

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 10, 2025

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

Dear Secretary Rubio:

We welcomed your decision to visit key Latin American countries from February 1-6, 2025 – Panama, El Salvador, Costa Rica, Guatemala and the Dominican Republic – for your first trip as Secretary of State. This decision reflects our mutual understanding of the critical role of our Western Hemisphere partnerships in U.S. national security.

All five countries are also home to important U.S. foreign assistance programs and USAID missions that manage much of this funding. These programs are fundamental to advancing the exact national security priorities you highlighted as the trip's themes: bolstering regional cooperation, preventing large-scale irregular migration, curtailing cartel activity, countering China and deepening economic partnerships. However, all five countries continue to be subject to a blanket freeze, including on critical national security assistance programming and the suspension of USAID activities on January 24.

During your stop in El Salvador, you visited the Aeroman aeronautics plant and used this location as a venue for disparaging the work of USAID and its employees. Although you touted Aeroman as an example of private sector innovation, you may be interested to learn that Aeroman itself is a longstanding beneficiary of USAID's Bridges to Employment program.

Other examples include:

- Migrant return programs supported by USAID have helped El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras receive and process nearly 150,000 returned migrants. Prior to January 24, USAID fostered the sustainable reintegration of these migrants into their communities, significantly reducing repeat migration. At a time in which the Trump administration is pushing these countries to accept more and more deportees, these programs are no longer active.
- In Panama, U.S. foreign assistance has supported projects to enhance border security and boost Panama's ability to counter narcotrafficking routes and networks. The Darien Gap, on Panama's southern border with Colombia, is the only land route for migrants traveling

north from South America. These programs are no longer active.

- In El Salvador, Congress has appropriated funds for programs to address the security, economic, and social drivers of irregular migration and to strengthen democratic institutions. With poverty around 30 percent over the last five years and with an economy highly dependent on remittances, mass deportations to El Salvador as well as political instability risk an explosion of gang violence. These programs are no longer active.
- In Costa Rica, U.S. foreign assistance has supported Costa Rican law enforcement efforts to dramatically reduce the influence of drug cartels and mitigate other destabilizing security threats – to include helping the country house migrants who would otherwise travel north to the U.S. border. U.S. economic assistance programming has also fostered a ripe investment climate for U.S. firms, including a major Intel computer chip factory that is essential to efforts to counter China’s chipmaking capacity. These programs are no longer active.
- In Guatemala, U.S. foreign assistance has promoted democratic resilience and political stability, including the provision of cost-effective development assistance to support job creation and fostering opportunities for foreign direct investment. This has played a major role in stemming migration and creating economic incentives for migrants and Guatemalans to stay in Guatemala rather than traveling north to the U.S. border. As a result of active U.S. partnership, Guatemala remains one of 12 countries to recognize Taiwan, despite significant pressure from China. These programs are no longer active.
- In the Dominican Republic, U.S. assistance has supported health programs that have limited the spread of infectious diseases – in a country geographically very close to the United States – and has served to mitigate migrant outflows. These programs are no longer active.

As must have been clear during your trip, U.S. national security interests in every location you visited have been directly advanced by the thoughtful execution of U.S. foreign assistance programming.

Throughout your Congressional career you were a forceful advocate for curtailing Chinese influence globally and advancing the interests of the American people. You spoke eloquently about the essential role of foreign assistance in advancing U.S. interests. You have also rightly asserted that although foreign assistance represents less than 1 percent of the U.S. budget, it is a major force multiplier that keeps our adversaries at bay. During your confirmation hearing, you affirmed that our foreign policy should make America safer, stronger and more prosperous. This freeze in foreign assistance runs contrary to your stated goals and only helps the U.S.’s adversaries. We urge you to closely consider the disruption caused to U.S. security interests by the blanket freezing of these programs, and by the efforts of Elon Musk and the Trump Administration to destroy USAID.

What is further clear is that Elon Musk – who maintains deep financial connections to China and engages in secret meetings with Russian officials – does not share your priorities or those of the

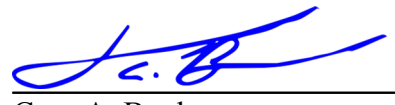
United States. China and Russia are already moving rapidly to exploit the weaknesses created by the Trump Administration's global retreat.

The United States is best able to project power around the world when we are comfortable in our own hemisphere. We are safer and more prosperous when our neighbors are safer and more prosperous. Now that you have returned from your historic trip, we urge you to reflect on the role of U.S. foreign assistance in solidifying our partnerships and advancing our national security interests in Panama, El Salvador, Costa Rica, Guatemala, and the Dominican Republic, as well as throughout the world, and quickly reverse this short-sighted and damaging freeze.

Sincerely,



Tim Kaine
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



Peter Welch
United States Senator



Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator



John Hickenlooper
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



Alex Padilla
United States Senator