

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 28, 2025

The Honorable Marco Rubio  
Secretary of State  
Department of State  
Washington, DC 20520

The Honorable Pete Hegseth  
Secretary of Defense  
Department of Defense  
Washington, DC 20301

Dear Secretary Rubio and Secretary Hegseth,

We are writing to urge you to take the necessary steps to ensure the timely obligation and expenditure of funds appropriated by Congress for foreign assistance, including the Vietnam war legacy programs. These programs, with strong bipartisan support for many years, have been implemented by USAID and the Department of Defense, in coordination with the Department of State and other U.S. Government and private entities. They are the foundation of the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership between our two countries, and their continuation to completion is essential to maintaining and strengthening that Partnership. With respect to funding for any of these programs that has already been terminated, we urge you to promptly reinstate it.

Briefly, these programs include the following:

- **Unexploded ordnance removal.** More than 100,000 Vietnamese have been killed or injured from UXO accidents since the end of the war. Each year, the Congress provides \$25 million for the Department of State and Department of Defense to support UXO clearance activities in Vietnam, which includes training and equipment for demining teams in provinces heavily contaminated with UXO.
- **Dioxin remediation.** USAID manages and jointly funds this project with the Department of Defense to remediate dioxin-contaminated soil and sediment at the Bien Hoa Airbase, which was the largest U.S. airbase during the war where millions of gallons of Agent Orange were stored and loaded onto aircraft. The U.S. has already provided \$300 million of a total estimated cost of \$450 million for this project to eliminate an extreme health hazard. It is the sequel to the successful dioxin remediation at the Da Nang airport, where Air Force One carrying President Trump landed in 2017.
- **Vietnam Health/Disabilities Program.** USAID manages this program through American and Vietnamese implementing partners with \$30 million annually, to support

health and disabilities programs in ten provinces for Vietnamese suffering from severe physical and cognitive disabilities caused by UXO accidents and exposure to dioxin.

- **War Remnants Museum.** At the War Remnants Museum in Ho Chi Minh City that is visited by hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese and foreigners annually, USAID is supporting the construction of a modern exhibit portraying the decades of positive U.S.-Vietnam cooperation on war legacies, including the programs described above, at a cost of approximately \$2 million.
- **Vietnam Wartime Accounting Initiative.** This program, funded jointly by USAID through the International Organization of Missing Persons and the Department of Defense, with \$15 million over the next five years, is significantly upgrading Vietnam's DNA technology and making available archival documents and artifacts in DoD's possession to assist Vietnam locate and identify the remains of some of the estimated 200,000-300,000 persons missing from the war. The initiative builds on and reciprocates Vietnam's 40 years of working with the Department of Defense to locate the remains of U.S. MIAs.

2025 marks the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of the Vietnam War and the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the normalization of relations between the U.S. and Vietnam. Today, Vietnam is an important partner in an increasingly challenging region. Our war legacy programs have not only transformed a formerly antagonistic and distrustful relationship into one of amicable partnership, they have also been the catalyst for cooperation between the U.S. and Vietnam in maritime security, law enforcement, higher education, energy development, and many other areas. Vietnam's leaders, under constant pressure from the Chinese Communist Party, have long emphasized the importance they give to being able to rely on their partnership with the U.S. It would be difficult to overstate the damage to the relationship that would result if the U.S. were to walk away from these war legacy programs, which have received such high-profile attention and appreciation in Vietnam.

Like in Vietnam, USAID personnel work in concert with the Department of Defense and Department of State to advance U.S. interests around the world. Our long-standing programs in Vietnam are illustrative of the transformative impact of U.S. foreign assistance on behalf of the American people.

Thank you for your consideration. We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



Peter Welch  
United States Senator



Jack Reed  
United States Senator



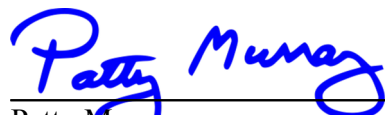
Jeanne Shaheen  
United States Senator



Mark R. Warner  
United States Senator



Amy Klobuchar  
United States Senator



Patty Murray  
United States Senator



Sheldon Whitehouse  
United States Senator



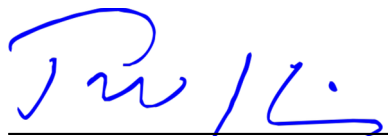
Tammy Baldwin  
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen  
United States Senator



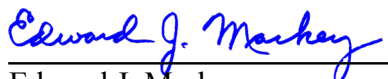
Jeffrey A. Merkley  
United States Senator



Tim Kaine  
United States Senator



Bernard Sanders  
United States Senator



Edward J. Markey  
United States Senator



Kirsten Gillibrand  
United States Senator

Cc: Mike Waltz, National Security Advisor