

MAGA war skeptics rage over Lindsey Graham

The South Carolina Republican's media blitz urging more aggressive action in Iran drew backlash from anti-interventionists on the right.



Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.) speaks with reporters after a briefing from Trump administration officials about the U.S. strikes on Iran at the U.S. Capitol on March 3, 2026. | Francis Chung/POLITICO

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03/10/2026 03:28 PM EDT



Sen. Lindsey Graham's push for a more aggressive posture in the U.S.-Israel war with Iran is infuriating war skeptics within the MAGA base, who are questioning why the veteran South Carolina Republican has significant influence over U.S. foreign policy.

Graham — who has been calling for military action against the Iranian regime for years — threatened “consequences” for Gulf countries that have [refrained from striking Iran](#) despite enduring repeated attacks, and even floated negotiations with foreign governments.

“I’m willing to do a mutual defense agreement with [Saudi Arabia] and give you protection in perpetuity,” he said in a Fox News interview on Monday. “If you were attacked by Iran, we would go to war for you.”

Graham, a close ally of President Donald Trump on foreign policy, also suggested the United States should relocate its military bases from Spain after Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez refused to involve the country in what he called

an “illegal war” in the Middle East.

The aggressive remarks drew scathing rebukes from prominent MAGA commentators and activists who have been skeptical of the war, arguing that Graham is overstepping his authority.

“When did Lindsey Graham become our president?” Megyn Kelly, the onetime Fox News host turned independent podcaster, [wrote on X](#). She warned about Graham’s influence on Trump and described his rhetoric as dangerous.

“Let’s get real. The problem with Lindsay Graham isn’t (just) that he’s a homicidal maniac, it’s that Trump likes and is listening to him, and Trump’s favorite channel is parading him around like a Hefner bunny in stockings on every show,” [she said](#), referring to her former network home.

A spokesperson for Graham did not immediately respond to a request for comment on the criticism. When asked for comment, White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt said the president has a good and candid relationship with Graham.

“Republicans are unanimously supportive of President Trump’s bold decision to launch combat operations and end the threat posed by the Iranian terrorist regime,” she said in a statement.

Graham [successfully lobbied Trump](#) to take military action against Iran and has maintained a strong relationship with the president, who he described as “Ronald Reagan plus plus plus.” But his calls for a more aggressive military posture in Iran and strong allegiance to Israel prompted critics on the right to quickly pile on.

Conservative commentator Matt Walsh echoed similar criticisms to Kelly, [writing on X](#): “Where does he think he derives the authority to unilaterally offer permanent ‘defense agreements’ to foreign countries?”

And former Rep. Matt Gaetz, Trump’s one-time pick to be attorney general and now a One America News host, was critical of a Fox News interview where Graham repeatedly praised Israel and its military leadership. “Moving ‘all our stuff to Israel’ is not America First,” [Gaetz wrote](#).

The backlash highlights a divide inside Trump’s political base over opposition to further U.S. involvement in foreign conflicts, with anti-interventionists voices becoming increasingly critical as the war in the Middle East escalates.

Over half of U.S. voters opposed the military action in Iran and a majority

believe the conflict could last for months or more, according to a [Quinnipiac University poll](#) released Monday.

But Republicans have overwhelmingly supported Trump's moves, putting the skeptics broadly in the party's minority. Eighty-five percent of Republicans surveyed said they supported the military action in Iran, with just 11 percent opposed.

The White House has publicly refused to rule out the potential for boots on the ground in Iran, as the administration sends mixed messages for how long the war could last.

And some of Graham's critics argue that he is unnecessarily raising the prospect of Americans being deployed.

"There are some in the Senate that advocate for war everywhere. Lindsey Graham is one of them. He does NOT tell the President what to do, nor does he control Congress," Rep. Anna Paulina Luna (R-Fla.) [posted on X](#). "I have spoken with the administration a number of times, as well as other members of Congress over the last week or so, and nothing has changed regarding boots on the ground. NO BOOTS on the ground."