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February 3, 2025

**VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL**

The Honorable Marco Rubio  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Rubio,

I write to express grave concern that the Trump Administration's freeze on foreign assistance is causing serious detriment to our national security. This freeze, mandated through President Trump's executive order titled "Reevaluating and Realigning United States Foreign Aid," has reportedly been implemented through your directive to the Department of State to block all funding obligations and stop work on existing programs. This policy has already led to significant setbacks, including disrupting efforts to monitor ISIS prisoners and secure chemical weapons in Syria, and it threatens vital international efforts to prevent U.S. technology from falling into the hands of adversaries like North Korea, Iran, and Russia.

This ill-considered freeze has already led to significant threats to our national security. Immediately after its announcement, it was reported that payment to guards monitoring ISIS terrorists was temporarily halted, nearly resulting in this "potential terrorist army in waiting" breaking free.<sup>1</sup> It has also been reported that the freeze has severely hampered efforts to recover and secure chemical weapons stockpiles in Syria, potentially allowing these weapons to get into the hands of adversarial countries and organizations.<sup>2</sup>

The profound harms to our national security which have been publicly reported are just the tip of the iceberg. During the last Congress, I led the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations in a 15-month investigation into the diversion of U.S. technology for use in weapons by our adversaries on the battlefield. We found that exports of U.S. components to countries with entities

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<sup>1</sup> Robbie Gramer and Eric Bazail-Eimil, *The ISIS prison break Trump almost risked*, Politico, Jan. 28, 2025, <https://www.politico.com/newsletters/national-security-daily/2025/01/28/the-isis-prison-break-trump-almost-risked-00195922>.

<sup>2</sup> Mathias Hammer, *US funding freeze impacts Syrian chemical weapons clean-up*, Semafor, Jan. 29, 2025, <https://www.semafor.com/article/01/29/2025/us-freezes-funding-for-syrian-chemical-weapons-clean-up>.

known to divert our technology have increased significantly since the start of Russia's war in Ukraine, and that components from U.S. companies were also found in Iranian and North Korean weapons recovered on the battlefield in Ukraine. These findings derived in significant part from the work of international organizations that send experts to collect components from war zones, including but not limited to Conflict Armament Research (CAR), which investigates the diversion of U.S. technology found in Russian, Iranian, and North Korean weapons. These organizations' work is critical to our national security and has helped our country detect and block sales to entities whose sole purpose is to help adversaries like North Korea, Iran, and Russia circumvent U.S. law.

The executive order halting foreign aid will have a devastating impact on these organizations. Specifically, the order halted payments on three State Department grants to CAR which, cumulatively, represent almost half of its annual budget. It even stopped payment for work CAR has already performed under the grants in the fourth quarter of 2024.

I am deeply concerned that pausing these and similar grants will embolden our adversaries and lead to more U.S. technology ending up in enemy hands. Indeed, CAR's work alone has provided information that led directly to more than 100 entities of concern—principally located in China—being sanctioned or listed by the U.S. Departments of the Treasury and Commerce. In January of this year, information provided to the U.S. government by CAR helped lead to the conviction of Nikolay Goltsev to 40 months in prison for conspiring to commit export control violations by illegally providing U.S. electronic components to sanctioned Russian companies, including components that CAR found in Russian weapons on the battlefield in Ukraine. CAR has also provided particular assistance to the United States and its allies in understanding the growing military capabilities of North Korea. The Trump Administration's unconstitutional funding freeze threatens this critical work.

This freeze not only undermines the security of the United States but also contradicts the goals you outlined during your confirmation hearing: to make America safer, stronger, and more prosperous. By halting foreign aid, the Trump Administration is weakening our national security and emboldening our adversaries. I demand that you end this policy before it results in any further harm to our national interests.

Sincerely,



Richard Blumenthal  
Ranking Member  
Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations

Hon. Marco Rubio  
February 3, 2025  
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cc: The Honorable Ron Johnson  
Chairman