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(BY APPOINTMENT ONLY)

The Honorable Kay Granger
Chairman
House Appropriations Subcommittee on State,
Foreign Operations, and Related Programs
Room HB-26, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Nita Lowey
Ranking Member
House Appropriations Subcommittee on State,
Foreign Operations, and Related Programs
Room 1016, Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Granger and Ranking Member Lowey:

Chairman Granger, Ranking Member Lowey, Members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to present my priority requests. Having served on this subcommittee for eight years, though I am now on leave, I know the importance of your work. Now more than ever, American interests are at stake as we confront unprecedented instability and growing humanitarian crises around the world. Congress must invest in our national security, which includes development and diplomacy programs, alongside a strong defense.

Among my requests to the Subcommittee, I want to highlight two matters I hope the subcommittee will prioritize in the FY19 bill – support for **Armenia and the people of Nagorno Karabakh**; and the **Broadcasting Board of Governors**, the independent agency charged with informing, engaging and connecting people around the world in support of freedom and democracy.

Support for the People of Nagorno Karabakh

I have always been a strong proponent of support for Armenia. I have also been unwavering in my support for the right of self-determination of the people of Nagorno-Karabakh or Artsakh. Armenia has just emerged from a period of volatile politics and mass protests with a new Prime Minister, and I believe this is an important moment to deepen our engagement with Armenia and offer our support as they build a stronger and more prosperous democracy.

I continue to be deeply disturbed by the military provocations by Azerbaijani forces against the people of Artsakh. I remain deeply concerned too by the strong evidence of human rights abuses on the part of Azeri troops, and the appalling desecration of the bodies of Armenian and Artsakh citizens. There need to be specific steps to defuse tension and violence along the border, such as independent monitors on the Line of Contact, and the use of technologies that can detect sniper fire from Azerbaijan's territory. The true victims of this escalated violence are the people of Artsakh who simply want to live free of fear and violence, and exercise their right of self-determination.

I request the Subcommittee:

- To include language to ensure not less than \$20 million is appropriated to support implementation of the Royce-Engel peace proposals, prioritizing the placement of independent monitors and equipment to determine the source of attacks along the line of contact.
- Suspend U.S. military aid to Azerbaijan until its government ceases its attacks against Armenia and Nagorno Karabakh, and agrees to the peaceful resolution of regional conflicts.
- Continue and expand the humanitarian assistance provided to Artsakh's civilians, including the continuation of de-mining programs as well as support for rehabilitation programs.

Support for Armenia's Independence

The U.S.-Armenia relationship is founded upon a shared commitment to freedom and democratic values. Armenia provides a safe haven for refugees, participates in U.S.-led peacekeeping deployments, and supports the peaceful resolution of regional disputes. Blockaded by Azerbaijan and Turkey, Armenia confronts serious challenges to its security and its sovereignty. U.S. economic and military assistance plays a vital role in strengthening Armenia's independence. Military aid enables Armenia's membership in NATO's Partnership for Peace, and supports Armenia's participation in peacekeeping operations.

I request the Subcommittee to:

- Increase of FMF aid for projects that develop Armenia's capability to undertake peacekeeping missions.
- Increase IMET funding to expand U.S. training opportunities for Armenian officers.
- Include language ensuring that not less than \$40 million in economic aid and \$11 million in military aid is appropriated to Armenia.

Regional Safe Haven for Middle East Refugees

More than 20,000 individuals from Syria have sought safety in Armenia, a state which despite being one of the poorest nations to accept Syrian refugees has received only modest levels of U.S. and international relief and resettlement assistance. Areas of greatest need include short-term housing and support for social and economic integration.

I request the Subcommittee:

- Include language ensuring not less than \$40 million is appropriated to support Armenia's efforts to serve as a regional safe haven for Christians and other at-risk populations fleeing violence in the Middle East.

Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG)

Russia is waging a disinformation campaign to undermine Western democratic states and values and subvert the NATO alliance. In addition to invading Georgia and Ukraine, and bombing civilians in Syria, Russia has pumped tens of millions into disinformation and propaganda targeting the U.S. and

Europe. Russia seeks to create chaos and division in the U.S. and EU through disinformation campaigns to distract us, divide us, and ultimately paralyze us, so Russia can achieve its foreign policy goals of fracturing the US-led security order.

Russia seeks to destroy confidence in pro-Western political parties and values through targeted information wars that range from pushing fake news stories and conspiracy theories, to inflaming existing tensions on issues such as immigration. Russia has been developing and implementing this disinformation effort for a number of years, which worked to influence the U.S. election, Brexit referendum, and numerous interventions in Eastern and Western Europe. For too long, the U.S. response to Russian aggression has been weak and ineffective. We need to better counter Russia's information war and combat its coordinated propaganda and disinformation. The best way to respond is through truthful, independent journalism, as well as having a positive narrative about western values and democracies.

It is estimated that six out of seven people in the world live in countries without a free press. The BBG supports five broadcasting networks that provide programming in 58 languages to over 100 countries, reaching more than 230 million people per week around the globe. By providing an alternative to disinformation and extremist propaganda, the BBG is at the forefront of combatting the weaponization of information and disinformation that we see on a global stage. BBG entities VOA and RFE/RL continues to produce Current Time, a popular 24-7 Russian language digital television network. Current Time connects Russian speakers around the world and provide audiences with objective news on current events and real-time fact-checking of false narratives.

Current Time is pulling strong audiences in social networks. In 2017, its videos were viewed more than 160 million times on Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and Russian social networks. The content that Current Time broadcasts is a mixture of hard and soft programming – it professionally reports local and regional news that is not available in the Russian-language market, or which is misreported. Programs also cover business and entrepreneurship, civil society, culture, travel, and corruption.

As many observers have noted, good quality entertainment programming can be a key to drawing in larger audiences, and Current Time is no exception. It underscores not only that the BBG cannot sustain further cuts at this time, but we should support increased funding to allow BBG to continue to pursue innovative ways to reach important global audiences, and serve as a resilient front against disinformation wars that threaten our democratic governance systems and the values that underlie them.

I request the Subcommittee:

- Appropriate no less than \$800 million for the BBG, including funding for the expansion of Current Time, including funding for entertainment programming to draw in larger audiences, to enhance its ability to serve as a resilient front against disinformation that threatens democratic systems and values.

I appreciate your consideration of these requests.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Adam B. Schiff". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Adam" and last name "Schiff" clearly legible, and a middle initial "B." in between.

Adam B. Schiff
Member of Congress