

February 27, 2008

Re: Letter from 20 national organizations requesting hearings on militarization of U.S. foreign assistance.

The Honorable Joseph Biden
Chairman
Committee on Foreign Relations
Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-6225

The Honorable Richard Lugar
Ranking Member
Committee on Foreign Relations
Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-6225

Dear Chairman Biden and Ranking Member Lugar,

As you fill out your hearing schedule for 2008, we request that you hold a hearing on an important topic affecting U.S. foreign policy: the increasing militarization of U.S. foreign assistance.

The Pentagon has greatly expanded its involvement into the realm of activities that have traditionally been implemented by civilian foreign policy agencies and overseen by the Foreign Relations Committee. The numbers speak for themselves: the percentage of the Official Development Assistance the Pentagon controls has exploded from 1998 to 2005, growing from 3.5% to nearly 22%, while USAID's percentage of ODA shrunk from 65% to 40%.¹

The Pentagon is also changing how foreign military assistance—including the training and equipping of foreign forces—is implemented. Several broad new authorities allow for increasing levels of military aid through “cooperative logistics”, “coalition support” “train and equip”, and “building partnership capacity” programs within the DOD budget.

Of greatest concern to us, the Pentagon has requested for the second year in a row that Congress authorize a controversial proposal called the “Building Global Partnerships Act”. This proposal would make permanent in Title 10 a pilot program established under Section 1206 of the National Defense Authorization Act of 2006 and would allow the DOD to spend up to \$750 million a year on training and weapons for militaries of its choosing.

The proposed legislation would allow the Defense Department to ignore historic provisions within the Foreign Assistance Act that prevent assistance from going to countries that commit gross human rights violations, experience a military coup, engage in nuclear proliferation, or condone human trafficking, child soldiers, or religious intolerance. It would also allow the training and weapons to be provided to police, paramilitary and other non-defense forces. Additionally, it is unclear to what extent the Defense Department is required to follow long-standing U.S. laws and regulations to

¹ Patrick, Stewart and Brown, Kaysie. The Pentagon and Global Development: Making Sense of the DoD's Expanding Role. Center for Global Development, November 2007, p 4.

ensure that U.S. weapons are not diverted to unwanted recipients.

Congress has codified these restrictions on foreign assistance for sound policy reasons, and it has safeguarded the tradition of civilian control over military assistance in foreign countries in order to ensure that U.S. foreign policy is consistent and does not undercut our long term policy and goals.

DOD officials are quick to waive away concerns about human rights with assurances that Leahy Law human rights vettings apply to these programs. However, the Defense Department version of the Leahy Law is considerably weaker, and the State Department's DRL office budget has—until this year—had no dedicated funds to carry out these vettings, despite its vastly increased workload. Moreover, it is not sufficient to apply the Leahy Law and not the many other laws restricting military assistance for sound policy reasons.

Congressional oversight and investigation are, we believe, needed to examine the foreign policy implications of the DOD taking an increased role in ODA, as well as the significance of DOD circumnavigating Congressionally-mandated restrictions on the training and equipping of foreign militaries.

These changes have real world implications for U.S. foreign policy in the field, as well as symbolic impact. These implications are clearly outlined in your Committee's December 2006 print, "Embassies as Outposts in the Anti-Terror Campaign." We thank you for this important work and encourage you to address the concerns raised in the report in a public hearing.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss this topic further and suggest potential witnesses. Thank you in advance for your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,

Alexandra Arriaga, Managing Director Government Relations and Advocacy
Development, *Amnesty International USA*

Ken Bacon, President, *Refugees International*

Marie Dennis, Director, *Maryknoll Global Concerns*

Sandra Dunsmore, Regional Director for Latin America, *Open Society Institute*

Morton H. Halperin, Executive Director, *Open Society Policy Center*

William D. Hartung, Director, *Arms and Security Initiative, New America Foundation*

Lisa Haugaard, Executive Director, *Latin America Working Group*

David T. Ives, Executive Director, *Albert Schweitzer Institute*

Don Kraus, Vice President, *Citizens for Global Solutions*

Nicole C. Lee, Executive Director, *TransAfrica Forum*

Joy Olson, Executive Director, *Washington Office on Latin America*

Rev. John L. McCullough, Executive Director and CEO, *Church World Service*

Mary Ellen McNish, General Secretary, *American Friends Service Committee*

John M. Miller, National Coordinator, *East Timor and Indonesia Action Network*

Ray Offenheiser, President, *Oxfam America*

Lisa Schirch, Program Director, *3D Security Initiative, Eastern Mennonite University*

Susan Shaer, Executive Director, *Women's Action for New Directions*

Julia E. Sweig, Director, Latin America Studies, Council on Foreign Relations*

Russell Testa, Executive Director, *Franciscan Action Network*

Joe Volk, Executive Secretary, *Friends Committee on National Legislation*

Robert E. White, President, *Center for International Policy*

James E. Winkler, General Secretary, *General Board of Church and Society, United Methodist Church*

Emira Woods, Co-Director, *Foreign Policy in Focus, Institute for Policy Studies*

*affiliation for identification purposes only.

To respond, contact David Holiday, Open Society Institute, tel. 202-721-5604