May 21, 2021

Dear Chairwoman McCollum, Ranking Member Calvert, Chairman Tester, and Ranking Member Shelby,

The undersigned 40 organizations believe that the Biden administration’s recently announced troop withdrawal from Afghanistan offers an opportunity to re-examine the nation’s extremely large commitments to the Pentagon budget. We are dismayed that the administration's initial budget blueprint to Congress did not reflect a corresponding reduction in war funds, and instead included a gargantuan request of $753 billion for the Pentagon and affiliated spending. We urge the congressional defense appropriations subcommittees to appropriate a lower topline than initially requested by the Biden administration to, at a minimum, reflect cost savings from withdrawing troops from Afghanistan.

Estimates indicate that at least $20 billion and perhaps as much as $50 billion will be freed up by withdrawing troops from Afghanistan. Yet the administration requested a 1.7 percent increase from the previous fiscal year, adding $13 billion in discretionary spending to an already sky-high figure. If the costs of the troop withdrawal were not factored into this request, the budget increase will in reality be even greater, given troops are required to withdraw prior to the start of the next fiscal year.

Recently, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute reported that the United States spent more on its military last year than the next eleven nations combined, a whopping 39 percent of global military spending in 2020. If enacted, the administration’s proposed budget would provide the Department of Defense with more money than the Departments of State, Justice, Education, Transportation, Health and Human Services, and the Environmental Protection Agency combined. The increase alone in Pentagon spending is more than the entire budget for diplomatic programs at the State Department - despite the fact that robust diplomacy in Afghanistan will be needed both during and after the troop withdrawal.

As such, we urge you to appropriate a lower topline for the Pentagon and associated spending in the final FY22 budget than that requested by the Biden administration.

Sincerely,

American Friends Service Committee
Center for International Policy
Coalition on Human Needs
CODEPINK
Common Defense
Concerned Veterans for America
Daily Kos
DC Peace Team
Demand Progress
Detention Watch Network
Foreign Policy for America
Friends Committee on National Legislation
Friends of the Earth
Just Foreign Policy
Greenpeace US
Indivisible
MADRE
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
MoveOn
National Priorities Project at the Institute for Policy Studies
National Taxpayers Union
Our Revolution
Pax Christi USA
Peace Action
Peace Direct
PlusPeace
Progress America
Project On Government Oversight
Public Citizen
Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft
RootsAction.org
Sisters of Mercy of the Americas - Justice Team
Social Security Works
Taxpayers for Common Sense
United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries
United Methodist Church - General Board of Church and Society
Win Without War
Women’s Actions for New Directions
World BEYOND War
Veterans for Peace