

RELEASE IN FULL

United States Institute of Peace: Background

Proposals for the creation of a government “peace” agency stretch as far back as a proposal in 1792 to create a “Peace Office” on par with the War Department. Between 1935 and 1976 over 140 bills were introduced in Congress to establish peace-related agencies, departments, bureaus, and committees of Congress. In 1979 Congress established the Commission on Proposals for the National Academy of Peace and Conflict Resolution. In 1981, the Commission – known as the Matsunaga Commission for its head, Senator Spark Matsunaga – recommended the creation of a national peace academy. In 1984, President Reagan signed the United States Institute of Peace Act and the first meeting of USIP’s Board of Directors took place in 1986.

The USIP Act established “an independent, nonprofit, national institute to serve the people and the Government through the widest possible range of education and trainings, basic and applied research opportunities, and peace information services on the means to promote international peace and the resolution of conflicts among the nations and peoples of the world without recourse to violence.”

USIP is an independent agency, funded by Congress, which serves as an intersection between those involved in policy research, fieldwork, and practitioners. More than 70 USIP policy experts conduct research on a wide variety of country-specific and cross-cutting functional issues. Some examples of USIP activities include:

- Working in countries such as Iraq, Sudan, Nigeria, Uganda, Pakistan, and Afghanistan to mediate and facilitate dialogue among parties in conflict, promote the rule of law, strengthen civil society and education systems, and educating the public through events, films, and other outreach.
- USIP has given out \$58 million in grants for over 1,700 peacebuilding projects in 76 countries.
- USIP hosts standing working groups of experts and practitioners on a variety of issues, including Sudan, Syria, Korea, Iran, Iraq, and Haiti.
- USIP has facilitated a number of task forces, including the Iraq Study Group and the recent Congressional Commission on the Strategic Posture of the United States, chaired by William Perry.