

The Road to a Safer, Stronger, and More Prosperous America

Addendum to USGLC's Blueprint for America to Win in the World

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The Case for Strategic International Assistance

In today's era of great power competition, global instability, and transnational threats, America's safety, strength, and prosperity require more than just military might alone. Strategic investments in international assistance are vital foreign policy tools that work to prevent crises, counter adversaries, and build strong economic and security partnerships that help Americans win around the world.

By prioritizing smart, targeted investments in development and diplomacy abroad, we:

- Prevent instability before it reaches U.S. borders
- Compete effectively with China and other rivals
- Protect supply chains, public health, and critical mineral access
- Build long-term global partnerships aligned with U.S. values

The following addendum complements USGLC's "[A Blueprint for America to Win in the World](#)" with additional practical policy recommendations that Congress and the Trump Administration can implement to ensure U.S. international assistance delivers for the American people and makes our nation safer, stronger, and more prosperous.

The addendum was contributed to by retired military leaders, national security experts, and Republican and Democratic policymakers, including:

1. **Hon. Steve Benjamin**, Former Mayor, *Columbia, SC*; Former Senior Advisor to the President for Public Engagement
2. **Sean Callahan**, President & CEO, *Catholic Relief Services*
3. **Carrie Filipetti**, Executive Director, *The Vandenberg Coalition*
4. **Representative Lois Frankel** (D-FL)
5. **Julia Frifield**, Director, Communications, Policy & Advocacy, *Rockefeller Foundation*
6. **Vice Admiral Robert Harward**, U.S. Navy (Ret.)
7. **Representative Peter Meijer** (R-MI), Former
8. **Lt. General Richard Newton**, U.S. Air Force (Ret.)
9. **Gabriel Noronha**, President, *POLARIS National Security*
10. **General Laura Richardson**, U.S. Army (Ret.)
11. **Representative Peter Roskam** (R-IL), Former
12. **Dr. Bill Steiger**, Chief of Staff, *USAID* (2017-2021)
13. **Lt. General Jon "Ty" Thomas**, U.S. Air Force (Ret.)
14. **Hon. Andrea Thompson**, Undersecretary of State, *International Arms Control and International Security Affairs* (2018-2019)

Building the Road to a Safer America

U.S. national security and safety depend not just on military strength but on strategic and effective international assistance. From countering adversaries and reducing migration to stabilizing fragile regions, targeted economic growth and development programs are essential national security tools. Smart investments – from the Western Hemisphere to Africa and the Indo-Pacific – help prevent crises before they reach our shores, while promoting stability, rule of law, and partnerships aligned with U.S. interests.

RECOMMENDED AREAS OF STRATEGIC FOCUS

Align U.S. International Assistance with National Security and Defense Strategies

- **Leverage the Administration's forthcoming defense and national security strategies** to underscore the importance of aligning U.S. international assistance with U.S. national and economic security interests, including for critical priorities like:
 - Countering rivals like China, Russia, and Iran
 - Investing in strategic regional priorities with greatest return on investment
 - Planning for fragile states
 - Integrating diplomacy, international assistance, and defense
 - Connecting economic security and national security

Drive U.S. International Assistance for National Security Impact

- **Prioritize U.S. assistance in countries and regions where American national and economic security interests are most at stake**, including in the Western Hemisphere, Africa, and the Indo-Pacific.
- **Pursue consistent and transparent planning processes for U.S. international assistance** – in partnership with Congress – with clear guidelines **and transition plans** to fully leverage resources, prioritize target countries, and gain local input.

Strengthen Civil-Military Coordination

- **Build on the Global Fragility Act to strengthen coordination between State Department regional bureaus and U.S. Combatant Commands to advance U.S. national security** – and bolster civilian-military preparedness and synergy where appropriate.
- **Reinforce coordination between U.S. civilian and military capabilities in crisis stabilization and humanitarian logistics**, while ensuring civilian leadership in key areas, including disaster response, international development, and economic growth.

No More Wars: Address Root Causes of Instability

- **Target U.S. international assistance to address the underlying drivers of conflict and terrorism in fragile states** – including smart investments to combat extremism and youth recruitment, strengthen governance, and confront food insecurity.
- **Leverage U.S. programs to strengthen security cooperation with key countries**, including through security assistance, narcotics control, and law enforcement partnerships.
- **Reinvigorate the “Journey to Self-Reliance” model with country-led, reform-driven programs** with clear, benchmarked transition and graduation goals for partner countries. Detail clear, realistic exit strategies, including in multi-year programs.

Burden Sharing: Partners Must Invest Too

- **Engage directly with partner governments to ensure buy-in, co-investment**, and understand how country priorities align with U.S. national interests.
- **Require contributions from partner countries and ensure the consistency of U.S. programs** – through the appropriations, authorization, and obligation processes – to allow countries to better plan for their eventual graduation and transition from U.S. assistance.
- **Deploy U.S. international assistance to strengthen local capacity** – and, when possible, deliver through local organizations in partner countries that can be properly vetted and deliver successfully.

Building the Road to a Stronger America

A stronger America relies not just on economic and military power, but on leading global humanitarian and health efforts. Programs like PEPFAR reflect our values and strengthen both national and economic security. To maximize impact, we must reinforce what works, implement smart reforms, and ensure the right systems and personnel are in place. Targeted assistance helps prevent outbreaks, respond to crises, and build resilient communities – all vital to U.S. strength.

RECOMMENDED AREAS OF STRATEGIC FOCUS

Strengthen Global Health and Biosecurity

- **Strengthen investments in global health security** and build on effective, quantifiable results in bolstering health system capacity for protecting Americans from deadly diseases and outbreaks.

- **Double down on proven global health programs with clear, evidence-driven results and bipartisan support**, including PEPFAR, PMI, Gavi, and the Global Fund. Build upon PEPFAR's consistent and transparent annual planning processes with participation from the government, private sector, and civil society.
- **Leverage compacts and agreements in the global health space** as a winning idea to speed the delivery of programs, strengthen economic wins, and promote partner government investment and country-led health planning to bolster sustainability and burden sharing.
- **Put a new emphasis on ensuring global health programs address acute needs and have built-in exit strategies** for national governments to step in and continue programs started by the U.S. Clear guidelines and guardrails should be established to ensure country-level ownership and avoid abrupt withdrawals that set recipient countries back in progress.

Bolster Life-Saving Capabilities and Pursue Smart Humanitarian System Reforms

- **Ensure the U.S. humanitarian response to natural disasters is a top U.S. priority** through civilian expeditionary teams, implementer partnerships, and, when appropriate and strategic, U.S. military logistical capabilities.
- **Strengthen the U.S. humanitarian response team within the State Department**, ensuring the U.S. has a capability to scale rapidly to respond to multiple crises with professional, multisector humanitarian aid programs – all partnered with global health functions.
- **Establish a single State Department function dedicated to all food and non-food assistance** – alongside the global health bureau – to build greater efficacy in delivering assistance. An Under Secretary position above these bureaus would strengthen synergy between the food, assistance, and health sectors, which often are bifurcated in many countries.
- **Leverage the strengths of America's non-profit and faith-based humanitarian implementers** – who often play an important role in the immediate stage of a crisis – as an integrated part of America's rapid response. With U.S. government support and credibility, these groups can continue to respond quickly to disasters on behalf of the American people.
- **In conflict-driven crises, increase U.S. focus on countries with governments where the U.S. has influence** to promote conflict resolution and leverage compacts, when possible, to encourage reform.

Strengthen Personnel and Systems for Effective U.S. International Assistance

- **Accelerate the nomination and confirmation processes for ambassadorial nominees** to avoid ceding influence to China in strategically important countries with no significant U.S. leadership presence.
- **Ensure the State Department and other international affairs agencies have the necessary personnel in place**, including technical expertise, grant and contract managers, and in-country capacity to deliver effective and accountable U.S. international assistance.

Building the Road to a More Prosperous America

America's prosperity and ability to remain the #1 economy in the world depends on our nation's global competitiveness, and strategic international assistance is a powerful but underused tool. From infrastructure and critical minerals to energy and supply chains, well-designed assistance can deliver win-win outcomes for partners and the U.S. economy. Initiatives like the Lobito Corridor show how aid can align with private investment and national priorities. Modernizing aid and targeting key sectors will strengthen U.S. economic interests and global competitiveness.

RECOMMENDED AREAS OF STRATEGIC FOCUS

Lead and Prioritize Assistance with U.S. Economic Interests

- **Align U.S. international assistance with economic and national security priorities** and bring scale where we can have the highest returns on investment for American taxpayers, including on critical minerals, infrastructure investment, agricultural investments, women's economic empowerment, and global health.
- **Bring the full U.S. diplomatic and international assistance toolkit to bear to outcompete China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)**, particularly in the Western Hemisphere, Africa, and the Indo-Pacific.
- **Deploy compact models to advance U.S. national interests**, ensure mutual accountability, and provide platforms to scale results-driven, high-impact investments. This includes agile compacts with countries and partnership models like the Lobito and Luzon Economic Corridors that help advance clear U.S. economic interests and support U.S. businesses.
- **Leverage the State Department and embassy teams to weigh in on behalf of U.S. businesses abroad.** Deploy State Department personnel and programs to aggressively set the rules of the road and strengthen the ability of American companies to compete in new and emerging markets.

Unleash the Power of the Private Sector

- **Expand the impact of U.S. international development agencies and programs to stabilize tumultuous regions** and prevent rivals from gaining footholds, de-risk private investment, and scale opportunities and build confidence for American companies and private investors.
- **Create new public-private partnership models to invest in basic infrastructure – including energy, water, health, and education** – to support economic growth, job creation, and opportunities for American exports.
- **Increase investment in U.S.-led ventures**, including through insurance and debt-swap programs, and leverage the strong return on investment the U.S. receives through the World Bank and other multilateral development banks.

Modernize Assistance Architecture

- **Align investment tools and streamline coordination across U.S. international development agencies to maximize impact.** Allow for greater simplicity and flexibility in compacts and financing, including increased DFC budget caps, better waiver mechanisms, and a focus on basics including anti-corruption, legal reform, and business friendly policies.
- **In alignment with forthcoming national security and defense strategies, the State Department and interagency teams should engage in a prioritization effort for pursuing regional, country, and sector deals** and partnerships – leveraging the best assets of the DFC, MCC, USTDA, and others.
- **Leverage technology and AI to drive new ways of working at the State Department** and elsewhere across U.S. international affairs agencies. Increase the deployment of cyber and digital trade officers to U.S. embassies around the world.

Conclusion: Strategic International Assistance = A Win for Americans

From preventing instability and pandemics to driving economic growth and deterring adversaries, U.S. international assistance is a powerful force multiplier. But only if it is:

- Prioritized wisely
- Structured for transparency, effectiveness, and accountability
- Aligned with America's self-interests
- Backed by private sector and partner country engagement

A safer, stronger, and more prosperous America depends on how smartly we deploy our tools abroad, not just because of our humanitarian values, but for our own national interests of security and prosperity.



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