

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

December 1, 2022

The Honorable Christopher Coons  
Chairman  
Senate Committee on Appropriations  
Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations  
and Related Programs  
SD-127  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Barbara Lee  
Chairwoman  
House Committee on Appropriations  
Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations  
and Related Programs  
RH-2470  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Lindsey Graham  
Ranking Member  
Senate Committee on Appropriations  
Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations,  
and Related Programs  
SD-190  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Hal Rogers  
Ranking Member  
House Committee on Appropriations  
Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations,  
and Related Programs  
RH-2406  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairs Coons and Lee and Ranking Members Graham and Rogers,

Thank you for your strong support of the State Department's Conventional Weapons Destruction (CWD) program in the House and Senate FY23 appropriations reports. As you know, this account funds humanitarian demining programs responsible for the removal of approximately 100,000 landmines, improvised explosive devices (IEDs), and other items of unexploded ordnance each year, and improves the security of government-held weapons and ammunition stockpiles in countries worldwide.

CWD programs prevent casualties, promote economic development, allow safe access for other forms of humanitarian aid, enable the return of displaced families, remove hazards that could harm U.S. troops, bolster stability, and ensure the U.S. removes its legacy ordnance. These programs are also popular with local communities, in addition to regional and national governments worldwide, bolstering the U.S. image abroad and countering the influence of our adversaries. CWD programs also keep weapons – such as man-portable air defense systems – out of the hands of terrorist organizations and armed criminal actors that could otherwise fuel violence, thereby threatening U.S. national security.

## CWD Overall Funding

Given the positive impact of these programs worldwide we are pleased to see both the House and Senate include increased support for the CWD account in this year's budget, with the chambers proposing \$264.603 million and \$268.35 million respectively. However, given the scope of funding needs globally, it is essential that these programs are provided with the strongest possible level of support.

For this reason, we respectfully ask that you include the following language in the final FY23 appropriations report: ***The Committee supports \$290 million for Conventional Weapons Destruction programs.***

#### Ukraine

Ukraine already contained significant landmine and explosive contamination in the eastern region before the current conflict. Now, the country is awash in explosive hazards that are contributing to casualty figures, preventing reconstruction, and keeping large swaths of agricultural land out of productive use. Increased funding is urgently needed to enable the elimination of these deadly devices as soon as possible.

For this reason, we respectfully ask that you include the following language in the final FY23 appropriations report: ***The recommendation also includes additional funds above the prior year level for increased demining activities in Ukraine.***

#### Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia

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 \$80 million in FY23, with \$50 million for Laos would expedite ongoing clearance efforts and demonstrate positive U.S. leadership in the region.

For this reason, we respectfully ask that you include the following allocation in the final FY23 appropriations report, as is proposed by the House: ***Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia allocated \$80,000,000 for Conventional Weapons Destruction programs (\$50,000,000 for Laos).***

#### Sri Lanka

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.

For this reason, we respectfully ask that you include the following allocation in the final FY23 appropriations report, as proposed by the House: ***Sri Lanka allocated \$10,000,000 for Conventional Weapons Destruction programs.***

### Angola

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 FY23, 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.

For this reason, we respectfully ask that you include the following allocation in the final FY23 appropriations report, as proposed by the House: ***Angola allocated \$10,000,000 for Conventional Weapons Destruction programs.***

### Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe is one of the more 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.

For this reason, we respectfully ask that you include the following language in the final FY23 appropriations report, as proposed by the House: ***Zimbabwe allocated \$4,000,000 for Conventional Weapons Destruction programs***

### Afghanistan

Afghanistan contains extremely high levels of explosive contamination, exacerbated by the recent fighting. Landmines, UXO, and, notably, improvised explosive devices (IEDs) all pose a significant threat to communities as they return to their livelihoods. An allocation of \$30 million, including \$5 million to support IED clearance, will help eliminate these deadly hazards, support security, and provide safe access for other forms of humanitarian relief.

For this reason, we respectfully ask that you include the following language in the final FY23 appropriations report, as proposed by the House: ***Afghanistan allocated \$30,000,000 for Conventional Weapons Destruction programs (of this, \$5,000,000 to be focused on improvised explosive device (IED) clearance).***

### Nagorno Karabakh

The 2020 conflict in Nagorno Karabakh resulted in heightened levels of contamination by cluster munitions 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 rebuilding infrastructure damaged during the conflict. An allocation of \$2 million in FY23 will allow ordnance removal efforts activities to continue and ensure families can return to their livelihoods without fear of explosive threats.

We are grateful that both the House and Senate included \$2 million in support for demining in Nagorno Karabakh in their respective appropriations reports and ask that the final FY23 omnibus include the House-proposed language: ***The Committee recommendation also includes not less than \$2,000,000 for demining activities in Nagorno-Karabakh.***

Continued U.S. leadership in demining will promote effective and efficient programs that save lives, promote economic development, facilitate stability, and expand American influence. We appreciate your consideration in mobilizing additional resources for these important programs.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



Chris Van Hollen  
United States Senator



Tammy Baldwin  
United States Senator



Sherrod Brown  
United States Senator



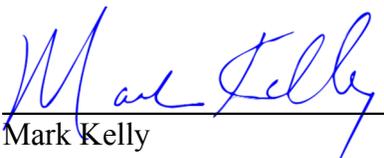
Robert P. Casey, Jr.  
United States Senator

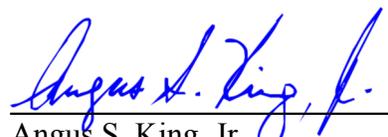


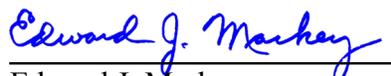
Dianne Feinstein  
United States Senator



Mazie K. Hirono  
United States Senator

  
Mark Kelly  
United States Senator

  
Angus S. King, Jr.  
United States Senator

  
Edward J. Markey  
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Christopher S. Murphy  
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Gary C. Peters  
United States Senator

  
Bernard Sanders  
United States Senator

  
Tina Smith  
United States Senator

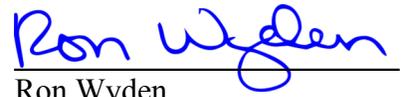
  
Debbie Stabenow  
United States Senator

  
Mark R. Warner  
United States Senator



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Elizabeth Warren  
United States Senator



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Ron Wyden  
United States Senator