June 17, 2022

The Honorable Lloyd J. Austin III
Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1000

Secretary Austin,

We write to urge that the United States Security Coordinator (USSC) for Israel and the Palestinian Authority (PA) in Jerusalem remain an officer of three-star rank and not be downgraded below that level. Given continued regional volatility, steadfast high-level U.S. leadership and engagement to support peace and stability in Israel and the West Bank remain in the national security interest of the United States.

The USSC coordinates multilateral efforts toward peace and stability and serves as a critical liaison between Israeli and PA security forces. Downgrading this position would undermine U.S. leadership and credibility in a region where it is essential to have a high-ranking officer who can engage with other nations’ highest-level military leaders.

The European Union, United Kingdom, Canada, Italy, Greece, the Netherlands, Bulgaria, Poland and others count on the USSC to provide this leadership. Downgrading this position would undermine critical security programs and degrade communications between Israelis and Palestinians, which the USSC facilitates. Such a downgrade would also risk fracturing the U.S.-led international coalition committed to strengthening security and stability in Israel and the West Bank.

We understand Congress has required the Department to reduce the aggregate number of flag and general officers, and this requirement may have driven consideration of this change. Nevertheless, we urge you not to downgrade this position at a time when U.S. leadership in the region is critical, and we stand ready to work with you to amend the law as necessary to support this vital policy objective.

Sincerely,

Jon Ossoff
United States Senator

Lindsey Graham
United States Senator
John Hickenlooper  
United States Senator

Roy Blunt  
United States Senator

Cory A. Booker  
United States Senator

James E. Risch  
United States Senator

John Kennedy  
United States Senator

Alex Padilla  
United States Senator

Richard Blumenthal  
United States Senator

Charles E. Grassley  
United States Senator

Richard J. Durbin  
United States Senator

Rob Portman  
United States Senator
Mazie K. Hirono  
United States Senator

Lisa Murkowski  
United States Senator

Raphael G. Warnock  
United States Senator

Michael D. Crapo  
United States Senator

Jeffrey A. Merkley  
United States Senator

Jacky Rosen  
United States Senator

Tammy Duckworth  
United States Senator

Catherine Cortez Masto  
United States Senator

Joni K. Ernst  
United States Senator

Dianne Feinstein  
United States Senator
Jeanne Shaheen  
United States Senator

Jerry Moran  
United States Senator

Mark Kelly  
United States Senator

Michael F. Bennet  
United States Senator

Amy Klobuchar  
United States Senator

Christopher A. Coons  
United States Senator

John Hoeven  
United States Senator

/s/  
Benjamin L. Cardin  
United States Senator