



By: TA | AP Insight

How will the US Congress grapple with the consequences of a war that was never authorized?



The question hangs in the halls at the Capitol: Was it worth it?

Congress, which never authorized the war against Iran yet never fully objected to it, now must grapple with the consequences of President Donald Trump's nearly four-month conflict: the lives lost, the **billions spent** and the national security fallout that has reordered the political dynamics in the Middle East.

Ask senators what they think about the **deal Trump struck** to end the war, and they do not search too far for words.

“Pathetic. Failure. Inevitable conclusion of a combination of never making the case to the American people, flawed strategic vision, lack of grasp of the regional dynamics,” said Delaware Sen. Chris Coons, a Democrat on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

“How many ways, can I say, bad, bad, bad?”

Yet Republican Sen. Ron Johnson of Wisconsin, a past chairman of the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, said that because of the president's actions, “We are safer today.”

“You can criticize — Oh, he didn't totally win,” Johnson said. “Well, that was always going to be very difficult.”

As Trump moves on to the next phase, it is left to the Congress to pick up the pieces: explaining the war to voters back home, restocking the **military arsenal** that has run low from bombing runs and trying to ensure the fragile ceasefire holds as the United States seeks to halt **Iran's nuclear ambitions** and work toward an uneasy peace.

More money for the Pentagon

Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth made the rounds on Capitol Hill this past week as lawmakers consider Defense Department funding as part of the Republican majority's next big budget package.

The White House has asked for a remarkable **\$1.5 trillion for the Pentagon** this year, on top of the extra money that Republicans delivered as part of the Trump's tax cuts package last year.

Republicans are mulling a sizable \$350 billion plus-up for Hegseth on par with the White House's budget request that the GOP could pass on its own, through the reconciliation process that allows majority rule over potential objections from Democrats.

One report is on an investigation into the strike on an elementary school in Iran that killed more than 165 people, a flashpoint at the start of the war

Senators, meanwhile, are seeking to set some **guardrails** on Hegseth with a provision to block a portion of his travel fund until the Pentagon delivers various reports.

One such report is on an investigation into the **strike on an elementary school** in Iran that killed more than 165 people, a flashpoint at the start of the war.

Officials have said they believe the U.S. was responsible for the strike and that it was based on faulty intelligence.

Questions swirl over what's next in Iran

Lawmakers are still processing what just happened after Trump swiftly signed a memorandum of understanding with Iran and opened a window of 60-day talks toward ending Tehran's nuclear program.

“I understand the president's trying to find a peaceful solution to this,” said Sen. Mike Rounds, R-S.D., who serves on the Senate Armed Services and Intelligence committees. “I commend him for that. But we've got a lot of questions.”

Senators are particularly concerned about the tentative deal's provision for a potential \$300 billion fund for the reconstruction and economic development of Iran

Senators are particularly concerned about the tentative deal's provision for a potential **\$300 billion fund** for the "reconstruction and economic development" of Iran.

To many skeptical Republicans, that money sounds similar to the planeloads-of-cash narrative they used against the Obama-era Iran nuclear deal, which offered a slim fraction of that amount, some \$1.7 billion overall.

To this day, Trump tells an **exaggerated story** of how that payment to Iran, for U.S. military equipment it never received, was made.

"The only concerns I have are the money and the conditions," said Sen. Thom Tillis, R-N.C.

"If we send a trainload, a shipload, it's gonna age as well as that," he said.

Circumspect over what was gained and lost

Over and over again Congress tried and failed to exert its authority under the war powers act to halt the U.S. military action in Iran.

The House ultimately passed a **war powers resolution** that sought to force an end to the war after a small number of Republicans joined the Democratic measure last month.

The Senate has voted nine times, including this past week, but failed to reach the majority needed.



Not one of the president's objectives has been achieved, and Iran won significant concessions - Jeanne Shaheen

At the same time, Congress did not affirmatively authorize the war with a use of force resolution, as has been done in certain other conflicts, including the Iraq War.

"I'm glad that the conflict has finally ended and hope the ceasefire holds," said a statement from Sen. Jeanne Shaheen of New Hampshire, the top Democrat on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

But Shaheen said the country must be clear-eyed about what has come about.

Not one of the president's objectives has been achieved, she said, and Iran won significant concessions.

"The American people are paying the price with higher costs in every aspect of life and tens of billions in tax dollars spent," she said.

Republican Sen. Lisa Murkowski of Alaska said it's hard to see what leverage the U.S. gained to force Iran to a better negotiation.

"You want to be able to give the benefit of the doubt," she said.

But Murkowski said, "I think we're in a place where there is a deal that has been signed, but it doesn't appear to me that it puts us in that much of a different position than prior to the beginning of the war."