

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 24, 2020

The Honorable Lindsey Graham  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on State, Foreign  
Operations, and Related Programs  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patrick Leahy  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on State, Foreign  
Operations, and Related Programs  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Graham and Ranking Member Leahy:

We write to express our support for continued funding for humanitarian projects in Nagorno-Karabakh. The United States has a long history of providing humanitarian assistance to the people of Nagorno-Karabakh, including USAID's funding of humanitarian landmine and unexploded ordnance (UXO) clearance. We ask you to include provisions supporting humanitarian demining and UXO clearance programs and other humanitarian assistance to Nagorno-Karabakh in the FY 2021 appropriations for State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs.

USAID-funded humanitarian demining work has cleared almost 500 minefields in Nagorno-Karabakh since 2000, saving untold civilian lives and building goodwill towards the United States. The Subcommittee has previously recognized the necessity of demining work, writing in the FY 2016 and FY 2017 reports that "The Committee recognizes that Nagorno-Karabakh has a per capita landmine accident rate among the highest in the world, and that mine clearance programs have been effective where implemented." However, mines continue to threaten civilians in the region. Mines have killed 12 people since 2017 and the past year alone has seen 12 near-miss scenarios.

We acknowledge that the Administration wants to focus on the peace process, and we share their desire to see progress on that front. However, we also understand that the Administration intends on ceasing its humanitarian clearance work at a time when landmines still threaten civilians. Anger and resentment from landmine accidents reduce the population's desire to see peace, so the threat of un-cleared landmines and UXO undermines other programs aimed at supporting the peace process. Beyond that threat to peace, humanitarian demining and UXO clearance programs, as well as other humanitarian programs that assist civilians in Nagorno-Karabakh, build goodwill towards the United States that could make American programming to prepare populations for peace more effective.

To gain a better understanding of how much demining and UXO clearance remains to be done, we recommend that funding be appropriated for an independent assessment of remaining

contamination from mines and UXO in Nagorno-Karabakh as well as the risk that contamination poses to civilians in Nagorno-Karabakh. The independent assessment should be either an independent review of an existing survey that has received U.S. funding and is currently ongoing, or a new independent survey; the implementing agency would decide which option best suits the circumstances. This independent assessment will help the Subcommittee and the Administration determine what levels of funding are appropriate for future years. This funding should be appropriated in addition to funding for FY 2021 mine clearance, as there are identified minefields that can be cleared while the assessment is ongoing.

To continue saving civilian lives, build goodwill towards the United States, and better understand the extent of remaining mine and UXO contamination in Nagorno-Karabakh, we ask that all three of the following provisions be included in the FY 2021 appropriations for State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs:

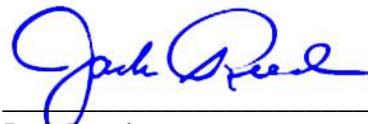
- Of the funds appropriated by this Act, not less than \$1.5 million shall be made available to fund demining and landmine risk education programs in Nagorno-Karabakh.
- Robust funding for Nagorno-Karabakh-based regional rehabilitation services for survivors of landmine injuries and individuals with physical and cognitive disabilities.
- Funding for an independent assessment of remaining contamination from mines and unexploded ordnance in Nagorno-Karabakh and the risk that contamination poses to civilians in Nagorno-Karabakh. The independent assessment shall be either an independent review of an ongoing contamination survey or a new independent survey. The appropriate congressional committees shall receive regular updates on the assessment's progress and the assessment results once completed.

Thank you for your consideration of these requests and for your work to support America's long tradition of humanitarian assistance.

Sincerely,



Robert Menendez  
United States Senator



Jack Reed  
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal  
United States Senator



Sherrod Brown  
United States Senator

**/s/ Chris Van Hollen**

Chris Van Hollen  
United States Senator



Edward J. Markey  
United States Senator



Tammy Duckworth  
United States Senator



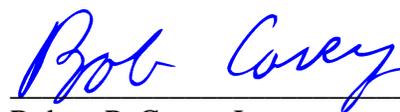
Jeanne Shaheen  
United States Senator



Maria Cantwell  
United States Senator



Sheldon Whitehouse  
United States Senator



Robert P. Casey, Jr.  
United States Senator



Dianne Feinstein  
United States Senator



Kirsten Gillibrand  
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker  
United States Senator



Elizabeth Warren  
United States Senator



Tammy Baldwin  
United States Senator



Mazie K. Hirono  
United States Senator



Bernard Sanders  
United States Senator



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Christopher S. Murphy  
United States Senator



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Benjamin L. Cardin  
United States Senator



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Ron Wyden  
United States Senator



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Kamala D. Harris  
United States Senator



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Jacky Rosen  
United States Senator



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Christopher A. Coons  
United States Senator



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Jeffrey A. Merkley  
United States Senator



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Catherine Cortez Masto  
United States Senator



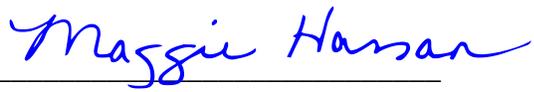
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Michael F. Bennet  
United States Senator



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Gary C. Peters  
United States Senator



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Margaret Wood Hassan  
United States Senator



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Kyrsten Sinema  
United States Senator



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Debbie Stabenow  
United States Senator