

**STATE, FOREIGN OPERATIONS, AND RELATED
PROGRAMS APPROPRIATIONS FOR FISCAL
YEAR 2016**

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 2015

U.S. SENATE,
SUBCOMMITTEE OF THE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS,
Washington, DC.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:07 a.m., in room SD-192, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Lindsey Graham (chairman) presiding.

Present: Senators Graham, Kirk, Blunt, Boozman, Moran, Lankford, Daines, Leahy, Durbin, Coons, Merkley, and Murphy.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

STATEMENT OF HON. JOHN F. KERRY, SECRETARY

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR LINDSEY GRAHAM

Senator GRAHAM. The committee will come to order.

It is my pleasure to have Secretary Kerry with us today. We all look forward to your testimony, Mr. Secretary. I just want to acknowledge your hard work on behalf of our Nation. You are very energetic, traveling from one end of the globe to the other, trying to bring some calm out of chaos.

As to the subcommittee itself, I am now the chairman. I appreciate the honor of chairing the subcommittee, but my partner, Senator Leahy, we will continue to do what we have been doing since I have been here, and that is work together for the common good.

This is one account that has been bipartisan. We intend to keep it that way. It represents 1 percent of the Federal budget, give or take a bit. The amount of return on investment the American taxpayer has achieved from this account I think is something we should all be proud of.

There is more than one way to deal with a problem. The military options are sometimes the most talked about, and there are other ways to engage the world. This account represents ways to engage the world without the use of military force.

I worry deeply about the effects of sequestration, Mr. Secretary, on this account. We are due to spend 2.3 percent of GDP, somewhere in that range, on defense by the 2024 period. That will be the lowest amount we spend on our national defense in decades.

This account, which I believe is national defense in another form, gets dramatically reduced.

What does that mean? It means that all the efforts we have made to counter malaria and AIDS in Africa and throughout the world are put in jeopardy. We have made such progress. Mother-to-child AIDS transmission has been dramatically reduced. There are countries on the continent of Africa that are inside the 10-yard line in terms of eradicating their AIDS problems. We are turning the corner on malaria and almost eradicated polio.

The developing world needs America now more than ever. From an American taxpayer point of view, this has been a good investment to bring stability, particularly to the continent of Africa. All is in jeopardy if the Congress continues to sit on the sidelines and watch sequestration being implemented.

Finally, Embassy security. The entire State Department's budget is under the appropriation of this subcommittee. To the diplomats and the contractors who are serving in faraway places with strange sounding names, God bless you. We worry about your safety daily. I am here to say, from my point of view as chairman of the subcommittee, if sequestration is not somehow moderated or replaced, we are putting in jeopardy the ability to post people overseas in dangerous areas safely. That, to me, is not an alarmist view. It is reality.

So I look forward to hearing from the Secretary about a variety of challenges throughout the world, and would love to hear your comments about the effects of sequestration on your ability to manage the department. You have a hard stop at noon, so we will try to get through the 7-minute rounds.

With that, I will turn it over to Senator Leahy.

STATEMENT OF SENATOR PATRICK J. LEAHY

Senator LEAHY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I congratulate you in the way your staff worked with me and my staff throughout the years. The chairman was right in saying that this is a committee where we are pretty transparent. We try to work in a bipartisan way. I remember Senators Dan Inouye and Ted Stevens doing that. I did it with Senator McConnell. We went back and forth. Part of the time, I was chairman. Part of the time, he was chairman. And then it was Senator Gregg in New Hampshire, and now Senator Graham.

We did work closely together. Our bill was one of the few that came out with virtually unanimous support. We tried to check the priorities of whoever was in the White House, whether it was a Democrat or Republican as President.

One of the things we tried to do also was to give the view to the rest of the world that we are a lot stronger when we work together.

Mr. Secretary, you have one of the most difficult jobs in the world. We have known each other for decades. I have talked to you about your travels, your indefatigable travels. But the world seems to be on fire, sometimes literally, in so many parts of the world.

We had a 14-year war in Afghanistan that set wildly optimistic goals. But today, much of that country remains under Taliban control with a weak central government. The government I believe we should support struggles to function in a highly insecure and cor-

rupt environment. We had tens of billions of dollars in aid programs implemented by U.S. contractors, very little of that can be or will be sustained by the Afghans.

In Iraq, we spent hundreds of billions while dire needs in other parts of the world, including our own hemisphere, to say nothing about our own country, were neglected. But there it is, an unstable, corrupt environment. I believe the future is anything but secure.

Syria is the world's biggest disaster. Libya looks like it can become another Syria.

Relations between Israelis and Palestinians have gone from bad to worse, and we are at a decisive point with Iran.

ISIL has emerged seemingly out of nowhere. It is probably the best illustration of how naive some were to think that launching a war to overthrow Saddam Hussein meant that we were going to be created in that area as liberators.

I have more of my statement that I will put in my record.

But look at Central America. Decades of corrupt oligarchies, civil wars, despots. Governments there have squandered the past two decades. Now you have organized crime and corruption deeply rooted, widespread. I do welcome a new focus in that region, but I want to make sure that the billions that are being requested are going to be spent differently than they were in the past.

Then we have Ebola, HIV/AIDS, spiraling cost of U.N. peacekeeping, global warming. There is a lot going on.

I do commend the administration. I have spoken to you privately and the President about this.

I realized that 50 years of policy on Cuba hadn't worked. I think of the memos sent to the President, to hold tough and those Castros will be gone any day now. Of course, the first such memo was sent to President Eisenhower and then President Kennedy and President Johnson, President Nixon, and so on.

PREPARED STATEMENT

So I think it won't change overnight, but the nice thing now is that the mistakes made in Cuba and the failures of their own economy, the Cuban Government can no longer blame it on us because of our embargo. They are going to have to take responsibility for their own mistakes.

I will put my full statement in the record.

[The statement follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF SENATOR PATRICK J. LEAHY

Thank you Mr. Chairman. This is Senator Graham's first hearing as chairman of this subcommittee, and I congratulate him and thank him for the way he and his staff have worked with me and my staff over the years.

This subcommittee has a history of bipartisanship.

I remember 30 years ago when Senators Dan Inouye and Bob Kasten worked together, and myself with Senator McConnell, Senator Gregg, and since then with Senator Graham.

I have served as chairman and ranking member. We have switched back and forth. But unlike some committees we have worked in a transparent, cooperative way, drafting the bills and reports together.

We include the priorities of both sides, which has made it possible to report bills with strong bipartisan votes and the support of the White House—whether Republican or Democrat.

In a world as dangerous as today, we are far stronger when we act together.

Mr. Secretary, thank you for being here. You have one of the most difficult jobs in the Government. The world seems to be on fire—literally or figuratively—in so many places it is hard to keep track. We appreciate that you are here requesting the resources to try to put those fires out.

I think today we are reaping some of what we have sowed. After a 14 year war in Afghanistan that set wildly optimistic goals, much of that country remains under Taliban control. A weak central government—a government I believe we should support—struggles to function in a highly insecure and corrupt environment.

After tens of billions of dollars on aid programs implemented by U.S. contractors, very little of our investment can be sustained by the Afghans.

In Iraq, where we spent hundreds of billions while dire needs in other parts of the world—including our own hemisphere—were neglected, there is a similarly unstable, corrupt environment where the future is anything but secure.

In the meantime, Syria is the world's biggest disaster, Libya looks like it is becoming another Syria, relations between Israelis and Palestinians have gone from bad to worse, and we are approaching a decisive point in the negotiations with Iran.

To top it off, ISIL has emerged seemingly out of nowhere, which is perhaps the best illustration of how little the past administration knew it was risking when it confidently, and naively, launched a war to overthrow Saddam Hussein expecting to be greeted as liberators.

Our history is replete with examples of enormously costly, failed attempts to control events—or to ally ourselves with repressive, corrupt regimes—in parts of the world we don't understand, seemingly oblivious to the long-term consequences.

I respect President Obama for wanting to avoid repeating those mistakes, and I am interested in hearing your ideas for how to do that.

In Central America, after decades of corrupt oligarchies, civil wars and death squads, governments there have squandered the past two decades. Poverty, violence, organized crime and corruption are now deeply rooted and widespread.

I welcome the administration's new focus on that region, but I want to hear how the billion dollar initiative you propose is substantially different from the billions we have spent there already.

Then there is Ebola and HIV/AIDS, the spiraling cost of UN peacekeeping, global warming—the list of challenges for you and this subcommittee is almost endless.

I want to commend you for the change in our policy toward Cuba, which has been praised by our allies in this hemisphere.

I hope the Congress will do its part by ending the embargo, which has failed to achieve any of its objectives. Then the Cuban people will see that it is their own government, not the United States that is to blame for the poverty and repression.

Your fiscal year 2016 budget request—with exceptions like the funding for Central America, the Green Climate Fund, and the State Department's and the United States Agency for International Development's (USAID) operating budgets—looks a lot like last year.

It will, like most years, require us to make hard choices. I want to work with you and Chairman Graham because I think we can do a much better job of getting what we pay for.

Senator GRAHAM. Thank you, Senator Leahy.

I have asked the Office of Inspector General to submit written testimony on the budget request, which will appear in the record following Secretary Kerry's opening statement.

SUMMARY STATEMENT OF HON. JOHN F. KERRY

Welcome, Secretary Kerry. We look forward to testimony.

Secretary KERRY. Well, Mr. Chairman, thank you very, very much. It is really a pleasure to be here with you today and with all my former colleagues and some non-former. But I deeply appreciate the opportunity to testify.

And I welcome your chairmanship, Mr. Chairman, and Ranking Member Leahy's continued efforts on this committee. I have always found this committee has worked very hard to be bipartisan or apolitical, and find the important middle ground for America, and I appreciate those efforts.

To respect your time, I am going to summarize. The heart of my message, Mr. Chairman, is really pretty straightforward, and you

spoke to it in your own opening. We do an awful lot on very little, and the simple reality is that America is leading all around the world. I am not going to go through all the places where we are literally taking the lead and making things happen, whether it is pushing back in parts of Asia against potentially aggressive behavior; or it is Ebola, the coalition to deal with that; the ISIL coalition; Syria; Ukraine, Europe, sanctions; the effort to negotiate with Iran. I can run a long list.

The bottom line I want to make to all of you is, we are a great country, and we need to behave like a great country. And when it comes to the issue of sequestration, it is kind of a public admission that the Congress is unwilling to or unable to make choices.

Our job is to make choices, all of us. And the simple fact is we cannot lead, we cannot do what we need to do in the world, on the cheap. As this committee knows well, the funds that we devote to the entire range of foreign policy programming, everything from our counterterrorism to nonproliferation initiatives, to helping businesspeople and travelers be able to open doors, get their visas, move through rapidly, do business in various countries, all of which creates jobs here at home, may I add, all of that amounts to less than 1 percent of the Federal budget. And yet it is not an exaggeration to say that that 1 percent probably has an impact on 50 percent or more of the history that will be written about this era.

So I invite members of this committee to work with me and my colleagues to shape that history in ways that will advance our Nation's interests and uphold the values that our citizens represent. And that is really what a budget is. It is a statement of your priorities and of your values.

ISIL—DAESH

Now, one place to begin is with our efforts to mobilize countries everywhere to counter violent terrorism. Last week here in Washington, but every day around the globe, literally, we are preparing and acting to confront this challenge, and it goes well beyond ISIL or Daesh, although Daesh, obviously, is a central part of it.

Since September, we have put together a coalition of more than 60 countries, with five Arab nations joining us in the efforts in Syria today. We have launched some 2,500 airstrikes in Iraq and Syria. And whenever we have combined our air support with able partners on the ground, the terrorists have literally been routed.

We have helped the Iraqis to take back territory. Approximately 30 percent of the territory that had been gained by ISIL has now been restored to Iraqi hands. And we are training the Iraqis and preparing for the moment where they can do more. Thousands of ISIL-Daesh leaders have been taken off the battlefield. We are undertaking a global effort to restrict their revenues, curb the recruitment of foreign fighters. And we are engaged in a round-the-clock campaign to rebut the terrorist messaging on social media and on other outlets.

Now, we are in the early stages of what is going to be a multiyear effort, but the momentum that ISIL had built up last fall, last summer, has dissipated. A key supply line has been completely severed. ISIL militants can no longer maneuver out in the

open the way they did before. Convoys can't move, and they can't talk to each other the way they used to.

Throughout, the coalition has been working closely with Iraq. We have said from day one: President Obama made the right choice in saying that he was going to calibrate the early bombing in order to try to make certain that we had a government transition in Iraq that gave us a government we could work with. And frankly, with pretty effective diplomacy on the ground—with our ambassador, our assistant secretary, the Vice President, others—we were able to help the Iraqis themselves to make that transition. And now we have an inclusive government backed by professional security forces that are enjoying the full support of its people.

So we are looking to you for the resources to help us be able to continue to bring Sunni tribal leaders more fully into this process. It is also important that Iraqis speak against Daesh with one voice. And it is vital that Americans and the rest of our partners do so as well. The leaders of Daesh have to understand that they are not going to divide us, and they are not going to beat us.

Earlier this month, the President transmitted to Congress a draft Authorization for Use of Military Force. It reflects our views, but frankly, it profited greatly from the testimony that I gave the Foreign Relations Committee last December and the discussions we had on the Hill.

Mr. Chairman, bringing people together and finding answers to these tough challenges is what we do in our country, I think pretty darn well. And if we get caught trying to make a difference in many of these places, then we are living up to what the world expects from us.

UKRAINE

In Europe, we have been supporting Ukraine. We can go into that in some greater detail. I won't tie it all up now, except to say that we are working also on the bilateral economic reforms necessary through the IMF. And while the situation in the east obviously still remains very tricky, very tenuous, even grim, the ultimate outcome is undecided, and Ukrainians are coming together to rebuild their own democracy. And Europe is standing firm, and Russia is paying a very significant price.

IRAN

We are focused, obviously, on Iran. The President has made clear, and I can't state this more firmly, the policy is Iran will not get a nuclear weapon. And anybody running around right now jumping in to say, "Well, we don't like the deal," or this or that, doesn't know what the deal is. There is no deal yet. And I caution people to wait to see what these negotiations produce.

Since 2013, we have been testing whether or not we can achieve that goal diplomatically. I don't know yet. But it is the most effective way to solve the problem, and we will prove that over the course of these next weeks and months.

The P5-plus-1 talks have made inroads since the Joint Plan of Action. We have halted the progress of Tehran's nuclear program. We have gained unprecedented insight into it. And we expect to

know soon whether or not Iran is willing to put together an acceptable and verifiable plan.

CUBA

As you know, in December, President Obama announced plans to normalize relations with Cuba. Last month, Assistant Secretary of State Jacobson went to the island for historic meetings with the government. The next meeting will take place here on Friday. We will exclusively be talking about the road to the diplomatic process.

But she conveyed the message echoed by many of you that America's support for democratic reforms, human rights, Internet freedom, and the release of political prisoners is unequivocal. And the change that we are making, we believe, actually assists the United States to be able to promote the democracy and the rights that we want for the people of Cuba. It will also make it harder for those who want to close the door to blame America for what is happening there, and we believe, in the end, can help create accountability for the hardships that those folks live under.

AFGHANISTAN

So, Mr. Chairman, much has happened since my last budget testimony. For example, in the wake of a fractious election, we have helped Afghanistan's new unity government to come together to build on the past economic and social progress and take full responsibility for the security of its citizens. I was intimately involved in both negotiating the BSA and this transition. And I can tell you there is a very different process of governance now taking hold in Kabul, in Afghanistan.

SYRIA

In addition, we led a successful international effort that eliminated Syria's declared stockpile of chemical weapons, placing those weapons beyond the reach of both government forces and terrorists.

And I ask you just to stop and think: If we hadn't done that—there were many people saying all you have to do is drop a bomb or two. Well, a bomb or two would not have gotten the weapons out. Diplomacy got the weapons out. And thank God they are out, because if they weren't, ISIS, which controls a significant portion of Syria, would have access to them.

ASIA

So we have been modernizing our alliances in the Asia Pacific, maintaining our steadfast support for the denuclearized Korean Peninsula. We are pursuing ambitious trade agreements in Europe and Asia. And last August, as you know, President Obama hosted a historic summit with African leaders. Especially, we are moving forward in the areas of food security, youth leadership, and the economic participation of women.

PEACEKEEPING

We have supported peace operations by the U.N. and African Union to save civilian lives. And our former colleague Russ Feingold did an outstanding job of serving as a special envoy to the

Great Lakes region in helping to negotiate an end to the violence with M23 and a process for the disarmament, which we are now working on enforcing.

HIV/AIDS

We have PEPFAR, which you mentioned, Mr. Chairman. With congressional support, we have been able to further reduce HIV infections to create an AIDS-free generation. That is what we are on the cusp of. And there are many other challenges, obviously, on that continent.

ENVIRONMENT AND HUMAN RIGHTS

We have also been leading on the environment, on the oceans and marine sanctuaries, promoting democracy and good governance, supporting human rights and religious liberty.

And I would just close by saying to you, Mr. Chairman, Dean Acheson served as Secretary of State in 1949–1953 in the shadow of World War II. And he wrote that the problems that bedevil American foreign policy are not like headaches that can be cured by taking an aspirin and getting a good night's sleep. He wrote, "All our lives, the danger, the uncertainty, the need for alertness, for effort, for discipline, will be upon us."

It is true today, never more so in many ways. Those words remind us that we long ago entered an era of ever-present danger. And the test of our leadership has never been to completely be able to eliminate those risks, because that is just probably not possible. The test has been whether we can manage them decisively over time in ways that reduce the peril and strengthen the forces of democracy, humanity, justice, law, human rights.

And that is precisely the task that confronts us today. And I believe that once again, the United States of America is answering that call.

And I want to express our gratitude to the young men and women in uniform around the world who bear an enormous amount of this burden of helping us to do that; also to the average Americans who contribute to civil society; the work of our development professionals who put themselves at risk; to journalists who have lost lives covering these challenges; and also to you, the Members of Congress who travel, who learn about these countries, who set the international gold standard, frankly, for meeting with our partners overseas and thinking constantly about how we best harness our resources to address the world's problem.

So like Secretary Acheson, we have had our share of headaches, and this is an explosive moment in the world. But the transition that is taking place is really an emergence, really, of people from a kind of darkness, a recognition that we are living in a new, modern global world, where everybody is in touch with everybody all of the time. That raises the possibilities. It also raises the stakes. And it obviously pushes back against culture, against learning, against people's beliefs.

PREPARED STATEMENTS

So we are in an era of uncertainty, but I will tell you this, one thing remains absolutely sure. This administration, the United States, I am convinced this Congress, are absolutely prepared to answer the call.

And with that, Mr. Chairman, I would be delighted to answer any questions.

[The statements follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. JOHN F. KERRY

Mr. Chairman and members of the subcommittee; thank you for the opportunity to testify today regarding America's international leadership and the administration's budget request for the State Department and related agencies for the 2016 fiscal year.

Last month, in his State of the Union Address, President Obama said that we "lead best when we combine military power with strong diplomacy; when we leverage our power with coalition building; [and] when we don't let our fears blind us to the opportunities that this new century presents."

It is with that guidance in mind that we submit our budget to you this year and ask for its fair consideration and approval. We do so at a time and in a world that is marked both by stark tragedy and by great promise, a world where America's role is critical as are the resources that only Congress can provide. So we ask for your help. America must lead, but cannot do so on the cheap. The money we devote to the entire range of foreign policy programming, everything from Embassy security to our counter-terrorism and nonproliferation initiatives, amounts to only about 1 percent of the Federal budget, yet it may impact fifty percent of the history that will be written about this era. So we all have a job—to do everything we can, working together, to shape that history in ways that advance our Nation's interests and uphold the values of the people we represent.

Mr. Chairman, within the fiscal year 2016 President's budget request, the Department of State and USAID are seeking a total of \$50.3 billion in discretionary funding, including \$7.0 billion for Overseas Contingency Operations. Our requests for all accounts include:

- \$3.5 billion to counter the terrorist network known as ISIL, address the crisis in Syria, bolster regional security, and respond to the humanitarian catastrophe brought on by the crises in Syria and Iraq;
- \$3.1 billion in continued support for our democratic partner, Israel;
- \$639 million to help our friends in Ukraine, Georgia, and Moldova as they seek to strengthen their democracies, withstand pressure from Russia, and to integrate more closely into Europe;
- \$1.4 billion to support our activities in and to implement the President's strategy to rebalance to the Asia-Pacific region;
- \$1 billion to address the root causes of illegal migration from Central America to the United States, including the inhumane and perilous migration of unaccompanied children;
- \$5.4 billion to finance our leadership and support for international organizations and peacekeeping efforts and thereby ensure that other nations will share the costs and burdens of maintaining global stability and strengthening consensus principles and norms;
- \$3.4 billion to reinforce our partnerships and diplomatic engagement with Afghanistan and Pakistan;
- \$4.8 billion for Embassy Security that will enable the Department to support overseas security requirements for our personnel and facilities, and continue implementing the recommendations of the Benghazi Accountability Review Board. These critical investments make possible the work of our diplomats to advance American interests worldwide, assist our citizens, and promote our ideals;
- \$1.2 billion to support public diplomacy and exchanges;
- \$8.2 billion for global health, including programs to end preventable child and maternal deaths; combat infectious disease through the Global Health Security Agenda; and create an AIDS-free generation;
- \$808 million to invest in clean energy, sustainable growth, and measures to curb the harmful impacts of global climate change;

- \$978 million for the President's Feed the Future initiative to promote agriculture-led development and help reduce poverty and hunger;
- \$390 million for the President's Counterterrorism Partnerships Fund to support counterterrorism activities, countering violent extremism, and crisis response, as well as provide enabling support to partners engaged on the front lines against terrorism; and
- Over \$2 billion for democracy, human rights, and governance programs that support governments and citizens to build societies where people can address legitimate grievances through the democratic process and express themselves through strong civil societies.

Mr. Chairman, decades ago, in the aftermath of World War II, Dean Acheson wrote that the problems that bedevil American foreign policy are not like headaches that can be cured by taking an aspirin and getting a good night's sleep. "They will," he asserted, "stay with us until death. We have got to understand that all our lives the danger, the uncertainty, the need for alertness, for effort, for discipline will be upon us. This is new to us. It will be hard for us. But we are in for it and the only real question is whether we shall know it soon enough."

Secretary Acheson's words remind us that we long ago entered into an era of virtually nonstop danger, whether in one part of the world or another or regarding one type of challenge or another. The test for our leadership has never been to entirely eliminate those risks, because that is not possible; the test has been whether we can manage them decisively over time in ways that reduce the peril and strengthen the forces of democracy, humanity, justice, and law.

That is precisely the task that confronts us today just as it has confronted earlier administrations and generations. And I believe that, once again, our country is answering the call. We can see that leadership in the brave service of our fighting men and women on duty in strategic outposts and waterways across the planet. We can see it in our citizens who contribute to international civil society and who work hard every day to address and ease global challenges from extreme poverty to women's rights and the protection of religious liberty and other precious freedoms. We can see it in the work of our development professionals who are helping millions of people overseas to build strong communities, expand markets, and contribute to shared prosperity. We can see it in the Members of Congress from both parties who devote countless hours to meeting with international partners and to thinking about how best to harness our resources and relationships to address shared problems. And we can see it in the daily efforts of our diplomats to defend America's interests, advocate our principles, and strengthen our country's position in the world.

Mr. Chairman and members of the subcommittee, there can be no question that our diplomatic engagement around the globe today is as deep and as strong as it has ever been. Let me point to just a few examples of where our leadership backed by our resources is making an important difference.

To begin, our country's leadership is on display in mobilizing actions across the globe to counter and prevent violent extremism. Just last week, the White House convened a landmark conference to build solidarity and identify concrete plans to address both the immediate and long term challenges. The United States is committed to helping countries in vulnerable regions to enhance their capacity to defeat terrorist networks and to rebut the radical ideologies that drive those networks. We have also taken the lead in a robust international effort to combat the terrorist group known as ISIL. Frankly, coalition building is a natural fit for the State Department—we're in the business of bringing other countries to the table to support mutual interests. And because ISIL is a threat to us all, this menace has galvanized a Coalition with more than 60 members, a Coalition that is as diverse as it is dedicated.

Already, nine countries are contributing to air strike operations in Iraq and a dozen have committed to train security forces there. Coalition partner pilots are also flying strike missions in Syria, and hosting the train and equip program for the moderate opposition. Meanwhile, we're pooling information and resources to cut ISIL's profits from smuggling and to block access to banks. Our air strikes have reduced ISIL's ability to profit from oil sales. To slow recruiting of foreign terrorist fighters, we're engaged in capacity building in the Balkans, criminal justice reform in North Africa, helping high-risk communities in the Middle East, and tightening security at airports. These efforts are in addition to the humanitarian aid that the United States and many other countries have contributed to care for refugees and displaced persons in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and elsewhere in the region.

We are doing much; but we're still in the early stages of a multi-year campaign. Going forward, we must turn up the heat. Thus far, whenever our local partners have engaged the enemy on the ground with Coalition support from the air, we have prevailed. And the fact is that ISIL's momentum—which some called unstoppable

just a few months ago—has dissipated. A key supply line has been severed. Terrorist fighters can no longer mass and maneuver in large convoys due to Coalition airstrikes.

Throughout, the Coalition has been working closely with the Government of Iraq and with moderate elements of the Syrian opposition. Success on the ground will depend on strong and legitimate local partners. That's why this year's request includes \$355 million to support critical governance and security reforms in Iraq. Nothing will contribute more to the defeat of ISIL than an Iraqi Government that governs inclusively, respects the rights of and protects all of its citizens with the help of a professional security force, and as a result enjoys the full support of its people.

Success will also be more likely if America is able to speak with one voice in our determination to defeat ISIL. Earlier this month, the President transmitted to Congress a draft Authorization to Use Military Force that provides just such an opportunity. As someone who served on Capitol Hill for almost 30 years, I welcome this step and look forward to discussing all aspects of this very important proposal with you. The approval of this authorization would provide a clear and powerful signal of American unity and resolve.

The fight against violent extremism also continues in Central and South Asia.

This year, Afghanistan will exercise full responsibility for its security forces, making possible a significant reduction in the U.S. military presence. We will, however, continue to consult with Kabul on security matters, and to administer a robust train, advise, and assist mission. We are also requesting \$1.5 billion to support the new Afghan Unity Government as it strives to implement reforms and improve economic performance. This aid will be targeted at helping Afghanistan to move ahead through better governance, investments in health, education, and infrastructure, and the equitable treatment of women and girls.

In Pakistan, the United States is working with the government to counter terrorist groups that threaten our shared security. Last month, I met with the country's leadership for our annual Strategic Dialogue and found—in the wake of the December 16 terrorist attack on the military school that murdered 132 children—a vigorous commitment to take on and defeat violent extremist groups. In recognition of our long-term engagement with the Pakistani people, we're also helping to promote development, energy security, health, and education.

At the same time, through constant diplomacy and the exchange of historic visits by our heads of government, we've strengthened our ties with India, the world's largest democracy, on economic issues, security cooperation, science, and clean energy.

Closer to home, in Europe, we have been steadfast in supporting Ukraine's recently-elected government against illegal intervention by Moscow and violence from the armed separatists that Moscow backs. Working closely with our international partners, we have approved targeted sanctions—including against Russia's financial, energy, and defense sectors—that have imposed a clear cost on the Russian economy and brought Kremlin leaders back to the bargaining table. The package of measures signed earlier this month to implement the September 2014 Minsk Protocol mandated a ceasefire and the pullback of heavy weapons. We have called for full implementation of the Minsk documents, including the withdrawal of all foreign equipment and troops from eastern Ukraine, the full restoration of Ukrainian control of the international border, and the release of all hostages. To date, neither Russia nor the forces it is supporting have come close to complying with their commitments. If that failure continues, there will be further consequences—consequences that would place added strains on Russia's weakened economy.

Meanwhile, the United States is backing Ukraine's economic reforms through a \$1 billion loan guarantee (and the possibility of another if reforms continue) and support for a \$17.5 billion financial package from the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Although the situation in eastern Ukraine remains very difficult, we are working to help the country emerge from this crisis united, and with the chance to decide its own future in a Europe where NATO is reinvigorated and leaders in the Kremlin are judged solely by their actions, not their words.

Mr. Chairman, President Obama has made it clear that Iran will not obtain a nuclear weapon. Since late 2013, we have been testing whether that goal can be achieved through determined multilateral diplomacy. The so-called P5+1 talks have made considerable progress but have not yet reached a satisfactory consensus on all critical questions. During our deliberations, for the first time in a decade, we've halted the progress of Tehran's nuclear program and even rolled it back in key respects. We will know soon whether we will be able to reach a verifiable and comprehensive plan to ensure that Iran's nuclear program is wholly peaceful. We will continue to consult closely with you as our efforts progress. Although I cannot pre-

dict the outcome, I do believe that an agreement of the type we seek would advance America's interests and that of our allies in the Middle East, strengthen the global nonproliferation regime, and serve the cause of international stability and peace.

In our own hemisphere, we are requesting \$1 billion to help our friends in Central America make the difficult reforms required to address the region's interlocking security, governance and economic problems. In recent years, the combination of limited educational and employment opportunities, epic levels of violence, a lack of sufficient investment, and corruption have held these countries back while also spurring attempts at illegal migration to the United States. An estimated 6 million young Central Americans will enter the work force in the next decade. If opportunity isn't there, our entire hemisphere will feel the consequences.

Last December, President Obama announced a change in U.S. policy to increase communications, commerce, and travel between our country and Cuba and to initiate the process—supported by this budget—of normalizing diplomatic relations with Havana for the first time since 1961. In January, Assistant Secretary of State Roberta Jacobson went to the island for a first round of meetings with government officials and representatives of independent civil society. She conveyed the message—reinforced before and since by many Members of Congress—that America's support for democratic reforms, human rights, Internet freedom, and the release of political prisoners is absolutely firm. We believe very strongly that the time is right to deprive Cuban authorities of their longstanding crutch—so that they can no longer blame U.S. policy rather than their own failures for the hardships faced by the brave people of Cuba.

This budget also supports the President's rebalance to the dynamic region of East Asia and the Pacific. Based on President Obama's strategic commitment, we have modernized our alliances with Japan and South Korea, strengthened our partnerships with other regional powers, and supported democratic progress and respect for human rights in Thailand and Burma. A key element of our policy has been to build a comprehensive relationship with China that supports its rise in a manner compatible with international law and respectful of the concerns and rights of its neighbors. The United States remains committed to the peaceful denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and will continue—in close consultation with our allies—to bring pressure to bear on North Korea in support of that goal.

Last August, President Obama hosted a summit attended by some 50 African leaders, during which we discussed plans for future cooperation and progress. U.S. policy toward the region reflects the continent's diversity and includes the promotion of investment and trade, energy access, youth leadership, and the economic participation of women.

Mr. Chairman, American leadership has also been evident in the fight to halt the deadly spread of Ebola—and it was a team effort. The State Department, the U.S. military, USAID, the Department of Health and Human Services (including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the National Institutes of Health, and the U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps), State and city governments, civil society, citizen volunteers, and Members of Congress all contributed. Together, we worked with international partners and with the brave communities and caregivers of West Africa to confront and contain this virus. The struggle won't be over until new infections are reduced to zero. But consider that 5 months ago, experts predicted that the number of active cases in West Africa would be 1.4 million. The actual level is less than 2 percent of that number. This is still a terrible human tragedy—but it is also an impressive demonstration of what international partnerships can accomplish. We have committed over the next 3 years to build on these partnerships, through the Global Health Security Agenda, to strengthen health systems in these vulnerable countries to prevent a tragedy of this scale from happening again.

We also serve our interests when we exercise leadership within the U.N. and other international organizations. The United States isn't everywhere and we shouldn't be everywhere, and so it's a great help to us when the U.N. is able to contribute to international security and stability through its peacekeeping and political missions, conflict-resolution, development, and humanitarian activities. As we continue to press for reforms within the U.N. system, it is essential that we meet our own obligations to pay our bills in full and on time. We demand that of others; we should be consistent in meeting that standard ourselves.

These are just some of the issues that we're focused on each and every day. But they're not the only ones. Programs to support democratic governance contribute to the development of societies that are peaceful, more prosperous and stable, and better partners for the United States. As more people around the world stand up for their fundamental freedoms, demands for U.S. support grow. Unfortunately, this has coincided with declining funding in recent years. This year, to meet the growing

needs and advance our interests, the President has requested over \$2 billion, a significant increase in democracy and governance funding.

Our military training and education enhances our security relationships while exposing students from friendly nations to U.S. values and respect for internationally-recognized human rights. Training foreign law enforcement and counterterrorism officials in American investigative techniques increases their capability and our security. Implementing stricter export controls, training weapons inspectors, improving global nuclear, biological and chemical security, and securing our borders allows us to guard against the most pernicious of threats: the possibility that terrorists might one day attack our homeland or our allies with a weapon of mass destruction.

Our global presence does something else: it creates jobs. Through our contributions to international financial institutions like the World Bank, we don't just lift the economies of low-income countries; we open markets for American businesses. Foreign policy is economic policy, and so the State Department is fully geared toward helping American entrepreneurs to build prosperity at home and across the globe. To that end, we're pursuing ambitious, 21st century trade agreements such as the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership and the Trans-Pacific Partnership that will establish landmark labor and environmental standards and help our manufacturers, farmers, ranchers, and service providers to increase what they are able to sell abroad.

We're also leading on the environment, on the oceans and marine sanctuaries, and in addressing the potentially devastating consequences of climate change. In November, the leaders of the United States and China, the world's two largest emitters of greenhouse gases, came together to announce ambitious targets to limit carbon emissions in the post-2020 period. Our budget and our diplomacy are focused on helping nations to grow in sustainable ways, and to mobilize countries everywhere to achieve a truly meaningful agreement on climate change in Paris this December. And here I want to stress the connection between climate change and other goals. For example, our investments to protect global food and water supplies are critical. But none of those efforts will succeed over time if we don't also concern ourselves with what we put in the air; food security simply will not happen if we fail to curb the harmful effects of climate change.

All this speaks to why our budget proposals aren't just a collection of numbers—they're the embodiment of our values and priorities. After serving in public life for over three decades, I am aware that there are few more reliable—or damaging—applause lines than promising to slash the budgets of the State Department and USAID. President Reagan once lamented that, "Foreign aid suffers from a lack of domestic constituency." And it's true that, in Washington, long-term goals can often lose out to more visible short-term projects. But that's exactly why we need your help—to take the long view and to recognize how the relatively modest investments we make now can improve the world and enhance our own security for generations to come.

As we have learned through history, the success or failure of America's international leadership is not only relevant; it will be a determining factor in the quality of the lives of our citizens. Foreign policy can help our workers to find a job or lose one; it can start a war or forge a peace; it can safeguard our families or expose them to grave risk; it can enable us to look forward with confidence or it can place a shadow over the future in which our children and their children will grow up.

Mr. Chairman and members of the subcommittee, even though the globe seems at times to be awash in difficulties, the truth is that many international vital signs today are positive. Worldwide, extreme poverty is down and so is child mortality. More babies are being born healthy; more boys—and girls—are attending and staying in school; and with U.S. contributions leading the way, we are making welcome progress in protecting the vulnerable from HIV/AIDS and other infectious disease.

Meanwhile, each day in diplomatic outposts across the globe, America's representatives make known the high value our people place on democratic institutions, human rights, religious liberty, and the freedoms of speech and press.

So make no mistake, America is leading—with partners when possible, but alone when necessary. Leading against terror and proliferation. Leading in support of embattled friends from Ukraine and Afghanistan to Central America and Somalia. Leading to promote peace in the Middle East and Africa. Leading to create jobs domestically and protect the environment globally. Leading against the axis of suffering—hunger, ignorance, and disease. Leading to build a more free, just, and humane world. We are leading as one country, including the administration, Congress, our Armed Forces, our businesspeople, our citizen activists, and our volunteers.

Scanning the horizon, we are under no illusions about how difficult the demands of leadership are. Like Secretary Acheson, we have had our share of headaches. Setbacks along the way are inevitable. Engagement on all fronts will be required. But

we draw strength from our democratic ideals, inspiration from the example of our predecessors, and courage from the conviction that the values guiding us are the right ones. In an era of uncertainty, one thing remains sure: America will continue to answer the call.

Thank you and now I would be pleased to respond to any questions you might have.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF STEVE A. LINICK, INSPECTOR GENERAL FOR THE U.S.
DEPARTMENT OF STATE AND THE BROADCASTING BOARD OF GOVERNORS

Chairman Graham, Ranking Member Leahy, and members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to highlight some of the mission-critical work performed by the Office of Inspector General (OIG) for the Department of State and Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG). First, I want to express my appreciation for the support you have shown to my office. I am grateful for the overall budget increase that OIG received in fiscal year 2015. Notwithstanding the fiscal year 2015 increase, along with the increase included in the President's fiscal year 2016 request, we still face significant challenges, given the growth of Department funding compared to our own. Still, we have a substantial and positive impact on the operations of the Department and BBG.

With that premise in mind, I would like to outline some of our notable work and new initiatives, including our most recent responsibility—joint oversight of Operation Inherent Resolve (OIR), the overseas contingency operation directed against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). In the last section of my testimony, I discuss OIG's resource challenges.

I. STATE OIG'S MISSION AND OVERSIGHT EFFORTS

It is my honor to have led the State OIG for the past 17 months—since the end of September 2013. OIG's mandate is broad and comprehensive, involving oversight of the full scope of Department and BBG programs and operations, including more than 72,000 employees and 280 overseas missions and domestic entities, as well as the U.S. Section of the International Boundary and Water Commission. These agencies are funded through combined annual appropriations of approximately \$15 billion and nearly \$7 billion in consular fees and other earned income. OIG also is responsible for full or partial oversight of an additional \$17 billion in Department-managed foreign assistance.

State OIG differs from most OIGs in that it has a mandated inspection function. We are statutorily required to periodically audit and inspect every domestic and overseas operating unit around the world once every 5 years.¹ Additionally, since the beginning of my tenure, we have redoubled our efforts to address some of the top challenges of the Department, including the protection of people and facilities, the management of contracts and grants, and the security of sensitive information around the world. I will elaborate on each of these:

Improving Security

Protecting the people who work for the Department is a top priority for the Department and for OIG. OIG has inspected physical security at overseas posts for years; however, since the September 2012 attacks on U.S. diplomatic facilities and personnel in Benghazi, Libya, OIG has significantly stepped up its oversight efforts related to security, including targeted audits and evaluations. We help safeguard the lives of people who work in or visit our posts abroad by performing independent oversight to help the Department improve its security posture. Unlike many of our other oversight activities, as well as more traditional Government-wide work conducted by the Inspector General (IG) community, we cannot attach a dollar-value metric to our efforts related to physical security. Achievement in this area is not reflected in our "return on investment" statistics. However, our oversight successes are a source of great satisfaction, and to the degree that unreasonable risk persists, OIG will vigorously continue to highlight any deficiencies to the Department and to Congress.

Although the Department has made improvements to overseas security, challenges remain. Through our inspection and audit work, OIG continues to find security deficiencies that put our people at risk. Those deficiencies include failing to observe set-back and perimeter requirements and to identify and neutralize weapons of opportunity. Our teams also uncover posts that use warehouse space and other

¹ This timeframe requirement is routinely waived by Congress each year.

sub-standard facilities for offices, another security deficiency.² Under the Department's security rules, office space must meet more stringent physical security standards than warehouse space. Our audit³ of the Local Guard Program found that firms providing security services for Embassy compounds were not fully vetting local guards they hired abroad, placing at risk our posts and their personnel. In other reports, we found that the Bureau of Diplomatic Security (responsible for setting standards) and the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations (responsible for constructing facilities to meet those standards) often do not coordinate adequately to timely address important security needs.⁴ Based on our recommendations, those bureaus have taken steps to improve their communication and coordination. OIG will closely monitor whether these steps actually sustain improved joint performance to mitigate security vulnerabilities.

OIG has also examined the Department's handling of significant security breaches that resulted in the deaths of U.S. Government personnel. For example, in September 2013, OIG published a report⁵ on its Special Review of the Accountability Review Board (ARB). As you know, the Secretary of State convenes an ARB when serious injury, loss of life, or significant destruction of property at or related to a U.S. Government Mission abroad has occurred. The most recent ARB was convened following the 2012 attacks and tragic events in Benghazi. OIG's Special Review examined the process by which the Department's ARBs are established, staffed, supported, and conducted, as well as the manner in which the Department tracks the implementation of ARB recommendations. We examined the Department's follow-through on long-term security program improvements involving physical security, training, and intelligence-sharing over four administrations (since 1998) and found that it lacked sustained oversight by Department principals. Over time, the implementation of recommended improvements slows. The lack of follow-through explains, in part, why a number of Benghazi ARB recommendations mirror previous ARB recommendations. This underscores the need for a sustained commitment by Department principals to ensure that ARB recommendations are timely and effectively carried out.

OIG also continues to increase its focus on security issues. OIG is currently involved in reviewing the Department's reported compliance with recommendations made by the ARB convened in the aftermath of the 2012 attacks at U.S. diplomatic locations in Benghazi. In addition, planned fiscal year 2015 security audits include an audit of the approval and certification process used to determine employment suitability for locally employed staff and contracted employees, an audit of emergency action plans for U.S. Missions in the Sahel region of Africa, and an audit of the Vital Presence Validation Process (VP2) implementation. VP2 is the Department's formal process for assessing the costs and benefits of maintaining its presence in dangerous locations around the world. Finally, we will continue to emphasize security concerns as we inspect the International Programs Directorate of the Bureau of Diplomatic Security.

Improving Oversight of Contracts and Grants

Contracts and grants are critical to the Department's mission. The Department's obligations in fiscal year 2014 equaled approximately \$9 billion in contractual services and \$1.5 billion in grants, totaling approximately \$10.5 billion.⁶ However, the Department faces challenges managing its contracts, grants, and cooperative agreements, which have been addressed repeatedly in OIG audits, inspections, and investigations over the years. These challenges were highlighted in two recent OIG Management Alerts that I provided to senior Department officials.

In fiscal year 2014, more than 50 percent of post or bureau inspections contained formal recommendations to strengthen controls and improve administration of grants. In our March 2014 Management Alert⁷ focusing on contract management deficiencies, we reported that over the past 6 years, files relating to Department contracts with a total value of more than \$6 billion were either incomplete or could

²Review of Overseas Security Policy Board Exceptions and Secure Embassy Construction and Counterterrorism Act of 1999 Waivers (ISP-I-13-06, January 2013).

³Audit of Contractor Compliance With and Department of State Oversight of the Process Required for Vetting Local Guards (AUD-HCI-14-24, June 2014).

⁴Inspection of the Bureau of Diplomatic Security, High Threat Programs Directorate (ISP-I-14-23, September 2014); Compliance Follow-up Review of the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations (ISP-C-11-26, May 2011); Audit of the Process to Request and Prioritize Physical Security-Related Activities at Overseas Posts (AUD-FM-14-17, Mar. 2014).

⁵Special Review of the Accountability Review Board Process (ISP-I-13-44A, September 2013).

⁶USASpending, <www.usaspending.gov>, accessed on February 19, 2015.

⁷Management Alert: Contract File Management Deficiencies (MA-A-0002, March 20, 2014).

not be located at all. In a September 2014 Management Alert⁸ on grant management deficiencies, we highlighted weaknesses in oversight, insufficient training of grant officials, and inadequate documentation and closeout of grant activities. In fiscal year 2012 alone, the Department obligated more than \$1.6 billion for approximately 14,000 grants and cooperative agreements worldwide.⁹ This is a significant outlay of American taxpayer funds, which makes oversight and accountability even more critical. Grants present special oversight challenges because, unlike contracts, they do not generally require the recipient to deliver specific goods or services that can be measured. The Department has agreed to adopt most of OIG's recommendations in these Management Alerts. OIG will continue to monitor the Department's efforts and seek additional improvements in this important area.

In fiscal year 2015, OIG plans on issuing, among others, audits involving non-lethal aid and humanitarian assistance in response to the Syrian crisis, the Iraq Medical Services Contract, and the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs Embassy Air Wing Contract in Iraq.

Enhancing Information Security

Another top management challenge concerns information security. The Department is entrusted to safeguard sensitive information, which is often targeted by multiple sources, including terrorist and criminal organizations. The Department is responsible for preserving and protecting classified and other sensitive information vital to the preservation of national security in high-risk environments across the globe. OIG assessments of the Department's efforts to secure its information technology (IT) infrastructure have uncovered recurring weaknesses in unclassified systems and instances of noncompliance with Federal Information Security Management Act (FISMA) requirements. For example, we found that unclassified IT systems lacked adequate controls, allowing unauthorized individuals to enter and manipulate systems; ineffective security scanning; and weaknesses in cybersecurity management (including absence of a strategic plan). In a November 2013 Management Alert,¹⁰ I raised these concerns with senior Department officials, recommending, among other things, that independent penetration testing be conducted to assess the system's vulnerabilities to cyber attack.¹¹ This effort is currently underway.

II. NEW OIG INITIATIVES

Since joining OIG, I have implemented a number of new initiatives to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of OIG's independent oversight of the Department's programs and operations:

Management Alerts and Management Assistance Reports

Soon after my arrival, we began to issue Management Alerts¹² and Management Assistance Reports.¹³ They are intended to alert Department leadership to significant issues that require immediate corrective action. For example, we issued two Management Assistance Reports recommending that the Department take immediate action (for example, termination) against certain grantees for misuse of grant funds. In addition, and as mentioned above, we issued Management Alerts¹⁴ relat-

⁸ *Management Alert: Grants Management Deficiencies* (MA-14-03, September 26, 2014).

⁹ U.S. Government Accountability Office, *Implementation of Grants Policies Needs Better Oversight* (GAO-14-635, July 2014).

¹⁰ *Management Alert: OIG Findings of Significant, Recurring Weaknesses in Department of State Information System Security Program* (MA-A-0001, November 12, 2013).

¹¹ Vulnerabilities in the Department's unclassified network also affect OIG's IT infrastructure, which is part of the same network. We noted in our November 2013 information security Management Alert that there are literally thousands of administrators who have access to Department databases. That access runs freely to OIG's IT infrastructure and creates risk to OIG operations. Although OIG has no evidence that its IT systems have been compromised, the potential exists and places our independence at risk.

¹² *Management Alert: OIG Findings of Significant, Recurring Weaknesses in Department of State Information System Security Program*, (MA-A-0001, January 2014); *Management Alert: Contract File Management Deficiencies* (MA-A-0002, March 2014); *Management Alert: Grants Management Deficiencies* (MA-14-03, September 2014).

¹³ *Management Assistance Report: Concerns with the Oversight of Medical Support Service Iraq Contract No. SAQMMA11D0073* (AUD-MERO-15-20, December 23, 2014); *Management Assistance Report: Grant Improprieties by Nour International Relief Aid* (AUD-CG-15-19, January 15, 2015); *Management Assistance Report: Termination of Construction Grants to Omran Holding Group* (AUD-CG-14-37, September 18, 2014).

¹⁴ *Management Alert: Contract File Management Deficiencies* (MA-A-0002, March 20, 2014); *Management Alert: Grants Management Deficiencies* (MA-14-03, September 26, 2014); *Management Alert: OIG Findings of Significant and Recurring Weaknesses in the Department of State Information System Security Program* (MA-A-0001, November 12, 2013).

ing to serious problems in the areas of grant and contract management and information security. The response from the Department to these products has been favorable, as they have concurred with most of our recommendations.

Moreover, we greatly appreciate that this Committee has also recognized their value. The explanatory statement to the fiscal year 2015 omnibus appropriations bill included language directing the Secretary of State to submit to Congress a report detailing the status of each of the recommendations included in OIG's fiscal year 2014 Management Alerts.

Office of Evaluations and Special Projects

The Office of Evaluations and Special Projects (ESP) was established in 2014 to enhance OIG's oversight of the Department and BBG. In particular, ESP undertakes special evaluations and projects and complements the work of OIG's other offices by further developing the capacity to focus on broader, systemic issues. For example, in October 2013, ESP published a Review of Selected Internal Investigations by DS,¹⁵ which addressed allegations of undue influence by Department management. Currently, ESP is undertaking a joint review with the Department of Justice OIG of a number of shooting incidents in Honduras in 2012, which involved Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) and Department of State personnel.

Increased Emphasis on Whistleblower Protections

OIG is also using ESP to improve OIG's capabilities to meet statutory requirements of the Whistleblower Protection Enhancement Act of 2012 and other whistleblower initiatives. Department employees, employees of contractors and grantees, and others have been encouraged to report fraud, waste, abuse, and misconduct. Such reporting must take place without fear of retaliation. We have designated an ombudsman (a senior ESP attorney) for these purposes. We also produced an educational video and published a guide regarding whistleblower protections on our website.¹⁶

Oversight of Overseas Contingency Operations

The IG community was recently tasked, through an amendment to the Inspector General Act of 1978 (IG Act), with additional responsibility for overseeing current and future overseas contingency operations. Approximately 8 weeks ago, Jon T. Rymer, the Inspector General for the Department of Defense (DOD), was appointed Lead Inspector General for Operation Inherent Resolve (OIR)—the U.S.-led overseas contingency operation directed against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). Mr. Rymer subsequently appointed me as Associate Inspector General in charge of oversight. Three OIGs (State, DOD, and U.S. Agency for International Development) have dedicated staff to this important project. We are working jointly on: (1) strategic planning, to provide comprehensive oversight of all programs and operations in support of OIR; (2) program management, to track, monitor, and update information provided by our agencies in support of OIR; and (3) communications, to collect information and prepare periodic reports for Congress on projects related to OIR. Relatedly, we are in the process of establishing a hotline dedicated to the contingency operation and developing joint investigative capabilities for OIR oversight.

Data and Technology

OIG is developing an automated evidence tracking system to enhance evidence processing accuracy and efficiency, and employee computer forensic and data processing procedures in order to significantly reduce agents' time and investigative hours. Further, we are building the capacity of our new data analytics group and developing a fusion cell consisting of special agents, forensic auditors, criminal analysts, and computer specialists. This group of specialists will enable all of our divisions to proactively analyze financial data to identify potential vulnerabilities in Department programs and processes and perform fraud risk assessments.

Suspension and Debarment

We have enhanced our efforts to identify and refer appropriate cases to the Department for suspension and debarment. Our Offices of Investigations and Audits prepare detailed suspension and debarment recommendation packages, in consultation with our Office of General Counsel, including referral memoranda summarizing all relevant facts and setting forth the specific grounds for suspension or debarment. They then submit their packages to the Department's Suspension and Debarment

¹⁵ *Review of Selected Internal Investigations Conducted by the Bureau of Diplomatic Security* (October 2014, ESP-15-01).

¹⁶ OIG, Whistleblower Protection, <<http://oig.state.gov/hotline/whistleblower>>.

Officials (SDOs) for action. Between 2011 and 2014, OIG referred 128 cases to the Department for action.

New Locations

For reasons of oversight efficiency and to have “boots on the ground” at key financial locations, OIG intends, in the near term, to locate staff in Charleston, South Carolina, where one of the Department’s Global Financial Services Centers resides, and in Frankfurt, Germany, the site of one of the Department’s Regional Procurement Support Offices. Both locations are responsible for billions of taxpayer dollars. These moves will allow OIG to more efficiently and economically access pertinent information and pursue targeted reviews.

Prosecution of Cases

OIG has initiated a program to place one or more Special Assistant U.S. Attorneys (SAUSAs) in appropriate positions in the Department of Justice in order to prosecute more quickly and effectively cases involving fraud against the Department of State. For example, an OIG attorney-investigator now works as a full-time SAUSA in the U.S. Attorney Office for the Eastern District of Virginia.

III. IMPACT OF OIG WORK

Through our independent audits, evaluations, inspections, and investigations, OIG returns significant value to American taxpayers and the Department and BBG. In fiscal year 2014, we issued 77 reports, which included hundreds of recommendations to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the Department and BBG. During this period, we identified \$43.3 million in taxpayer funds that could be put to better use. Additionally, our criminal, civil, and administrative investigations resulted in the imposition or identification of \$75 million in fines, restitution, recoveries, and other monetary results last fiscal year. This was in addition to the \$1 billion in financial results from audit- or inspection-related findings and more than \$40 million in investigative-related financial results that OIG identified in the previous five fiscal years.

However, these financial statistics do not adequately take into account some of our most significant impacts, which cannot be quantified monetarily—namely, the physical safety and security of people and facilities, and the integrity of the Department’s operations and reputation. Indeed, the work of our dedicated and talented staff in reviewing security and leadership at our overseas and domestic posts has significant effects on the lives and well-being of employees throughout the Department. This impact is what motivates our employees, many of whom sacrifice precious and long periods of time with their families, often at high-threat posts.

IV. OIG RESOURCES

I am very grateful for your support and the additional financial resources that OIG has received over the past 2 years, and I would like to express my thanks to this subcommittee, the committees on appropriations, and both Houses of Congress. Our budget requests have been substantially supported by the administration, and we are grateful for its support as well. These additional financial resources have enabled OIG to better fulfill its mission.

Although our appropriation has increased in recent years, we still face significant challenges, given the growth of Department funding compared to our own. In 1996, when our mission was expanded to absorb the United States Information Agency, OIG’s budget represented 0.70 percent of the Department’s appropriation. Over the following decade, OIG’s budget was largely flat.

Through the support of Congress and the administration, OIG’s funding has more than doubled in the last few years. By comparison, however, the Department’s funding nearly quadrupled (more than 380 percent) between 1996 and 2014 accompanied by significant increases in foreign assistance for which OIG also provides oversight. As a result, even with the increase included in the 2015 budget and the President’s fiscal year 2016 request, OIG still represents less than one-third of 1 percent of the Department’s operating budget. This percentage drops to less than one-quarter of 1 percent when Department-managed foreign assistance is included.

In addition to the substantial number of programs and dollars for which we have oversight, another challenge that we face now is the new requirement that OIG conduct joint oversight of OIR to defeat ISIL. Since we are still in the process of defining the scope of our OIR oversight commitments, long-term impacts on mission priorities are difficult to predict. Presently, we are funding these responsibilities out of existing resources, a situation that necessarily reduces oversight resources for our

other mission-critical priorities and operational needs.¹⁷ Challenges we face include, among others, the following:

- OIG is statutorily required to inspect and audit every bureau and post once every 5 years.¹⁸ However, due to budgetary and staffing limitations, more than 50 percent of domestic entities and 100 overseas posts, representing billions of dollars and tens of thousands of employees, have not been inspected in the last 5 years. At current staffing levels, OIG estimates that it will take approximately 8 years to inspect each overseas post and 11 years to inspect each domestic operating unit. One of the most important functions of our inspection work is ensuring the safety and security of personnel and facilities overseas.
- In the past decade, there has been a substantial growth in Department grants and contracts, particularly in high-risk, high-cost programs and operations, such as Afghanistan. For example, in the last 5 years, Department procurements have more than tripled, to approximately \$12 billion annually.
- As described above, we remain concerned about the vulnerabilities of our own IT network. Additional resources may be required to increase our independence and reduce the risk of OIG systems being vulnerable to unfettered and undetectable access by the Department.

In conclusion, Chairman Graham, Ranking Member Leahy, and members of the subcommittee, thank you for opportunity to highlight some of our significant oversight work and for your continued strong support. We take seriously our statutory requirement to identify instances of fraud, waste, abuse, and mismanagement and to notify Congress, agency leadership, and the public of these deficiencies. My staff and I remain committed to promoting the economy, efficiency, and effectiveness of the Department and BBG, as well as to protecting the safety and security of its employees and facilities and sensitive information around the world. As always, I would be happy to answer your questions and provide more information on any of our past, present, or future work.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF JOHN F. SOPKO, SPECIAL INSPECTOR GENERAL FOR
AFGHANISTAN RECONSTRUCTION

IMPROVING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF U.S. RECONSTRUCTION EFFORTS IN AFGHANISTAN
BY ENHANCING OVERSIGHT AND ADDRESSING KEY AREAS OF HIGH RISK

Chairman Graham, Ranking Member Leahy, and members of the subcommittee, Thank you for the opportunity to provide this statement for the record to aid in your consideration of the Department of State (State) fiscal year 2016 budget request for Afghanistan.

Since 2002, Congress has appropriated approximately \$107.5 billion to rebuild Afghanistan. For fiscal year 2016, the President has requested more than \$5.3 billion in additional reconstruction funding for Afghanistan, consisting of over \$1.5 billion for State and U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) efforts, and \$3.8 billion for the Department of Defense (DOD) to train, equip, and sustain the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF). It is the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction's (SIGAR) mission to ensure that these funds are spent as effectively and efficiently as possible and that they are protected from waste, fraud, and abuse. As funding for reconstruction projects in Afghanistan continues through fiscal year 2015 and beyond, and as the U.S. military presence and travel accessibility shrinks, the risk of fraud, waste, and abuse increases. SIGAR will continue to provide aggressive oversight of ongoing reconstruction projects and the billions of reconstruction dollars yet to be spent, while developing creative ways to operate in a more constrained environment.

This statement summarizes SIGAR's fiscal year 2016 budget request, recent successes from SIGAR's ongoing work, the challenges SIGAR has in accomplishing its mission, and steps being taken to overcome these challenges. In addition, the statement describes key management and program challenges facing State and USAID, as well as DOD, by highlighting areas of high risk that SIGAR has identified.

¹⁷ OIG's fiscal year 2015 budget does not include funds for OIR. Approximately two-thirds of the President's requested fiscal year 2016 increase—\$6.27 million—will be directed toward funding 16 positions to meet our oversight responsibilities for OIR to degrade and defeat ISIL. The remaining \$2.73 million will fund 11 direct-hire positions needed to strengthen security oversight, particularly in the context of increased terrorist threats abroad, and to fulfill OIG's other statutory responsibilities.

¹⁸ This timeframe requirement is routinely waived by Congress each year.

FISCAL YEAR 2016 BUDGET REQUEST HIGHLIGHTS SIGAR'S UNIQUE AND IMPORTANT ROLE
IN OVERSEEING AFGHANISTAN RECONSTRUCTION FUNDS

SIGAR is the only inspector general with interagency authority to audit, inspect, and investigate the activities of all U.S. Government agencies and international organizations that receive U.S. funding for Afghanistan reconstruction. As a result, SIGAR can conduct cross-cutting reviews of State, USAID, DOD, and other agencies. In addition, SIGAR is the only oversight agency that focuses solely on Afghanistan reconstruction, enabling it to examine reconstruction programs and issues in more depth while still producing timely and high-quality work. Further, SIGAR is truly independent. We conduct our oversight autonomously and report directly to Congress and the Secretaries of State and Defense. To support its ongoing oversight mission, SIGAR has requested \$56.9 million for fiscal year 2016. Although this is equivalent to the fiscal year 2015 enacted level, SIGAR intends to reallocate funds within the agency, as discussed below, to address operational and budgetary changes within Afghanistan's uncertain and unpredictable environment.

SIGAR currently has the largest oversight presence in Afghanistan, with more auditors, analysts, and investigators in country than any other agency. SIGAR's staff of 42 deployed personnel—consisting of 18 Audits and Inspections staff, 20 Investigations staff, and 4 Management and Support staff—are located at U.S. Embassy Kabul, Bagram Airfield, and Kandahar Airfield. Most of SIGAR's deployed staff serve at least 2 years in country, limiting the amount of annual turnover compared to other agencies and providing a stable knowledge base within the U.S. Government's presence in Afghanistan. SIGAR plans to maintain 41 deployed positions in Afghanistan through fiscal year 2016. SIGAR has also hired six local Afghan engineers and analysts. To supplement the deployed and local staff, SIGAR personnel located at the agency's headquarters in Arlington, Virginia, frequently travel to Afghanistan on a temporary duty basis for 2 to 8 weeks to conduct audit, inspection, and investigative work.

By working and living alongside their colleagues in State, USAID, DOD, and other implementing agencies, SIGAR's staff has a full understanding of the challenges and dangers of working on the ground in Afghanistan. SIGAR's investigators located at sites outside Kabul regularly experience rocket attacks and other indirect fire. An investigator recently received the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency Sentner Award for Dedication and Courage in recognition of his courage, uncommon selflessness, and dedication to duty during an insurgency attack on the Herat Consulate in September 2013. The morning of September 13, 2013, a truck packed with explosives rammed into the security gate and blew up, killing several guards and heavily damaging the building. A group of armed insurgents then tried to storm the compound, but ultimately failed. SIGAR's investigator assisted the Regional Security Officer by conducting an armed sweep to ensure that all U.S. personnel were accounted for and that no insurgents had penetrated the consulate. The investigator also helped move casualties and held a weapons position covering the blown-open entrance to the consulate until security forces arrived.

When SIGAR was established in 2008, the agency created four directorates to accomplish its mission: (1) Audits and Inspections, (2) Investigations, (3) Research and Analysis, and (4) Management and Support.¹ In addition to these directorates, in 2012, SIGAR created its Special Projects program to examine emerging issues and deliver prompt, actionable reports to implementing agencies and Congress. The team conducts a variety of assessments and, to date, has produced 88 inquiry and alert letters, reviews, fact sheets, and other products, on different aspects of the Afghanistan reconstruction effort. SIGAR was the only Inspector General with this capability until 2014, when State's Office of Inspector General followed SIGAR's lead by establishing a similar group within its own office.

In late 2014, SIGAR established another unique capability in the form of its Lessons Learned Program (LLP). SIGAR is the only Inspector General with the authority to look across the entire reconstruction effort in Afghanistan to analyze lessons learned and best practices. SIGAR's previous oversight work has exposed a series of systemic issues that have hindered the progress of agencies' reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan. These, along with the demonstrated successes of those and other efforts, will be incorporated into the lessons learned work.²

¹Formerly known as the Information Management directorate, Research and Analysis produces SIGAR's quarterly report to Congress. Management and Support provides human resources, budget, information technology, and other support to SIGAR's directorates and staff.

²Some of these systemic interagency problems, such as corruption, sustainability, counter-narcotics, contract management and oversight, and strategy and planning, are detailed in SIGAR's December 2014 *High-Risk List*.

LLP is planning to release a series of reports focused on key aspects of the reconstruction effort that will contain actionable recommendations that can help to improve current and future reconstruction efforts. These reports will document what the U.S. Government sought to accomplish through its reconstruction efforts, assess what it achieved, and evaluate the degree to which these programs helped the United States reach its strategic goals in Afghanistan. These reports will distill this knowledge to produce recommendations to address the challenges stakeholders face in ensuring efficient, effective, and sustainable reconstruction efforts, not just in Afghanistan, but in future conflict zones. Through these reports, SIGAR plans on reaching a diverse audience in the legislative and executive branches, at both the strategic and programmatic levels, and in Washington, DC, and the field. LLP has four initial projects underway, which will address (1) interagency strategy and planning, (2) coordination of international donor assistance, (3) anti-corruption efforts, and (4) counternarcotics interventions in Afghanistan reconstruction. Future projects will focus on other significant issues.

SIGAR sees the LLP and its lessons learned reports as a key legacy of SIGAR and is working to ensure the proper resourcing for this important effort. To staff the LLP, SIGAR has hired subject-matter experts with considerable experience working and living in Afghanistan. In producing its reports, the LLP is also leveraging the considerable skills, experience, and resources found throughout SIGAR in its Audits and Inspections, Investigations, Research and Analysis, and Special Projects directorates. By leveraging these resources, as well as SIGAR's unique interagency mandate, LLP intends to do everything it can to make sure that the lessons from the United States' largest reconstruction effort are identified, acknowledged, and most importantly, remembered and used to inform future reconstruction and development efforts.

SIGAR's Work Continues to Improve the Effectiveness and Efficiency of Reconstruction Programs, and Reduce Fraud, Waste, and Abuse of Funds

SIGAR's investigations, audit, and other work continues to have positive impacts on ongoing and planned reconstruction programs and agency operations. Since 2008, SIGAR has identified over \$1.6 billion in savings, representing a return of almost \$8 for \$1 appropriated to fund SIGAR. SIGAR's investigations have saved the U.S. Government more than \$550 million. Forfeitures, fines, and restitution resulting from criminal investigations currently total over \$18 million. In addition, SIGAR's investigative work has led to the conviction of over 80 subjects, 64 of whom have been sentenced. During the first quarter of fiscal year 2015, SIGAR recovered a record \$53.7 million for the U.S. Government from Civil Settlement Agreement payments, consisting of:

- \$25 million from Supreme Logistics FZE (Supreme) for falsifying billing claims by submitting false claims to three prime global transportation and logistics contractors, causing them to overcharge the U.S. Government for refrigerated containers when Supreme used dry goods containers;³
- \$20 million from Supreme Site Services GmbH for over-billing for fuel purchased by the Defense Logistics Agency for use by U.S. and coalition military forces; and
- \$8.7 million from Maersk Line Limited for alleged failure of performance and noncompliant shipments to military outposts under a contract with DOD.

This nearly equals SIGAR's total budget of \$56.9 million for the current fiscal year. Other significant achievements from prior years include four convictions resulting from an investigation into an individual who used his position to steer more than \$10 million in military supply contracts to a company owned and operated by his wife and mother-in-law. Two notable examples are the convictions of four individuals after a single investigation uncovered a complex scheme to steal U.S. Government fuel, and an investigation into a \$1.75 million contract for a clinical engineering support program to assist the Afghan National Army (ANA) Medical Services that resulted in the contract being terminated for nonperformance and a \$1.5 million cost savings for the U.S. Government.⁴

In addition, SIGAR has completed 188 audit and inspection reports and made 540 recommendations that have identified nearly \$1.1 billion in questioned costs, funds

³ The U.S. Transportation Command awarded a series of contracts, collectively referred to as the "USC-06" contracts, to three global transportation and logistics companies: Maersk Line Limited, American President Lines, and Hapag-Lloyd. Under various USC-06 contracts, those three companies transported food and cargo destined for U.S. troops in Afghanistan from the United States to Latvia or other intermediate ports in Europe. At that point, the three companies then arranged with various logistics vendors, one of which was Supreme, to carry the cargo the rest of the way to Afghanistan.

⁴ SIGAR currently has 328 ongoing investigations.

that can be put to better use, and funds identified for potential recovery. Of that \$1.1 billion, SIGAR's financial audit program identified approximately \$107 million in questioned costs, \$11.5 million of which has been sustained by the agencies so far. Of the 540 recommendations, State, USAID, and DOD have implemented 374, or almost 70 percent, with 100 recommendations still open. These recommendations have, among other things, strengthened contract oversight, management, and compliance; assisted in building and sustaining the capacity of the Afghan Government; and ensured accountability over on-budget support.⁵ For example, based on SIGAR's audit of the Afghan Air Force's medium-airlift requirement, we requested that DOD review those requirements and the Afghan Air Force's ability to fully use its two existing C-130 cargo planes before providing two additional planes. DOD subsequently determined that a fourth plane was unnecessary, resulting in potential savings of about \$40.5 million: \$19.8 million for the aircraft itself and \$20.7 million for maintenance, parts, training, and aircraft modifications.⁶

SIGAR's audit, inspection, and quarterly reports continue to be used by U.S. agencies, international partners, and the highest levels of the Afghan Government to improve oversight and management of reconstruction efforts. During my most recent trip to Afghanistan in February 2015, I met with President Ashraf Ghani and his key advisors, at President Ghani's request. During that meeting, President Ghani thanked me for SIGAR's aggressive oversight work. He noted that he reads and uses SIGAR's audit and quarterly reports. For example, he carefully followed SIGAR's work examining issues regarding the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) management of the Law and Order Trust Fund for Afghanistan (LOTFA), which funds Afghan National Police (ANP) salaries.⁷ He also stated that he is pushing for major changes in the ANP's salary program as a result of SIGAR's recent audit of the reliability of ANP personnel and payroll data.⁸

SIGAR continues to have a good working relationship with the Department of Defense and its subcomponents and commands, most notably the Combined Security Transition Command—Afghanistan (CSTC-A). SIGAR has also taken great strides to improve its relationships with State and USAID. In addition, SIGAR coordinates regularly with the other Inspector General Offices and the Government Accountability Office to ensure coverage of all aspects of the reconstruction effort and prevent duplication of effort. For example, SIGAR participates in the Southwest Asia Joint Planning Group, which meets quarterly and produces the Comprehensive Oversight Plan for Southwest Asia. As an extra step to prevent duplication, SIGAR vets its performance audit notification letters with the DOD, State, and USAID Offices of Inspector General; and the Government Accountability Office prior to initiating those audits. Further, SIGAR's financial audit team meets frequently with the USAID Mission for Afghanistan to ensure, to the extent possible, that USAID's reconstruction contracts, grants, and cooperative agreements are audited.

SIGAR Has Taken Steps to Overcome Challenges to Completing Its Oversight Mission

With the transfer of full responsibility for securing Afghanistan to the Afghan Government, the end of the International Security Assistance Force mission, and the beginning of the Resolute Support Mission, a new phase of the Afghanistan reconstruction effort has begun. The Afghan Government and international community refer to this as the "Transformation Decade," which began in 2015 and ends in 2024. To help guide SIGAR during this period of rapid change in Afghanistan and address, among other things, how the office will conduct its oversight mission with less direct access to program and project sites, SIGAR developed a transition plan for 2014 through 2016. The plan ensures that SIGAR's transition activities are synchronized with its strategic plan and other U.S. agencies' transition plans. Over time, and as appropriate, SIGAR will adjust its functions, methods, products, and practices, adopting new ones when necessary, to continue to provide seamless, independent oversight of the reconstruction effort. Further, SIGAR will take all measures necessary to uphold Government standards of quality in carrying out its oversight.

⁵As of February 19, 2015, recommendation implementation rates by agency were approximately 66 percent for State, 72 percent for USAID, and 69 percent for DOD.

⁶SIGAR-14-80-AL, *Afghan Air Force C-130 Aircraft*, July 10, 2014, and SIGAR-14-80a-AL, *Afghan Air Force C130 Aircraft Response*, October 6, 2014.

⁷See SIGAR Special Project 14-57-SP, *Inquiry Letter: UNDP LOTFA Oversight*, May 13, 2014; SIGAR Special Project 14-98-SP, *Inquiry Letter: UNDP LOTFA Oversight Response*, September 12, 2014; SIGAR Special Project 14-99-SP, *Inquiry Letter: CSTC-A Role of UNDP Oversight and Financial Management of LOTFA*, September 17, 2014.

⁸SIGAR 15-26-AR, *Afghan National Police: More than \$300 Million in Annual, U.S.-funded Salary Payments Is Based on Partially Verified or Reconciled Data*, January 7, 2015.

For example, to expand our ability to monitor projects remotely, SIGAR has hired six Afghan engineers and analysts to assist with audit and inspection work. These local employees have greater freedom of movement, allowing them to visit sites and facilities that SIGAR's U.S. staff is unable to visit. In addition, in December 2014, SIGAR signed a cooperative agreement with Integrity Watch Afghanistan (IWA), a well-respected Afghan nongovernmental organization, to conduct site visits, including inspections and engineering assessments of U.S.-funded projects. SIGAR has assigned an agreement officer to work closely with IWA to ensure that its work meets generally accepted Government auditing standards (GAGAS) and SIGAR's internal quality control requirements. SIGAR has also expanded its use of geospatial imaging through agreements with the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency and Army Geospatial Center. SIGAR is currently pursuing additional methods for remote monitoring.

In addition, SIGAR plans to continue its financial audit program.⁹ Established in 2012, the SIGAR financial audit program contracts with independent public auditing firms to perform financial audits of completed reconstruction contracts. SIGAR staff oversees the firms' completion of these financial audits, from notification to the final report, to ensure the work complies with GAGAS and SIGAR quality control standards. To date, SIGAR has completed 38 financial audits, which have, as noted above, identified approximately \$107 million in questioned costs, \$11.5 million of which has been sustained by the agencies, and another 30 financial audits ongoing. When questioned costs are identified, SIGAR investigators review those costs and initiate criminal investigations, when applicable.

SIGAR is also coordinating closely with the Afghan Attorney General's office to refer criminal and civil cases involving Afghans for prosecution in Afghanistan. For example, SIGAR conducted an investigation into bid rigging on the Afghan Ministry of Defense's (MOD) contract to deliver fuel to ANA sites throughout Afghanistan and other contracts. In early February 2015, a SIGAR investigator; Major General Todd Semonite, the CSTC-A commander; and others attended a meeting with President Ghani at the presidential palace regarding the investigation. Based on SIGAR's work, President Ghani suspended the fuel contract and assigned a representative to investigate the alleged collusion. That representative has since informed SIGAR that President Ghani cancelled the fuel contract completely and that six MOD officials were suspended pending the results of the investigation. SIGAR was also informed that CSTC-A would fund \$280 million per year on the contract. That amount includes \$80 million in reserve funding per year. In order to draw upon the reserve funding, MOD would have to justify and account for its fuel usage, thus placing conditionality on that funding. In addition to referring cases to the Afghan Government, SIGAR plans to share lessons learned with Afghan central government auditors and facilitate their relationship with the Government Accountability Office and the International Organization of Supreme Audit Institutions.

SIGAR HAS IDENTIFIED SEVEN AREAS OF HIGH RISK TO THE SUCCESS OF THE U.S. RECONSTRUCTION EFFORT IN AFGHANISTAN

Although State, USAID, and DOD have each experienced some successes in their individual reconstruction efforts, multiple challenges exist that could undermine the success of the overall U.S. reconstruction effort. Building on the seven questions SIGAR developed in early 2013 to guide decision makers as they consider whether and how best to use the remaining reconstruction funds,¹⁰ in December 2014, SIGAR issued its first High-Risk List to call attention to program areas and elements of the U.S.-funded reconstruction effort in Afghanistan that are especially vulnerable to significant waste, fraud, and abuse.¹¹ With the list, SIGAR seeks to highlight program areas SIGAR believes agencies, such as State, USAID, and DOD, need to focus on and discuss how specific agencies are failing to mitigate risks in areas under their purview. In addition to driving agencies to evaluate and address

⁹ SIGAR produces two types of audits: (1) financial and (2) performance. Financial audits evaluate completed reconstruction contracts and identify questioned costs, if any, resulting from significant deficiencies in the audited entity's internal controls related to the contracts, and any instances of noncompliance with contract requirements and applicable laws and regulations. Performance audits provide objective analysis of the effectiveness and efficiency of reconstruction programs and make recommendations to improve performance and operations, reduce costs, and facilitate decisionmaking by parties with responsibility to oversee or initiate corrective action for public accountability.

¹⁰ See SIGAR, *Quarterly Report to the United States Congress*, January 30, 2013, and SIGAR, Statement for the Record, Committee on Appropriations, Subcommittee on the Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs, U.S. Senate, *Reducing Waste, Improving Efficiencies, and Achieving Savings in U.S. Reconstruction of Afghanistan*, April 18, 2013.

¹¹ SIGAR, *High-Risk List*, December 2014.

their own operations, SIGAR intends to use the list as an internal tool for planning its own oversight work in order to develop recommendations to help Congress and the agencies correct major deficiencies. The list proposes some key questions for Congress and the agencies to consider to improve their reconstruction efforts. In addition to informing U.S. stakeholders, the list should assist the new Afghan national unity government in planning and implementing its reform agenda.

SIGAR's first High-Risk List identifies seven program areas:

1. Corruption/Rule of Law
2. Sustainability
3. ANSF Capacity and Capabilities
4. On-Budget Support
5. Counternarcotics
6. Contract Management and Oversight Access
7. Strategy and Planning

Although other areas of risk exist, SIGAR selected these seven program areas because they are essential to the success of the reconstruction effort. In other words, if there is a failure in any of these areas, the entire 13-year reconstruction effort could fail, resulting in billions of dollars in taxpayer funds being wasted. These seven areas are also at risk of significant and large scale failure due to fraud, waste, or abuse; elements of ongoing or planned reconstruction programs and projects; and subject to the control or influence of the U.S. Government.

SIGAR recognizes that even in conflict-free areas, no reconstruction or development program or project is without risk of fraud, waste, and abuse. This risk is greater in insecure and unstable conflict areas, such as Afghanistan. However, SIGAR's work and the work of other oversight agencies has shown reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan are at unnecessarily high risk, which agencies could mitigate by taking appropriate corrective actions.

Corruption/Rule of Law

Corruption is one of the most serious threats to the U.S.-funded Afghanistan reconstruction effort. In a February 2014 report, the DOD Joint Staff wrote, "Corruption alienates key elements of the population, discredits the government and security forces, undermines international support, subverts state functions and rule of law, robs the state of revenue, and creates barriers to economic growth."¹²

Reducing corruption and increasing accountability are important components of the U.S. reconstruction strategy in Afghanistan. However, in 2010, SIGAR reported that more than \$50 billion in U.S. assistance had been provided for reconstruction in Afghanistan since 2002 without the benefit of a comprehensive anti-corruption strategy, and that U.S. anticorruption efforts had provided relatively little assistance to some key Afghan institutions.¹³ In a 2013 follow-up review, SIGAR found that although an additional \$46 billion had been appropriated for reconstruction, the United States still did not have a comprehensive strategy or related guidance that defined clear goals and objectives for U.S. efforts to fight corruption.¹⁴

In 2012, SIGAR's Investigations directorate enhanced its relationship with the Afghan Attorney General's office and began documenting criminal activity by senior government officials and Afghan businessmen, and referring those matters to the Attorney General's office for action. More recently, in April 2014, SIGAR reported that the single biggest issue limiting the Afghan Government's collection of customs revenue is corruption.¹⁵ This is a significant loss since customs revenue has accounted for between 44 and 48 percent of Afghanistan's total domestic revenue for the past 3 years. Increasing domestic revenue is a key goal of both the U.S. and the Afghan Governments, and significantly reducing or eliminating corruption could double customs revenues. However, despite spending \$198 million to develop Afghan capacity to assess and collect customs revenue, its potential as a stable source of government income remains uncertain.

Key questions for consideration are:

¹² DOD, Joint and Coalition Operational Analysis (JCOA), division of Joint Staff J-7 (Joint Force Development), *Operationalizing Counter/Anti-Corruption Study*, February 28, 2014.

¹³ SIGAR Audit 10-15, *U.S. Reconstruction Efforts in Afghanistan Would Benefit from a Finalized Comprehensive U.S. Anti-Corruption Strategy*, August, 5, 2010.

¹⁴ SIGAR Special Project Report SP-13-9, *U.S. Anti-Corruption Efforts: A Strategic Plan and Mechanisms to Track Progress are Needed in Fighting Corruption in Afghanistan*, September 11, 2013.

¹⁵ SIGAR Audit 14-47-AR, *Afghan Customs: U.S. Programs Have Had Some Successes, but Challenges Will Limit Customs Revenue as a Sustainable Source of Income for Afghanistan*, April 15, 2014.

- To what extent have U.S. technical assistance and capacity-building programs dedicated sufficient resources to reducing corruption within the Afghan Government?
- What steps has the Afghan Government taken to pursue criminal action against those matters referred by SIGAR?
- What steps are U.S. agencies and the Afghan Government taking to reduce corruption within Afghanistan's customs collection system?

Sustainability

Much of the more than \$107 billion the United States has committed to reconstruction projects and programs risks being wasted because the Afghans cannot sustain the investment without significant support from the United States and other donors. However, Afghanistan lacks the capacity—financial, technical, managerial, or otherwise—to operate and maintain much of what has been built or established during more than a decade of international assistance. For example, the Afghan Government's budget for 2014 was nearly \$7.6 billion; however, the Government expected revenues to only cover \$2.8 billion, or less than 37 percent, of that amount, with donor grants making up the rest.

SIGAR's work has shown that State, USAID, and DOD have not always considered sustainability when planning programs or projects, jeopardizing the massive investment that the United States and other international donors have made. For example, a 2013 audit examining the \$18.5 million in USAID funds spent to build two hospitals in Afghanistan found that USAID did not fully assess the Afghan Ministry of Public Health's (MOPH) ability to operate and maintain the facilities. The new operation and maintenance costs for the two hospitals could be five times the costs of the hospitals they replaced, a burden that neither USAID nor the MOPH has agreed to assume.¹⁶

Further, both the international community and the Afghan Government agree that improving the energy sector is essential to Afghanistan's economic progress and long-term viability. However, the Afghans cannot afford to pay for much of the electric power infrastructure that the U.S. reconstruction effort has provided. In 2014, SIGAR reported that over 2 years after its completion, the Kabul Power Plant, a 105-megawatt power plant on the outskirts of Kabul built under a USAID contract—was not being operated and maintained in a sustainable manner by the Afghan national power utility, Da Afghanistan Breshna Sherkat.¹⁷

In addition to conducting audits, inspections, and special projects, SIGAR investigates cases involving sub-standard construction of critical facilities that not only detracts from their expected life spans but also presents an immediate safety risk for the individuals occupying those facilities.

Questions for consideration are:

- To what extent has the Afghan Government made progress in generating revenues to fund government operations?
- To what extent have U.S. agencies developed plans for sustaining their programs and projects that will be turned over to the Afghan Government and coordinated these plans with the relevant Afghan ministries?

ANSF Capacity and Capabilities

A stable security environment is vital to prevent Afghanistan from again becoming a safe haven for terrorists and to enable much-needed reconstruction and development activities to occur. A well-developed and fully capable ANSF is critical to achieving and maintaining this security. As such, a key component of the U.S. and international reconstruction effort has been to build the capacity of the ANSF. As of January 2015, Congress had appropriated more than \$60 billion to build, equip, train, and sustain the ANSF, and DOD has requested an additional \$3.8 billion for fiscal year 2016. However, this significant investment in Afghanistan's security is at risk, particularly in light of the end of the U.S. and coalition military combat mission at the end of 2014 and drawdown of those forces.

SIGAR has developed a substantial body of work on U.S. efforts to develop the ANSF in areas such as infrastructure construction and maintenance; equipment and other resources, and maintenance of that equipment; personnel management; capabilities of the ANSF; and training. For example, in a 2014 audit of ANSF literacy training, SIGAR reported that widespread illiteracy undermines effective training,

¹⁶ SIGAR Audit 13–9, *Health Services in Afghanistan: Two New USAID-Funded Hospitals May Not Be Sustainable and Existing Hospitals Are Facing Shortages in Some Key Medical Positions*, April 29, 2013.

¹⁷ SIGAR Audit 13–2, *Afghanistan's National Power Utility: \$12.8 Million in DOD-Purchased Equipment Sits Unused, and USAID Paid a Contractor for Work Not Done*, December 18, 2012.

use of technical manuals, understanding orders, inventorying equipment, documenting operations, and other vital military functions. Despite a \$200 million literacy training contract, the NATO Training Mission—Afghanistan and CSTC-A did not have the ability to measure the effectiveness of the training or to determine the extent to which overall literacy of the ANSF had improved.¹⁸ In a 2012 audit of ANSF facilities, SIGAR found that the Afghan Government would likely be incapable of fully sustaining ANSF facilities after the transition in 2014 and the expected decrease in U.S. and coalition support. The Afghan Government's challenges in assuming operation and maintenance responsibilities included a lack of sufficient numbers and quality of personnel, as well as undeveloped budgeting, procurement, and logistics systems.¹⁹

Based on SIGAR's work, possible questions on the capability of the ANSF include:

- To what extent is the ANSF making sufficient progress toward becoming a fully capable and self-sustaining force that is able to successfully secure Afghanistan?
- What safeguards has DOD implemented—or planned to implement—to strengthen accountability for U.S.-funded equipment and infrastructure, and ensure the Afghans have the capacity and capability to account for, fully utilize, and maintain this equipment and infrastructure?

On-Budget Support

SIGAR continues to have concerns about the risk to U.S. funds provided to the Afghan Government in the form of on-budget assistance, which includes direct assistance (also referred to as bilateral assistance), government-to-government assistance, and assistance that travels through multi-donor trust funds before reaching the Afghan Government.²⁰ Since 2002, the United States has committed a total of more than \$7.7 billion in the form of on-budget assistance to Afghanistan.

SIGAR's prior work has shown that many ministries lack the capacity or necessary internal controls to effectively manage and account for on-budget assistance funds, and are unable to do so in a transparent manner that enables U.S. agencies to oversee those funds. A 2013 audit of the \$236 million Partnership Contracts for Health program raised serious concerns about an on-budget program that supports the MOPH's delivery of healthcare services to local clinics and hospitals. The audit found that, despite MOPH financial-management deficiencies, USAID continued to provide millions of U.S. taxpayer dollars in direct assistance with little assurance that MOPH is using these funds as intended.²¹ Yet another audit found that USAID's assessments of seven Afghan ministries receiving on-budget assistance from the U.S. Government found that none of the ministries would be capable of effectively managing and accounting for those funds unless they implemented a series of required risk-mitigation measures developed by USAID.²² Further, in a review of DOD's safeguards for funds provided to the MOD and Ministry of Interior (MOI), SIGAR identified a number of weaknesses that increased the risk that on-budget funds provided to the ANSF that made those funds particularly vulnerable to waste, fraud, and abuse.²³

One way to improve Afghan ministries' ability to manage and account for on-budget assistance is to make this assistance conditional on the ministries taking defined actions to improve their financial management, procurement, strategic planning, and auditing capabilities, among others. During my recent meeting, President Ghani voiced his support for conditionality on assistance provided to the Afghan Government, adding that he plans to use conditionality to keep his government focused on meeting performance targets and prioritizing its key tasks. In addition, CSTC-A recently made a small portion of its on-budget support to the MOI conditional on the ministry taking steps to approve its accounting for ANP personnel and

¹⁸ SIGAR Audit 14–30–AR, *Afghan National Security Forces: Despite Reported Successes, Concerns Remain About Literacy Program Results, Contract Oversight, Transition and Sustainment*, January 28, 2014.

¹⁹ SIGAR Audit 13–1, *Afghan National Security Forces Facilities: Concerns with Funding, Oversight, and Sustainability for Operation and Maintenance*, October 30, 2012.

²⁰ The major multi-donor trust funds for Afghanistan are the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund, managed by the World Bank (\$2.04 billion in cumulative U.S. contributions); the Afghanistan Infrastructure Trust Fund, managed by the Asian Development Bank (\$105 million in cumulative U.S. contributions); and LOTFA, managed by UNDP (\$1.45 billion in U.S. contributions).

²¹ SIGAR Audit 13–17, *Health Services in Afghanistan: USAID Continues Providing Millions of Dollars to the Ministry of Public Health Despite the Risk of Misuse*, September 5, 2013.

²² SIGAR Audit 14–32–AR, *Direct Assistance: USAID Has Taken Positive Action to Assess Afghan Ministries' Ability to Manage Donor Funds, but Concerns Remain*, January 30, 2014.

²³ SIGAR Special Project Report 14–12–SP, *Comprehensive Risk Assessments of MOD and MOI Financial Management Capacity Could Improve Oversight of Over \$4 Billion in Direct Assistance Funding*, December 3, 2013.

salaries. However, State and USAID have yet to fully embrace the conditionality as part of their on-budget support.

Given the ongoing concerns about on-budget support, questions for consideration are:

- What conditions should U.S. agencies impose on Afghan ministries before distributing on-budget funding to the Afghan Government?
- What steps are agencies taking to achieve Afghan transparency in the use of U.S. on-budget assistance?
- What level of oversight access do U.S. officials have to documents, personnel, and locations funded through on-budget support?

Counternarcotics

The expanding cultivation and trafficking of drugs puts the entire U.S. and international investment in the reconstruction of Afghanistan at risk. The narcotics trade, which not only supports the insurgency but also feeds organized crime and corruption, puts the gains the U.S. agencies and their international partners have achieved over the past 13 years in women's issues, health, education, rule of law, and governance in jeopardy. Although the United States has invested \$8 billion, as of December 30, 2014, in counternarcotics efforts in Afghanistan, that country still leads the world in opium production, and Afghan farmers are growing more opium than ever before.

Both SIGAR's October 2014 quarterly report and a special project on opium cultivation highlighted the ineffectiveness of law enforcement and alternative livelihoods programs in combating opium cultivation.²⁴ A SIGAR report on the Counternarcotics Justice Center (CNJC) alerted U.S. officials that the CNJC's \$11 million detention facility was not being used for high-profile drug traffickers as intended; rather, the cells were being occupied by low-profile detainees. Because the detention center was filled with low-profile detainees, no cells were available to house mid- and high-profile drug traffickers. SIGAR also noted that, at the time, the CNJC did not have procedures in place to handle a high case load.²⁵

SIGAR investigations routinely involve analysis of financial flows out of Afghanistan. For law enforcement to be effective in combating the narcotics trade, financial information must be made transparent to ensure that illegal networks can be identified and eliminated. For this to be accomplished, it is imperative the Afghan Government be Financial Action Task Force (FATF) compliant.²⁶

Some questions for consideration on the counternarcotics issue are:

- To what extent has U.S. assistance for counternarcotics efforts in Afghanistan succeeded in achieving its overarching goals and objectives?
- To what extent is the Afghan Government capable of assuming a lead role—and sustaining—the fragile progress made by U.S.-supported counternarcotics operations?
- What steps has the Afghan Government taken to be fully FATF compliant?

Contract Management and Oversight Access

U.S. military and civilian agencies in Afghanistan rely heavily on contractors to carry out their missions. At times, the number of contractor employees has exceeded the number of in-country U.S. military personnel. Although contracting has provided indispensable support of the U.S. mission, it has also been a massive opportunity for waste, fraud, and abuse, and an enormous challenge to effective oversight of funding and performance.

SIGAR has repeatedly found problems with agencies' management and oversight of contracts and other agreements. In January 2015, SIGAR reported that it could not complete a full inspection of Gorimar Industrial Park, built under a \$7.7 million USAID contract because USAID was unable to locate project design, planning, construction, quality assurance, and related documents that the agency should have

²⁴ SIGAR, *Quarterly Report to the United States Congress*, October 30, 2014, and SIGAR Special Project Report 15-10-SP, *Poppy Cultivation in Afghanistan: After a Decade of Reconstruction and Over \$7 Billion in Counternarcotics Efforts, Poppy Cultivation Levels Are at an All-Time High*, October 14, 2014.

²⁵ SIGAR Audit-09-7, *Documenting Detention Procedures Will Help Ensure Counter-Narcotics Justice Center Is Utilized As Intended*, September 30, 2009.

²⁶ FATF is an inter-governmental body established to set standards and promote effective implementation of legal, regulatory, and operational measures for combating money laundering, terrorist financing, and other related threats to the integrity of the international financial system.

maintained in accordance with the Federal Acquisition Regulation.²⁷ Another inspection found that a contractor's noncompliance with contract requirements and inadequate contract oversight of the construction of a dry fire range for the ANP in Wardak province resulted in serious structural deficiencies in the facility.²⁸ Notably, improper substitution of clay bricks for bricks composed mostly of sand resulted in water penetration that essentially "melted" the facility building. Because of these irreparable damages, the ANP demolished and is currently rebuilding the facility, representing a waste of the almost \$500,000 in U.S. funds spent on the initial construction.

The increasing difficulties U.S. agencies are having—due to, among other things, drawdown of U.S. and coalition military personnel, deteriorating security conditions across Afghanistan, and the ongoing normalization of Embassy Kabul's operations and presence—have made it much more difficult for agency personnel to oversee their programs and projects first-hand, thus exacerbating ongoing problems with contract oversight. USAID has developed a multi-tiered monitoring and evaluation strategy for Afghanistan that includes using independent, third-party contractors to monitor and evaluate the agency's programs. State is reportedly taking similar steps.

Although U.S. agencies may be well intentioned in their efforts to rebuild Afghanistan, SIGAR remains concerned that the agencies are implementing and have planned several large-scale reconstruction programs without fully determining how they will oversee those programs. For example, in October 2014, USAID announced the launch of Promoting Gender Equity in National Priority Programs (Promote), a 5-year, \$416 million program that, according to USAID, is "the largest women's empowerment program supported by USAID anywhere in the world."²⁹ Promote's primary goal is to strengthen Afghanistan's development by boosting female participation in the economy, helping women gain business and management skills, supporting women's rights groups, and increasing the number of women in decision-making positions within the Afghan Government. However, it is currently unclear the extent to which USAID will be able to effectively implement, monitor, and assess the impact of Promote and the extent to which the program will achieve its overall goal.

Key questions for consideration regarding U.S. agencies' contract management and oversight are:

- If security conditions prevent U.S. access for direct management and oversight in some areas, to what extent have agencies made reasonable plans for adequate and verifiable remote or third-party monitoring of contractor performance?
- What steps have agencies taken to improve contract management and oversight, particularly agency personnel's adherence to existing regulations and policies and contractors' adherence to the terms of their agreements?

Strategy and Planning

U.S. agencies have sought to coordinate their efforts to achieve the U.S. reconstruction objectives in Afghanistan through a series of Civil-Military Strategic Frameworks (2012 and 2013) and United States Integrated Civilian-Military Campaign Plans (2009 and 2011). Since fiscal year 2007, the number of reconstruction projects and programs implemented has dramatically increased. However, SIGAR's work has shown that there has been a gap between the high-level strategic documents and the various projects and programs being implemented. This lack of strategic and operational planning to ensure that U.S. activities in Afghanistan actually contribute to overall national goals threatens to cause agencies and projects to work at counter-purposes, spend money on duplicative or unnecessary efforts and endeavors, or fail to coordinate efforts to maximize their impact.

For example, a 2014 SIGAR audit found that although the U.S. Government has developed a comprehensive water strategy for U.S. agencies working in Afghanistan, USAID did not meet three of its key objectives in four of the nine water projects it has funded since fiscal year 2010.³⁰ During the course of another audit of State's

²⁷ SIGAR Inspection 15–30–IP, *Gorimar Industrial Park: Lack of Electricity and Water Have Left This \$7.7 Million U.S.-funded Industrial Park Underutilized by Afghan Businesses*, January 27, 2015.

²⁸ SIGAR Inspection 15–27–IP, *Afghan Special Police Training Center's Dry Fire Range: Poor Contractor Performance and Poor Government Oversight Led to Project Failure*, January 13, 2015.

²⁹ Of the \$416 million, USAID will fund \$216 million and other international donors are expected to fund \$200 million.

³⁰ SIGAR Audit 14–52–AR, *Afghanistan's Water Sector: USAID's Strategy Needs to Be Updated to Ensure Appropriate Oversight and Accountability*, April 24, 2014.

Justice Sector Support Program, Embassy officials told SIGAR that they were currently updating the 2009 U.S. Government Rule of Law Strategy for Afghanistan to, among other things, assist them to identify overall goals for the Afghan justice sector and help them develop policies and programs to achieve those goals. However, this strategy has not been finalized, and there is no clear timeline for its completion.³¹

Key questions for consideration are:

- To what extent do agencies monitor and evaluate the contributions of specific programs and projects to higher-level U.S. strategic reconstruction goals for Afghanistan?
- What mechanisms exist to facilitate interagency coordination, and how effective are these mechanisms?

CONCLUSION

Since 2002, the United States has provided billions of dollars to rebuild Afghanistan and prevent it from again becoming a safe haven for terrorist groups. The transfer of security responsibility for the country to the Afghan Government, the end of the U.S. and coalition combat mission, and the drawdown of international forces does not mean the reconstruction effort is over. Much remains to be done before Afghanistan becomes a country that can ensure its own stability and security with a capable and self-sustaining ANSF, and has a stable government that can provide necessary services, such as rule of law and education, to its citizens. The success of this effort greatly hinges on the U.S. Government's ability to efficiently and effectively provide reconstruction assistance to Afghanistan and ensure that funds are not wasted or abused in what is the most costly rebuilding program for a single nation in U.S. history. SIGAR is committed to assisting Congress, U.S. agencies, and other stakeholders by continuing to provide the aggressive and independent oversight of the reconstruction effort.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this statement to assist your oversight of U.S.-funded reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan. SIGAR shares your commitment to protecting U.S. funds from waste, fraud, and abuse, and is available to answer any questions you may have.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF CATHERINE M. TRUJILLO, ACTING DEPUTY INSPECTOR GENERAL, U.S. AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Chairman Graham, Ranking Member Leahy, and members of the subcommittee, I am pleased to provide this written statement to the subcommittee on behalf of the Office of Inspector General (OIG) for the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). In the following pages, I address our oversight and budget requirements as well as challenges that the agencies we oversee confront in managing and implementing assistance activities abroad.

USAID OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL OVERSIGHT

USAID OIG was established to combat waste, fraud, and abuse and promote economy, efficiency, and effectiveness in foreign assistance programs. Our oversight responsibilities extend across USAID programs and activities, as well as those of the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), U.S. African Development Foundation, and Inter-American Foundation. In addition, OIG has limited oversight authority and responsibility relating to the Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC).

OIG executes this mission by conducting audits and reviews of agency foreign assistance programs and operations; by investigating allegations of fraud, waste, and abuse; and by conducting extensive outreach to educate and raise awareness among stakeholders about their responsibilities to help prevent, detect, and report mismanagement, fraud, waste, and abuse. OIG employs dedicated Foreign and Civil Service auditors, analysts, investigators, and Foreign Service Nationals to carry out oversight of foreign assistance programs around the world. To ensure independence, OIG maintains administrative, personnel, and information technology (IT) systems separate and apart from USAID's. By law, we obtain legal counsel from our own staff of attorneys, and we fund and independently execute our own management, communications, and reporting responsibilities.

OIG seeks to deliver a consistently high level of performance and productivity in providing independent oversight of foreign assistance programs. Last year, we made

³¹SIGAR Audit 14-26-AR, *Support for Afghanistan's Justice Sector: State Department Programs Need Better Management and Stronger Oversight*, January 24, 2014.

good on that commitment through the issuance of 694 financial and performance audits and reviews with more than 1,100 recommendations for improving foreign assistance programs. These audits identified \$167 million in questioned costs and funds to be put to better use, and during the course of the year agency officials sustained approximately \$117 million in costs that we had questioned. Meanwhile, OIG investigative work led to 8 arrests and 96 administrative actions such as suspensions, debarments, and terminations of employment. In total, OIG investigations contributed to more than \$23 million in savings and recoveries in fiscal year 2014. To promote fraud awareness and reinforce adherence to appropriate spending and accounting practices, OIG provided more than 280 briefings and training sessions for approximately 8,700 attendees.

Overall, even by the most conservative appraisal, OIG has consistently served as a net source of revenue for the Federal Government. For every dollar OIG has spent over the past 5 years, the agencies we oversee have recouped almost three dollars in sustained questioned costs, funds to be put to better use, and investigative savings and recoveries. In addition to these clear direct returns, OIG has contributed to future economies and efficiencies by strengthening systems and controls and helping to get agency programs and activities back on track. By making it plain that there is a cop on the beat in high-risk international settings, OIG activity has also had a deterrent effect against waste, fraud, and abuse.

While OIG can point to a strong track record of providing effective oversight and adding value to foreign assistance efforts, our ability to continue to meet our mandate is in question. As we look forward to fiscal year 2016, OIG confronts new oversight requirements and must take steps to shore up its internal systems, but has not been budgeted the resources that OIG believes are necessary to address these needs.

USAID's push to expand its use of host country systems in implementing assistance programs under the Local Solutions Initiative has increased OIG oversight requirements. As the number of new local partners has increased, OIG has had to expand audit and outreach efforts to ensure appropriate controls are in place and that new partners understand fraud reporting requirements and procedures. OIG has also had to work more intensively with local law enforcement, prosecutors, and courts to address misuse of U.S. Government funds on the part of a growing base of USAID implementing partners not subject to U.S. legal jurisdiction. Rather than one court system, OIG must seek to advance prosecutions and recoveries in many jurisdictions scattered across the globe. This greatly complicates our work and significantly adds to coordination and liaison requirements.

These developments coincide with the expansion of whistleblower protections to Federal contractors. Congress extended whistleblower protections previously enjoyed by Federal employees to employees of Federal contractors and grantees on a pilot basis. Provided these additional protections, employees of foreign assistance implementing partners may be more willing to report allegations regarding waste, fraud, abuse, and mismanagement to our office. Consequently, we have intensified outreach to implementing partner personnel with the aim of increasing their awareness of these protections. Because employees of agency contractors and grantees are often in the best position to observe fraud, waste, and mismanagement in foreign assistance programs, OIG believes that these additional protections have and will continue to encourage more of these personnel to report matters of concern to OIG.

The emergence of two overseas contingency operations (OCOs) related to the Ebola (Operation United Assistance) and ISIL (Operation Inherent Resolve) response efforts has also placed additional demands on our office. Whereas in the past, special inspectors general were established to provide oversight for contingency operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, in 2012, Congress amended the Inspector General Act to provide for a Lead Inspector General to work with counterpart OIGs to provide oversight of future OCOs. This arrangement was adopted to increase the efficiency of oversight efforts by leveraging the specialized knowledge and standing capacity of the OIGs for USAID and the Departments of Defense and State. While this new framework promises to deliver the kind of contingency operation oversight that Congress and the public expect, it also entails more intensive oversight, outreach, coordination, and reporting on the part of all OIGs associated with an OCO, including our office. Notwithstanding these additional requirements and responsibilities, USAID OIG did not receive funding to fully address Ebola-related oversight needs in our view, or any additional resources to support OCO oversight contributions in Syria and Iraq.

Not only has the intensity of OIG oversight requirements increased, so too has the amount of funding for which USAID OIG is likely to be responsible. In addition to substantial funding for Ebola-related activities in the recent appropriation,

USAID and MCC accounts received a significant increase in the fiscal year 2016 Budget Request.¹

By any measure, expectations and requirements for our office have grown, yet our budget reflects historic levels of spending. In fact, the amount provided for our office in the fiscal year 2016 budget request is consistent with what we spent last year. So, while our requirements are increasing, the levels of funding available to us are standing still.

While promoting efficiency in the agencies we oversee, OIG has consistently looked for ways to find economies in its oversight operations. In the austere budget climate of the past several years, however, OIG has cut funding in several areas that can no longer go unsupported without adversely affecting the quality of its work. Important training and professional development activities have been canceled or postponed, and internal support systems vital to OIG independence such as those associated with IT and human capital, have been under-resourced. These and other internal requirements must be addressed for OIG to continue to properly perform mission-critical oversight functions.

These challenges are taking a toll on the organization. OIG's IT and human capital systems are not resourced to deliver the level of service we need to remain an effective, independent organization. Our auditors are struggling to keep pace with demands to examine emerging issues of congressional and public interest and have had to set aside assessments of the implementation of significant policy and program initiatives. OIG criminal investigators face average caseloads that increased by 75 percent over the past several years, and leads are going cold while they wait in the queue. These conditions have created an environment in which turnover is too high and morale too low.

Absent relief, these conditions will worsen. OIG anticipates that this situation will become more serious in the coming months as we begin to suspend recruitment and hiring activity to bring staff levels in line with what we can support with the amounts in the President's budget.

OIG cannot meet the challenges it faces in the coming years within current budget constraints. We believe that the immediate trade-offs we must consider to operate within the levels provided in the President's budget will impair our ability to sustain the kind of broad-based, robust oversight that Congress has long held us to. In OIG's view, provided funding at this level, OIG would not be able to properly deliver on oversight of two active OCOs or fortify its internal systems, and we would need to divert resources from other aspects of our operations. OIG would need to recall personnel from international offices and provide oversight at a distance in several parts of the world. In particular, we would need to withdraw personnel from two international offices, significantly roll back oversight of Europe and Eurasia programs, and suspend plans to enhance investigative coverage of East Africa by opening a small investigative office in the region. While these changes will have a significant effect on our staff and organization, the impact will be felt more acutely in the programs and operations of the agencies we oversee. Constraints on OIG's ability to provide needed oversight will reduce accountability and expose foreign assistance programs and activities to greater risks of waste, fraud, and abuse.

We look forward to working with the Office of Management and Budget and Congress to ensure that OIG oversight requirements are adequately supported in the future.

CHALLENGES TO THE MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION OF FOREIGN ASSISTANCE

Our oversight work has highlighted a number of significant challenges that foreign assistance agencies face in administering related programs and activities. Significant challenges currently facing foreign assistance include operating in non-permissive environments, effectively mitigating risks associated with increased foreign partner implementation of assistance projects, providing clear strategic focus, strengthening performance data, improving sustainability, and planning and operating in the context of budgetary uncertainty. In addition, the management of human capital, IT, and financial systems represents a major management challenge for agencies responsible for foreign assistance activities. Finally, defects in the oversight arrangement for OPIC also represent a significant challenge that must be addressed.

Work in nonpermissive environments poses a major management challenge for foreign assistance agencies. USAID in particular frequently operates in countries facing conflict, insecurity, instability, and weak governance. Travel restrictions on U.S. direct hire personnel and sometimes local Foreign Service National staff com-

¹ OIG oversight of MCC is funded through MCC's appropriation.

plicate program management and oversight activities. Humanitarian assistance activities in Syria are operated from neighboring countries, embassies have closed in Libya, Somalia, and Yemen, and USAID missions for Iraq, South Sudan, Tunisia, and West Bank/Gaza have been evacuated or operated with limited staffing at different points in recent years. These conditions make it extremely difficult to monitor and oversee development projects and humanitarian assistance efforts, yet the U.S. Government continues to invest substantial resources in these settings. Ensuring that agency personnel can responsibly manage related resources and that implementing partners are able to apply funds to well-designed, sustainable programs that advance development or stabilization objectives also represents a significant challenge in these countries.

USAID plans to channel 30 percent of assistance through partner-country systems under its Local Solutions Initiative. This means providing increased funding to and relying to a greater extent upon foreign government ministries, local non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and local for-profit firms to implement programs. By adopting this approach, the agency seeks to promote project sustainability and reinforce local systems for advancing development. This greater reliance on host-country systems, however, also carries significant risks. Local recipients are often unfamiliar with U.S. Government requirements and corresponding management and accountability expectations. Under current conditions, agency contracting staff cannot ensure that organizations new to U.S. procurement requirements and processes use funds properly, heightening the risk of fraud, waste, and abuse.

Another serious challenge that has emerged in recent years relates to the need for sustained strategic focus. When coupled with external mandates, USAID's many initiatives and priorities may divert attention from core responsibilities and shift focus away from long-term goals and commitments. Agency personnel report that the number and pace of new USAID leadership initiatives and priorities have been overwhelming. In many cases, the agency has not reportedly aligned new initiatives with current strategies and policies, fully considered field conditions affecting implementation, or ensured that initiatives are fully adopted and integrated into agency operations before introducing new ones.

OIG audits frequently find performance data concerning USAID programs to be unreliable and the agency has yet to take effective, comprehensive agency-wide action to address problems surrounding the quality of its data. Because problems associated with data collection and reporting have presented in USAID activities around the world, ensuring reliability in performance data has become a real management challenge. While USAID has made some efforts to address the problem, such as developing training on data quality standards and the use of site visits and assessments to detect problems, OIG has observed deficiencies in this area for many years.

International development efforts are intended to provide program benefits that are sustained after donor funding ends. Although both USAID and MCC have incorporated sustainability considerations into project design and planning activities, OIG audits often identify major risks to the sustainability of project activities. The sustainability of foreign assistance projects is often dependent on the willingness and ability of recipients to maintain investments. In some cases agencies are unsuccessful in securing recipients' long-term commitments to support projects at their outset and, in others, recipients renege on their commitments, failing to uphold gains in capacity or maintain systems and infrastructure.

Managing around an unpredictable budget process associated with frequent delays and uncertainty also poses a major difficulty for foreign assistance agencies. These conditions make it challenging to initiate large, multiyear programs. In addition, unforeseen increases or decreases in funding, delays in receiving funds, and hasty obligations of those funds can all adversely affect project planning and implementation. When budget and time pressures are overlaid onto complex procurement processes and requirements, errors in awards and planning weaknesses frequently arise.

Foreign assistance agencies also face noteworthy difficulties associated with human capital management. USAID experiences shortages of experienced, skilled personnel to perform programming and support functions and these shortages translate into shortcomings in institutional performance. Deficits in the number of contracting staff with the knowledge and skills to properly design and administer awards, for example, lead to extended delays in program design and approval. Meanwhile, poor human capital development and promotion practices have contributed to a situation in which many managers reportedly fail to delegate tasks, recognize employees' strengths and contributions, or encourage innovation.

IT and financial management are also sources of concern. USAID's decentralized management of information technology and information security and reliance on Department of State systems in many locations make it difficult for the agency to en-

sure that relevant policies and procedures are implemented or that external mandates are met. OIG was not able to provide an opinion on USAID's most recent financial statement due to the material volume of accounting adjustments the agency had made to reconcile accounts but could not support. In addition, incurred-cost audits of USAID's for-profit contractors have lagged, resulting in a sizable backlog. For its part, MCC continues to have difficulty accumulating the disbursement data it needs from foreign-government-managed Millennium Challenge Accounts to prepare complete, reliable financial statements.

In closing, I would like to highlight a management challenge that bears congressional resolution: the need to establish an appropriate long-term oversight arrangement for OPIC. As we noted earlier, USAID OIG has limited oversight authority and responsibility with respect to OPIC. Current OIG authorities and responsibilities are identified in 22 U.S.C. §2199 and annual, interagency agreements between OIG and OPIC that we have entered into each of the past 3 years. The most recent agreement provides the basis for OIG to run a fraud awareness program, conduct an audit to address identified risks in OPIC operations, report on compliance with information security requirements, and review the Corporation's purchase card program. However, neither the statute nor the agreement provide for the full range of oversight activities commonly undertaken by inspectors general.

Under the current arrangement with OPIC, our office does not have independent authority to conduct all oversight activities that we deem appropriate. OIG does not have needed flexibility to adjust oversight plans because the law does not specifically authorize OIG to conduct audits of OPIC programs whenever such work is necessary or desirable, and the funding and authority for these activities is determined in annual agreements. Other core activities that are typically the province of an OIG, like oversight of annual financial statement audits and the examination of complaints about the effects of projects, are managed by OPIC itself, rather than an independent entity. In addition, OPIC has sought to shape the types of oversight we provide as part of interagency agreements, and perennial delays in its signing of agreements have postponed OIG oversight activities. This arrangement with OPIC—whereby the subject of oversight can shape the types of oversight it receives and the terms on which it is provided—presents potential conflicts that should be remedied through legislative action.

A number of legislative proposals to address this situation have been introduced in recent years but none has come to fruition. One proposal would provide our office with a full complement of OPIC oversight authorities, while another would assign these to the Export-Import Bank OIG. Other legislation provides for OPIC to have an OIG of its own.

While congressional attention to the future of OPIC oversight may be warranted, the continuing uncertainty surrounding the oversight arrangement that will ultimately emerge does no service to OPIC and does little to provide independent assurance that OPIC is managing resources appropriately. USAID OIG has no position on what specific, long-term arrangement should be selected for OPIC oversight, but firmly believes in the value that truly independent oversight can bring to Federal Government programs and activities. Accordingly, USAID OIG welcomes continued engagement with OPIC and Congress on this matter and stresses the importance of securing both adequate funding and comprehensive audit and investigative authorities for any OIG charged with overseeing OPIC programs in the future.

Thank you for this opportunity to address the subcommittee. At USAID OIG, we greatly appreciate your interest in our work and continuing support for effective oversight.

Senator GRAHAM. Thank you.

And welcome to our new subcommittee members. I hope you enjoy the experience. I appreciate you being willing to serve on this subcommittee. And to my past colleagues who have been here since day one, thank you.

IRANIAN INFLUENCE

Mr. Secretary, do you agree with me that Iran has more influence in Baghdad, Iraq now than they did in 2009?

Secretary KERRY. I would say that they have more overt influence, but I am not sure they have actually more bottom-line influence, because, Mr. Chairman, Prime Minister Maliki was far more inclined to administer a sectarian government, and aligned himself

much more, in a sense, even though Iran wasn't as directly engaged.

But Prime Minister Abadi has really been walking a very important line, which even the Iranians—I was just yesterday negotiating with the Iranians in a brief conversation. It was clear to me, because we don't talk about other subjects, really, but it was understood that the Prime Minister is working hard to try to bring the country together. I think that is different than what we had under Prime Minister Maliki.

Senator GRAHAM. Do you agree with me that the government in Yemen collapsed because of the Iranians' willingness to support the Houthis?

Secretary KERRY. I think it contributed to it, Mr. Chairman, without any question whatsoever. But I do know that the Iranians were surprised by the events that took place and are hoping, actually, to see a national dialogue produce some kind of—

Senator GRAHAM. Do you agree with me that the Houthis couldn't last 15 minutes without Iranian support?

Secretary KERRY. They will last longer than 15 minutes, but obviously, Iranian support is critical.

Senator GRAHAM. Do you agree with me that Assad is a puppet of the Iranian regime?

Secretary KERRY. Pretty much.

Senator GRAHAM. Do you agree with me that Hezbollah is a subcontractor of the Iranian regime?

Secretary KERRY. Totally.

Senator GRAHAM. Do you agree with me that Iran is trying to destabilize Bahrain?

Secretary KERRY. There has been influence. I am not sure to what degree, but we know that they have been involved with the Shia there.

Senator GRAHAM. Do you agree with me that Iran is actively trying to produce an ICBM that could reach faraway places outside of Tehran?

Secretary KERRY. I think that is the subject of a classified conversation.

RUSSIA

Senator GRAHAM. Okay. Do you agree with me that when Russia says there are no Russian weapons or troops in the Ukraine that they are lying?

Secretary KERRY. Yes.

Senator GRAHAM. Why do they lie?

Secretary KERRY. You're asking me?

Senator GRAHAM. Yes.

Secretary KERRY. Mr. Chairman, Russia is engaged in a rather remarkable period of the most overt and extensive propaganda exercise that I have seen since the very height of the Cold War. And they have been persisting in their misrepresentations, lies, whatever you want to call them, about their activities. They are to my face, to the face of others, on many different occasions.

Senator GRAHAM. So we can all collectively say that the Russian leadership lies when it comes to their behavior in Ukraine.

Do you agree with me that the Russian dismemberment of Ukraine has trampled the Budapest Memorandum?

Secretary KERRY. Yes, it has, essentially.

Senator GRAHAM. Do you agree with me that it is not in our national security interest for such behavior to go unchecked, that Ukraine in the late 1990s gave up thousands of nuclear weapons with the understanding their sovereignty would be guaranteed by Russia and the United States? Do you believe we are living up to that commitment to guarantee Ukrainian sovereignty?

Secretary KERRY. I think we are doing the best we can with certain limitations that exist. But I think we are doing a pretty good job of standing up for Ukrainian sovereignty.

Senator GRAHAM. Do you support sending defensive weapons to the Ukrainian people to defend themselves against this aggression?

Secretary KERRY. That is a conversation that is taking place within the administration right now, Mr. Chairman. Until the President makes his decision, I am going to keep my consultations personal and private with him.

SYRIA

Senator GRAHAM. As to Syria, do you agree with me ISIL is not being checked in a meaningful way inside Syria?

Secretary KERRY. Would you say that again?

Senator GRAHAM. ISIL is not being meaningfully checked or controlled within Syria?

Secretary KERRY. No, I don't agree with that. I believe ISIL is being checked, but it is not being yet sufficiently stopped in Syria. There are a lot of reasons for that. But there are a lot of strategy discussions taking place right now with our allies and with others that I believe will mount the strategy necessary to deal with ISIL in Syria.

Senator GRAHAM. You mentioned the Authorization for Use of Military Force. I have asked a question of the White House General Counsel. The Free Syrian Army that we are training, we sent them into fight ISIL. They were attacked by Assad, by Assad's aircraft or helicopters.

I have been told by the General Counsel that under the Authorization for Use of Military Force we are considering, we do not have the authority to engage Assad's aircraft. I am going to send a letter to the White House General Counsel to get him to comment on that.

Would you agree with me that any strategy regarding Syria has to have an Assad component?

Secretary KERRY. Ultimately, yes.

Senator GRAHAM. Do you agree with me that no Arab army is going in on the ground in Syria just to fight ISIL. They want Assad replaced.

Secretary KERRY. Let me come back—

Senator GRAHAM. I mean, Egypt, Turkey—

Secretary KERRY. There are various ways to be able to contemplate different options regarding Assad that will ultimately have an impact on our choices with respect to ISIL.

Senator GRAHAM. I guess what I am saying, I agree with that, but no Arab regional force will engage ISIL alone.

Secretary KERRY. I agree with that.

Senator GRAHAM. They are not going to give Syria over to the Iranians.

Secretary KERRY. I agree with that.

Senator GRAHAM. So please, I want everyone on this committee to understand that whatever mythical Arab army we can create to go into Syria, they are going to require the replacement of Assad as the price of admission, because to do otherwise would be to give Syria to Iran.

IRAN

Do you agree with me that the Arabs in the region are very concerned about Iranian advancement?

Secretary KERRY. Yes.

Senator GRAHAM. Do you agree with me that the Arabs in the region will not tolerate a nuclear deal with Iran that in their minds would give the Iranians a nuclear advantage over the Sunni Arab countries?

Secretary KERRY. Well, the way you have phrased that question doesn't quite accurately represent what the choice will be. So I would say to you that we are working very, very closely with all of our friends in the gulf. In fact, Friday I will be attending a GGC meeting in London, and we have kept them fully abreast of what we are doing.

Senator GRAHAM. Have you kept Israel fully abreast of what we are doing?

Secretary KERRY. Yes, we have.

OBAMA FOREIGN POLICY DOCTRINE

Senator GRAHAM. Okay. I will just close with this, could you briefly describe the Obama foreign policy doctrine?

Secretary KERRY. Well, the foreign policy doctrine of the United States is to be engaged and to lead across the world in ways that advance America's interests and values and protect our security.

Senator GRAHAM. Do you think it is working?

Secretary KERRY. It is working very effectively in many places. It is troubled in some places, obviously.

I will give you an example. In Afghanistan, it was not a small endeavor to help pull Afghanistan out of the morass of that—

Senator GRAHAM. I agree. I think you have done a good job.

Do you support a condition-based withdrawal in Afghanistan, of our military forces?

Secretary KERRY. I think the President is on the right track. I think the evaluation that is going on now with respect to the adjustments on the troop is appropriate, and the President will make his decision shortly.

Senator GRAHAM. Thank you, Mr. Secretary.

Senator Leahy.

Senator LEAHY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CUBA

Secretary, since you have been Secretary, you and I have discussed Cuba a number of times, as you know, as I have with the President, and was involved in a lot of the negotiations with Cuba.

I have felt that, for 53 years, our policy of unilateral sanctions against Cuba hurt the Cuban Government far more than it hurt the Castro government. It was opposed by every country in this hemisphere. I once told Fidel Castro that our embargo was the best thing he had going for him because he could blame a failed economy and a failed political system on the United States, instead of having to take the blame himself.

You go to Cuba now, as I have many times, and talk with people, and you hear that most of them there, not all, but most, who were critics of the Cuban Government say that they now have hope. They oppose the embargo. They want us to be more engaged.

Of course, the question is asked, what do we get in return? Well, of course, the American people who were told that the only country in the world where their government told them they couldn't go now, they now have more freedom to go or they can go as tourists, which you could in any other country.

And I think we can start debunking the myth that the poverty and deprivations that Cubans are facing isn't the fault of their government, but of ours.

How do you see what is happening in Cuba? How do you see this as affecting our relations with other countries in the hemisphere?

Secretary KERRY. First of all, let me begin, Senator Leahy, by really honoring and thanking you for your prescience and long, long commitment to the issue of Cuba. You have been deeply engaged in that. And you were very engaged in helping to get Alan Gross out, and we appreciate it.

It is one of those examples of senatorial engagement that can make a difference on an administration, any administration, this one or another one.

With respect to Cuba, I want to emphasize to everybody that what we are trying to do with Cuba is not about what the Cuban Government is going to do for us. It is about what we can do for Cuba and for the Cuban people and the American people. This policy has been in place, everybody knows, for 50-plus years, and it just wasn't changing anything.

This policy change, I can tell you, has been received with an extraordinary sense of welcome in Latin America, in Central America, in Europe, in Asia, and elsewhere. People feel like this was long overdue, and they think it is the right thing to be doing. I think the only people unsettled by it are the Venezuelans.

So, in my judgment, it is the right choice, and the future is what is going to really define that.

But reestablishing diplomatic relations, Mr. Ranking Member, will remove the pretext that has been used for decades, to counter pressure from the Cuban people for more freedom and economic prosperity and for other legitimate demands. And it really has the chance to provide the people of Cuba with a prospect of transformation. We hope we can complete the task.

CENTRAL AMERICA

Senator LEAHY. The President's request has a proposal to establish an independent grantee organization to carry out broadcasts in Latin America and the Caribbean, including Cuba, and the Broadcasting Board of Governors will deal with that. You are on that board. I am going to submit a letter, because we don't have the full justification I think of a lot of the money wasted on some of the other broadcasts before. And I would like to hear from you about how they see this new one working.

But in Central America, you are requesting \$1 billion to promote trade and economic development and enhance security there. Those are worthy goals. But we spent billions of dollars there over 2 decades. We have seen conditions get worse in Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador.

I am afraid that we may have this Alliance for Prosperity plan that may be more of a wish list. I would like to see the Central American private sector invest in their own economic development and public security. Instead of many who, and I won't go down and list a whole lot of them, pay for their own private security. They live in Miami. They live behind walls. They don't pay taxes. If they don't live in Miami, they keep their money there. We can help train police, investigators, prosecutors, and judges to ask them to uphold their part of the law.

But do you agree that the private sector should be doing more?

Secretary KERRY. Yes, but I also think, Senator—I know this. I met personally when I was in Mexico with the presidents of Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador, when the unaccompanied children challenge was at its greatest. We listened very carefully and worked very hard on how you stem this tide, how you begin to deal with it.

One of the principal things that the kids were running away from, or their families enticing them toward where they were, was the violence, the levels of violence. Secondly, just the day-to-day absence of opportunity, the standard of living, the poverty.

So we have put together a security-based and governance-based—changing governance, how it responds, absence of corruption, beginning to deal, training the police.

Senator LEAHY. The absence of corruption would be a major thing, especially with the police.

Secretary KERRY. Now our plan is to help train vetted police, investigators, prosecutors, judges, to increase the capacity to uphold the rule of law and protect those citizens.

So I know it sounds distant to some people, and they say, well, why are we doing it there? We are doing it there because it is our problem, too. They are coming up through Central America, across Mexico, into Texas, into other places. We were capturing them. We were putting them in facilities, holding them. And then the question is, who do you send them back to?

Senator LEAHY. I don't disagree that is part of our problem. But I think of all the money that has been spent down there, and I would only urge that there be a lot more control of that money, and a lot more calling on the governments themselves and the people in those countries, especially those who can afford it in the private

sector, to do a lot more in the interest of their country than just in the interest of their own bank accounts.

Secretary KERRY. But they have committed to undertake those kinds of initiatives. And we are very focused on this, which is why we have asked for the billion dollars. You know, there was, once upon a time, an Alliance for Progress. It had a huge impact on Latin American attitudes towards North America, towards the United States. It opened up all sets of possibilities.

Senator LEAHY. I realize money is not the only thing. I mean, look at Haiti. Billions of dollars either spent or pledged down there, and it is going from bad to worse. You have a government that is ruling by decree. The economy is in shambles. Protests by thousands of people who are living in the streets.

I mention this only because money is not the only answer.

Secretary KERRY. Of course not. Money is absolutely not the only answer. You can throw money at it and throw it away.

What we have learned in the last 25 years, and these are lessons that have been significantly applied in the way we are doing development now, partly the Millennium Challenge Corporation goals, partly what Raj Shah did while he was administrator at AID, was change our approach to development. There is a much greater degree of visibility, a much greater degree of self-help, a much greater degree of oversight. And we understand this has to be done carefully and properly.

But if it isn't done, there will be greater levels of violence, greater levels of upheaval, greater opportunities for radical groups to grab people. Violence will increase. And the United States will feel that impact.

So this is not just a sort of do-good, let's help them deal. This is also in our interests, in our security interests, our long-term interests, and it meets our values.

So what we are doing is a three-part strategy that focuses on security, focuses on governance, and focuses on prosperity, and that piece engages the private sector.

Senator LEAHY. Thank you. My time is up, but I will have further follow-up questions on what the press has uncovered, which appear to be war crimes in Iraq by the Iraqi Government and Iraqi military. Those are very serious matters that may have to be answered in a classified forum, but they are very serious.

Senator GRAHAM. Thank you, Senator Leahy.

Senator Kirk.

IRAN

Senator KIRK. Mr. Secretary, I would like to take you to a chart that I have here. This shows that during the negotiations run by Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Wendy Sherman, that we have been steadily relieving sanctions on Iran to the tune of \$490 million every 3 weeks. That is about five times the amount that the Ministry of Intelligence and Security (MOIS) of Iran pays to maintain Hezbollah.

Secretary KERRY. I am sorry, I missed that. What was the number?

Senator KIRK. It is \$490 million every 3 weeks.

Secretary KERRY. What is that?

Senator KIRK. This demonstrates the point that the Iranian delegation at the Geneva talks is rented, bought and paid for. You have been arranging for substantial cash flow to go to Iran that is five times the amount that the MOIS, the Iranian Intelligence Service, pays to Hezbollah.

Secretary KERRY. Senator, I hate to say this, but I don't understand what money you are referring to, from where.

Senator KIRK. This is a steady flow of sanctions relief. This is the heart and soul of your negotiation. You maintain a steady cash flow to the Iranians in—

Secretary KERRY. Actually, it is not, Senator. It is not the heart and soul of our negotiation, at all.

I don't know where your information is coming from, but the fact is that Iran has gotten significantly less money than they anticipated and hoped for from the relief that is within the interim agreement, number one.

Number two, the total may amount, over the period of time, to somewhere in the vicinity of \$14 billion. But that is over the period of the life of that.

The fact is that, during that time, many times that has been escrowed in an account that they can't reach. I would say, \$25 billion, \$30 billion a year has been put away, and they can't reach it. They now have well over \$100-and-some billion, I don't know the exact figure, that is put away. They can't reach it. And the reason they are negotiating today is because they want to get out from under the sanctions. They are not out from under. In fact, we added sanctions, I might add. I don't think I have it all in front of me here.

But our oil sanctions alone have deprived Iran of over \$40 billion. Altogether since 2012, we have denied access to more than \$200 billion in lost exports and funds they can't use. And those revenues are being held abroad in restricted accounts.

I don't know anybody who looks at the interim agreement and doesn't say, wow, this has really worked, including Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who would like to see it extended, having opposed it vehemently in the beginning, calling it the deal of the century for Iran. It was obviously not the deal. It has restrained their program, stopped work on Iraq, taken their 20 percent enrichment down to zero, given us access to Fordow, access to Arak, access to their mining, their milling, their production, their centrifuges.

Senator KIRK. Mr. Secretary, when you say "access," could you describe how our typical inspection happens? I was just on the phone with Olli Heinonen, who was the lead nuclear inspector at the IAEA. In the briefing that he gave me, an inspection occurs only after 2 hours' notice, always with an Iranian handler to make sure you only see what they want you to see.

Did you know that?

Secretary KERRY. That is not accurate. We have people on site each day. We are tracking exactly what a centrifuge is doing, how many centrifuges there are, what their production levels are, where the waste is going. And the IAEA has determined, as recently as a few weeks ago, that there isn't one thing that Iran is out of order in, with respect to their compliance with this agreement.

Moreover, 40 entities have been added to the designation list on sanctions. Fifteen were added under terrorism authorities. Thirty-four were added under sanctions evasion and material support authorities. Three were added under human rights authorities. Five were identified as Iranian financial institutions. And eight aliases were added to the list for entities designated.

That is a pretty remarkable job of raising the stakes on Iran for any kind of potential violation.

Senator KIRK. I would just point out the notion that getting Iran to help fight ISIS is like hiring the local town psychopathic, pyromaniac to join the volunteer fire department.

Secretary KERRY. Well, Senator, were not hiring them. We are not asking them to do anything. We are not coordinating with them. They are doing what is in their own self-interest. They hate Daesh. Every country in the region hates Daesh.

So, yes. They are fighting them. But we're not coordinating with them. And whatever Daesh they take off the field, we are delighted to see them go.

RADICAL ISLAM

Senator KIRK. You called them ISIS and Daesh in the same hearing. If we get two words, could you say the words "Islamic radical" in public?

Secretary KERRY. Yes, I have talked about radical Islamic problems in many speeches, in many places. You know, obviously, even in the Muslim world, people talk about political Islam and radical Islam, so, I mean, I don't have a problem with that.

Senator KIRK. So is that who we are fighting, radical Islam? And do you agree with that?

Secretary KERRY. Well, that is not the place to place this debate. What we are fighting are a group who are naming themselves with a name referring to Islam who have absolutely nothing that has anything to do with Islam.

Now, is that a fight against Islam? No, it is not. It is a fight against a radical group of terrorists, frankly, criminals. What we have here is a criminal anarchy that we are fighting that is trying to claim legitimacy under a religion, and a whole bunch of people are fighting back against that.

I am proud to say that many of the strongest voices are coming from Islam and from the Muslim world itself. The grand mufti of Egypt called this group satanic and outside anything to do with Islam. The grand mufti of Saudi Arabia, the same thing. I mean, there are just huge opprobrium being placed on this group.

And I think our greater challenge is really figuring out how we balance the sectarianism that enters into it.

KOREAN ENERGY DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATION

Senator KIRK. Let me take you to another subject. This is the Appropriations Committee. Originally, this committee had approved about \$400 million for an organization called the Korean Energy Development Organization. In the end, Western powers gave about \$1.5 billion to this organization, all under the management of Wendy Sherman. I wonder if you could follow up and find out who

got that money. Was it Charles Kartman? Was it Joel Wit who got that \$1.5 billion? I think we ought to look into that.

Secretary KERRY. Senator, I am happy to look into that. I honestly don't know the details of that at all.

Since you several times mentioned Wendy Sherman, I have huge admiration for Wendy Sherman. She is a professional, and she works harder than anybody I have met. And she is doing a tremendous job working with a team of people in these negotiations.

But with all due respect, the President of the United States is the ultimate arbiter of these negotiations, and on his behalf, me. And running day-to-day, you can dump it on me. I am responsible.

So, you know, she has done a superb job, and I think we need to wait and see what, if anything, we come up with.

Senator KIRK. When you say she has done a superb job with the \$1.5 billion that—

Secretary KERRY. Well, I will find out about it.

Senator KIRK. What was actually purchased?

Secretary KERRY. I really don't know. I will have to find out.

Senator KIRK. This was \$1.5 billion, and you have no idea what happened with it.

Secretary KERRY. What year was that?

Senator KIRK. It was 1996.

Secretary KERRY. Yes, 1996, no, I am sorry, I don't have instant recall as to what happened in 1996 on that. I was on the committee. I know there were negotiations. But we will find out exactly what it was.

Senator KIRK. Back in Chicago, \$1.5 billion is a huge chunk of change.

Secretary KERRY. Well, of course, it is, Senator. But it is now 2015, and I wasn't Secretary of State then. I was sitting up there somewhere towards the end, and trying to learn as much as I could.

Senator KIRK. Right.

Senator GRAHAM. Thank you.

Senator Merkley.

Senator MERKLEY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thank you, Mr. Secretary.

The quote that you had from Dean Acheson, the final half of it, we have to understand that all our lives, the danger, the uncertainty, the need for alertness, for effort, that discipline will be upon us. It will be hard, but we are in for it. And the only real question is whether we shall continue strongly enough soon enough.

That is a powerful reflection on how complicated the world has been and, certainly, as it continues to be now.

I wanted to praise the work of our folks in the Embassies around the world. We were able, at the end of last year, to fill a number of the ambassadorships that had been vacant. That is certainly positive, in terms of our relationships.

And I wanted to mention that I appreciated particularly that we confirmed Karen Stanton in East Timor. There is a challenge involving a citizen from Oregon who is being held in that country, and she has done a wonderful job of helping to draw attention to it. And I will continue to work with her and the State Department,

hopefully to get her back home. Her name is Stacy Addison. I just wanted to mention that.

GLOBAL HEALTH INITIATIVE

Second, I wanted to turn to the Global Health Initiative that is in this budget, and the U.S. support for it. Some of my constituents really wanted to see the U.S. step up at the January conference of this year with a multiyear pledge on vaccinations as one of the most cost-effective ways to impact global help, with the goal of vaccinating 300 million additional children. The U.S. did step up with a 4-year commitment, and I wanted to praise the U.S. for being engaged in that type of thoughtful international leadership with huge leverage.

And perhaps down the line, when we have vaccinations for things like AIDS and Ebola, that will be expanded to address that world. But in general, I wanted to draw attention to how that type of international global health work reverberates in the quality of life around the world.

AUTHORIZATION FOR USE OF MILITARY FORCE

I wanted to turn to ask a couple questions about the authorization for the use of military force (AUMF), the draft AUMF that we have now, that we will be considering. It is my understanding that the administration is not recommending that we put a time limit on the 2001 AUMF, and is recommending a 3-year restriction on the new AUMF. I just wonder if you could address why not essentially create a sunset on each of these components, including the 2001?

Secretary KERRY. Senator, first of all, let me begin by saying thank you for your mention of your constituent. I want you to know that Embassy officers have been communicating with the host government officials. On last November 7, we had a meeting with the Timorese ambassador. We are trying to get the release passport. And hopefully, we can secure her release. There really is—I am familiar with the case—no legitimate explanation for how she has been detained and kept most recently. So we are going to keep working on that.

With respect to the AUMF, let me just say that the rationale behind the timeframe is, on ISIL, the President felt it was really important for a future president to be able to reevaluate, whoever the President may be. He remembers how he came in and there was Afghanistan, and he had a 30,000 or whatever it was troop addition on his plate in the first weeks when he came in. And what he thinks is that it is very important that there be an institutionalized process whereby Congress measures where we are, what have we achieved, whether the goals are worth it, and so forth.

On the other hand, the 2001 AUMF is, in fact, a very broad permission to deal with the threat that is ongoing now, about which there is no real need to sort of reevaluate, I think, and that is al Qaeda and Taliban and affiliated groups similar to that who are threatening the United States of America, or who had a very direct relationship to 9/11 and to the events coming out of 9/11.

So that is the distinction between the two. And the President really sees Daesh as one problem over here that ought to be re-

measured in 3 years for a new President, and the other is a continuum between administrations and as an ongoing challenge, which we shouldn't limit.

Senator MERKLEY. I will just comment that I would like to see us put a timeframe on 2001, despite, as you point out, that there is an enduring threat. ISIL also emerges from ancient conflicts, Sunni-Shiite conflicts, emerges from ancient philosophies about what is the pure approach.

So there are roots that are deep in all these things, and I don't think it hurts us to be off of a permanent vision and reevaluate 2001 as well.

Secretary KERRY. Well, the only thing I would say to you, Senator, as you know, the President is asking that you refine and adjust the 2001 as necessary, if it is necessary. So he is not oblivious that it may need some refinement. But he wouldn't want that authority, I think, at this point in time.

Now he has suggested that the 2002 ought to be repealed, because there is a distinction between the two.

Senator MERKLEY. Turning to another phrase in the proposed draft is "enduring offensive ground combat operations," and this is in regard to a limitation on the use of ground Army forces. But the phrase "enduring" and "offensive," certainly, is vague, perhaps by intention. But do you want to offer any clarifying thoughts about that?

Secretary KERRY. Well, "enduring" really came out of the conversation that I had with the Foreign Relations Committee last December. And I think it was language that was proposed by Congress, in fact. I think Senator Menendez and Senator Corker may have put that together.

We thought that it adequately represented a distinction that left the President the appropriate level of discretion with respect to how he might choose to fight or what he might need to do, without any room for interpretation that this was somehow being interpreted to be a new license for a new Afghanistan or a new Iraq. That is the distinction.

Both of those required major commitment of combat troops to a major period of time, obviously enduring combat. But if you are going in for weeks and weeks combat, that is enduring. If you are going in to assist someone in fire control, and you are embedded in an overnight deal, or you are in a rescue operation or whatever, that is not enduring.

I don't think that the military or most of the folks debating this have had any trouble drawing that line, at this point.

But is there some discretion for the President? Yes. But traditionally, as you know, constitutionally, that has been interpreted to be exactly what the President ought to have, even fuller discretion than he is willing to accept here. The reason he has accepted it is because he recognizes there are diverse opinions.

This really is sort of step two of step one, which was my appearance before the AUMF hearing in December, where the language of the Foreign Relations Committee was considered. And then it sort of built on that, and the President decided that looks like that is what Congress can get the biggest vote on.

What we want is as large a vote as possible for Congress to say Daesh deserves to be defeated, and we are committed to the fight. We don't want to have this become the victim of a tug-of-war between one person's or a couple people's strongly felt, but nevertheless not majority view of what powers the President ought to have to accomplish this goal.

Senator MERKLEY. Well, to close, because my time is out, I appreciate the administration putting forward the AUMF. I think it is our responsibility under our Constitution to wrestle with it. I look forward to that conversation.

I am always amazed at the vast complexity of the world issues that you are working on simultaneously, and the fact that you can go from the AUMF details to a single citizen from Oregon, Stacey Addison in East Timor, is amazing. I look forward to many more conversations. Thank you.

Secretary KERRY. Thank you.

Senator GRAHAM. Senator Boozman.

Senator BOOZMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you for being here, Mr. Secretary. I know that you share the same feeling, that oversight is so important in Congress.

SPECIAL INSPECTOR GENERAL FOR AFGHANISTAN RECONSTRUCTION

Recently, the IG for Afghan Reconstruction, in his most recent quarterly report to Congress, said that the information that has been published publicly for 6 years is now being labeled as classified, and additionally reported that the State Department would not answer questions on economic and social development activities or the evaluation of anticorruption initiatives of Afghan Ministry of Defense and the Afghan Ministry of Interior.

Can you explain why, after 6 years, the State Department has suddenly refused the IG access to the information? And are we still continuing to do that? And if so, why?

Secretary KERRY. This is news to me. I am not familiar with what it is that may have been classified. I am not even sure that that denies him actual access, but in a classified structure. So let me find out about that, if I may, because we have been very open. We have a terrific IG. I brought him on. We didn't have one previously. He has a strong, independent record. And we look to him to help us find things that are not working well, and we have worked very cooperatively. So let me find out what that is about, and we will come back to you.

Senator BOOZMAN. Thank you very much.

USAID INSPECTOR GENERAL

In a related question, Catherine Trujillo, acting Deputy IG for USAID—and I completely agree with you. Earlier, you mentioned in Raj Shah, the good job that he has done in changing the culture and putting oversight and accountability in place. She said that the President's budget request is insufficient and would require the Office of Inspector General to recall personnel from abroad and resort to, and I quote, "providing oversight at a distance." Again, can you respond to that?

Secretary KERRY. It is the first I have heard of it, but I will find out as part of my package to get back to you.

Senator BOOZMAN. Good. Thank you very much.
Secretary KERRY. Yes.

PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY

Senator BOOZMAN. I recently joined 74 of my colleagues here in the Senate in writing a letter to express our concerns with the recent bid by the Palestinian Authority to join the International Criminal Court. Secretary General of the United Nations Ban Ki-moon has stated that the Palestinian Authority will be given member status on April 1. Several weeks ago, the State Department and White House announced that they would conduct a review of all U.S. assistance to the P.A. Can you share what determinations you made thus far regarding the review? And do you believe the Palestinians have taken the required steps to trigger a cutoff of U.S. aid?

Secretary KERRY. Well, we believe that the Palestinians do not qualify as a state to be able to apply. And we have made that position known to the prosecutor, as did several other countries.

In addition to that, we stated to the Palestinians in the strongest terms that we really thought that this was inadvisable, a terrible exercise of judgment that would have profoundly negative impacts, among them the potential cutoff of aid from the United States. And the issue now really will be determined when and if something happens around April 1 with their assumption of membership.

What has happened so far is a preliminary inquiry is underway. It is not a formal investigation under the ICC.

So this is not an answer from the lawyers of the State Department. I am giving you my quick interpretation from reading the statute, which I have, that it is arguable whether or not they have at this point, simply by applying but without pressing a particular case, crossed that line.

But we still believe what they have done is a mistake. It is inadvisable. It is destructive. It hurts the building of confidence. It makes it harder for, obviously, anybody to look at them and believe that they are ready to be a partner in things.

On the other hand, they are very frustrated. They are deeply angry. They see settlement announcements coming out in large numbers and so forth, and they are politically very frustrated.

So it is a very difficult situation right now. And we are staying out of the elections. We don't want to get involved. But when the election is over in Israel, our hope is that there may be some opportunity to be able to try to get things right-sized again and be able to do something constructive. But it is very difficult.

Senator BOOZMAN. Good. Thank you, Mr. Secretary.

ISIL-DAESH

Earlier you talked about the success of airstrikes in Iraq with ISIL or ISIS. But there are reports from a variety of sources that ISIS' area of influence in Syria is close to twice the size it was when the U.S. began airstrikes last June. So we are championing success in Iraq, and yet it doesn't seem like we are having much success in fact perhaps going the other way in Syria.

Secretary KERRY. Senator, there has been a slight increase. It is a fact; there has been a slight increase of ISIL presence in Syria.

But I can't, by any means, describe what is happening in Syria as a big advance. They have been stopped in Syria also.

Remember, Kobani was going to be the big test. And they were days away from running over Kobani. We came in with very significant strikes. But more importantly, we came in and diplomatically worked with the Turks and with the Kurds and made it possible for Peshmerga to be able to pass through a corridor and come into Kobani and reinforce it.

And by continuing the strikes and joining in that effort, ISIL ultimately had to admit it lost. They were defeated. And they lost as many as 1,000 fighters there.

So we have been able to do some of the things. But I think it is well known. Everyone knows this. We are going to have to increase the capacity on the ground in Syria in order to be able to have more impact. That is what we are building. We are building it now with the Title 10 overt training that Congress has approved. That begins this month. And there are other things that are taking place that will augment the ability of the moderate opposition to have an impact on Assad.

So I believe that, over the next months, in my judgment, the pressure can increase significantly on the Assad regime. That will affect who is willing to do what on the ground.

At the moment, I am not going to pretend to you that the force is there that is ready to do that. But as Iraq takes place and confidence is built, and they are driven back into Syria, which they will be, then the focus will be much more on Syria.

Senator BOOZMAN. Good.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator GRAHAM. Thank you.

Senator Murphy.

Senator MURPHY. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, Mr. Secretary.

The State Department budget is about 1 percent of the Federal budget. We have more lawyers at the Department of Defense than we have diplomats throughout the world. I think we get a pretty good return on our investments, given all the troubles that you face.

UKRAINE

I wanted to come back to Ukraine. I agree with the chairman that it is time for some more serious defensive arms to the Ukrainians. I think that the Russians at this point have proven that they are immune to other forms of influence. I wish we weren't here, but I think as a last resort, the United States now needs to stand up the Ukrainian army to a degree that significantly changes the military calculation inside Russia.

But I think this very narrow debate over whether or not we arm the Ukrainians has obscured the larger project that we have ahead of us, which is that what we are seeing in Ukraine is just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to Russia's influence in the region. What we are not debating and talking about on a daily basis is what they are doing in Moldova, in Georgia, in Serbia, in Montenegro, in Latvia, in the Baltics. This asymmetric brand of warfare that they are perfecting where they buy up press outlets, they pay

off public officials—those that they can't pay off, they intimidate—is just simply not being matched by the West, in terms of the legal resources that we can use to try to blunt to those influences.

In your supplemental request, I see a number of line items that I could guess could be part of a buildup of the kind of anticorruption efforts, free press efforts, rule of law efforts, that would help. But having just come back from the Balkans where I was in the fall, you see in Serbia, for instance, Russia marching in with greater influence than they have ever had before, and our Embassy there just trying to scramble together enough money to run some simple exchange programs, USAID pulling out.

And I wonder if you could talk a little bit about it, because I know you are talking about the resources necessary to run this kind of strategy throughout the region. I wonder if you can talk a little bit about, within your supplemental and within your base budget, how we can start to meet this challenge in ways other than simply just providing arms to one country amongst dozens that are threatened by this new Russia?

Secretary KERRY. Senator, that is a very important question, and it couldn't be more important or timely than this effort. Russia is engaged in a massive, massive effort to sway nations, to appeal to them, reach out to them. And fundamentally, tragically, is sort of reigniting a new kind of East-West zero-sum game that we think is dangerous and unnecessary, frankly. If you see some of the speeches that have been made and look at their focus, even just the other day, Foreign Minister Lavrov at the U.N., at the 70th anniversary moment, was talking about the U.S. disruptive efforts around the world and how we are responsible for every ill they see.

And the question asked earlier by the chairman, about how they present things, and the lies about their presence in Ukraine and the training, I mean, it is stunning. But it has an impact in places where it is encountered.

Propaganda works. And so this is where we are hurting ourselves. I say this so respectfully to former colleagues. I mean, I was frustrated by this when I was here in the Senate and a member of the super-committee. We were trying to get a deal that would have freed us up to go out and do the things we know how to do.

But we are punishing ourselves needlessly by reducing our ability to be front and center in some of these battles where we can make a difference. And if the Secretary of State of the United States has to show up at a pledging conference and we are not able to pledge or pledge very much, and a whole bunch of other players are there ready and available to do things, you are going to see a change in where people go, what they think, who they think is important. So we do need to invest in this future in these places.

The battle in Ukraine, I assure you, is not principally this battle that has been taking place exclusively about Donetsk, Luhansk, and Debaltseve. That is important, and it is a land grab, and it is in violation of international law. But what it does is it stirs the water of Ukraine, makes it very difficult for private investment to come in, makes it very difficult for the economy of Ukraine to take off. And the true battle is a \$15 billion problem this year for Ukraine. And we are scrounging around. We have \$1 billion, \$2 billion. We may make a loan guarantee.

But the world is going to have to step up and decide how to define this current struggle that is taking place. It is not small pickings, and it is not just a passing fancy. So we need to fight for the things we have always fought for, the values we fought for.

And some of that is going to require you, appropriators and others, to be able to find the wherewithal to empower us to be front and center where we need to make a difference. And in a lot of cases, it is helping to build democracy. It is helping to educate some people, pull them away from the vacuum that exists, so they don't get grabbed by people who proselytize and turn them into extremists. I mean, all of these things matter.

And, Senator, you put your finger right on it. Whether it is Syria, Kosovo, Montenegro, Macedonia, other places, they are all in the firing line, Georgia, Moldova, Transnistria. What we are trying to persuade people is we are not looking for a zero-sum game challenge with Russia. We believe that Ukraine could become the gateway east and west. It doesn't have to be a pawn between the two. We believe that you could have an economic arrangement with the European Association agreement and working with what was—it has a new name now, the customs zone. But these could be, hopefully, integrated, if people wanted to implement a different vision.

So that is what we are trying to work toward. But we all need to be prepared to step up and be there economically for Ukraine as they reform and try to implement their dream and vision. It is not good enough to have Poroshenko come here and get 40 standing ovations and then not step up and deliver what it is really going to take to help him create the democracy he wants to create.

Senator MURPHY. Thank you.

I think this debate over arming Ukrainians is important. I think this question of how we resource countries that don't want to turn into the next Ukraine is infinitely more important. It is one of the reasons I asked to be on this subcommittee.

I appreciate the chairman's focus on this question as well. Thank you.

Senator GRAHAM. Senator Lankford.

Senator LANKFORD. Thank you.

Mr. Secretary, thank you. I appreciate the chance to get to know you. We did not get to serve together, but I appreciate the chance to get to know you, and your service, obviously, around the country and around the world, what you have done.

CENTRAL AMERICA

I want to touch on a couple things that Senator Leahy had mentioned earlier. One of them was about immigration. You had any written statement a pretty extensive statement there and a request for right at \$1 billion in funding to deal with immigration policy with Mexico and Central America. I want to dive into that little bit more.

What actions did the State Department take last summer when we saw the slowdown of the unaccompanied alien children coming into the United States? We saw that rapid stop, and it seemed to be greater enforcement happening with Mexico and their Guatemalan border. Is that part of the strategy of the \$1 billion in the request?

Secretary KERRY. Yes. There is clearly an enforcement component required. Very important.

Senator LANKFORD. Okay. What do you see as part of that? With that billion dollars, obviously, engaging, trying to not only deal with the root causes, as you put it in your statement, in Central America for those folks coming here, but actually the enforcement arm of that.

What do you anticipate the State Department's operation to be in working with Mexico and Central America, Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, especially?

UKRAINE

Secretary KERRY. Let me go through it very specifically for you. But I do want to add one other thing for everybody, because there was sort of a question earlier about what we are doing in terms of Ukraine policy.

Look, the last thing we want to do is see the people of Russia pay the price for what we think are bad political decisions. But because of the sanctions we put in place, nobody should diminish the impact that we have had through this united front. I will just take 1 minute on it. This is quick.

The ruble has dropped over 50 percent in the past 12 months, and it continues to be very volatile. The economic predictions for Russia are that it will go into recession this year. Inflation is predicted to exceed 15 percent this year. Standard & Poor's has cut their bond status to junk. The Central Bank of Russia has capital outflow in 2014 that hit a record, \$151 billion. And while it still has reserves of about \$375 billion, it is not in a position to do this interminably.

So it has been difficult. We have had to keep all of Europe united in that effort. So I think we think we are making some progress on it. Our preference is to have the Minsk agreement implemented fully and be able to de-escalate the situation. That is our goal.

CENTRAL AMERICA

Coming to the question of Central America and the request, \$300 million of that \$1 billion will help improve security, speaks specifically to security. And it will also deal with the extreme levels of violence. It will promote police reform. It will attack organized crime, and it will also help us in defense cooperation initiatives.

In economic initiatives, about \$400 million is to try to promote trade, transport, and Border-Customs integration, enhance workforce development, facilitate business development, and help small businesses create jobs. And then the improved governance is to create more accountable, transparent public institutions. There is about \$250 million that will reinforce democratic institutions; target corruption; strengthen efficiency, accountability, and transparency of the judicial system; and also improve the management of public funds and help create a competent civil service.

It is a big undertaking. We haven't had this kind of undertaking in Central America in decades. I believe, and I think the presidents of each of those countries believe, this could have a profound impact, and it will ultimately help us deal with the immigration challenge.

Senator LANKFORD. You have very sharp staff in Central America that I have met with and flown down there and got a chance to meet with some of that staff. What they do on a daily basis, they are doing a very good job for us.

But it is one of the key issues of enforcement that also affects national policy as well as international policy and the relationship there.

SYRIA

I need to ask you about Syria. You had mentioned some of the work happening on chemical weapons and getting chemical weapons out of the hands of ISIS. Do we have a picture, at this point, based on all the chemical weapons that have been pulled out, in the agreements? How often have those chemical weapons been used in a battlefield situation or are suspected of being used in last 6 months? Has that tapered off to zero? Where are we now, as far as the use of chemical weapons?

Secretary KERRY. Well, let me explain that. That is a good question, and it is important to draw a distinction here.

All of the chemical weapons that are on the annotated international list of chemical weapons that are prohibited under the Chemical Weapons Convention were taken out. Those were declared, and for the most part, we think we found every one of them, and there are none of those that have been alleged to have been used.

What has been used is chlorine, and chlorine is not on the prohibited list. But when mixed in a certain way, it can produce toxic impact and be used. Now, that has been used.

I think probably the numbers are classified, so I want to be careful here. But it is fair to say that the bulk of their use has been by the regime. But it is not exclusive. It appears as if there has been some by opposition and/or by ISIS.

Senator LANKFORD. Okay.

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

The battle that is happening among religious extremism and among Islamic communities, specifically, that is raging so much that we are on the edges of and drawn into often, obviously, is couched in religious terms. The State Department does a tremendous amount of work worldwide, dealing with carrying our values of religious liberty and recognition of all faiths. What changes is State proposing and are you proposing worldwide dealing with religious liberty issues? Obviously, there is a lot of work that has already happened. But this has become a prime issue for us, the recognition of religious liberty, and that value being spread. So what change are you proposing?

Secretary KERRY. Well, I just swore in Ambassador David Satterfield, who is a well-known rabbi who has worked for 40 years on religious freedom. He is going to be our Ambassador in the State Department, reaching out specifically on this issue of global religious freedom.

In addition, I appointed the first faith-based outreach office in the history of the State Department. Shaun Casey heads that up. We have been reaching out to global interfaith initiatives in order

to try to create common ground and reduce the mythology that surrounds a lot of the accusations made that stir people up, in terms of violent extremism.

We are deeply engaged, and, in fact, I will be hopefully meeting with King Salman of Saudi Arabia later this week. King Abdullah, his predecessor who just passed away, was deeply, deeply committed to this interfaith initiative. And we had many different conferences, meetings, outreach efforts going on to try to bring people together to work on religious tolerance, religious freedom, and to counter the messaging of the radical extremists.

Now, we are opening an office in Abu Dhabi, a center that will be set up, managed, run by the Emiratis who are funding this effort. But it will house a global group of players who will be engaged in social media response, working against the bigotry and the appeals that are appearing on the Internet that are trying to seduce people into these radical extreme efforts, and also just generally trying to promote tolerance and religious freedom.

We are working with leaders. There will be a conference of women taking place in the Middle East in the next months. There is another conference that will be taking place, bringing religious leaders together to specifically address this. Some of these are, interestingly, being promoted by and initiated by Muslim nations in the region.

So there is a lot happening on this front, and this was a very big part of the discussion at the White House summit in the past week and a major priority of the State Department.

Senator LANKFORD. Okay. Thank you.

Senator GRAHAM. Senator Durbin.

Senator DURBIN. Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Secretary, thank you for being here. One cannot be effective in your job without a sense of history, and you have that sense of history.

UKRAINE

It was Sunday in Chicago, a bright sunny day, but it was about 1 degree, and we had a rally outside the Catholic Church in Ukrainian Village in Chicago. And I spoke to about 500 people there. They were holding, obviously, many Ukrainian flags and posters, but Lithuanian flags and Polish flags. They have a sense of history, too. They have endured, personally and through their families, the aggression of the Soviets and the Russians.

I am worried about where we are, and I have joined with a dozen of my colleagues, Democrats and Republicans, urging you to call on the President to provide defensive arms to Ukraine and to do it quickly. I sensed the administration was moving that direction, that Angela Merkel and perhaps President Hollande begged for time for an attempted ceasefire before we made that military investment.

And now we know the results reported this morning, that the separatists have not complied with any of the three sequential steps prescribed by that agreement. They include full ceasefire, unfettered access of OSCE, and withdrawal of heavy weapons.

I hate to be cynical, but when it comes to Russia, they deserve it. They have time and again promised and not delivered. Unlike

other countries, like Syria and Libya, where we are mired in complexity, there is clarity here, clarity. This was the invasion of a sovereign nation by Russia, and they continue to seize territory.

My question to you, I think you responded to it earlier, about the President making the ultimate decision on weaponry, my question to you is this: Did we say to Angela Merkel and President Hollande, if this does not fail, what is Plan B, and what are you prepared to do? If this ceasefire doesn't work, what will Europe do beyond sanctions in response to protect Ukraine?

Is there a plan B, Mr. Secretary?

Secretary KERRY. Yes, there is, clearly, and it involves some very tough sanctions, among other things. It also will obviously weigh heavily on the choices that the President has to make with respect to recommendations that are or are not being made to him.

But nobody is taking this lightly at all, Senator. I mean, first of all, we have a request in the budget for Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine of \$75 million, reflecting an increase above the bilateral allocations, which is for the Reassurance Initiative. And that will enhance the interoperability of the NATO allies and non-NATO partners who are most threatened by Russia at this moment.

We have a \$75 million request for foreign military financing, and just under \$1 billion for overseas contingency operation funds, I think you know much of which can be designated to flow here if we need to. In addition to that, we have committed over \$118 million in arming and training—not arming—training and equipment. But some of it, the eye of the beholder will determine the arming specifically. \$52 million in high-end defensive equipment, such as counter border radars, night vision devices, body armor helmets, advanced radios, explosive ordnance, disposal robots, rations, first-aid kits, supplies. \$47 million in equipment to their border folks to help them, heavy engineering equipment, thermal imaging, other monitoring equipment, patrol boats, uniforms, generators, and more equipment is being planned to be arriving. We have \$19 million in global security contingency funds that is training and equipment to six companies and headquarters elements.

So we are out there doing a lot of different things.

Senator DURBIN. Are Germany and France going to join us in this effort?

Secretary KERRY. Germany and France are doing certain things that are nonlethal and that are not providing lethal assistance at this point. There is still a debate going on about whether or not, in these final moments, with Debaltseve now, tragically, the victim of the excess, what does that mean? The latest indications are that several Russian units are now outside. They are on the border. There is training going on in Rostov. There are other things that have happened. A lot of tanks crossed over. A lot of equipment was given earlier.

But at this moment, I would say, it is a question mark still as to where this is going to go in the next days.

Senator DURBIN. I want to close on this topic and just say that as the cease-fire efforts diminish and the Russians seize more territory, it becomes problematic. I think we need to move and be ready to move quickly.

COALITION AGAINST ISIL

Let me switch theaters quickly. Last week, I was in Panama and met with President Varela. I know that you attended his inauguration. Panama is the first Latin American nation to step up and join us in the coalition against ISIS. He is taking some grief for it in his country from his critics, and I told him how much we respect the fact that he is willing to engage with us in fighting what could be a global threat and, certainly, is a major threat to stability in the world.

Is it our hope to enlarge this coalition in Latin America? There have been so many disappointments recently in the United Nations when we have had test votes on some of the outrageous human rights violations in North Korea, on the Ukrainian predicament where 15 or 20 Central and South American countries voted against the United States or abstained when it came to these declarations. What can you tell us about the prospects of building this coalition, particularly in the Americas against the threat of ISIS?

Secretary KERRY. It has some challenges, in terms of this region. We have sort of been purposefully respectful and careful of creating problems where they don't exist and demanding something where there can't be that much contribution. There are also things that some people are doing that don't have to be listed and promoted, for instance, on foreign fighters, on financing.

We have said that every nation, there is something that everybody can do, and not everybody has to do it publicly. So there are some who are helping in certain ways, but we don't feel compelled to try to leverage people massively into this at this point in time, particularly since some of them are fighting other challenges. For instance, Colombia, we are trying to help with FARC, and we would love to see that get resolved. These things can play in difficult ways.

There are also some tensions between some of the countries in the region, as I think you know. And there is a group of countries that we wish were more ready to engage but still are behaving with sort of a very last century, old kind of rhetoric that is focused on the United States and blaming us for things that we are absolutely not engaged in and aren't doing.

Venezuela is paramount among those. I mean, this is a card that President Maduro loves to play. The minute he has a political problem, he launches an assault on the United States and blames us for doing something that we have had absolutely no inkling of doing. And there is never any evidence, mind you, of those things.

So it is not an area, I would say to you, that we are saying we have to have these guys on board visibly in this coalition, but where they are cooperating in certain ways and where we can build some greater perhaps cooperation as we go forward.

We have high hopes for the Summit of the Americas, which will take place in the beginning of April, in Panama, by the way, where we hope some of these issues will be more openly discussed. And we are trying to put civil society and human rights squarely on the agenda for that meeting.

Senator DURBIN. Thanks.

Senator GRAHAM. Senator Blunt.

Senator BLUNT. Thank you, Chairman.

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Mr. Secretary, in your comments on religious freedom, I just want to say I look forward to the new leadership there. I think we have been wanting in that area in the department, and I was pleased to be supportive of the person that was nominated that is going in there now.

I was also pleased when you used the words "religious freedom." I think in too much of our discussion with countries around the world, we have talked about the right to worship, which is a different thing than religious freedom. And I am glad to see any language that expands that.

I see a couple of questions on the faces of people behind you. It might be a good test to have, at the State Department someday, what is the difference between the right to worship and religious freedom? What is the difference in freedom to worship and religious freedom? And there is a difference. I am sure you understand that. And I don't want to take a lot of time with that, but I am just pleased to hear you using that language.

IRAQ AND YEMEN

In both Iraq and Yemen, I am wondering what your view is of why we missed the level of how quickly those countries could change direction. In Iraq, at one point, we were referring to ISIS or whatever you want to call it, we're all talking about the same group, as junior varsity, not quite up to the A game. A few months later, they control a substantial amount of the country.

In September, in Yemen, the President saying this is a great example of the success of our policy. And 6 months later, we are evacuating the Embassy.

What do you think we missed? What have we learned about the world today that maybe is different than the world 10 years ago that leads us to come to those conclusions that turn out to be so wrong so quickly?

Secretary KERRY. Well, in a sense they weren't altogether wrong all the time. Let me be precise.

Senator BLUNT. Remember, what I am going to ask, of course, is surely Yemen is no longer the quintessential example of our positive success in foreign policy.

Secretary KERRY. I don't think I ever called it that.

Senator BLUNT. I think the President said this was a good example of our successful policy.

Secretary KERRY. Well, what he was talking about, in all fairness, Senator, the President was talking about a way to not get in the middle of something and still be able to carry out your CT objectives. That is what it was. He was talking about a model of our ability to fight al Qaeda and to deal with that problem.

Now, that relied on cooperation with the government. And we had a platform from which we were working, and it was effective.

What did surprise, and it surprised everybody, and by the way, including Iranians and Saudis whose backyard, in many respects, certainly, the Saudi backyard, the Iranians reaching across it, but it surprised everybody that it moved the way it did. One of the way

reasons it moved the way it did was a very simple rule that we have learned many times over. I can go back to countless countries and countless revolutions where the United States picked somebody and they didn't pan out.

What we can't control is the quality of governance. And in Iraq, what you had was a serious process of deterioration. I went back and relooked at the figures, because there had been some accusations, well, the troops came out too soon, this and that. They weren't combat troops. There was no talk ever of leaving combat troops, ever. So combat troops wouldn't have made the difference.

The question is what kind of military did you have? What kind of leadership did you have? And who did they represent? And what were they capable of doing? And that was steadily deteriorating because you had a prime minister who was putting his cronies in, using it as a personal tool, and excluding a good part of the country.

So when Daesh came along in Mosul, people didn't want to fight, because you had a Shia presence in the Sunni part of the country fighting Sunnis. And they said this is their fight, we are out of here. And there was no discipline and no capacity to do it.

So a lot of lessons learned from that about inclusivity and having a stake in the process.

Senator BLUNT. And the ability to resist.

Secretary KERRY. And the ability to resist. Absolutely.

So, Senator, that lesson is really being applied now in the efforts to try to create greater unity and capacity to be able to push back and fight back and deal with the issue of governance.

The same thing in Yemen. In Yemen, you had Hadi, who just didn't deliver. He had Saleh, the former president, who was present, creating enormous mischief underneath him with the people that he still had who were aligned with him, working with the Houthis, and now they are at each others' throats and at odds for contesting for power.

There is an effort to create a dialogue now.

IRAN

Senator BLUNT. Secretary, let me ask one question, at least, on Iran. I hear that. I think I asked the counterterrorism head the other day the same question, and basically said we overestimated the ability of the incumbent governments to resist. I think you are saying the same thing, and I appreciate that answer.

In Iran, the chairman had a long list of countries that he asked you about where Iran is influencing in a negative way. What do you think happens if we put Iran on a clock toward nuclear capacity? How do you think others in the neighborhood react if there is a 10-year window? I don't want to argue about the window.

If there is a clock of some kind where Iran within a certain understood period of time could become nuclear capable if they tell us they are going to become nuclear capable, that 12-month clock or whatever it is, how do the Saudis react? Leaving the Israelis out for a minute, do other countries react in a way that allows Iran to become nuclear-capable without thinking they have to move in that direction as well? When you and I visited at the Munich security conference a year ago, I told you that I didn't think you could con-

tain enrichment, and I still don't, but I would be glad to hear your answer to that.

Secretary KERRY. Well, that is the test, obviously, Senator. It is a very good question, and we ought to spend a little moment on it, just because it really is central to all of this.

First of all, we are not deliberating whether or not to give Iran a nuclear capacity, if by nuclear capacity, we are both talking about a peaceful nuclear-power-oriented program, not a weapons program, just nuclear power. Iran already has that kind of nuclear capacity. They have what they allege is a peaceful program. We have had questions about that, very serious ones.

But they have nuclear capacity. They know how to enrich. They already learned how to do it. By the way, they learned how to do it in another administration's tenure. Back in 2003, Iran had 164 centrifuges. Today, they claim some 27,000. There are 19,000 of them out there working or capable of working. There are less than that working today.

So they have nuclear capacity. They got it. They got it a number years ago when an administration, by the way, had a policy of no enrichment at all. That was the administration's policy.

Was that enforced? Did anything happen while they went from 164 centrifuges to 27,000? No. They are where they are.

So we are taking the program that we have got today, and what we are committed to try to do is make absolutely certain, hopefully in a failsafe manner, as failsafe as you could be in nuclear policy, that they cannot develop a bomb, as distinguished from a peaceful nuclear power program.

Now they have agreed, and it is much unnoticed and not paid attention to, to live by the NPT. They could pull out of the NPT. North Korea is not in the NPT. That is one of the problems. But Iran is in the NPT.

Right now, the IAEA has documented that they have lived by every single requirement of the interim agreement. They have taken their 20 percent enriched uranium and they have reduced it to zero. They have opened up Fordow, the underground facility, to inspection daily. They have opened Natanz. They opened up Arak. They have stopped Arak. Not one feature of Arak has been advanced from the day we made this agreement.

So in effect, I won't go into the numbers, but a certain number of months of "breakout time" has now been growing larger. Israel is safer today than Israel was before we signed the interim agreement. And we are trying to come to an agreement that will, in fact, expand that time even further, so that if they were to try to break out, we will know. And then the test is, how do you know you will know? How do you have sufficient ability to be able to have the inspection and intrusion necessary to do that?

That is our job. That is what we are trying to do now. So we can come to you and say, and to Israel, and to the Arab world and the community, we will have the ability to know what they are doing sufficiently that they can't break out. And if they did breakout, we have the same options available to us to whack them or do whatever you want as we have today.

Now, that makes it a very difficult negotiation. It is a difficult negotiation. But Iran has lived up to its agreement. And our hope

is that they will do things necessary to prove they have a peaceful program and give us an assurance that there isn't some capacity to go covert to slide it off. And I think it is really important to see it.

Now, are other countries nervous about what may or may not happen? Sure. Of course they are. And it is our job to sit with them and show them what we are doing and have them hopefully understand the full measure of it.

Now we have a 123 agreement with the Emirates. They have already agreed to enter into some kind of peaceful process. And obviously, if a program is peaceful, there is going to be a lot more nuclear discussion in the years of head because I assume if and when people all get serious about climate change, it is a zero-emissions form of production, and it may become more affordable and attractive to people in various parts of the world, instead of fossil fuels. So we will see where we go.

But we are trying to create a template here that can withstand public scrutiny to show that they can't produce a weapon.

One final comment. I know I went over my time, but this is important.

This concept of breakout is not understood well enough, and there are a lot of reasons for that. In the 1980s, when I was in the Senate, and the 1990s, we were debating international arms control agreements, and breakout then used to mean your ability, we thought, to deliver a weapon. Breakout in the context we have been talking about with respect to Iran and its program does not mean that.

Breakout is the amount of time it takes to develop enough fissile material for one weapon. We are trying to get a year for some period of time that we can guarantee that, and then enough time afterward that everybody is comfortable that they really just can't go do this without our knowing it, because we are going to be tracing the uranium trade.

Now, I don't want to get into all the details. It is inappropriate for me to do that while we are negotiating. But suffice it to say that we are going to try to have sufficient understanding.

But once you have the 1 year to be able to have enough fissile material, you still have to go design a means of delivery and a means of explosion. That could take 4, 5, 6 years.

No country in the world has ever had the kind of restraint that we are talking about. We will see what happens.

Senator GRAHAM. Thank you, Mr. Secretary.

We have three more members, and I appreciate if we could get everybody in.

Secretary KERRY. I will be very quick.

IRAN

Senator GRAHAM. One very quick question. The Iranian parliament is allowed to vote on any agreement entered into between the P5-plus-1. Do you object if Congress has that same right?

Secretary KERRY. Well, the Iranian parliament is considerably different from Congress, and I think you know that. And I wouldn't equate the two, or what their rights are, or what they may or may not do.

And I assure you, they will not be able—

Senator GRAHAM. Do you object to the Congress reviewing this deal, having a vote on it?

Secretary KERRY. Well, you will review it. Of course, you will review it. We are reviewing it now, and we will review it in the days ahead, and you already have a vote, because your vote is a vote that will be necessary to ultimately terminate sanctions.

Senator GRAHAM. Senator Coons.

Senator COONS. Thank you, Chairman Graham.

Thank you, Secretary Kerry. I appreciate your lengthy and thorough review of the negotiations that are ongoing with Iran. This is one of the most important challenges that faces our security, Israel's security, and global security.

You mentioned in your opening testimony that you recognize the value and importance of closely consulting with Congress, both before and should there be agreement afterwards. I look forward to that.

I am grateful for the number of briefing opportunities that have been made available to me and other members. This is a difficult and demanding strategic situation. Your exculpation of exactly what you understand breakout to mean in this context, for example, is helpful for us to know, as we try and assess the strength and value of the deal you are seeking to negotiate.

But it is also a reminder that the nonnuclear components that I think Iran has not yet fully come forward with helping the world and IAEA understand the research that was being done toward the development of warheads or missile systems is a key component of our having confidence about what the breakout time is, understood as the broader issue of the ability to deliver a weapon, and if and when they get the capacity to develop a weapon. These are all of grave concern.

I don't think there is any disagreement here about strong support for the \$3.1 billion in aid to Israel that is in this package. I don't disagree at all with your opening statement that an AUMF needs to be passed here in a way that is bipartisan and is strong. I look forward to continuing to work with you and others in the administration on it.

And I welcome your billion dollar investment in Central America, in order to strengthen a number of countries from which we really face some challenges, and your testimony earlier about standing up to Putin's aggression in the Ukraine.

ASSISTANCE FOR AFRICA

But I would like to focus us, in my few minutes, on Africa, a continent where I chaired the Senate Subcommittee on Foreign Relations for 4 years and have a persistent interest and enthusiasm. Let me just lay out a few issues and then ask you to use the time left to answer them.

First, \$2 billion out of \$50 billion in this budget is dedicated to democracy, promoting democracy and governance and human rights globally. I think that is a modest and absolutely essential investment. Africa is a continent of 54 countries, and in a number of them, there are difficult and contested elections this coming year. So any comment you care to make about the work we are

doing to strengthen civil society in countries, from Nigeria to Ethiopia to Rwanda, where there are difficult and contested elections and where our support of democracy is a key part of advancing our values.

Second, the African summit that happened last August, the first convening of more than 50 heads of state or heads of government, I think was a great beginning. It is my hope that the department and the administration plan to continue a robust engagement around Power Africa, around the Young Africa Leaders Initiative, and around security.

So if you have any comments you care to make about the commitments around security and, in particular, African-led initiatives to improve security in countries facing extremism, from Somalia to Nigeria to the Central African Republic, would be great.

You mentioned in passing the significant and bipartisan support for appropriations in the work against Ebola. We are not yet done. We haven't gotten to zero. But many Americans, I think, wonder whether we are ever thanked by the nations who we do so much to work with and to help. President Sirleaf of Liberia will be here Thursday expressly to thank the American people for the support that our Armed Forces, our uniformed Public Health Service, USAID, State Department, and many others, CDC, of course, provided in the course of that public health crisis.

I strongly support the investment, as Senator Leahy mentioned previously, in the Global Health Security efforts and the importance of strengthening health systems.

And last, you in your role on this committee really championed wildlife trafficking. I think this is an important issue for us to tackle this year, because so often wildlife trafficking funds extremism and international gangs. It is the next stage after narcotrafficking and trafficking in humans. Wildlife trafficking has become a major source of revenue for illicit organizations around the world.

If in 3 minutes, you can make a coherent response to any of those four questions, I would be even more impressed with your skill, Mr. Secretary. Thank you.

Secretary KERRY. Thank you very much. I will do it in a—

Senator COONS. And, of course, responses for the record are always welcome, if we run out of time.

Secretary KERRY. I would be happy to add more.

First of all, thank you for your abiding interest, which is making a huge difference, and we appreciate it enormously. And thanks for participating in the global summit.

As you know, we had the African leaders here last summer. It was an enormously important effort. We requested \$260-plus million, \$268 million, to support the initiatives of programs that came out of the African Leaders Initiative. And that is \$76 million for Power Africa, which is absolutely critical to bringing electricity to communities so you can have economic development. It is one of the reasons Ebola is a problem, for instance. There is just no infrastructure there.

There is funding for Trade Africa and trade investment hubs that will begin to create greater economic commerce. There is \$10 million for the Young African Leaders Initiative. I have to tell you, that is one of the most exciting parts of this entire conference we

had. These young leaders came from all over Africa, hugely educated and energized and ready to go out and change the world in their countries, working for different global companies, working for Goldman Sachs. They all came over here and they are ready to make these kind of transformations take place in Africa. This is a hugely well-spent amount of money.

And \$110 million for the African Peacekeeping Rapid Response Partnership, a security governance initiative that we have to work with various countries. We are making progress in various places, and we have big challenges.

Nigeria is the challenge, Boko Haram. But Chad, Cameroon, a couple of neighbors have come together. They are engaged. We are trying to work with them to help them fight back against the Boko Haram.

I was in Nigeria to encourage the election process. I met with President Jonathan, with his opponent. I am sorry the election was postponed. We are working now to make sure that election takes place and is accountable and free and fair.

But I think that we have Feed the Future and Food for Peace, both are taking place there. And, of course, we are continuing our health initiatives, which are absolutely essential.

So that is a quick take on it. We have \$302 million requested for peacekeeping operations, and particularly working with the rapid response partnership, the African Union peacekeeping initiatives, Somalia, the Central African Republic, and security sector reform. So there is just a huge amount that is happening.

A lot of people don't realize it, but I think six or seven of the fastest growing countries in the world are in Africa, notwithstanding the turmoil and difficulties of some of northern Africa and the Horn of Africa. And hopefully if we stay engaged and we continue to lead and work with other countries, this can change for the better.

Senator COONS. Thank you, Mr. Secretary. Yes, seven of the fastest growing economies in the world, according to the World Bank, are in Africa this decade. So Power Africa and Trade Africa I think are important initiatives.

There are a number of countries that face real threats from extremism, and I am grateful for your leadership and look forward to working together in ways to find bipartisan solutions to those real challenges to security and democracy. Thank you, Mr. Secretary.

Secretary KERRY. Thank you very much.

Senator GRAHAM. Senator Daines.

Senator DAINES. Secretary Kerry, thank you for being here today. Many of us were outside of D.C. last week. Many of us went home. I spent the week back in Montana. One of the top of mind issues for the average Montanan as we're sitting down, having cups of coffee, is what is going on in the Middle East, certainly, and ISIS, this issue of radical Islam.

ISIL—DAESH

Secretary Kerry, during your presidential campaign in 2004, you used the term "Islamic extremism" to describe radical Saudi clerics. And in 1997 book, "The New War," you described the Taliban as

Islamic fundamentalists. In your opinion, could one of these terms that you used, and I think correctly used, Islamic extremists, Islamic radicals, Islamic fundamentalists, be used to describe ISIS?

Secretary KERRY. Well, first of all, I am pleased to have anything that I said in 2004 validated in 2015.

But not treating any of this lightly, some, not all—you know, these guys, there are some of them who have a dream of a caliphate and who are obviously implementing their very warped sense of Islam in a horrendous, grotesque way. But they, certainly, think they are furthering some kind of thing, and I have called them any number of different things, including Islamic extremists, if, in fact, they are wearing that hat and that is what they are trying to do and they are proselytizing on that basis. But not all of them are.

You have a lot of thrill seekers. You have adventurers. You have thugs. You have a mix of opportunists. You have an unbelievable array contained within this. So I think you want to be careful how you sort of tab it as a whole.

Senator DAINES. Mr. Secretary, to look around the world, David Cameron has been very, very clear, I think provided great moral clarity on defining this issue. Tony Blair has been very, very clear on this. In fact, even King Abdullah, who met with the Appropriations Committee. In fact, we met 2 hours after that horrible video was released of that F-16 pilot. He said this is a war inside of Islam. And I think there is a concern, we lack this moral clarity, that many leaders around the world are, we are not hearing this from the President and it is giving great—

Secretary KERRY. Well, make no mistake. Look, I think you are working too hard to try to create something that isn't anything here. The President could not be more committed to beating back ISIS, Daesh, whatever you want to call it. I prefer to call it Daesh, because then you avoid this notion that there is anything Islamic about it, which there fundamentally isn't, and Daesh is a pejorative in Arab terms. So we all ought to call it that.

But the point I am making is that the President is just trying to be careful not to lend a whole bunch of other people who take quick swipes at this, and if you go to the social media, you will see the degree to which people are trying to make it look like America is engaging in some kind of religious war or that this is an effort to be at war with Islam.

So he's trying to be careful. I think it is appropriate the President is trying to be careful about that.

But make no mistake. All of us understand that there are radical Islamic extremists engaged in these endeavors, just as there are others. But when the President speaks, I think it is appropriate for the President to try, because his voice is so much more magnified than yours, mine, and others, that I think it has to be done properly.

VIOLENT EXTREMISM

Senator DAINES. I think what we saw of concern last week, and of course, it created a media firestorm, when the State Department spokeswoman Marie Harf made the comments that implied that the way to confront terrorism was through jobs programs or some-

how this was fundamentally a governance issue. It was her words, in terms of root cause.

So is the administration's belief that the root cause of this terrorism is economic versus ideological or religious?

Secretary KERRY. Let me speak to that. I am glad you asked that.

Marie spoke globally about the problem of violent extremism in the context of the summit that we were having. And she clearly, as she has almost every day that she speaks, embraced our military effort. We are going to kill as many of these terrorists already declared members of Daesh as we can. And the President's goal is to degrade and destroy ISIS. That is the goal. He has stated it. I have stated it any number of times.

But the fact is, if all you do is do that, you are not going to solve this problem. Some Secretary of State is going to be here in the future, some President will be there, and there will be a different acronym and you are going to be talking about how you get rid of them, because there is a big pool of people out there waiting to be seduced into this.

Why do you think three young girls get on an airplane and leave Britain? Why do you think there are several hundred Americans over there? Why are there thousands of people from Russia, from Germany, from France, from Britain, from various countries, who are going to Syria to fight? Well, something is bringing them to that.

Part of our conference the other day was Dr. Peter Neumann, who has done a huge amount of work on this. He is at King's College in London. He's the director of the International Center for the Study of Radicalization. Here's what he said. He said you have to know who these people are and you have to know why they are joining. He said so we know these people. We know their stories. We know there isn't just one story. There are many of them.

Some of them are pious, but others, not so much. Many have troubled histories. Some would have had great prospects, if they had stayed in their European home countries. Some were driven by the humanitarian suffering of the Syrian people. Others were seeking thrill and adventure. And, of course, many were genuinely committed to and enthusiastic about the totalitarian project of the group that calls itself ISIL.

Here's what he concludes. The real way you are going to deal with this, he thought, was first the issue of the fighter's parents. He said that a lot of people have been kept from the battlefield by their parents and families and what they come from.

Secondly is the Internet. A lot of the Internet is radicalizing them.

And thirdly, he said if you really want to get serious about reducing the pool of people who are susceptible to the ideas of violent extremists, you have to begin by recognizing a lot of these people don't even feel a stake in their own society.

So this is bigger. That is what Marie was saying. She never set out to say the solution is to give them jobs.

Senator DAINES. Yes, Secretary Kerry—

Secretary KERRY. She talked about a much broader array of things we have to do. And if we can't have a serious conversation

about this without politicizing it on cable TV and making it a scoring point for 1 day, we are in trouble.

Senator DAINES. Well, I think, though, there is great anxiety and concern back home. Folks back home are seeing this as an ideological threat.

And I remind all of us here that the 9/11 attackers came from good families. They were well-to-do. And the greatest attack on U.S. soil came from individuals who most were from very rich, top class families.

So I guess I hope we can at least have an open dialogue here on getting back to the root cause, which I think is more than jobs and governance, but comes back to an ideology. I think that is a debate we need to have here in this country.

Secretary KERRY. Well, it is, but why does somebody fall prey to that ideology? Why does somebody think going and cutting off somebody's head is a good idea? Why is somebody not more aware of how women are actually going to be treated when they show up?

I mean, there is a gap here of knowledge, and there is a readiness and willingness, and it is different everywhere, believe me. I have been looking at this now for 30 years, and I am telling you it is different everywhere. There is no one-size-fits-all shoe that is going to solve this.

It has to be a holistic approach. But the one thing I want to say to you, with everything I can summon about imperative, we have to step up and do more, and we have to view it holistically, and we have to understand it is a whole bunch of things. And if we work at it holistically, we are going to win. If we make the wrong judgments, though, about what is going to make a difference, then we are going to take a lot longer to do what we need to do.

Senator DAINES. Thank you, Mr. Secretary.

Senator GRAHAM. Senator Moran.

Senator MORAN. Mr. Chairman, thank you.

Mr. Secretary, thank you for your presence here today. I am a new member of the subcommittee, and I have appreciated the conversations that I have heard between colleagues and you today.

ISIL—DAESH

In regards to ISIL or ISIS, whatever phrase or title you want to use, I consider it one of the greatest threats our country faces at the moment. When I say at the moment, it is today, but it is in the future as well. I am always worried that Presidents, not just this one, but administrations have the habit of downplaying the risks.

We haven't declared war in this country since World War II. We sometimes ask Congress for authorization of use of force. And in this particular case, the request for an authorization of use of force, it seems to me, diminishes the threat by its narrowness of scope.

I want to have you reassure me how serious the threat is to our country, and that the goal here is to make certain that the American people and our leaders, us in Congress, you in the administration, administrations to follow, have the support of the American people to see that we are successful in accomplishing the goal of defeating this threat. I just want to encourage the administration to in no way diminish by narrowing the resolution, by talking

about a certain group of countries, scope, and boots on the ground terminology, and using the phrase “enduring.” Make certain that we have the American people—I am not a veteran. I grew up with Vietnam in the back of my life, and it seemed to me that something we should have learned from Vietnam—first of all, Mr. Secretary, I would say that one of the things I learned from Vietnam is to always respect those who served, and I respect your service to our country.

Secondly, I would say that we should have learned that the American people need to be told the truth from the very beginning about how difficult the task is to succeed. Anytime we downplay that, we run the risk of the American people moving on before the task is accomplished.

Secretary KERRY. Well, Senator Moran, that is a very good question. And you are absolutely correct in your judgment about not losing focus. So let me try to emphasize as much as I can without hyperbole, and, certainly, without intimidating people.

This is the challenge of a generation. This is our challenge. No question about it. But it is not just the challenge, as I was saying a moment ago, of the kinetic, the military component of this. It is a bigger challenge than that.

You have to also address the draining of the pool for future recruits, and that is the only way you win this, comprehensively. So it is more than just the kinetic piece.

Now, in the context of the kinetic piece and declaring war, we have not declared war against another state since World War II. To take ISIS and elevate it and make it into sort of state status would be a huge mistake. The President is not asking for a declaration of war, because we don’t need a declaration of war, and it would be bad policy to have one.

But he is asking for us to take this as absolutely seriously as it deserves to be. This is a threat. They have already threatened us. They have threatened Western allies of ours. They have threatened non-Western allies of ours. They have threatened the world with their version of what they want, how they want to live, and how they want to impose their life on other people.

They destroy schools. They destroyed books. They rape girls. They sell people into slavery. They cut off heads in public. They burn people alive. This is a horrendous step backward in the context of the world’s march toward civility and rule of law. And every one of us understands that.

That is why President Obama is so committed. That is why we had the summit here. That is why we put together 16 nations. That is why young men and women in uniform are once again at risk in an effort to take on this fight.

But it doesn’t require a declaration of war for us to do what we need to do. And much of what we need to do is outside of the normal parameters of “war.” It is addressing why people don’t have a greater stake or greater assimilation into their community, why they don’t have other opportunities, why they are seduced by the Internet by this, how do we block that, how do we counter it, how do we message it?

Those are why we have five principal avenues of strategy. One is the military and kinetic. Another is the anti-foreign-fighter

movement. The third is the anti-funding, preventing them from getting funded. The fourth is the humanitarian piece, where we are the largest contributor to taking care of the people displaced in Syria and elsewhere. And the fifth is the ideology.

We are doing the major messaging across the globe, but principally in the Middle East, where we are now gearing up with huge numbers of people engaged in the effort to deal with social media, countermessaging, and galvanize the global religious community, all faiths, to begin to help speak out, particularly from Islam itself.

Senator MORAN. Mr. Secretary, thank you.

ARMS TRADE TREATY

Let me ask a different line of question, a different question. I have been involved in a number of efforts to demonstrate the opposition of members of the Senate to the Arms Trade Treaty. Despite that opposition by the Senate, by both Republicans and Democrats in somewhat significant numbers, the administration negotiated that agreement.

It was a previous Secretary, but now 17 months later, that treaty has not been submitted to the Senate. I am interested in knowing what is preventing or stopping that submission to the Senate, if it is ever going to happen. And in the absence of being submitted to the Senate, are there operational plans in which the administration believes that that Arms Trade Treaty is applicable even in the absence of Senate approval? And I would also ask why a full legal review has never been done by the State Department of that treaty.

Secretary KERRY. Is it applicable—

Senator MORAN. In the absence of Senate ratification of that treaty, does the State Department, the administration, intend to use it as an operable document, meaning something despite no confirmation in the Senate?

Secretary KERRY. Let me get back to you on that, because honestly, I haven't had a conversation that has suggested there is a reason for why it isn't specifically, but let me find out for you.

Senator MORAN. All right. Mr. Secretary, thank you.

Senator GRAHAM. Mr. Secretary, you've been very generous with your time. I think Senator Leahy has one or two questions.

Senator LEAHY. I referred to this earlier. Incidentally, I appreciated all you said this morning. I think it has been very helpful, not only to us, but to the American public understanding our foreign policy.

LEAHY LAW

I mentioned Iraq before. I have seen some very disturbing photos that purport to show Iraqi security force personnel, military, and militias operating, with them torturing people, killing them, either beheading them or beheading them after they were dead. In any event, they were executed. Of course, these are war crimes.

Now we provided training and equipment to Iraqi security forces for years. A lot of it was just abandoned to ISIL, but nonetheless, we have provided it.

Have any Iraqi units been denied U.S. aid under the Leahy Law?

Secretary KERRY. Yes. We have refused some units. I think about 122 units have received aid, but they have all been vetted for Leahy.

Senator LEAHY. Are we able to vet Iraqi recipients of U.S. aid?

Secretary KERRY. Yes, we are. We are fully capable of doing that, and all of them are being vetted. And since 2003, there have been denials on occasions where people have been accused of human rights abuses.

By the way, there is a current investigation going on, Senator, which Prime Minister Abadi has called himself as a result of some of these allegations.

Senator LEAHY. If militias had acted in connection with Iraqi security agents, would that be a violation?

Secretary KERRY. Yes.

Senator LEAHY. Thank you.

You always supported the Leahy Law, and I appreciate that. It is designed to prevent U.S. aid from going to units of foreign security forces that are committing those violations. I would assume the State Department still continues to vet those, whether it is in the Middle East or Central America or anywhere else. Is that correct?

Secretary KERRY. We absolutely do. We have actually wound up, and I think I have talked to you on the telephone about a couple of these, where we have had some problems in certain countries because we have so assiduously asserted them.

Senator LEAHY. I also look at northern Nigeria, I look at Boko Haram's excursions there. I also look at the difficulty in getting action out of the Nigerian Government. That is probably a broad way of saying it.

Some people blame the Leahy Law for not doing more to support the Nigerian army, so saying that we will give them aid even if they commit crimes like murder, rape, torture.

Do you have a response on that?

Secretary KERRY. That is not the reason. There are other reasons for the lack of adequate response, Senator. A lot of them have to do with governance itself, choices in the military leadership, absence of, and other problems, but it is not the Leahy Law that is prohibiting that.

Senator LEAHY. Thank you very much.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator GRAHAM. Thank you.

IRAN

Very quickly, is it a fair summary to say that the Iranians are wreaking havoc in the Middle East, as I speak?

Secretary KERRY. That is not the way I would frame it. What I would say to you, Senator, is the Iranians are reaching into and having an impact and influencing a number of countries in the region. Are they in Baghdad and having an impact there? Yes. Are they in Beirut and having an impact in Lebanon? Yes. Are they in Damascus having an impact? I already characterized Assad's relationship. Yes. Were they in Yemen and did they have an impact there? The answer is yes. Are there other places? Yes.

And I want to emphasize that everything that we are doing with respect to the current negotiations is focused on the nuclear compo-

nent, with a clear understanding that none of these other areas somehow result in less focus or pressure by the United States or attention, because we will continue to push back against those kinds of activities.

Senator GRAHAM. Just very briefly, I think they are wreaking havoc. I think they destabilized the Yemeni government, which was helpful in counterterrorism actions against al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula. I think they are propping up Assad, who is one of the great mass murderers of the 21st century. I think Hezbollah has been a destructive element in Lebanon and a constant thorn in the side of Israel. I think what they are doing in Iraq, that Senator Leahy pointed out, is going to make it very hard for us to come together.

So I would just want to let you know, from my point of view, we are dealing with people who are hell-bent on expanding their influence in the Mideast in a destructive fashion, and I hope we will understand who we are dealing with.

Secretary KERRY. Senator, could I just—

Senator GRAHAM. Please. Absolutely.

Secretary KERRY. The greatest wreaking of havoc of all, and the most destabilizing thing, would be if, in fact, you had a nuclear armed Iran that projected even more power and influence than it has today. That is why we are so committed to not allowing that and not having that become a possibility. But we are in close contact working with all of our partners in the region on pushing back on these other components you just talked about.

We cooperated with Israel in tracking and interdicting a ship carrying Iranian rockets that was going to Palestinian militants. In December, we helped the Bahrain coast guard interdict a ship carrying weapons of Iranian origin to proxy groups. In December, President Obama designated the GCC as eligible for foreign military sales, meaning they can purchase weapons as an entity in order to lay the groundwork for them to deal with challenges that they feel from Iran.

So we are not oblivious to these tentacles and these efforts.

Senator GRAHAM. Have you ever thought of the following, going to the Iranians and say we will cease negotiations about your nuclear ambitions until you stop wreaking havoc on the region. We are going to reapply sanctions with full force. We are not going to negotiate with you while you destabilize the region, as a punishment for destabilizing the region.

Have you ever thought of that option?

Secretary KERRY. Senator, there are ways to manage that. I will talk to you in a classified setting, or afterward.

Senator GRAHAM. Fair enough.

Secretary KERRY. I think there is a better way to answer that.

Senator GRAHAM. Last question, and you have been great to share with us your thoughts and your time.

IRAQ AND ISIL—DAESH

Do you agree with me that what you see with ISIL, its presence in Iraq and Syria and now Libya and throughout the entire region, is a predictable result or outcome of our decision not to leave troops behind in Iraq and not to have a no-fly zone 3 years ago when it

was recommended by the entire national security apparatus of the Obama administration?

Secretary KERRY. I can say definitively no, it is not a result of the issue of troops being or not being in Iraq. There is no question in my mind about that.

You can have a greater argument about the issue of no-fly zone and what choices were made back then, but there is no question in my mind that the decision about troops, if you look at what flowed immediately afterward as the troops came down and left Iraq and the Iraq that existed immediately afterward for more than a year or so was calmer, less violent, there were less incidents. And that is a process during which time, unfortunately, the governance of Iraq did not keep up with the possibilities that it faced. The troops that would have been left behind would have been training, to some degree. We can go into what we did or didn't happen with respect to the training process.

But as I said earlier in my testimony, the real problem was the absence of a sufficient level of continuing leadership and the, frankly, overt discrimination that was taking place against the Sunni population and the unwillingness even to work out issues with the Kurds.

So Iraq became fractured well before in a way that lent to the possibility of ISIL being able to move as it did.

Senator GRAHAM. Thank you, Mr. Secretary.

ADDITIONAL COMMITTEE QUESTIONS

If there are no further questions this morning, Senators may submit additional questions for the record until Friday, February 27, and we request the Department of State's response within 30 days.

[The following questions were not asked at the hearing, but were submitted to the Department for response subsequent to the hearing:]

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED TO HON. JOHN F. KERRY

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR LINDSEY GRAHAM

Question. What actions have the Department of State and the administration taken to free Pastor Saeed Abedini from imprisonment in Iran, and what how is his health and welfare?

Answer. We have repeatedly called for the release of Pastor Saeed Abedini, who is serving an 8 year prison sentence on charges related to his religious beliefs. We have raised, and will continue to raise, his case with senior Iranian officials at every possible level. President Obama raised Saeed's case with President Rouhani in September 2013, and highlighted his plight during his speech at the National Prayer Breakfast earlier this month. Secretary Kerry has, on several occasions, discussed Saeed's case directly with Foreign Minister Zarif. Likewise, Under Secretary Sherman raises his case on the sidelines of the P5+1 negotiations at every opportunity. Because of privacy considerations, we are unable to comment further on our efforts on Mr. Abedini's behalf.

Question. What percentage of prior fiscal year assistance for democracy and governance programs in Syria supports indigenous Syrian civil society organizations (by organization, amount, and fiscal year), and how much assistance is anticipated for such purposes in the fiscal year 2016 budget request?

Answer. The United States provides significant support to civil society groups and organizations in Syria with the goals of fostering a robust, inclusive and tolerant society that is empowered to hold governance institutions accountable, provide services to their communities, empower marginalized groups and vulnerable populations, and facilitate the free flow of information. This support is a key component

of our broader U.S. assistance to the moderate Syrian opposition, and is a critical aspect of our policy to counter extremist elements in the region, including ISIL, and set the conditions for a negotiated political settlement in Syria. The United States is providing more than \$330 million in nonlethal and transition assistance to support the moderate Syrian opposition. As part of this assistance, the U.S. has committed more than \$56 million from a range of accounts and fiscal years to support Syrian civil society through an array of activities including training to build organizational capacity, fostering linkages across civil society groups and between civil society and local and national governance institutions, and bolstering their technical capacity to provide services to their local communities. For the safety and security of those we work with, we do not publically detail each individual activity or organization we work with. However, supporting civil society in Syria remains a priority and these efforts will continue into fiscal year 2016. U.S. assistance to civil society includes:

Civil Society Capacity-Building and Advocacy Support

U.S. assistance strengthens and empowers networks of indigenous civil society organizations (CSOs), independent journalists, civic, women and youth activists to work together and build trust between each other, and position them to form the basis of a strong and vibrant civil society. U.S. assistance also supports Syrian civil society groups across ethnic and religious divides to impart the skills, knowledge, and resources to lead an inclusive peacebuilding and reconciliation process and, more broadly to support their active role in representative, transparent and accountable governance. This assistance is critical to supporting a future Syria that is accepting of all religious, ethnicities and genders.

Service Provision by Civil Society Organizations

A large component of U.S. assistance provides support to bolster Civil Society Organizations (CSOs') ability to work with local governance actors to provide services to their local communities. The U.S. Government (USG) has partnered with over 50 CSOs in Syria to collaborate with local authorities to respond to community needs through the implementation of a range of projects including education, minor repairs to water and electricity services, waste management and agriculture projects. Many of these activities also focus on promoting ideals of tolerance and coexistence through funding activities such as the production of short films that promote non-violent activism and local cleanup campaigns to foster community collaboration.

Internet Freedom and Communications Security

The USG is providing security and technology training for Syrian activists, human rights organizations, and media outlets to enhance their security as they exercise their rights of freedom of expression, association, and assembly online. Our assistance builds the capacity of CSOs operating within the country to improve their communication, safety, and security.

Question. What are the implications of an economic assistance suspension to the Palestinian Authority (PA) arising from Palestinian action at the International Criminal Court? What are the estimates of the amounts of funding impacted by such a suspension? Will suspension of economic aid to the PA result in an increase of humanitarian assistance for the Palestinian people?

Answer. A provision in the fiscal year 2014 and 2015 appropriations acts restricts Economic Support Fund (ESF) assistance if the Palestinians initiate an International Criminal Court judicially authorized investigation, or actively support such an investigation, that subjects Israeli nationals to an investigation for alleged crimes against Palestinians. Our view is that this legal restriction has not been triggered.

We are concerned that if assistance to the Palestinian Authority (PA) were restricted, or if assistance to the PA were otherwise withheld, there might be significant consequences—including security consequences—for both Israelis and Palestinians. A significant portion of U.S. assistance to the Palestinian Authority (PA) comes in the form of budget assistance. Over the last two fiscal years, of the \$450 million in budget support to the PA, approximately \$425 million—nearly 95 percent—was transferred to Israeli private sector creditors to pay off PA debts for electricity services. The remaining \$25 million in budget support was paid to East Jerusalem hospitals, also to pay off PA debts. Should the PA's fiscal crisis remain unresolved, rendering the PA unable to pay, creditors may be faced with the choice of working unpaid or cutting off services, exacerbating an already tenuous situation in the West Bank and Gaza.

U.S. assistance to the Palestinians also advances a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by working to build the institutions of a future Palestinian state and improve outcomes for the Palestinian people. Many of these pro-

grams play a valuable role in promoting stability not just for the Palestinians, but also for Israel. While it is difficult to estimate specific amounts of funding that would be implicated by a suspension of funding to the PA, a suspension could also impact a portion of ongoing and planned programs that provide assistance to PA institutions.

We are currently reviewing our assistance to the West Bank and Gaza, including assistance to the PA, to determine how it can best be used moving forward. This includes considering how legal restrictions could impact funding. Should legal restrictions on assistance to the PA be triggered, or if assistance is otherwise withheld, an increase in assistance to the Palestinian people is possible, but no final determination has been made.

Question. Can you assure the Congress that the United States will continue to use our veto against any one-sided resolutions at the United Nations Security Council?

Answer. The United States has consistently opposed every effort to delegitimize Israel or undermine its security, including at the United Nations. We uniformly and firmly oppose one-sided actions designed to punish Israel in international bodies and will continue to do so.

In most cases of unfair and unbalanced texts introduced in the Security Council, we have been able to advocate successfully for the U.S. position during negotiations and, if necessary, form a coalition of like-minded countries to stop such resolutions from moving forward.

For example, on December 30, 2014, the United States successfully rallied a coalition to join us in voting against an unbalanced draft resolution on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that was hastily put before the Security Council. We made clear to the other members that the draft text was deeply imbalanced and should not be supported. Through outreach by Secretary Kerry to multiple leaders represented on the Security Council, as well as Ambassador Power's tireless work in New York, the resolution failed to achieve the nine United Nations Security Council (UNSC) member votes in favor required for adoption. Separately, the administration used its veto power to defeat another one-sided resolution in 2011.

We will continue to work with our partners, including in the Council, to advance the prospect for future negotiations and provide a horizon of hope for Israelis and Palestinians, while opposing all efforts that would undermine that goal.

Question. Has any U.S. assistance made available for humanitarian aid, including reconstruction, in Gaza been diverted for other purposes?

Answer. Since the onset of the July-August 2014 conflict in Gaza, the United States has committed \$231 million in humanitarian assistance to Gaza, provided to established U.N. and non-governmental organizations, including the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the World Food Program, the United Nations Development Program, UNICEF, the International Committee for the Red Cross, and others. We are not currently aware of any reports that U.S. assistance for humanitarian aid in Gaza, including reconstruction, has been diverted for other purposes. The United States takes very seriously any reports of diversion of its assistance, and we have long required our partners in Gaza to take appropriate steps to prevent U.S. funding from being diverted for non-intended purposes.

UNRWA has stringent policies and procedures in place regarding neutrality and preventing UNRWA funds and programs from benefiting terrorists, consistent with the conditions on U.S. funding required by section 301(c) of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended. Vetting of UNRWA staff, beneficiaries, and other persons receiving UNRWA payments is a key component of these policies and procedures. In addition to UNRWA's vetting processes, the State Department also screens the names of all entities or individuals receiving UNRWA procurement contracts of aggregate annual value greater than \$100,000 on a quarterly basis against the General Service Administration's database of people and entities that are unable to receive Federal funding due to connections to terrorist organizations. To date, there have been no matches. To monitor the delivery and neutrality of UNRWA's assistance, UNRWA international staff members conduct formal quarterly inspections of all 255 UNRWA facilities in Gaza and daily monitoring of all nine concrete factories currently contracted by UNRWA building contractors to use materials for UNRWA's Israeli government-approved projects. UNRWA also escorts trucks with construction material to its delivery destination to ensure that construction material is used for its intended purpose only.

Consistent with statutory requirements, USAID has appropriate procedures in place to ensure that Economic Support Fund (ESF) assistance for the West Bank and Gaza is not provided to or through, or diverted to, any individual or entity that is known to be involved in or advocating terrorism, including Hamas. USAID's vet-

ting process checks non-U.S. individuals and entities within certain thresholds against law enforcement and intelligence community systems prior to local prime or sub award issuance. Worldwide, USAID requires grantees to sign its Certification Regarding Terrorist Financing in order to receive funds. In the West Bank and Gaza specifically, the annual Appropriations Act requires annual audits of all USAID direct awardees, as well as an annual Government Accountability Office audit of the use of all ESF assistance.

Question. What factors were considered prior to the evacuation of U.S. Embassy personnel from Sana'a, and what must be considered prior to their return?

Answer. When the Houthis forcefully entered Sana'a in September 2014, the security situation in the capital significantly deteriorated. However, despite the instability in Sana'a, and the unpredictable nature of the political crisis, our Embassy was still able to work with Yemeni interlocutors and the international community on the ground to advance and support Yemen's political transition process. However, recognizing the changed security environment, Embassy Sana'a went on Ordered Departure on September 24, 2014, and we proceeded to reduce our staffing levels to minimize our footprint should we have to evacuate. We also updated our travel warnings and issued several security messages to American citizens stressing that Yemen was unsafe and they should depart immediately.

Subsequently, the unilateral declaration by the Houthis on February 6, 2015 that dissolved the Yemeni parliament, created new Houthi-controlled governing bodies, prolonged the house arrest of the President and Prime Minister, and pitted the Houthis against nearly all of Yemen's political elements ultimately led to an untenable security environment. Accordingly, we re-evaluated our security posture in Sana'a and determined that our Embassy could no longer operate normally, and the risks to our personnel were too great.

The Department of State, in concert with the Department of Defense, had developed specific plans for an additional drawdown of personnel in November 2014 and further refined those plans as the situation evolved on the ground. When the Embassy temporarily suspended operations on February 10, 2015 we successfully moved all our personnel to Sana'a International Airport without incident. The relocation from Yemen was conducted safely, swiftly, and most importantly without loss of life, by highly skilled and experienced personnel. The Department is able to manage risk by balancing threats, applying appropriate mitigating measures, and implementing quality security programs.

Although we have temporarily relocated out of Sana'a, we remain engaged with interlocutors in Yemen and the international community to advance U.S. policy objectives, including counterterrorism. Since the suspension of operations at Embassy Sana'a, Ambassador Mathew Tueller has made two trips to Aden to meet with President Hadi, has met with him recently in Riyadh, and is based in the region to facilitate continued engagement as circumstances permit. We continue to monitor threats emanating from Yemen and we believe we have the resources and capabilities postured in the area to address them. We remain committed to ensuring the safe and effective conduct of foreign policy. When the political and security situation has stabilized, such that there is no longer a risk of prolonged and severe civil disorder, and the host government demonstrates a vested interest in maintaining the safety and security all U.S. personnel and facilities, a return to the country will be actively considered.

Question. Which countries have endorsed Russian aggression in Ukraine, and should the U.S. consider withholding bilateral assistance to those countries?

Answer. There have been no public endorsements by any countries of Russian intervention in eastern Ukraine. Similarly, no country has recognized the self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic (DPR) or the Luhansk People's Republic (LPR). In fact, many nations criticized the so-called DPR/LPR separatist elections on November 2, 2014, as illegitimate. Russia, however, stated that it would recognize the results of the separatist "elections," as the voting supposedly expressed the legitimate will of the residents in the Luhansk and Donetsk oblasts.

The State Department is currently reviewing whether any countries have endorsed or otherwise supported the purported annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation. Should it be determined that the central government of any country has endorsed Russian aggression in Ukraine, we would consider whether withholding bilateral assistance would be appropriate or necessary.

The United States does not recognize and will not accept Russia's occupation and attempted annexation of Crimea. U.S. sanctions enacted against Russia for its occupation and attempted annexation of Crimea will remain in place until Russia ends its occupation and restores Ukrainian sovereignty over Crimea.

Question. When do you anticipate the U.S. Interest Section in Havana transforming into a U.S. Embassy, and how will staffing requirements change with this diplomatic upgrade? Please describe the process for upgrading the mission.

Answer. The Department is working with the Government of Cuba to re-establish diplomatic relations and take the steps necessary to convert the interests sections in Havana and Washington into embassies.

We expect that the costs of this change in status for the U.S. Interests Section (USINT) in Havana will be minimal for the remainder of fiscal year 2015, and will be absorbed within resources available to the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs. As with other embassies around the world, it will be staffed and operated as leanly as possible. We do not foresee changes to staffing during fiscal year 2015, in part because the building that houses USINT does not allow for an immediate increase to staffing. We are evaluating physical modifications that could be made to accommodate additional personnel in the future as the Embassy expands engagement with the Cuban people and Government.

The process for upgrading the mission from an interests section to an Embassy would likely involve several steps. Both governments must first agree to re-establish diplomatic relations and permanent diplomatic missions. Next, our mission would send a diplomatic note to the Cuban Government accrediting our staff to our new Embassy under the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations. We would also send separate diplomatic notes proposing the termination of the Interests Section Agreement with the Government of Cuba and notifying the Swiss that they no longer need to serve as the U.S. protecting power in Cuba. Once these steps are completed, the interests section would officially be changed to an Embassy.

Question. Did the Department of State or other administration representatives meet with any Cuban human rights activists before announcing their change in policy? If so, please provide details. To what extent were the views of such activists considered in the crafting of the President's new policy of engagement?

Answer. The President has met with representatives of Cuba's independent civil society, and senior officials from the State Department and National Security Council Staff meet with them when they are traveling through Washington DC. In addition, Department officials and the U.S. Interests Section in Havana regularly meet with them on the island. We were well aware of their views and priorities and took them into account in formulating our new policy approach. We did not share with them the specifics of our intentions to change our policy approach. We will continue to consult with independent Cuban civil society to hear their views and plans for future activities, and we have urged other countries to do the same.

The continued promotion of universal human rights and the empowerment of all Cubans is the bedrock of our new approach toward Cuba. We have no illusions the Cuban Government will change its behavior simply because of our new policy approach, but we are now better positioned to press the Cuban Government for real change. We support the key points around which Cuban civil society groups have rallied, including Cuban ratification and compliance with various U.N. human rights treaties; legal recognition of independent civil society; implementation of constitutional and legal reforms to ensure full respect for labor rights, freedoms of expression, association, peaceful assembly, and to allow for free elections; the release of prisoners arrested for political reasons; and an end to government-sponsored harassment of independent civil society.

We will continue to urge respect for democratic principles as well as human rights and fundamental freedoms in our discussions with the Cuban Government.

Question. Did the State Department or other administration officials meet with any business interests before announcing the change? If so, please provide details. To what extent were the views of such business interests considered in the crafting of the President's new policy of engagement?

Answer. The State Department and other U.S. agencies frequently engage with the U.S. private sector about U.S. policy and sanctions, and meet with a broad range of interests as a matter of course. The Department of Treasury and Commerce's January 16, 2015, amendments to Cuba sanctions regulations, to which the State Department provided substantial foreign policy guidance, were aimed at increasing people-to-people contact, further supporting civil society in Cuba, and further enhancing the free flow of information to, from, and among the Cuban people. In implementing this policy, U.S. agencies were mindful of the perspectives of all stakeholders, including the U.S. private sector, regarding how regulatory amendments could most effectively further these policy goals. For example, engagement with U.S. telecommunications companies was helpful in identifying how regulatory changes could support increased access to information by the Cuban people. We, along with our colleagues at relevant U.S. agencies, continue outreach to inform U.S. business interests of these most recent changes and to respond to questions.

Question. Yes or no: Do you commit to keeping all relevant congressional committees informed of engagement with the Cuban Government going forward?

Answer. Yes.

Question. What specific reforms of the World Health Organization (WHO) have the administration and other governments considered (or are actively pursuing) in the wake of the Ebola outbreak?

Answer. The World Health Organization is the critical global public health agency that cooperates with 194 member states and technical partners across the spectrum of public health issues such as the International Health Regulations and their implementation and related surveillance, preparedness, and response to emergencies and outbreaks. The WHO has been a key player in international efforts to drive the number of Ebola cases to zero, and has worked consistently over the years to finish the job globally on polio eradication. In addition to its life-saving operational activities, the WHO performs key normative functions, such as setting quality and safety regulatory standards in the food and drug sectors, and addressing health system effectiveness.

Currently the WHO is at full capacity in their operations in West Africa, with over 700 people on the ground dealing with the epidemiology of the outbreak, laboratory capacity, case management, contact tracing, running the U.N. medevac system, and working with partners on social mobilization.

In addressing the valid criticisms of the WHO early response efforts in the Ebola outbreak, WHO Director-General Margaret Chan undertook a course correction with changes to the structure of the response, including personnel changes, to mobilize fully the capacity of the WHO. She also called for the WHO Executive Board to hold a Special Session on Ebola (held January 25, 2015). The United States partnered with South Africa and championed a resolution, "Ebola: ending the current outbreak, strengthening global preparedness," which called for measures to both address the immediate Ebola outbreak and to set in motion additional reform measures. This resolution, and the accompanying actions, had broad member state support and will make critical changes in the emergency response capacity so that the Organization will be able to respond with immediate effectiveness in a future complex major emergency or disease outbreak.

Immediately following the Special Session, WHO Director-General Chan appointed a Special Representative for the Ebola Response for the duration of the outbreak. WHO is taking the reforms adopted at the Special Session seriously, with work underway to further improve the Organization's functions by the annual World Health Assembly in May. At that time, the WHO will report on an interim assessment by experts on all aspects of the WHO response, the proposed development of a global public health emergency workforce for rapid deployment in the event of a public health emergency, strengthened command and control functions at the WHO for emergencies and outbreaks, and improved human resource policies related to the functioning of the Organization across its three levels.

The United States has been a driving force behind an on-going reform agenda at the WHO underway since 2011. Reforms have proceeded on four fronts: priority-setting, managerial reforms, governance reforms, and financing. Member states agreed on streamlined priority setting processes and a 6-year overall strategy. Management reforms have encompassed administration, oversight and ethics, and the U.S. has worked closely with the Organization on human resource reforms to set in place more flexible contracts, streamlined recruitment processes, and changes to the workforce model. Some governance processes have improved with more work underway, and reforms have been implemented to improve financing.

Question. What is the justification for the fiscal year 2016 budget request that cuts funding for refugees and disaster assistance below levels provided by Congress in fiscal year 2015 (under Migration and Refugee Assistance and International Disaster Assistance, respectively)?

Answer. The administration remains dedicated to providing strong support for humanitarian programs worldwide. The President's fiscal year 2016 request reflects the administration's strong commitment to these programs, while taking into account the current constrained budget environment. The fiscal year 2016 request includes \$2.453 billion for the Migration Refugee Assistance and \$1.741 billion for the International Disaster Assistance (IDA) account. In addition, the Department is requesting \$50 million in the Emergency Refugee and Migration Assistance (ERMA) account to respond to urgent and unforeseen needs.

Overall, this request represents a nearly \$850 million increase from the President's fiscal year 2015 request in response to the dire humanitarian situation resulting from the conflicts in Syria, South Sudan, Iraq, and Central African Republic, among others. The Department of State and the United States Agency for International Development also plan to carry over approximately \$500 million in fiscal

year 2015 funding into fiscal year 2016 in order to support humanitarian aid programs. However, should the need for additional funding from the U.S. Government this year exceed our current plans, the administration would tap the planned carry-over funding to address them.

With the request and planned carryover, we anticipate having the funds necessary to support robust U.S. Government support for humanitarian aid programs in in fiscal year 2015 and fiscal year 2016.

Question. How does the fiscal year 2016 budget request address or mitigate the growing global influence of the People's Republic of China, particularly in Africa?

Answer. Foreign investment is essential to Africa's economic development, and there is room for both the United States and China to engage in public and private investment opportunities. The United States offers a compelling narrative for Africa. Our firms introduce international best practices, export top-quality products, provide employment opportunities, and promote economic growth in Africa, while also generating benefits for the U.S. economy.

China will continue to seek an expanding role in Africa and elsewhere around the world, and we must maintain our engagement with China in this regard.

The United States welcomes Chinese engagement in Africa that is consistent with international labor and environmental standards, promotes transparency, good governance, and sustainable development, and maintains a level playing field for all companies. The United States will continue to press China to not undermine local and international efforts to promote healthy competition, good governance, transparency, and responsible natural resource management in Africa and elsewhere.

We believe that Chinese efforts to build infrastructure and enable economic growth are generally consistent with our promotion of economic development in the region. The United States has strong relationships with many African partners, and we are identifying opportunities to collaborate with these partners and with China, including through international institutions, towards common goals that also contribute to our broader regional and global priorities.

INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND QUOTA REFORMS

Question. How will failure by the Congress to implement the International Monetary Fund (IMF) governance and quota reforms included in the President's request impact the United States?

Answer. U.S. hesitation on IMF reform diminishes our capacity to influence the international development financing landscape and will ultimately affect the IMF's ability to respond to geopolitical and economic crises in a way that serves our vital national interests. Giving important developing economies a greater vote in the IMF would preserve the integrity of the existing international financial infrastructure without increasing U.S. monetary commitments or endangering the U.S. veto over important IMF decisions.

Despite the fact that the United States championed the 2010 IMF quota and governance reforms, we are now the only major IMF member country that has not yet ratified them. The U.S. failure to ratify IMF reforms is generating criticism abroad and eroding our credibility in the G-20, with emerging economies, and with international financial institutions. At the 2014 World Bank/IMF spring and fall meetings, an increasing number of countries called for moving forward on IMF quota and governance reforms without the United States. The November G-20 Brisbane Summit Joint Communiqué stated that the G-20 will begin to engage the IMF in 2015 to discuss how to advance the reform process if the United States fails to ratify the proposed reforms by the end of 2014. It is unclear, however, how IMF members would advance reforms without the United States, and no details have been presented.

Our inaction may also have helped fuel momentum for alternative institutions that have not yet committed to the international best practices that protect global financial stability. Since October 2014, 28 countries, including the United Kingdom most recently, have joined the Chinese-led Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), despite our oft-stated concerns regarding its governance structure and outstanding questions about its commitment to adhere to international best standards on lending. We acknowledge the need for additional multilateral financing for global development but are concerned that the new institutions are not yet sufficiently committed to maintaining accepted high standards on governance, environmental and social safeguards, procurement, and debt sustainability. Institutions that do not incorporate these standards can undermine development priorities and create financial crisis vulnerabilities through irresponsible or politically motivated lending.

Question. What is the policy of the United States regarding military-to-military engagement with Burma?

Answer. During his November visit to Burma, President Obama stated clearly that the United States would not expand our engagement with the Burmese military in 2015. In keeping with the President's direction, the Departments of Defense (DOD) and State will continue to engage with the Burmese military as it has since 2012: in a limited and calibrated manner intended to promote reform and to help ensure the country's most powerful institution remains engaged in Burma's reform process.

In 2015, engagement with the Burmese military will continue to promote the ideals and values of a professional military in a democracy, including accountability, civilian control, rule of law, and respect for international humanitarian and international human rights law. In limited circumstances, consistent with past practices, members of Burma's civilian government and armed forces may attend classes or observer activities designed to help the country respond to humanitarian crises or disasters. Additionally, we anticipate interactions with the Burmese military on the margins of multilateral fora (e.g. ASEAN) where senior U.S. officials deliver messages supportive of continued reform to their Burmese counterparts.

We will provide no operational training, field training, weapons, materiel, or other technologies to any of Burma's armed forces. In moving forward we will continue to consult broadly with civil society organizations, ethnic groups, political party leaders, and other stakeholders in evaluating the impact and appropriateness of our planned activities.

The administration continues to believe that the United States can promote positive changes and professionalism within the Burmese military more effectively through tailored bilateral interactions than through disengagement, especially given Burma's traditional reliance on China, Russia, and North Korea as defense partners. However, we have repeatedly notified Burmese military representatives that before the United States will consider moving beyond our current level of engagement, the Burmese military and the Government of Burma must take further steps to demonstrate concretely its commitment to democratic reform, national reconciliation with ethnic groups and religious minorities, adherence to international human rights standards, and ending all defense sales ties with North Korea in accordance with U.N. Security Council resolutions.

Question. How do you assess prospects for free and fair elections in Burma, and do you share growing concerns within Burmese civil society and democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi that the military will interfere in the conduct of these elections—as they have done in the past?

Answer. President Thein Sein publicly announced that Burma's general election will take place in November 2015. We welcome the Burmese Government's confirmation that the election will happen in a timely manner. The credibility of Burma's 2015 election is of utmost importance to the development of Burma's democratic institutions and will serve as a critical marker in Burma's reform process. It is essential that the election be credible, inclusive, and transparent and allows the people of Burma to freely choose their leaders.

Democracy is not a 1-day event, but a long-term process, and the United States will support Burma's democratic reforms before, during, and after these elections. U.S. assistance is intended to strengthen Burma's democratic institutions, and build capacity among all key stakeholders. The U.S. Government is providing more than \$18 million in assistance to strengthen the country's political institutions that are key to democratic governance and support civil society, political parties, the media, and government to conduct inclusive, transparent, and credible elections in 2015.

At the same time, the U.S. Government has publicly and privately encouraged constitutional reforms to decrease the role of active-duty military in the political structure and pave the way for the Burmese to freely choose their President in a free and fair 2015 election. President Obama strongly advocated for constitutional reform during his trip to Burma in November, consistent with previous U.S. Government statements on the issue. The government and military have repeatedly stated they would follow the "people's will" when considering constitutional amendments.

Opposition leaders have long called for high-level talks to forge stakeholder consensus on the country's political and economic reform strategy and Aung San Suu Kyi continues to engage the military and the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) on these issues. On March 2, she held a fifth round of talks with President Thein Sein and reportedly discussed the elections and possible amendments to the constitution.

Question. The Government of Burma (GoB) broke a 17-year cease fire with the Kachins in June 2011. Since then there has been increased attacks by the Tatmadaw on the Kachins. Further, there has been no sustained delivered of humanitarian assistance to the nearly 100,000 IDPs pressed up against China's bor-

der. The “Peace Process” appears to be more about process and less about peace: what is your assessment of the peace process?

Answer. The seventh round of formal negotiations towards achieving a Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) will resume on March 16–21 in Rangoon. Both the GoB and the ethnic armed groups have expressed their desire to make progress in these talks and maintain momentum.

The discussions will focus on recent fighting in Kachin and Shan states and seek to formalize the text of the NCA. The unresolved military aspects of the agreement, such as a ceasefire code of conduct, the post-ceasefire repositioning of troops, and the establishment of a joint-monitoring mechanism, will be crucial for the success of the negotiations.

A ceasefire agreement would be an important milestone. However, it would not conclude the reconciliation process but rather serve as the beginning of an inclusive and transparent political dialogue essential to the creation of a lasting peace. Furthermore, the NCA would not end all conflict in the country as some armed ethnic groups are not part of the formal negotiations and would not be able to sign the agreement.

We continue to encourage the GoB and ethnic groups to maintain their commitment to dialogue as the only path to genuine and lasting peace, stability, and development in Burma. We remain in close contact with humanitarian actors in the area to ensure that the needs of the conflict-affected communities can be met quickly and safely. We continue to urge national and local government authorities to permit immediate and unfettered humanitarian access to provide life-saving assistance to these populations in need. We have appealed to all sides to exercise restraint and ensure the full protection of civilians and humanitarian staff in accordance with international humanitarian standards.

Question. The situation in Rakhine State toward the Rohingya Muslim population remains appalling, and they live in an apartheid-like situation. The GoB said they would issue “white-cards” which could have been a pathway to citizenship, but shortly thereafter the government rescinded the offer.

What measures are being taken by the administration and our allies to address Rohingya citizenship, to protect their human rights, and provide humanitarian assistance to affected communities and individuals?

Answer. Given the dire humanitarian and human rights situation in Rakhine State and significant concerns raised by the international community, we consistently press the Government of Burma to pursue durable solutions to these problems, including developing a path to citizenship for members of the Rohingya population and taking steps to end systemic racially- and religiously-motivated discrimination. The Government of Burma invalidated the “white cards” on March 31, 2015, but there is not yet evidence of an alternative path to citizenship or legal residency status. While not a direct path to citizenship, the white cards, provided holders with temporary legal status, access to some social services, and allowed them to vote in previous elections and the constitutional referendum. The steps taken by the Burmese Government that deny the rights of persons who have lived in Burma for generations belie the Burmese Government’s commitments to reconciliation, equal protection for all under domestic laws and international standards, and inclusive national elections in 2015.

The resolution of these issues is a critical element in Burma’s transition to a stable, more inclusive democracy. The U.S. Government is applying diplomatic pressure to encourage the Government of Burma to uphold its international human rights obligations; ensure the accountability of security forces and other perpetrators of abuses in northern Rakhine State; and provide a path to full citizenship for the Rohingya population. Embassy Rangoon and visiting senior U.S. officials have regularly raised these issues with the government, including Under Secretary for Political Affairs Wendy R. Sherman; Under Secretary for Civilian Security, Democracy, and Human Rights Sarah Sewall; Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor Tom Malinowski; Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Daniel Russel; and Assistant Secretary of State for Population, Refugees, and Migration Anne Richard.

During his November 2014 visit, President Obama raised concerns about the Rohingya in his meeting with President Thein Sein, including issues related to their citizenship, discrimination against them, and restrictions on their ability to travel. U.S. officials, and our allies, have also urged the government to ensure that actions intended to maintain or restore security and stability in the area are carried out in a way that do not violate human rights and that those responsible for violence are held accountable.

During the second U.S.-Burma Human Rights Dialogue in January 2015—led by Assistant Secretary Malinowski and joined by Assistant Secretary Richard—the

Burmese Government acknowledged the importance of implementing a comprehensive, transparent, and inclusive reconciliation process in Rakhine State. The Government of Burma and the United States agreed that this process should prioritize equal protection for all under domestic laws and international standards and unfettered humanitarian access to all vulnerable populations. The United States also welcomed the Government of Burma's commitment to hold credible, transparent, and inclusive parliamentary elections in 2015. However, the Government of Burma's more recent actions run counter to these commitments.

As a result of our regular communication with our allies on these issues, a strongly-worded resolution was passed at the Human Rights Council last month, which renewed the mandate of the Special Rapporteur for Myanmar/Burma.

Since fiscal year 2013, the U.S. Government, including the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the State Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, has provided nearly \$152 million in life-saving humanitarian assistance to internally displaced persons, refugees, and asylum seekers, including the Rohingya, in Burma and in the region. This funding provides health and medical care, nutrition and food security, water, sanitation and hygiene, shelter, non-food items, and services for people with disabilities. Other activities include support for intra-faith dialogue, where religious leaders exchange views and perspectives on the role of religion in politics and an open society; training on tolerance and diversity; and programs with interfaith speakers to help local interfaith groups develop advocacy strategies. U.S. assistance also furnishes local civil society networks with resources to monitor and mitigate the potential for intercommunal conflict and violence. The assistance also supports small-scale activities to develop economic linkages and joint marketplaces for Rakhine and Rohingya communities.

The U.S. Government also regularly engages the broader international community, including the U.N., international non-governmental organizations, human rights and civil society organizations, and the diplomatic corps to coordinate humanitarian response efforts. This coordination is accomplished by participating in monthly Chiefs of Mission roundtables in Rakhine State, bi-weekly diplomatic corps working group meetings, and regular donor and humanitarian coordination meetings. U.S. Government officials also consult with community leaders and civil society from Rakhine and Rohingya communities to understand their perspectives, monitor the risk of violence, encourage peaceful resolution of conflict, and communicate U.S. policy and support.

Question. In January, the Buddhist-nationalist monk U Wirathu called the U.N. Special Rapporteur for Human Rights in Burma Yanghee Lee, a "bitch . . . whore" for upholding the rights of the Rohingyas to "self-identify" in accordance with international human rights law. Further, the Burmese Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) issued a press release on February 3, 2015 which rebuked Ms. Lee for interfering in the internal affairs of Burma, which was clearly an attempt to intimidate her and diminish her mandate.

The remarks engendered a swift and apt reply from U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein. The U.N. Secretary General (UNSG) apparently did not comment or respond.

Has the Department of State discussed U Wirathu's disgraceful comments and the MoFA press release with the UNSG, and what messages have been sent to the GoB by the UNSG?

Answer. We support Special Rapporteur Yanghee Lee for her work and her reporting on Burma human rights over the past year. We condemn the misogynistic attack against her. We have not discussed this issue with the U.N. Secretary-General, and are not aware of any messages that the Secretary General sent to the Government of Burma.

Question. Has the Department of State discussed the comments and press release with the GoB's Ambassador to the U.N.?

Answer. We have not discussed the comments and press release with Burma's Ambassador to the U.N. The U.S. Embassy in Rangoon expressed concern to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and to an advisor to the President's office regarding Wirathu's comments.

Question. Congress recommended \$2.9 billion for democracy and governance programs in fiscal year 2014, yet the administration provided only \$1.9 billion for such programs.

How do you explain the reduction in democracy and governance programs in fiscal year 2014—does this demonstrate the lack of commitment to democracy and governance abroad by this administration?

Answer. Democracy, human rights, and governance (DRG) programs abroad remain a significant priority for this administration. This commitment is strongly reflected in the President's budget for fiscal year 2016, which requests \$2.9 billion in

foreign assistance for DRG programs, the same as the fiscal year 2014 request, including increases for critical programs in Africa and Central America to foster good governance and fight corruption, strengthen the rule of law, and promote civil society.

For fiscal year 2014, the Department of State and USAID requested \$2.9 billion to promote and support DRG programs around the world. The fiscal year 2014 appropriation reduced funding for the key foreign assistance accounts that support DRG programs, which made it difficult to fully fund DRG programs included within the President's request. The fiscal year 2014 allocations balanced numerous foreign policy priorities, including DRG programs, while ensuring we had met statutory congressional sector directives included within the bill. After reviewing worldwide needs and congressional directives, nearly \$2.0 billion was allocated to DRG programs in fiscal year 2014, resulting in a reduction of almost \$1.0 billion in global DRG activities as compared to the President's request.

Question. How important are democracy and governance programs to combating disease outbreaks like Ebola or the influence of Islamic extremists?

Answer. Democratic processes and strong governance institutions are critical in times of crisis such as the 2014 Ebola epidemic in West Africa. Strong governance is essential to ensuring the successful management of disease outbreaks and other crises. Also, democratic systems and good governance contribute to the ensuring the trust of the public—a key factor in crisis response. We learned from the Ebola epidemic that community cooperation is a vital component of social mobilization. Programs that address these issues will be an important part of long-term recovery.

The Ebola response was hampered by instances of poor governance, weak institutions, and corruption. The healthcare systems were quickly overwhelmed and quickly collapsed in the face of the Ebola virus and the initial emergency response was poorly executed. We are also aware that a few government officials tried to use the influx of assistance for their own financial advantage. The United States and other donors have made it clear that corruption will not be tolerated and the Ebola response and recovery funds must be used transparently and with great accountability. We have conveyed that it is no longer business as usual. The Ebola epidemic, and similar crises, have impressed the need to change the culture of corruption. We have clearly communicated the message at all levels of government, and intend to support that message with programs that build domestic capacity. We have been assured by our U.S. Ambassadors in the affected countries that the funds delivered for the Ebola response have been handled appropriately.

A major challenge during the Ebola response was mistrust in government, which led some communities to resist Ebola outreach teams. It is critical that governments build that trust with communities going forward through transparent and equitable delivery of services, free and fair elections, good governance, improved citizen access to and participation in decisionmaking, and holding officials accountable. Programming in the Emergency funding request is intended to develop efforts to strengthen the infrastructure and operation of healthcare systems and the regulatory environment. In addition to the "hardware" of the infrastructure, funding will also be used to ensure that necessary personnel are well-trained and prepared.

The fiscal year 2016 request includes funds for the three impacted countries that will build upon the support provided by the emergency Ebola funding fiscal year 2015 appropriation to the Department of State and USAID. With these fiscal year 2015 and fiscal year 2016 funds, USAID is supporting economic, social, and governance programs in Ebola-affected countries to address the potentially sharp increase in extreme poverty and other second-order impacts, including damage to the livelihoods of vulnerable households in Liberia.

Question. Over the past several years, the Government Accountability Office has made numerous recommendations to help improve the effectiveness and efficiency of State Department programs and activities. While State has taken action on a number of these recommendations, according to GAO there are more than 150 GAO recommendations since 2011 that State has not yet addressed.

What actions will you take over the next year to address GAO's recommendations?

Answer. We value the recommendations resulting from the work of the GAO as they identify ways to improve our programs and operations. In fiscal year 2014 alone, State had approximately 75 engagements with the GAO. It is our long-standing commitment to complete action on recommendations in an expeditious manner. Some recommendations, however, can take a number of years to implement completely. In addition, there are no State specific areas on GAO's 2015 High Risk List. State has a collaborative and robust liaison relationship with GAO and will continue to provide GAO with regular updates as we follow-up together to assure that recommendations are closed as quickly as possible.

Question. The fiscal year 2016 budget request includes a request to use Economic Support Funds (ESF) for “programs to support initiatives relating to North Korea that are in the national interests of the United States, notwithstanding any other provision of law”.

What programs does the administration anticipate for North Korea that would require use for this broad authority?

What are the impacts and how does sequestration impede the conduct of diplomacy?

Answer. The President’s fiscal year 2016 budget request seeks authority to use Economic Support Funds (ESF) for “programs to support initiatives relating to North Korea (DPRK) that are in the national interests of the United States, notwithstanding any other provision of law.” The fiscal year 2016 request does not seek any bilateral foreign assistance funding for the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) and we currently have no plans to fund bilateral programs using ESF. In past years, the President has requested that the funds appropriated under ESF may be made available for programs to support the goals of the Six Party Talks, including nuclear security initiatives relating to North Korea, notwithstanding any other provision of law. Given the significant restrictions on assistance to North Korea, this authority is needed to provide flexibility to support our diplomatic efforts if we ever do enter into active talks.

Sequestration is an arbitrary across-the-board cut that reduces our flexibility everywhere, including potentially with respects to our efforts on the DPRK, and would therefore make the job of diplomacy harder than it already is.

Question. (a) Have you abandoned efforts to persuade Iran to dismantle the majority of its nuclear infrastructure? If Iran maintains most of its infrastructure—even under severe constraints and under a serious inspection regime—doesn’t that allow for a quick breakout either during the time of the agreement or after the agreement expires?

(b) If Iran maintains thousands of centrifuges and an operational heavy water reactor, aren’t they a nuclear threshold state?

(c) You have said that Iran must address its past weaponization efforts before any agreement is signed. Yet it has consistently refused to do so. What must Iran do to at a minimum on this in order for an agreement to be finalized?

(d) Given Iran’s history of cheating on its international commitments, will anything other than anytime, anywhere inspections give you comfort that Iran is living up to its commitments? Will specific penalties be delineated for not living up to those commitments?

(e) You have said you will not support any further extensions of the talks if there is no conceptual agreement by March 24. Does that remain your position under any circumstances?

Answer. (a) Fully dismantling Iran’s nuclear program would not completely eliminate its ability to breakout. Iran has already sufficiently mastered significant parts of the nuclear fuel cycle after decades of developing its program. Even if Iran’s program were razed to the ground, it would retain the ability to breakout within a few years. So we cannot completely and permanently eliminate its ability to breakout, but we can severely restrain it by putting in place strict constraints and intrusive monitoring measures. We are seeking a comprehensive deal that would give us expansive access into and oversight of all aspects of the nuclear fuel cycle, which would allow us to detect any attempts to breakout overtly or covertly. Key elements of this transparency regime, including implementation of the Additional Protocol, would continue in place even after the end of a deal.

(b) There are many variables related to extending the breakout time of the uranium pathway, including the number and types of centrifuges Iran is able to use and the size of its stockpile of enriched uranium. We are also determined to ensure that Iran cannot acquire plutonium for a nuclear weapon from the Arak heavy water research reactor. Cutting off all of these pathways will involve a variety of constraints and extensive monitoring measures. It will be critical to find the right combination of measures to ensure Iran cannot acquire a nuclear weapon through either the uranium or the plutonium path. Both of these elements remain under negotiation, but in the end, we must be assured that Iran cannot breakout by producing weapons grade uranium or plutonium.

(c) We are pressing Iran to cooperate fully with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to address all outstanding issues, particularly those that give rise to concerns regarding the possible military dimensions (PMD) of Iran’s nuclear program. This includes providing access to facilities, individuals, and documents requested by the IAEA. This is one of the issues we are working to resolve in the negotiations. We believe a comprehensive deal should facilitate the IAEA’s investigation of PMD and ensure there are no ongoing weaponization activities.

(d) A comprehensive deal must ensure that Iran is subject to significantly enhanced transparency and monitoring measures to verify the exclusively peaceful nature of its nuclear program and to quickly detect any attempts by Iran to break out. We continue to place a high priority on strict monitoring measures in order to detect violations promptly and retain an ability to snap sanctions back in place should violations occur. How exactly that framework would look is still under negotiation. Our team continues to work toward a package that will best achieve our goals of preventing Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon and ensuring that Iran's nuclear program is used for exclusively peaceful purposes.

(e) We evaluate major national security decisions against national interests. We strongly believe that the Joint Plan of Action (JPOA) has significantly advanced U.S. national security interests by halting and rolling back Iran's nuclear program in key ways. Without the JPOA, Iran would be enriching to 20 percent uranium and continuously increasing its stockpile of uranium to dangerous levels. We will not take a bad deal. And if we conclude that Iran is unable or unwilling to take the necessary steps to resolve our concerns, we will walk away from these negotiations.

Question. Deputy Secretary Blinken testified last month before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and said during the JPOA there were situations that "we believe were violations of the JPOA."

Can you elaborate on those violations? When the violations were identified, was anyone in Congress notified?

What does it say about Iranian intentions for a long-term agreement if they are already violating the interim agreement? How will violations we dealt with in a long-term agreement?

How long did it take for the U.S. to identify a violation had occurred, and for Iran to stop the violation? Might there be other violations that we are not aware of?

Answer. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) continues to verify Iran's fulfillment of its nuclear-related commitments under the Joint Plan of Action (JPOA). Part of the reason why the JPOA has been so effective is that it has provided a framework and a mechanism for all sides to raise questions and resolve issues when they arise. When we had questions about activities related to the IR-5 centrifuge, we raised them with Iran as soon as the IAEA reported them, and the issue was resolved to our satisfaction. The Iranians have confirmed that they will not continue that activity as cited in the IAEA report.

IAEA access is valuable and gives us insight into what is happening on the ground. One of the many benefits of the JPOA is that the IAEA has obtained greater access into Iran's nuclear program to verify that Iran is meeting its JPOA commitments. As a result of the JPOA, Iran's nuclear program is more constrained and transparent than it has been in years.

Question. Mr. Secretary, you worked very hard last year to create a conceptual framework for talks between Israel and the Palestinians. Unfortunately, Palestinian President Abbas' response to your proposal was to form a unity government with Hamas and to leave the negotiating table and take his case to the United Nations. He pushed for a one-sided United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolution that called for a final agreement within 12 months requiring total Israeli withdrawal to the pre-1967 lines by 2017. That provocative move was followed by signing on to the Rome Statute to join the International Criminal Court (ICC).

What is the U.S. planning to do to try to discourage the ICC from instigating a full investigation of Israel which can only politicize the ICC and potentially do great damage to Israel?

Answer. The United States does not consider the Palestinians eligible to accede to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. The United States has made clear its view that Palestinian action in seeking to become a party to the Rome Statute is counter-productive, will damage the atmosphere with the very people with whom the Palestinians ultimately need to make peace, and will do nothing to further the aspirations of the Palestinian people for a sovereign and independent state. We also made clear that we strongly disagree with the ICC Prosecutor's decision to open a preliminary examination.

The United States continues to oppose actions—by both parties—that undermine trust and create doubts about their commitment to a negotiated peace. Such actions only push the parties further apart.

Question. Mr. Secretary, you worked very hard last year to create a conceptual framework for talks between Israel and the Palestinians. Unfortunately, Palestinian President Abbas' response to your proposal was to form a unity government with Hamas and to leave the negotiating table and take his case to the United Nations. He pushed for a one-sided United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolution that called for a final agreement within 12 months requiring total Israeli withdrawal to

the pre-1967 lines by 2017. That provocative move was followed by signing on to the Rome Statute to join the International Criminal Court.

How is the U.N. Human Rights Council (HRC) an improvement over its discredited predecessor the Commission on Human Rights?

Answer. The HRC is the only global intergovernmental body that exists to promote and defend human rights. It is in the vital interest of the U.S. to ensure that international human rights norms and laws continue to protect and advance individual freedoms.

Through its membership on the Human Rights Council (HRC), the United States focuses attention on the world's worst human rights abusers. We have reached across traditional blocs and geographic divides to foster solutions to human rights-related problems, and help shine a spotlight on the human rights of members of groups that have not received sufficient attention in the past, such as persons with disabilities, and those who face reprisals for their testimony to U.N. human rights mechanisms.

Through active U.S. leadership, the Council has authorized international mandates to expose and address the human rights situations in countries including North Korea, Iran, Syria, Belarus, Sudan, and Eritrea. The United States introduced three resolutions passed by the Council encouraging reconciliation and accountability in Sri Lanka. The United States also has looked for opportunities for the Human Rights Council to build the capacity of countries such as Mali, Somalia, Tunisia, Yemen, Haiti, and Libya to promote and protect human rights.

The United States drew together a cross-regional group of sponsors to create in 2010 the first new Special Rapporteur focused on fundamental freedoms in 17 years, the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and freedom of association. The United States also strongly supported the establishment of a mandate to monitor and combat discrimination against women in law and practice. We collaborated with partners such as the United Kingdom, Turkey and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) to craft resolution 16/18, which encourages member states to take specific actions to promote religious tolerance and combat discrimination without infringing on freedom of religion or expression. This ended years of divisive debates and voted resolutions on the concept of "defamation of religions." We took the reins on the mandate for the special rapporteur on freedom of expression so as to combat efforts to restrict speech.

The United States has also encouraged the Council to pursue a range of new initiatives to promote and protect specific human rights. For example, the U.S. worked with Sweden to secure a landmark resolution that underscores that all individuals are entitled to the same human rights online as they are offline, and that all governments must protect those rights regardless of the medium through which they are exercised. Seventy-nine others co-sponsored that resolution.

While the United States recognizes that the HRC continues to have deep flaws, including its one-sided bias against Israel, the administration also knows very well how much worse the HRC was when the U.S. did not participate. Before the U.S. joined, the Council held five special sessions on Israel and over half of all country-specific resolutions at the Council focused on Israel. Since the United States joined, the Council's focus has dramatically shifted to other urgent situations, including Syria, Libya, and Iran.

We are working to reduce the structural bias and disproportionate focus on and bias against Israel. Before the United States joined the U.N. Human Rights Council in 2009, more than half of all of the country-specific resolutions adopted there were focused on Israel; today, we've helped lower that proportion to less than a third. This is an inappropriate amount, especially considering the fact that the Human Rights Council has still adopted many more resolutions criticizing Israel than it has on egregious human rights violators. The United States will continue to oppose the unfair and disproportionate focus on Israel at the HRC, and will continue to work toward ending it.

Question. Mr. Secretary, you worked very hard last year to create a conceptual framework for talks between Israel and the Palestinians. Unfortunately, Palestinian President Abbas' response to your proposal was to form a unity government with Hamas and to leave the negotiating table and take his case to the United Nations. He pushed for a one-sided United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolution that called for a final agreement within 12 months requiring total Israeli withdrawal to the pre-1967 lines by 2017. That provocative move was followed by signing on to the Rome Statute to join the International Criminal Court.

What influence does the United States have to combat discrimination against Israel, and to remove "agenda item VII" as a permanent agenda item?

Answer. The administration believes the work to improve the Human Rights Council will remain unfinished so long as the HRC continues to unfairly single out

Israel. Israel is the only country with a stand-alone item on the HRC's agenda. That is why the U.S. has been vocal in urging the Council to end its unfair and unacceptable bias.

U.S. leadership since joining the HRC in 2009 has resulted in notable progress in ameliorating the Council's disproportionate focus on Israel, although much work remains to be done. Most recently, the U.S. worked closely with several other states to garner an invitation for Israel to join the Western European and Others regional group (WEOG) in Geneva, which will ensure that Israel has the same regional group coordinating status at the HRC as other U.N. members.

Prior to American membership, over half of all of the country-specific resolutions the HRC adopted concerned Israel. This number has been reduced to well under one-third since the United States joined the Council. Additionally, the HRC held five special sessions on Israel in the 3 years before our membership, whereas only 2 of the 11 special sessions called since the U.S. joined the HRC have focused on Israel. Since the U.S. joined, the Council has held four special sessions on Syria, along with ones on Libya, Cote d'Ivoire, Haiti, ISIL in Iraq, and the Central African Republic.

In the 2011 review of the HRC, the United States pushed strongly to remove agenda Item 7, which focuses solely on the Israeli-Palestinian issue, although that effort was not successful. The U.S. will continue to work to abolish Item 7 and ensure that the HRC stays focused on its mission to promote and protect the human rights of persons around the world.

Question. Mr. Secretary, you worked very hard last year to create a conceptual framework for talks between Israel and the Palestinians. Unfortunately, Palestinian President Abbas' response to your proposal was to form a unity government with Hamas and to leave the negotiating table and take his case to the United Nations. He pushed for a one-sided United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolution that called for a final agreement within 12 months requiring total Israeli withdrawal to the pre-1967 lines by 2017. That provocative move was followed by signing on to the Rome Statute to join the International Criminal Court.

Our Committee included new language in last year's Omnibus appropriations bill that would reduce our contribution to the Palestinian Authority (PA) by the same amount that the PA provides in payments for acts of terrorism by jailed and deceased terrorists. Have you examined whether these payments continue to date, and if so, have you determined what that reduction will be?

Answer. As a part of our effort to ensure we are in full compliance with relevant legislation, we are gathering and reviewing information about payments the Palestinian Authority made to Palestinians in Israeli prisons and have not yet made a determination on assistance moving forward. In accordance with the legislative provision, prior to the obligation of any fiscal year 2015 Economic Support Funds for the PA, Congress will receive a report on any reduction that is made pursuant to the provision.

Question. Can you provide an update on where talks with Israel stand on a new MOU with Israel?

Answer. Discussions with Israel are underway on a follow-on FMF MOU. The current MOU expires at the end of fiscal year 2018. Teams from Israel and the U.S. have met several times after President Obama directed his national security team in March 2013 to begin discussions with Israel on a new MOU. As we continue these discussions, we are also mindful of the mounting fiscal constraints on U.S. foreign assistance allocations. Israel's security remains of the utmost importance to this administration.

QUESTION SUBMITTED BY SENATOR MITCH MCCONNELL

Question. On September 27, 2013, the Department of State reported that the Congolese Ministry of Interior and Security, General Directorate of Migration had suspended the issuance of exit permits to adopted Congolese children seeking to depart the Democratic Republic of the Congo with their adoptive parents. According to January 2015 data provided by the Department of State, 963 Congolese children who have been or are in the process of being adopted by American citizens are potentially affected by this exit permit suspension, and it is my understanding that approximately 19 of these children have been or are in the process of being adopted by Kentucky families. Seventeen months after the announcement of the exit permit suspension, what is the administration's strategy to resolve this ongoing adoption stalemate?

In January 2015, the Department of State issued data indicating that of the children in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) who have been or are in the process of being adopted by American citizens, 52 have I-600 forms pending with

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, 24 have ongoing I-604 reviews with the Department of State, and 98 are awaiting the completion of visa interviews and additional visa processing by the Department of State. What action is the Department of State taking to complete these cases in a timely fashion so that legally adopted Congolese children may depart the DRC with their adoptive American parents when the adoption exit permit suspension in the DRC is lifted?

Answer: Our strategy in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) has been threefold. First, we have pressed the DRC Government at every opportunity and at the very highest levels, including during Secretary Kerry's meetings with President Kabila last May and August, to lift the suspension immediately for families who have already completed the adoption process in good faith under existing Congolese adoption laws. Second, we have pressed the DRC Government to consider the issuance of exit permits on an expedited basis for those adopted children requiring urgent, life-saving medical care abroad. Third, to address Congolese concerns about significant flaws in their current system, we have offered technical consultations aimed to improve the Congolese intercountry adoption process.

Since the start of the suspension in September 2013, our efforts have led to the issuance of exit permits to more than 30 families that had completed their adoptions prior to the start of the suspension or had children with life-threatening medical conditions that required immediate treatment outside of the DRC. However, the list of families adopting in the DRC despite the suspension continues to grow, and the Department will not cease its efforts until all the families receive relief.

Ambassador Swan and the team at Embassy Kinshasa continue to engage regularly on this issue with the DRC Government as well as with the families. We are pressing the DRC Government to hold a previously promised inter-ministerial meeting to address the adoption suspension, including the question of how to manage already completed adoptions once new adoption legislation is enacted. Embassy Kinshasa recently submitted to the DRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs a list of children whose adoptions were final prior to the suspension. The accompanying diplomatic note reiterates that our families have already legally adopted their children, and that the rigorous process and investigations completed by the State Department and the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) mitigate any deficiency in the DRC system. The note requests that these children receive exit permits to join their adoptive families in the United States immediately. In December 2014, Special Advisor for Children's Issues, Ambassador Susan Jacobs, led a delegation to the DRC to discuss pending adoption cases and proposed adoption reforms. Acting Assistant Secretary Michele T. Bond will visit Kinshasa March 19 to 21 to discuss adoptions with Congolese officials and to meet with waiting adoptive parents. The following week, the State Department and USCIS plan to send a follow-up technical team to consult on adoption reforms in the DRC and to encourage the DRC Government to pass and implement new adoption-related legislation. This team will meet with the Ministry of Interior and other relevant DRC ministries and press for the immediate issuance of exit permits for the children who have already been adopted.

The Department continues to press the DRC Government at every opportunity to lift the suspension.

Consular staffing at Embassy Kinshasa is a high priority for the Department. In an effort to meet the challenge of completing our orphan review process as expeditiously as possible, the Department of State continues to send additional temporary consular personnel to Embassy Kinshasa. The Department is already seeing faster completion of orphan reviews and will continue to provide additional staffing support to the extent warranted by the workload.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR ROY BLUNT

Question. I have spoken with Ambassador Swan on the issue of stalled adoptions from the Democratic Republic of Congo in the past, and it's something that is constantly on the minds of families in Missouri who are in the process of adopting several of the children caught in this tragic situation. As of 2 weeks ago, the State Department has said that they have been unable to set up a meeting with the Congolese Ministry of the Interior to discuss the adoption suspension. What is the State Department's strategy to successfully set up this initial meeting and, finally, to end the suspension?

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Question. I have a question regarding the administration's goals relating to the Paris Climate Change Conference planned for later in 2015. You stated in Lima in December that we must take "giant, measurable, clear steps forward that will set us on a new path. And that means concrete actions and ambitious commitments." Yet it has also been reported that State Department negotiators are hoping for a "politically binding" deal that would "name and shame" countries into cutting their emissions.

What exactly is a politically binding deal, and do you plan to bring a legally binding treaty before the Senate for ratification?

Answer. It is an open question whether the Paris outcome will be of a nature that requires Senate approval before the President may ratify it. The appropriate domestic form of the outcome, whether a protocol, another legal instrument, or an agreed outcome with legal force, will depend upon several factors, including its specific provisions.

To the extent that the referenced New York Times story used the term "politically binding" to describe a non-legally binding outcome, it would follow that such an outcome would be within the authority of the executive branch to conclude.

As Secretary Kerry testified during his confirmation hearing, any international agreement brought into force for the United States will be done so consistent with the U.S. Constitution.

Question. In early February, the executive secretary of the United Nations' Framework Convention on Climate Change stated that the goal of the Paris Climate Conference is to "intentionally, within a defined period of time . . . change the economic development model that has been reigning for at least 150 years, since the Industrial Revolution."

Does the administration believe this is the ultimate goal behind the Paris Conference or any other international climate agreement?

Answer. The ultimate objective of the 1992 U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) is stated clearly in Article 2 of the UNFCCC itself: ". . . to achieve, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Convention, stabilization of greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system." Article 2 also states that this objective applies to "any related legal instruments that the Con-

ference of the Parties may adopt.” This is what we and other UNFCCC parties have been working to achieve over the past two decades and it remains our ultimate objective. Clean energy development and more efficient energy use are vital tools to stabilizing greenhouse gas concentrations. Doing so now is far more affordable than paying for the consequences of climate change later. The Council of Economic Advisors pointed out last year that delaying action for a decade would increase the cost of responding to climate change by 40 percent. In addition, between now and 2035, investment in the energy sector is expected to reach nearly \$17 trillion, creating a tremendous opportunity, both for clean energy development and for creating new jobs in the United States and around the world.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR JAMES LANKFORD

Question. When will President Obama appoint a Special Envoy to Promote Religious Freedom of Religious Minorities in the Near East and South Central Asia as Congress called for in August 2014 with the signing into law of the Near East and South Central Asia Religious Freedom Act?

Answer. I agree that the dire situation of religious minorities in the Near East and South Central Asia deserves special attention and it is one of my priorities. As President Obama made clear in his speech to the Nation in November, “We cannot allow these communities to be driven from their ancient homelands.”

Along those lines, I am thrilled to have recently welcomed Ambassador-at-Large for Religious Freedom, David Saperstein, to the Department. He just returned from an official trip to Iraq, where he met with members of religious communities and pressed government authorities to ensure their protection, safety and security.

My understanding is that the White House is actively considering how to fill the Envoy position, and I support those efforts.

Question. The fiscal year 2016 budget request includes \$500 million toward a multilateral Green Climate Fund (GCF). It is my understanding that these taxpayers’ dollars will be used to help developing countries adapt to climate change and reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. How do you justify prioritizing other countries’ infrastructure when our own Nation’s highways, roads, and bridges is in need of improvement? Additionally, since this is a United Nations fund, how will Congress and U.S. taxpayers know what their money is spent on? Who will report how much money went to what project(s)?

Answer. Climate change is affecting communities across the United States as well as countries across the world. Action is required both here at home and internationally to combat the devastating effects of climate change. That is why the administration is prioritizing helping communities across the United States that are and will be most affected by climate change as well as assisting other vulnerable nations adapt to climate change and pursue a clean energy pathway.

However, climate change is a global challenge. To significantly reduce emissions, we need all countries to take action. It is in the United States’ national interest to support and partner with developing countries to accelerate their climate actions and the GCF is an important means of achieving this goal. U.S. investments in financing international climate action will yield many benefits including:

- Protecting the U.S. economy from greater climate change impacts,
- Increasing U.S. competitiveness in the international clean energy market,
- Helping U.S. national security, and
- Reducing the health impact cost of air pollution.

Moreover, U.S. participation in the GCF is critical to advancing our international interests in the on-going climate negotiations. The establishment of the GCF was a central provision of the Copenhagen Accord, a landmark agreement that recognized for the first time the importance of developing countries taking action to reduce their carbon emissions and combat climate change. In contrast to the Kyoto Protocol, in which only developed countries have emission-reduction obligations, the Copenhagen Accord contains commitments by a wide range of emerging economies, including major emitters like China, India, Brazil, and Indonesia. U.S. commitment to the GCF has and will continue to help us put pressure on developing countries to put forward mitigation commitments in a timely manner and to help secure a new global climate agreement in Paris. That agreement will help the United States and other countries avoid some of the most catastrophic risks from climate change, at home and abroad. We have already experienced the high cost of those impacts here in the United States.

Question. Additionally, since this is a United Nations fund, how will Congress and U.S. taxpayers know what their money is spent on? Who will report how much money went to what project(s)?

Answer. The GCF is not a United Nations fund. The GCF is an independent entity based in South Korea with an independent Board and Secretariat. While it is designed to contribute to achieving the objectives of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the GCF is not an arm of the United Nations or part of the UNFCCC. The GCF makes independent funding and operational decisions, and decides how best to respond to any guidance from the Convention of the Parties (COP).

The GCF's independent Board is made up of 24 members with an equal number from developed and developing countries. The United States is represented on the GCF Board by the U.S. Department of Treasury and the U.S. Department of State serves in an advisory role to U.S. Board representative. All the activities of the GCF are under the care and review of the Board, including its U.S. representative. The World Bank is the present trustee of the GCF.

The GCF will require regular results reporting for the projects and programs it finances and in turn this information will be reported to the GCF Board members. The initial results management framework of the GCF is currently being finalized, and it builds on experience and best practices from other funds and institutions. This will include regular and transparent reporting to the Board as well as the ability of individual Board members to require other regular and ad-hoc reports to the Board from the GCF Secretariat. The GCF Board is also establishing an Independent Evaluation Unit (IEU) that will report directly to the Board (independently of the GCF Secretariat) to evaluate GCF activities. The IEU will conduct periodic independent evaluations of the performance of the GCF in order to provide an objective assessment of the results of the GCF, including its funded activities and its effectiveness and efficiency. The results of the periodic evaluations will be published.

This administration takes our GCF oversight role seriously and we are working hard to ensure that GCF funding is used responsibly. To that end, the GCF will require among the strongest fiduciary standards and social and environmental safeguards of all multilateral funds in climate finance today. Board proceedings and documents are among the most transparent of any multilateral mechanism. This will help ensure that GCF-financed projects and programs are responsibly designed and implemented and that all financial resources are managed prudently and transparently.

Question. Is the forceful removal of Asad part of the administration's overall, enduring strategy to reestablish a unified Syria?

Answer. Our strategy in Syria has remained consistent since 2012: we are committed to a negotiated political transition, in the context of the Geneva Principles, toward an inclusive government capable of serving the interests of all the Syrian people; this type of solution, rather than a militarily-imposed resolution, offers the best hope for a sustainable end to the conflict. With respect to Bashar al-Asad, the United States firmly maintains that he has lost all legitimacy and cannot be part of a political solution. It is clear there can never be a stable, inclusive Syria under his leadership. His brutalization of his own people was central to the creation of and helps sustain extremist groups such as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). We continue to work with our allies to isolate and sanction the Asad regime. We likewise are focused on strengthening our support for the moderate opposition and on supporting moderates who stand against the extremes—whether they be the terrorism of ISIL and other extremist groups or of a regime that terrorizes its own people. Our support of the opposition is intended to help enable progress to a political solution.

Question. Can you please describe what reporting requirements the U.S. Department of State must provide to Congress when procuring military and/or lethal equipment/weapons from non-U.S. entities?

Answer. For procurements in support of State Department operations, the Bureau of Administration, Office of Acquisitions Management is not aware of any use of appropriated funding for the acquisition of military and/or lethal equipment/weapons from non-U.S. entities.

For foreign assistance purposes, per section 42 of the Arms Export Control Act (AECA), the Department of State, the Department of Defense (DOD), and the Department of Treasury must concur and complete an assessment and waiver on the procurement of equipment from non-U.S. entities using Foreign Military Financing (FMF) funds. Per section 604(a) of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended (FAA), the Department must complete an assessment of the procurement of equipment using any FAA-authorized funding, including Peacekeeping Operations (PKO) funds, if such procurement is sourced outside the United States, the recipient country, or developing countries. This assessment includes a review of whether or not the commodities and services to be procured can be sourced from such countries; and whether or not a waiver on the basis of unforeseen circumstances or efficiency

is appropriate. The section 604(a) waiver has been delegated to the Secretary of State. There is no congressional reporting requirement associated with this process.

The Department of State does not have congressional reporting requirements associated with procurement of equipment by DOD for use by their department; I would refer you to DOD for such acquisition issues.

Question. What kind and to what extent of humanitarian aid are we providing to religious minorities affected by the spread of ISIS and radical Islam, and what more could be done? Please describe the types of assets contributed, dollar amounts, and Federal agencies involved in the effort.

Answer. The U.S. Government has long been concerned about the safety and rights of vulnerable populations in the Levant, including religious and ethnic minorities. The Department of State has regular ongoing contact with leaders of these groups in the United States and throughout the Middle East region to discuss their wellbeing and needs. Our contacts include Christian leaders, Yezidi activists, civil society and clergy members, minority diaspora, and advocacy groups.

The U.S. Government also continues to be a primary donor to displaced Iraqis, contributing nearly \$220 million since the start of fiscal year 2014. The U.S. Embassy in Baghdad and Consulate General in Erbil are in daily contact with the Iraqi Government, the Kurdistan Regional Government, the United Nations (U.N.), and other humanitarian aid organizations in Iraq to ensure they do their utmost to reach and assist displaced Iraqis—including minorities. The Department of State contributed more than \$182 million in fiscal year 2014 funds to U.N. relief agencies and other international and non-government organization to assist displaced Iraqis. This funding supported the U.N. and international and nongovernmental organizations that are providing Iraqis with assistance, including food and water, health and mental healthcare, shelter materials, clothing, water, and sanitation and hygiene resources, and basic relief items such as mattresses, blankets, cooking sets, and other household goods. The U.S. Agency for International Development provided more than \$18 million in fiscal year 2014 and more than \$11 million in fiscal year 2015 funds to support the provision of health services, shelter, water, and sanitation and hygiene resources. The Department of Defense also contributed \$7.5 million in fiscal year 2014 funds for humanitarian assistance for Iraq displacement and insecurity.

In addition to providing humanitarian assistance, the State Department has also directed programs funded through Economic Support Funds to target minority and internally displaced persons (IDP) communities. Program activities focus on human rights and rule of law and atrocities prevention and accountability.

The United States remains the single largest donor to the humanitarian response for Syria, contributing more than \$3 billion in life-saving humanitarian aid to affected Syrians, including IDPs and refugees in the region, since the crisis began. This support includes the provision of emergency medical care and medical supplies, emergency shelter, childhood immunization, food, clean water, and other relief supplies and support to those affected by the crisis, both in Syria and in neighboring countries. We are increasing our focus on coordinating humanitarian and development assistance given the long-term nature of the conflict and impact on refugee-hosting countries, and increasing diplomatic engagement with host countries to encourage them to keep borders open to the most vulnerable seeking refuge.

Question. For more than three decades, U.S. aid to Egypt, especially in the form of foreign military financing (FMF), has remained a strong component of American foreign policy in the Middle East that fosters peace and prosperity in the region. Recent reports suggest that Egypt is contracting with more non-U.S. military equipment providers because it is having trouble filling its security needs through U.S. contractors. What are you doing to work with Congress to ensure that Egypt receives the military equipment necessary from the United States to combat terrorism within its own borders?

Answer. Egypt is an important strategic partner of the United States, and our common interests include countering terrorism and maintaining regional stability, including peace with Israel. Our annual allocation of \$1.3 billion in Foreign Military Financing (FMF) to Egypt is an important instrument in our support to Egypt. FMF helps Egypt to modernize the Egyptian military by updating and maintaining key U.S.-origin systems deployed by Egypt that enhance Egypt's capacity to combat terrorism and protect its borders, and professionalizes Egypt's armed forces.

U.S. assistance cannot fulfill every military requirement for Egypt. While approximately 52 percent of Egypt's military hardware is American origin, Egypt has historically engaged with a number of non-U.S. providers of military equipment, as do many of our partners around the world. We expect such engagement, but we also recognize that the Egyptian armed forces maintain a preference for U.S.-origin systems. We continue to monitor reports about pending arms sales by Russia, China, and other suppliers.

We continue to work with Congress to ensure that the United States maintains support to Egypt, to include seeking annual appropriations for FMF and the legislative authority needed to provide military equipment, training, services, and other assistance for this important partner. We recognize the concerns of Congress that our assistance not only maintains Egypt's ability to counter the significant terrorist threat Egypt now faces within its borders and in the region, but also has been used during the Egyptian political transition process. Our counterterrorism cooperation with Egypt is part of the President's broader efforts to work with partners across the region to build counterterrorism capacity that upholds and enforces the rule of law, protects innocent lives, and respects human rights and international norms. The Secretary has been considering the certifications provided in the Fiscal Year 2015 Appropriations Act, but has not yet made a decision to move forward.

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QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR PATRICK J. LEAHY

Question. The Central American governments blame the drug cartels and gangs, as they should, but it is the weakness and corruption of the police and public institutions that have created the opportunity for criminal organizations to flourish. The governments' answer has been to turn to the military, or to militarize the police, which as we have seen in Mexico can make things worse. Can you provide us with the specific steps these governments are going to take to build the kind of civilian police and justice capacity they need?

Answer. Consistently weak civilian police institutions often lead governments to turn to military institutions to provide civilian security. However, the military is not trained for this task. Reliance on the military for internal security diverts attention and resources from the real solution—effective national police reform.

The Northern Triangle's own Alliance for Prosperity prioritizes improving public safety and enhancing access to the legal system as a key line of action. To achieve these goals we must address the deficiencies in both the police and judiciaries. Each country in the Northern Triangle needs to develop a civilian-controlled, professional, accountable, capable police force. Specifically, all three countries will focus on improving police training to incorporate core law enforcement skills and to include vetting, oversight, and transparency mechanisms. This will be done in close coordination with our existing programs in each country to improve the civilian police forces and domestic judiciaries capacity and capability.

In El Salvador, the United States utilizes U.S.-trained Colombian polygraphists to assist the Salvadoran Government with anti-corruption efforts. The United States is also assisting the National Academy of Public Security to deploy virtual classrooms in each department within El Salvador to improve access to professional training and is providing training and equipment, including canines, to the National Civilian Police (PNC) to strengthen border and port security. In addition, the United States is actively working with the Attorney General to initiate asset forfeiture cases and is helping the Supreme Court establish a permanent asset forfeiture court.

In the context of working to strengthen civilian police capacity to ensure their effective management of internal security responsibilities, Honduras will introduce a reform plan for the Honduran National Police by June 2015, with a commitment to recruit, train, vet, and deploy an additional 6,000 civilian police over the next 3 years. U.S. assistance is focused on the reform and professionalization of the Honduran National Police as well. Honduran officials also want to incorporate more community policing methods and programs for at-risk youth to prevent and reduce crime, based on proven models founded with U.S. assistance.

In Honduras the Criminal Investigative School (EIC) is strengthening and professionalizing members of the justice sector, specifically the Honduran National Police, prosecutors, and judges, by providing the basic educational tools needed to pursue criminal investigations. In 2014 the EIC trained a total of 1,482 justice sector actors. In 2015 they hope to open a San Pedro Sula Annex to serve as a training site covering the northern part of the country.

In Guatemala, a police reform plan is addressing need for improved police recruitment, internal controls, and disciplinary procedures; as well as a more streamlined process to remove law enforcement officers who do not respect the rule of law. In order to improve career development, the Police Academy is working with local universities to get the Police Academy's curriculum accredited so that cadets can earn college level credit. In addition, the curriculum will include courses in human rights training as well as child and women victims' assistance.

As part of the U.S. Strategy for Engagement with Central America we will build upon these efforts to, work with police, prosecutors, and judges to help ensure transparency across the justice system. It is important to address the public security sector at many levels and among many stakeholders—including in the judiciary. Effective, independent, and accountable judicial systems are an essential component of the rule of law, an important check on corruption, and a safeguard for citizens. The Northern Triangle governments already agreed to strengthen this sector, choosing to prioritize efficiency, transparency, and accountability, as well as to promote independent monitoring mechanisms to ensure governmental transparency.

At issue is not just access to justice, but the effectiveness, independence, and accountability of the judicial system.

Question. In Haiti, a lot of the rubble from the earthquake is gone, and most people have been moved out of shelters. But safe housing remains a huge problem, and things in general seem to be going steadily downhill in Haiti. There have not been elections in 3 years, President Martelly rules by decree, the economy is a shambles, there are regular protests of thousands of people in the streets, and no solution in sight. Five years after the earthquake and billions of dollars in international aid, is this what we should have expected, and is there any reason to think the situation will be better a year or two from now? Does the administration have a new plan, or is it more of the same?

Answer. Since the 2010 earthquake, the United States has made available \$4 billion in assistance for Haiti, some 80 percent of which—\$3.2 billion—has been disbursed as of December 31, 2014. U.S. assistance to Haiti is having a measurable impact, including providing access to basic health services for approximately half of all Haitians, assisting 328,000 earthquake-displaced Haitians find alternative shelter, generating 5,000 new jobs to date at the Caracol Industrial Park, helping 70,000 farmers increase their crop yields, and helping train and commission more than 3,300 new Haitian National Police officers. Basic health indicators and overall security are improved, primary school enrollments are up, and Haiti has had positive economic growth rates since 2011. More remains to be done, and Haiti's reconstruction and development will continue for many years.

Haitian President Michel Martelly is governing by executive order—so-called “rule by decree”—following the January 12, 2015 expiration of all but 10 of Haiti's parliamentary seats. Parliament did not pass elections legislation before the January 12 deadline, despite numerous concessions made by President Martelly.

Article 136 of the Haitian Constitution calls for the president to ensure regular operations of the government and continuity of the state. Following Parliament's lapse, President Martelly prioritized the organization of elections and demonstrated inclusivity by consulting with the remaining seated senators as well as political party leaders. On January 23, the President swore in a new Provisional Electoral Council (CEP), which was structured according to opposition demands.

On February 11, the CEP unveiled draft electoral regulations and a proposed elections calendar. Following input from party leaders, the electoral decree was submitted to the Executive and published on March 4. According to the final electoral calendar, the first round of elections is scheduled to take place in August.

The United States is firmly committed to long term support of the Haitian people as they build a more prosperous and secure future. The overall strategy for U.S. assistance to Haiti will continue within the current parameters, focusing on four areas—infrastructure and energy, food and economic security, health and basic services, and governance and rule of law. Governance and rule of law is a priority, as political gridlock hampers Haiti's economic growth. Despite the Martelly administration's business-friendly rhetoric, key pieces of legislation to facilitate investment have not been passed. For prospects to improve, there needs to be free and fair elections to restore Parliament, and legislators need to be willing to work with the Executive to pass legislation and implement key structural reforms to restore fiscal sustainability.

Question. We know of the increasing threats by ISIL and other jihadists against Egypt. The beheading of 21 Coptic Christians is the latest grotesque example.

I also recognize the importance of Egypt in the region and of our relations with Egypt, which you have often expressed. But I agree with President Obama that the

denial of human rights is one cause of extremism, and I am concerned that in each of these areas the Egyptian Government is going in the wrong direction.

The fiscal year 2015 Omnibus provides \$1.3 billion in military aid for Egypt, and requires a certification that the Egyptian Government is making progress in democracy, human rights and the rule of law, which it is not.

I am concerned with Egyptian-American citizens who are political prisoners and the lack of due process for prisoners who have been subjected to sham trials and sentenced to death or long prison terms.

I am also concerned that we are providing lethal equipment to the Egyptian military in the Sinai, but there is no reliable way to monitor whether our equipment is being used consistent with the Leahy Law. Nor is there any evidence that the Egyptian military itself is accountable to the rule of law. How do you see the situation?

The fiscal year 2015 Omnibus also calls on the Secretary of State to consult with this committee “on plans to restructure military assistance for Egypt, including cash flow financing”. Is such a plan being developed and if so by whom?

Answer. We share your concerns and continue to urge the Government of Egypt to implement the human rights protections of its new constitution. We have expressed our severe reservations regarding legislation that criminalizes peaceful dissent and imposes onerous restrictions on civil society. We continue to press the government to allow freedom of speech, assembly, association and due process for all Egyptians.

In 2014, Egypt held a constitutional referendum and presidential elections. Domestic and international observers concluded that the constitutional referendum and subsequent presidential election were administered professionally and in line with Egyptian laws, while also expressing concerns that government limitations on association, assembly, and expression constrained broad political participation.

The Egyptian courts recently declared unconstitutional the redistricting provisions of a new electoral law earlier this month. In response, President al-Sisi has ordered a re-write of the law to comply with the court ruling. That effort will delay parliamentary elections that were scheduled to begin in March 2015.

We welcomed the release of Australian journalist Peter Grete and note that President al-Sisi has said publicly he will release the other two Al Jazeera journalists, now out of prison on bail, when their retrial is completed.

Our Embassy in Cairo continues to provide consular services to American citizens arrested and detained in Egypt, and I will continue to press the Egyptian Government to ensure they receive proper treatment and due process. We regularly ask for humanitarian parole for Mohamed Soltan, whose trial continues.

We have repeatedly registered our disapproval of mass trials, and objected to the arrest and prosecution of individuals for peacefully protesting, as well as the harsh sentences many have received. We continue to encourage the Government of Egypt to allow non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society to operate freely.

We continue to request access to Sinai for Embassy Cairo personnel and coordinate closely with the Multinational Force and Observers who regularly patrol in Sinai to monitor conditions there. We recognize that success in Sinai will require integration of effective military action and social/economic development. Our Embassy in Cairo regularly monitors the use of U.S. equipment supplied to the Egyptian military, as required by law.

I appreciate the flexibility the Congress provided with respect to FMF in the fiscal year 2015 omnibus. The administration continues to carefully review our foreign military financing (FMF) program with Egypt, but no decisions have been made with respect to pending democracy certifications or cash flow financing. As that process continues, we look forward to consulting closely with the Congress.

Question. This subcommittee has strongly supported the Clean Technology and Strategic Climate Funds. For fiscal year 2016, you are requesting a total of \$500 million for a U.S. contribution to the new “Green Climate Fund (GCF)”. Can you explain what this Fund does and what difference it makes whether the U.S. participates or not? How big a priority is this for the State Department?

Answer. Like the Clean Technology and Strategic Climate Funds (CIFs) that the subcommittee has strongly supported over the years, the GCF will assist developing countries in their efforts to combat climate change through grants and other concessional financing for mitigation and adaptation projects, programs, policies, and activities. In short, the GCF is meant to be the successor to the CIFs, and we expect that the GCF will become the preeminent channel for climate finance, allowing for the rationalizing of other existing sources of climate finance. Initially, the GCF will complement many of the existing multilateral climate change funds such as the Climate Investment Funds (CIFs); however, as the recognized financial mechanism of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC),

it will eventually replace or subsume the other means of international climate assistance. For instance, the CIFs are expected to sunset once the GCF is fully operational and our obligations to the CIFs are complete. The Treasury Department, through the CIF Trust Fund Committees, is already engaged in a discussion with the CIFs' Administrative Unit and Trustee as to when and how to sunset the CIFs. Once the sunset is decided, the CIFs will stop accepting new funds and only approve new projects to the extent that they have funds on hand, and the GCF will be the primary vehicle to support developing countries to address climate change.

Moreover, the GCF has been designed with key elements that are new or improvements on the CIFs and past climate finance vehicles:

Inclusive governance. The GCF's governance structure—headed by a 24-member Board with an equal number of developed and developing countries—gives it uniquely high levels of international acceptance.

High standards. The GCF will require among the strongest fiduciary standards and social and environmental safeguards of all multilateral funds in climate finance today. This will help ensure that GCF-financed projects and programs are responsibly designed and implemented, and that all financial resources are managed prudently and transparently. In addition, the Fund has independent evaluation and integrity units, and Board proceedings and documents are among the most transparent of any multilateral mechanism.

Working through the private sector. The GCF will have a dedicated Private Sector Facility (PSF) that can directly support entrepreneurs developing low-carbon technologies and projects, as well as adaptation efforts implemented in partnership with the private sector. The PSF aims to mobilize capital from private sector entities from both developed and developing countries and facilitate innovative instruments that catalyze greater private sector investment in developing countries. The Board is also advised by a standing Private Sector Advisory Group, composed of business leaders from developed and developing countries.

Adaptation and mitigation. Building on lessons from other institutions, the GCF will balance (50/50) its support for mitigation and adaptation activities, building up expertise in both areas and positioning itself to capitalize on synergies between them.

Large network of partners. The GCF will have more countries eligible for funding than most other climate funds. As such it will work through a large network of partners to help it reach more regions and communities, as well as unlock opportunities in both adaptation and mitigation in hard to reach locations.

Diverse Donors. The GCF is being capitalized by contributions from a broad donor base including developing countries. The GCF may also receive funding from other sources, including eventually from the private sector.

Independent, lean organization. The GCF is an independent entity and will not have a large bureaucracy. By working through existing mechanisms and entities as implementer, the GCF will maintain a light footprint and a small secretariat to administer.

The GCF has so far received pledges totaling \$10.2 billion from 31 countries, including many non-traditional donors, including Chile, Colombia, Indonesia, Mexico, Mongolia, Panama, Peru, and Republic of Korea. More are expected to pledge in the future. The U.S. pledge and U.S. engagement were key factors in securing larger pledges than originally expected from many developed countries as well as getting emerging economies and developing countries to pledge resources to the GCF.

It is in the United States' national interest to support and partner with developing countries to accelerate their climate actions through new international investments in the GCF. U.S. investments in financing international climate action will yield many benefits including:

- Protecting the U.S. economy from greater climate change impacts,
- Increasing U.S. competitiveness in the international clean energy market,
- Helping U.S. national security, and
- Reducing the health impact cost of air pollution.

Moreover, U.S. participation in the fund is critical to advancing our international interests in the on-going climate negotiations. The establishment of the GCF was a central provision of the Copenhagen Accord, a landmark agreement that recognized for the first time the importance of developing countries taking action to reduce their carbon emissions and combat climate change. Including the GCF in Copenhagen helped us to secure emerging economy commitments to 2020. Operationalizing and financing the GCF can help us secure emission reductions from emerging countries in the post-2020 timeframe. A significant U.S. pledge to the GCF has and will continue to help us put pressure on developing countries to put

forward mitigation commitments in a timely manner. We now need to realize a significant portion of that U.S. pledge in fiscal year 2016, in order to help secure a new global climate agreement in Paris. That agreement will help the United States and other countries avoid some of the most catastrophic risks from climate change, at home and abroad. We have already experienced the high cost of those impacts here in the United States.

As the premier climate change fund going forward, it would reflect very poorly on the U.S. and U.S. leadership to not support the GCF. As such, standing up and financing the GCF is a top priority for the State Department. The United States is taking a leadership role to address climate change, but we can't solve this alone. The GCF will play a critical role in ensuring that the poorest and most vulnerable countries can take action and in achieving strong commitments from other countries.

ISIL

Question. I am concerned that the propaganda of ISIL and ISIL's supporters are dwarfing counter-ISIL messages, both in volume and effectiveness. Your Center for Strategic Counterterrorism Communications is not impressive, yet the White House says that office will "drive U.S. Government efforts in discrediting terrorist propaganda."

There are concerns that the Department's counter-ISIL messages on social media are ineffective and dismissed as U.S. propaganda. What is the Department doing to determine the effectiveness of the Center for Strategic Counterterrorism Communications' social media operations?

REVAMPED AND EXPANDED EFFORTS OF THE CSCC AND ITS COUNTER-ISIL CELL

Answer. We are expanding and revamping the efforts of the Center for Strategic Counterterrorism Communications (CSCC) to confront the propaganda of ISIL and other groups. We have recently added an inter-agency counter-ISIL cell to the CSCC that is focusing on three main areas:

(1) *Expanding our messaging efforts, including on social media platforms, in Arabic, Somali, Urdu, Hausa, and English* to amplify (a) stories of ISIL defectors and former fighters, (b) poor living conditions under ISIL, (c) ISIL battlefield losses and internal divisions, (d) statements from credible voices in the Muslim world, (e) ISIL atrocities, particularly against Muslims, who make up a vast majority of ISIL's victims, and (f) positive narratives emphasizing our values and the examples of young people around the world who are addressing challenges they face through productive means.

(2) *Expanding partnerships with foreign governments and non-government organizations (NGO) partners to directly counter ISIL's messaging.* Recognizing that other partners around the world will have the unique ability to respond to certain aspects of ISIL's messaging, we are supporting NGOs who are countering ISIL's narrative and helping other countries to establish their own counter-ISIL messaging centers. The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has opened a center that will go live in early July, and we are working with Malaysia, Tunisia, and other countries on similar centers.

(3) *Coordinating U.S. Government and Coalition messaging* by issuing daily and thematic guidances on the counter-ISIL topic mentioned above to nearly 3,000 U.S. Government officials as well as Coalition partners. We are also developing a content sharing platform so that our Coalition partners and U.S. Government offices around the world can work together to upload, download, curate, and produce counter-ISIL content.

Measuring the Impact of Our Efforts

While it is difficult to measure how many of those on the fence decide not to join terrorist groups, we track: (1) The reach of our messaging, including the number of times our content in the various languages is viewed and shared and copied and pasted by other users (our online rates of engagement (ROE) are consistently above industry standard); (2) Polling showing that ISIL's approval ratings, including in the Muslim world, continues to be in the single digits; (3) The responses to our materials online, which often elicit threatening replies by ISIL and other terrorists; and (4) The types of counter-ISIL messaging, including content produced by others, that tends to go viral and that we can also use. Our efforts are designed to prevent young people from ever being attracted to ISIL by contesting the information space and trying to reach the small percentage of those in societies around the world who may be susceptible to recruitment.

Question. Public diplomacy is only one tool. The White House fact sheet on the Summit noted the importance of supporting civil society to counter violent extremism. How do you respond to the concern that some U.S. allies, like Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and the United Arab Emirates have a history of cracking down on civil society and imprisoning critics of the government?

Answer. We encourage the Governments of Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE to build inclusive political processes in their countries that respect civil liberties and fundamental human rights, which are critical to good governance, political stability, and a rule-of-law based approach to counterterrorism. Radicalization and recruitment into violent extremism are shared challenges for these and many other countries. To be effective, CVE efforts require a range of actors—including those in government, the private sector, civil society and communities—to work together on developing and implementing CVE strategies and programs. Respecting human rights and providing space for civil society to operate is essential for allowing these kinds of partnerships to take shape, and for supporting longer-term stability in the region and beyond.

Question. What efforts are being taken by the Department of State and the Department of Defense (DOD) to address the impact of U.S. air attacks against ISIL on innocent civilians in Iraq and Syria?

Answer. We take our responsibility to safeguard civilians very seriously, and the Department of Defense strives for precision in the execution of U.S. airstrikes. The Department of Defense complies with the Law of Armed Conflict and takes all feasible measures during the targeting process to reduce risks to civilians.

The Department of State maintains extensive channels of communication with human rights organization, civil society, local non-government organizations (NGOs), and other contacts on the ground to obtain allegations of attacks against civilians that we share with our interagency partners. State takes all allegations of civilian casualties seriously and shares this information with counterparts across the U.S. Government to aid in investigations of allegations of civilian casualties when appropriate.

There is a process in place at U.S. Central Command to determine if allegations are credible. The key to evaluating the credibility of any allegation is whether sufficient verifiable information is available—such as corroborating statements, photographs or documentation that can help us determine whether an allegation is credible. Once an assessment has determined an allegation as credible the next step would be a formal investigation into the matter.

We will continue to work with our Counter-ISIL Coalition partners to degrade and defeat ISIL in a manner that prioritizes the safety of civilians and protects the people of Iraq and Syria from the savagery of ISIL, which continues to kill and abuse civilians.

Question. Venezuela—a country of 30 million people—is sliding toward chaos, thanks to an inept, corrupt government and the sharp drop in oil prices. If things continue to deteriorate, where do you see this leading and are there any governments that might step in to try to rescue the Maduro Government other than Cuba, which doesn't have much to offer? Do you see any sign that the Maduro Government can be convinced to stop its persecution of Leopoldo Lopez and other opponents of the government?

Are you planning to implement the assets freeze provisions in the Venezuela Defense of Human Rights and Civil Society Act?

Answer. We share your concerns about the political, economic, and social pressures building in Venezuela. We will not refrain from speaking out about human rights abuses. We are joined by dozens of individuals and entities, including the U.N. High Commissioner on Human Rights, OAS Secretary General Insulza, the Peruvian, Costa Rican, and Colombian Governments, and the Inter American Commission on Human Rights, among others. Rather than imprisoning and intimidating its critics, we believe the Venezuelan Government should focus its energy on finding real solutions for the country's economic and political problems through democratic dialogue with the political opposition, civil society, and the private sector.

While no one can predict the future regarding the speed or trajectory of Venezuela's downward slide, this year's National Assembly elections present an opportunity for Venezuelans to engage in legitimate, democratic discourse. Credible election results could reduce tensions in Venezuela. We have urged regional partners to encourage Venezuela to accept a robust international electoral observation mission, and to hold free and fair elections. Now is the time for the region to work together to help Venezuela to work toward a democratic solution to the challenges the country faces. We will also continue to work closely with Congress and others in the region to support greater political expression in Venezuela, and to encourage the Venezuelan Government to live up to its commitments to democracy and human

rights, as articulated in the OAS Charter, the Inter-American Democratic Charter, and other relevant instruments.

The President issued an Executive order “Blocking Property and Suspending Entry of Certain Persons Contributing to the Situation in Venezuela” on March 9. This new authority implements and goes beyond the sanctions provided for in the Venezuela Defense of Human Rights and Civil Society Act of 2014 and is aimed at persons involved in or responsible for certain conduct, including use of violence and human rights violations and abuses, including in response to antigovernment protests, actions that prohibit, limit, or penalize the exercise of freedom of expression or peaceful assembly, as well as significant public corruption by senior government officials in Venezuela. The annex to the Executive order identifies seven individuals subject to economic sanctions under the Executive order. The Executive order does not target the people or the economy of Venezuela.

INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND (IMF) QUOTA REFORMS

Question. The President has again requested authorization for the International Monetary Fund governance and quota reform that were agreed to in 2010. The President did not begin requesting the authority to approve these reforms until 3 years ago and has included it each year since then. The Senate has included the authorities and funding but each year the House has refused.

The administration’s strategy for gaining congressional support for this has not worked. We are seeing the fallout for not approving the reforms—the U.S. reputation has been damaged and U.S. leverage at the IMF has declined. The IMF members have begun to look at other options to begin implementing the 2010 reforms. Do you know if the administration plans to do anything different this year to help get this through Congress?

Answer. The administration strongly calls for congressional approval of the 2010 IMF quota and governance reforms. The U.S. delay in ratifying the 2010 reforms has eroded our leadership and capacity to influence international development financing. Giving important emerging market and developing economies greater power in the IMF would preserve the integrity of the existing international financial infrastructure without increasing U.S. monetary commitments or endangering the U.S. veto over important IMF decisions. To preserve U.S. influence, we need to work to recognize the legitimate aspirations of several growing economies to become responsible participants in the Bretton Woods Institutions. Delay will ultimately affect the IMF’s ability to respond to geopolitical and economic crises in a way that serves our vital national interests.

Despite the fact that the United States championed the 2010 IMF quota and governance reforms, we are now the only major IMF member country that has not yet ratified them. You are correct that the U.S. failure to ratify IMF reforms is generating criticism abroad and eroding our credibility in the G-20, with emerging economies, and with international financial institutions. Participants at the April 17–19, 2015 World Bank and IMF Spring Meetings criticized the United States for our inability to implement quota and governance reforms, and discussed interim solutions to adjust quota shares. As Secretary Lew underscored at the time of those meetings, the administration is committed to securing legislation to implement the 2010 quota and governance reforms. President Obama has requested approval for the reforms in his current budget request and at the same time the administration is seeking every possible opportunity to work with you to obtain congressional approval as soon as possible.

The administration will continue to make passing the 2010 IMF reform package a priority for this year and will keep Congress informed of the adverse consequences of failing to do so.

Question. You are requesting \$124 million for the next construction phase of the Kabul Embassy, which is a fraction of the \$2 billion we have spent on U.S. diplomatic facilities in Kabul. This is an astounding amount. We went through this same thing in Iraq. While the Department has done a better job of planning for the civilian transition in Afghanistan, the construction costs are still too high, particularly when it looks like the security problems will severely limit the ability of U.S. Embassy staff to monitor programs in the field. I am afraid we are maintaining a presence in Afghanistan the size of which cannot be justified for the work that can actually be accomplished there. Why do 4,816 employees and contractors, including 2,000 guards and diplomatic security officers, planned for Kabul in fiscal year 2016 make sense?

Answer. Our diplomatic presence in Kabul is vital to U.S. national security interests and to maintaining the viability of the Afghan Government. Major policy efforts over the last year—the formation of the government of national unity, concluding

the bilateral security agreement, preparing Ashraf Ghani's visit to Washington and maintaining pressure to complete cabinet appointments—demonstrate there is no substitute for direct, face-to-face engagement by our diplomats, assistance experts and military. This on-the-ground engagement is the best way to influence policy makers, oversee accountability of assistance programs, and build Afghanistan's ability to defend its own territory and govern effectively, so that it can never again be used as a safe haven by terrorists to threaten the United States.

This approach is working. A few years ago, we had more than 100,000 troops and more than 1000 diplomats and development professionals scattered throughout the country. We have reduced those numbers dramatically and are centralizing in Kabul as the Afghans have stepped up to govern and secure their country themselves. We are keeping a constant eye on how effectively we can do our work in the evolving security environment, a process that includes looking for ways to lower the number of staff in the field and off-shoring certain functions wherever possible.

Afghanistan will remain a dangerous place for U.S. diplomats. The security environment magnifies the challenges to our diplomacy and greatly increases the security requirements and support staff required for our mission. With continued support from the Congress, the State Department is investing in facilities and security to ensure the safest, most effective platform possible to enable our work. Ongoing construction and security upgrades will create an Embassy compound that mitigates insurgent threats to our facilities and personnel, and allows considerable capacity to sustain operations without relying on local infrastructure. These efforts represent our best estimate of the long-term political and security challenges U.S. diplomacy will face in Afghanistan.

Question. The President's fiscal year 2015 request for refugee and disaster assistance was \$1.5 billion less than the fiscal year 2014 level. For fiscal year 2016, these accounts are once again underfunded, this time by roughly \$800 million below the fiscal year 2015 level, despite increasing requirements in Iraq and Syria, Gaza, and Central Africa.

The explanation we've heard is that the Department expects to carry over \$500 million in fiscal year 2015 funds for use in fiscal year 2016. Why not use these appropriated funds when people are freezing in Syria and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) had to suspend operations in Gaza, and then request the necessary amount for fiscal year 2016?

Answer. The administration remains dedicated to providing strong support for humanitarian programs worldwide. The President's fiscal year 2016 request reflects the administration's strong commitment to these programs, while taking into account the current constrained budget environment. The fiscal year 2016 request includes \$2.453 billion for the Migration Refugee Assistance and \$1.741 billion for the International Disaster Assistance (IDA) account. In addition, the Department is requesting \$50 million in the Emergency Refugee and Migration Assistance (ERMA) account to respond to urgent and unforeseen needs.

Overall, this request represents a nearly \$850 million increase from the President's fiscal year 2015 request in response to the dire humanitarian situation resulting from the conflicts in Syria, South Sudan, Iraq, and Central African Republic, among others. The Department of State and the United States Agency for International Development also plan to carry over approximately \$500 million in fiscal year 2015 funding into fiscal year 2016 in order to support humanitarian aid programs. However, should the need for additional funding from the U.S. Government this year exceed our current plans, the administration would tap the planned carryover funding to address them. With the request and planned carryover, we anticipate having the funds necessary to support our humanitarian assistance goals in fiscal year 2015 and fiscal year 2016.

Thanks to generous support from the U.S. Congress, the U.S. Government (USG) is the largest humanitarian donor in the world, including to the crisis in Syria. With significant USG funding, international and non-governmental organization partners have been better able to plan for the effects of winter this year. In Syria, as part of its year-round efforts to provide seasonally appropriate emergency relief, the USG provided supplies such as thermal blankets, floor coverings, water heaters, warm clothing—including winter coats, scarves, hats, socks and boots—and additional plastic sheeting for shelter to prepare Syrians for the cold-weather of winter. Since October 2014, USG partners have reached over 970,000 Syrians with cold-weather relief commodities.

In Jordan, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and Government of Jordan preparations for winter began months ago with cash programs for heaters and gas cylinders, blankets, and shelter reinforcements for more

than 250,000 refugees. In camps, moving refugees out of tents and into trailers has been a priority for the last year.

When the first storm struck Jordan in January bringing snow, heavy rains, winds, and freezing temperatures, U.N. and non-governmental organization partners quickly activated contingency plans, opening emergency shelters when necessary, repairing damaged infrastructure, and providing gas heaters, blankets, and other supplies. In response to the storm that hit in February, partner organizations were able to mobilize quickly and ensure families stayed dry without storm casualties. The World Food Programme (WFP) ensured that food vouchers were topped up before the storm and stores in camps were pre-stocked and open. The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) arranged emergency shelter. The response was a model for good planning and preparation with sufficient funding.

We plan to continue our robust support in fiscal year 2015 and are urging other donors, including the Gulf nations, to contribute to these emergencies.

Question. In her recent book "Thieves of State", Sarah Chayes says this about Afghanistan:

"Development resources passed through a corrupt system not only reinforced that system by helping to fund it but also inflamed the feelings of injustice that were driving people toward the insurgency."

I think that describes our experience not only in Afghanistan, but also in Iraq and much of Africa, Asia, and the former Soviet Union. We seem to make the same mistakes time after time. Even the best controls do not seem to be enough. Have we learned anything from this? Should the people who design and administer these programs be accountable?

Answer. The Department of State and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) are continuously assessing our assistance efforts in Afghanistan to guard against waste, fraud and abuse and to ensure our programs achieve intended results. Our assistance has achieved significant results in Afghanistan despite the challenging environment. Afghanistan has seen historic improvement in health, education, electricity generation, government revenues and other areas that would not have been possible without our support. In some cases we've been able to work directly with the Afghan Government to achieve these results, but in many cases we've worked separately with the Afghan private sector and civil society. Certainly not all programs have been successful; that is to be expected in a tough environment like Afghanistan, but we've been vigilant in our monitoring of programs and continuously examine programs to ensure they are achieving the intended results. We work closely with outside auditors and when problems are identified we respond quickly.

Moreover, over the past 3 years the United States and our international donor partners have encouraged the Afghan Government to combat corruption proactively and to improve governance by conditioning a portion of our assistance portfolio on Afghan progress on specific reform deliverables in accordance with the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework. This approach resulted in a much improved electoral framework that made the 2014 presidential election possible as well as in the passage of an improved mining law, increased government attention to budget transparency, and an improved asset declaration process for high-ranking government officials.

The United States has developed comprehensive mechanisms and processes to protect foreign assistance resources in Afghanistan from waste and abuse. The U.S. Government employs highly educated and experienced program designers with expertise in difficult environments such as Afghanistan. From beginning to end, U.S. Government-funded programs (whether on-budget or off) take into account the pitfalls associated with the corruption endemic in Afghanistan and employ multiple mechanisms to mitigate the risk. Our on-budget programs specifically work with recipient ministries and governmental entities to strengthen their capacity to manage and track monetary flows so as to create internal mechanisms for combating corruption. Ultimately, there is no substitute for Afghans taking responsibility for their own development challenges and the hands-on experience that on-budget programs provide establishes a solid foundation for more effective Afghan use of resources and ultimately for improved sustainability of our efforts.

We constantly review our programs and make adjustments based on lessons learned. One such modification is the launch of a new multi-tiered monitoring approach to ensure we have sufficient information necessary for reviewing and evaluating our assistance programs. This approach collects information from various sources including direct observation by U.S. Government officials, reports from government, civil society, and implementing partners, third party assessments and au-

dits, enhanced communication with recipients and local leaders, and the use of independent monitors. In addition, we have put in place a special team in Kabul to collect and organize all this additional monitoring information to help oversight officials make more informed decisions.

We work closely with our internal inspectors general and independent auditors including the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR). For instance, we are currently working closely with SIGAR on a lessons learned project that promises to inform the design of future programming.

Question. I am very concerned that U.S. citizens working, studying, and traveling overseas, including members of our military, are at risk because the United States has not lived up to its obligations under the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations. That convention guarantees that when an American is arrested in another country the U.S. consulate will be notified and can provide help. Unfortunately, even though we are required by the Convention, we have not provided the same guarantee to citizens from other countries arrested here. I have tried for 5 years to pass the Consular Notification Compliance Act to fix this problem.

That bill has been supported by the Departments of Defense, Justice, State, and Homeland Security. Your fiscal year 2016 request includes the same language as that bill. Is passing this legislation a priority for the administration? What difference does it make if we don't pass it?

Answer. Passing the Consular Notification Compliance Act is a priority for the administration. Compliance with our legal obligations related to consular notification and access ensures our ability to protect U.S. citizens traveling and working abroad, including members of our Armed Forces and their families.

The United States is severely hampered in our efforts to ensure that other countries respect their obligations under the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations when U.S. citizens are detained abroad if we do not respect our own obligations when foreign nationals are detained in the United States. Where one country, especially an influential country like the United States, is seen to take a cavalier approach toward its legal obligations, other countries can be expected to take a cavalier approach to theirs, particularly when U.S. citizens are involved.

The protection of U.S. citizens will always be a priority, and it is important that we can continue to rely on the protections of the Vienna Convention so that our consular officers can continue to provide essential consular assistance to our citizens abroad. In fiscal year 2014, our consular officers conducted more than 8,685 visits with U.S. citizens, who were arrested overseas. Our consular officers make a real difference in the lives of thousands more U.S. citizens detained abroad each year across the globe by ensuring that they have adequate food, medical care, access to an attorney, and protection from abuse and mistreatment while in prison. Passage of the Consular Notification and Compliance Act is essential to safeguarding our ability to provide these services to U.S. citizens detained abroad.

Question. The administration has proposed a new Authorization for the Use of Military Force (AUMF) against ISIL for the next 3 years. It does not limit the battlefield to Syria and Iraq, ISIL's strongholds, and it would permit attacks against persons or forces "associated" with ISIL. While it would repeal the 2002 law Congress passed for the invasion of Iraq, it would leave intact the 2001 authorization for the war in Afghanistan, which the administration has relied on to conduct attacks that went well beyond the scope of what Congress authorized. In short, the new AUMF, coupled with the 2001 authorization, would provide the White House with almost unrestricted authority engage in attacks around the globe as long as it can justify a connection, however tenuous, to ISIL. At least that is how I see it. Am I wrong?

Answer. The administration's proposed AUMF reflects bipartisan input and is specifically tailored to address the threat posed by ISIL. The proposal contains reasonable limitations and would provide the President with the flexibility he needs to successfully pursue the armed conflict against ISIL.

The proposed AUMF would grant the President the authority to use "necessary and appropriate" force against ISIL or associated persons or forces. In order to determine that a group is an associated force under the proposed AUMF, we must assess not only that the group is in hostilities against the United States or its coalition partners, but also that the group has entered the fight for, on behalf of, or alongside, ISIL (or any closely related successor entity).

This is not an open-ended inquiry, nor does it otherwise provide the administration with unlimited flexibility to define the scope of the AUMF. A group that simply embraces the ideology of ISIL would not be an "associated force," nor would every group or individual that commits terrorist acts.

Moreover, as the administration has made clear in the context of our counterterrorism operations, it is not the case that "we can use military force whenever we

want, wherever we want. International legal principles, including respect for a state's sovereignty and the laws of war, impose important constraints on our ability to act unilaterally—and on the way in which we can use force—in foreign territories.”

Question. Can you provide examples of what the Department is doing to encourage foreign governments to hold individuals who have committed gross violations of human rights accountable, in accordance with the Leahy law?

Answer. The Department has provided guidance to all diplomatic posts that host governments are to be notified when the U.S. is withholding assistance from a unit due to credible information that such unit has been implicated in a gross violation of human rights. In February 2015, the Department and the Secretary of Defense approved a joint State—the Department of Defense (DOD) policy that establishes a process for deciding whether a foreign government has taken steps sufficient to allow a security force unit credibly implicated in a gross violation of human rights to regain eligibility to receive assistance. The aim is to create an incentive to bring to justice those who have committed abuses. Under the law, the Department is to the maximum extent practicable, to offer assistance in bringing those responsible to justice. Depending upon the type of unit involved, the U.S. military, the Department of State or the Department of Justice may be in a position to provide concrete assistance in specific cases. Many of the Department's foreign assistance programs already incorporate measures to improve transparency and accountability for security sector institutions, and the Department is committed to providing such targeted assistance where appropriate. We are working to make more systematic the range of assistance options available in these circumstances.

Over the last several years, Department officers at posts and in Washington have collaborated on cases to develop several successful country-specific courses of action to encourage host governments to bring those responsible for certain gross violations of human rights to justice. We can provide details of these cases in a classified setting.

Question. What is the Department doing to help the Government of Iraq address sectarian and ethnic tensions, an issue which you have acknowledged helped pave the way for ISIL's quick advances?

Answer. We have stressed repeatedly that the fight against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in Iraq cannot be based solely on military efforts, but rather must focus on rooting out the conditions and policies which allowed such extremism to foment. We are focused on supporting the Government of Iraq to govern in an inclusive manner, one that would address the longstanding grievances of religious and ethnic components which have contributed to the current crisis.

President Obama linked U.S. airstrikes and kinetic action to halt ISIL's advancement into Iraq in August on forward movement in Iraq's democratic process, aided by the selection of new Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi, who has committed, through words and actions, to reform the policies of his predecessor and govern in an inclusive manner. In his first 6 months in office, Prime Minister Abadi's government has made significant strides in improving governance as outlined in Iraq's National Program for reform and reconciliation. Recently, on February 3, Iraq's Council of Ministers approved two key pieces of draft reform legislation with significant implications for national reconciliation now being reviewed by parliament:

1. A revision of the country's de-Baathification law; and
2. A restructuring of Iraq's Security Forces (ISF) to integrate local-community volunteers, including Sunni tribal fighters, into provincially based “National Guard” (NG) units.

The Government of Iraq (GOI) has sought our assistance in developing the National Guard concept based on U.S. experience and our policy and military advisors continue to play an active role in helping the Iraqis to develop their security infrastructure in a manner which would facilitate the inclusion of all religious and ethnic groups into the counter-ISIL campaign. We also continue to meet with Iraqi leaders and tribal sheikhs to ensure that all parties have a seat at the table. A senior delegation of Sunni Sheikhs from Anbar Province traveled to the U.S. just weeks ago, meeting with Vice President Biden and senior State and DOD officials and we stressed the importance of all groups working in coordination on the counter-ISIL strategy.

On February 10, Iraqi President Massum, a Kurd, signed Iraq's new budget law that included an important agreement on energy exports and revenue sharing between the central government and Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG). The Department played a significant role in brokering the agreement between the central government and KRG officials to reach the deal and continues to serve as a key interlocutor on reconciliation matters between both parties. Our commitment to Iraq's national unity has helped fostered better coordination between the KRG and

central government on the current military campaign against ISIL and it is critical that we continue to work through the central government to build this trust.

Additionally, Prime Minister Abadi has issued a number of executive orders to initiate other critical reforms, such as devolving authority over certain public services to local communities and expediting the release of prisoners held without charge, to the extent possible within his constitutional authority as Prime Minister. As part of our strategy in the counter-ISIL campaign, we continue to work aggressively to pressure the GOI to enact further reforms to unify Iraqis and promote human rights and the rule of law. The State Department's Bureau for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL), Embassy Baghdad through the Ambassador's Fund, and USAID continue to carry out targeted interventions to promote reconciliation, the protection of minority communities, and respect for human rights. Notably, we are targeting nearly \$10 million in fiscal year 2014 DRL funding for programs which include activities to address human rights and rule of law as well as atrocities prevention and accountability issues—key areas for building reconciliation. Separately, we have contributed over \$208 million in humanitarian assistance for Iraq in fiscal year 2014 targeting at displaced and vulnerable communities.

Our Ambassador in Baghdad engages regularly with the senior-most officials in the Iraqi Government pressing for additional concessions on Sunni political grievances, the clamping down of human rights abuses by unregulated militias, and the further integration of Sunnis into the armed forces. We continue to believe that addressing the root causes of this conflict and supporting the GOI's effort to promote national reconciliation will be the only effective method to cement battlefield gains against ISIL.

Question. In an answer to a question about the administration's claim last fall that Yemen was an example of where the President's counterterrorism strategy has been successful, you defended that characterization because the U.S. was able to use Yemen as a base from which to fight al-Qaeda without getting mired in Yemen's domestic situation. You also said, "we can't control the quality of governance." Our engagement with partner countries against terrorism needs to be more than using their territory as a military base. If a partner has a poor governance record and lacks political will to fix it, we should try to find a more sustainable way to combat terrorism in that region so our efforts do not suffer when the government collapses, like happened in Yemen. Do you agree?

Answer. We approach counterterrorism (CT) in Yemen and elsewhere within the context of our overarching political objectives and the realities on the ground. Among these objectives, and central to the overarching U.S. counterterrorism strategy, is the development of a range of partnerships with governmental and non-governmental entities and civil society in key regions to enable sustained counterterrorism efforts. To the extent possible, we seek to promote partnerships that are rooted in a shared analysis of the threats we face, shared commitments to countering terrorism in a holistic fashion, and shared dedication to good governance and the rule of law. We seek to develop partnerships with countries that have the political will and capacities to counter terrorism within their borders and in their region as part of a global coalition against violent extremism that encourages our partners to take an active role in combating a threat that we all share.

We recognize that successful, sustainable efforts to counter terrorism require strong governance and the rule of law. For this reason, a cornerstone of our CT partnership strategy is the development of rule-of-law institutions and practices that will lead our partners to pursue transparent, lawful counterterrorism efforts. Our partnership model also includes civil society and religious community actors who can work with us disseminating messages to counter efforts by violent extremists to recruit new members. These same civil society partners can help drive reform efforts aimed at strengthening governance.

Our partnership efforts have had an impact, even in the face of chaotic political environments. In Yemen, we supported local forces who could take the fight to al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), and our Yemeni partners succeeded in applying pressure on AQAP in that context. Yemen's fragile central government and forces within Yemen that threaten to disrupt the transition process, however, continue to pose a challenge to our ongoing CT efforts. As we continue to look for avenues to support CT in Yemen, we are pursuing broad diplomatic engagement to encourage a peaceful, political resolution that adheres to the Gulf Cooperation Council Initiative and National Dialogue Conference outcomes and enables Yemen to move forward with its political transition. We continue to support the U.N.-mediated negotiations that are bringing together all parties, including President Hadi, to find a way out of Yemen's political crisis while at the same time maintaining our CT efforts against AQAP.

Question. The President's request includes a proposal to establish an independent grantee organization to carry out broadcasts to Latin America and the Caribbean, including Cuba. I understand that the Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBGs) envisions that this new grantee would consist of Radio and Television Marti and VOA's Latin America Division. We have not received the BBG's budget justification so I do not know the reasoning behind the proposal.

Since as Secretary of State you are a BBG board member, can you explain why this is being proposed and how this will improve broadcasts to Latin America and Cuba?

Answer. The fiscal year 2016 request proposes the authority for the Broadcasting Board of Governors to establish and supervise grants to an independent grantee organization to carry out media activities to Latin America and the Caribbean, including Cuba. The proposal is intended to improve the quality, reach, and effectiveness of broadcasting operations in Latin America and the Caribbean by giving the grantee organization the ability to recruit and retain staff based on the media environment and expertise needed in the region. This approach is consistent with international media operations in other regions, including Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty and the Middle East Broadcasting Network. The administration is firmly committed to providing unbiased, objective information to all Cubans through international broadcasting and digital media.

QUESTION SUBMITTED BY SENATOR BARBARA A. MIKULSKI

Question. Secretary Kerry, the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) has been regarded as one of the most successful global health programs in history. It has allowed for the extensive expansion of HIV treatment, and has undoubtedly saved countless lives.

Unfortunately, the pace of new treatment enrollments for PEPFAR declined for the first time ever in 2014. Despite this, the President has proposed level-funding for PEPFAR in 2016. I am concerned that this level of funding will set the U.S. back in its goal of helping establish an AIDS-free generation.

(a) Given the steep decline in new treatment enrollments for PEPFAR, what is the President's justification for these cuts and for continued level-funding for PEPFAR?

(b) Do you believe the goals the U.S. has established to help combat AIDS worldwide will be accomplished with these funding levels?

Answer. (a) The Obama Administration's commitment to achieving an AIDS-free generation remains strong. The fiscal year 2016 request for HIV/AIDS programs under PEPFAR is \$5.7 billion, a decrease of \$244 million (4 percent) from both the fiscal year 2014 Actual and fiscal year 2015 Estimate levels. This includes: \$1.1 billion for the U.S. contribution to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, fulfilling President Obama's commitment to the Fund's fourth replenishment (2014–2016); and \$4.6 billion for bilateral HIV/AIDS programs, a 7 percent increase over fiscal year 2014, including \$300 million for a new Impact Fund, which is on par with the fiscal year 2015 Estimate. The new Impact Fund resources will be awarded to PEPFAR-supported countries that take concrete steps to use data for decisionmaking and realign their national HIV/AIDS programs programmatically and geographically to accelerate progress toward HIV/AIDS epidemic control, with resources focused on areas with a high burden of HIV/AIDS. If pursued aggressively, this evidence-based approach will position a number of countries to reach epidemic control by the end of fiscal year 2017.

(b) PEPFAR is shifting the way it does business to help reach the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS' (UNAIDS) ambitious 90-90-90 global target: 90 percent of people with HIV diagnosed, 90 percent of them on anti-retroviral treatment (ART), and 90 percent of those on treatment virally suppressed by 2020. Achieving the UNAIDS global goals of 90-90-90 by 2020 requires a shared responsibility by partner countries, PEPFAR, and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria (Global Fund). To have the greatest impact and to accelerate progress toward an AIDS-free generation, PEPFAR can best contribute to achieving the UNAIDS targets of 90-90-90 and controlling the epidemic by employing a data-driven approach that strategically focuses resources on geographic areas, at the sub-national level and populations that have the highest burden of HIV/AIDS.

In fiscal year 2016, PEPFAR's efforts will be driven by five action agendas: Impact, Efficiency, Sustainability, Partnership, and Human Rights. These agendas—combined with PEPFAR's overriding commitment to transparency, oversight, and accountability—will continue to guide the initiative's work. PEPFAR will focus on doing the right things, in the right places, and at the right time to control the epi-

demic and, ultimately, achieve an AIDS-free generation. This will entail using the best available data to direct PEPFAR resources toward bringing evidence-based interventions (e.g., ART, prevention of mother-to-child transmission [PMTCT], voluntary medical male circumcision [VMMC], and condoms) to scale for populations at greatest risk and in geographic areas of greatest HIV incidence. PEPFAR will prioritize reaching scale quickly and with quality because an expanding HIV epidemic is not financially sustainable.

Vulnerable populations, including children, adolescents and young women, as well as key populations will remain a priority for PEPFAR's investment. PEPFAR will accelerate efforts to prevent HIV infections and ensure treatment among those who need it most. These efforts will be data-driven from the national level down to the site level to best guide programmatic decisionmaking and to solidify sustainability and quality. Access to viral load testing will be essential so everyone can ensure they have effective treatment. Transparency and public access to data will allow for mutual accountability and enables data-driven decisionmaking, allowing PEPFAR to spend every U.S. dollar effectively to achieve the greatest impact —an AIDS-free generation.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR CHRISTOPHER A. COONS

Question. Extremist groups in more than a dozen countries have declared allegiance to ISIL and its affiliates in Libya beheaded 21 Coptic Christians last week. Moreover, thousands of foreign fighters continue to travel to Syria and Iraq and ISIL's online propaganda threatens to inspire lone-wolf attacks in countries far from the Middle East. Given these recent developments, how has our strategy against ISIL changed since airstrikes began?

Answer. The strategy to combat ISIL and related groups outside of Iraq and Syria rests on the Coalition efforts within Iraq and Syria. In Iraq, the Coalition is helping Iraqi Security Forces reclaim territory held by ISIL, suppressing ISIL's ability to conduct large-scale operations, degrading its command, control and logistics capabilities, and building the political foundations for long-term security. In Syria, more than 1200 Coalition airstrikes against ISIL targets have destroyed ISIL vehicles and buildings, have degraded its economic infrastructure, and have defended local forces contesting ISIL advances, such as in Kobani. Our efforts in Syria will deny ISIL safe haven while creating the conditions for a stable inclusive Syria that fulfills Syrian's aspirations for freedom and dignity. Our counter-ISIL strategy in both countries will inhibit the group's capability to operate globally and expand. In fact, since September 2014, Coalition efforts have forced ISIL to change its tactics and it is suffering significant losses, reducing its morale and challenging its ongoing propaganda campaigns.

Beyond Iraq and Syria, the international community and the Global Coalition continue to diminish ISIL's capacity to generate revenues and fund its operations, cut off the flow of foreign terrorist fighters transiting to and from Iraq and Syria, and expose its empty and destructive ideology. Starving any new ISIL-related groups of funds and manpower mitigates the risk of attacks against our international partners. Over the past 6 months, the international community has been increasing its efforts to expose the true nature of ISIL to reduce its draw to foreign fighters and other extremist groups. Similarly, international organizations and local communities across the globe are also increasingly working to minimize the influence of this hateful rhetoric and insulate potentially vulnerable sectors of populations. Following meetings with Coalition members which Secretary Kerry chaired in December and January, Coalition working groups are now coordinating combined efforts to address ISIL's finances, foreign fighter draw, and messaging and thereby diminish ISIL's global potential.

As these ISIL-related groups have emerged, the United State has also been working closely with our partners to reduce the safe-havens that many of these groups exploit, build effective governance and security, strengthen the capacity of our partners to deal with these threats internally, enhance economic opportunity, and disrupt any plots. The United States continues to emphasize the importance of a multifaceted, multi-national approach to addressing ISIL and other extremist groups.

Question. Did President Obama's Countering Violent Extremist conference reach any conclusions applicable to our anti-ISIL campaign?

Answer. On February 19, the State Department hosted the ministerial component of the WH Summit to Counter Violent Extremism. It included more than 60 governments, civil society representatives from more than 50 countries, more than two dozen private sector leaders, Secretaries General from the U.N. and half-a-dozen regional organizations, the World Bank, and the World Economic Forum. The con-

ference highlighted the role that communities, civil society, and the private sector can play in addressing the broad drivers of violent extremism. The programs and initiatives catalyzed by this multi-stakeholder global partnership against violent extremism will certainly pay dividends both in the context of countering ISIL and preventing future terrorist threats. The Summit also set in motion a process that will culminate with leaders meeting on the eight-pillar action agenda that was outlined by President Obama and others during the meeting. The Summit's action agenda calls for governments, multilateral bodies, civil society, and the private sector to take concrete steps to, *inter alia*, (1) promote local research and information on the drivers of violent extremism so we can better target interventions to counter it and prevent its spread; (2) strengthen the role of civil society, in particular youth and women; (3) use strategic messaging, including social media, to counter violent extremist messaging; (4) elevate the role of credible and authentic voices that support tolerance and non-violence and more broadly promote educational initiatives to build resilience against extremist recruiting; (5) prevent radicalization in prisons and rehabilitate and reintegrate violent extremists; (6) identify and fund political and economic opportunities for communities that are vulnerable to radicalization and recruitment to violence; (7) strengthen community-police and community-security force relations; and (8) provide development assistance and stabilization efforts. Throughout the course of the day, participants offered a range of recommendations on steps government, civil society, the private sector, and the U.N. and regional organizations can take to advance this action agenda that will make further inroads against the violent extremist threat both in the context of addressing the immediate threats and preventing future ISILs from emerging.

Question. What political, security, and governance initiatives will we pursue to protect reclaimed territory, reduce corruption, and ensure more transparent and effective policies in Baghdad if our military effort successfully “degrades and destroys” ISIL?

Answer. In September 2014, Iraq's parliament approved Prime Minister Haydar al-Abadi's National Program and Political Agreement for National Unity, which lay out a roadmap for political and security reforms needed to promote reconciliation and ensure more transparent, effective, and inclusive governance. Central to that roadmap is a legislative agenda focused on building “functional Federalism”—devolving more governance, including budgetary authority and oversight of public services, to provincial and local governments. Iraqi leaders consider decentralization a pillar of their strategy to improve governance and stabilize the country. For example, the Iraqi parliament is currently considering legislation establishing provincially based “National Guard” units that can secure local communities liberated from ISIL while operating in close coordination with Iraq's national command authorities. Long sought by Iraq's various ethno-religious communities, such devolutionary reforms will be essential to ensuring that stabilization and reconstruction of local communities liberated from ISIL will be conducted in a manner that is more inclusive and responsive to local needs and accountable to local residents.

The Department of State is also working with its inter-agency partners to calibrate our assistance programs to complement these reforms—ranging from those aimed at improving efficiency and transparency in public services to advising and equipping security forces at the local, provincial and central governmental levels—to pursue U.S. goals in Iraq. For instance, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) is providing technical assistance to the Iraqi Government to decentralize certain functions from the central government to provincial governments in order to improve the delivery of essential services.

While authorities in Iraq must be responsible for post-liberation reconstruction, the United States will remain actively engaged in reinforcing the Government of Iraq's implementation of the National Program and other reform and stabilization initiatives. For example, we and our international partners are evaluating options for supporting Prime Minister Abadi's request to create an international assistance fund to augment Iraq's own stabilization efforts. Following meetings in Berlin and London earlier this year, we and our Coalition partners are forming working groups to coordinate international contributions effectively and to ensure those contributions build upon, rather than supplant, the Government of Iraq's responsibility to rebuild its country.

Question. A final deal with Iran will reportedly enforce strict controls for 10 years and then gradually lift restrictions over the last 5 years of an agreement, after which Iran may be privy to the same restrictions as other Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) states. How will the U.S. ensure Tehran does not restart its military nuclear program? What factors will change Iran's negotiating calculus and lead it to commit to a deal with the United States and the international community?

Answer. As part of the ongoing P5+1 negotiations with Iran, we seek to achieve a long-term comprehensive deal to the Iranian nuclear issue. Our objectives include ensuring Iran's compliance with the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), preventing it from acquiring a nuclear weapon, and ensuring that its nuclear program is used for exclusively peaceful purposes. Our negotiators and technical experts continue to work on a comprehensive package that will best achieve those goals.

Following successful implementation of the comprehensive deal for its full duration, Iran would remain bound by its international nonproliferation obligations, including the NPT, its International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards agreement, and the Additional Protocol (AP). In particular, the deal would require Iran to bring into force, and provisionally apply pending entry into force, the AP, which Iran is not currently implementing. The AP is an essential tool for the IAEA to have the enhanced access to information and facilities needed to detect undeclared nuclear activities in Iran.

Verification measures required by Iran's safeguards agreement and the AP would continue after the deal is completed, and we would be prepared to respond to any future Iranian non-compliance with its obligations. Furthermore, we believe the additional insights we would gain into Iran's nuclear program from the enhanced verification and monitoring measures under a comprehensive deal would better enable us to verify Iran's future compliance with its international nuclear obligations in the longer term.

Most importantly, should Iran not comply with its international non-proliferation obligations or provide continued access necessary for verification after the conclusion of this deal, we would retain all of the options for responding to that situation as we do today, including aggressive implementation of sanctions as well as the use of military force.

PEACEKEEPING

Question. The fiscal year 2016 request proposes a series of security initiatives through the peacekeeping accounts, the Security and Governance Initiative (SGI), the African Union Rapid Response Force, and the newly formed African Peacekeeping Rapid Response Partnership (APRRP). Most notably, the request for the new APRRP program requests \$110 million. In 2015 we will look to support stability and transitions in Central African Republic, South Sudan, and Democratic Republic of Congo. How do the new security initiatives such as APRRP and SGI dovetail with our existing peacekeeping and security initiatives in Africa?

Answer. SGI will determine focal areas for improved security sector governance and institutional performance with the partner government. While SGI could complement existing U.S. Government (USG) programs, it is intended to target a different problem set than is currently addressed by security assistance activities. SGI is fundamentally about governance—to assist our African partners in improving the oversight, management, and accountability of the security sector to more efficiently and effectively address shared security challenges.

The African Partnership for Rapid Response and Peacekeeping will develop the capabilities of partner nations to rapidly deploy forces in support of an African Union (AU) and/or UN-mandated operation. APRRP will inject targeted resources to address specific gaps in peacekeeping rapid response capabilities in the selected partner countries. With this specific goal in mind, APRRP works with a set of proven partners to emphasize training, and provision and maintenance of equipment to enable rapid deployment and sustainment.

APRRP assistance will complement, but not replace, existing peace operations capacity building programs, such as the Global Peace Operations Initiative (GPOI), the Africa Contingency Operations Training and Assistance (ACOTA) program (which is funded predominantly through GPOI), and the International Police Peacekeeping Operations Support (IPPOS) program. GPOI and IPPOS emphasize broader, global capacity building efforts focused on addressing a wider range of international peace operations shortfalls and strengthening the effectiveness of U.N. and regional missions. APRRP partners have and may continue to receive training through these other programs as well.

MATERNAL AND CHILD HEALTH

Question. Each year approximately 290,000 women die in pregnancy and childbirth and 2.9 million newborns die in their first month of life. Last summer, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) released its "Acting on the Call" action plan for ending preventable maternal and child deaths. How does the administration's new budget provide the resources necessary to undertake the priority actions to save mothers and children in fragile states and areas of na-

ture or man-made disasters? How is USAID now using data and evidence-driven decisionmaking to increase the effectiveness of maternal and child health programming in priority countries? Does the budget support continued development of a vaccine?

Answer. The fiscal year 2016 budget request provides over \$2.0 billion to support USAID's effort in the global goal of Ending Preventable Child and Maternal Deaths by 2035. This effort is a continuation of the global movement started at the Child Survival Call to Action in June 2012, and the Acting on the Call event in June 2014.

To date, more than 178 governments, 220 faith-based groups, and 230 other civil society organizations have signed the pledge to end preventable child and maternal deaths. Twenty governments have launched A Promise Renewed since the 2012 Call to Action and have developed national plans to accelerate progress in reducing child and maternal mortality, setting clear priorities and costs. Many of these countries have developed tools to increase accountability and have developed scorecards to systematically track outcomes and implementation of the plans.

USAID has identified the investments that will have the greatest impact, and will enable us to work together with partner countries, other donors, and multilateral organizations to save the lives of up to 15 million children and nearly 600,000 women by 2020 in 24 focus countries.

Over the last 2 years, USAID has undergone a rigorous review of maternal and child health funding to identify inefficiencies and accelerate progress. USAID has aligned its resources in 24 priority countries primarily in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, which account for 70 percent of maternal and child deaths and half of the unmet need for family planning. This budget reflects life-saving interventions that have the highest impact, while taking into account work in fragile states and areas of nature or man-made disasters.

We are also building on our long-standing support of strengthening immunization programs, in line with the administration's pledge of \$1 billion to Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, over 4 years (2015–2018). Further, USAID has been a participant in the development of the global Every Newborn Action Plan, which was launched at a major international forum in South Africa last year. It is now being rolled out and endorsed by governments around the world.

In parallel, we worked with the World Health Organization and other partners to establish a global target for maternal mortality reduction of 70 deaths per 100,000 live births by 2030, and USAID released its Maternal Health Vision for Action to lay out how we will contribute to this goal and drive down maternal mortality to 50 deaths per 100,000 live births by 2035.

USAID's work is driven by voluntarism and informed choice. As the largest bilateral donor to family planning in the world, USAID continues to work with the global community to reach an additional 120 million women and girls with family planning information, commodities and services by 2020. Family planning enables women to practice healthy timing and spacing of pregnancies, which could lower child deaths by 25 percent and cut maternal deaths by one-third. In 2013, 8.4 million additional women and girls used modern contraception in developing countries.

According to the World Health Organization's most recent malaria report (2014), an estimated 4.3 million lives have been saved as a result of the scale-up of malaria interventions since 2000. There was an almost 60 percent decline in malaria deaths in children under age five during this time, with most of that improvement occurring since 2007. The financial and technical contributions made by the U.S. Government—through the U.S. President's Malaria Initiative (PMI) and investments in the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, as well as those of host country governments and other partners—are a major catalyst in the remarkable progress that has been made to save children's lives while also building countries' capacity to fight malaria.

In 2014, USAID released a Multi-Sectoral Nutrition Strategy, which is aligned with the 2025 World Health Assembly Nutrition Targets and reaffirms both USAID's commitment to global nutrition, and our role as a major international partner in the fight against malnutrition. With this strategy, USAID aims to decrease chronic malnutrition, measured by stunting, by 20 percent through the U.S. Government's Feed the Future and Global Health initiatives, the Office of Food for Peace development programs, resilience efforts, and other nutrition investments.

Question. The President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief is at a pivotal moment, as continued scientific advances and lessons learned in the field make possible continued declines in new infections and leads to epidemic control. (In addition, the new DREAMs Partnership aims to reduce new infections among girls and women aged 15–24 by 15 percent in hard hit areas across 10 countries.)

(a) How does the funding requested in this budget meet the stated goal of working towards an AIDS-free generation?

- (b) How is the administration using new data tools to direct funding in transparent and efficient ways?
- (c) How will the program support those living with HIV currently served by programs funded through PEPFAR in rural or more remote locations?

Answer. (a) The Obama Administration's commitment to achieving an AIDS-free generation remains strong. With this budget, the United States, through PEPFAR, will remain the world's largest contributor to the global HIV/AIDS response. The fiscal year 2016 request for HIV/AIDS programming under PEPFAR is \$5.7 billion, a decrease of \$244 million (4 percent) from both the fiscal year 2014 actual and fiscal year 2015 estimate levels. This includes: \$1.1 billion for the U.S. contribution to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, fulfilling President Obama's commitment to the Fund's fourth replenishment (2014–2016); and \$4.6 billion for bilateral HIV/AIDS programs, including \$300 million for a new Impact Fund, a 7 percent increase over fiscal year 2014 and on par with the fiscal year 2015 estimate. The new Impact Fund will provide resources to PEPFAR-supported countries that take concrete steps to use data for decisionmaking and realign their national HIV/AIDS programs programmatically and geographically to accelerate progress toward HIV/AIDS epidemic control, with resources focused on areas with a high burden of HIV/AIDS. If pursued aggressively, this evidence-based approach will position a number of countries to reach epidemic control by the end of fiscal year 2017.

PEPFAR is shifting the way it does business to help reach the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS' (UNAIDS) ambitious 90–90–90 global target: 90 percent of people with HIV diagnosed, 90 percent of them on anti-retroviral treatment (ART), and 90 percent of those on treatment virally suppressed by 2020. Achieving the UNAIDS global goals of 90–90–90 by 2020 requires a shared responsibility by partner countries, PEPFAR, and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria (Global Fund). To have the greatest impact and to accelerate progress toward and AIDS-free generation, PEPFAR can best contribute to achieving the UNAIDS targets of 90–90–90 and controlling the epidemic by employing a data-driven approach that strategically focuses resources on geographic areas, at the sub-national level and populations that have the highest burden of HIV/AIDS.

In fiscal year 2016, PEPFAR's efforts will be driven by five action agendas: Impact, Efficiency, Sustainability, Partnership, and Human Rights. These agendas—combined with PEPFAR's overriding commitment to transparency, accountability and impact—will continue to guide the initiative's work.

PEPFAR will focus on doing the right things, in the right places, and at the right time to control the HIV/AIDS epidemic and, ultimately, achieve an AIDS-free generation. This will entail using the best available data to direct PEPFAR resources toward bringing evidence-based interventions (e.g., ART, prevention of mother-to-child transmission (PMTCT), voluntary medical male circumcision (VMMC), and condoms) to scale for populations at greatest risk and in geographic areas of greatest HIV incidence. PEPFAR will prioritize reaching scale quickly and with quality because an expanding HIV epidemic is not financially sustainable.

PEPFAR's DREAMS initiative, announced on December 1, 2014, focuses specifically on preventing HIV infection in 15 to 24-year-old women—a population that represents nearly 7,000 new infections per week. It is a \$210 million initiative in up to 10 countries, and the goal of the partnership is to help girls develop into Determined, Resilient, Empowered, AIDS-free, Mentored and Safe (DREAMS) women. It will provide a core package of evidence-based interventions that have successfully addressed HIV risk behaviors, HIV transmission, and gender-based violence. Evidence shows that girls can reach their full potential and remain HIV-free when they have access to these interventions.

(b) PEPFAR is using site level quality and results data together with granular epidemiologic and expenditure data to inform where PEPFAR resources should be allocated to have the greatest impact. Indicators are focused on core combination prevention activities which have demonstrated population-level impact as well as supportive services indicators. The combination of strengthened monitoring indicators, information regarding site and service delivery quality, site-specific program results, and a more detailed understanding of the geographic distribution of the burden of disease allows PEPFAR to identify exactly where the front edge of the epidemic is occurring and where programs are most effective in response. This ability, together with PEPFAR expenditure data permits realignment of resources to those geographic and population centers responsible for the waves of ongoing new infections, enhances PEPFAR's efforts to ensure further declines in these trends.

Decisionmaking to support these transformations occurs within PEPFAR country teams, in partnership with stake-holders in-country and at U.S. Government (USG) headquarter locations. Much of this data will be made available publically on the PEPFAR Dashboard Website as an unprecedented step toward transparency.

(c) PEPFAR is strongly committed to focusing our resources where the virus is. Data transparency, allowing increased data access and oversight, will allow for mutual accountability and innovation so that PEPFAR investments can have the greatest impact, while ensuring that each U.S. taxpayer dollar is spent effectively. PEPFAR is firmly committed to ensuring that all current patients remain on treatment. Underlying all of our programming must be a dedication to ensuring information and program data are understandable, digestible, and actionable. We need to be more nimble making program improvements for impact, and we need to act more rapidly based on data.

PEPFAR works closely with partner governments on their national HIV/AIDS responses. The partner governments will continue to provide HIV-related services for their citizens with support from PEPFAR. PEPFAR will continue support for ART in very low prevalence areas; however, we do want to work with partner governments to ensure that sites provide the highest quality care, which may require consolidating site support or transferring individuals to facilities with higher ART care volume, which will ensure not only continued access to HIV care and treatment but improved quality of care.

Question. Does the regionalization of the fight against Boko Haram (BH), including the planned 8,000+ soldier multinational force drawn from the five regional militaries, represent a real pivot point in fighting BH? How can we maximize the opportunity this might present, given the existing impediments to enhanced collaboration with Nigeria? Are we willing to provide assistance to Nigeria's neighbors that exceeds what we currently provide to Nigeria? Have resources to provide such assistance been requested in this budget? Given the widely reported human rights abuses committed by Nigerian forces in the last few years, what messages have we delivered to the Governments of Chad, Niger, and Cameroon regarding the need for their militaries to respect human rights in the course of counter-Boko Haram operations?

Answer. In recent weeks, Nigeria and its neighbors have made significant progress in establishing an emboldened multinational force—the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF)—to fight Boko Haram. After productive expert-level meetings last month in Yaounde and N'Djamena, the Lake Chad Basin Commission countries (Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria) and Benin on February 27 approved and signed a Concept of Operations for the MNJTF. These developments represent progress in the region's push to work together to combat Boko Haram.

On March 3, the AU approved the Concept of Operations, which revises the proposed number of troops upward to 10,000, establishes a command structure, defines an area of operations, and sets forth a plan to obtain U.N. endorsement of the force.

The United States, together with the United Kingdom and France, supports these efforts and has participated in many of the meetings to develop the concept for the MNJTF. We are actively considering ways to expand our bilateral support to the member countries as well as to the MNJTF to support their efforts in the form of equipment, advisory support, logistics, and intelligence. Because we have only recently received specific requests for assistance, we have not yet determined all that we will be able to provide or the form that assistance will take. We are currently providing limited individual and unit equipment on a rapid response basis and hope to expand this support in the months ahead using available funding and authorities. Nigeria, as one of the largest recipient of security assistance in sub-Saharan Africa, will continue to be a significant recipient of security assistance to combat Boko Haram and to confront other security challenges.

Deputy Secretary Blinken met with the heads of delegation Cameroon, Chad, Niger, and Nigeria during the Countering Violent Extremism Summit on February 19. During this meeting, Deputy Secretary Blinken confirmed U.S. support for the region's efforts to combat Boko Haram while also conveying our commitment to human rights and the need to ensure that troops engaged against Boko Haram respect human rights and protect civilians. He also underscored the importance of following military success against the Boko Haram with police and civilian engagement to address the underlying conditions so the cycle of violence doesn't repeat itself. We have been encouraged by the region's commitment to incorporate human rights standards into the MNJTF's Concept of Operations and will continue to support their commitment to human rights training and standards.

Question. The nomination of the first Ambassador to Somalia in more than two decades is a strong signal of the administration's confidence in the current Somali Government and the improved security situation. What is your estimated timeline for a potential reopening of Embassy Mogadishu? Are resources sufficient to cover all associated costs included in this budget? There have been significant military advances against al-Shabaab in recent months. What is the administration's plan for

advancing police reform in Somalia, so that these hard-won gains are not relinquished amidst a subsequent security vacuum?

Answer. The Department of State does not have a permanent diplomatic presence in Somalia due to continued instability and the high-threat security environment in Mogadishu. The Department will consider increasing our presence posture, as security conditions permit. U.S. diplomatic officials based in the Somalia Unit of the U.S. Embassy in Nairobi, Kenya conduct U.S. bilateral engagement with Somalia. Security conditions permitting, U.S. officials regularly travel to a secure compound at Mogadishu International Airport to meet with Somali, international, and civil society actors. They also travel periodically to other locations in Somalia. The Department currently expends \$1,378,600 to cover lodging, food, and other life support expenses for Chief of Mission personnel visiting Mogadishu International Airport. Diplomatic Security incurs expenses of less than \$300,000 annually for security support to U.S. Government personnel in Mogadishu. The current budget is sufficient to maintain this level of engagement.

A capable Somali civilian police force is critical to ensuring recent territorial and operational gains against al-Shabaab and to extend basic rule of law structures throughout the country. U.S. Department of State programs are building the capacity of the Somalia National Police Force to investigate serious crimes and support police deployments to recaptured areas. We are in the process of awarding an \$8.5 million training and mentoring cooperative agreement to initiate this 4-year program, which will begin in the spring of 2015. In addition to police capacity building efforts, we support criminal justice sector programming that focuses on improving the knowledge and skills of lawyers in the areas of women's and juvenile justice, counterterrorism legislation, and procedural law.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR LINDSEY GRAHAM FOR SENATOR SHELLY MOORE
CAPITO

Question. Please explain how the Department justifies proceeding with release of the Foreign Affairs Security Training Center (FASTC) revised environmental impact statement (EIS) without prior notification to Congress in direct contravention of the legislative provision in Public Law 113–235.

Answer. Regarding the language in the Joint Explanatory Statement accompanying the Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 2015 (Division J, Public Law 113–235), all funds currently being expended towards FASTC, including the Supplemental Environmental Impact statement were obligated for the FASTC project in prior fiscal years, in accordance with applicable congressional notification requirements. Expenditures of funds previously obligated for FASTC are not subject to further notification. Future obligations for FASTC will be in accordance with applicable congressional notification requirements.

Question. The most recent cost projections for development and construction of the FASTC are nearly \$500 million. Please provide a detailed accounting of the total expenditures to date, and identify the accounts from which those funds were drawn.

Answer. The total project costs going forward for the Foreign Affairs Security Training Center (FASTC) are \$413 million, of which some funding has already been appropriated. Of the money appropriated to date, the Department of State has obligated \$135.5 million for FASTC, of which \$70 million was from Diplomatic and Consular Programs (D&CP) appropriations provided in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act and \$65.5 million was from prior year D&CP appropriations for the Worldwide Security Program. All funds have been obligated on a reimbursable work order to the General Services Administration. As of the date of the hearing, \$17 million has been expended.

Question. The scope of the proposed project at the Foreign Affairs Security Training Center (FASTC) has been significantly reduced. It is our understanding that 85–90 percent of the “hard skills” training is currently being performed at Summit Point. Please specifically identify training services and facilities that will be included at the proposed facility that are not currently available, or could not be expanded more cost effectively, at Summit Point.

Answer. A review of Diplomatic Security (DS) expenditures for contract training facilities in the mid-Atlantic region for fiscal year 2014 indicates that only 38 percent of available funds were utilized for training at Summit Point. DS believes this is an accurate proportion of the amount of training that took place at Bill Scott Raceway (BSR), located in Summit Point, West Virginia.

A primary goal of FASTC is to consolidate U.S.-based advanced tactical training at one site to achieve operational efficiencies. The space to be utilized at Pickett to

consolidate DS tactical training is approximately 1,400 acres. BSR has a maximum land size of approximately 750 acres.

FASTC will be a purpose-built, fully integrated facility capable of 24/7 training operations. Fort Pickett has no night time “quiet hours” training restrictions or other noise abatement issues. The Fort Pickett site will enable DS to have full scheduling control of three driving tracks on a 24/7 basis, with no concerns about other USG or commercial clients; long distance firearms ranges up to 1,000 meters; a Mock Embassy approximately twice the size of the interim structure at Summit Point; three separate explosives ranges that fully meet Federal safety requirements; access to an adjacent military/civilian operating air field capable of taking military aircraft and DOS chartered aircraft; a live fire shoot house; a half mile long explosives simulations alley; a large, purpose-built urban training area; and other advantages that enhance DS training.

Question. The Department claims the proposed new facility for the Foreign Affairs Security Training Center (FASTC) will enable consolidation of the current 11 sites where these training activities are conducted. Please provide a list of the facilities that will be closed and/or contracts terminated, the kinds of training currently conducted at each of the existing facilities, and the anticipated dates when services at those facilities will be terminated. Explain why these functions could not be carried out at Summit Point, West Virginia. Please provide the estimated cost to expand the facilities at Summit Point to accommodate further consolidation of the remaining hard skills training from other locations.

Answer. Diplomatic Security currently utilizes contracts with or pays for the use of 11 sites to conduct its standard hard-skills training, and plans to consolidate the activities of 10 of them at FASTC at Fort Pickett. These sites cumulatively account for several dozen firearms ranges of varying lengths, multiple explosive training pads and simulation areas, various specialized tactical training facilities such as live fire shoot houses, etc. Taken together, their total capacity far exceeds what Summit Point, West Virginia by itself can provide. The sites and training conducted at them are listed below. DS would continue to use only Venue 1 below, while Venues 2–11 will be gradually phased out during the 2017–2019 period.

1. Federal Law Enforcement Training Center Cheltenham, Cheltenham, Maryland
An indoor range complex utilized for standard firearms re-qualifications for agents in the Washington, DC area. DS plans to continue to use this facility on a limited basis for re-qualifications.
2. Marine Corps Base Quantico, Virginia
DS utilizes Marine Corps Base Quantico long distance firearms ranges. The longest firearms range at Summit Point is 100 meters. DS has requirements that extend out to 800+ meters.
3. Interim Training Facility/Bill Scott Raceway, Summit Point, West Virginia
DS conduct multiple types of training at this site, including firearms, driving, explosives, fire as a weapon, first aid (responder), defensive tactics, Embassy defense scenarios, tactical training in urban environments and room clearing. Anti-Terrorism Assistance (ATA) Quick Reaction Force training will commence in June 2015. Summit Point also has noise abatement and night training rules that impede 24/7 training. DS conducts night training (currently at different venues) between 190–200 nights per year depending upon course schedules. Also, upon consolidation, DS will require the use of three high-speed driving tracks on an exclusive basis simply to meet its own training needs.
4. U.S. Training Center (Academi), Moyock, North Carolina
DS/ATA utilizes this site for crisis response training (SWAT type training) for foreign nationals. The site has multiple ranges, driving track, live fire shoot houses (not present at Summit Point), several urban training areas and explosive training areas.
5. O’Gara Training Center, Montross, Virginia
DS/ATA utilizes this site for explosives training for foreign nationals. Additionally, and as with Academi, the site has multiple ranges, a live fire shoot house, driving track, a large tactical urban training area and multiple explosive training areas.
6. Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) Huntsville, Alabama

DS Regional Security Officer students take Post-Blast Investigative training at this site. Summit Point has one blast range. Cumulative DS explosives training will require a minimum of three, with Federal safety standards incorporated in their construction and operation.

7. Mid-South Institute of Self-Defense Shooting, Memphis, Tennessee

DS Office of Mobile Security Deployments (MSD) utilizes this site for advanced firearms training. It has specialized tactical shooting venues not present at Summit Point.

8. Combat Shooting and Tactics, Nacogdoches, Texas

The office of Mobile Security Deployments (MSD) utilizes this facility for multiple firearms and tactical training. It possesses ranges up to 800 yards and a range available to shoot from vehicles. As noted, Summit Point's longest range is 100 meters, and the capability to shoot from moving vehicles does not exist.

9. Virginia Ki Society, Fairfax, Virginia

A gym used on an intermittent basis by DS/MSD for defensive tactics training. The current mat rooms at the DS Interim Training Facility at Summit Point cannot accommodate consolidated training of MSD and ATA.

10. Panthera Training Center, Moorefield, West Virginia

DS/MSD currently conducts most of their specialized training at Panthera. The facility has five flat ranges (50 yards to 800 yards), a live fire shoot house, a driving track, off-road course, urban training area, and three simunition training "houses." Summit Point does not have the ranges, shoot house or quantity of simunition training areas.

11. Fort AP Hill, Virginia

DS coordinates with the Asymmetric Warfare Group (AWG) for use of their urban training area to conduct joint DOD-DS CAPSTONE exercises (a 3 day 24/7 exercise conducted approximately 5 times per year as the culmination of the 10 week High Threat Operations course). This exercise requires night training and generates loud noise due to night time helicopter operations and the use of loud training munitions such as artillery simulators and blanks fired from belt-fed weapons such as machine guns.

DS is currently developing a transition plan to move hard-skills training from Venues 2-11 to Fort Pickett as the several construction phases are completed.

The property at Summit Point is privately owned. DS is not able to provide cost estimates for expansion for a site that is not owned by the United States Government.

Question. The revised Environmental Impact Study regarding the Foreign Affairs Security Training Center (FASTC) estimates a needed training capacity of 8,000-10,000 trainees per year. It is our understanding that sufficient training capacity exists at Summit Point to accommodate this growth. Please verify.

Answer. As part of the original 2009 site selection process, over 30 sites were reviewed by the General Services Administration (GSA) and the Department of State, including Bill Scott Raceway (BSR), and it was determined that BSR did not meet the Department of State's hard-skills security training needs. The Department of State has hard-skills venue requirements that are not present at Summit Point in West Virginia, nor is it realistic to expect that Summit Point can almost double its size (about 750 acres) to match the approximate size of the FASTC site at Fort Pickett (about 1,400 acres). Further, issues remain at BSR concerning the exclusive availability of track/range use, noise abatement, night training and overall capacity to meet the Department of State's hard-skills security consolidated training needs.

Question. Please provide the estimated annual operating costs for the proposed Foreign Affairs Security Training Center (FASTC) facility.

Answer. The Department has analyzed the operating expenses and has determined that fiscal efficiency can be achieved by consolidating multiple, disparate, leased or contracted training facilities into a single, purpose-built facility that satisfies the agency's need for expanded high-threat training capability and capacity. The projected operating cost for FASTC is \$59 million per year. By consolidating existing hard-skills operations into a single, purpose built, FASTC facility, the Department can reduce total annual hard-skills training operating expenses by approximately \$11 million, while nearly doubling training capacity from 5,000 to 9,200. Not only does consolidation reduce per-student operating costs by over \$7,500 per student, it also allows the Department to provide critical security training to a larger population.

Question. The proposed site for Foreign Affairs Security Training Center (FASTC) is at least a 4-hour drive from the DC area, whereas the current contract facility at Summit Point is approximately an hour away from the Bureau of Diplomatic Security headquarters. Please provide an estimate of the increased costs for trainee travel, per diem and lost productivity that would result from a more remote location.

Answer. The future location for the Foreign Affairs Security Training Center (FASTC) will be located in Blackstone, Virginia, a 2½ hour drive from the State Department area. While this drive marginally exceeds the hour and a half drive to Summit Point in West Virginia, the Department will be able to achieve cost efficiencies by consolidating existing hard-skills operations from 11 separate locations into a single, purpose built, FASTC facility in Blackstone, Virginia. This drive is also a much shorter and less expensive than the two full travel days and flights that would be required to utilize FLETC in Georgia. Through consolidation, the Department can reduce total annual operating expenses by approximately \$11 million, while nearly doubling training capacity from 5,000 to 9,200. Not only does consolidation reduce per-student operating costs by over \$7,500 per student, it also allows the Department to provide critical security training to a larger population. Any increase in the costs of buses or possibly an extra meal by going to Blackstone will be offset by the overall savings.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR LINDSEY GRAHAM FOR SENATOR JOHN CORNYN

Question. Mr. Secretary, the 1944 treaty (“Utilization of Waters of the Colorado and Tijuana Rivers and of the Rio Grande”) governs water sharing between the United States and Mexico. Specifically, Article 4 provides that Mexico shall deliver to the United States from the designated tributaries of the Rio Grande, not less than 350,000 acre-feet annually as an average amount in cycles of five consecutive years. The treaty provides one set of circumstances under which Mexico may be allowed to deliver less than the minimum required amount: “In the event of extraordinary drought or serious accident to the hydraulic system on the measures Mexican tributaries, making it difficult for Mexico to make available the run-off of 350,000 acre-feet annually” Throughout Article 4, the language of the treaty makes explicit reference to 350,000 acre-feet as an annual delivery requirement. However, the practice of the U.S. Section of the International Boundary and Water Commission (USIBWC) and the State Department is to treat this amount as both a delivery ceiling, rather than a floor, and to provide wide latitude to Mexico to under-deliver even in years without extraordinary drought or hydraulic system damage.

- Please provide the subcommittee with a fair and thorough reading of Article 4, specifically addressing this apparent contradiction between plain language and current practice.
- Is it the position of the State Department that Mexico should be allowed to end both year-4, and the overall current 5-year cycle, in a deficit to the United States, even if extraordinary circumstances have not existed in Mexico’s portion of the basin since 2012?
- Assume that during a future 5-year cycle, Mexico does not experience extraordinary drought or an accident to the hydraulic system. Would the Department still allow Mexico to carry a deficit into the next 5-year cycle? If so, how does that represent an equitable distribution of water? If not, what steps would the State Department be willing to take to ensure compliance within the 5-year cycle and prevent further harm to U.S. stakeholders?

Answer. Mexico’s water delivery obligations related to the waters of the Rio Grande are spelled out plainly in Article 4 of the 1944 Water Treaty. Article 4, paragraph B, subsection (c) of the treaty allots to the United States, among other waters, “one-third of the flow reaching the main channel of the Rio Grande [from certain designated tributaries], provided that this third shall not be less, as an average amount in cycles of 5 consecutive years, than 350,000 acre-feet (431,721,000 cubic meters) annually.” Mexico’s water delivery requirement on the Rio Grande is therefore one-third of the entire measured flow from those tributaries, but in any case not less than the average annual amount, calculated on a 5-year cycle, of 350,000 acre-feet. The U.S. Section of the International Boundary and Water Commission’s (USIBWC’s) and the Department of State’s interpretation of these provisions is consistent with the terms of the treaty and has not changed.

Subsection (d) provides for a remedy in situations where at the end of the 5-year cycle Mexico has failed to provide a total amount that averages out to 350,000 acre-feet per annum (1,750,000 acre-feet). Subsection (d) states: “In the event of extraordinary drought or serious accident to the hydraulic systems on the measured Mexi-

can tributaries, making it difficult for Mexico to make available the run-off of 350,000 acre-feet (431,721,000 cubic meters) annually, allotted in subparagraph (c) of paragraph B of this Article to the United States as the minimum contribution from the aforesaid Mexican tributaries, any deficiencies existing at the end of the aforesaid 5-year cycle shall be made up in the following 5-year cycle with water from the said measured tributaries.” Thus, the treaty provides that Mexico must make up for any deficiency in total deliveries over one 5-year cycle in the next 5-year cycle.

The Department and the USIBWC are acutely aware of the impact drought conditions and delivery shortages in the Rio Grande basin have had on water users in Texas. The Department and the USIBWC will continue to work closely with the Government of Mexico and the Mexican Section of the IBWC to ensure that future deliveries not only comply with Mexico’s obligations under the treaty but also are carried out in such a way as to provide as regular and consistent a flow as is practicable.

Question. Mr. Secretary, in a recent report to this subcommittee, required by the Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act, 2015, the State Department cited the adoption of new analytical software by the Mexican Section of the IBWC and CONAGUA, Mexico’s National Water Commission, as an important achievement in 2014, reached only after dedication of substantial staff time to the matter.

Please explain how this software adoption milestone will be used to: commit Mexico to also adopt a model informed by software data on naturalized flows; provide specific commitments to the U.S. based on modeling results; and yield additional water to the United States.

Answer. Reliance on a common analytical framework will assist in the achievement of mutual understanding of the complex factors affecting the hydrology of the Rio Grande basin. With such an understanding in hand, the United States and Mexico will have a common frame of reference for addressing water supply questions in the basin, including means for achieving enhanced water deliveries, the adoption of measures to avoid deficits in the future, and the elimination of Mexico’s current accrued water deficit.

Question. The report states that “Mexican officials have assured USIBWC and the U.S. Embassy in Mexico City that the Government of Mexico intends to institute new basin-wide regulations in 2015 that would include water allocations for the United States.” U.S. stakeholders have seen many similar “expressed intention[s]” from Mexico prove hollow in the past—what specific written or formal commitments has the Department received that lead you to believe that this time is any different? Please provide such documentation to the subcommittee, as appropriate.

Answer. Mexico’s assurances are part of its diplomatic and technical dialogue with the Department and USIBWC as we pursue long-term improvements in water deliveries in the Rio Grande.

SUBCOMMITTEE RECESS

Senator GRAHAM. The subcommittee stands in recess. Thank you very much.

[Whereupon, at 12:30 p.m., Tuesday, February 24, the subcommittee was recessed, to reconvene subject to the call of the Chair.]