

September 13, 2023

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate

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

We write to thank you for your leadership and actions to protect our country's national security and economic interests.

As leaders who served at the highest levels of the military across the globe and operated in the Indo-Pacific during the course of our careers, we have seen on the frontlines how U.S. civilian diplomacy and development tools are central to a comprehensive American strategy to compete with China and protect U.S. national security interests.

As a nation, we are approaching a critical juncture in our strategic competition with the PRC – one we have seen play out first-hand not only in the Indo-Pacific, but across the globe. China continues to expand its global footprint, using a combination of soft and hard power tools to advance its national interests. The PRC is doing so in an aggressive manner that is not only threatening to our allies and partners, but detrimental to our strategic interests.

In March, the PRC's Foreign Minister stated that his country has "pressed the acceleration button" on their own diplomatic engagement strategy around the world. Simultaneously, it's no coincidence that Beijing has sharply increased its diplomacy and development budget as it seeks to broaden its influence. According to the Lowy Institute, the PRC already overtook America's global diplomatic footprint back in 2020 with more embassies and consulates around the world – a concerning development that, if left unchecked, puts America on the back foot as we compete for influence globally.

While serving in uniform, we were proud to work hand in glove with our nation's diplomacy and development agencies around the world. Whether in Africa, Latin America, or beyond, the State Department, USAID, the U.S. Development Finance Corporation, and other development agencies are the tip of the spear when it comes to reducing conflict, fighting hunger, eradicating disease, and advancing U.S. security and economic interests. These platforms are critical for providing a credible American alternative to the PRC's development deals and are essential to protecting the nation we swore to defend.

Shortchanging our nation's diplomacy and development tools would be a self-inflicted wound for protecting U.S. national security interests, and we urge you to support robust funding for development and diplomatic tools in the Fiscal Year 2024 International Affairs Budget. These investments are critical for America's national security and economic well-being.

Thank you for your consideration and leadership at this critical time for our nation.

Sincerely,

General Anthony C. Zinni, USMC (Ret.); Co-Chair, USGLC National Security Advisory Council

Admiral James G. Stavridis, USN (Ret.); Co-Chair, USGLC National Security Advisory Council

Admiral Thad W. Allen, USCG (Ret.)

General John R. Allen, USMC (Ret.)

Lt. General Edward G. Anderson III, USA (Ret.)

Lt. General Thomas L. Baptiste, USAF (Ret.)

Lt. General Brooks L. Bash, USAF (Ret.)

Lt. General Brian D. Beaudreault, USMC (Ret.)

Lt. General John M. Bednarek, USA (Ret.)

Lt. General Ronald R. Blanck, USA (Ret.)

Lt. General Steven W. Boutelle, USA (Ret.)

Vice Admiral William A. Brown, USN (Ret.)

General Arthur E. Brown Jr., USA (Ret.)

Vice Admiral Michael Bucchi, USN (Ret.)

Lt. General Jeffrey S. Buchanan, USA (Ret.)

General Bruce A. Carlson, USAF (Ret.)

General George W. Casey Jr., USA (Ret.)

Lt. General Robert L. Caslen, USA (Ret.)

Lt. General John G. Castellaw, USMC (Ret.)

General Peter W. Chiarelli, USA (Ret.)

Lt. General Charles G. Chiarotti, USMC (Ret.)

Lt. General George R. Christmas, USMC (Ret.)

General Wesley K. Clark, USA (Ret.)

General Richard A. Cody, USA (Ret.)

General John D.W. Corley, USAF (Ret.)

Vice Admiral Philip Hart Cullom, USN (Ret.)

General Terrence R. Dake, USMC (Ret.)

Lt. General David A. Deptula, USAF (Ret.)

Vice Admiral David J. Dorsett, USN (Ret.)

Lt. General James Dubik, USA (Ret.)

Vice Admiral Joseph W. Dyer, USN (Ret.)

General Ralph E. Eberhart, USAF (Ret.)

Lt. General Kenneth E. Eickmann, USAF (Ret.)

Admiral James O. Ellis Jr., USN (Ret.)

Admiral William J. Fallon, USN (Ret.)

Admiral Thomas B. Fargo, USN (Ret.)

Lt. General Vern M. Findley, USAF (Ret.)

Admiral Mark P. Fitzgerald, USN (Ret.)

General Ronald R. Fogleman, USAF (Ret.)

Vice Admiral Michael T. Franken, USN (Ret.)

General Douglas M. Fraser, USAF (Ret.)

Lt. General Benjamin C. Freakley, USA (Ret.)

Lt. General Robert G. Gard, USA (Ret.)

Admiral Edmund P. Giambastiani Jr., USN (Ret.)

Lt. General John Goodman, USMC (Ret.)

Lt. General Arthur J. Gregg, USA (Ret.)

Lt. General Wallace C. Gregson, USMC (Ret.)
General Michael W. Hagee, USMC (Ret.)
Lt. General Franklin L. Hagenbeck, USA (Ret.)
Lt. General Earl B. Hailston, USMC (Ret.)
Lt. General Michael A. Hamel, USAF (Ret.)
General John W. Handy, USAF (Ret.)
Lt. General Russell J. Handy, USAF (Ret.)
General Richard E. Hawley, USAF (Ret.)
General Michael V. Hayden, USAF (Ret.)
Lt. General Mark P. Hertling, USA (Ret.)
General James T. Hill, USA (Ret.)
Lt. General Ben Hodges, USA (Ret.)
General James L. Jamerson, USAF (Ret.)
Lt. General Thomas S. James Jr., USA (Ret.)
Lt. General Jan-Marc Jouas, USAF (Ret.)
Lt. General Richard L. Kelly, USMC (Ret.)
Lt. General Claudia J. Kennedy, USA (Ret.)
Lt. General Donald L. Kerrick, USA (Ret.)
General Ronald E. Keys, USAF (Ret.)
Lt. General Frank J. Kisner, USAF (Ret.)
Vice Admiral Albert H. Konetzni Jr., USN (Ret.)
General Charles C. Krulak, USMC (Ret.)
Vice Admiral Mike LeFever, USN (Ret.)
Lt. General Frank Libutti, USMC (Ret.)

Admiral Samuel J. Locklear, USN (Ret.)

Admiral James M. Loy, USCG (Ret.)

Lt. General Raymond V. Mason, USA (Ret.)

Vice Admiral Michael F. McAllister, USCG (Ret.)

Vice Admiral Justin D. McCarthy, USN (Ret.)

Lt. General Frederick McCorkle, USMC (Ret.)

General Dan McNeill, USA (Ret.)

Lt. General Paul T. Mikolashek, USA (Ret.)

Vice Admiral J. Kevin Moran, USN (Ret.)

Lt. General John W. Morgan III, USA (Ret.)

Lt. General John F. Mulholland, USA (Ret.)

Admiral Robert J. Natter, USN (Ret.)

General Robert B. Neller, USMC (Ret.)

Lt. General Lawrence D. Nicholson, USMC (Ret.)

General William L. Nyland, USMC (Ret.)

Lt. General Tad J. Oelstrom, USAF (Ret.)

Admiral Eric T. Olson, USN (Ret.)

Vice Admiral Carol M. Pottenger, USN (Ret.)

Lt. General John F. Regni, USAF (Ret.)

General Victor E. Renuart, USAF (Ret.)

Lt. General Randall L. Rigby, USA (Ret.)

General Robert W. RisCassi, USA (Ret.)

General David M. Rodriguez, USA (Ret.)

Admiral Michael S. Rogers, USN (Ret.)

Lt. General Robert Schmidle, USMC (Ret.)
Lt. General James N. Soligan, USAF (Ret.)
General Larry O. Spencer, USAF (Ret.)
Lt. General Martin R. Steele, USMC (Ret.)
Vice Admiral William D. Sullivan, USN (Ret.)
Lt. General Jon T. Thomas, USAF (Ret.)
Lt. General John C. Thomson III, USA (Ret.)
General James D. Thurman, USA (Ret.)
General Stephen J. Townsend, USA (Ret.)
Vice Admiral Nora Tyson, USN (Ret.)
General Charles F. Wald, USAF (Ret.)
General William S. Wallace, USA (Ret.)
Lt. General William E. Ward, USA (Ret.)
Lt. General William Welser III, USAF (Ret.)
General Charles E. Wilhelm, USMC (Ret.)
General Johnnie E. Wilson, USA (Ret.)