

---

# THE LAMPKIN DOCTRINE

War Powers, Mission Clarity, and Accountability  
in U.S. Military Action

*Iran (February–March 2026) as a Case Study*

---

Xavier Lampkin

Republican Candidate for President

FEC Committee ID: C00939371

March 2026

[lampkin2028.com](http://lampkin2028.com)

---

LAMPKIN 2028

# Contents

1. Why This Document Exists
2. Constitutional Authority: Congress Declares War
3. The Mission Clarity Standard
4. The Exit Strategy Rule
5. Troop Protection First
6. Economic Impact: Americans Pay the Price
7. What the American People Actually Want
8. The Lampkin Doctrine
9. What This Doctrine Is — and What It Is Not
10. Sources

# 1. Why This Document Exists

---

On February 28, 2026, the United States and Israel launched coordinated military strikes against Iran. The operation, codenamed “Operation Epic Fury” by the Department of Defense, resulted in the death of Iran’s Supreme Leader, retaliatory strikes across the Middle East, disruption to global energy markets, and the deaths of American service members.

These strikes were launched without congressional authorization. No vote was held. No formal debate occurred. The American public was not asked. Congress was notified shortly before the strikes began, but was not consulted for authorization as the Constitution requires.

This paper is not a commentary on the tactics of the Iran campaign. Tactical details in an active conflict shift rapidly and are subject to dispute. This paper addresses something more fundamental: the principles and processes that should govern any decision to send Americans into harm’s way.

I am not anti-military. I am not anti-intervention. I am pro-process, pro-accountability, and pro-Constitution. If we are going to ask American service members to risk their lives, we owe them — and their families — a clear mission, a defined end state, and a government that followed the law before ordering the first strike.

“No major war without Congress voting. Period.”

## 2. Constitutional Authority: Congress Declares War

---

The Constitution is unambiguous on this point. Article I, Section 8 vests in Congress — not the President — the power to declare war, raise armies, and regulate their use. Article II designates the President as Commander-in-Chief, but this authority was designed to direct wars that Congress has authorized — not to initiate them unilaterally.

The War Powers Resolution of 1973 (Public Law 93-148, 50 U.S.C. Chapter 33) was passed specifically to address this tension. Enacted over the veto of President Nixon in the aftermath of undisclosed bombings in Cambodia, the Resolution establishes three conditions under which the President may introduce armed forces into hostilities:

- **A declaration of war** by Congress.
- **Specific statutory authorization** from Congress.
- **A national emergency** created by an attack upon the United States, its territories or possessions, or its armed forces.

The Resolution further requires that the President consult with Congress “in every possible instance” before introducing forces into hostilities, notify Congress within 48 hours, and withdraw forces within 60 days unless Congress has authorized the action.

### The Iran Case

The February 28, 2026 strikes against Iran do not appear to meet any of the three conditions specified by the War Powers Resolution. Congress did not declare war. No specific statutory authorization was passed. And while Iran poses threats to American interests, the administration has not demonstrated that an attack on the United States was imminent.

According to reporting by the Associated Press and PBS NewsHour, the administration did not present evidence that Iran was planning to attack American forces first. Secretary of State Marco Rubio stated publicly that the justification was preemptive: the administration believed Israel was going to strike Iran, and that Iranian retaliation would then target American forces in the region.

This is a significant expansion of the concept of preemptive self-defense — and it is precisely the kind of decision the Founders intended Congress to deliberate before, not after.

### Bipartisan Constitutional Concern

This is not a partisan issue. War powers resolutions have been introduced in both chambers by members of both parties. In the House, Rep. Thomas Massie (R-KY) and Rep. Ro Khanna (D-CA) co-authored the resolution. In the Senate, Sen. Tim Kaine (D-VA) and Sen. Rand Paul (R-KY) have both publicly called for congressional authorization.

Presidents of both parties have stretched war powers over decades. This is not a problem created by one administration. But the scale of the Iran operation — a sustained, multi-week campaign explicitly aimed at regime change, with American casualties — makes the absence of congressional authorization more consequential than in prior limited strikes.

## The Lampkin Standard

As President, I would not launch sustained military operations without a vote in Congress. If emergency action is required to protect American lives under imminent threat, I would act — and then immediately seek a congressional vote to authorize continuation. The American people, through their elected representatives, must be on the record before their sons and daughters are sent into harm's way.

*“If you’re not willing to put a war vote on the record, you’re not confident enough in the mission to send Americans to fight it.”*

## 3. The Mission Clarity Standard

---

Before major military action, the Commander-in-Chief owes the American people a clear and public answer to five questions:

- **What is the objective?** What specifically are we trying to achieve?
- **What does success look like?** What measurable outcome ends the operation?
- **What is the estimated duration?** How long will this take?
- **What are the projected costs?** In lives, in dollars, in strategic readiness?
- **What is the exit condition?** Under what specific circumstances do American forces come home?

These are not unreasonable demands. They are the minimum that any competent organization requires before committing resources to a major undertaking. No Fortune 500 CEO would approve a project without defined objectives, a budget, and a completion timeline. The American military deserves at least the same discipline.

### The Iran Case

In the first days of the Iran campaign, public statements from administration officials included multiple, sometimes contradictory objectives. President Trump stated the goal is to “eliminate imminent threats,” “destroy the missile threats, destroy the navy, no nukes,” and told the Iranian people to “take over your government.” Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth stated the U.S. would not engage in nation-building. The President estimated the operation would last “four to five weeks” but has not ruled out ground troops.

Regime change, nuclear disarmament, and naval destruction are three fundamentally different military objectives with different force requirements, different timelines, and different consequences. When all three are stated simultaneously without prioritization, the mission lacks the clarity that troops need and the public deserves.

### Historical Precedent: The Cost of Unclear Objectives

The Iraq War began in March 2003 with stated objectives of disarming weapons of mass destruction and liberating the Iraqi people. The regime fell within weeks. But without defined success metrics, an exit strategy, or a governance plan, the United States remained in Iraq for over eight years, at a cost the Council on Foreign Relations estimates at \$8 trillion including veterans’ healthcare, with over 4,500 American service members killed and approximately 300,000 Iraqi civilians dead.

The Council on Foreign Relations’ 20-year retrospective concluded that the initial error of invasion was immediately compounded by the absence of an agreed exit strategy and the decision to embark on a massive, open-ended nation-building project. The International Crisis Group’s analysis noted that Western interventions aimed at toppling foreign governments are costly, messy, and virtually impossible without boots on the ground.

In Libya, the 2011 intervention removed Muammar Gaddafi without a governance plan. The result was a failed state, ongoing civil war, and the rise of extremist groups. The pattern is consistent: military action without defined end states produces chaos, not freedom.

*“If you can’t define what ‘winning’ looks like before you start, you will never know when to stop.”*

## 4. The Exit Strategy Rule

---

Every military operation must have a defined exit strategy before it begins. This is not weakness. This is basic military planning. The absence of an exit strategy is how limited operations become indefinite wars.

An exit strategy must include:

- **Measurable milestones** that indicate progress toward the objective.
- **A defined end condition** that triggers the withdrawal of American forces.
- **A governance transition plan** if the objective involves regime change or political transformation.
- **A regional stabilization assessment** accounting for effects on neighboring states, refugee flows, and allied interests.
- **An industrial readiness review** ensuring American weapons stockpiles and force posture are not degraded below acceptable levels.

### Alliance Obligations

No American military operation of this scale occurs in isolation. The United States maintains treaty obligations through NATO, bilateral defense agreements, and intelligence-sharing arrangements including the Five Eyes alliance. Any sustained campaign must account for the positions, contributions, and constraints of allied nations.

Coalition operations require coordination on rules of engagement, burden-sharing, post-conflict responsibilities, and diplomatic objectives. An exit strategy that accounts only for American forces while ignoring allied commitments is incomplete. As President, I would ensure that allied consultation is integrated into operational planning from the outset — not treated as an afterthought once operations are underway.

### The Regime Change Problem

If the stated or implied goal of military action is regime change, the exit strategy must answer: who governs after? History offers no examples of successful regime change through external military force where the intervening power did not also commit to extensive post-conflict governance support.

President Trump has told the Iranian people to “take over your government” after the operation concludes. This is not a governance plan. Iran is a nation of approximately 88 million people with complex ethnic, religious, and political dynamics. Hoping that a functioning democracy emerges from sustained bombing is not a strategy. It is a wish.

I am not arguing that the Iranian regime deserves sympathy or protection. The regime's violent suppression of its own citizens, its nuclear ambitions, and its support for proxy groups across the Middle East represent genuine threats. But recognizing a threat and having a viable plan to address it are two different things.

*“Regime change without a governance plan is not liberation. It is demolition without a blueprint.”*

## 5. Troop Protection First

---

The most fundamental obligation of a Commander-in-Chief is to protect the men and women in uniform. Protection does not mean avoiding all risk — it means ensuring that the risks American service members face are justified by a clear mission, adequate support, and a defined purpose.

As of this writing, American service members have been killed in action in the Iran campaign. These losses deserve to be honored, not politicized. I will not use specific casualty figures for political effect. But I will state clearly: every American who falls in combat deserves to know that their government followed the law, defined the mission, and committed to bringing their fellow service members home.

### Readiness Concerns

Extended military operations consume munitions, strain logistics, and degrade readiness for other contingencies. Analysis from the Brookings Institution and researchers at Northeastern University has documented that the U.S. defense industrial base was under significant strain before the Iran campaign began, with production timelines for advanced munitions, precision-guided weapons, and naval assets measured in years rather than months. Every day of sustained operations depletes stockpiles that may be needed for other threats, including potential contingencies in the Indo-Pacific.

A responsible Commander-in-Chief monitors readiness in real time and adjusts operations accordingly. Open-ended campaigns with undefined objectives make readiness planning impossible.

### The Lampkin Standard on Troop Protection

- No undefined missions. Every deployment must have a stated objective and measurable end condition.
- No shifting objectives after forces are committed without returning to Congress for reauthorization.
- Readiness assessments published to Congress and the public on a regular schedule.
- Force protection prioritized in all operational planning. Risk to American lives must be proportional to the clarity and importance of the objective.

## 6. Economic Impact: Americans Pay the Price

---

Military action in the Middle East does not stay in the Middle East. It comes home through gas prices, market volatility, supply chain disruptions, and inflation.

### The Iran Case: Energy and Markets

The Strait of Hormuz, through which approximately 20% of the world's daily oil supply passes, experienced severe disruption following the February 28 strikes. Major shipping firms suspended transits. War-risk insurance premiums spiked, making commercial passage economically prohibitive. Oil prices surged, with Brent crude rising over 10% in initial trading and analysts warning of potential increases to \$100 per barrel or higher if disruptions persist.

These are not abstract numbers. When oil prices rise, gas prices rise. When gas prices rise, transportation costs rise. When transportation costs rise, the price of groceries, goods, and services rises. Every American family feels the economic consequences of military action in the Gulf — whether or not they are paying attention to the conflict itself.

This connects directly to my Cost of Living platform: energy costs are the invisible multiplier behind every price in American life. Military decisions that destabilize energy markets without clear strategic justification impose a hidden tax on every American household.

### The Transparency Requirement

As President, I would require real-time public reporting on the economic consequences of military operations:

- **Operational costs:** How much is this costing per day, per week, per month?
- **Energy market impact:** What is the effect on oil prices, gas prices, and energy supply chains?
- **Readiness impact:** What munitions, equipment, and assets have been expended, and what is the replacement timeline?
- **Supply chain disruption:** What commercial shipping routes are affected, and what are the downstream effects on American consumers?

This information would be published on a public dashboard — built by the Federal Digital Service Agency (FDSA) — so that the American people can see in real time what military action costs them.

*“If Americans are paying for a war at the gas pump, they deserve to see the bill.”*

## 7. What the American People Actually Want

My campaign is built on a simple principle: the American people should have a voice in the decisions that affect their lives. That principle applies to education, to healthcare, to taxes — and it applies to war.

### The Polling Is Clear

Before the strikes, polling consistently showed that the American public did not support military action against Iran:

**70%** said the U.S. should not take military action against Iran

*Quinnipiac University National Poll, January 8–12, 2026*

**70%** said presidents should seek congressional approval before military action

*Quinnipiac University National Poll, January 8–12, 2026*

After the strikes began, initial polling confirmed public skepticism:

**27%** approved of the strikes (43% disapproved, 30% unsure)

*Reuters/Ipsos Poll, February 28–March 1, 2026*

**59%** of Americans disapproved of the strikes

*CNN/SSRS Poll, February 28–March 1, 2026*

**60%** said the President does not have a clear plan

*CNN/SSRS Poll, February 28–March 1, 2026*

**62%** said the President should seek congressional approval

*CNN/SSRS Poll, February 28–March 1, 2026*

For context: initial public approval for military action in Afghanistan in 2001 was approximately 92% (Gallup). Initial approval for the Iraq War in 2003 was approximately 71% (Pew Research Center). The Iran operation began with a fraction of that support.

### Why This Matters

A president who launches a war without public support and without congressional authorization is operating outside both the democratic mandate and the constitutional framework. This does not mean the President should govern by poll. But when a supermajority of Americans say they want congressional authorization before war, and the President declines to seek it, the democratic process has failed.

My platform — “What Does America Really Want?” — exists to create direct communication between the American people and their government. War is the ultimate test of that principle.

## 8. The Lampkin Doctrine

---

This is what I will uphold as Commander-in-Chief. These are not aspirations. They are rules.

**1****Congress votes before major military action.**

If emergency action is required to protect American lives under imminent attack, the President may act — and must immediately seek a congressional vote to authorize continuation. No sustained campaign without a vote.

**2****Clear objectives, defined in plain English, before force is used.**

The administration must publicly state: the objective, the definition of success, and the conditions that end the operation. If the objective changes, the President returns to Congress.

**3****No regime-change operations without a postwar plan.**

If the goal includes changing a foreign government, the plan must include governance transition, regional stabilization, refugee planning, and allied coordination — submitted to Congress before action begins.

**4****Exit strategy required for every operation.**

Measurable milestones, a defined end condition, and a timeline. No indefinite wars. If the operation exceeds its authorized timeline, Congress must vote again to continue.

**5****Troop protection comes first.**

No undefined missions. No shifting objectives after deployment. Force protection prioritized. Readiness assessments made public. Risk to American lives must be proportional to the clarity of the mission.

**6****Full transparency on costs and consequences.**

Real-time public dashboard showing operational costs, energy market impact, readiness status, and supply chain effects. Built by the FDSA. If Americans are paying for a war, they see the bill.

These six rules are not radical. They are the minimum that a constitutional republic requires before sending its citizens to war. Every rule listed above has been violated in living memory. The result has been trillions of dollars spent, thousands of American lives lost, and a public that has lost faith in its government's ability to make honest decisions about war and peace.

I am running for President to restore accountability in government. That accountability starts with the most consequential decision a President can make: whether to send Americans into combat.

*“America must be strong. But strength without clarity is how nations get trapped in wars that last years, drain readiness, and hit American families at the gas pump. I will not let that happen.”*

## 9. What This Doctrine Is — and What It Is Not

---

**This is not anti-military.** I will fund, equip, and support the strongest military on Earth. But I will not send that military into undefined missions without a plan to bring them home.

**This is not isolationist.** America has genuine interests around the world, and I will defend them. But defense and indefinite war are not the same thing.

**This is not anti-intervention.** There are circumstances that justify military action. But those circumstances require congressional authorization, clear objectives, and an exit strategy.

**This is not partisan.** War powers have been eroded by presidents of both parties over decades. Restoring constitutional authority is not a Democratic position or a Republican position. It is an American position.

**This is pro-Constitution, pro-military, and pro-accountability.** The Founders gave Congress the power to declare war because they understood that one person should not be able to commit a nation to conflict alone. That wisdom has not expired.

I am asking for the presidency because I believe the American government can be rebuilt to work for the people it serves. That starts with the most basic promise: your government will not send your children to war without following the law, defining the mission, and being honest with you about the costs.

*“Every other candidate will tell you they support the troops. I’m the only one putting rules on paper for how we protect them before we deploy them. That’s not a talking point. That’s a doctrine.”*

## 10. Sources

---

### Constitutional and Legal

- U.S. Constitution, Article I, Section 8 — Congressional war powers
- U.S. Constitution, Article II, Section 2 — Commander-in-Chief clause
- War Powers Resolution of 1973, Public Law 93-148 (50 U.S.C. Chapter 33) — Full text at [Congress.gov](https://www.congress.gov) and Cornell Law Institute
- Congressional Research Service, “War Powers Resolution: Expedited Procedures” (CRS Report R47603)
- War Powers Resolution Reporting Project ([warpowers.lawandsecurity.org](https://warpowers.lawandsecurity.org))

### Iran Conflict Reporting (February–March 2026)

- Associated Press — Congressional notification, war powers debate, administration justifications (via PBS NewsHour, NPR, NBC News)
- NPR — “Trump defends Iran strikes, offers objectives for military operation,” March 2, 2026
- NPR — “Congress gears up for vote on Trump’s war powers in Iran,” March 2, 2026
- PBS NewsHour — “Members of Congress demand swift vote on war powers resolution,” March 1, 2026
- NBC News — “Democrats will force a vote to limit Trump on Iran,” February 28, 2026
- CNBC — Secretary of State Rubio direct quotes on preemptive justification, March 2, 2026
- Washington Post — “Trump says strikes on Iran could take weeks,” March 2–3, 2026

### Economic Impact

- CNBC — “How the attack on Iran could impact the global oil market and economy,” February 28, 2026
- CNN Business — “Oil surges and stock futures sink as war in Iran threatens crude supply,” March 1, 2026
- NPR — “How could the U.S. strikes in Iran affect global oil supply?” February 28, 2026

### Public Opinion Polling

- Quinnipiac University National Poll, January 14, 2026 ([poll.qu.edu](https://poll.qu.edu))
- University of Maryland Critical Issues Poll, February 5–9, 2026 ([criticalissues.umd.edu](https://criticalissues.umd.edu))
- Reuters/Ipsos Poll, February 28–March 1, 2026 ([ipsos.com](https://www.ipsos.com) official release)
- CNN/SSRS Poll, February 28–March 1, 2026
- Gallup — Historical: Afghanistan military action approval, November 2001
- Pew Research Center — Historical: Iraq War approval, March 2003

### Historical Precedent and Analysis

- Council on Foreign Relations — “The Long Shadow of the Iraq War,” March 2023 ([cfr.org](https://www.cfr.org))
- International Crisis Group — “After Iraq: How the U.S. Failed to Fully Learn the Lessons,” March 2023
- Congressional Research Service — “Iraq: U.S. Regime Change Efforts” (CRS Report RL31339)

- Brookings Institution — “After the strike: The danger of war in Iran,” March 3, 2026
- Northeastern University Global Resilience Institute — Defense industrial base capacity and munitions production analysis

## Campaign Reference

- Lampkin 2028 — Federal Digital Service Agency (FDSA) Implementation Blueprint ([lampkin2028.com](https://lampkin2028.com))
- Lampkin 2028 — Cost of Living Policy ([lampkin2028.com/issues](https://lampkin2028.com/issues))