March 26, 2019

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Minority Leader McCarthy, Majority Leader McConnell, and Minority Leader Schumer:

We write as retired three- and four-star flag and general officers from all branches of the U.S. Armed Forces to thank you for your leadership in recognizing that development and diplomacy are critical to keeping our country safe and prosperous and reflect our nation’s core values.

As military leaders, we have seen firsthand the threats posed by rising authoritarianism around the world and the importance of development and diplomacy to counter them. Alongside its expanded global military presence, China is expected to invest more than $1 trillion – seven times the size of the Marshall Plan – in its Belt and Road Initiative to increase its influence around the world. China has surpassed the U.S. as the leading trading partner for several Latin American countries, including Brazil – the continent’s largest economy -- and in sub-Saharan Africa, China is now the top exporter to 19 out of 48 countries.

America’s civilian agencies also keep us safe from the challenges of fragile states that are vulnerable to violent extremism, the spread of pandemics like Ebola, instability, and mass migration. As we have seen from Venezuela to Yemen, these challenges cannot be solved by military force alone. They will require strategic investments in development and diplomacy to tackle the root causes of conflict in order to succeed for the long term. And these investments are cost effective: for every $1 spent on conflict prevention, we save $16 in response costs and avoid sending our troops into harm’s way.

We urge you, once again, to defend critical resources for the International Affairs Budget. The State Department, USAID and our other development agencies are more important than ever in advancing our nation’s interests and values.

In these turbulent times, America must not stand down from the challenges ahead of us.

cc: Members of the U.S. Senate of the 116th Congress
Members of the U.S. House of Representatives of the 116th Congress
General Keith B. Alexander, USA (Ret.)
Director, National Security Agency ('05-'14); Commander, U.S. Cyber Command ('10-'14)

Admiral Thad W. Allen, USCG (Ret.)
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General Arthur E. Brown, Jr., USA (Ret.)
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Vice Admiral Michael Bucchi, USN (Ret.)
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Associate Director of Central Intelligence for Military Support, Central Intelligence Agency ('00-'03)
General Bruce A. Carlson, USAF (Ret.)
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General George W. Casey, Jr., USA (Ret.)
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Commander, Allied Air Forces Central Europe ('95-'96)
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Lt. General Mark P. Hertling, USA (Ret.)
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Lt. General Walter S. Hogle, USAF (Ret.)
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Lt. General William L. Nyland, USMC (Ret.)
Assistant Commandant, U.S. Marine Corps ('02–'05)

General Raymond T. Odierno, USA (Ret.)
Chief of Staff, U.S. Army ('11-'15)

Admiral Eric T. Olson, USN (Ret.)
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Commanding General II MEF ('02-'04)

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Commander, Coalition Forces in Afghanistan ('10-'11) and Iraq ('07-'08)

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Deputy Chief of Staff, Capability Development at NATO Allied Command Transformation ('10-'13)

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Commander, Joint Task Force - Global Network Operations
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Commander in Chief, ROK/U.S. Combined Forces Command
Commander, U.S. Forces Korea ('92-'93)

Vice Admiral Ronald Route, USN (Ret.)
Naval Inspector General ('04-'07)

Lt. General Bennet S. Sacolick, USA (Ret.)
Director for Strategic Planning, National Counterterrorism Center ('14-'16)

Lt. General Norman Seip, USAF (Ret.)
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Commander in Chief, Allied Forces Southern Europe ('94-'96)
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