June 4, 2025

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Chairman
Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Chris Coons
Ranking Member
Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman McConnell and Ranking Member Coons,

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 generates three specific lines of effort. 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 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 over 290 operational field evaluations in 44 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. It has saved one implementing partner roughly $52 million since 2007 due to the efficiencies created and approximately $4.3 million in 2024 alone. The use of the TRAXX/T800, built to cut through hard-to-see tripwires and lift mines from soil saved an implementing partner more than $3.6 million in efficiencies in Ukraine in 2024 – completing in 1,522 workdays what would have taken 11,537 days with traditional equipment. Overall, HD
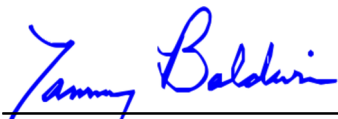
R&D equipment has been used to clear more than 27,675 acres of land, and to destroy more than 420,000 mines and UXO.

Due to strong bipartisan support, Congress provided $23.068 million for the Army HD R&D Program (Program Element 0603920A) in Fiscal Year 2024, which the program will also receive during the current fiscal year in accordance with the Fiscal Year 2025 Continuing Resolution. The Senate Defense Appropriations Subcommittee also allocated $23.272 million in their original Fiscal Year 2025 Report. However, this program has a long list of unfunded projects, including long-distance drones with multispectral and Lidar sensors in Angola, specialized armored excavators for working on slopes in Cambodia, and Minelab GPZ7000 detectors in Sri Lanka. The HD R&D program also requires resources to address the heavy contamination and varied threat types across Ukraine, where the program is beginning to evaluate remote controlled systems for modified John Deere machines.

We urge the committee to support funding at a level of $27 million in Fiscal Year 2026 for HD R&D. This additional funding will improve the ability of U.S. soldiers and our allies to safely detect and clear landmines, UXO, and IEDs, as well as protect civilian lives. This funding is especially important as new conflicts uncover new threats in areas like Ukraine, the Middle East, and Libya.

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

<div align="center">Sincerely,</div>

Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator

Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator
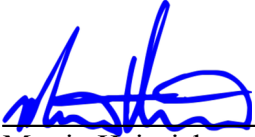
Catherine Cortez Masto
United States Senator

Tammy Duckworth
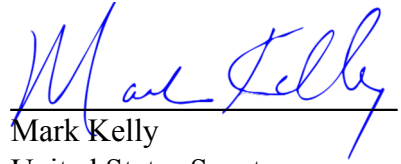United States Senator

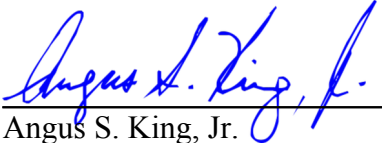Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator
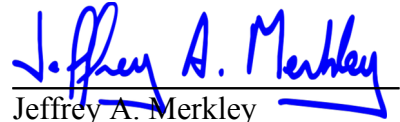
Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator

Martin Heinrich
United States Senator

Mark Kelly
United States Senator
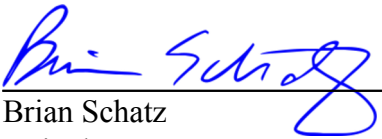
Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator

Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator

Alex Padilla
United States Senator

Bernard Sanders
United States Senator

Brian Schatz
United States Senator

Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator

Tina Smith
United States Senator

Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator

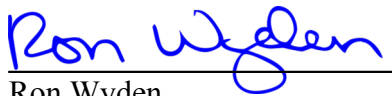Raphael Warnock
United States Senator

Elizabeth Warren
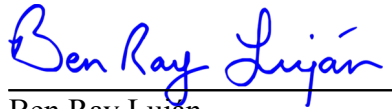United States Senator

Peter Welch
United States Senator

Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator

Ron Wyden
United States Senator

Angela Alsobrooks
United States Senator

Ben Ray Luján
United States Senator

Andy Kim
United States Senator

Cory A. Booker
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Jack Reed
United States Senator

Ruben Gallego
United States Senator

Christopher S. Murphy
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Gary C. Peters
United States Senator

Adam B. Schiff
United States Senator