

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

December 9, 2009

The President
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

As you prepare your Fiscal Year 2011 budget, we are writing to express our strong support for a robust International Affairs Budget. The critical programs funded in the International Affairs Budget invest in the tools of development and diplomacy, foster economic and political stability on a global scale, strengthen our allies, and fight the spread of poverty, disease, terrorism and weapons of mass destruction. These investments are essential to strengthening our national security, building economic prosperity, and protecting the health and safety of all Americans, while demonstrating our moral values and humanitarian principles.

National Security: National security and foreign policy experts across the political spectrum support an increase in the International Affairs Budget as an essential component of our national security. As Defense Secretary Robert Gates has stated, “It has become clear that America’s civilian institutions of diplomacy and development have been chronically undermanned and underfunded for far too long – relative to what we traditionally spend on the military, and more important, relative to the responsibilities and challenges our nation has around the world.”

Secretary Gates and other military leaders argue that our national security is dependent not only on a strong military force but also on increased investments in the full range of diplomatic, development and humanitarian tools funded through the International Affairs Budget. These investments improve our ability to track down terrorists and weapons, help reduce poverty and hunger, promote the security of key allies, and assist in the stabilization of fragile states that often provide quarter and safe haven to terrorists and others who seek to do us harm. A strengthened International Affairs Budget will also improve the capacity of the Department of State and associated agencies to partner with the military in pursuit of our national security objectives.

Economic Security: By helping to create new and stable global markets for American goods and services, international affairs programs create jobs at home and opportunities for economic expansion abroad for American companies. Our export promotion agencies and overseas missions advocate for U.S. commercial interests overseas and promote U.S. exports, which account for one out of every seven U.S. jobs. Additionally, programs funded in the international affairs budget foster the development of sound economic policies in poor countries, protect intellectual property rights, build vibrant trade relationships and encourage public-private partnerships.

Humanitarian Values and Human Security: Programs funded within the International Affairs Budget demonstrate America’s moral values and our compassion for those in need around the world. They also protect the health and safety of our own citizens by preventing the spread of infectious disease, conserving the natural environment, and reducing the flow of refugees and contraband. Americans, both through our government and through private organizations, have a proud history of bringing hope to millions of people who live under oppressive poverty, face starvation, battle HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases and suffer the consequences of conflict and insecurity. Strong support for these life-saving interventions helps leverage significant private contributions that together promote a healthier, more peaceful and stable world.

Even with small increases in recent years supported by both Democratic and Republican Administrations and Congresses, the International Affairs Budget totals less than 1.5% of the federal budget -- a level that is inadequate to respond to the challenges of the 21st century. That is why we urge you -- in addition to modernizing and enhancing the effectiveness of our foreign assistance programs -- to request a robust FY 2011 International Affairs Budget that will reflect the importance of diplomacy and development -- alongside defense -- as key pillars of our national security.

Sincerely,

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Chaka Fattal



Bill Pasarell Jr

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