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THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA: ENSURING RESOURCES MATCH OBJECTIVES

HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON
THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA: ENSURING RESOURCES MATCH OBJECTIVES

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 13, 2018

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
Washington, DC.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:05 a.m., in room 2172, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. The subcommittee will come to order due to time restraints of Ambassador Satterfield. And we are so honored to have you here.

Not that we are not honored to have you here, Mr. Ferguson. But thank you very much.

We will get started. Mr. Deutch is at a Judiciary meeting, and as soon as he is done with that, he will come right back. And we will recognize him for his opening statement at that moment.

After my opening statement and any members who have an opening statement, we will hear from our witnesses.

And, without objection, the witnesses' prepared statements will be made a part of the record, and members may have 5 days to insert statements and questions for the record subject to the length limitation in the rules.

The Chair now recognizes herself.

This is now the sixth time that Ted and I have convened this particular hearing conducting oversight over the President's budget request. It is often difficult to know if the request matches the objective, because we are often presented with broader generic policy objectives rather than strategies to achieve those objectives. I am going to do the low voice. And this year's budget request for the Middle East and North Africa, sadly, is no different.

Earlier this year, then Secretary of State Tillerson laid out the administration's vision for Syria. I don't think any of us would disagree that it did have five laudable objectives. Likewise, just a few weeks ago, Secretary Pompeo laid out 12 objectives in our counter-Iran plan. But I think it is safe to say that both of these were policy objective heavy and short on strategy. That is to say they were lacking details on how we were going to accomplish those objectives.

This makes it extremely difficult for us as policymakers and members tasked with an oversight responsibility to ensure taxpayer dollars are used effectively and efficiently to really know if

the administration is requesting adequate resources to carry out its strategy. It is also difficult for us to get a full accounting of the support we provide to the Middle East and North Africa, given that many different mechanisms and accounts are being used to provide our assistance to conflict areas and humanitarian crises in the region. In Iraq, in Syria, in Jordan, and in Yemen, there is a great need for U.S. leadership and U.S. assistance.

These are old threats, but there are new threats, and there are emerging threats that can destabilize the region and damage our interests as well. But this budget request seems like it does not go far enough to match the priority and the threat to our national security with the resources allocated.

In Syria, the budget request seems to fall short of Tillerson's stated objectives. And that is before you take into account the fact that the administration has put a hold on $200 million for Syria stabilization efforts until it completes a review. I am all for getting partner nations to increase their share of contributions, but in the meantime, we are losing critical time, and we are certainly not making progress on our Syria objectives if we aren't providing our assistance.

Likewise, I remain very concerned over our continued request for assistance to the Lebanese Armed Forces, the LAF, despite very real concerns regarding Hezbollah's influence: $50 million in this year's request. With Hezbollah and its allies making gains in last month's election, it doesn't make sense to continue to push the narrative that we are supporting the LAF as a counterweight to Hezbollah instead of having used our assistance for Lebanon wisely with programs aimed at decreasing Iran and Hezbollah's influence.

Before the elections, our Embassy in Lebanon cut critical programs, perhaps out of fear of upsetting the status quo. And because of that, we will certainly need the administration's request for $3.3 billion in foreign military financing for Israel as it faces an increased and more aggressive Iranian posture on its borders and many of these other emerging threats.

So I applaud the administration for standing strong with Israel and in understanding the sheer magnitude of the threats that our closest friend and partner, the democratic Jewish state of Israel, faces.

I do, however, question the administration's decision to keep the PLO office open. I have been trying to get an answer on the status of the PLO office ever since November when the waiver lapsed, which should have forced it to be closed. I spoke briefly with Ambassador Satterfield about this just yesterday, but Congress and the American public deserve to know why the administration is allowing the PLO office to remain open. I joined Senator Cruz in sending a letter to the Secretary laying out specific questions, and it is my hope that we get a full public response. There is no reason why the administration should keep this information to itself.

Moving to Jordan, I applaud the administration for meeting the agreed number that is stipulated by our latest memorandum of understanding, MOU. The numbers reflect the need to ensure that Jordan remains stable and secure. However, I do hope that the administration sees the current situation on the ground in Jordan as seriously as we do and understands that it may need to be flexible

with its resources if circumstances dictate. And we look forward to His Majesty coming to meet with us very soon.

I was also pleased to see the administration reverse course from last year's request and allocate additional funds for Tunisia. Ninety-five million dollars for fiscal year 2019 represents a $40 million increase from fiscal year 2018 request, but falls far short of what is required, and far short of what Congress has appropriated. Tunisia's stability and Tunisia's success are of vital importance to the United States and the region—failing to ensure its viability would be a terrible mistake. We want to work with the administration to advance our interests in the region to ensure that we have an adequate response to the ongoing crises and to ensure the region's stability and security. So I am eager to hear from our witnesses on ways that we can work together to achieve all of that.

And, with that, I am pleased to yield to our ranking member, Mr. Deutch.

Mr. DEUTCH. Thank you, Madam Chairman, and thank you, Ambassador Satterfield and Senior Deputy Assistant Administrator Ferguson for appearing today.

The work of the State Department and USAID is incredibly important. I am very grateful to all of our Foreign Service and career personnel at both agencies. We ask a lot from these people, often sending them to far away and very dangerous places. We ask them to do their job, often without the full resources that they need. And it is important for us, for this Congress, to communicate to them how grateful we are for their service. And we ask that you relay that right back to them.

As we look at today's Middle East, the challenges we face are only growing more complex. These growing threats and challenges emphasize the need for the United States to develop and stay committed to a comprehensive strategy backed by an adequate level of funding, so U.S. interests and stability in the region can be advanced. I remain very concerned about both the administration's lack of a real whole-of-government cohesive plan for the Middle East as well as the proposed cuts to the international affairs budget.

For the second year in a row, the administration has sent us a budget with a 30-percent cut to a portion of the budget that makes up less than 1 percent of our total spending, again, against the advice of bipartisan military leaders, bipartisan diplomats, and bipartisan elected and former officials. These cuts undermine our ability to promote democracy, diplomacy, peace, and security, and development in this key region. These cuts also send complicated messages to our allies who look to the United States for leadership. Our partners want to know they can count on us not to retreat from the region and that the United States will live up to its commitments.

Our traditional allies are questioning where we stand following our exit from the Paris climate accord, JCPOA, and the harsh criticism of our closest partners. But we need to work together to confront regional threats and to ensure our own interests are protected. And I cannot overstate how deeply concerned I am that this administration continues to disparage and create unnecessary and petty conflicts with our allies. Iran is actively and aggressively spreading its malign influence throughout the region. There is no

doubt that it is in our national interest to counter Iran's dangerous expansion, including in Yemen, Lebanon, Iraq, and Syria. Apart from exiting the nuclear deal and reimposing sanctions, the administration has not provided specifics on how we are going to confront the Iranian threat.

Also seemingly lacking is a strategy for how we are going to tackle long-term problems, like what our role in the Syria conflict will be after ISIS is pushed from its remaining territory in the east. Will the United States continue to back the Syrian democratic forces who have been an instrumental ally in our fight against ISIS? And if so, to what extent is the administration willing to back them if they come into conflict with Turkish or pro-regime forces? And I remain deeply concerned about the freeze on our assistance to the Syrian crisis.

We have got to continue to support democratic transitions, particularly in North Africa. And I am pleased to see FMF restored to Tunisia, although not quite at levels necessary, to confront the many security challenges.

Even as we try to assist with security and stability in North Africa, we must remind all governments that human rights cannot be trampled in the name of security. The United States should continue to support economic development in civil society as both are the cornerstones to open and democratic societies.

We are also watching as the administration struggles to articulate its plan for peace, and peace talks between Israel and Palestinians seem to be even further out of reach. Now, I supported the decision to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel because it is the capital of Israel. But Hamas is trying to take advantage, trying to use this decision to end the humanitarian crisis in Gaza to sow discontent. Now, I worry about the decision to cut humanitarian funding and freeze other West Bank and Gaza funding. We can acknowledge the humanitarian crisis in Gaza and work with our allies to address it, even as we decry Hamas as they focus not on that crisis or the people of Gaza but instead on advancing their own terror agenda aimed at the civilian population of ally, Israel. We can do both.

And, Madam Chairman, there is much to discuss today. I haven't touched on the Gulf crisis, protests in Jordan, the conflict in Yemen or Libya, but I will stop here. I look forward to hearing from our witnesses on how the administration plans to work for U.S. national security interests on this deeply flawed budget proposal.

And I yield back.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you very much, Mr.Deutch.

And now we will yield to members who wish to make an opening statement, starting with our friend from New York, Mr. Donovan.

Mr. DONOVAN. Thank you, Madam Chairwoman and Ranking Member. I want to thank you for holding this hearing today to ensure resources match objectives in the Middle East and North Africa.

The number of crises that continue to plague the region is shocking. The Assad regime in Syria is still a U.S. designated state sponsor of terrorism. Assad brutalizes his own people through the use of chemical weapons and barrel bombs. The people in Gaza are suffering in the midst of clashes between Hamas and the Palestinian

Authority. Meanwhile, the Palestinian Authority could obtain the humanitarian aid that is desperately needed for its people if only they would stop making payouts to terrorists.

Iran has developed a geographic land bridge across Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon to give itself a clear path straight to Israel. It is not just me and my fellow bipartisan members of the Foreign Affairs Committee who have identified these areas as matters of grave concern. President Trump has spoken on all of these issues as well. I am looking forward to hearing from the Trump administration witnesses today as to how the requested budget will conquer these problems to better serve American national security interests.

And, with that, Madam Chairman, I yield back.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you so much, Mr. Donovan.

Ms. Frankel, my Florida colleague.

Ms. FRANKEL. Thank you, Madam Chair.

And thank you to the witnesses for being here.

A couple of issues. I am especially concerned about the Syrian stabilization assistance. I look forward to some comments on that, and also the humanitarian conditions in Gaza, the violence by Hamas, and our response there.

In particular, I want to bring to your attention—hopefully this has been brought to your attention, is what is going on in Saudi Arabia, which is very shortly going to lift the ban on female drivers, which is a good thing. And there has been a slow movement there to try to give—women can actually go to movies. I mean, this is a biggie.

But what happened recently was the arrest of women activists who were protesting or activating, trying to get more rights, more social rights, for women. And they were arrested and accused by the state news agency that they wanted to destabilize the Kingdom and breach its social structure and mar the national consistency. I mean, which is really—I mean, basically, they are calling for an end—this is the women—they are calling for an end to Saudi Arabia's repressive guardianship system, which requires them to get the permission of a male guardian for almost everything. So it is just shocking in this day and age. So it seems pretty obvious that this administration did not publicly condemn these arrests. And I am very curious as to whether or not, behind the scenes, what we are saying about this, if anything.

And I yield back.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you, Ms. Frankel.

Mr. DeSantis, another Florida colleague. We own this subcommittee.

Mr. DESANTIS. Well, thank you, Madam Chairman.

We had a wonderful event last month in Jerusalem when we opened the American Embassy. It had been American policy since 1995, never implemented by a series of Presidents.

But when you talk about resources, a lot of the plans out of the State Department were to build something that was going to cost maybe hundreds of millions of dollars. It was going to take years and years. And to his great credit, the Ambassador, David Friedman, had a plan where we utilized an existing consulate annex, which I think is going to work very well. Minimal expenses to get it ready. And, obviously, there will be some things we do over the

years. But I think that was a great example of doing something with an eye on the taxpayer, and it ended up being a phenomenal event.

As we look forward, certainly, if you are looking at Syria policy, I don't know how we can look at what is going on in Syria and not want U.S. policy to recognize Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights.

Under no circumstance would we want that strategic area to be turned over to some remnants running around Syria, whether Iranian or Hezbollah or Syrian affiliated with the Assad regime. So I am hoping that that will be the next step. The Embassy was bold. Let's recognize Golan. And I think we will help establish more security in the region as a result.

And I yield back.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you very much, Mr. DeSantis.

Mr. Rohrabacher of California.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. And thank you for the leadership that you provided all these years here on this committee, we appreciate that. And I am sure that there are people overseas——

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. What do you want?

Mr. ROHRABACHER. I am sure there are people who are alive today because—and living peacefully today because of the great endeavors that you have made in this committee.

Let me note I am optimistic about the Middle East. And we have a President who went to Saudi Arabia, and the first thing he did was far different than what his predecessor did. His predecessor bowed to the leadership of Saudi Arabia. Our President took the leaders and put them in a room and said: If you want to be a friend of the United States, drive the terrorists out of your mosque. And, you know, our President has had more success than trying to promote what a good guy he is by bowing down. And, in fact, we have a much greater chance for peace through that act of strength.

In Iran, same deal in Iran. Same deal when it comes to moving the Embassy into Jerusalem. We have a President who has made tough decisions and have been strong. It is going to bring about a more peaceful situation.

Thank you very much.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you, Mr. Rohrabacher.

And now it is a pleasure to introduce our witnesses. We are delighted to welcome back our friend, Ambassador David Satterfield, the Acting Assistant Secretary of State for the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs. Ambassador Satterfield previously served as the Director General of the Multinational Force and Observers. Prior to this, the Ambassador served as Coordinator for Iraq, Senior Adviser to the Secretary of State, Deputy Chief of Mission to Iraq, chief of mission in Cairo, and as the United States Ambassador to Lebanon. Thank you for your service, sir, and we look forward to your testimony.

And next we are delighted to welcome Mr. Hallam Ferguson, who serves as senior Deputy Assistant Administrator for USAID's Bureau for the Middle East. Prior to joining USAID, Mr. Ferguson worked for the International Republican Institute for 13 years. At IRI, Mr. Ferguson served as the Deputy Regional Director for the

Middle East and North Africa and previously held positions in Afghanistan and Iraq. Thank you for being here today. We look forward to your testimony.

And as I said, your entire testimony is part of the record. Please feel free to summarize. And we will begin with you, Mr. Satterfield.

STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE DAVID M. SATTERFIELD, ACTING ASSISTANT SECRETARY, BUREAU OF NEAR EASTERN AFFAIRS, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. Thank you, Madam Chairman, Ranking Member. And while I don't want anything, I do associate myself with the remarks regarding your leadership of this body.

Thank you very much all of you for inviting me to appear again to discuss the President's fiscal 2019 budget request.

As members of the subcommittee know well, there are many challenges facing this region. In order to meet these challenges—and I also am optimistic about the future of the region—the President has requested $7 billion in foreign assistance. This request addresses critical U.S. national security and economic interests with an emphasis on burden sharing. It focuses U.S. funding on the enduring defeat of ISIS, strengthening democratic institutions, and broadening the range of economic opportunities and civil participation available to citizens of the region, including women, minorities, and the growing number of youth in that region.

President Trump has been very clear that the United States should not and will not bear the sole responsibility for funding regional stabilization. Excluding U.S. Government contributions, our partners in the global coalition to defeat ISIS have contributed more than 3 billion U.S. dollars in funding for explosive hazards clearance, bilateral stabilization support, and humanitarian assistance to Iraq since 2014.

Additionally, coalition donors have contributed more than $540 million to the U.N. Development Agency's Funding Facility for Stabilization, the FFS, which is implementing projects in liberated areas of Iraq.

Now, civil conflict in Yemen and Libya make it difficult but not impossible for our assistance to reach those in need. Iran's maligned behaviors, ongoing support to proxy militias, support for terrorist organizations, and development and proliferation of ballistic missiles destabilizes the region and threatens our partners. These are the challenges. But despite them, we have been persistent in our effort to mobilize regional and local partners, international partners to join us in support, and not have the U.S. taxpayer shoulder the burden here disproportionately.

Following the President's decision on the JCPOA and through execution of our comprehensive Iran strategy, we have the opportunity to counter Iran's regional influence and enhance regional and U.S. security by building new partnerships deepening existing relationships.

With our allies and partners, we share a common assessment. I want to underscore: We are not going it alone here, that the Iranian regime poses a threat to our collective security, to international security, that we must address jointly and rapidly.

Ranking Member, Madam Chairman, I know you are deeply concerned about the Robert Levinson case. And I want personally to assure you the administration remains committed to resolving this case bringing home all Americans, whether in Iran or elsewhere, who are unjustly detained.

President Trump has been clear. The enduring defeat of ISIS is one of his primary national security priorities. The 2019 budget request for the region supports this commitment, with substantial foreign assistance to support key regional and local partners through civilian-led efforts to stabilize and secure areas liberated from ISIS and other terrorist groups.

The 2019 request for Syria recognizes the support necessary for the enduring defeat of ISIS to counter the influence of other terrorist groups. ISIS has lost nearly all the territory, the so-called caliphate, it once controlled in northern Syria. But the fight does continue as we meet. U.S. foreign assistance prioritizes stabilizing areas to cement military gains and facilitate the safe and voluntary return of those who have been displaced.

The President has requested $200 million to support Iraq. Iraq is at a crucial juncture. It has the potential to be a center of stability and prosperity for the Middle East and a partner for the U.S. We are optimistic about the future of Iraq.

In Yemen, we are working with the international donor community to address critical humanitarian needs and help create opportunities for durable peace. The 2019 budget request includes $43.4 million to support the Yemeni people and their institutions, to address development and security issues, particularly countering the threats in Yemen from ISIS and al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula.

Now, the 2019 budget request, of course, includes our enduring commitments to our key partners: Israel, Jordan, and Egypt. It also seeks development security assistance funding for programs in the West Bank and Gaza.

Madam Chairman, Ranking Member, the 2019 request supports our highest national security priorities in the region, it promotes investments to further our regional interests, and it encourages support from others for a common burden and a common challenge.

I want to thank you for the support this subcommittee has expressed.

I look forward to answering your questions.

[The prepared statement of Ambassador Satterfield follows:]

Testimony

Before the House Foreign Affairs Committee
Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa

Statement of

David M. Satterfield

Acting Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern Affairs

June 13, 2018

Chairman Ros-Lehtinen, Ranking Member Deutch, Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for inviting us to appear before you today to discuss the President's Fiscal Year 2019 budget request. I welcome the opportunity to testify with my colleague, Hallam Ferguson, Senior Deputy Assistant Administrator for the U.S. Agency for International Development's Bureau for the Middle East.

As Members of this Subcommittee, you know well the challenges that face the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). The President's FY 2019 budget request for the region addresses critical U.S. national security and economic interests with an emphasis on burden-sharing - leveraging U.S. taxpayer dollars against investments from our regional partners and the international community. It focuses U.S. funding on the enduring defeat of ISIS, strengthening democratic institutions, and broadening the range of economic opportunities and civil participation available to citizens of the region, including women, minorities and the growing number of youth in the region. Terrorists, such as ISIS and al-Qaeda, exacerbate the problems in the region. Civil conflict in Yemen and Libya make it difficult – but not impossible – for our assistance to reach those most in need. Iran's malign behaviors such as ongoing assistance to proxy militias in the region, support for terrorist organizations, and development and proliferation of ballistic missiles destabilizes the region and threatens our partners. Given these challenges, U.S. leadership and foreign assistance programs remain indispensable to delivering sustainable regional security and mitigating threats to the homeland.

The President's FY 2019 foreign assistance budget request for the region is $7 billion. Despite the complex operating environment, U.S. interests in the region are stable and enduring, and reflect fundamental American values.

We have diligently worked to mobilize our partners and link their contributions in support of our common goals. As Secretary Pompeo stated during his recent testimony before the Full Committee, "It's time for other nations, especially those with high GDPs, to assume greater responsibilities and devote greater resources towards our common objectives." President Trump has been clear that the United States should not bear the sole responsibility for funding regional stabilization. In this regard, our request reduces foreign assistance to Iraq and Syria, where we expect other donors to provide funding for stabilization and reconstruction activities in FY 2019. Our regional allies have heard the President and have stepped up. They are effectively multiplying our contributions. Excluding U.S. Government contributions, our partners in the Global Coalition to Defeat-ISIS have contributed more than $3 billion in funding for explosive hazards clearance, bilateral stabilization support, and humanitarian assistance to Iraq since 2014. Additionally, Coalition donors have committed more than $540 million to UNDP's Funding Facility for Stabilization, which is implementing projects in liberated areas of Iraq.

Across the region, from Iraq to Syria to Yemen, Iran's malign influence continued under the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). As Secretary Pompeo stated in his speech at the Heritage Foundation, Iran must end its support to terrorist groups in the Middle East, including Lebanese Hizballah, Hamas, and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad. Iran must also end its military support for the Houthi militia and withdraw all forces under Iranian command throughout the entirety of Syria. The JCPOA was a fundamentally flawed deal because it did not address these malign Iranian behaviors and our withdrawal benefits U.S. national security as well as international security. Following the President's decision on the JCPOA and through execution of our comprehensive Iran strategy, we have the opportunity

to counter Iran's malign regional influence and enhance regional security by building new partnerships and deepening existing relationships. Re-imposed U.S. sanctions are powerful tools that should incentivize Iran to change its behavior. With our allies and partners, we share a common assessment that the Iranian regime poses a threat to our collective security that we must address jointly and quickly. Furthermore, Ranking Member Deutch, I know something you spoke to the Secretary about, and something you and Chairman Ros-Lehtinen are deeply concerned about, is Robert Levinson's case. I want personally to assure you this Administration remains committed to resolving this case and bringing home all Americans who are unjustly detained.

President Trump has been clear that the enduring defeat of ISIS is one of his primary national security priorities. The FY 2019 budget request for the region supports this commitment with substantial foreign assistance to support key regional and local partners through civilian-led efforts to stabilize and secure areas liberated from ISIS and other terrorist groups. With the conclusion of major combat operations against ISIS in Iraq, their impending conclusion in Syria, and our work with our partners to invigorate the Syrian political process pursuant to UNSCR 2254, our assistance will address the devastation wrought by ISIS throughout the region and generate additional needed funding from the regional and international community. We must turn our focus from the hard work of winning the war to the equally difficult task of maintaining the peace.

At the President's direction, in recent months the Administration has been reviewing all aspects of our assistance to Syria to ensure that it fully supports our priorities and national security interests and is an appropriate and justifiable use of taxpayer dollars. The FY 2019 request for Syria of $174.5 million recognizes the

support necessary for the enduring defeat of ISIS to counter the influence of other terrorist groups. ISIS has lost nearly all the territory it once controlled in Eastern Syria, but the fight continues, as does our determination to ensure ISIS remains defeated. U.S. foreign assistance prioritizes stabilizing areas to cement military gains and facilitate the safe and voluntary return of displaced persons. It will also enable local governance actors, service institutions, and civil society organizations to respond to critical needs and stabilize communities by restoring essential services such as water, electricity, sanitation, education, and health. These efforts represent steps needed to ensure that Syrians can return to safe, productive lives.

The President has requested $200 million to support Iraq. Iraq is at a crucial juncture: stability has improved since the military defeat of ISIS, but the group continues to pose a serious asymmetric threat. Iraq has the potential to be the center of a stable and prosperous Middle East that is a partner for the United States. To achieve this, we must continue to invest in the Government of Iraq and its people. Targeted U.S. financial investments are critical to preventing an ISIS resurgence. Economic and humanitarian conditions in Iraq, including long-term displacement of entire communities, imperil our battlefield successes. Our stabilization programming has set the conditions for more than 3.8 million Iraqis to return to their homes, but two million remain displaced. U.S. assistance promotes further integration of Iraq into the global economy, which will in turn create opportunities for U.S. businesses and jobs here at home. Funding to support the resilience of vulnerable communities, such as ethnic and religious minorities, to promote and preserve Iraq's religious pluralism is a top priority for the United States. A more stable, unified, and pluralistic Iraq with strong institutions is also a country less susceptible to Iran's malign influence. Tehran simply cannot match the quality and range of assistance that we and our partners offer Iraq.

In Libya, U.S. foreign assistance supports the country's political transition and stabilization, with the goal of a unified government that can stand on its own against ISIS and other terrorist groups. The FY 2019 request of $34.5 million will help Libya become capable of partnering with the international community on common security, economic, and political interests. Libya is an exceptionally challenging environment to implement assistance programs, but we have achieved success working on both national and local levels. Key Libyan leaders have committed to work through the UN political process toward credible, secure, and well-prepared elections as soon as possible and to respect the results of those elections when they occur. Under UN Special Representative Salamé's leadership, the UN is consulting with Libyan elements on adopting a constitution, which will be a pivotal moment in Libya's political transition from civil war toward fragile democracy. Support for the Government of National Accord will remain critical to its success and to defeating ISIS, stemming the flow of migrants, and interdicting human trafficking.

In Yemen, we are working with the international donor community to address critical humanitarian needs and help create an opportunity for durable peace. The FY 2019 budget request includes $43.4 million to support the Yemeni people and their institutions to address development and security issues, particularly countering threats from ISIS and al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula. The United States understands and is responsive to the devastating humanitarian effect of the conflict, particularly the ongoing cholera and food security crises affecting millions of Yemenis. Our assistance will advance our ability to support international efforts to bolster early stabilization activities, resumption of economic activities, and

provision of basic services while the United States and our partners press for a comprehensive political settlement.

The FY 2019 budget request, of course, includes our enduring commitments to key partners: Israel, Jordan, and Egypt. The most significant change in the request includes increases to Jordan and Israel in support of each of the new foreign assistance Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs).

This budget maintains our unwavering commitment to Israel's security and prosperity with $3.3 billion in Foreign Military Financing (FMF). FY 2019 marks the first year under the new 10-year, MOU between the United States and Israel, which includes plans for $33 billion in FMF over that time period.

Separately, the FY 2019 request also seeks $251 million in development and security assistance funding for programs in the West Bank and Gaza. While U.S. assistance to the Palestinians remains under review, this request will give us the flexibility to provide assistance to the Palestinian people, consistent with the Taylor Force Act and other provisions of law, should our review determine it is in our interests to do so. I can assure you that the Administration will brief Congress on the conclusions of the review when it is complete.

The FY 2019 request includes $1.275 billion for Jordan consistent with the new five-year MOU. Additional resources will allow the United States to continue to support the Jordanian government and people as they implement an important economic reform program designed to reduce debt levels and spur additional economic growth. We will continue to work with the new government appointed last week by King Abdullah on ways to promote prosperity and security for all

Jordanians in the future. The additional funds will also allow for the continued development of Jordan's security forces, which are on the front line in a turbulent region. Foreign assistance allows the United States to continue its strong and enduring partnership with the Kingdom of Jordan to achieve critical U.S. national security priorities.

In Egypt, our foreign assistance request includes $1.3 billion in Foreign Military Financing (FMF), supporting the Egyptian Armed Forces' capacity to counter terrorism in the Sinai, and to secure land and maritime borders. Our longstanding partnership across a range of regional issues, specifically efforts to defeat terrorism and prevent ISIS from strengthening its presence in the Sinai, are critical to American national security interests in the region. The United States will also continue funding priorities that advance American interests by strengthening the stability of the Egyptian state and the resiliency and prosperity of its 100 million people. For example, U.S. assistance supports Egypt's stability by helping to improve the quality of education and public health programs, support responsive and accountable government institutions, and create opportunities for Egypt's youth entering the workforce.

Security assistance remains an essential tool for advancing our security cooperation with our allies and partners and provides the means for them to counter destabilizing and malign activities in the region. FMF supports U.S. objectives to build security sector institutional capacity to ensure long-term sustainability, effectiveness, professionalism, and resilience of partner and ally nations. The FY 2019 request sustains our enduring commitments, and restores requests for bilateral FMF for Lebanon and Tunisia to strengthen their armed forces' counterterrorism and border security capabilities. U.S. assistance for

Lebanon's security services, particularly the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF), is the backbone of U.S. policy to reinforce Lebanon's sovereignty and assist the Lebanese government in asserting its authority throughout all of its territory. Strengthening Lebanese state institutions like the LAF undermines Hizballah and its attempts to exploit a weak Lebanese central government. U.S. security assistance to Tunisia represents a critical investment in a capable and valued partner working jointly with us to confront complex threats in North Africa. We are also maintaining robust support for Tunisian civilian counterterrorism forces through the Counterterrorism Partnership Fund.

Regional programs focus on countering terrorism and simultaneously fostering economic growth. The President' s FY 2019 request includes funding for regional programs to counter terrorism and support civil society, businesses, and non-governmental organizations that advocate for political, social, and economic reform. For example, the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership fosters regional security cooperation to defeat terrorists across North Africa and the Sahel. Our commitment to fostering democratic organizations and strengthening the rule of law and respect for human rights spans across the region from Morocco to Iran. The Middle East Partnership Initiative fosters partnerships between the private sector, civil society, and governments, and encourages innovation, and introduces measures that advances stability and prosperity in the region.

Chairman Ros-Lehtinen, Ranking Member Deutch, the President's FY 2019 request supports our highest national security priorities in the region and promotes investments to further our regional interests. Our ability to react quickly to the dynamic environments in the Middle East and North Africa will require your

continued support. I want to thank this Subcommittee for your unwavering support and look forward to answering your questions.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you so much, Mr. Ambassador.
Mr. Ferguson.

STATEMENT OF MR. HALLAM H. FERGUSON, SENIOR DEPUTY ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR, BUREAU FOR THE MIDDLE EAST, U.S. AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr. FERGUSON. Chairman Ros-Lehtinen, Ranking Member Deutch, and members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on the President's fiscal year 2019 budget request for the Middle East and North Africa. And thank you for your leadership on this subcommittee. I am pleased to appear alongside Acting Assistant Secretary Satterfield.

The Middle East and North Africa remains of key focus of U.S. foreign policy and national security priorities, particularly as we continue the fight against violent extremism. Despite complex political humanitarian and development challenges in the region, we see opportunities for USAID's work in stabilization, economic, and social development, and protecting vulnerable communities.

As you heard from Administrator Green in April, USAID's goal is to end the need for foreign assistance. There is no surer path to self-reliance than helping governments be more responsive to their citizens and more accountable in the management of public resources. To that end, the fiscal year 2019 request will support democracy assistance programs that remain a fundamental element of how we help countries address critical development challenges.

USAID stands in solidarity with the people of the Middle East and North Africa as they work to build a stable, more prosperous future. With your support, our fiscal year 2019 request of $1.7 billion for economic and development programs will help secure the enduring defeat of ISIS, further strategic partnerships, promote good governance, and encourage stability and economic security.

The impacts of the Syrian crisis and ISIS have spread to neighboring regions and countries, especially Jordan. Jordan is host to more than 660,000 registered Syrian refugees who have a significant impact on host communities. With our fiscal year 2019 request, we will continue to work with the health and education ministries to ensure that Jordanian communities, including refugees, have access to the same quality of services. Additionally, in support of our nearly eight-decade partnership with the Kingdom of Jordan, our fiscal year 2019 assistance will help Jordan accelerate inclusive economic growth, improve delivery of public services, and promote more efficient management of scarce resources, including water.

Our commitment to Jordan is evidenced by the new 5-year MOU we signed in February. In Tunisia, the birthplace of the Arab Spring, the USAID assistance will continue to work with local government structures, provide tangible economic and educational opportunities for youth, partner with private businesses to create jobs, and support sustainable economic reform. For example, we currently assist private companies in addressing the critical issues of unemployment and underemployment, particularly among young people.

In Yemen, the humanitarian crisis continues to deteriorate in the absence of a lasting political solution as we continue to see today. As a major donor, we are keenly aware of the importance of hu-

manitarian assistance and commercial goods, including food and fuel, which moves through the Hudaydah Port, and are determined to ensure they are not disrupted.

As Secretary Pompeo reiterated earlier this week, we expect all parties to honor their commitment to work with the United Nations in support of a political process to resolve this conflict, ensure humanitarian access to the Yemeni people, and map a stable political future for Yemen. USAID is in the process of scaling up development assistance activities to help put the country on a path to recovery and create the conditions for lasting peace.

More details about USAID plans for specific areas are in my written statement for the record.

Before I close, however, I would like to mention one——

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Would you like to put something in the record?

Mr. FERGUSON. I am sorry?

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Did you say that you wanted to put something in the?

Mr. FERGUSON. No. More details of our plans will be included in my written testimony that will be submitted.

Thank you.

However, before I close, I would like to mention one administration priority: The protection of religious and ethnic minorities who have suffered unspeakable harm in recent years, including genocide, crimes against humanity, and other atrocities. At the President and Vice President's direction, USAID is now redoubling its efforts to identify, deliver, and distribute the aid that Iraq's persecuted communities desperately need. Our commitment to these communities is steadfast.

When minorities are attacked, we rally local and international civil society and the private sector to join us. We strive to ensure their safety, food security, and livelihoods, and to find them a place to call home for now and ultimately secure their return. We have already channeled tens of millions of the dollars to the region. But we know the need is far greater and that we must do more to meet the urgent needs of these endangered populations. And we will.

This month, Administrator Green will travel to Iraq to meet with leaders of these suffering communities to personally assure them that assistance will soon turn from an inconsistent trickle to a steady stream. With the fiscal year 2019 request, USAID will continue its assistance to these vulnerable communities, particularly religious and ethnic minorities in the Nineveh Plains and Sinjar regions.

Protecting people's rights to choose their own beliefs and culture has been at the core of our Nation's values since its founding.

I thank the subcommittee for its continued recognition of the importance of this work and for your steadfast support.

Thank you for inviting me to testify today, and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Ferguson follows:]

Testimony before the House Foreign Affairs Committee
Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa
Statement of Hallam H. Ferguson
Senior Deputy Assistant Administrator of the Middle East Bureau
U.S. Agency for International Development
June 13, 2018

Chairman Ros-Lehtinen, Ranking Member Deutch, and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on the President's Fiscal Year (FY) 2019 budget request for the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). And thank you for your leadership on this Subcommittee. I am pleased to appear alongside my colleague from the Department of State, Acting Assistant Secretary Satterfield.

The Middle East and North Africa remain a key focus of U.S. foreign policy and national security priorities, particularly as we continue the fight against violent extremists. The protracted Syrian conflict and resulting humanitarian and refugee crises have significantly compounded the challenges in the region, especially in Jordan and Lebanon. In Yemen, 76 percent of the population is in need of assistance, the cholera outbreak approaches 1.1 million cases, and 17.8 million people are food insecure. Despite complex political, humanitarian, and development challenges in the region, we see opportunities for USAID's work in stabilization, economic and social development, and protecting vulnerable communities, including religious and ethnic minorities.

As we address these challenges and opportunities, this budget request aims to balance fiscal responsibility with national security imperatives. All of our work is underpinned with the principle of sustainability, to assist countries on their journey to self-reliance. And we continue to call on our partners to commit additional

resources for our shared priorities. The President's request reflects this, in places like Iraq and Syria where we are actively leveraging other donor resources, particularly that of our partners in the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS, and in Iraq where we expect the central government to be able to take on a greater role in its own recovery and stabilization.

As you heard from Administrator Green in April, USAID's goal is to end the need for foreign assistance. There is no surer path to self-reliance than helping governments be more responsive to their citizens and more accountable in the management of public resources. To that end, the FY 2019 request will support programs that strengthen democratic governance abroad, as democracy assistance remains a fundamental element of how we help countries address critical development challenges. In order to ensure our investments are sustained, USAID's approach includes, working "by, with, and through local partners." In FY 2019, we will continue to work directly with national and local governments; civil society; and local people to help them build their own strong, stable communities across the region.

As my colleagues and I visit USAID projects and meet with partners across the region, it is clear that the people of the Middle East and North Africa appreciate our support and have hope for their future. We stand in solidarity with the people of the region as they work to build a stable, more prosperous future. With your support, our FY 2019 request of $1.7 billion for economic and development programs in the Middle East and North Africa will help secure the enduring defeat of ISIS; further strategic partnerships with governments, civil society, business leaders, and entrepreneurs; promote good governance; and encourage stability and

economic security in the region. U.S. investment in these areas builds a bulwark against violent extremist actors and ideologies.

The President has been clear that the enduring defeat of ISIS is a national security priority, and our FY 2019 request will allow USAID to continue promoting stability and countering violent extremism across the region. In Iraq, our request will promote stabilization assistance in areas liberated from ISIS, inclusive governance, and economic reforms. This assistance will be in key in supporting the Government of Iraq's efforts to use its own resources more effectively and transparently.

As you know, the protection of religious and ethnic minorities in Iraq, who have suffered greatly under ISIS, has been a top priority for President Trump, Vice President Pence, and Administrator Green. In Northern Iraq - once home to large communities of Christians and other minorities, many of whom left their homes or fled the country altogether - USAID is committed to creating the conditions necessary for these communities to return safely and voluntarily to their ancestral lands.

The FY 2019 request will enable USAID to continue to target assistance to vulnerable communities, particularly religious and ethnic minorities in the Ninewa Plains and Sinjar regions. The United States has a proud legacy of standing with vulnerable ethnic and religious minorities. Protecting people's right to choose their own beliefs and culture has been at the core of our nation's values since its founding. When minorities are attacked, such as Christians and other ethnic and religious minority groups were in Iraq, we rally local and international civil society and the private sector to join us. We strive to ensure their safety, food security, and livelihoods, and to find them a place to call home for now and ultimately

secure their return. We have already channeled tens of millions of dollars to the region, but we know the need is far greater and that we must do more to meet the urgent needs of these populations -- and we will. This month, Administrator Green will travel to Iraq to meet with leaders of these suffering communities and report back with a plan of action to accelerate aid to those in greatest need.

At the President's direction, we are currently reviewing our assistance to Syria, to ensure that funding for stabilization programs supports our national security objectives, with the goal of targeted, effective, and appropriate level of assistance. We will continue to work with the international community, members of the Coalition, and our partners on the ground to provide much-needed stabilization support to vulnerable areas in Syria liberated from ISIS.

The impact of the Syrian crisis and ISIS has also spread to neighboring regions, and the ongoing crisis in Syria continues to strain the region, especially Jordan. Jordan is host to approximately 666,000 registered Syrian refugees, who have a significant impact on host communities. With our FY 2019 request, we will continue to work with the Health and Education Ministries to ensure that Jordanian communities, including refugees, have access to the same quality of services. Additionally, in support of our nearly eight-decade partnership with the Kingdom of Jordan, our FY 2019 assistance will help Jordan accelerate inclusive economic growth, improve delivery of public services, and promote more efficient management of scarce resources, like water. Our commitment to Jordan is evidenced by the new, five-year MOU we signed in February.

In Lebanon, the FY 2019 request will continue to build bridges between host communities and local government bodies to reduce community tensions and

improve service delivery. For example, we currently provide assistance to municipalities to implement projects prioritized by their communities. In Lebanon's recent election, USAID supported first-time voter education efforts to get out the vote, and provided training and capacity building for the Constitutional Council for Election Disputes Resolution and the Supervisory Commission for Elections for monitoring. We will also continue our work to improve access to education in Lebanon.

Turning to Egypt, which is entering its fifth decade of USAID partnership, the FY 2019 request will enable USAID to continue to invest in programs that further private sector-led growth; support the government to implement essential economic and social sector reforms; encourage the growth of small and medium-sized enterprises; and strengthen the Egyptian workforce, particularly youth and women. We will also continue investing in health and education to help the next generation of Egyptians fully realize their potential. We remain concerned about the May 2017 NGO law, which has the potential to further restrict civil society and complicate ongoing and future U.S. assistance in Egypt, if implemented, and we maintain an ongoing dialogue with the Egyptian government on issues that arise from the implementation of our work. We also continue to urge Egyptian officials to overturn or pardon the 2013 convictions of 41 staff of U.S.-funded NGOs.

In Morocco, USAID partners with the private sector, local and national government entities, and other donors to ensure that programming is sustainable. USAID's programs will continue to strengthen civil society, provide opportunities for youth in marginalized areas, support systemic education improvements, and address the workforce skills shortage that constrains economic growth.

While our assistance to the Palestinians remains under review, we will continue to support the Administration's goal of achieving a comprehensive and lasting peace agreement between the Israelis and Palestinians by helping create the conditions for stability and security on the ground.

In Tunisia, the birthplace of the "Arab Spring", USAID assistance will continue to work with local government structures, provide tangible economic and educational opportunities for youth, partner with private businesses to create jobs, and support sustainable economic reform. For example, we currently assist private companies in addressing the critical issue of unemployment and underemployment, particularly among young people.

In Libya, U.S. foreign assistance supports the political transition and stabilization efforts, including in areas liberated from ISIS. With our FY 2019 request, we will continue to support the United States' goal of helping Libyans build a more stable, unified, and national government. Since 2011, USAID has worked to help the country recover from civil conflict, advance its democratic transition, and strengthen governance at the national and local levels. We view elections in Libya -- national and local -- and the adoption of a new constitutional framework as the central ingredient for achieving these objectives. Toward this end, USAID is helping Libyans build the foundation for electoral events and a potential constitutional referendum. For example, we are providing technical assistance to Libya's local election commission and municipalities as they undertake municipal elections over the next year. We are also supporting the High National Election

Commission, which has successfully registered almost 1 million additional voters beyond the existing rolls (bringing the total to 2.4 million registered).

In Yemen, the humanitarian crisis continues to deteriorate in the absence of a lasting political solution. As a major donor, we are keenly aware of the importance of the humanitarian assistance and commercial goods, including food and fuel, which moves through Hudaydah port, and are determined to ensure they are not disrupted. As Secretary Pompeo reiterated earlier this week, we expect all parties to honor their commitments to work with the UN Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen and support a political process to resolve this conflict, ensure humanitarian access to the Yemeni people, and map a stable political future for Yemen.

USAID is in the process of scaling up development assistance activities to help put the country on a path to recovery and create the conditions for lasting peace. For example, to address the continued erosion of household purchasing power, we are working to help Yemenis generate income in sustainable ways, such as helping coffee farmers and fishermen increase their yields. We are building our development activities on existing humanitarian assistance, to increase sustainability and multiply our efforts. Our FY 2019 request will continue to support Yemeni institutions to address core economic and social issues, such as access to education, healthcare services, and water.

The President's FY 2019 budget request will support USAID's work to foster inclusive development and economic opportunity. This assistance plays an important role in building stable and prosperous societies that contribute to global security and enhance economic opportunities, including for American businesses.

I thank the Subcommittee for its continued recognition of the importance of this work, and for your steadfast support. Thank you for inviting me to testify today and I look forward to your questions.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you to both gentlemen with us.

Ambassador, I will ask you a question, and then two for Mr. Ferguson. I will just read them right along so you can ponder it.

Ambassador Satterfield, in your written testimony, you state that security assistance to the LAF is the backbone of U.S. policy to reinforce Lebanon's sovereignty and the government's authority throughout the region. Yet last month Secretary Pompeo told us at a full committee hearing that a review of U.S. assistance to the LAF is necessary in order to ensure that American tax dollars are supporting groups that can achieve U.S. interests.

How do you reconcile these two statements? Is it in U.S. interest to have aid to the LAF be the backbone of our policy while that aid is under review? And what is the status of that review?

And then, for Mr. Ferguson, H.R. 5141, the United States-Israel Security Assistance Authorization Act, a tag team effort by Mr. Deutch and me, would authorize USAID to sign additional MOUs, memorandums of understanding, with Israel in order to advance our mutual international development goals.

Is USAID working on this global MOU with Israel? And another bill from Ted and Ile's excellent adventure, H.R. 2646, the United States-Jordan Defense Cooperation Extension Act, would authorize a Jordan enterprise fund, among other things. And given the Kingdom's economic state, its current political unrest, vital interest to the United States, and given that Congress historically appropriates funds over the MOU numbers, will USAID take additional ESF funds to set up this enterprise fund?

So we will begin with you, Mr. Ambassador.

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. Madam Chairman, the continued U.S. robust support to the Lebanese Armed Forces remains one of the critical elements of our efforts in Lebanon to achieve not just stability in that country, particularly in the south, but also to enhance the role of state institutions, particularly security institutions, against illegitimate pretenders to that role, notably Hezbollah.

The Secretary's remarks spoke to the fact that we continuously review all of our programming, including this program, to ensure it remains both in its content, the amount of resources dedicated in the outcomes, not just the inputs and outputs, advancing U.S. goals. We believe, we continue to believe at this point, that support does——

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. You don't think they are conflicting. You think they are reviewing, but it is still——

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. We always review these programs.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you.

Mr. Ferguson.

Mr. FERGUSON. Thank you, Madam Chair, for your questions. Both important subjects.

First, thank you for the encouragement on exploring and negotiating a memorandum of understanding with Israel. We do share many of the same objectives in terms of development and providing prosperity around the world. And we are, indeed, pursuing such an MOU. And we hope to have an announcement to that effect in the very near future. Our administrator is personally very engaged in this and looks forward to speaking more about it.

On the question of the Jordan enterprise fund, I traveled to Egypt a few weeks ago in which—during which I met with the Egypt American Enterprise Fund there and came away very impressed by the work that they do and very encouraged at the possibilities of applying that same model elsewhere. And in Jordan, I think it is an issue that we look forward to exploring very carefully and fully in partnership with you because, as you say, the economic needs in Jordan are great, and I believe an enterprise fund is part of the solution there.

Thank you.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. So good news. Thank you so much.

Mr. Deutch is recognized for his questions.

Mr. DEUTCH. Thank you very much, Madam Chairman.

Ambassador Satterfield, first of all, I really want to thank you for your comments on Bob Levinson and the other Americans. And I do appreciate the commitment from you and from the Secretary. Bob remains the longest held American hostage. And Secretary Pompeo, in his Iran speech on May 22, said the return of American citizens held in Iran is a priority.

I wonder if you can provide any update on how the administration plans to engage with the Iranians and our allies to ensure the return of Bob and the other Americans.

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. Mr. Deutch, I would be very happy, along with my colleagues, to provide that information to you in an appropriate setting.

Mr. DEUTCH. Okay.

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. Very happy to arrange that.

Mr. DEUTCH. I appreciate that. We will follow up to arrange that meeting.

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. Thank you.

Mr. DEUTCH. Of course, Mr. Ferguson, welcome to the committee. Let me start by saying I have great respect for you, the work that you did before coming into this position and your commitment to this position. But I am still surprised, I think a lot of us are surprised, to see you here today as—until 2 days ago, there was a difference in your Deputy Assistant Administrator. And we were notified yesterday that you would be here instead.

And I just wanted to talk about—because there are questions, and I would like to just air them out. Some of the circumstances that seem to coincide with the departure of your predecessor. I have followed the policy change directed by the White House in October to directly aid religious minorities in Iraq. You spoke about the importance of that this morning. I fully concur with your assessment of the importance for us to be vigilant.

I am aware that one of our colleagues wrote a piece least week criticizing USAID for slow-walking the delivery of that aid. And I now see the Vice President—and as you referred to this morning, the Vice President has directed Administrator Green to personally go out to Iraq to evaluate the situation, a trip that I also understand had been long planned.

My first question is whether you plan to make any changes in the funding to religious minorities in Iraq that has already been awarded?

Mr. FERGUSON. Thank you for the question.

Yes. This is a very important matter, as I mentioned in my opening remarks and as you were just discussing.

We have a variety of assistance mechanisms and streams currently under way, including one that is reaching its conclusion of the procurement process right now. We expect that to be concluded sometime in the next coming weeks. And we do look forward to getting that assistance under way.

In addition, I would add that we are exploring additional means for getting resources quickly and rapidly to these endangered communities through a variety of options.

Mr. DEUTCH. As you complete that assessment, were entities, or do you expect any entities that have already been told that they won't receive contracts who were asking for sole-source contracts, and are there any plans to award sole-source contracts in the broad agency announcement process?

Mr. FERGUSON. I am sorry that I can't get into complete specifics in terms of the ongoing broad agency announcement, as it is an ongoing procurement, and so we can't get into details of it. But there are a variety of organizations that we have been talking to over a long period of time that are involved in that, from faith-based communities to local Iraqi groups. And we are looking at a variety of consortiums and coalitions that we will be funding through that.

Mr. DEUTCH. As you look at those, there is speculation whether your predecessor, who I understand was a member of the Senior Executive Service was removed because she in some way refused to flout USAID's policies and procedures and provide contracts to groups, that perhaps the Vice President and others wanted, or whether she was simply forced to take the fall for following or USAID's established policies and procedures, and if those procedures—if there is any truth that those procedures need to change, that is a policy decision that I would think that we would be engaged in.

Again, I am just concerned about the message that this confusion—and maybe it will be sorted out with the announcement as a result of this process—but I am concerned about the message that is sent to career civil servants to see someone who has spent their career working on behalf of State and USAID unceremoniously pushed out of a senior position with a political appointee, albeit qualified political appointee, installed in their place. I hope that this is just the start of this conversation. I think there is a—it is very important that this be addressed in a very open way so that we know exactly what the circumstances were. And, again, if, in fact, there was what is believed to be the case actually happened, it is concerning and I think would require this committee to engage in further discussion about the policies, whether they were appropriate or needed change, and whether this was ultimately a political decision made about someone who was following those existing policies.

And, with that, I yield back.

Thanks, Madam Chairman.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you so much, Mr. Deutch.

Mr. Kinzinger.

Mr. KINZINGER. Thank you, Madam Chair. Thanks for your leadership and holding this hearing and a bunch of other nice stuff. So I will just fill it in with whatever you want to hear. So thank you.

I thank the panel for coming before us today. You know, when I ran for Congress in 2010, I had actually gotten back from Iraq in 2009. And I had heard, then, the new President, President Obama, talk about repeatedly how he wants to leave Iraq. And, in fact, at the end of 2011, he did just that. Declared victory. He was correct in declaring a peaceful, stable, democratic Iraq. But we left Iraq, and we know what happened after that, and we are buried in the ramifications of that. And that is my concern with kind of where we are at today.

I think, in combating terrorism, we are going to find ourselves in a generational fight. I think we have arguably so far, and it is going to continue. And so my big concern is, how do we deprive the next generation of terrorists of recruits? That is the 7 and the 8, 9, 10 years old right now in refugee camps or living under oppressive hands. And that is the way to starve the next generation of their ability to recruit.

Mr. Satterfield, I do have a question for you. It was reported that you proposed closing American forward-operating bases on the Iraq-Syria border as an incentive to get Iranian-backed militias to withdraw from Southern Syria. Can you explain your reasoning here?

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. Excuse me, Mr. Kinzinger. Could you repeat the comment?

Mr. KINZINGER. Yeah.

It was reported that you proposed closing American FOBs on the Iraq-Syria border as a way to incentivize the Iranians to leave.

If that is true, can you explain what your reasoning is for that?

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. The reports are not correct.

Mr. KINZINGER. So they are just totally incorrect?

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. No. They are totally incorrect.

Mr. KINZINGER. Okay.

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. Any decision on the presence of U.S. military in Syria anywhere would be contingent upon execution of the destruction of ISIS and our policy with respect to containing and rolling back the presence of Iran in Syria.

Mr. KINZINGER. Okay. So, just to be clear, at no point did you propose that as an incentive?

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. No, it is not correct.

Mr. KINZINGER. Okay. And we had reports this weekend that Iranian-backed forces in Syria temporarily withdrew from the southern de-escalation zone, only to return to their post wearing Syrian Army uniforms.

Do you think that the Iranian-backed militias could use a similar strategy in other parts of Syria? Should American forces withdraw from the region?

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. I have not seen those reports and, frankly, have seen nothing in any channel on such an allegation. Iran——

Mr. KINZINGER. So I must be getting all kinds of information from somewhere that is incorrect then.

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. Iran and Iranian forces remain present throughout Syria. Our objective is to see them leave all of Syria, not just the southwest. In terms of how one would validate that, there are many ways and means to know whether any purported withdrawal of Iran, Iranian-backed proxy forces has or has not been achieved, not just in our hands but in the hands of other critically involved parties in the region.

Mr. KINZINGER. And do you believe that we can counter Iran and Syria while the Assad regime remains in power?

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. It is an excellent question that you pose. I see little indication that this regime is prepared to sever its reliance upon connections with Iran and the presence of Iranian forces in Syria. But the goal of that total Iranian departure from Syria is absolutely where we are.

Mr. KINZINGER. And then, last year, Iran and Iraq desk at the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs were merged into one position. Following President Trump withdrawing from the U.S.—the U.S. from the JCPOA, the Deputy Assistant Secretary who handles the issues has become extremely busy implementing the administration's policy toward Iran. This is concerning given the recent Iraqi elections.

Yesterday, Cleric al-Sadr and Iranian-backed militia Chief Amiri formed an alliance between their political blocs. While the formation of the government is not complete, this is an important development toward the Iranians gaining a strangle on the Iraqi Government. And, also, I think it is important to remind people that a quarter of American soldiers that were killed in the war were killed directly or indirectly by Iranian influences and forces.

What actions did State Department take to assist those Iraqi officials who were working to ensure Iraq became a pro-West democracy, instead of a pawn to the ayatollahs in Tehran?

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. Two comments. First, the process of negotiations maneuvering both public and private between the various coalitions or would-be coalitions in Iraq is exceedingly complex. I would caution strongly on the record, nothing you hear or see in terms of declarations of formation are anything more than posturing for the moment directed at influencing other groups within Iraq. This is a process that still has some time to work its way out.

In terms of our role, we are very much engaged and involved at all levels of government in working for an outcome which supports what we believe are both Iraqi and U.S. interests in stability, in an alignment that does not allow the domination of Iraq by any outside force, including Iran. We think the chances of getting there are good. But this is an Iraqi political process, it still has got quite a ways to play out.

Mr. KINZINGER. Thank you. And I want to thank you for your service to your country, and thank you both for being here.

And I will yield back at that.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you so much, Mr. Kinzinger.

Mr. Schneider of Illinois.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Thank you.

And as have others, I want to thank the chairman and the ranking member for having this hearing, and to my—both colleagues

from Florida—but the chairman, all the good wishes as you finish your term here.

And, again, thank you to the witnesses for joining us today.

As you laid out your assessment, I tried to think of the issues in our interests in the region in, essentially, three ranked categories. First is humanitarian. We have key humanitarian interests in Syria, in Yemen, the impact that that is having and potential crises leading to in Jordan and Lebanon. We have security interests. As you touched on, we need to defeat ISIS. And it is not just ISIS, because behind ISIS is al-Qaeda and other groups that are a threat to the region but also to our interests around the world and here at home. And, ultimately, we have long-term strategic interests. The biggest threat I see in the region continues to be Iran, Iran's nuclear program, Iran's interventions in conflicts in the region trying to spur those conflicts in support of terrorism.

As we look forward, we are trying to create the stability: Stability through diplomacy, stability through development, ultimately stability by creating political resilience within the—our allies in the region. But I have real concern.

Ambassador Satterfield, you also touched on a key point that one of the challenges in the region is the growing number of youth. And I think all three of those interests affect—or are affected by the population and the demographics in the region because of the youth.

So my first question to you is, how are we ensuring that strategy, our investments in the region are focused on the long term and making sure that the youth have opportunities, have stable governments, and are not a breeding ground for these terrorist organizations?

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. Mr. Schneider, I would say the three critical strategic lines you have outlined all have to proceed in parallel. No one in all places at all times can trump the others.

With respect to the youth, let me look at the example which I think is probably most distinctive, Egypt. Egypt has one of the highest rates of population increase in the world, and the rate of rate of population increase grows year on year. The challenge posed by this youth cohort bulge, the inverted pyramid, as it is sometimes referred to, is a challenge to the Egyptian Government. It is a challenge to society, to economic opportunity, and to stability and security.

What are we doing? We have shifted—and here I will turn to my AID colleague—over the course of the last decade increasingly to programs which are explicitly targeted in terms of demonstrable delivery to populations in Egypt who need to have the skills necessary both of a technical, nontechnical, and professional character to be able to work to contribute to the growth of the Egyptian economy. That is a different approach than was taken in many years past. It is a shift away from bricks and mortar programs toward people and enhancing skills in a particular place at a particular time that are needed. But it is very much speaking to the kind of long-term goals that you have advocated.

In Yemen, though, our focus is on simply providing feeding, potable water, medicine to sustain a population in absolute humanitarian crisis.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Right. And I appreciate that. There is so much to talk about. I want to—I don't mean to gloss over it. But you also talked about burden sharing. I support the efforts to increase the burden sharing. The United States cannot do it alone. But I would posit that the United States leadership is critically important, not just now but in the long term. And I do hope that, as we talk about burden sharing, it is not with an eye toward the United States withdrawing from the region but working with our allies, working with our partners, bringing more resources to the region but securing the United States' role.

How do you see us ensuring and strengthening the U.S. position, the U.S. role in the region?

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. The President is absolutely committed to increasing burden sharing both of a financial and a presence-on-ground character. But your remarks are absolutely correct. What we have found in our exchanges with regional international local parties is that a degree of U.S. engagement is necessary to elicit and sustain the much greater burden sharing by external partners that we see.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Great. And I will close. And I am running out of time. But I do worry very much about Iran's presence in the region but, in particular, Syria, as they are increasingly developing permanent presence of their forces, indigenous missile manufacturing capability.

And my broad question is, as the President has signaled a desire for U.S. withdrawal from Syria, what are the long-term implications for us ensuring that Iran does not create a permanent presence in Syria threatening all of our neighbors in the region but, in particular, our key ally, Israel.

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. We share exactly the concerns you identify. In the words that you have used, we are working with all of our partners in the region, including Israel, on how best to mitigate, contain, and then roll back that threatening Iranian presence.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Okay. And I just would continue to raise the concern. If we are withdrawing from Syria, it is harder for us to have influence in the outcomes long term and strategic in Syria.

With that, I yield back. Thank you very much.

Mr. ZELDIN [presiding]. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Florida, Mr. Mast, for 5 minutes.

Mr. MAST. Thank you, Chairman. I appreciate it.

You know, I think one of the things that is often missed by people in Washington, DC, is failing to acknowledge that what our partners want, leaders of other nations, is they want what is best for themselves. They want what is best for their bottom line. That is a reality of the world that we live in. And I thank God personally that we have an administration that cares more about the young sergeant or the young lieutenant from a place like Paris, Arkansas, or Paris, Illinois, or the tax dollars of some constituent from a place like Paris, Indiana, or Paris, Iowa, than they do about the well-being of a bureaucrat in Paris, France. So I think that is something that needs to be applauded here.

I have a question for each one of you. Number one for you, Ambassador, when we talk about the conversation of burden sharing and we look at those historical numbers—540 million in Iraq, 3 bil-

lion, numbers for the future, 200 million—who can you say are going to be our top partners for burden sharing? What percentage of burden sharing do we expect out of them individually? And is that a reasonable expectation that they fulfill that?

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. We have already had key support from governments in the Gulf, Saudis, Emiratis, Qataris; from the broader international community outside the region, Japan as well as European partners.

I can't give you percentages because we don't express it that way. The requirements are considerable. We have identified the specific order of magnitude of those requirements, not just for broad categories like stabilization, preventing resurgence of ISIS and violent extremism, but particular project areas, streams of funding where we believe international participation, regional and local participation is absolutely appropriate. And we continue to engage the highest levels to elicit the support necessary to meet those goals. They are in the interest of the region itself, not just U.S. national interests.

Mr. MAST. Is that an expression that can be made in a more suitable environment?

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. We would be happy to provide greater detail in an appropriate setting.

Mr. MAST. Thank you.

Mr. Ferguson, I have a question for you.

When we are talking about resources and burden sharing, are there resources that are being used to encourage those hundreds of thousands of Syrians who have fled Syria to share a piece of that burden by reengaging in fighting for their own country?

Mr. FERGUSON. Thank you, sir.

The regional Syrian refugee crisis is a critical one. And we have spent, over the course—since the beginning of the crisis, $7.4 billion of U.S. taxpayer money supporting those refugees throughout the region. The Ambassador may have more to say on specific diplomatic initiatives to encourage those refugees to take a more direct role in the ongoing fighting there. USAID's primary concern and focus is ensuring that those people are healthy and comfortable in their current—in their temporary residence, and ultimately, some day, we lay the groundwork for them to go home.

Mr. MAST. I thank you for those comments. I will just espouse on this a little bit.

It is troubling to me, a piece of that. The focus on comfort for refugees, I get it. I understand it. But I also get what I ask when I ask somebody to engage in combat. I know it as well as anybody. And I dare say one of the greatest parts about American history is the ways in which we have gone out there and fought and earned our freedom and earned the style of government that we want.

And if Syria ever wants to be a nation where they can look back on themselves for generations to come, those refugees that have fled their country have to play the greatest role in re-obtaining their country and making it into the nation that they want it to be. Otherwise, it is not going to be something that is long lasting, in my opinion.

I yield back.

Mr. ZELDIN. The gentleman yields back.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Florida, Ms. Frankel, for 5 minutes.

Ms. FRANKEL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you again to our panelists.

I want to go back. I think I raised my questions in earlier remarks, and I want to start with what is going on in Saudi Arabia, which I think we were all happy to hear about progress. I say it, the progress. It is ridiculous it has taken all these years, but—so they are due to lift the ban on the female drivers, but just recently, they have arrested women activists who had been protesting for greater reforms, so—which include women not having to get their father or their husband's permission to do many different activities.

So my question to you is, what has the administration done in this regard? I know there hasn't been any public denouncements, I don't think. But what about behind the scenes?

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. Ms. Frankel, the administration has strongly supported the Crown Prince's vision for what we would call a more liberalized society which empowers the over 50 percent of the Saudi population that is female to play their role in the country's economy, society, and future. These are worthy goals. We have encouraged and supported the specific steps that have been taken so far, some of which you make reference to. While they may seem like small and extraordinarily late from historical perspective measures, they are enormous in the context of Saudi Arabia's history, culture, and traditions.

We understand and we speak to the Saudis regarding those issues, which continue to concern us, including the question of arrests, which would appear to contradict the broader liberalizing ambitions that the Crown Prince and the government have laid out. And we are certainly not silent about those issues in our dialogue. But I do want to underscore, we regard the progress that has been articulated an aspirational sense by the Crown Prince as exceedingly positive, worthy of support.

Ms. FRANKEL. I mean, if you know, was there specific conversations about these recent arrests? In regards to women being required to get permission of male guardians for almost everything, were there specific discussions on that?

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. The issue of the arrest has been discussed.

Ms. FRANKEL. It has. Okay. Well——

Mr. FERGUSON. And I would just add, if I could——

Ms. FRANKEL. Yes, please.

Mr. FERGUSON [continuing]. That on the more general question of women's rights throughout the region, this is an issue that USAID takes extremely seriously and attempts to incorporate in its programs in every country, not in Saudi Arabia per se, but in Tunisia, Egypt, everywhere we go. It is something that our Administrator talks about all the time.

Ms. FRANKEL. Thank you very much.

And I had another question that I pose, and I wanted to get your input on that, which is what we have seen been going on on the Gaza Strip. We know that there—obviously, there are issues with the humanitarian conditions in Gaza. On the other hand, some of

this "nonviolent protesting" is not nonviolent and is instigated by Hamas paying people.

What, if any, recent steps are we taking in that regards?

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. Ms. Frankel, we have made very clear, including during the events of May 14, when I was in Jerusalem, along with others, some from this committee and from the U.S. Government, that the responsibility for the fatalities, for the injuries that occurred at and on the fence that day lies solely with Hamas. Hamas put innocent people in line of fire, put them at risk for its own cynical objectives. They and they alone are accountable for this. No one else.

Ms. FRANKEL. I agree with you on that point. But my question is, are we taking any other steps to help? There are innocent people in Gaza who are suffering. And what steps are we taking?

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. We have robust, along with the international community, contributions of a humanitarian character to Gaza. We support efforts by the Government of Israel, as well as by the Government of Egypt and others, to relieve the humanitarian suffering.

But my answer has to track back in the end to the fact much of that suffering is a direct consequence of actions taken by Hamas and what Hamas has not done: Recognize the existence of the state of Israel, accepted that only a peaceful political negotiating process can yield outcomes, and abandonment completely of the use and tools of violence.

Ms. FRANKEL. Well, I think—I am. Okay. Yes.

So I guess my followup to that is, aren't funds being frozen? Funds that are going toward humanitarian assistance, are they being frozen?

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. Humanitarian funds continue to flow. Previously obligated funds continue to move.

Mr. FERGUSON. I am sorry. If I can add to that——

Ms. FRANKEL. Yes.

Mr. FERGUSON [continuing]. Answer.

The review that is ongoing does cover all assistance going into the West Bank and Gaza. Previously obligated funds to humanitarian implementers, including the World Food Programme, and other implementers continue to run.

But to your point, ma'am, yes, those resources are on hold. No additional resources have been delivered at this time.

Ms. FRANKEL. Well, what is the extent of the assets that are not being delivered? What are we talking about?

Mr. FERGUSON. I am sorry. I don't have the specific numbers of specifically humanitarian resources in the Gaza Strip here. We can follow up with you with more direct detail.

Ms. FRANKEL. Thank you.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN [presiding]. Thank you, Ms. Frankel.

Ms. FRANKEL. Thank you.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Zeldin of New York. Thank you, sir.

Mr. ZELDIN. Thank you, Madam Chair.

And Ambassador Satterfield, I agree 100 percent. I appreciate your sentiment with regards to your analysis of Gaza and the cause of their struggles and the importance of supporting Israel's efforts, the administration's efforts, to hold what is a terrorist orga-

nization accountable and their need to recognize Israel's right to exist.

I want to get clarity on—I just want to follow up briefly on Mr. Kinzinger's question. Did you propose—Ambassador Satterfield, did you propose closing a base on the Iraq-Syrian border?

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. There was no proposal to take any such step. We have been in detailed discussions with governments in the region, including that of Israel, on how best to address the situation in the southwest, as well as in Syria as a whole. But any decision on the U.S. military presence anywhere in Syria, A, is a Presidential decision, B, depends absolutely on the exit of Iran from Syria.

Mr. ZELDIN. And the reason why we are asking is that it was reported—you probably have seen some of the stories where your name was referenced as being in a meeting with some other nations involved in the region with regards to a proposal to close borders.

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. I am not going to comment further on confidential diplomatic discussions, except to note——

Mr. ZELDIN. I just wanted you to understand why we are asking this.

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. Yes.

Mr. ZELDIN. Okay. Going back to the topic on Gaza, West Bank, there is a next generation of children in schools being educated, receiving textbooks, some of which—many of which are provided from the Palestinian Authority. The PA does get funding support from UNRWA. We, the United States, provide a lot of funding to UNRWA. Some of those textbooks are English only. There are many Members of Congress with concerns with regards to the content of these textbooks: Showing maps of the Middle East without Israel, not teaching their children about Judaism. Not just historical, geographical, religious—there is a whole perspective of reality that they are not providing to that next generation. And we do provide a lot of money to UNRWA, and that money, in large respects, end up in providing for funding these textbooks.

So what is, either of you want to just share your perspective of what you are observing and what we can do to better leverage the money to get the results of filling in the gaps of what is not getting covered?

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. What you address here is a longstanding concern. Whether from the PA or from UNRWA, the issue of incitement through educational materials, it is decades old. We have addressed this over a number of administrations. It is among the concerns that we have regarding both the PA as well as UNRWA itself.

And when you make reference to the burden of UNRWA funding last year, calendar year, the U.S. provided 34 percent of the funding to UNRWA. The President has made very clear that is an inappropriate burden on the United States in terms of the magnitude of the monies. But perhaps more importantly, the fundamental structures of UNRWA from the budget model, such as it is, to the mission and mandate require deep examination and consideration.

Mr. ZELDIN. I appreciate that answer. I tend to agree that the oversight, the accountability, the auditing of how our funds are

being used, the better leverage of the money that is being provided to get the results that we are looking for. Can you speak to—is there anything you can share with regards to the English-only supplement and how that might be filling in any gaps that we are not seeing otherwise?

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. I would have to come back to you on that specific question.

Mr. ZELDIN. Fair enough.

There are English-only supplements that are provided to teachers, and I would encourage anyone involved in the process, whether it is the teacher, anyone responsible for supervising or hiring that teacher, to the PA, UNRWA, the entire chain of whether it is funding, drafting textbooks, approving curriculum, and the standards is to ensure that some of those gaps get filled.

If English-only supplements are being provided, I think it is important for the teachers to be using them. So there is a lot here that goes beyond just accountability, auditing, better leveraging our money. We can fund the material. We can make sure it gets in the teachers' hands. It is important that the teachers are actually using it and it is not just getting shelved and they are not participating in training. And I would look forward any future opportunities to work with either of you gentlemen on getting better results with our funding and filling in those gaps in the region.

Thank you. I yield back.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you so much, Mr. Zeldin.

Mr. Cicilline from Rhode Island.

Mr. CICILLINE. Ambassador Satterfield, I want to go back to that issue of the Palestinians. I want to be very clear with this. Are you saying that all funding is frozen to the Palestinians, both UNRWA funding and other funding?

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. Already obligated humanitarian assistance, what remains in those channels continues to flow through implementers. New assistance is frozen.

Mr. CICILLINE. So when you say "new assistance," money that was allocated for 2018 has been frozen?

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. All previously appropriated funds other than those obligated for humanitarian——

Mr. CICILLINE. Previously appropriated or previously obligated?

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. Previously appropriated.

Mr. CICILLINE. Okay. Because we have reports from UNRWA that they are running a $260 million deficit because of frozen funds. Food from the World Food Programme will end at the end of the month, leaving 350,000 people without food. You agree with that assessment?

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. I cannot comment on those numbers.

Mr. CICILLINE. Okay. That 700 schools will close that provide education to 270,000 students and that Hamas has offered to open the 700 schools, which mean those young people will be exposed to the worst kind of extremism possible. So you would agree that—well, let me ask this. You can't dispute those facts because you don't have knowledge of it?

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. On the issue of education, I can indeed comment.

Mr. CICILLINE. That 700 schools are closed?

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. By end of July, we understand, from UNRWA, the contracting will need to be entered into for the August startup of schools, which they support. We have sought from UNRWA a definition of what the order of magnitude of the fiscal gap here may be.

With respect to an assertion that Hamas possesses the resources to open UNRWA-funded schools in Gaza, I simply can't comment.

Mr. CICILLINE. Okay. So what is the status of the review of UNRWA funding? Who is conducting it? What is the current status? What are the data points in making a determination? Who is doing it?

This seems to be generating a significant humanitarian crisis that could undermine rather than advance the national security interests of our own country and Israel. So I——

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. The review is under way.

Mr. CICILLINE. By whom?

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. The National Security Council is leading the interagency community in that review. It will make recommendations ultimately to the President.

Mr. CICILLINE. And when is that expected to be concluded?

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. I cannot give you a time line, sir.

Mr. CICILLINE. Ambassador Satterfield, how does the administration's budget and policy goals reflect its position on Egypt's crack down on personal freedom, civil liberty, and nongovernmental agencies, which I consider to be very, very serious?

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. We are sensitive too, have discussed with the Government of Egypt the impact of what you describe, civil society restrictions, other steps the government and its authorities have taken on overall long-term stability and security of Egypt.

At the same time, we regard Egypt as a vital, critical pillar of security and stability, not just for the region but also for Europe and for the United States. And our dialogue with Egypt touches on both those issues, the vital national security role—U.S. definition—Egypt plays, as well as our concerns over the matters of civil society, freedom of speech, and activity.

Mr. CICILLINE. Ambassador Satterfield, finally, you, in response to Congresswoman Frankel's question about the plight of women in Saudi Arabia, spoke a little bit about the Department's budget and policy objectives. And I would like to hear your thoughts on how the budget request, which very significantly cuts funding for diplomacy and programs that would impact the rights and well-being of women and girls, helps to achieve the mandate of the State Department's Office of Global Women's Issues, which represents the aim of the United States to promote interests, such as ending gender-based violence and child marriage, advancing women's economic empowerment, and promoting women's active roles in peace and security, which seem hard to achieve those objectives with deep cuts in programs that fund efforts that are intended to enhance the rights and well-being of women and girls, I would like to know how you reconcile those.

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. With respect to Saudi Arabia——

Mr. CICILLINE. No. No. Broadly.

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. Broadly speaking, we believe we have the resources required to continue with the active promotion of those goals.

Mr. CICILLINE. And, finally, so the deep cuts—I mean, it is sort of a curious answer. We made a substantial investment in these programs to achieve that objective. We have deep cuts, and you think we can still achieve them. But I take your answer.

My last question, then, Ambassador Satterfield, is what the status of the $200 million marked for the Syrian stabilization? I know it has been on hold. What is the current status of it?

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. It continues to be subject to review.

Mr. CICILLINE. Thank you.

I yield back.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you, Mr. Cicilline.

Ambassador Wagner of Missouri.

Mrs. WAGNER. I thank you, Madam Chairwoman, for hosting this hearing.

And thank you to our witnesses for their service.

I appreciate the subcommittee's commitment to our duty as Members of Congress to examine how the U.S. is allocating its finite resources to confront a range of threats in the Middle East.

Mr. Ferguson, in 2016, USAID used $20 million from the Complex Crisis Fund to mitigate the strain that an influx of Syrian refugees imposed on Jordan's water resources.

Can you explain and evaluate how USAID implemented this money?

Mr. FERGUSON. Yes.

Much of USAID's approach to supporting Jordan, a critical ally, is indeed to alleviate the pressures placed on local communities by the refugees. And the number that I referenced earlier, over $7 billion spent throughout the region, a large portion of that is in Jordan, not just through the specific allocation that you are referring to.

Mrs. WAGNER. How would you evaluate that? Quickly.

Mr. FERGUSON. So, on that specific instance, I will have to return to you with more detail. I am not intimately familiar with that.

Mrs. WAGNER. I am very interested in the fund. And vis-a-vis my genocide and atrocities legislation, how it is being used by State and how we can better use it in the future going forward, especially in the areas of prevention. To that point, Mr. Ferguson, the administration has indicated that it can use the Economic Support Fund to support crisis response activities that Congress funds through the Complex Crises Fund.

In your experience, how has the Economic Support Fund been used to respond to my anticipated humanitarian crises in the Middle East? And is the Economic Support Fund the most efficient way to fund regional crisis response?

Mr. FERGUSON. We use economic support funds for a variety of programs throughout the region. And as it intersects with crises, as we see many in the Middle East, the ESF funds are primarily used to attempt to alleviate the longer term underlying drivers of those crises. So, in Yemen, for example, a terrible humanitarian crisis, we are using ESF funds primarily to address the long-term

drivers in terms of state collapse there to prevent the much more immediate humanitarian issues.

Mrs. WAGNER. And immediate humanitarian issues would come under the refugees and what happened, for instance, with the Syrian refugees in Jordan and such.

You know, I do want us to make sure that we are communicating with the administration the difference between the Complex Crises Fund and the ESF, the ESF being, as you well stated, Mr. Ferguson, a longer-term look at crisis mitigation in the Middle East and across the globe.

I was appalled and, to be honest, deeply confused to learn that Syria took the reins of the U.N. disarmament forum at the beginning of this month. As we all know, Syria's proliferation activities in chemical weapons, ballistic and cruise missiles, and likely biological weapons are well documented. Ambassador Satterfield, how will the State Department counter mixed messaging from the U.N. And roll back the development of banned weapons in its Syria programming?

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. We were extremely involved, prior to that assumption by Syria, that position. And we made public very vigorously, in the voice of our mission in New York our outrage at that step. It is wholly incompatible with the objectives of that organization.

Mrs. WAGNER. I couldn't agree more. I also am, like I said, appalled and find it abhorrent that Syria, Syria, could take the reins of the U.N. disarmament forum.

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. We share that view.

Mrs. WAGNER. Any further discussion regarding this or a reevaluation or a revisit on this?

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. It will not impact the international work to identify and hold accountable the Syrian regime for abuses which it undertakes.

Mrs. WAGNER. According to the United Nations, North Korea has been supplying Syria's chemical weapons program. What impact will our new negotiations with North Korea have on nonproliferation issues in the Middle East, do you think?

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. I will have to take that question. We will respond to you.

Mrs. WAGNER. I would appreciate that, especially since we are all focused on the Korean Peninsula right now and obviously nonproliferation issues as a whole.

So I thank you, and I yield back the remainder of my time.

Mr. ZELDIN [presiding]. The gentleman yields back.

The Chair now recognizes the gentleman from New York, Mr. Suozzi, for 5 minutes.

Mr. SUOZZI. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Ambassador Satterfield, thank you so much for being here today. A lot of questions that have been asked about Syria, and I just want to follow up on some of those questions as well.

I am concerned about that we don't have a strategy overall or we don't know what the strategy is regarding Syria. I supported the President's decision to launch the airstrikes in Syria in response to the chemical attacks by the Assad regime. But I am concerned about knowing what the comprehensive strategy is. And by not

having a comprehensive strategy, we are really empowering Russia and Iran in the process.

So, in response to my colleague, Mr. Cicilline, you said earlier that the $200 million stabilization fund is on hold and still under review.

So what is being reviewed? What is the decision point regarding that money? And I will let you answer that first.

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. The President has made clear we wish to destroy as rapidly as possible the remaining presence of ISIS in Syria, the so-called caliphate. And that process is well under way as we are speaking.

The President has also made clear in parallel that the burden of preventing the resurgence post-destruction of ISIS, of either ISIS or another violent extremist group in Syria, lies primarily with regional and local forces who are most directly affected by that phenomenon. This is a question both of financial support but also literal physical support for stabilization for continuing the mission. We engage with all of the States in the region toward accomplishment of those two objectives by the President.

Mr. SUOZZI. Okay. So, now, you say the President has been clear. But the President has also sent some signals that the U.S. Forces may be withdrawing from Syria. So is that a possibility? Is there a timeline for that? Was that being discussed? And how does that line up with our goals similar to what you just mentioned about the effect to try and limit Iranian forces in Syria and to limit Russia's influence in Syria?

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. The President remains instructing us to continue the ISIS campaign and to continue to solicit the greatest degree of support possible from regional, local, and international parties for the enduring ongoing mission after that defeat.

Mr. SUOZZI. So are you saying that right now there is no consideration of withdrawing American forces from Syria?

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. I have described the President's position as best I can.

Mr. SUOZZI. Okay. And when you talk about the regional forces, are you talking about an Arab coalition in Northern Syria? And how will that affect our relationship with Turkey in the process?

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. We are looking at regional and local forces to take on their share of responsibility for stabilization in Northern Syria post-defeat of ISIS. We have a very robust dialogue with the Government of Turkey on issues in Northern Syria that are of particular concern to the Turkish Government. And we don't see the two as contradictory.

Mr. SUOZZI. What, if you could, would you say should we be looking at over the next 6 months? What is going to—what are we looking at? What are the big issue—what are the big decision points over the next 6 months?

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. Destruction of ISIS.

Mr. SUOZZI. That is the only one—number one priority.

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. It is the number one priority.

Mr. SUOZZI. And is there any other priority related to Iran and Russia at this time?

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. We obviously are extensively engaged in our Iran strategy with affecting Iran's ability to sustain ma-

ligned behaviors in the region and beyond, to be able to resume an enrichment program, and to continue with the broad range of actions which the U.S. regards as fundamentally threatening to us, to our friends and allies of the international community. That is a key policy focus of the United States.

Mr. SUOZZI. So how does that manifest itself specifically in Syria? How does our concern about Iran manifest itself in Syria?

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. We are in discussion—and greater detail can be provided in an appropriate setting—with key involved parties in and around Syria with respect to how best to roll back the Iranian threat posed by, present in, and through Syria.

Mr. SUOZZI. Okay. Thank you.

I yield back my time.

Mr. ZELDIN. The gentleman yields back.

The Chair now recognizes the gentleman from California, Mr. Rohrabacher, for 5 minutes.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to our witnesses.

Let me just note the expression that we heard earlier of the compassion—tears of compassion about the humanitarian situation on Gaza. Let me just note that, as long as those—the leaders in Gaza are allowing their resources to be spent on tunnels—they go into Israel in order to put terrorists in Israel—as long as they are allowing rockets to be shot into Israel—those tunnels, I have visited them. They are very expensive, and those rockets certainly are not inexpensive. We should not be in any way concerned that we are shortchanging the humanitarian needs for governmental or leaders of a given area that spend their money on rockets and tunnels.

So, with that said, is this the—where do the Kurds fit into all of this? Could this not be—I happen to believe the turmoil we face in the Middle East is not due to Israel but is due to the fact that, 100 years ago, that the Western colonial powers decided to create countries out of nothing like the country of Iraq that supposedly exists.

Isn't it time that maybe we try to set things straight? Maybe permit the Kurds and other—and nationalities there, like the Baloch in Iran. Shouldn't we try to, in some way, deal with that instability that was created so long ago?

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. Mr. Rohrabacher, we could spend a great deal of time on the issue of the Sykes-Picot and where it is 100 years later.

But our position, our policy, is quite clear. We support Syria. We support Iraq. We support Iran as integral united states within their existing borders. We believe that is a correct position based exactly on the issue of stability, vice instability, security, vice insecurity.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. I understand that, and I certainly commend the professionalism that that answer reflected. But let me just note, I don't think that works. And I think that we have seen it is not working. And perhaps we should pick our friends and just say the Kurds are our friends, and let's see what we can do to help them—whether or not that—whatever that creates among the make-believe country of Iraq would be less relevant than having the Kurds as a force in that part of the world.

Now, Turkey, could you give us—do you think Turkey will be playing any kind of a positive role? Or are we worried that Erdogan is going in exactly the wrong direction?

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. I can speak to our engagement with Turkey with respect to Syria. There we have been engaged over the last many months to try to achieve a resolution, an aspirational plan dependent on conditions on the ground, in which Turkish concerns, which are real, and we respect with regard to terrorism and attacks on it across their southern border with Syria, are properly addressed, as well as our concern that stability in Syria be sustained and that our campaign to defeat ISIS not be interrupted, as was the case some months ago.

With respect to the hypothetical you pose on the broader issue of direction to Turkish policy, my colleagues from the European Bureau can respond in greater detail. But I can simply tell you we regard Turkey as a critical NATO ally, as a part of Europe. We wish to see Turkey advance and prosper within those frameworks.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. I understand. That is great—again, more professional approach. Perhaps the more revolutionary approach might be—might end up with a better result, which is the approach that I am suggesting.

Let me note that, when you are talking about partners and that this administration is looking for partners, I would hope that, when we look at Iran, we look for partners there but not in the government, not in the established order, but the fact that you have people in Iran who are our allies. There are more Kurds in Iran than there are in Iraq. We have got Azeris in Iran and Baloch in Iran and young Iranians. So, if we are looking for people to share the burden and we are looking for partners, I hope that we look for those people inside Iran who are willing to be our partners. And they are anxious to do so.

Thank you very much. Again, we appreciate your service, both of you. And we appreciate the professionalism that you reflect. And we will try to get the job done as partners with you.

Thank you.

Mr. ZELDIN. The gentleman yields back.

The Chair now recognizes the gentleman from California, Mr. Lieu, for 5 minutes.

Mr. LIEU. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Ambassador Satterfield, for your service and for being here today.

I would like to talk to you about Yemen. In April this year, you testified before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and I will quote what you said. You said: "I will be quite explicit. We have told the Emiratis and the Saudis there has to be no action undertaken that would threaten the Port of Hudaydah." Right now, UAE is launching a military offensive on Hudaydah. The reason that you said what you said, and the reason the administration took that position I believe was threefold. First, the U.N. itself says that such an operation could result in 250,000 civilian causalities. Second, a prolonged assault on Yemen's main port would severely jeopardize the delivery of humanitarian aid to the whole country making what is already the world's humanitarian crisis somehow even worse. And, third, it will instantly set back any progress that has been

made to reach a diplomatic solution to this seemingly endless conflict.

So my first question to you is what has changed since your April statement and today?

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. Mr. Lieu, we continue to expect all parties to this conflict to honor their commitments to work with the United Nations and support a political process, not a military process, to resolve this conflict and to ensure the critical goal of continued humanitarian access.

We are a major donor of humanitarian aid, and we are very concerned with the situation of the Yemeni people. We are keenly aware, as we have spoken to in the past, Mr. Secretary of State has spoken in the past, of the importance of Hudaydah and Saleef Ports, and we are determined to ensure that operations there are not disrupted for all the reasons you and this committee well understand.

We are closely following the developments you refer to around Hudaydah. The Secretary has spoken with Emirati leaders. He has made clear both our desire to address their security concerns and to preserve the free access to humanitarian critical commercial supplies through that port. We are also in close touch with U.N. agencies and with the U.N. Special Envoy Martin Griffiths with respect to his interests and his dialogue with the Houthis.

Mr. LIEU. Thank you for that.

So let me ask this another way.

In April, the Trump administration opposed military action undertaken by UAE and Saudi Arabia toward Hudaydah. Did that position change, or did UAE and Saudi Arabia do this despite the opposition from the Trump administration?

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. As the Secretary said in the statement issued by the Department, we have been in touch with the UAE leadership. We understand their security concerns. But in parallel with that understanding, we have made clear there should be no interruption of access through the ports.

Mr. LIEU. Okay. Let me try this a third time.

Does the Trump administration support or oppose this military offensive by UAE on the Port of Hudaydah?

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. We have been very clear with the Saudis, the Emiratis, and with Yemeni officials, all of them at every level, that destruction of critical infrastructure, disruption of the delivery of vital humanitarian aid, remains unacceptable.

Mr. LIEU. All right. Followup question.

Could you tell us how the U.S. is prioritizing U.N. negotiations for peace efforts in Yemen? I believe you understand, as well as the other stakeholders, that there is no military solution. What would you see as their path toward peace in Yemen?

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. The path toward peace in Yemen are arrangements that at first addressed the critical humanitarian requirements of the Yemeni people; secondly, bring down the level of violence and confrontation to the point that real negotiations amongst all of the parties involved can begin.

Our understanding is that, with respect to the Port of Hudaydah, the U.N. Envoy was, remains in the position of proposing to the

Houthis, resolutions which could spare threats to the port but that the Houthis have not responded at this time to those proposals.

Mr. LIEU. Thank you.

Is the U.S. assisting in this military operation in Hudaydah?

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. No.

Mr. LIEU. Okay. As you know, the State Department lawyers under the Obama administration undertook an inquiry as to whether U.S. military support for a Saudi-led coalition amounted to aiding and abetting war crimes.

Can you give us a copy of that memo that the State Department lawyers wrote on that issue?

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. I will take your request.

Mr. LIEU. All right. Thank you.

Can you tell us what they concluded in that memo?

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. Without reference to the existence or nonexistence of such a specific memo, I will take the request back.

Mr. LIEU. Okay. Thank you.

I yield back.

Mr. ZELDIN. The gentleman yields back.

The Chair now recognizes the gentleman from Virginia, Mr. Connolly, for 5 minutes.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Ambassador Satterfield, the humanitarian situation in Gaza has deteriorated. "Dramatically" doesn't even begin to describe it. It is catastrophic: 95 percent of water is unfit for human consumption; 53 percent of people live in poverty, which is up from 38 percent in 2011; 44 percent unemployment, highest recorded unemployment rate in the world.

And then when we look at how it affects people's lives: 140,000 people would lack emergency food assistance if our assistance and other assistance were cut off; 42,000 patients would lack essential access to any kind of rudimentary healthcare system, let alone surgery and the like; 50,000 youths lacking access to life skills; and 12,250 people who would lose paid entrepreneurship opportunities with a freeze or an end to our assistance.

What is the counterargument to that in terms of it is time to cut off assistance or run the clock on the fiscal year 2017 funding levels provided by the Congress?

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. That there is absolutely no challenge.

Mr. CONNOLLY. I can't hear you, sir.

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. There is no challenge from the administration to the gravity of the humanitarian suffering in Gaza.

Mr. CONNOLLY. You agree with what I just enumerated?

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. I agree with the magnitude of the humanitarian suffering. What I would note is it is an international responsibility, not solely one on the shoulders of the United States, to address the real humanitarian needs in Gaza. It is a need that the United States has disproportionally borne responsibility for many years. But I would also, sir, reflect on why the situation in Gaza is as it is. It is 11 years of governance by a terrorist organization that has chosen to use its resources, chosen to use parts of international assistance for the furtherance of its military goal, which is threatening, if not aiming, for the destruction——

Mr. CONNOLLY. Ambassador Satterfield, American generosity has overlooked that time and time again in the Post-World War II era, including, I might add, with North Korea. Even in the midst of unbelievable human rights violations in North Korea by this dictator and his father and his grandfather before him, the United States found itself providing, for example, humanitarian food assistance so that people didn't starve to death, irrespective of the politics of the regime. Do we have a different standard for the Gaza because you don't like Hamas? I don't like Hamas either. But there are people who are suffering, as you and I both agree.

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. We are making an assessment.

Mr. CONNOLLY. I am sorry?

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. We are making an assessment of what U.S. assistance is appropriate for Gaza, West Bank in conjunction with our emphasis on burden sharing by regional parties which are directly affected by this.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Ambassador Satterfield, I agree with that. I think the United States absolutely should assist in burden sharing. It shouldn't just be disproportionately our burden. I agree. And I think the objections to the Hamas government are legitimate and need to be registered.

But we have to also look at the suffering of the people in the Gaza. We can't just decide: Because of your political structure, you are going to suffer, and we don't care. And right now, as I understand it, you have undertaken a review of our assistance to the Gaza starting in January. That review began in January. Is that correct?

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. Yes.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Sir, it is now June. And as I understand it, you have declined to give us any timeline for when we might expect completion of that review and new policy recommendations coming out of it. And as I said, meanwhile there is a freeze, is there not, on the assistance going to the Gaza?

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. Except for currently or previously obligated funds, yes, sir.

Mr. CONNOLLY. And how would you respond to the critics who say that this review is really subterfuge for, you know, running the clock until the fiscal year 2017 appropriation expires in September?

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. The review is at the direction of the President. It will answer ultimately to the President in terms of decisionmaking. And it is based upon what is the most appropriate use of U.S. taxpayer resources to effect U.S. strategic objectives wherever the review may be, Syria, Gaza, West Bank.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Well, I am sure that will bring great comfort to the human suffering in the Gaza.

I yield back.

Mr. ZELDIN. The gentleman yields back to the Chair.

The Chair is going to recognize himself for 3 minutes.

I just want to make a note to committee members. We do have a hard stop here at the committee at noon. After I recognize myself for 3 minutes, I will be recognizing Ms. Frankel for 3 minutes and then Mr. Deutch. And then we will be concluding the subcommittee meeting. That is the plan.

The Chair recognizes himself for 3 minutes.

If we can move to the situation we are all witnessing with the protesters in Iran. And if you could just share your thoughts, your reflections on what you are seeing. A lot of people within the country are speaking out. They are protesting. There is a crackdown on the government.

What are we seeing in recent weeks and months with regards to Iran?

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. The protests you refer to are extremely interesting because, unlike the protests of previous years, they are not addressed to any particular official or any particular movement, conservative, radical, moderate. It is about the structure of economics, the structure of finance, employment, jobs, life in general in Iran. It is a broad-based multi-city protest. The structure is rotten. It is not addressing the needs of the Iranian people. There have been bank collapses. People have been left without resources. The middle class is diminishing. It is the system itself that is the object of this protest. And it may be why it is as challenging and significant as it is.

There are limited resources available to the regime. We believe they have been grossly misspent in support of Iran's maligned adventures in the region and beyond. The people of Iran who may or may not have transparency on those issues, probably less rather than more, are reacting to what they see at their level, their access to economic opportunity, the reliability of a system taking care of them. That is what the generator is for this protest, and it is significant.

Mr. ZELDIN. Since the President's decision to withdraw from the nuclear deal, what kind of response are you seeing from the Iranian regime as far as an interest in staying in or a desire to go in a different direction?

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. In the context of this setting, I would say that the regime is deliberating over what it does. What does it do to avoid making the situation worse, to avoid isolating itself further, to avoid alienating critical European and other trading partners more? And I don't think they have come to a specific decision.

We could discuss this more in another setting.

Mr. ZELDIN. Let me yield back. Thank you to the witnesses.

And at this time, Mr. Curtis actually just arrived. So I am going to recognize him now for 3 minutes.

Mr. CURTIS. Thank you. I appreciate everybody's time today and the witnesses being here for such a long period of time.

I would like to talk just a little bit about what is happening in Iran with the—several months ago, we saw the protests. The administration was very supportive of the protesters. And I am kind of curious what we can look forward to as far as how we use our resources there to support those who need it most and who are supportive of the United States.

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. I think the best use of our resources to ensure that the Iranian people are as aware as possible of the decisions being taken by their regime, the adventures in which their regime is engaging in a regional context, the expenses those adventures require, and allowed to communicate amongst them-

selves. I think that is probably the absolute best use of our resources.

Mr. CURTIS. Adventures. That is an interesting term. I think we probably know what you are talking about.

Are we—and by "we" I mean Congress—are we doing enough, and is there something else that we can be doing?

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. We have had very strong support from the Congress with respect to the programs that we are undertaking in Iran. And we are very pleased with the fact the support has been sufficient to address the needs we have identified.

Mr. CURTIS. Thank you.

Another situation where we have got well-meaning people sometimes being taken advantage of, particularly by terrorist groups, is Gaza. And can the U.S. assistance be used to improve the situation for the majority of people in Gaza that simply want to live their lives without some of those funds going to the terrorist organizations? And do you have an opinion on that?

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. The meta-issue, if I may refer to it as such in Gaza, is that humanitarian assistance, however worthy in addressing the very real suffering of the people of Gaza, is a palliative measure. It doesn't address the core reasons why the people of Gaza are suffering, which are the choices made, and the choices not made, by the Hamas leadership. And there is a degree of difference between palliation and ultimately addressing root causes of a problem. There had been many, many years of measures that attempt to address today's problem, today's suffering. They haven't really gotten at the core of the problem of Gaza yet, which is Hamas.

Mr. CURTIS. Okay. Thank you.

I yield my time.

Mr. ZELDIN. The gentleman yields back.

At this time, the Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Florida, Ms. Frankel, for 3 minutes.

Ms. FRANKEL. Thank you.

I just want to follow up on our discussion today on what is going on in Gaza and West Bank with the Palestinians. And just to preface that by saying, you know, we all care about Israel's security and prosperity. And I stand with Israel. It is an enduring situation for me. But I think this is like cutting off your nose to spite your face, what your—the attitude that you are reflecting here today. Because if you want to stop the violence from spilling out even further from Gaza, it seems to me that we have to participate in humanitarian assistance. I mean, we give, rightfully so, billions of dollars to Israel to keep them secure, and yet now you want to take away what is millions to prevent the harm that Mr. Connolly laid out here.

And I just want to read from the Times of Israel today—or recently where the IDF chief—that is Israel Defense Forces—said to warn Gaza war likely if humanitarian crisis persist. The IDF's chief of staff, Gadi Eizenkot, warned ministers during a cabinet meeting on Sunday that Israel could soon face another war with Gaza-based group Hamas as a result of the deteriorating humanitarian and economic conditions in the coastal enclave. And he further said that, should the humanitarian crisis continue to spiral,

Israel is liable to find itself drawn into another round of fighting with Hamas in 2018.

So it seems to me that this hard-line attitude, as I said, is like cutting off your nose to spite your face. And I would really urge the administration to rethink its position.

And I yield back.

Mr. ZELDIN. The gentlewoman yields back.

At this time, the Chair would like to recognize the gentleman from Florida, Mr. Deutch, for 3 minutes.

Mr. DEUTCH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I wanted to return to this topic also and see if we can just—I think it will be really helpful, Ambassador Satterfield, for the committee, in light of what Mr. Connolly and Ms. Frankel said, and others, to understand a little more detail about what this review looks like.

So you said the NSC is leading an interagency review. So I would—I ask the following questions. I think we would all like to know, to the extent you can share with us, first, what specifically is the scope of the review? Mr. Connolly pointed out how long we have been waiting. What is the timeline for completing the review? Is there a deadline by which it is going to be completed, given the humanitarian crisis that exists that is, in so many ways, impacting certainly those whose lives are being challenged because of the humanitarian crisis and ultimately the security in Gaza and the security for our ally Israel? So is there a deadline? Who else is participating in that review that the NSC is leading? And then ultimately—and, finally, I think most importantly, is there a guiding principle other than how much should we be contributing and how much should others be contributing? Is there a guiding principle about what is—how the review is being conducted and what American interests are, particularly the ongoing commitment that this country has always made when there is a humanitarian crisis?

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. Mr. Deutch, I am very much aware of the interest of this committee, Mr. Connolly, Ms. Frankel, and others. I will have to take the questions you have posed back for a response.

Mr. DEUTCH. Okay. Well, then I would just ask this followup. Is that a response—the NSC is—somewhere, when a review is conducted like this, there is a charge given. So where did that come from? How much specificity was in it? I think that is what we would like to understand.

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. I understand your question. I will take that back.

Mr. DEUTCH. Okay. I appreciate it. If you can take that back, and we would very much appreciate that response be presented, provided to us in writing.

I would be happy to yield to Mr. Connolly.

Mr. CONNOLLY. I thank my friend.

I just would add, if you would consent, another question, which is the one Ms. Frankel raised, which is, is this freeze and is this long timeline unwittingly harmful to our ally Israel? Because at some point, this becomes a security threat to Israel, but for the want of humanitarian assistance, as Ms. Frankel pointed out. And

I think that is a legitimate policy question to be examined and answered.

I thank my friend.

Mr. DEUTCH. And an appropriate question to be included. And I thank Mr. Connolly.

I yield back.

Mr. ZELDIN. The gentleman yields back.

I would like to thank all the members for participating, especially our witnesses today.

The subcommittee stands adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 11:56 a.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

APPENDIX

Material Submitted for the Record

SUBCOMMITTEE HEARING NOTICE
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6128

Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa
Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL), Chairman

June 12, 2018

TO: MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

You are respectfully requested to attend an OPEN hearing of the Committee on Foreign Affairs to be held by the Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa in Room 2172 of the Rayburn House Office Building (and available live on the Committee website at http://www.ForeignAffairs.house.gov).

DATE: Wednesday, June 13, 2018

TIME: 10:00 a.m.

SUBJECT: The Middle East and North Africa: Ensuring Resources Match Objectives

WITNESSES: The Honorable David M. Satterfield
Acting Assistant Secretary
Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs
U.S. Department of State

Mr. Hallam H. Ferguson
Senior Deputy Assistant Administrator
Bureau for the Middle East
U.S. Agency for International Development

By Direction of the Chairman

The Committee on Foreign Affairs seeks to make its facilities accessible to persons with disabilities. If you are in need of special accommodations, please call 202/225-5021 at least four business days in advance of the event, whenever practicable. Questions with regard to special accommodations in general (including availability of Committee materials in alternative formats and assistive listening devices) may be directed to the Committee.

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

MINUTES OF SUBCOMMITTEE ON *The Middle East and North Africa* HEARING

Day *Wednesday* **Date** *06/13/18* **Room** *2172*

Starting Time *10:05* **Ending Time** *11:56*

Recesses [ ] (____to ____) (____to ____) (____to ____) (____to ____) (____to ____) (____to ____)

Presiding Member(s)

Chairman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, Rep. Zeldin

Check all of the following that apply:

Open Session [✓]
Executive (closed) Session [ ]
Televised [✓]

Electronically Recorded (taped) [✓]
Stenographic Record [✓]

TITLE OF HEARING:

The Middle East and North Africa: Ensuring Resources Match Objectives

SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

GOP: Chairman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen Reps. Curtis, DeSantis, Donovan, Kinzinger, Mast, Wagner, Zeldin,
Dems: Ranking Member Deutch, Reps. Cicilline, Connoly, Frankel, Lieu, Schneider, Suozzi

NON-SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: *(Mark with an * if they are not members of full committee.)*

GOP: Rep. Rohrabacher

HEARING WITNESSES: Same as meeting notice attached? Yes [✓] **No** [ ]
(If "no", please list below and include title, agency, department, or organization.)

STATEMENTS FOR THE RECORD: *(List any statements submitted for the record.)*

Statement for the Record submitted by Rep. Connolly
Questions for the Record submitted by Chairman Ros-Lehtinen for The Honorable David M. Satterfield
Questions for the Record submitted by Rep. Schneider
Questions for the Record submitted by Rep. Fitzpatrick for The Honorable David M. Satterfield
Questions for the Record submitted by Rep. Kinzinger for The Honorable David M. Satterfield
Questions for the Record submitted by Rep. Lieu for The Honorable David M. Satterfield

TIME SCHEDULED TO RECONVENE _____
or
TIME ADJOURNED *11:56*

Subcommittee Staff Associate

Statement for the Record
Submitted by Mr. Connolly of Virginia

In order to match resources to objectives, one has to have objectives. In the Middle East and North Africa, the Trump Administration has none, except to undo every action the Obama Administration took, no matter the impact on U.S. national security interests. President Trump has decimated funding for diplomatic and development programs in the region, withdrawn from the Iran Deal, frozen critical funding needed to address the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, and created a vacuum that our adversaries have eagerly filled in Syria. If the objective is to cede American leadership and threaten U.S. national security, then the President's FY 2019 budget is right on target.

The Trump Administration's FY 2019 international affairs budget continues the President's unilateral retreat from the world, and the Middle East and North Africa region is no exception. The President proposed slashing bilateral aid for the region by 18.1 percent compared to FY 2017. These cuts are particularly acute for humanitarian aid. Since 2011, the United States has provided more than $11 billion to alleviate humanitarian crises stemming from ongoing conflicts in Syria, Iraq, Yemen, and elsewhere in the Middle East. Yet with global displacement at an all-time high, President Trump has proposed cutting global humanitarian assistance by 19 percent.

Meanwhile, the humanitarian crisis in Gaza has deteriorated from bad to worse. In Gaza, 95 percent of the water is unfit for human consumption, more than 53 percent of people live in poverty (up from 38.8 percent in 2011), and 44 percent of people are unemployed (highest rate in the world). President Trump not only proposed cutting bilateral assistance to the West Bank and Gaza by 14 percent, but the Administration has also frozen current funding while it undertakes a vague and undefined "review" of such assistance. If continued, the impact of this freeze could be catastrophic: 140,000 people would cease to receive emergency food and non-food assistance, 42,000 patients would not receive essential health services, 50,000 youths would lack access to life skills development, and 12,250 people would lose paid entrepreneurship opportunities.

This Committee supported my amendment to the Taylor Force Act to protect childhood vaccination programs in the West Bank and Gaza. It must reiterate that concern for the humanitarian situation in the Palestinian territories by pressing this Administration to provide transparency on the standards and timeline of this ambiguous review. Palestinian lives, Israeli security, and regional stability hang in the balance.

Compounding threats to regional stability, Trump's withdrawal from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) constitutes one of the most sordid and reckless acts by a chief executive of this country. In doing so, he has ejected us from the deal without a parachute. Secretary Pompeo announced a so-called "Plan B" for Iran, conceived as an afterthought and predicated on America's shattered credibility to reconvene the parties for a "better deal." The probability of a nuclear Iran has now risen exponentially just when we had it under control. And if that happens, the Saudis have

indicated they will pursue a nuclear weapon too. And now we're off to an arms race in the most volatile part of the world.

In Syria, the Trump Administration's erratic behavior and lack of a coherent strategy have emboldened President Bashar al-Assad and his patrons Russia and Iran, and endangered U.S. national security interests. Twice in the course of a year, an Administration announcement of retreat from Syria presaged a brutal chemical weapons attack by the Assad regime, followed by a kneejerk kinetic response lacking a larger strategy. It should come as no surprise that under President Trump's leadership or lack thereof, we are no closer to a peaceful negotiated settlement in Syria.

By failing to articulate a strategy or invest in the necessary resources to protect U.S. national security interests in the Middle East and North Africa, the Trump Administration has allowed other parties on the ground to shape regional dynamics to reflect their own interests. This unilateral retreat may very well be the Administration's objective, but it makes America less safe.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Acting Assistant Secretary David Satterfield by
Chairman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (#1)
House Foreign Affairs Committee
June 13, 2018

Question:

Ambassador Satterfield, you testified that reports that you had proposed closing a U.S. base near the Iraq-Syria border in exchange for the withdrawal of Iranian forces in the area are "totally incorrect" and "any decision on the presence of U.S. military in Syria anywhere would be contingent upon execution of the destruction of ISIS and our policy with respect to containing and rolling back the presence of Iran in Syria." You also testified that "there was no proposal to take any such step:"

a. Whether or not this idea was officially proposed, please explain the importance of the U.S. military presence in southwest Syria as a component of U.S. policy in Syria.

b. What would the U.S. concede strategically if the U.S. were to withdraw its forces from southwest Syria while Iran and its militias remain in other parts of the country?

c. How would such an action fit into Secretary Pompeo's strategy for rolling back Iranian influence in Syria?

Answer:

This Administration's priority in Syria is the enduring defeat of ISIS, and our military presence is part of that campaign. We expect countries in the region and beyond, plus the United Nations, to work together towards a diplomatic resolution to the Syrian conflict under UN Security Council Resolution 2254 and continue the fight to ensure that ISIS never re-emerges. Part of this Administration's strategy in Syria also remains focused on neutralizing Iran's threatening influence in Syria, and a secondary benefit of our military presence in that country is that it deters Iranian malign influence.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Acting Assistant Secretary David Satterfield by
Chairman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (#2)
House Foreign Affairs Committee
June 13, 2018

Question:

Ambassador Satterfield, you testified that $200 million in stabilization assistance to Syria "continues to be subject to review" and that NEA, as part of the President's emphasis on burden sharing, "engage(s) with all of the States in the region" in order to destroy ISIS and prevent the resurgence of another violent extremist group in Syria. On June 14, the State Department announced that the President authorized the release of approximately $6.6 million in aid for the White Helmets and the UN's International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism:

a. What other programs are currently on hold that fall under the review of the suspended assistance, who is in charge of this review, and what happens if this assistance is not released by the end of the fiscal year?

Answer:

The Administration is conducting a review of all bilateral foreign assistance for Syria stabilization to determine how best stabilization funds might be utilized. While this review is underway, the State Department and USAID continue efforts to support immediate stabilization and early recovery efforts in areas liberated from ISIS control, including the removal of explosive remnants of war, the restoration of essential services and building local capacity to support longer-term sustainability.

The President has also made clear that, as we move forward, the Administration will continue to engage the international community and our partners in the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS to take a greater role in stabilizing liberated areas of Syria. In the past several weeks, Coalition donors have pledged nearly $100 million dollars to support stabilization efforts in northeast Syria undertaken by U.S. government implementers, the United Nations, the Syria Recovery Trust Fund, and in the case of some nations, their own bilateral efforts.

b. What is State doing to lift the freeze on the stabilization assistance or is this not a priority for the administration?

Answer:

We are working closely with the White House to ensure that our assistance is targeted, effective, and set at the appropriate level. The lasting defeat of ISIS in Iraq and Syria remains a priority for this administration.

c. What outreach has State performed with regional donors in order to fund these programs and have we received any commitments from our partners?

Answer:

The U.S. Department of State continues to lead and build upon a multi-front donor engagement effort to secure funding for NE Syria stabilization – an effort accelerated in April 2018. We will continue to leverage Defeat-ISIS Coalition engagements to advocate for funding requirements and shortfalls, inclusive of the recently concluded meeting in Morocco, and the upcoming July 12 Ministerial.

The United States has opened up its programs to foreign donor funding for those Coalition Members that lack implementing partners, in order to broaden the donor base. The donor dialogue has thus far netted approximately $89 million in hard commitments since April 1. Hard commitments received to date reflect new Coalition commitments through four channels: bilaterally-funded programs; pledges to UN programs; pledges to the Syria Recovery Trust Fund; and contributions to U.S. government mechanisms supporting stabilization efforts, including explosive hazards clearance.

d. If regional donors do step up to fill the gap left by the U.S. freeze, what are the tradeoffs for U.S. interests?

Answer:

Regardless of whether regional donors contribute to our efforts in Syria, their management and implementation rely on U.S. presence and programs. A pause in early recovery efforts behind our forward line of troops will undermine the speed of our military campaign, prevent the consolidation of military gains, and delay stabilization initiatives critical to preventing an ISIS resurgence.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Acting Assistant Secretary David M. Satterfield by
Representative Brad Schneider
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
June 13, 2018

Question 1:

What is the status of U.S. assistance to the Palestinians? What is the Department's timeline for finalizing its review?

Answer:

The Administration routinely conducts reviews of our foreign assistance in order to ensure it is meeting our national security interests, achieving our policy objectives, and providing value to U.S taxpayers. U.S. assistance to the Palestinians is under review, and the Administration has not yet reached a decision. I look forward to briefing Congress at the conclusion of the review.

Question 2:

The humanitarian situation in Gaza continues to worsen and even though Hamas remains in power, there are many Gazans who simply want to live and improve their lives. How can U.S. assistance be used to support these individuals in Gaza, while at the same time, not benefit Hamas?

Answer:

The Administration shares your goal of addressing the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Gaza. On March 13, the White House hosted a conference on Gaza with representatives from 20 countries, including Israel and many Arab states, to discuss a series of concrete proposals and projects that would address the urgent challenges faced by Palestinians in Gaza, including chronic shortages of electricity and water.

Hamas's continued control of Gaza remains our biggest challenge. Hamas has consistently put its own destructive priorities above those of Gaza's population. This behavior makes it more difficult for the international community to move forward with major projects for the people of Gaza. Despite the challenges, the Administration is committed to working with our partners to find ways to improve the lives of the people of Gaza.

Question 3: Answered by USAID/ME

Mr. Ferguson's testimony states that USAID is helping to support the goal of a lasting peace by creating the conditions that lead to stability and security for both Israelis and Palestinians:

Please elaborate on how exactly USAID assistance is contributing to stability and security for both Israelis and Palestinians. Please specify the programs that are being funded and timeline for obligation of assistance.

Question 4:

Earlier this year, the State Department signed aviation-related agreements with Qatar and the UAE to provide greater transparency and ensure a level playing field in global aviation. Compliance is critical, so can you please share the timeline for implementation of these two agreements:

What resources is the State Department devoting to monitor and ensure compliance? What mechanisms are available to the Department should concerns arise with the agreements?

Answer:

Enforcement of our air transport agreements is a priority for the Department of State. We are committed to ensuring that Qatar and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) follow through on their commitments in the recent written understandings on issues such as financial transparency and commercial terms for material transactions with state-owned enterprises. The Bureau of Economic and Business Affairs leads this effort, allocating its resources as appropriate, working closely with the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs. We also draw upon the expertise and support of the Department of Transportation. The understandings with Qatar and the UAE include provisions for follow-up discussions within one year, and the bilateral air transport agreements also provide a mechanism for formal consultations at the request of either party.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Acting Assistant Secretary David M. Satterfield by
Representative Adam Kinzinger
House Foreign Affairs Committee
June 13, 2018

Question 1:

This question is a follow up question for Mr. Satterfield, regarding the recent Iraqi elections and the role that the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs (NEA) plays in helping our Iraqi partners. As we discussed, last year the Iran and Iraq desks at NEA were merged into one position:

Mr. Satterfield, given the extreme importance that Iraq and Iran play to American national security, would it make sense to separate the position back into two standalone desks to ensure that both countries are receiving sufficient resources?

Answer:

I agree that the issues surrounding Iraq and Iran are both extremely important to American national security. While the Department chose to consolidate the Iraq and Iran portfolios under a single Deputy Assistant Secretary last fall, the NEA bureau maintains separate, and robustly staffed, Iraq and Iran offices. I can assure you that the Department is allocating appropriate staffing, attention, and resources to the two offices covering Iraq and Iran.

Question 2:

I would like to thank the State Department for their efforts over the last several months to restore a level-playing field in international aviation markets. As you know, for years, the governments of UAE and Qatar have undermined competition by providing massive subsidies to their state-owned airlines – putting American carriers and their employees at risk of being pushed off important international markets. So I was pleased when the State Department announced agreements that will subject these state-owned airlines to greater transparency and accountability:

Can you please share any next steps on enforcing these agreements and monitoring the financial activities of these airlines to ensure compliance? What will the State Department use to measure success in implementing these agreements? Has the Department defined what success looks like after 6 months – or a year – of the agreements being in place?

Answer:

The Administration is committed to ensuring that both Qatar and the United Arab Emirates follow through on their commitments on issues such as financial transparency and commercial terms for material transactions with state-owned enterprises as set out in the written understandings. The Administration seeks a level playing field globally for U.S. companies, and we consider that goal as the standard by which to measure success of Department efforts.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Acting Assistant Secretary David M. Satterfield by
Representative Ted Lieu (#1)
House Foreign Affairs Committee
June 13, 2018

Question 1:

What is the status of the Administration's strategy for Syria, which was due to Congress on February 1, 2018, pursuant to the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2018?

Answer:

The Administration is deeply concerned about the situation in Syria. Our priority in Syria remains the enduring defeat of ISIS. Separately, the Administration is also working to counter Iranian malign influence, prevent the use of chemical weapons, ensure the safety of Syria's neighbors, including Israel, and ultimately resolve the Syrian conflict and humanitarian crisis through the de-escalation of violence and a political solution in line with UN Security Council Resolution 2254. We remain committed to supporting a diplomatic resolution to the Syrian conflict, one which can bring about a more representative and peaceful Syria, free of terrorism.

Question 2:

During the hearing, I asked, "Is the U.S. assisting in this military operation in Hodeidah?" Amb. Satterfield, you simply responded, "No." However, according to numerous media reports, the U.S. is working with the U.A.E. on targeting for the Hodeidah operation. Additionally, U.S. mid-air refueling services provided daily to coalition aircraft operating in Yemen would also likely constitute "assisting" the operation, unless there is some assurance or verification that such fuel would not be used in that operation that we are not aware of: In light of this information, I will ask again: Is the U.S. assisting the coalition in this military operation in Hodeidah?

Answer:

The United States has not changed its level of support to the Saudi-led Coalition in Yemen as a result of the Hudaydah operation. We continue to provide limited support to the Coalition in support of the Republic of Yemen Government. Fewer than 100 U.S. military personnel provide military advice and limited information, logistics, and other support to regional forces combatting the Houthi insurgency in Yemen. Our non-combat support includes efforts to improve Coalition processes and procedures, especially regarding compliance with the law of armed conflict and best practices for reducing the risk of civilian casualties. This includes coordinating with the Coalition, UN, and NGOs to pass no-strike targets. We continue to stress, at the highest levels, to our foreign partners the need to avoid any action that disrupts the flow of humanitarian assistance and commercial goods through Hudaydah port.

Question 3:

Over the past month, did the Administration explicitly communicate to the UAE and Saudi Arabia its opposition to launching an offensive in the city and region of Hodeidah?

Answer:

We continue to oppose and consistently tell the Saudis and Emiratis at the highest levels they should refrain from military operations that could exacerbate Yemen's humanitarian crisis or undermine prospects for a political process. The Administration continues to assert that all parties must prioritize the UN Special Envoy's

efforts to revive political negotiations. A negotiated, political settlement is Yemen's only viable option for long-term stability.

Question 4:

Does the Department believe that the UAE and KSA has adequately planned for and begun executing the anticipated humanitarian consequences of the ongoing offensive in Hodeidah?

Answer:

The Administration is monitoring the situation in Hudaydah closely. Though the port remains open, we remain concerned about the impact of increased military activity, including indications that shippers' confidence levels in their ability to use the port are declining. We continue to stress to our foreign partners the need to avoid any action that disrupts the flow of humanitarian assistance and commercial goods through Hudaydah port. Secretary Pompeo has spoken to Emirati leaders and made clear the Administration's desire to address their security concerns while preserving the free flow of humanitarian aid and commercial goods to reach the Yemeni people who desperately need it.

Question 5:

In the Department's assessment, is the ongoing offensive in Hodeidah by the Saudi and UAE-led coalition likely to encourage or deter Houthis from negotiating?

Answer:

The Administration continues to assert that there is no military solution to this conflict. The only sustainable solution is a political agreement that will be reached through UN-sponsored dialogue. While we have limited ability to influence Houthi decision-making, all sides will have to make compromises in order to reach a political solution. The Administration fully supports UN Special Envoy Martin Griffiths' efforts to de-escalate tensions in Hudaydah; Griffiths hopes that reduced tensions in Hudaydah will set the stage for broader, countrywide, de-escalation.

Question 6:

What is the status of the report on Yemen that was due to Congress on June 12, 2018, pursuant to Section 1265 of the National Defense Authorization Act for FY18?

Answer:

This report is being finalized in coordination with the Department of Defense. We plan to submit the report as soon as possible.

Question 7:

Please describe U.S. military intelligence sharing with members of the Saudi-led coalition for the purposes of informing, enabling, or otherwise supporting the Saudi-led coalition military operations or activities in Yemen against the Houthis; the types of Saudi-led coalition military operations or activities that U.S. military intelligence sharing informs, enables, or otherwise supports; and the rationale for the U.S. military sharing intelligence with the Saudi-led coalition.

Answer:

Our support to the Saudi-led Coalition is important to protecting our partner's borders, preventing Iranian encroachment in the region and protecting shipping in the Red Sea. For the specifics on the issue of military intelligence sharing, we refer you to the Department of Defense.

Question 8:

I remain concerned by airstrikes by the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen that constitute war crimes and grave violations of international humanitarian law. U.S. code requires credible reporting from international NGOs to be taken into account when the State Department evaluates the human rights situation in partner countries. Has any foreign military unit of the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen been added to INVEST pursuant to airstrikes that have been deemed likely war crimes by Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch? How many units of the Saudi-led coalition have been added to INVEST since 2013?

Answer:

The Department of State takes all allegations of any violations of human rights seriously, and we do not provide assistance to any foreign security forces unit when we have credible information that such a unit committed a violation of human rights, until and unless the relevant government takes effective steps to bring those responsible to justice. When a unit of a foreign security force is nominated for Leahy law-applicable assistance, the Department vets the nominee using a variety of sources, including NGO reports. If the nominated security force unit is credibly implicated in a violation of human rights, assistance is withheld.

The Department is closely following the conflict in Yemen and closely scrutinizes all allegations of abuse related to the conflict. We have consistently expressed, at the highest levels, our concern about reports of civilian casualties related to the conflict in Yemen. We continue to urge all parties to the civil conflict in Yemen to take all feasible measures to mitigate the impact of the conflict on civilians and to investigate fully all credible allegations of human rights violations or international humanitarian law violations and hold all those responsible to account.

Question 9:

Since the Yemen conflict began, has the Houthis' relationship with Iran and Iranian proxies deepened?

Answer:

The Iranian regime has taken advantage of regional conflicts and instability to aggressively expand its regional influence and threaten its neighbors with little domestic or international cost for its actions. In Yemen, the IRGC provided the Houthis sophisticated missiles and explosive boats to attack innocent civilians in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, as well as freedom of navigation in the Red Sea. Iran's provision of sophisticated weaponry to the Houthis exacerbates the conflict and advances Iran's regional ambitions.

Question 10:

What specific steps has the U.S. taken to support UN Envoy Griffiths' diplomatic efforts to reach a political agreement between the coalition and the Houthis?

Answer:

The Administration strongly supports and is working closely with UN Special Envoy to Yemen Martin Griffiths to revive political negotiations on an accelerated timeline. Our support is not passive. Secretary

Pompeo, Secretary Mattis, and senior White House officials have met with the Special Envoy. They offered him their full support and the Department will continue to engage with key regional partners, including the Saudis and Emiratis, to reinforce the Envoy's work. In addition, senior State Department officials are in regular contact with Griffiths. All sides, including the Houthis, will have to make compromises in order to reach a political solution.

Question 11:

I am concerned that the impact of the U.S. aid freezes and "reviews" of programs in Gaza are worsening the humanitarian situation there and empowering radicals. The majority of the population in Gaza is living in poverty and being deprived of essential food aid and emergency medical care previously provided by these funds.

What steps is the Administration taking to ensure that the deteriorating situation in Gaza does not lead to more violence and a full-blown humanitarian crisis?

Answer:

While a review of U.S. assistance to the Palestinians is ongoing, the Administration shares your goal of addressing the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Gaza. On March 13, the White House hosted a conference on Gaza with representatives from 20 countries, including Israel and many Arab states, to discuss a series of concrete proposals and projects that would address the urgent challenges faced by Palestinians in Gaza, including chronic shortages of electricity and water.

Hamas' continued control of Gaza remains our biggest challenge. Hamas has consistently put its own destructive priorities above those of Gaza's population. This behavior makes it more difficult for the international community to move forward with major projects for the people of Gaza. Despite the challenges, the Administration remains committed to working with our partners to find ways to improve the lives of the people of Gaza.

Question 12:

Ambassadorial appointments have not been made for key MENA countries, including Egypt, Jordan, Libya, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia:
In your experience, is diplomacy stronger when U.S. embassies have ambassadors in place? How has the lack of ambassadors affected U.S. diplomatic engagements in the MENA region?

Answer:

The Secretary has been clear in his public statements that he looks forward to filling the vacant ambassadorial positions. I look forward to continue working with U.S. ambassadors overseas to advance diplomacy in the Middle East and North Africa region.

Question 13:

Has the crackdown on civil and political rights in Bahrain in the past year strengthened the influence of Iran in Bahrain?

Answer:

The security threats Bahrain faces from Iran are real, but should not be an excuse for restricting human and political rights. We are concerned that closing avenues to legitimate civil and political discourse has opened a window for external parties, including Iran, to exploit frustrated communities. We recognize the

threats that Bahrain faces from terrorism in the region, including militant groups supported by Iran. We stand shoulder to shoulder with Bahrain and our other allies in the Gulf to counter threats to our shared security.

Question 14:

The Qatar-GCC crisis continues to provide an unnecessary strain on the United States' ability to tackle key policy concerns in the Middle East:

What specific diplomatic steps has the State Department taken since your last appearance before the House Foreign Affairs Committee to resolve the Qatar-GCC dispute?

Answer:

The State Department has regularly engaged with the governments of the GCC countries and Egypt to emphasize that the United States seeks to strengthen its bilateral relationships with all the parties, affirm that it is in all of our interests to resolve the dispute, and demonstrate our readiness to facilitate a mutually agreeable solution. The State Department continues to express its support for the mediation efforts of the Kuwaiti Amir.

The State Department has stressed that the dispute prevents some of the United States' most important allies in the region from cooperating to confront Iran, and that the dispute has disrupted the GCC as an institution, hindered U.S. efforts to strengthen regional defense cooperation, and resulted in provocative rhetoric that could deepen resentment among governments and populations.

Question 15:

What action has the State Department taken, if any, to specifically address family separation or other humanitarian issues created by the Qatar-GCC dispute?

Answer:

I share your concerns regarding the human impact of the Gulf dispute. The State Department has repeatedly emphasized to the parties in the dispute that reaching a resolution will allow families with multiple nationalities or members spread throughout the region to reunite. This is one of many unintended consequences of the dispute that can be solved by reaching a mutually agreeable resolution. The State Department stands ready to play a constructive role in any resolution process, and supports the mediation efforts of the Kuwaiti Amir.

Question 16:

Tunisia has made considerable progress toward a rules-based, democratic system, some early signs of backsliding have raised concerns about the future of Tunisia's democratic transition. Of particular concern is the Tunisian government's proposal to reform Decree 88, the 2011 law regulating non-governmental organizations (NGOs), which is widely regarded as the best framework for associational activity in the region. Tunisian officials claim that the law provides inadequate protection against money laundering and terrorist financing and thus needs to be revised. Civil society activists, however, argue that Tunisia's recently passed anti-terrorism law gives the government all the tools it requires to combat terrorism, and suspect the government is invoking terrorism as a pretext to crack down on civil society:

If passed, how could such a law or any similar proposed alternatives affect the ability of the State Department, USAID, and your grantees to administer development and assistance programming in Tunisia?

Answer:

We understand the Tunisian government is considering new proposed legislation that would aim to create a more efficient and transparent mechanism for registering and administering civil society groups, and to address possible gaps in existing legislation on money laundering and terrorist financing. The Tunisian government has assured us that any new legislation would respect freedom of association and would not impose any cap on foreign funding. The Tunisian government has committed to draw on input from civil society organizations if and when it drafts any new legislation; at this stage, no new legislation has been drafted. In addition, the democratically elected and independent Tunisian Parliament has shown its commitment to an iterative and consultative legislative process.

We will continue to engage with the Tunisian government, Tunisian parliamentarians, and civil society actors to track the progress and content of any new legislation regulating NGOs and associations, and any potential impact such legislation could have on our development and assistance programming.

Question 17:

In August of last year, the State Department announced that it was withholding $195 million in FY16 military assistance to Egypt, pending progress on several U.S. concerns. One of the conditions for the release of this aid is the resolution of the 2013 NGO trial, in which 43 NGO employees, including 17 Americans, were sentenced to between one and five years in prison on politicized charges. Earlier this year, Egypt's highest appeals court overturned the original convictions and opened a pathway for all 43 defendants to be re-tried:
Since January 2018, what specific steps has the Administration taken, including engagements with Egyptian officials, to resolve this issue and free the NGO employees?

Answer:

The Administration is working with the Egyptians at the highest levels to resolve this issue. We continue to urge the Egyptian government to find a resolution that vacates the NGO employees' convictions as expeditiously as possible, without regard to the nationality of the employees. We are in close contact with the affected NGOs and are seeking an outcome that is acceptable to the United States, the affected NGOs, and the individual defendants. Furthermore, USAID, with the full support of State, has offered to pay for reasonable legal costs accrued by the NGOs for the appeals process. USAID and the State Department will continue to consider additional costs, including those for possible retrials, as those costs become known. It is important to note that none of the defendants are currently incarcerated.

Question 18:

What is the status of the NGO workers who were put on trial in Egypt in 2012-2013?

Answer:

This issue remains unresolved and the convictions remain in place for the 41 employees of U.S. NGOs – the International Republican Institute, the National Democratic Institute, Freedom House, and the International Center for Journalists. However, none of the defendants are currently incarcerated. We would be happy to brief you in more detail about recent developments in a private setting.

Question 19:

I am concerned about the apparent deterioration of human rights across the MENA region and the resurgence of authoritarian tactics of repression: What steps is the Department taking to raise human rights issues with our partners across the region?

Answer:

Respect for human rights and strengthening democratic institutions and processes are core tenets of American values. We regularly raise concerns about negative developments on these issues privately at senior levels with partners in the region. We also reaffirm our commitment to these issues in public forums. For example, the Department of State has publicly stated its concern regarding restrictions on civil society in Egypt, as well as arrests of peaceful activists in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia. We have ongoing programming that addresses the larger operating environment for citizen participation and engagement, activism, and the protection of fundamental freedoms. We also support efforts for greater gender-inclusive policies, working with civil society to engage in advocacy to government representatives at all levels. We continue to support work on greater government transparency, protection of human rights, and ensuring equal access to information for all. For example, ongoing programming in the region includes tackling gender-based violence in Iraq, and working throughout the region to promote civil society engagement with government representatives on issues of concern to marginalized populations. Sometimes we have successes to report, such as the elevation of Bahrain and Oman in this year's Trafficking In Persons (TIP) rankings.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Acting Assistant Secretary David Satterfield by
Representative Brian Fitzpatrick (#1)
House Foreign Affairs Committee
June 13, 2018

Question 1:

As you know, the State Department recently concluded months of negotiations with the governments of Qatar and UAE regarding government subsidies to their state-owned airlines. Those negotiations resulted in agreements that require UAE and Qatar to open their books and provide real financial transparency – and push both countries towards operating under the same commercial standards that apply to international airlines all over the world. The agreements are an important step in ending the subsidies that distort competitions and put American workers at a disadvantage. I'm grateful for this important step and appreciate the Department's diplomatic efforts to put these agreements in place:

What will the State Department use to measure success in implementing these agreements? Has the Department defined what success looks like after 6 months – or a year – of the agreements being in place?

Answer:

The Administration is committed to ensuring that both Qatar and the United Arab Emirates follow through on their commitments on issues such as financial transparency and commercial terms for material transactions with state-owned enterprises as set out in the written understandings. The Administration seeks a level playing field globally for U.S. companies, and we consider that goal as the standard by which to measure success of Department efforts.

Question 2:

I appreciate the State Department's recent action to enforce our Open Skies agreements with Qatar and the UAE. Hundreds of my constituents are employed by U.S. airlines, and ensuring a level playing field for America's aviation workers is of utmost importance:

Will you continue the State Department's work to enforce and monitor these agreements to prevent unfair subsidies? Will your team dedicate the necessary resources to ensure that Qatar and the UAE live up to their promises by discontinuing subsidies and releasing their financial documents?

Answer:

We appreciate the favorable response of U.S. industry stakeholders to the understandings on civil aviation reached with Qatar and the United Arab Emirates earlier this year. We will continue to work to ensure that both countries follow through on the political commitments on issues such as financial transparency and commercial terms for transactions with state-owned enterprises memorialized in those written understandings.

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