

**Statement of Representative John Conyers,  
Jr.**

*before the*

House Committee on Rules

*concerning*

Conyers Amendment #25 to H.R. 2397

July 22, 2013

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Chairman Sessions, Ranking-Member Slaughter, and Members of the Committee:

I appreciate the opportunity to submit this testimony on behalf of my amendment to H.R. 2397, which would prevent funds appropriated in the Fiscal Year 2014 Defense Appropriations Act from being used to fund any type of ground combat operations in Syrian territory. My amendment would simply codify the policy endorsed by

President Obama and thereby ensure that any potential involvement in Syria remains limited in scope. I am pleased that my amendment enjoys bipartisan support from Mr. Jones, Mr. Welch, Mr. Cohen, and Ms. Lee.

Specifically, my amendment would prevent funds from being used to deploy, establish, or maintain a presence of Members of the Armed Services or private security contractors on the ground in Syria. I also want to make it clear that my amendment contains an exception that would allow for the rescue of Members of the Armed Services who may potentially need to be rescued from Syrian territory at some point in the future.

Currently, there is no domestic or international authority allowing for an escalation of hostilities that would lead to boots on the ground in Syria. The President has stated that he does “not foresee a scenario...in which American boots on the ground in Syria — would be good for America but would also be good for Syria.” My amendment would simply enact the President’s stated policy into law. If at some point the President believes that our national security interests require a ground presence in Syria, he could come to the Congress and request an authorization for force, which would override this provision.

It is also worth noting that there is precedent for my amendment. The House has previously adopted language identical to my amendment in the context of the conflict in Libya as a part of the 2012 National Defense Authorization Act, as well as the 2012 Defense Appropriations Act.

The time is now for Congress to exercise its constitutional authority to place boundaries on the use of our military overseas and definitively state that the conflict in Syria will not escalate into another unaffordable occupation of a Middle Eastern country.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony.