

TESTIMONY OF
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SUBCOMMITTEE ON STATE, FOREIGN OPERATIONS AND RELATED PROGRAMS
HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
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I want to thank Chairman Rogers, Ranking Member Lowey and the members of the Committee for this opportunity to submit testimony on appropriations priorities for Fiscal Year 2018. I think everyone recognizes the difficult choices you will be facing this year if media reports prove accurate about the size of reductions that the president might propose in the State Department and USAID budgets.

With that in mind, I am here today to strongly encourage this Committee to fight for robust funding for the accounts under your jurisdiction, including reaching out to your counterparts on the Budget Committee to include robust funding for the 150 Account in any Budget Resolution being drafted and advancing in the House.

No one understands better than you that the programs under your jurisdiction are central to our nation's national security and address critical and often urgent needs around the world. When I testified before this committee in 2013, General James Mattis, who was then Commander of U.S. Central Command, stated in testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee on March 5th of that year: "If you don't fund the State Department fully, then I need to buy more ammunition." More recently, 120 retired generals echoed those same sentiments in a February 27th letter, which I'm sure you've received. Those words are as true today, now that General Mattis is Secretary of Defense, as they were four years ago. Funding for the State Department and USAID helps avoid wars, and when wars are inescapable, it helps the victims of those conflicts and the diplomacy necessary to end them.

I know from the many requests that you receive each year that there is strong history of bipartisan support for the global health, food security, humanitarian and development programs that promote U.S. interests and which literally save and improve billions of lives and livelihoods around the world. They reflect the very best of American values and ideals.

I come before you today to add my voice in support of America's global food security, nutrition and hunger programs. I will also be making recommendations regarding funds for Colombia, Central America, and regions in Central Africa that have been affected by violence from the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA).

Specifically, I ask the Committee to support, at a minimum, funding levels that match or exceed the FY 2017 appropriations provided for the Feed the Future Program within the Development Assistance account; nutrition programs – in particular, the Nutrition sub-account under the Global Health Programs account in USAID; and emergency food security assistance included within the International Disaster Assistance.

Mr. Chairman, with all the competing priorities that the Committee must weigh, I strongly believe that maintaining and expanding America's commitment to global food security, agricultural development and nutrition must be high on the list. Not only can we advance global food security, we can achieve it – and U.S. leadership has been key to expanding the engagement of an international coalition on these issues.

Addressing hunger and food insecurity is central to helping people and nations become more economically productive and prosperous. It should, therefore, be weighed as an investment to helping nations free themselves from dependency on international donor assistance. But to be successful, these programs require the long-term commitment of governments, donors, institutions and NGOs. They require that nutrition, the empowerment of women and small-scale farmers, and resilience become core values to achieving an end to hunger and food insecurity. There is no better example of success within our USAID and State Department programs for this than Feed the Future, an initiative that began under President George W. Bush and was strengthened and expanded during the Obama Administration with strong bipartisan support by this Committee. The U.S. cannot afford to back away when many of these initiatives are beginning to take root. To do so would squander the investments made to date and abdicate America's global leadership on these matters.

With respect to the unfinished FY 2017 appropriations, the House recommendations for both Feed the Future and the overall Global Health Account are more generous than the Senate's. So, I respectfully ask the Committee to stick to its priorities for these accounts in the final negotiations over FY 2017 funding levels – and then, at a minimum, maintain or expand these accounts in FY 2018.

Despite an increase in Global Health Programs overall, it is disappointing that both the House and the Senate flat funds the Nutrition sub-account at \$125 million for FY 2017. In each Committee report, there is language detailing the importance of the Nutrition sub-account and its many responsibilities. But the funding remains the same as FY 2016, despite increases in the costs of medicines, transportation, personnel and storage.

Continued flat funding, let alone reductions, in the Nutrition sub-account, in my view, is not in the best interest of the United States and undermines the investments the U.S. has already made in nutrition funding, not to mention the successes achieved.

Congress has played a significant role in championing nutrition and increasing the Nutrition sub-account during previous years, which has undoubtedly been life-saving for millions of children since almost half of all under-5 child deaths are nutrition related. A substantial increase in the Nutrition sub-account in FY 2017 would have addressed the leading cause of child mortality by significantly scaling-up investments in nutrition.

As the House and Senate reports outline, Nutrition funding supports many specific and vital activities, such as nutrition education to improve maternal diets, nutrition during pregnancy, exclusive breastfeeding, and infant and young child feeding practices. It further supports diet quality and diversification through fortified or bio-fortified staple foods, specialized food

products, and community gardens, as well as the delivery of nutrition services such as micronutrient supplementation and community management of acute malnutrition.

It is critical that the Nutrition sub-account receive a boost in FY 2018 – and in FY 2017, if that is still possible – in order not to reduce the scope of its work and the number of beneficiaries reached. I respectfully ask that the Committee review its work for FY 2017 and FY 2018 so that the Nutrition sub-account within Global Health Programs does not stagnate and receives a boost in funding in both fiscal years.

Mr. Chairman, I would now like to focus the remainder of my testimony on regional programs under the Committee’s jurisdiction – Colombia, LRA-affected regions in Central Africa, and Central America.

Colombia, one of America’s strongest and most important allies in the Western Hemisphere, is in the midst of profound historic change. With over fifty years of conflict, nearly five million internally displaced persons, hundreds of thousands of victims of unspeakable violence, and generations growing up knowing only war, the Colombian government has successfully concluded negotiations to bring armed conflict to an end. Its success faces considerable challenges, not the least of which are the activities of intransigent and extremist political sectors inside Colombia, as well as violence from neo-paramilitary and criminal networks that continue to undermine the ability to fully implement these historic accords. The human rights situation also remains perilous in many regions of the country and in marginalized urban areas. Human rights defenders and local social leaders – the very leadership Colombia needs to consolidate the peace and promote lasting reconciliation – are under attack and even being murdered in escalating numbers. It is urgent that the Committee signals America’s continuing support for its ally and partner by maintaining strong funding for the implementation of the Colombian peace agreement, as well as maintaining key human rights conditions in law. It is also critical, however, that Congress not seek to impose conditions that undermine or are directly contrary to provisions of the negotiated peace accords.

It is unclear today what will be the total funding for Colombia in FY 2017 since final negotiations on the FY 2017 State/Foreign Operations Appropriations Act are still pending. With respect to that unfinished work, I urge the Committee to be generous to Colombia to the maximum extent that can be achieved. Both the House and Senate committee reports emphasize the importance of implementing the peace agreements. They also emphasize continuing U.S. support for human rights, refugees and the internally displaced, Afro-Colombian and Indigenous communities, small farmers, economic development and support for the Colombian Office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Human Rights Unit of the Attorney General. In particular, the Colombian Office of the U.N. High Commissioner faces significantly expanded responsibilities under the peace accords, and I recommend that a minimum of \$3 million of ESF funds be provided for that office in both FY 2017 and FY 2018.

In addition, it is critical to specifically provide \$21 million in FY 2017 under the Nonproliferation, Anti-Terrorism and Demining account for demining in Colombia, or to make up the shortfall in the FY 2018 appropriations bill. Colombia is the second most mine-contaminated country in the world, which still claims victims among children, campesinos and

members of Colombia's military every year. An unprecedented collaboration between the FARC guerrillas and Colombian military to jointly map and demine key areas within Colombia was initiated even before the final accords were concluded. It is critical for Congress to provide U.S. support for the expanded demining initiative so that all Colombians will be able to walk the land without fear of losing their lives and limbs to this indiscriminate, deadly weapon.

Mr. Chairman, I respectfully request that the Committee provide robust funding for the peace accords in both FY 2017 and FY 2018. The Committee should continue to emphasize the priorities of peace, development, human rights, reconciliation and the rule of law. In both total funding and with statutory and/or report language, the Committee should allocate robust funding to support the full implementation of the peace accords, and address urgent human rights, development and justice priorities. I would be happy to work with the Committee and provide greater detail on these priorities for Colombia.

As this Committee knows so well, there are also hundreds of thousands of Colombian refugees surviving in precarious situations in neighboring countries. Even with the peace accords signed and beginning to be implemented, many, perhaps most, of these refugees are not likely to return to their home regions until a stable peace and security are established in their home regions. As you know, Administration budgets, Republican and Democrat alike, consistently underfund programs to assist refugees in the Western Hemisphere in its budget request for Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM). I anticipate that FY 2018 will be no different. It is to the Committee's great credit that these funds are restored and often increased each year. I urge the Committee to restore funding to address the continuing humanitarian crisis of Colombian refugees in the Andean region should the Administration's FY18 request once again fall short of the need.

I want to thank the Committee for appropriating funds to carry out *the Lord's Resistance Army Disarmament and Northern Uganda Recovery Act* (P.L. 111-172) and to provide assistance to communities in the Democratic Republic of Congo, South Sudan and the Central African Republic affected by violence from the LRA. These funds are making a difference on the ground in the lives of communities and individuals. They have provided much needed support for enhanced protection and aiding in the disarmament, demobilization and recovery of former LRA members, including child soldiers. I ask the Committee to continue to provide funding for these programs, specifically no less than \$10 million in both the FY 2017 and FY 2018 bills to expand USAID programs that improve physical access, telecommunications infrastructure and early-warning mechanisms, and to support the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former LRA combatants, especially child soldiers.

Finally, let me say a few words about Central America, and El Salvador, in particular. Just as with Colombia, it is vital to U.S. national security interests that there be no doubt that the United States will continue to partner with our allies in the Northern Triangle in addressing the violence and lack of economic opportunity that plague the region and which drive so many families and young people to abandon their homes and flee, looking for refuge and security where their children can grow up safely. Within that context, funding for economic development, violence reduction, development that supports at-risk families and youth, and protection of violence-affected communities, human rights defenders, journalists, jurists, social

leaders, environmental and land rights activists remain high priorities. Congress must signal its continued support for these struggling nations and people who live under such daily threat. We cannot afford to undermine the reliability of America's alliances, support and partnerships for this region.

At the end of January I was in El Salvador to join a delegation of Salvadoran-American and Salvadoran families and youth asking the Salvadoran government to establish a national commission to investigate and resolve the estimated 7,000-10,000 disappeared from the civil war who remain missing. The families made a humanitarian appeal to allow them to know what happened to their relatives and loved ones, locate the remains if possible, and give them a dignified burial. The Salvadoran government agreed to set up such a commission – it already has a similar commission to search for disappeared and missing children from the war – and is currently in the process of getting input on the design and mandate of such a national commission to focus on adults who disappeared. I respectfully request that the Committee provide \$200,000 - \$300,000 from existing ESF for El Salvador to support this commission's work, in the FY 2017 appropriations bill, if that is still possible, or in the FY 2018 bill.

Mr. Chairman, as we all know, when it comes to the disappeared in any country, these are wounds that never heal; they never go away; and they are never forgotten. Grief is passed from one generation to the next, impeding reconciliation, forgiveness, and the ability to move forward. With such a modest amount of funding, we can directly contribute to healing these wounds. And I ask that the Committee signal its support for this initiative that affects so many of our own citizens and children.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for this opportunity to testify. I look forward to working with you, the Ranking Member and the members of your Committee on developing these priorities in the weeks ahead.