

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

COMMITTEES:

AGRICULTURE, NUTRITION,
AND FORESTRY

ARMED SERVICES

HOMELAND SECURITY AND
GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

VETERANS' AFFAIRS

September 18, 2026

Dear President Trump:

You chose to enter the United States into a war of choice with Iran—a war that Congress never authorized and for which it appears you had no strategic plan. Eighteen American servicemembers have been killed and over 820 have been wounded. On the eve of your summit with Chinese President Xi Jinping, there is now a large and growing body of evidence that Chinese companies are helping Iran target and kill American troops, keep Iran's drone and missile programs alive, and sustain Iran's economy. But when confronted with evidence of Chinese support for Iran, you have repeatedly defended President Xi, saying China has had "very little involvement" in the Iran war.¹

I have many concerns about your China policy and President Xi's state visit to Washington next week. Your insistence on rolling out the red carpet for our adversaries and kicking our allies in the teeth is beyond me. But I would hope, as commander-in-chief of the armed forces, the provision of targeting information by China to help Iran kill American servicemembers would be something even you can't tolerate. Unfortunately, this does not appear to be the case.

For months, we have known that Chinese companies are helping the Iranian military target and attempt to kill U.S. troops. But new reporting now shows that this support from China may have directly contributed to the deaths of American servicemembers. Last week, the Wall Street Journal reported that Iran acquired high-resolution satellite images of a U.S. base in Jordan from Chinese companies both before and after an Iranian attack in July that killed three American servicemembers and wounded four others.² But when you were asked this week whether you would raise this issue—three American servicemembers potentially killed as a result of Chinese companies supplying targeting information to Iran—with President Xi during his visit, you said, "I think he's behaved reasonably well."³

This reporting crosses a rubicon. It follows months of mounting evidence that Chinese companies are helping Iran strike American forces in the Middle East. In May, your own State Department sanctioned multiple Chinese companies for providing satellite imagery that enabled Iranian military strikes against U.S. forces in the Middle East.⁴ In August, the Department disclosed that the Iranian military used commercial Chinese satellite imagery to support attacks on U.S. and partner facilities.⁵ Your Treasury Department has also sanctioned a Chinese

¹ Gavin J. Quinton and Jasmine Wright, "State Dinner in the Works for Chinese President Xi Jinping's Visit to D.C.," The Washington Sun, Sept. 4, 2026, www.washingtonsun.com/trump-white-house/state-dinner-china-president-xi-jinping-visit-washington-dc.

² Vera Bergengruen, Shelby Holliday and Anika Arora Seth, "U.S. Links Chinese Satellite Imagery to Iranian Strike That Killed Three Troops," Wall Street Journal, Sept. 11, 2026, www.wsj.com/world/u-s-links-chinese-satellite-imagery-to-iranian-strike-that-killed-three-troops-ca0b4be3.

³ "Trump downplays report China entities helped Iran before attack that killed US troops," Reuters, Sept. 14, 2026, www.reuters.com/world/china/trump-dismisses-report-china-entities-helped-iran-before-attack-that-killed-us-2026-09-14/.

⁴ "Disrupting Iran's Overseas Military Procurement Networks," U.S. Department of State, May 8, 2026, www.state.gov/releases/office-of-the-spokesperson/2026/05/disrupting-irans-overseas-military-procurement-networks/.

⁵ "United States Implements Operation Economic Outcast with Sanctions Targeting Iran's Military Activities and Procurements, and Petroleum and Petrochemical Product Traders," U.S. Department of State, Aug. 24, 2026, www.state.gov/releases/office-of-the-spokesperson/2026/08/united-states-implements-operation-economic-outcast-with-sanctions-targeting-irans-military-activities-and-procurements-and-petroleum-and-petrochemical-product-traders-fact-sheet/.

company for helping Iranian buy shoulder-fired surface-to-air missiles—the same missile that NBC News reported likely brought down an American F-15E over Iran in April.⁶ Reuters later reported that Iran signed a \$60 million agreement to purchase up to 400 more of these Chinese-made missiles—indicating that the small-scale sanctions your Administration has pursued to date have failed to deter Chinese companies from helping Iran.⁷

Chinese supply chains are likewise keeping Iran’s drone and missile programs alive, allowing Iran to continue striking our troops in the region. A Wall Street Journal investigation found that Chinese companies have become the most important source of Iranian drone components, including engine parts and navigation equipment, allowing Iran to develop faster, more deadly drones to launch at U.S. bases.⁸ Chinese companies have supplied Iran with chemicals required to propel ballistic missiles, and your own Treasury Department has sanctioned vessels suspected of shipping these chemical precursors from China to Iran.⁹ However, six months into a war that you said would last six weeks, Chinese companies continue to supply Iran with critical components for its war effort with no end in sight.

At this point, China is also the most important lifeline financing Iran’s war machine. Your Treasury Department reported that China buys approximately 90 percent of Iran’s oil exports.¹⁰ And yet, aside from sanctions on relatively small-scale Chinese companies, you have taken no action against Chinese banks to cut off China’s financial support to Iran. And while China has provided Moscow with a similar, steady supply of support since 2022, from satellite imagery to enable Russian targeting to drone components and purchases of Russian oil, Chinese support is now directly involved in targeting U.S. forces and bases of which you are commander-in-chief.

Given all of this, I urge you to make this a centerpiece of your talks with President Xi next week. I urge you, as commander-in-chief, to make clear to President Xi that this support must stop immediately—and that there will be consequences China will face if it fails to act. Our troops, military families, and the American public also deserve a clear accounting from you on the actions you will take to protect our troops in this regard.

Sincerely,



Elissa Slotkin
United States Senator

⁶ “Economic Fury Disrupts Networks Supplying Weapons and UAV Components to Iran,” U.S. Department of the Treasury, May 8, 2026, home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/sb0496; Dan De Luce, Courtney Kube, Katherine Doyle and Gordon Lubold, “Iran May Have Used Chinese Missile to Shoot Down U.S. Fighter Jet, Sources Say,” NBC News, May 29, 2026, www.nbcnews.com/politics/national-security/iran-may-used-chinese-missile-shoot-us-fighter-jet-sources-say-rcna347555.

⁷ John Irish and Jonathan Saul, “Iran to Get Chinese Shoulder-Launched Missile Systems in Weeks, Sources Say,” Reuters, July 28, 2026, www.reuters.com/world/china/iran-get-chinese-shoulder-launched-missile-systems-weeks-sources-say-2026-07-29/.

⁸ Austin Ramzy, “How the Iranian Shahed Drone Transformed War—With China’s Help,” The Wall Street Journal, Aug. 25, 2026, www.wsj.com/world/how-the-iranian-shahed-drone-transformed-war-with-chinas-help-2671bb43.

⁹ Cate Cadell, “U.S. Targets China’s Shadow Trade With Iran in Sweeping Sanctions,” The Washington Post, April 24, 2026, www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2026/04/24/china-iran-oil-treasury-sanctions/.

¹⁰ “Treasury Warns of Sanctions Risks Linked to China-Based Independent ‘Teapot’ Oil Refineries,” U.S. Department of the Treasury, April 28, 2026, home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/sb0476.