



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515

September 25, 2023

The Honorable Christopher Coons
Chairman
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations
and Related Programs
SR-218
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mario Diaz-Balart
Chairman
House Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations
and Related Programs
CH-374
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Lindsey Graham
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations,
and Related Programs
SR-211
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Barbara Lee
Ranking Member
House Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations,
and Related Programs
RH-2470
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairmen Coons and Diaz-Balart and Ranking Members Graham and Lee,

Thank you for your strong support of the State Department's Conventional Weapons Destruction (CWD) program in the House and Senate FY24 SFOPS appropriations reports. As you know, this account funds humanitarian demining programs responsible for the removal of approximately 250,000 landmines, improvised explosive devices (IEDs), and other items of unexploded ordnance each year, and improves the security of government-held weapons and ammunition stockpiles globally.

In approximately 50 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, thereby 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 Account

Given the positive impact of these programs, we are pleased to see both the House and Senate include strong support for the CWD account in this year's budget. The Senate maintained the FY23 allocation to this account at \$264.103 million, and the House included a modest increase to \$271.703 million.

Given global need, 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 FY24 appropriations report: **The Committee supports \$271.703 million for Conventional Weapons Destruction programs.**

Demining in Southeast Asia

Laos, Vietnam, and Cambodia remain heavily impacted by U.S.-origin cluster bomblets from the Vietnam War, as well as 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.

The House included \$80 million in its FY24 budget draft for CWD activities in Laos, Vietnam, and Cambodia, while the Senate included \$73 million, matching the FY23 allocation, as well as language recommending funding for humanitarian demining activities in Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam at levels not less than the prior fiscal year.

Increased funding in the next fiscal year would expedite ongoing clearance efforts and demonstrate positive U.S. leadership in the region. This regional allocation would also provide the State Department the flexibility to spend this funding to achieve maximum impact.

For this reason, we respectfully ask that you include the following allocation in the final FY24 appropriations report, as proposed by the House: **Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia allocated \$80,000,000 for Conventional Weapons Destruction programs.**

It is essential that this regional allocation comes with an increase to the CWD topline to \$271 million, as outlined above, so that funding does not directly trade off with other global demining programs funded by this account.

Demining in Ukraine

The Ukrainian Government has estimated that 43 million acres of land contain landmines and other explosive contamination, including 1.2 million acres of farmland. There have already been more than 1,000 civilian casualties in Ukraine from explosive hazards. These deadly threats, including cluster munitions of US origin, threaten innocent men, women, and children returning

home to liberated areas, prevent reconstruction in areas where families are desperately seeking to regain their livelihoods.

The Senate FY24 report does not include a specific allocation for CWD activities in Ukraine, while the House report recommends continued funding for Ukraine. The FY24 State Department Congressional Budget Justification includes only \$8 million for CWD activities in Ukraine – less than was allocated for this work in FY21, FY20, or FY19.

In August 2023, the Administration requested \$94 million for the Nonproliferation, Anti-terrorism, Demining and Related (NADR) Programs account, used “primarily to sustain urgent demining activities.” As stated in the request, “As Ukrainian forces continue to liberate territory, continued U.S. assistance to train and equip Ukrainian government deminers and augment their capacity by deploying contractor and non-governmental organization demining teams remains critical.”

This funding is desperately needed, but we must ensure that there continues to be a strong track record of accountability for these resources and encourage the Committee to request regular information from the State Department to ensure the continued proper use and monitor the impact of these resources.

Due to the unprecedented and ongoing need for demining in Ukraine, **we request that you include the requested \$94 million for NADR, primarily for demining, in a supplemental funding bill or in the final FY24 explanatory report.**

If funds are included directly within the CWD account, the topline must also be raised to ensure that funds don’t directly trade off with critical demining programs elsewhere.

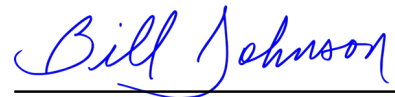
Given the measurable and long-term benefits of CWD programs worldwide, we hope to see greater support for these efforts to create a more secure world for Americans and those living in areas impacted by conflict.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



Chrissy Houlahan
Member of Congress



Bill Johnson
Member of Congress



Gwen S. Moore
Member of Congress



Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress



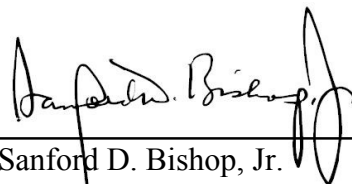
Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress



Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress



Dina Titus
Member of Congress



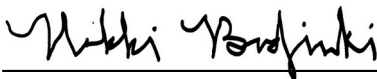
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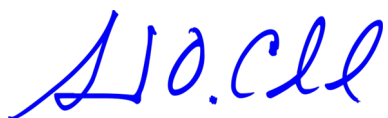
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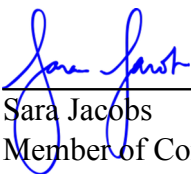
Adam B. Schiff
Member of Congress



Bradley Scott Schneider
Member of Congress



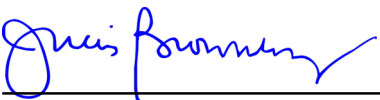
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