



SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
1000 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1000

APR 21 2010

The Honorable Kent Conrad
Chairman
Committee on the Budget
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman:

I am writing to express my strong support for full funding of the President's FY 2011 foreign affairs budget request (the 150 account) which, along with defense, is a critical component of an integrated and effective national security program.

I understand this year presents a challenging budget environment, with competing domestic and international pressures. However, I strongly believe a robust civilian foreign affairs capability, coupled with a strong defense capability, is essential to preserving U.S. national security interests around the world.

State and USAID partners are critical to success in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iraq. Our military and civilian missions are integrated, and we depend upon our civilian counterparts to help stabilize and rebuild after the fight. As U.S. forces transition out of war zones, the U.S. government needs our civilian agencies to be able to assume critical functions. This allows us, for example, to draw down U.S. forces in Iraq responsibly while ensuring hard-fought gains are secured. Cuts to the 150 account will almost certainly impact our efforts in these critical frontline states.

In other parts of the world, the work performed by diplomatic and development professionals helps build the foundation for more stable, democratic and prosperous societies. These are places where the potential for conflict can be minimized, if not completely avoided, by State and USAID programs – thereby lowering the likely need for deployment of U.S. military assets.

In formulating his request for FY 2011, the President carefully considered funding needs for the budget accounts for both foreign affairs and national defense, taking into account overall national security requirements as well as economic conditions. I believe that full funding of these two budget accounts is necessary for our national security and for ensuring our continued leadership in the world. I hope you will take this into account when acting upon the President's FY 2011 budget request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert M. Gates".



cc:
The Honorable Judd Gregg
Ranking Member