

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 29, 2021

The Honorable Betty McCollum
Chair
House Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Defense
H-405 Capitol Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Ken Calvert
Ranking Member
House Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Defense
2269 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chair McCollum and Ranking Member Calvert:

We write to respectfully request your continued support for the U.S. Department of Defense's (DOD) Humanitarian Demining Research and Development (HD R&D) Program, implemented by the U.S. Army. The HD R&D Program specializes in developing and testing innovative technologies to detect and clear landmines, unexploded ordnance (UXO), and improvised explosive devices (IEDs). These technologies increase the effectiveness, efficiency, and safety of demining operations for military and humanitarian use – saving lives and taxpayer dollars.

The HD R&D team designs technologies to respond to technical challenges in the field, drawing from new commercial technology, equipment currently in use by the DOD, and advanced sensor technology available only through other DOD R&D programs. They then trial prototypes in real field conditions through partnerships with the Department of State's (DOS) humanitarian demining programs. During field evaluations, operators provide feedback on the functionality and effectiveness of the equipment. This allows HD R&D to modify and improve the equipment and increase the U.S. technical capacity to respond to explosive threats.

HD R&D produces three specific outcomes. First, the field evaluation cycle collects enormous amounts of data helping to improve detection technologies used by our soldiers. Second, successfully trialed equipment is used to train and equip explosive disposal units of allied militaries. By equipping partner militaries to handle their own explosive threats, U.S. soldiers are more likely to remain out of harm's way. Third, HD R&D equipment amplifies taxpayer value for money by increasing the amount of clearance performed on DOS projects without increasing costs.

The HD R&D Program has a track record of success, having performed nearly 240 operational field evaluations in 43 countries since 1995. The program is responsible for developing advanced technology for the Handheld Standoff Mine Detection System, which combines metal detection with ground penetrating radar, the rotary mine comb, designed to efficiently excavate low metal content anti-vehicle mines, and TRAXX, built to cut through hard-to-see tripwires and lift mines

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from soil. Overall, HD R&D equipment has been used to clear more than 19,000 acres of land, and to destroy more than 226,000 mines and UXO.

As you know, HD R&D receives funding from **Research, Development, Test & Evaluation, Army / Program Element 0603920A.**

Due to strong bipartisan support, the program received \$17 million in Fiscal Year 2021. However, this program has a long list of unfunded projects it is waiting to trial, including anti-tank mine detection equipment in Afghanistan and magnetic technology in Iraq. Further, this program moved under Army Futures Command in the past year and will now be subject to an Army tax this year that will cut into its program budget, unless this new expense is offset through a higher appropriation this year.

We urge the committee to support funding at a level of \$19 million in Fiscal Year 2022 for HD R&D. This additional funding will improve the ability of U.S. soldiers and our allies' ability to safely detect and clear landmines, UXO, and IEDs. This funding is especially important as new conflicts uncover new threats in areas like the Middle East, Libya, and Ukraine.

We appreciate your consideration and look forward to working with you throughout the appropriations process to save many military and civilian lives.

Sincerely,



JIMMY PANETTA
Member of Congress



Eric A. "Rick" Crawford
Member of Congress

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Stephen F. Lynch
Member of Congress

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Gregorio Kilili Camacho
Sablan

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Ruben Gallego
Member of Congress

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Madeline Dean
Member of Congress

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Member of Congress

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Jesus G. "Chuy" Garcia
Member of Congress

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Marilyn Strickland
Member of Congress

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Cheri Bustos
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Dean Phillips
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Rashida Tlaib
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Member of Congress

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Debbie Dingell
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Jim Costa
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Abigail D. Spanberger
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Peter Welch
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Anthony G. Brown
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