

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 28, 2021

The Honorable Christopher A. Coons
Chairman
Senate Appropriations Committee
Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations
and Related Programs
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Lindsey Graham
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Committee
Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations
and Related Programs
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Coons and Ranking Member Graham,

We appreciate increased support in recent years for the Non-proliferation, Anti-terrorism, Demining, and Related Programs account, Conventional Weapons Destruction (NADR-CWD) subaccount. However, additional resources are needed, and we are concerned about allocations to country-specific landmine and cluster munition clearance programs. Flat levels of support will delay progress of life-saving demining and ordnance clearance programs for which U.S. support remains critical. Reducing support for addressing U.S. legacy ordnance in Laos, Vietnam, and Cambodia contradicts the United States' responsibility to clear deployed ordnance, and curtailing U.S. assistance to other programs would leave impoverished communities vulnerable to the dire consequences of landmines.

For the FY22 appropriation, we respectfully request that you consider including the following language in the appropriations bill or report:

The Committee supports \$262.85 million for Conventional Weapons Destruction programs, including humanitarian demining, and encourages country allocations at the following levels:

- Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia allocated \$75,000,000 for Conventional Weapons Destruction programs
- Sri Lanka allocated \$10,000,000 for Conventional Weapons Destruction programs
- Angola allocated \$10,000,000 for Conventional Weapons Destruction programs
- Zimbabwe allocated \$2,500,000 for Conventional Weapons Destruction programs
- Afghanistan allocated \$30,000,000 for Conventional Weapons Destruction programs
- Nagorno Karabakh allocated \$2,000,000 for Conventional Weapons Destruction programs

Laos, Vietnam, and Cambodia remain heavily impacted by U.S. cluster bomblets and other explosive hazards. Laos is considered the most heavily bombed country in history, suffering an estimated 50,000 casualties from explosive remnants of war. Cambodia, which contains additional significant landmine contamination has suffered over 64,000 casualties from explosive hazards since 1979. In Vietnam, at least 105,000 casualties from explosive threats have been recorded. More resources are needed to remove these deadly items, demonstrate continued resolve to removing U.S. legacy ordnance, and strengthen diplomatic relations. An appropriation

of \$75 million in FY22 would expedite ongoing clearance efforts and demonstrate positive U.S. leadership in the region.

Sri Lanka's decades-long civil war ended in 2009. U.S. funding was crucial in jumpstarting and continuing a demining capacity that allowed more than 200,000 displaced people to return home and rebuild schools, hospitals, roads, and railways. Thousands of people await clearance so that they can return to their land. An allocation of \$10 million is needed to keep Sri Lanka on track to be landmine impact free in the near future, a remarkable accomplishment for a country so recently at war.

When Angola's Civil War ended in 2002, it was the most mined country in sub-Saharan Africa. It is estimated that over 80,000 civilians have been injured or killed by mines since 1975. U.S. assistance has directly cleared over 800 minefields and destroyed nearly 100,000 landmines since Angola's demining effort began in the 1990s. In FY22, funding for demining at a level of \$10 million is essential to saving the lives of its most impoverished people and supporting conservation-development efforts near the headwaters of the Okavango Delta.

Zimbabwe is one of the most highly-mined countries in the world. The former Rhodesian military laid unusually dense, unfenced minefields along the border with Mozambique and Zambia. Today, these minefields separate communities from hospitals and schools, devastate local livestock, and block access to valuable water sources. U.S. funding at a level of \$4 million is critical to supporting a nation-wide demining program that clears tens of thousands of mines per year and is on track to achieve mine-free status in the near future.

In Afghanistan, the demining sector has the capacity to support security through clearing massive amounts of landmine and other explosive contamination that pose a danger to civilians, aid workers, remaining U.S. and coalition forces and personnel, and the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF). With \$30 million, the demining sector can also support stability by supporting reintegration efforts. By employing former-Afghan local police and demobilized ex-combatants as deminers, as the sector has successfully done in the past, the sector can remove incentives for people to return to the fight.

The recent conflict in Nagorno Karabakh resulted in enormous levels of contamination by cluster munitions, rockets, and other explosive ordnance. These hazards are still present near homes, and litter farms and streets – presenting a grave humanitarian risk. Further, the removal of explosives is critical to continuing to rebuild infrastructure decimated during the conflict. U.S. funding for demining in Nagorno Karabakh ended in March 2020 and no funding is currently planned. An allocation of \$2 million in FY22 will allow ordnance removal efforts activities to scale up and ensure families can return to their livelihoods without fear of explosive threats.

Continued U.S. leadership in demining will promote effective and efficient programs that save lives, promote economic development, facilitate stability, and expand American influence.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.


Sincerely,



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



Todd Young
United States Senator



Christopher S. Murphy
United States Senator



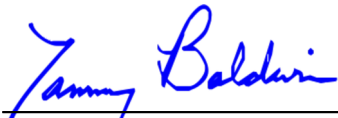
Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator



Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator



Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator



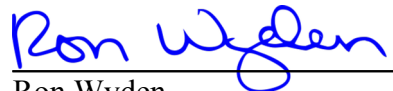
Tammy Baldwin
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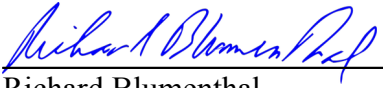
Tina Smith
United States Senator



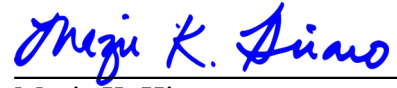
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United States Senator



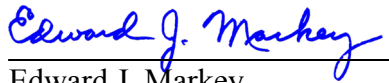
Ron Wyden
United States Senator



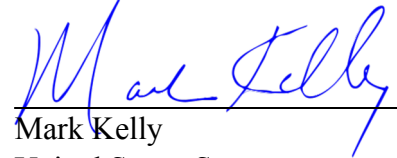
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United States Senator



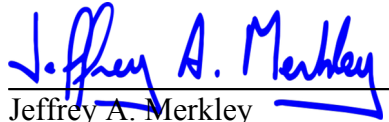
Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator



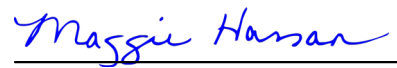
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Mark Kelly
United States Senator



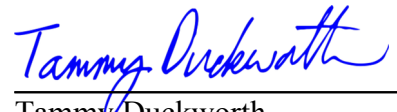
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Margaret Wood Hassan
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Sherrod Brown
United States Senator



Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator



Maria Cantwell
United States Senator



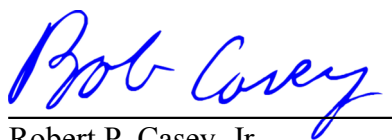
Alex Padilla
United States Senator



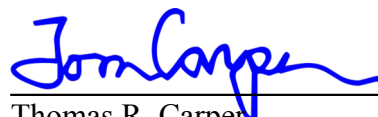
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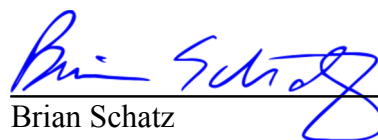
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