



Talking Points for the Peacebuilding Community

President Trump has proposed cutting State Department and USAID budgets by **37% from FY 17 levels** in his FY18 budget. If enacted, this cut would occur in the context of a request for a \$54 billion increase for the Pentagon in FY18, and a 15% cut to most other discretionary spending. Meanwhile, the administration is preparing a supplemental request for upwards of \$30 billion new dollars for the DOD in FY 17, which could require rescissions from other agencies' FY17 money already allocated and approved by Congress. These draconian cuts would severely damage the ability of the US to respond to global threats, would weaken our power to prevent deadly conflict and violent extremism, and would ultimately cost the US taxpayer more due to the higher cost of response versus prevention.

Use your voice and reach out to key members of Congress to advocate against the disastrous consequences of a 37% cut to the State Department and USAID. Talking points include:

Diplomacy and Development Prevent and Reduce Violence in Ways the Military Cannot

- Military capacities are ill-suited to address the drivers of violent conflict, especially for violent extremism. Violent extremism is principally the result of failed politics and development. Across the world, ISIS and other violent extremist organizations recruit by capitalizing on citizens' grievances based on political failures (wars, corruption) or developmental failures (economic inequality, group alienation). Cutting development spending from the foreign aid budget that prevents terrorism, while increasing spending in the Defense Department budget to counter terrorism, is strategically misguided.
- Despite spending nearly \$5 trillion in militarized counter-terrorism efforts since 9/11, global levels of violence and terrorism continue to rise. In fact, the House Republican policy blueprint states, "America faces the highest terror-threat level since 9/11." While the military will lead the fight against terrorism on the battlefield, it needs strong civilian partners in the battle against the drivers of extremism— lack of opportunity, insecurity, injustice, hopelessness, and exposure to violence.
- State Department and USAID programs have proven that "soft power" responses addressing root causes are key for building stability. These agencies have unique capabilities to address root causes of terrorism that the Department of Defense does not and never will have.
- As Senator Graham said, "If you take soft power off the table then you're never going to win the war."¹ Peace does not just happen in the absence of war; it must be built with strategic civilian engagement.
- Civilian responses to violence can be more effective than military action. Eighty-three percent of terrorist movements ended between 1968 and 2006 were done so through eventual political settlements or improvements in policing.²
- Governments have limited influence over the drivers of violence, and development and diplomatic actors are uniquely positioned to engage those who can have influence, including influential and credible religious leaders, civilian agencies, youth leaders, and civil society. Focused, stable, and accountable diplomacy is single-best tool to end and prevent the wars that are the primary drivers of displacement, and which create vacuums in which terrorists thrive.
- An increase in defense spending that is justified for countering terrorism should be matched by an increase in the international affairs budget, which is critical to supporting American defense priorities. Civilian-led development, prevention and peacebuilding that support locally-led

¹ BBC News. Top Republican says Trump's budget plan 'dead on arrival'. 28 Feb 2017.

² Institute for Economics and Peace. 2014 Global Terrorism Index. 2014.



solutions to the root causes of insecurity ultimately keep us safer. An imbalance of prioritizing defense at the expense of development and violence reduction programs will not increase the safety of US citizens, and will require spending significantly more on responding to crises rather than preventing them. Every budget deal made in Congress for the last five years has modified budget caps with parity between defense and non-defense as a deal prerequisite.³

- Civilian programs prevent terrorism on their own. One example is Mercy Corps in Somalia, where the US has spent billions in countering the violent extremist organization Al-Shabaab. New research found that a USAID education program successfully reduced the likelihood of youth participating in political violence by 13% and of supporting political violence by 20%.⁴ This landmark study was one of the first of its kind to document tangible reductions in support for a violent group – an outcome US military counter-terrorism spending has never proven. Effective development programs strengthen communities through evidence-based approaches, including culturally-sensitive peace education⁵ and gender-inclusive law enforcement and governance.⁶

Military Leaders Support a Robust Foreign Affairs Budget

- Over 120 retired three and four-star generals have called on Congress to “ensure that resources for the International Affairs Budget keep pace with the growing global threats and opportunities we face.”⁷
- General Mattis stated: “Of course, we cannot achieve our broader objectives...through military means alone. Our efforts require coordination and a spirit of collaboration between highly integrated civilian military teams. Our civilian colleagues need your full support even in this difficult fiscal environment to undertake their essential role in today’s complex environment.”⁸
- General Mattis also stated, “If you don’t fund the State Department fully, then I need to buy more ammunition ultimately.”⁹

Development and Diplomacy Are Cost-Effective

- Investing in conflict prevention is a cost-effective method of promoting US national security, since prevention is on average 60 times less costly than military intervention and post-conflict reconstruction.¹⁰

The International Affairs Budget Supports National Security and Economic Growth Here at Home

- Programs funded by the International Affairs Budget create jobs here at home by opening new markets and supply chains to American businesses. They also protect our national security by fighting terrorism and preventing conflicts before they start.
- This efficient investment staffs all U.S. embassies overseas, fights pandemic disease, provides emergency response after natural disasters, implements agriculture programs to promote stability and prevent hunger, saves millions of lives with HIV/AIDS medications, and provides essential good governance assistance to newly emerging democracies.¹¹

³ DefenseNews. Durbin: Dems would back Trump defense hike with domestic match. 28 Feb 2017.

⁴ Critical Choices: Assessing the Effects of Education and Civic Engagement on Somali Youths’ Propensity Towards Violence. Mercy Corps. 2016.

⁵ Teaching Peace, Building Resilience. International Alert. 2016.

⁶ Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremism in Pakistan: Why Policewomen Must Have a Role. Inclusive Security. 2014.

⁷ US Global Leadership Coalition. “Over 120 Retired Generals, Admirals on State and USAID Budget: “Now is not the time to retreat””. 2017.

⁸ General James N. Mattis, Former Commander, US Central Command, testimony before Senate Armed Services Committee, March 2011.

⁹ General James N. Mattis, Former Commander, US Central Command, testimony before Senate Armed Services Committee, March 2013.

¹⁰ Friends Committee on National Legislation. Preventing war is 60 times cheaper than fighting it.

¹¹ US Global Leadership Coalition. Budget Center. 2017.