



To: Secretary of Defense James Mattis
From: Wisconsin State Rep. Daniel Riemer
CC: Sen. Ron Johnson (R-Wisc.), Sen. Tammy Baldwin (D-Wisc.), Rep. Gwen Moore (D-Wisc.)
Subject: Trump's military parade diverts funding from where it's most needed

Tuesday, February 13, 2018

Dear Secretary Mattis,

The Department of Defense's most sacred responsibility is ensuring the force readiness of the men and women who serve in America's armed forces. As a combat veteran and lifelong U.S. Marine, you know this better than anybody. Unfortunately, President Trump's erratic approach to military affairs runs the risk of endangering American national security and might even hurt our service members' mission preparedness.

As [Secretary of Defense](#) for [America's Cabinet](#) – a group of young elected officials from across the country who came together to offer an alternative vision for the nation – I call on you to show leadership that truly honors and respects American service members. Sadly, this President's policies have thus far failed to do so.

Nowhere is this more apparent than in last week's calls for a massive military parade in Washington, DC – a logistical nightmare that would divert millions of defense dollars that should rightfully be used to ensure the force readiness of our men and women in uniform.

It has been estimated that such a parade would cost [\\$21 million](#) dollars, with the last such parade costing nearly [\\$12 million](#) in 1991. Secretary Mattis, think of the better uses that these defense dollars could be put to: increased funding for our troops in the field, military sexual assault prevention and reporting programs and mental health counseling services, just to name a few.

Perhaps even more significantly, though, this show of arrogance dressed up as strength and honor further undermines America's credibility as a responsible world power. As Sen. John N. Kennedy (R-La.) [said](#) in response to Trump's proposed military parade, "Confidence is silent and insecurity is loud. America is the most powerful country in all of human history; you don't need to show it off."

Of course, we know why President Trump is advocating for a military parade: the president frequently boasts of being the "biggest and best at the military" and having a "bigger and more powerful" nuclear button than foreign leaders. President Trump wants to use America's armed forces as a prop in his reckless foreign policy circus. Secretary Mattis, you mustn't let him do so.

There are also darker undertones to the calls for a military parade. Such displays of military might are a calling card for authoritarian dictators like Kim Jong Un who we oppose and shouldn't seek to emulate. This follows a long-held authoritarian streak that Trump has shown, having [threatened](#) to jail his political opponents, [encouraged](#) violence against protesters and branded the free press as the "[enemy of the American people](#)."



As a country, we can do better. As Secretary of Defense for America's Cabinet, I call on you, Secretary Mattis, to intervene on behalf of America's armed forces by refusing to allow them to be used as props in President Trump's pageantry. Instead, lead the way in creating a real foreign policy approach, reinvest in critical services for our men and women in uniform and take bold steps to actually make America safer in these complex and troubling times.

We call on you to do this, Secretary Mattis, because you know what it means to serve our country. Now, more than ever, we're depending on you to do so.

Sincerely,

Daniel Riemer
Wisconsin State Representative
Secretary of Defense, America's Cabinet