

Leadership Voices on U.S. International Assistance



National Security Advisor Mike Waltz

“We need to begin focusing the nation on the threat that [China] is, because their form of deterrence lies not necessarily in tanks, planes, and ships, but in ports, pipelines, grids, and water supply. If we fail to deter them, they could find themselves controlling over 50 percent of GDP in terms of shipping lanes and access routes into Asia.”

- **2024 [Atlantic Council Panel](#)**

“Strong civilian tools of diplomacy must be fully resourced to meet complex global challenges alongside our military strength. Embracing a smart power approach not only protects America’s interests and democratic ideals but helps to support the men and women in our armed forces and keep them out of harm’s way.”

- **2021 USGLC Virtual Event with Veterans**

“Our diplomats, our USAID officers, the folks that serve in the Peace Corps – those were our wingmen and women. Heck no, we’re not cutting our development aid budget. That puts soldiers in danger.”

- **2019 USGLC Award Gala**

“As a Green Beret serving from West Africa to the Middle East to multiple combat tours in Afghanistan, our diplomats – our fellow Americans – and USAID, the Peace Corps, and other parts of our foreign assistance apparatus are critical. They keep us out of wars.”

- **2019 Press Conference on Capitol Hill**



Secretary Of State Marco Rubio

“The direction (President Trump) has given for the conduct of our foreign policy is clear. Every dollar we spend, every program we fund, and every policy we pursue must be justified with the answer to three simple questions: Does it make America safer? Does it make America stronger? Does it make America more prosperous?”

- **SRFC Confirmation Hearing Opening Remarks, January 2025**

“The challenges to freedom and democracy all over the world are embedded in this new coalition of governments – of China and Russia and North Korea and Iran – who are not in a formal alliance like NATO, but are increasingly cooperating... Nations around the world need to see, that freedom and democracy are not just something to aspire to as an ideal but as a practical matter. It works, and it works better than totalitarianism.”

- **2024 International Republican Institute Freedom Award Event**

“Foreign Aid is not charity. We must make sure it is well spent, but it is less than 1% of budget & critical to our national security.”

- **2017 [Post on X](#)**

“While military might may be our most eye-catching method of involvement abroad, it is far from being our most often utilized. In most cases, the decisive use of diplomacy, foreign assistance, and economic power are the most effective ways to achieve our interests and stop problems before they spiral into crises.”

- **2013 Remarks at the American Enterprise Institute**

Military Voices (Since Freeze Began)

Former SOUTHCOM Commander General Laura Richardson, USA (Ret.), gave her first interview since retiring her command at U.S. Southern Command. In Foreign Policy's "[The Case for Optimism on Trump's Latin America Focus](#)," she cites the urgency of U.S. development and diplomacy to better compete in America's own backyard, saying "Where we are not, and where we cede, we cede ground to the axis of aggressors, whether it's China, Russia, Iran, or North Korea." (General Richardson is the new Co-Chair of USGLC's National Security Advisory Council.)

Former NATO Supreme Allied Commander Admiral James Stavridis, USN (Ret.), former Supreme Allied Commander of NATO, wrote in [Bloomberg](#) that America's aid workers from Afghanistan, to Haiti, to Colombia actually save taxpayer dollars and protect American interest as "the military's soft-power partners... Like smart preventative medicine **the work of USAID nips problems in the bud before they need very expensive major surgery.**"

Former CENTCOM Commander General Anthony Zinni, USMC (Ret.): "I worry that the call for a freeze on all U.S. foreign assistance – at a time when our rivals are playing to win – takes the U.S. off the playing field and diminishes U.S. strength around the world." ([Link](#))

Lieutenant General Mark Hertling, USA (Ret.), wrote in an op-ed in [The Bulwark](#) and testified in the Senate, that aid workers stand side-by-side our military to advance American interests, stating, "To hack apart this vital arm of American soft power like a side of beef without a proper assessment of the harm it will do will diminish our standing in the world over the long term—and it will also rob our military of critical partners the next time we need them in tough situations."

Vice Admiral Malcolm Fages, USN (Ret.): "[The] freeze on foreign assistance programs and the dismantling of the U.S. Agency for International Development will substantially impact our national security... This hatchet approach to virtually all foreign assistance programs serves only to bolster the impact of Chinese and Russian influence in regions around the world." (Published in [South Carolina Post and Courier](#))

Republican Members of Congress (Since Freeze of Overseas Programs Began)

Senate Armed Services Chairman Roger Wicker (R-MS): “I have felt for a long time that USAID is our way to combat the Belt and Road Initiative, which is China's effort to really gain influence around the world, including Africa and South America and the Western Hemisphere. So, we need an aid program to match the Chinese effort.”

Senate Appropriations Chairwoman Susan Collins (R-ME) told reporters that the administration did not follow the law in notifying Congress of changes to USAID and is “also concerned about the amount of confusion over what is covered and what is not covered under the so-called pause.”

Senate Appropriations SFOPS Subcommittee Chairman Lindsey Graham (R-SC): “I'm a big advocate of soft power and a big advocate of making sure the American people feel like their money is being jealously guarded... Out of all this drama, we'll have a system that will be more accepted by the American people.”

Senator Jerry Moran (R-KS): “I urge @SecRubio to distribute the \$340 million in American-grown food currently stalled in U.S. ports to reach those in need. Time is running out before this life-saving aid perishes.”

Senator Lisa Murkowski: “[USAID] does a lot of good around the world, particularly for women and girls – a way to make sure that we get humanitarian relief distributed fairly, equitably, is important.”

Senator Bill Cassidy (R-LA): “PEPFAR is the epitome of soft power. It is a Republican initiative, it is pro-life, pro-America and the most popular U.S. program in Africa. There's even a waiver acknowledging this, yet I'm told that drugs are still being withheld at clinics in Africa. This must be reversed immediately!!”

Former House Foreign Affairs Chairman Michael McCaul (R-TX): “I believe [assistance] still has a legitimate purpose to counter the rising threat of China and Belt and Road and our other foreign adversaries. It also has the ability to counter terrorism. Lindsey Graham and I passed the Global Fragility Act, state DOD, USAID, all working together to stabilize destabilized nations which breed terrorism.”

Rep. Young Kim (R-CA): “U.S. foreign assistance has long been a very powerful, soft power tool to advance our American leadership by building trust with our allies, promoting democracy, stabilizing terrorism-prone regions and providing market access for American businesses.”

Rep. Young Kim (R-CA): “For decades, USAID has helped the U.S. lead on the world stage by promoting food security, global health, economic prosperity, and democratic governance. We must boost government efficiency while continuing to show up and engage abroad as the partner of choice. Reforms must be done with precision and care so that America's standing and ability to project soft power are maintained abroad. Missteps will allow our adversaries, including China, an open door to fill the void. America must be strong for a peaceful world.”

Rep. Young Kim (R-CA): “If we pull out all of those activities and programs we are funding via USAID, who's going to step in? China. And they're just waiting for us to pull out.”

Rep. Mark Green (R-TN): “The generosity of Americans and the blessing of giving aid to others has always been one of our most valuable tools for diplomacy. The American people have a proud history of championing a fellow man.”

Rep. Tom Kean (R-NJ): “The best policies here and abroad are consistent over administrations, they are transparent with the American people as well as people looking from abroad, and so having that bipartisan strategy and consistency is extraordinarily important.”

Former Rep. Ted Yoho (R-FL) [testified](#) that he “entered Congress with the goal of eliminating foreign aid,” until he travelled to see the wasteful programs in-person only to find that, “foreign aid, when used properly, can be a tool in soft diplomacy that strengthens the nation's economy and security, increases trade, decreases migration, and creates strong partners and allies.”



Other Republican Members of Congress (Prior to January 2025)

Senator Bill Hagerty (R-TN) emphasized the importance of USAID to focus on food and financial security, [stating](#), “That’s what we should be focused on. How could the best allocation of taxpayer funds be on providing programs like this? And when we have a void, China steps in to fill that void. We need to be in the game. We need to be looking at the basic needs.”

Senator Tom Cotton (R-AR), wrote in his book *Beat China*, “The United States has powerful development–finance tools that will be useful during the economic long war with China. These include the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), U.S. International Development Finance Corporation (DFC), and Export–Import Bank (EXIM). Each could play an important role in softening the disruption of targeted decoupling by connecting U.S. firms with new customers, hastening the movement of supply chains out of China, and combatting Chinese attempts to dominate sales of key technology to foreign countries.”

Senator Katie Britt (R-AL) supported the April 2024 foreign aid package to Ukraine, Israel and Taiwan, [stating](#) that “This legislation accomplishes a generational victory that is integral to defending America’s future.”

Senator Thom Tillis (R-NC): “America faces unprecedented threats as Communist China, Putin’s Russia, and the terrorist state of Iran incite conflict and chaos across the globe.. Ignoring the lessons of history by turning our backs on Ukraine, Israel, and Taiwan during this critical time would have emboldened our adversaries and guaranteed a far more dangerous world for us to navigate in the months and years ahead.

Senator Joni Ernst (R-IA): “Plain and simple–food security is national security. I was grateful to join today’s summit to share my solutions to address the growing food security crisis, protect American ag land, and leverage public and private sector investments in agriculture to help keep communities across the Heartland safe and fed.”

Democratic Members of Congress (Since Freeze of Overseas Programs Began)

Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY): “USAID programs preserve America’s influence in Africa, Asia, and regions across the world. Our humanitarian efforts are critical for fighting Ebola, which is spreading in Uganda right now. It’s essential for countering terrorist activity. At a time of soaring egg prices, shutting off USAID programs that fight the global spread of bird flu is utterly asinine. If America retreats from the rest of the world, China will fill in the void. Russia’s influence will grow. Hatred against the U.S. will keep rising. Our diplomatic influence will disintegrate.”

Senate Foreign Relations Committee Ranking Member Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH) said in a roundtable discussion on the national security implications of halting U.S. foreign assistance, “Billions of dollars in contracts are being terminated as we speak with no regard for our national safety... It does not make us safer, it does not more secure and it does not make us more prosperous. And it definitely does not put Americans first. It increases the chances of terror attacks, it increases the number of people coming to our borders, it leaves us vulnerable to deadly diseases and it gives our most powerful adversaries an opening to exploit.”

Senate Appropriations SFOPS Subcommittee Ranking Member Brian Schatz (D-HI): “A lot of foreign policy is about managing impossible situations, but sometimes it’s about avoiding catastrophic unforced errors.”

Senate Appropriations Defense Subcommittee Ranking Member Chris Coons (D-DE) [wrote](#) in the Washington Post that “U.S. foreign assistance makes up 1% of our federal budget, and this money isn’t charity. It bolsters our security and advances our values... wins us friends, establishes our leadership, and neutralizes distant threats.”

House Foreign Affairs Committee Ranking Member Gregory Meeks (D-NY): “If the Trump Administration wants to review or revise various foreign assistance efforts, they could do so without an arbitrary, wholesale freeze—and in consultation with Congress.”

House Appropriations National Security Subcommittee Ranking Member Lois Frankel (D-FL): “[While](#) it’s reasonable for a new administration to review programs, I worry that this sudden and sweeping freeze on U.S. foreign assistance risks dire consequences for global health, safety, and security—including our own...This will cause unnecessary hardship for vulnerable communities, undermine years of development progress, and damage our credibility as a reliable partner. This creates an opening for adversaries such as China and Russia to expand their influence.”