



H.R. 2410, Foreign Relations Authorization Act

Reflecting President Obama's Priorities, This Bill Once Again Reinvigorates Diplomacy and Development, After Eight Years of Neglect

Key Points:

- During the eight years of the Bush Administration, U.S. diplomacy and development activities were significantly neglected and underfunded.
- Even a member of the Bush Administration itself acknowledged this fact. In July 2008, Defense Secretary Robert Gates pointed out in a speech, “It has become clear that America’s civilian institutions of diplomacy and development have been chronically undermanned and underfunded for far too long – relative to what we spend on the military, and more important, relative to the responsibilities and challenges our nation has around the world.”
- Now, President Obama has laid out a vision for reinvigorating diplomacy and development. He is calling for a balanced foreign policy that gives prominence to diplomacy and development -- as well as defense. This vision is dramatically different from that of the previous Administration.
- This bill helps implement President Obama’s foreign policy vision. It is designed to protect the national security interests of the United States by bolstering diplomacy and development. By taking these steps, we can help prevent conflicts before they start, restore America’s image in the international community, and rebuild relations with our friends and allies around the world.
- Indeed, using diplomacy to prevent conflict and failed states is much more cost-effective for U.S. taxpayers than providing massive amounts of humanitarian relief, funding peacekeeping operations, or, in the most extreme circumstances, putting U.S. boots on the ground.
- Specifically, this bill authorizes \$18 billion in FY 2010 and such sums as may be necessary in FY 2011 for the State Department, Peace Corps, Broadcasting Board of Governors (responsible for U.S. international broadcasting activities), and other foreign affairs programs.
- The bill reflects the priorities laid out by the Obama Administration. Indeed, almost all of the bill’s authorization levels match the Obama Administration’s FY 2010 budget request.
- The bill is supported by a broad range of groups, including Oxfam, CARE and other humanitarian NGOs; faith-based groups; National Peace Corps Association; the U.S. Chamber of Commerce; Satellite Industry Association; and Aerospace Industries Association.

Today, the House will consider H.R. 2410, Foreign Relations Authorization Act. This bill authorizes \$18 billion in FY 2010 and such sums as may be necessary in FY 2011 for the funding of the State Department, Peace Corps, Broadcast Board of Governors, and other foreign affairs programs. Below is an overview of some of the bill's key provisions.

Strengthens U.S. diplomatic activities by strengthening the State Department. The bill includes several provisions to strengthen the capabilities of the State Department. For example, it is designed to close the current “diplomacy gap” that has created imbalances and vulnerabilities in U.S. national security and resulted in a 16% gap in staffing in some overseas posts. Specifically, it supports the President’s request to rebuild the Foreign Service, including authorization of 1,500 new Foreign Service officers at State and 700 at the U.S. Agency for International Development over fiscal years 2010 and 2011.

Enhances efforts to assist Mexico and other Western Hemisphere countries reduce drug-related violence. The bill strengthens the “Merida Initiative,” which is an agreement reached by President Bush and Mexico in 2007 pledging U.S. assistance to the Mexican government in its fight against the drug cartels. This bill strengthens the Merida Initiative -- requiring the President to designate a “Merida Coordinator” at the State Department, with the rank of ambassador, to track all Merida Initiative-related efforts throughout the U.S. government. It also requires the President to incorporate Caribbean countries into the Initiative.

Bolsters the Peace Corps. The bill substantially increases the budget of the Peace Corps to support President Obama’s goal of doubling the number of Peace Corps volunteers and authorize a plan to use short-term volunteers to respond to humanitarian and development needs.

Ensures the U.S. meets its financial commitments to the U.N. and other international organizations. The bill authorizes \$1.8 billion in FY 2010, and such funds as may be necessary in FY 2011, for assessed contributions to international organizations. International organizations to which the U.S. contributes include the U.N., the U.N.’s specialized agencies, and the Organization of American States and other inter-American organizations.

Reforms the system of export controls for military technology. The bill contains numerous reforms to better ensure that arms exports comply with U.S. foreign policy and security objectives. It also requires the President to conduct a comprehensive and systematic review of the U.S. arms export control system in the context of the national security interests and strategic foreign policy objectives of the United States.

Strengthens the arms control and nonproliferation capabilities of the State Department. The bill authorizes \$3 million for 25 new positions at the State Department for arms control and nonproliferation functions, and gives additional authority to the Secretary of State under the Arms Control and Disarmament Act (PL 87-297). It also establishes a scholarship program to recruit students for civilian careers in the fields of nonproliferation, arms control and international security.

Creates a new foundation to help U.S. students study abroad. The bill establishes the Senator Paul Simon Study Abroad Foundation as a new executive branch corporation to expand dramatically the number and economic diversity of U.S. students studying abroad.

Increases resources for enforcement of intellectual property rights. The bill increases resources and training for enforcement of intellectual property rights, especially in countries identified by the U.S. government as lax in enforcing those rights – including by establishing 10 intellectual property attaches to serve at U.S. embassies around the world.