



Remembering Senator Graham's Legacy

The tributes from Jerusalem, Kyiv, and Taipei—and the celebrations in Tehran, Moscow, and Beijing—tell the story of Senator Graham's legacy. America's allies knew him as a friend to freedom; its enemies knew him as one of their fiercest foes. For over three decades in Congress and the military, Senator Graham championed Peace Through Strength, fighting every day to keep America safe. He rejected the temptation for the U.S. to retreat from the world and hope its dangers would pass us by, knowing the foundation of peace is American strength.

Senator Graham has one of the most consequential records in congressional history. In honor of his life, POLARIS reflects on Senator Graham's contributions to America's national security—and the unfinished work the next generation of conservatives must now carry forward.

Senator Graham Made 'Never Forget' a Sacred Charge – Not a Slogan

- **Senator Graham did everything in his power to prevent another 9/11—and succeeded.** He never lost sight of the threat terrorists posed, warning that reduced pressure gives them time and space to regroup, rebuild, and attack the homeland.
- **He shaped the War on Terror for the better**, drawing on his military experience. He helped [enact](#) the Detainee Treatment Act, [made](#) the Army Field Manual the interrogation standard, [elevated](#) military lawyers' abuse warnings, and [negotiated](#) protections for the country and service members carrying out lawful orders.
- **Senator Graham led the fight to keep terrorists locked away** in Guantanamo Bay and out of civilian courts. He helped [block](#) the closure of one of America's top security facilities, [forcing](#) Obama to [return](#) Khalid Sheikh Mohammed and his co-conspirators to military commissions designed for wartime offenses.
- **He championed the Iraq Surge, even though it was politically unpopular.** Alongside John McCain, he [backed](#) General Petraeus, resisted dangerous withdrawal deadlines, and protected defense funding. The [surge](#) succeeded in reducing violence, breaking al-Qaeda's sanctuary in Iraq, and helping pull the country back from collapse.
- **Senator Graham warned again and again against premature withdrawals.** He [opposed](#) Obama's Iraq retreat which fueled the rise of ISIS, [convinced](#) Trump not to pull out of Syria, and [pleaded](#) with Biden not to withdraw from Afghanistan. Graham [knew](#) withdrawals create vacuums that our enemies seize to threaten the homeland.
- **He refused to let Obama and Biden get away with their failures.** Sen. Graham was front and center in [investigating](#) disasters like the Benghazi attack and Afghanistan withdrawal, demanding answers and exposing mistakes so they wouldn't be repeated.

Senator Graham Led the Fight for a Strong National Defense

- **Senator Graham defended the President's powers to use force abroad to protect Americans at home.** He [resisted](#) unconstitutional efforts to stop the commander-in-chief from responding to crises and saving lives. He [knew](#) Congress' role is authorizing, funding, and overseeing military operations—not approving them.

- **He fought Obama's defense cuts and delivered military investments.** Senator Graham warned cuts would erode military readiness and modernization as adversaries rearmed. He repeatedly helped [secure](#) tens of billions of dollars for the military.
- **He championed missile defense and nuclear deterrence.** As Budget Committee Chair, he [pushed](#) policies to strengthen homeland air and missile defense, [shipbuilding](#), nuclear modernization, and more while opposing weak [agreements](#) like New START.
- **Senator Graham backed Taiwan's stand against China,** pushing initiatives like the [Taiwan Policy Act](#), which proposed \$4.5 billion in security aid, stronger official ties, preferential treatment for arms transfers, and severe sanctions on the CCP.

Senator Graham Fought to Secure America's Borders

- **He ensured the Trump Administration had funding to stop illegal immigration** and reverse Biden's open-border disaster. As Budget Committee Chair, he [ushered](#) the most comprehensive border security package in U.S. history into law.
- **He brought us closer than ever to ending sanctuary cities,** [securing](#) a vote on legislation penalizing officials who obstruct immigration enforcement. He knew that sanctuary cities were the primary cause of ugly clashes in the streets—not DHS and ICE.
- **He exposed Biden's open borders as a security nightmare,** slamming him for letting terrorists enter the country and “obliterating” border security. He also called out Democrats in Congress for abetting the mess—then whining when Trump cleaned it up.
- When Chuck Schumer and Senate Democrats shut down the Department of Homeland Security, **Senator Graham refused to let them hold Border Patrol and ICE hostage,** [bypassing](#) them with a \$70 billion funding bill to [override](#) their opposition.

Senator Graham Advanced Peace in the Middle East

- **He was Israel's greatest ally in the U.S. Senate**—and never wavered in his support. Senator Graham [championed](#) military funding for Israel's self-defense, [built](#) momentum for [recognizing](#) Israel's sovereignty, and led countless initiatives to help the Jewish state.
- **He led the charge on expanding the Abraham Accords.** Working with the Trump Administration, Senator Graham [brought](#) Saudi Arabia's participation—which would rank among the most consequential achievements of our time—within reach.
- **He exposed Obama and Biden's appeasement toward Iran,** [co-authoring](#) legislation that blocked sanctions relief. He [exposed](#) Obama and Biden for enriching the regime, failing to stop its nuclear program, and setting the conditions for October 7.
- **He understood the true nature of Iran's war:** a religious conflict led by terrorists determined to bring “Death to America.” Senator Graham [knew](#) that only military force could stop the regime from getting a nuclear weapon and [protect](#) Americans.
- **Senator Graham was Congress' most outspoken supporter of Trump's campaign against Iran.** He also [stood](#) fearlessly with the Iranian people in their pursuit of freedom, leading them to affectionately [call](#) him “Uncle Lindsey.”

Senator Graham Refused to Surrender Ukraine

- **Senator Graham saw the Russian threat long before most of Washington.** After Moscow invaded Georgia in 2008 and seized Crimea in 2014, he [pushed](#) to arm Ukraine, reinforce NATO, and [expand](#) sanctions to deter Putin from invading Ukraine.
- **He was Ukraine's fiercest conservative champion** after Russia's invasion. Senator Graham traveled to the front lines, lobbied his colleagues to support Ukraine's fight, and [pressed](#) Biden to provide the weapons needed to defeat Russia's forces.
- **Senator Graham pushed for an end to the war by pressuring Putin**, including with measures [calling](#) for war-crimes investigations and Russia's [designation](#) as a state sponsor of terrorism if it refused to release thousands of kidnapped Ukrainian children.
- **His final foreign policy mission targeted the money financing Putin's war.** Senator Graham [built](#) a historic 85-senator coalition behind secondary sanctions and tariffs on countries buying Russian energy. Just before his death, he [secured](#) the Trump Administration's [support](#) for the package—and Congress is now moving it forward.

Senator Graham Knew American Leadership Abroad Protects Americans at Home

- **He rejected the false choice between putting America first and leading the free world.** He believed America's first responsibility was protecting its own people—but saw that retreating overseas would only invite greater dangers at home.
- **He understood U.S. engagement abroad prevents costly entanglements.** Senator Graham knew deterring aggression before it spread was far cheaper than asking future generations of Americans to fight and die in disastrous conflicts later.
- **Senator Graham saw generosity as a strategic advantage.** He [defended](#) humanitarian help, global health programs, and targeted foreign assistance as tools to strengthen partners, counter adversaries, stabilize conflict zones, and build goodwill.
- **He never lost faith in America's ability to be a force for good.** Graham [stood](#) with freedom movements [against](#) dictators from Eastern Europe to Latin America because he knew America's support made our nation and the world safer.

Critics often dismissed Senator Graham as a “war hawk,” but history will remember him as a fierce defender of freedom and one of the most consequential national security leaders ever to serve in Congress. Like Ronald Reagan, he knew military strength preserves peace, alliances prevent wars, and America's leadership brings security to our nation and the world. He spent his final hours fighting for those convictions, determined to leave America safer than he found it. His life reminds us that peace is never inherited—it is secured by those willing to defend it.