

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

November 26, 2025

The Honorable Pete Hegseth
Secretary of Defense
U.S. Department of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301

Secretary Hegseth:

We write today in strong opposition to your Department's investigation of Senator Mark Kelly of Arizona.

Last week, Senator Kelly and five other Members of Congress who previously served in the U.S. military or intelligence community released a video restating a core principle of current law and military doctrine: service members must obey lawful orders and are not required to carry out unlawful ones.

In response, the president and other senior officials publicly labeled the video "seditious" and the president stated the Members' conduct was "punishable by death." Such rhetoric is reckless. It invites political violence, endangers public servants, and deters free speech. Your own public comments referring to these Members as the "Seditious Six" compounds these concerns. As these duly-elected Members continue to receive death threats, we respectfully request that you stop using such dangerous rhetoric.

Senator Kelly has had a long and distinguished career. He is a war hero who has served in more than 39 combat missions in Desert Storm and commanded four Space Shuttle missions. He was part of the recovery mission that brought home the bodies of his astronaut classmates who died in the Columbia disaster. Senator Kelly understands military discipline, constitutional command authority, and knows what service to America looks like.

Opening an investigation into Sen. Kelly on the purported "serious allegations of misconduct" because he accurately reaffirmed the legal duty to follow lawful orders is inconsistent with the Constitution and incompatible with the Department's tradition of nonpartisanship. Free speech is protected for Members of Congress, just like the general public, and restating settled law is by no means sedition.

We urge you to immediately close this investigation, publicly affirm that service members are bound only by lawful orders, and clarify that the Department will not be used to punish protected speech by American citizens who criticize the president.

Sincerely,



Greg Stanton
Member of Congress



Yassamin Ansari
Member of Congress



Adelita S. Grijalva
Member of Congress