Open Letter to Members of the Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction and Appropriations Leaders

September 7, 2011

As a member of the historic Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction, our nation looks to you for leadership at this critical juncture. We know meeting the extraordinary responsibility of putting our country back on sound fiscal ground while also protecting our most critical priorities will be no easy task.

We represent more than 100 retired 3 and 4-star flag and general officers who recognize the gravity of America’s fiscal challenges and agree that all programs must contribute their fair share to reducing our debt. Yet, given our decades of experience in protecting our national security, we are very concerned the International Affairs Budget could be forced to shoulder even more disproportionately deep cuts that could devastate our development and diplomatic programs and put our national security at risk.

As we commemorate the 10th anniversary of the September 11th attacks, this is an important moment for a national conversation on how best to keep our families safe and to reflect on the powerful impact development and diplomacy programs have had on our national security since then. As a result of the dramatic reductions to the International Affairs Budget in FY11 and proposed for FY12 – in some cases more than 30% below current levels – many of the hard-fought gains we have worked to achieve since 9/11 may be reversed.

In today’s ever-complex and interconnected world, we must use all the tools available to achieve our national security objectives, including a strong State Department, U.S. Agency for International Development, and other civilian-led agencies. At only 1.4% of the federal budget, further deep and disproportionate cuts to the International Affairs Budget threaten U.S. global engagement. America cannot retreat from today’s world, which is why military leaders from General Petraeus to Admiral Mullen have made clear that, in an era of global threats, U.S. national security requires strong civilian partners working alongside the military.

We urge you to support a strong and effective International Affairs Budget and oppose deep and disproportionate cuts to these programs. Support for U.S. global engagement is one area where military leaders and members of both parties can find common ground and come together to ensure a better, safer world and a more prosperous future.

Sincerely,

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Co-Chair, National Security Advisory Council

General Michael W. Hagee, USMC (Ret.)
Co-Chair, National Security Advisory Council

cc: Senator Daniel Inouye, Chairman, Appropriations Committee
    Senator Thad Cochran, Ranking Member, Appropriations Committee
    Senator Patrick Leahy, Chairman, State-Foreign Operations Appropriations Subcommittee
    Senator Lindsey Graham, Ranking Member, State-Foreign Operations Appropriations Subcommittee
    Representative Hal Rogers, Chairman, Appropriations Committee
    Representative Norm Dicks, Ranking Member, Appropriations Committee
    Representative Kay Granger, Chairwoman, State-Foreign Operations Appropriations Subcommittee
    Representative Nita Lowey, Ranking Member, State-Foreign Operations Appropriations Subcommittee
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