



March 18, 2016

Hon. Mac Thornberry, Chairman  
Hon. Adam Smith, Ranking Democrat  
Committee on Armed Services  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Thornberry and Ranking Member Smith,

We are writing to **ask that you require more transparency** from the Department of Defense regarding the **approximately \$10 billion** in weapons, materiel, training and other assistance it provides **to foreign governments and militaries from the DOD budget annually**.

Information is critical to your ability to play your constitutional oversight role, and yet the most basic facts are often unavailable. When you or your oversight staff want to know, for example, how much aid the DOD has provided to the Ugandan armed forces through all DOD authorities in the past year, are you able to get that information in a timely manner?

Such information is equally critical to your executive branch partners. The Department of State and USAID need detailed understanding of DOD assistance in order to inform diplomatic engagement and efforts to balance this military support with support for governance and accountability.

Private and civil society actors deeply engaged on the ground also need insight into the patterns of military support in order to assess our investments and programming in a given country. And anti-corruption campaigners or parliamentarians in recipient countries need to know how much the U.S. is giving and to whom so that they can perform their own legitimate oversight functions.

As you know, DOD now has dozens of authorities under which it provides assistance to foreign forces and governments. This year DOD provided budget justifications for several of the larger military aid accounts (e.g., Afghanistan). But even the Congressional Research Service has noted in several recent reports that it cannot currently determine how much aid DOD is providing across all authorities in a given country or in total.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example: "What Is 'Building Partner Capacity?' Issues for Congress," Congressional Research Service, December 18, 2015; and Statement of Lauren Ploch Blanchard, Congressional Research Service, Before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee Subcommittee on Africa and Global Health Hearing: U.S. Security Assistance, June 4, 2015

One potential solution is quite simple. Require DOD to provide Congress with a detailed (country-by-country) annual budget justification for all authorities under which it provides assistance. Most, if not all, federal departments that provide foreign assistance are required to do this.

We suggest that this annual budget justification report on prior fiscal year spending and project future fiscal year spending (as does the State Department foreign aid justification). We understand that projected spending may change, but having some indication of real intentions across all DOD spigots would drive better internal programming, allow better external oversight, promote interagency planning, aid the private sector in making better decisions, and assist our partners in democratic oversight of their militaries.

Transparency is integral to how we run our government. If the point of this aid is to improve the conduct of foreign militaries for the benefit of their people, then surely those people deserve insight into what's being given to their governments. If the point is to improve U.S. national security, then surely Congress, the executive branch, and U.S. citizens deserve insight into what is being done to promote our security.

Sincerely,

Freedom House

Global Witness

InterAction

Open Society Policy Center

Oxfam America

Project on Government Oversight (POGO)

Refugees International

Transparency International-USA

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