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THE CRISIS IN LIBYA: NEXT STEPS AND U.S. POLICY OPTIONS

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BEFORE THE

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THE CRISIS IN LIBYA: NEXT STEPS AND U.S. POLICY OPTIONS

TUESDAY, APRIL 25, 2017

U.S. SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS,
Washington, DC.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:45 a.m. in room SD–419, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Bob Corker, chairman of the committee, presiding.

Present: Senators Corker [presiding], Rubio, Johnson, Flake, Gardner, Young, Cardin, Menendez, Udall, Murphy, Markey, Merkley, and Booker.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. BOB CORKER, U.S. SENATOR FROM TENNESSEE

The CHAIRMAN. I am going to go ahead and start. I know our other witness will be out in just a moment.

The Foreign Relations Committee will come to order.

We thank all those for being here.

In today's hearing, we will examine the crisis in Libya. I would like to thank our witnesses for again appearing before the committee on this important issue.

Unfortunately, 6 years ago, after the NATO intervention, Libya remains on the brink of civil war. Like many of its neighbors, Libya failed to transition into a stable, representative democracy hoped for by citizens following the Arab Spring. And sadly, it is the Libyan people who have paid the price.

Fighting between militias has undermined internal security, weakened government institutions, and damaged the economy. It is also posing substantial risk to the U.S. and to our allies. Infighting has created a permissive environment for terrorist groups like ISIS. The organization's gains in Libya have led to U.S.-supported military operations last year in places like Sirte. We have had some successes there, but the conditions allowing extremists to thrive remain.

I think many of us agree that the Libyan political agreement needs to be altered as the current government lacks the power to actually govern the entire country. But that is only the beginning. Until the array of militias come under some type of central political control, no government will be able to provide essential services across the country. And even then, Libya will still face enormous challenges to fix weak government institutions and turn around the struggling economy.

I look forward to our discussion today and hearing from our two witnesses on the views of the crisis and what needs to be done to bring about its peaceful resolution. We would be particularly interested to hear your views on what the U.S. can do to help achieve these goals and what we should expect if ISIS or other radical groups regain ground in Libya.

Again, we thank you both for being here.

Ambassador, I did not want you to have to hear all of my opening statement. So I went ahead and began.

And with that, I will turn it over to our distinguished ranking member, Senator Cardin.

STATEMENT OF HON. BENJAMIN L. CARDIN,
U.S. SENATOR FROM MARYLAND

Senator CARDIN. Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. I thought your opening statement was very important to be heard by all. So I just want you to know that. Thank you very much for convening this hearing on Libya.

Yesterday, I had the opportunity to represent this committee, along with Senator Graham who was representing the Appropriations Committee, and we met with the ambassadors to the United Nations Security Council. We had about a 2-hour discussion. I thought it was a very helpful discussion. And we talked about a whole range of issues from North Korea to reform within the United Nations.

Ambassador Haley is doing an incredible job of representing our interests. I think her leadership as now the President of the Security Council for this month will be important. She is focusing on the issues of reform. She is focusing on the issues of North Korea and other areas that the United States has national security interests.

But one of the issues that came up during that discussion by our friends in Europe and our friends in Africa and the Middle East is what will be America's engagement. Will America be a power for the values that we stand for in dealing with global challenges? And that was raised by both friends in Europe and the Middle East and Africa.

And I say that because I start with the fact that the United States must be engaged. It is in our national security interests to have representative governments in countries like Libya that represent all of the population because when we do not have representative governments, what happens is it creates a void. And that void is filled by ISIS, as we have seen in Northern Africa. It is filled by Russia, and we see now Russia's engagement in Libya, which has not been helpful. And we recognize that it is in America's national security interest to get engaged.

So as you know, we have a private panel of witnesses. The Trump administration has yet to be able to fill its critical positions, and we are still not exactly clear what his policies are in regards to Libya. I was disappointed, Mr. Chairman, in the meeting with the Prime Minister of Italy that President Trump said—I will paraphrase it—but that we do not really have a role in Libya. I think we do have a role in Libya, and I think this hearing is an impor-

tant indication by the Congress that we do expect a role to be played.

I want to just underscore the importance of a representative, inclusive government. There is no military solution. We have seen this all too frequently in so many countries in that region. There is really no military solution to Libya. We need an inclusive government, a government that represents all of the different factions. We saw, as the chairman pointed out, that under the leadership of GNA, we were able to make progress in Sirte. That was important. But we also see with Moscow's involvement, Mr. Putin's involvement, that General Haftar in the eastern part of Libya is causing all types of problems for civilian control of the country and is also participating in activities that, in my mind, raise concern about human rights violations and war crimes.

So there is a role for us to play. If it is done right, we not only can have a representative government. The management of their oil resources can inure to the benefit of the people of Libya and give them a growing economy and a growing standard of living. That is our goal. And I think this hearing can play an important part in the Senate's oversight of that responsibility. And I look forward to hearing from our two witnesses.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, thank you very much for those comments.

And we will now turn to our witnesses. The first witness is Dr. Fred Wehrey, Senior Fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Thank you so much for being here, sir. Our second witness is the Honorable Deborah Jones, U.S. Ambassador to Libya from 2013 to 2015. Thank you for bringing your expertise and knowledge.

If you would just give your opening comments in the order I just introduced you. If could summarize in about 5 minutes, we would appreciate it. Without objection, your written testimony will be entered into the record. You have been here many times. So please proceed.

STATEMENT OF DR. FREDERIC WEHREY, SENIOR FELLOW, MIDDLE EAST PROGRAM, CARNEGIE ENDOWMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL PEACE, WASHINGTON, DC

Dr. WEHREY. Thank you. Chairman Corker, Ranking Member Cardin, committee members, I am grateful for this opportunity to speak with you here today about Libya's political crisis and the way forward for U.S. policy.

I am also honored to be joined by my distinguished co-panelist.

For those of us who have followed Libya since the revolution, its unraveling has been harrowing to watch. Today the U.N.-backed Presidency Council in Tripoli is failing in basic governance, unable to establish itself and its feuding militias and internal paralysis.

More importantly, the council confronts an existential challenge from an eastern faction led by General Khalifa Haftar, backed by Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, and, increasingly, Russia. The Haftar-allied parliament in the east has refused to endorse the Presidency Council, with its key objection being the issue of control over Libya's military.

Meanwhile, the country slides toward economic ruin. The surge of migrants across Libya's deserts and shores remains unchecked,

and jihadist militancy, whether in the form of the Islamic State, Al Qaeda, or some new mutation, could still take root.

These looming dangers, Mr. Chairman, demand immediate engagement from the United States. At the most basic level, the United States faces two imperatives: first, preventing a resurgence of terrorist activity; and second, supporting the formation of an inclusive, representative, stable government.

On the counterterrorism front, the Libyan-led campaign in Sirte last summer and fall deprived the Islamic State of any real territory. The remaining Islamic State militants, estimated in the low hundreds, are currently pooling in the center, west, and south, and they may try to mount a high visibility attack to show their continued viability.

What struck me the most during my visits last year to Libyan areas afflicted by a jihadist presence, whether Sirte, Benghazi, or the west, is that any traction the Islamic State got was often highly transactional. It was the result of poor governance. And this points to the importance of a broad-based approach in denying the jihadists sanctuary. Here, non-military strategies are essential. Promoting of economic development, municipal governance, education, and civil society form a vital adjunct to counterterrorism tools.

In the effort to identify and assist local Libyan partners to defeat terrorism, the United States must proceed carefully. Given the absence of a truly national, cohesive military, American aid to a particular armed group could upset the balance of power and cause greater factional conflict. Moving forward, the United States should only back those forces controlled by the internationally recognized government, and even this support should be limited in scope and geared toward specific threats.

The second area where American diplomatic engagement is crucial is the formation of a new government. A starting point for doing this is a new, Libyan-led dialogue backed by the United States with European partners and regional states. And the goal of the talks should be the amendment of the Libyan political agreement of 2015, specifically the composition of the Presidency Council. The new talks should also focus on two tracks absent in the first agreement.

First, they should include the leaders of Libya's armed groups who must agree on a road map for building a national level military structure. Here, an American red line must continue to be the elected civilian control over the military. Proposals for military rule or a military council are hardly a recipe for enduring stability. And for most Libyans, they run counter to the values for which they fought in the 2011 revolution.

Second, the talks must also set up a mechanism for the transparent distribution of oil revenues, especially to municipal authorities.

Once such an agreement is in place, the United States and its allies must stand ready to assist whatever government emerges, and not just on counterterrorism. With its formal institutions gutted by years of dictatorial rule, Libya's citizens remain its greatest resource. And this is why it is so important that the United States preserve its capacity to engage directly with the Libyan people.

Mr. Chairman, committee members, my travels across Libya during the past years have underscored the desperation of its plight. Yes, the Islamic State was dealt a significant blow, thanks in large measure to the sacrifices of brave Libyans. But Libya is now more polarized than ever, and the growing vacuum could breed future radicalism. Now is the time for American leadership to avert an impending collapse, safeguard American interests, and to help the country realize the early promise of its revolution.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you here today.

[The prepared statement of Dr. Wehrey follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF DR. FREDERIC WEHREY

Chairman Corker, Ranking Member Cardin, Committee members, I am grateful for this opportunity to speak with you about Libya's political crisis and a way forward for U.S. policy.

For those of us who've followed and visited the country since 2011, its unraveling has been heart wrenching. There is perhaps no more painful testament to Libya's dashed hopes than the eastern city of Benghazi, the birthplace of the revolution. Swathes of the city are now a shambles of spilled concrete and twisted iron, scarred by heavy-caliber rounds, including the sites of the early anti-Qadhafi protests. Many Libyans who gathered here in the heady first days of the uprising now find themselves on opposing sides of a civil conflict that has torn apart families and killed or wounded thousands. In the past months, stability has returned to Benghazi, but the costs have been considerable: displacement and destruction, a rupturing of the city's social fabric, and worsening divisions across the country.

Amidst Libya's collapsed authority, it was not surprising that the self-proclaimed Islamic State found room to expand, starting in 2014. The United States and its allies had hoped that fighting the menace posed by the terrorist group could serve as a springboard for unity among the country's warring political camps. In fact, the opposite has happened; Libya is more divided than ever. Campaigns against the Islamic State's strongholds in the west, center, and east proceeded pell-mell by local armed groups, without any oversight by a central authority. Even those militias that defeated the terrorist group in its coastal stronghold in Sirte, aided by American airpower, were only loosely tied to the United Nations-backed Presidency Council in Tripoli—and many have now turned against that government.

Today, the Presidency Council is failing in basic functions of governance. It is paralyzed by internal feuding and by a dispute with the central bank. It is unable to fully establish itself in the capital amidst a myriad of militias. More importantly, the Council confronts an existential challenge from an eastern faction led by Field Marshal Khalifa Hifter, backed by Egypt, the United Arab Emirates and, increasingly, Russia. The Hifter-allied parliament in the east has refused to lend its endorsement to a new Government of National Accord presented by the Presidency Council, with its key objection being the issue of control over Libya's military. Leaders in this camp have also made alarming statements about moving their forces west to Tripoli and settling Libya's political differences through military force. For their part, Islamist-leaning figures ejected from Benghazi have vowed to continue the fight against Hifter's forces. The two sides have clashed over oil facilities in the Sirte Basin and, more recently, airfields and supply lines in the southern desert.

Meanwhile, the country is sliding into economic ruin. Oil production has plummeted and the Libyan central bank is quickly burning through its reserves. Ordinary citizens are afflicted with untold suffering: shortages of medical care, fuel and electricity, and the collapse of the Libyan dinar. The surge of African migrants across Libya's deserts remains unchecked, abetted by a lucrative and abusive trade in smuggling. Jihadist militancy, whether in the form of the Islamic State, al-Qaeda, or some new mutation, could still find purchase.

These dangers, Mr. Chairman, demand immediate engagement from the United States. Having expended considerable military effort in helping Libyan forces wrest territory from the Islamic State last year, the United States should now turn its diplomatic attention to ensuring the country does not slip into greater chaos. The following observations and recommendations for how to do this stem from multiple visits over the past few years to Tripoli, Misrata and the west; Benghazi and the east; Sirte and the oil crescent, and the oft-neglected southern region.

NAVIGATING THE LANDSCAPE

Part of what makes Libya so confounding is that multiple crises are interlinked. At the most basic level, the United States faces two broad imperatives: preventing the resurgence of terrorist activity and supporting the formation of an inclusive, stable government. To ensure that these two lines of effort are mutually reinforcing the new U.S. administration must first understand the complexities of Libya's political map.

First, it should shun the easy and incorrect categorizations of Libya's players as "nationalist," "Islamist," and "secular." All of Libya's actors believe they are serving the national interest, all agree on some role for Islam in political and social life, and many would reject the secular label. Even Hifter's side, commonly typecast as secular, counts among its allies doctrinaire Salafi Islamists who have exerted influence over policing and social affairs in the east.

The administration should also reject the wrongheaded fantasies of fixing Libya through partition, for the simple reason that the vast majority of Libyans do not want this, to say nothing of its sheer unworkability. Similarly, it should rebuff the beguiling overtures of would-be Libyan saviors—whether exiles or ex-regime figures who promise to "deliver" the country or its tribes and regions from the chaos. Libya has few real power brokers, and their influence does not extend very far into what has become a fragmented and hyper-localized landscape.

Finally, the United States must avoid subcontracting its Libya policy to regional states, especially Egypt and the United Arab Emirates, whose exclusionary and securitized approach will only produce more division and radicalization. Punting the Libya file to Europe is also a non-starter; without U.S. muscle, a European role will lack credibility, inviting Russia to be the key power broker.

With these caveats in mind, the United States and its allies must redouble their efforts along several fronts.

SMART COUNTERTERRORISM

The Libyan-led campaign in Sirte last summer and fall deprived the Islamic State of any real territorial control. That said, the specter of a jihadist resurgence looms. The remaining Islamic State militants—estimated in the low hundreds—are currently "pooling" in the center, west, and south. The likely next strategy will be one of dispersal to underground cells in and around cities, where militants may try to mount a high-visibility attack on an oil facility or government asset to demonstrate continued viability. A more worrisome trend is the growth of al-Qaeda linked groups in the southwest corner and in the northeast—buoyed in part by defections from the Islamic State.

What struck me during my visits to a number of areas afflicted by a jihadist presence, whether Sirte, the southwest desert, Sabratha, or Benghazi, is that any traction the Islamic State received often resulted from poor or non-existent governance and was highly transactional: smugglers welcomed the terrorist group out of a shared interest in illicit profits; marginalized tribes saw it as useful protection against rivals; some Islamist militias in Benghazi forged an alliance with it against the common enemy of Hifter's forces. These dynamics highlight the importance of denying jihadists sanctuary through a broad-based approach.Here, non-military strategies are essential. The promotion of economic development and entrepreneurship, municipal-level governance, education, and civil society is a vital adjunct to traditional counter-terrorism tools like intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance, border control, train-and-equip, and direct action. Prison reform is especially important to prevent radicalization and recidivism.

In the effort to identify and assist Libyan partners to defeat terrorism, the United States must proceed carefully. Given the absence of a national, cohesive military, Western assistance to a particular armed group—whether the provision of intelligence or a train-and-equip program—could upset the balance-of-power and cause more factional conflict. Moving forward, the United States should only back those forces subordinate to the internationally recognized government and even this support should be limited in scope and targeted toward specific threats. In the past, more ambitious efforts to stand up Libyan military forces, whether the conventional "general purpose force" or specialized counter-terrorism units, failed because Libya lacked the institutional structure to absorb new trainees and, more importantly, because of political divisions.

All of this points to the urgency of inclusive reconciliation and an enduring political settlement in preventing jihadists from gaining further traction.

TOWARDS A LASTING RECONCILIATION

In recent months, near-universal consensus has emerged that the December 2015 Libyan Political Agreement (LPA) that produced the Government of National Accord needs to be amended. While some of these failures were inherent in the power-sharing formula of the agreement, obstruction from the eastern, Hifter-allied bloc also contributed. Here, interference by the Emirates and Egypt was pivotal—despite endorsing the LPA in principle, they continued to "hedge" against it, with military and financial assistance to Hifter's faction. Increased Russian support to the east, which included, among other things, printing much-needed currency, further eroded the prospects for unity.

Recently, some of Libya's regional patrons have pushed for new negotiations. The question now is what kind of government will emerge from these maneuverings.

The American red line must continue to be elected civilian control over the military. Proposals for a military council to govern Libya are hardly a recipe for enduring stability and, for most Libyans, run counter to the values for which they fought in 2011. Already the eastern areas under Hifter's control have witnessed a militarization of governance, marked by the replacement of elected municipal leaders with uniformed military officers. Attempts to apply this rule across the country would cause more conflict and would be a boon to the jihadists' narrative.

On the flip side, the bedlam that afflicts Tripoli and parts of western Libya is equally deleterious. Here, local militia bosses hold sway, skirmish with their rivals, run their own prisons, and are often deeply involved in the criminal underworld. Many are aligned with the Presidency Council.

A starting point to resolve the impasse is a new Libyan-led negotiation supported by the United States, European partners and regional states. The goal of the talks should be the revision of the political structures created by the LPA, specifically the composition of the Presidency Council. But they should also include two important tracks absent in the first agreement.

First, the new dialogue should include the leaders of major armed groups who must formulate a roadmap for building a national-level military and police, while at the same time demobilizing and reintegrating militia members. Second, the talks must set up a mechanism for the transparent distribution of oil revenues, especially to municipal-level authorities. On this track, the United States must continue to lead the diplomatic effort to safeguard the integrity of Libya's financial institutions; namely, the central bank, the oil corporation, and the investment authority. Relatedly, the negotiations should explore such confidence-building measures as the demilitarization of strategic assets like the oil crescent, airports and ports that have been the targets of chronic factional wrangling. American diplomatic leadership is essential to persuading the foreign patrons of Libya's camps to play a constructive role in this process.

Once such an agreement is in place, the United States and its allies must stand ready to assist whatever Libyan government emerges—and not just on counter-terrorism. With its formal institutions gutted by dictatorial rule, Libya's citizens are its greatest resource—and that is why it is so important that the United States preserve its capacity to engage directly with the Libyan people.

Mr. Chairman, Committee members, my travels across Libya over the past few years have underscored the desperation of its plight. Yes, the Islamic State was dealt a significant blow, thanks in large measure to the sacrifices of brave Libyans. But Libya is now more polarized than ever and the growing vacuum could breed more radicalism. Now is the time for American leadership to resolve the crisis, safeguard American interests, and help the country realize the early promise of its revolution.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you here today.

STATEMENT OF HON. DEBORAH K. JONES, U.S. AMBASSADOR TO LIBYA, 2013–2015, MCLEAN, VIRGINIA

Ambassador JONES. Chairman Corker, Ranking Member Senator Cardin, distinguished members of the committee, first, my apologies. As a retiree, I have never dealt with the parking downtown coming in from McLean before on a Tuesday morning.

But it is my distinct honor to appear before you today on this important and vexing matter. And I am pleased to appear with a colleague that I consider a real authority and one of the most honest authorities, or the most honest voices, on Libya today that I hear.

Libya, obviously, has confounded and frustrated and exhausted policymakers and diplomatic practitioners alike with its stubborn resistance to the obvious political math of 1.2 million barrels of oil a day and a mere 6 million citizens. Caught up in the endorphins of revolution, many assumed that Libya, like Athena from the head of Zeus, would turn into Dubai on the Mediterranean and that we could all go away. In hindsight, clearly it was wishful thinking because Libya was not—the landscape was not a tabula rasa. Libya has a history like any other place, and that history is one of fragmentation, even preceding Qaddafi.

What I have often said to people is that Qaddafi was not the creator of Libya's fragmentation. He certainly exploited it using the oil wealth that he had at his disposal, and I think it is important to remember that he deposed King Idris without firing a shot when he came in. He used that oil wealth much as a cartel warlord would do to extort, to bribe, to bring into power actually very disparate parts of the country. Libya has always existed. As Julius Caesar said, like Gaul, it is three separate entities—Tripolitania, Cyrenaica, and Fezzan—with different historical and political backgrounds, and which explain to us often the different influences at play to this day in each of those regions from international partners.

When Qaddafi died, in effect Libya was a mafia without a don, and that is the challenge that we have now. Qaddafi was gone, but his legacy remained.

Understanding this backdrop is very important to comprehending the deep divides and political antagonisms that followed the revolution, which I concluded not long after my arrival in Tripoli in 2013 was for all intents and purposes unfinished. There had been a highly touted parliamentary vote in 2012, in July 2012, but essentially that is the equivalent of purchasing a nib for a fountain pen that does not exist. There was no government behind it and there still remains no effective government behind that.

I do not want to repeat a lot of what is said here. I have submitted rather lengthy background notes, which I hope people will read because it contains a bit of a different narrative. Many people have described the lines, the splits in Libya as somehow secular nationalist versus Islamist. Others, myself included—and I suspect that Dr. Wehrey would agree—view the situation more in terms of status quo ante elements, some who were pro-Qaddafi versus democratic revolutionary elements, some Islamists with ideological extremists on both sides. The revolution revealed, together with true patriots, a significant number of whom were educated in the United States and elsewhere in the West and some unabashed ideologues, a number of, as Dr. Wehrey has said, opportunistic bedfellows whose political promiscuity for material gain often blurred distinctions.

I will not go into the whole narrative of the talks and the long talks there, but I would agree with Fred and as we have looked over it, that over time, as we were there observing on the ground and working to advance our mutual interests, that it soon became very clear to us that when we were dealing with areas that did not affect the national patrimony or the appearance of giving advantage to either military side, we were able to accomplish things. On

the other hand, efforts to train elite special forces and then to respond to then Prime Minister Ali Zeidan's April 2013 appeal to G7 leaders to help him build a general purpose force, we were frustrated due to that competition, that fractiousness, and the lack of any unified command and control system.

Interestingly, throughout the Qaddafi-era, technocrats who were entrusted with the Central Bank, with the National Oil Company, and with the Libyan Investment Authority, were left largely alone to do their business, indicating to me that Libyans in fact did not want to disturb their wealth, their national wealth. And in fact, we worked pretty closely behind the scenes with them to ensure that that remained the case.

Now, unfortunately, in the latter years and following the negotiations, as the competition has become more fierce, there have been efforts by some to create competing authorities to the dismay, I would say, of the average Libyan whose primary concern is that he or she have enough to eat, to communicate, and, ideally, to travel.

I would only say against this background of Tripoli's political disarray, which was significant, Benghazi continued to suffer a spate of brazen assassinations and lawlessness. The government had, for all intents and purposes, removed itself from Benghazi with the international community. And this is when Khalifa Haftar first appeared at the time in February, February of 2014, at the time of the dissolution basically, or the agreed dissolution of the GNC, or that it would be, and went on the television what we always called an electron coup, calling on Libyans to rise up and join him against the illegal, unlawful GNC, and corrupt. He did not stir much response in that effect. He went back underground, only reappearing in May in Benina in Benghazi when he declared his basically vigilante war against individuals he constituted responsible, or he condemned as responsible, for Benghazi's blood-soaked anarchy.

Together with this, we had—again, you know the story—the narrative of the national elections that were held in 2014. I hope you will read carefully my paragraph on that because my narrative, my understanding—and I was on the ground—was a bit different in response to counter-threats and threats of Haftar moving into Tripoli and the declaration by this time of the people on the Tobruk side that the dialogue was no longer necessary. The Misratan militias acted preemptively and, of course, encircled to drive the Zintan militias out of Tripoli, which meant taking them out of areas that they had conquered during the revolution. This was a lot again and again and again about booty, about revolutionary booty, people holding onto assets, whether it be the airport, the Tripoli tower that held the Libyan Investment Authority, the Islamic Call Center that was an important center under Qaddafi and later on in terms of territory. This fighting over this Zintan-occupied territory that others felt they had no right to is what led to our withdrawal and led to eventual withdrawal of all diplomatic members or diplomatic institutions or missions in Libya at the time.

I will not get into the boycott. I will offer a couple of things. Against this chaotic background, despite the political disarray, the United States, during my tenure as chief of mission, did conduct a number of missions successfully, to include the capture of both Anas Al-Libi and Benghazi suspect, Abu Khatallah, while engaging

credibly with all sides in the political reconciliation talks and with the support of successive Libyan governments. In other words, this is not a matter that requires us to pick and choose. Libyans were the first to assert the presence of ISIL and Daesh in Derna and to seek U.S. assistance in removing them. The Misratans were the first to draw our attention to the growing ISIL presence in Sirte, a presence reportedly accommodated by members of the Gaddaf ad-Dam tribe, who were historical enemies of the Misratans who earlier had affiliated for similarly opportunistic reasons with Ansar al-Sharia, another terrorist group.

We can talk about ISIL later, but I think you have covered the road map there.

Let me just say in conclusion—and we can get into the questions later—that Libya is not engaged in a traditional civil war based on intractable ideological differences. This is a war of attrition aimed at controlling, not destroying, critical infrastructure in the absence of a trusted administrator of national wealth. Historically, exhaustion, impoverishment, or physical hurt have proven the prime motivators for arriving at negotiated solutions. But as long as different factions, who thus far have been fairly evenly matched in terms of holding their turf, continue to believe they can count on external support to tip the scales and avoid reaching the limits of that impoverishment, hurt, or exhaustion, intermittent, low-intensity warfare will continue, contributing to human suffering, refugee flows, and penetration of Libya's vast territory by foreign fighters, Al Qaeda, and ISIL and Daesh. This is good neither for Libya, nor for us, nor for our European partners.

But any Libyan solution will require buy-in at the lowest levels, at the municipal levels for a governing regime that ensures the equitable distribution of national wealth—in this case, oil revenues—a certain degree of autonomy, including on security matters, at local and regional levels, and the reintegration of militias and the rehabilitation of their members. It must be inclusive and allow for the return and rehabilitation of all Libyans, no matter who they supported in the revolution. It must begin with a ceasefire, monitored by the international community with Libyan acquiescence and support, as well as the gathering of heavy weapons throughout the country and continued cooperation in the war against ISIL, Daesh, and others wishing to exploit Libyan territory. Libyans must agree to all of this. And I would note here that——

The CHAIRMAN. If we could come to a conclusion here.

Ambassador JONES. Okay. I will conclude.

Let me just say a civil conflict—Libya is not easy, but it is a worthwhile project. There is no alternative. Legitimacy cannot be imposed. It must be earned. Libyans have not asked us to fight their battles for them. The least we can do is support their dreams, which were inspired frankly by our example.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ambassador Jones follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF AMBASSADOR DEBORAH K. JONES

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Members of the Committee, Honored Guests: It is my distinct honor to appear before you today to address the important and vexing matter of Libya, a country that since being voted into existence by the United Nations General Assembly in 1949 has both faced and presented an array of challenges

along its difficult path towards responsible, durable statehood. I preface my remarks by underscoring that, having retired from the Foreign Service in November last year, my observations are my own and do not necessarily reflect current U.S. policy, nor do I have access to current intelligence and operational plans. Finally, I am ever mindful of the cautionary note proffered by the last British governor of Jerusalem, Sir Ronald Storrs, who said "the Near East is a university from which the scholar never takes his degree." Or hers, I would add, after 34 years serving largely in that part of the world.

Libya confounds policy makers and diplomatic practitioners alike with its stubborn resistance to the "obvious" political math of 1.2 million barrels of oil a day and a mere 6,000,000 citizens. Caught up in the endorphins of revolution, many presumed that—like Athena from the head of Zeus—a sort of "Dubai on the Mediterranean" would emerge following the overthrow of Gaddafi. In hindsight it was wishful thinking, as though the Libyan landscape were some sort of tabula rasa, separate from its history. Competing narratives and a certain tactical impatience, combined with urgent humanitarian concerns, have challenged the patient policy that has tried to accommodate both the inherently organic nature of political institution building and our very real national security concerns. I believe this remains the correct policy, presuming our national security objective remains a stable, secure Libya that is evolving into a nation-state both protective of and accountable to its citizens and compliant with international law.

Geography is destiny, the saying goes. Strategically located in the heart of north Africa, closer to Rome than to Mecca, Libya's vast, largely arid expanse includes 1,000 miles of Mediterranean coastline that favored imperial trade and piracy alike. Like Caesar's Gaul, Libya is divided into three parts—Tripolitania, Cyrenaica and the Fezzan, each with its own political history and external alliances. The area has a long history of being traversed, ruled and occupied by others, most notably the Italian Fascists whose "demographic occupation" resulted in nearly 150,000 Italian citizens—at the time approximately one fifth of Libya's population—appropriating much of the country's only fertile region, along the coastline. A crucial WWII battleground, devastated Libya found new tenants in the allied victors, the United States appropriating, with payment, what had been an Italian airbase, renaming it Wheelus and remaining with nearly 15,000 DoD personnel and family members, hospital, housing, school, cinema and bowling alley—in essence a Little America, as one former ambassador put it—until 1970. With this history, it's no surprise that Libyans were highly resistant to foreign military presence following the 2011 revolution.

When Colonel Gaddafi emerged from Benghazi in 1969, displacing (without firing a shot) the U.N.-designated monarch, Mohammed Idriss Senussi (he too from Cyrenaica, the leader of a religious order established by the then-Ottoman rulers of Libya, tapped by the British to lead Libyan resistance to the encroaching Italians; history indeed rhymes), he deployed Libya's newly found oil wealth to assert his rule over a nation of three disparate regions and a motley political landscape of city-states, tribes and oases. Raising the banner of Pan Arab nationalism, Gaddafi bought allegiance, stifled competition and kept potential foes at each other's throats in the manner of a criminal cartel lord. Gaddafi did not create the fragmentation that was Libya but he most assuredly exacerbated its vulnerabilities with his "spoils system." To survive in the absence of independent institutions and any neutral "rule of law," Libyans learned to be ethically fluid, transactional and opportunistic. When Gaddafi departed the scene, Libya, by now both fragmented but heavily networked, became essentially a mafia without a Don. Gaddafi was gone but his legacy remained.

Understanding this backdrop is important to comprehending the deep divides and political antagonisms that followed the revolution, which I concluded not long after my arrival in Tripoli in June 2013 was, for all intents and purposes, unfinished. Despite highly touted parliamentary elections in July 2012, the government was sharply split along lines some described as "nationalist" vs "Islamist." Others (myself included) viewed the situation more in terms of "status quo ante" elements, some pro-Gaddafi, vs "democratic revolutionary" elements, some Islamist, with marginal ideological extremists on both sides. The revolution had revealed, together with true patriots (a significant number of whom educated in the U.S. and elsewhere in the West) and some unabashed ideologues, such as the mufti, a number of opportunistic bedfellows, whose political promiscuity for material gain often blurred distinctions.

The parliament, or General National Congress (GNC) was gridlocked over matters involving the distribution of power between executive and legislative authorities, while heavily armed militias, increasingly affiliated with political wings, behaved as rival gangs, patrolling physical turf gained during the revolution. Militias opposed to allowing former Gaddafi-era officials access to political office, and the accom-

panying distributive control of national wealth, pressured the GNC into adopting the controversial Political Isolation Law (PIL) in May 2013, while the rival Zintan were accused of kidnappings, theft and the extortion of travelers from Misrata wishing to fly out of Tripoli's international airport, which they held. But lethal exchanges were rare. It appeared to observers on the ground that these frictions were driven by a desire for control of national assets, not by any ideological divide in a country 98% of whose inhabitants adhere to the same conservative Maliki school of Sunni Islam.

We were able to advance mutual interests in those areas not involving the national patrimony or perceived, in hindsight, to tilt the balance between rival security forces. In my first six months on the ground, we signed bilateral agreements to preserve Libya's rich cultural heritage; create a bilateral commission for Higher Education; enhance law enforcement cooperation; prepare for future investment (Trade and Investment Framework Agreement); and continue important work together with the Organization for the Prevention of Chemical Weapons and others to destroy Libya's precursor stockpiles. On the other hand, efforts to train elite special forces and to respond to then-Prime Minister Ali Zeidan's April 2013 appeal to G-7 leaders to help him build a General Purpose Force were frustrated due in large part to Libyan fractiousness and the lack of any unified command and control system.

Interestingly, those Gaddafi-era technocrats entrusted with overseeing the operations of Libya's most important national assets, the Central Bank, the National Oil Company, and the Libyan Investment Authority, were left largely free to do their work. Oil revenues, occasionally affected by extortionate tribal interference with pipelines, continued to flow into the Bank which in turn distributed salaries and subsidies to all, including rival militias and eventually governments. Similarly, Libya's ministry of Communications continued to provide full service, including mobile Wifi, throughout the country. I understand there have since been efforts by some to create competing authorities, to the dismay of the average Libyan whose primary concern is that he or she have enough to eat, to communicate and ideally to travel.

Sometime following my arrival, my diplomatic colleagues and I discovered that the Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG) Tarek Mitri, who headed the U.N. Special Mission in Libya, or UNSMIL, had quietly engaged with the two largest blocs in the GNC, the National Forces Alliance led by "nationalist, secularist" Mahmoud Jibril and the Justice and Construction Party, associated with the Muslim Brotherhood, to negotiate a modus vivendi. This soon morphed into a group of nearly 40 GNC political actors, who after nearly 5 months of confidential dialogue could agree only that they wanted a government that was "not central," a system that was "somewhat presidential" in nature, and that "sharia was an acceptable basis for Libya's constitutional law." By February 2014, which many interpreted as the deadline implicit in the 2012 constitutional declaration for the GNC to have completed a series of actions or yield to new elections, the SRSG declared a strategic pause as the talks broke down.

While Tripoli was dealing with political disarray and occasional militia shenanigans, to include the brief abduction of PM Zeidan on October 10, 2013 (shortly following the U.S. capture of Al Qaeda affiliate Abu Anas Al-Libi for his role in the 1998 bombings of U.S. embassies in Nairobi and Dar es-Salaam), Benghazi continued to suffer a spate of brazen assassinations in the absence of any state judicial or effective law enforcement authorities. In February 2014, retired General Khalifa Heftar appeared on Libyan TV in a professionally produced video, dressed in military uniform, calling on the Libyan people to rise up and throw out the "corrupt" GNC and to show their support for him by rallying in public squares. Reaction was muted and Heftar—whose location was unknown—quietly disappeared. Meanwhile, under increasing pressure, a GNC political committee agreed to hold new elections in June 2014.

Frustration with the slow pace of the SRSG's dialog efforts led the U.K. and U.S. to initiate our own, independently negotiating "Ten Principles" with Libyan political actors, capped by a March 2014 visit from then-Deputy Secretary of State Bill Burns, who gathered for the first time at the same table eight parties representing the spectrum of Libya's political divisions. As was often the case, success was soon followed by crisis when Libyan petroleum guards in the eastern sector facilitated the illicit offloading of oil to a mystery tanker of North Korean registry, leading to the ship's interdiction by U.S. SEAL team, the forced resignation of PM Zeidan, and his replacement by Abdullah al-Thinni (who remains Prime Minister). In May, Heftar re-emerged, this time in Benina military airport in Benghazi, with a reconstituted "Libyan National Army" (LNA) vowing to defeat within 2 weeks the Islamist militias he declared responsible for Benghazi's blood-soaked anarchy. In Tripoli, PM al-Thinni enjoined foreign missions to avoid contact with Heftar, whom

he accused of a coup attempt against the government, reportedly issuing a warrant for his arrest.

National elections were held in June 2014, with approximately 22% of the qualified electorate voting. As in July 2012, there was a clear majority for non-aligned "technocrats." Jubilant in their victory, the self-styled "nationalists" declared the dialogue process unnecessary, refusing any formal handover by the outgoing GNC that would imply that body's legitimacy. Reconciliation talks ceased and rumors spread that Heftar—who was finding it more difficult than anticipated to defeat the Benghazi Revolutionary Council militias—would soon enter Tripoli, accompanied by various tribal allies, to forcibly expel rival militias, in particular the "Shields" empowered by the GNC to "protect Tripoli." Acting pre-emptively in response to these rumors, following a lethal exchange between rival militias near the U.N. headquarters (which led to the withdrawal of U.N. personnel), a group of Misratan militias, led by GNC supporter Saleh Badi, entered Tripoli at several points, dislodging the pro-Tobruk Zintan militia from their various strongholds at Tripoli's International Airport (which was severely damaged in the fighting and planes destroyed), the Islamic Call Center, Tripoli Tower (home to the Libyan Investment Authority) and several other military sites held by the Zintan. This resulted in the eventual departure of most foreign missions from Tripoli in July 2014. The newly elected and internationally recognized House of Representatives (HoR), minus its boycotting members from Tripoli and Misrata, decamped in early August to Tobruk, a plan I was told had been in the making even prior to the outbreak of hostilities, funded by a wealthy Libyan with ties to the Gaddafi family.

U.N.-led talks continued, now focused on bringing together boycotting HoR members and those in Tobruk, led by a newly-appointed Bernardino Leon, whose energetic and creative engagement included regional players whose historical ties or political interests were entwined with Libya, and often at cross purposes with one another, affecting Libya's natural political valence and contributing to a volatile situation. In November 2014, Libya's Supreme Court deemed the process by which the June 2014 elections were held to have been illegal, which meant the nominally defunct GNC had to be brought back into the process. The long and the short of it is that following long months and nearly two and a half years of increasingly focused and inclusive negotiations, with the support of all permanent members of the U.N. Security Council (the U.S. having proposed and facilitated the inclusion of Russia and China in May 2015), and the involvement of three separate SRSG's, Libyans reached agreement in December 2015 on a compromise formula for creating a Government of National Accord (GNA) and a Presidency Council entered Tripoli in 2016 but has failed to consolidate control, in large part because armed groups on either side refuse to yield to civilian authorities.

COUNTERTERRORISM OPERATIONS IN LIBYA

Against this chaotic backdrop and despite the political disarray, the U.S. during my tenure as Chief of Mission conducted a number of missions successfully, to include the capture of both Anas Al-Libi and Benghazi suspect Abu Khatallah, while engaging credibly with all sides in the political reconciliation talks and with the support of successive Libyan governments. Libya's complex political terrain requires careful navigation. For example, many Libyans were prepared to disregard Libyan Ansar al-Sharia (AAS), who in their view provided largely social assistance, while welcoming action against Tunisian AAS, who they considered extremists exploiting Libyan resources to conduct their missions. Libyans were only too happy to have the U.S. take out foreign terrorists operating on their soil, but were dismayed when we apprehended Anas Al-Libi and Abu Khattala. Libyans were the first to assert the presence of ISIL/Daesh in Derna and to seek U.S. assistance in removing them. Misratan individuals associated with the nominally "Islamist" side of this conflict were the first to draw our attention to the growing ISIL presence in Sirte, a presence reportedly accommodated by members of the Gaddaf ad-Dam tribe, historical enemies of the Misratans who earlier had affiliated for similarly opportunistic reasons with AAS. Misratan military personnel led efforts to destroy ISIL in Sirte (and were later accused by Sirte elders of looting and other negative behaviors).

ISIL IN LIBYA

ISIL's first declaration in Libya appeared in June 2014 in Derna, where extremists had returned from fighting in Syria and Iraq. Taking advantage of Libya's chaotic situation, elements later appeared in Sabratha in the west, in Sirte and in Benghazi, with ISIL claiming attacks in Tripoli in January and September of 2015, the first taking the life of a private American security contractor. By 2015 ISIL in Libya had reached its peak, with some 2000 fighters, many of them from Tunisia,

sub-Saharan Africa (Mali) and elsewhere in the Maghreb, as well as several hundred returnees in the east from fighting in Syria and Iraq. By mid-2015, with the help of AFRICOM, the "Sabratha Revolutionaries" earlier associated with Libya Dawn (the western coalition assembled in reaction to Heftar's Dignity movement) were able to defeat ISIL elements in Sabratha. ISIL was also expelled by revolutionary fighters from Derna. Libyans opposed to Heftar suggest that his forces allowed ISIL members safe passage from Benghazi and Derna to relocate in Gaddafi's former stronghold of Sirte, questioning how they otherwise were able to slip through LNA checkpoints. In Sirte, they eventually were defeated by Misratan forces in cooperation with the GNA and AFRICOM airstrikes in an extended operation known as "Al-Bunyan al-Marsous," or "Impenetrable Foundation," carried out over an extended period.

KHALIFA HEFTAR

Heftar's role is also complex and has complicated the reconciliation process. His initial emergence in Benghazi, taking a vigilante approach to defeating those he considered Islamist extremists, was cheered by some and decried by others who noted that his polarizing tactics had pushed many moderates into the extremist camp for the sole purpose of preventing his rise to power. At the same time, they argue, he created an opening for ISIL/Daesh to exploit the chaotic situation by prolonging the political vacuum. His prolonged and—according to many—frankly incompetent campaign was marked by conflict and a lack of cohesion within his ranks, and floundered without significant external assistance, leading many to fear he is merely a tool in foreign hands. Others assert he is prepared to resort to opportunistic alliances (for e.g. with the Salafist Madkhalis) and to engage in severe human rights violations against Libyans for the sake of gaining power.

In any event, as a practical matter, at no time during my engagement with Libya did Heftar control more than 12% of Libyan territory. Libya is too vast to rely on one partner, particularly in such a politically fraught environment. It was my policy advice that to defeat Daesh/ISIL in Libya, we needed to partner with Libyans across the spectrum, an approach agreed to by the Obama Administration. Embassy Tripoli facilitated many of the contacts between AFRICOM and western militia leaders that enabled this successful collaboration. I am not aware of Heftar's contributions to combating ISIL in Libya.

CONCLUSION

Libya is not engaged in a traditional civil war, based on intractable ideological difference. This is a war of attrition aimed at controlling—not destroying—critical infrastructure in the absence of a trusted administrator of national wealth. Historically, exhaustion, impoverishment, or physical hurt have proven the prime motivators for arriving at negotiated solutions. As long as different factions—who thus far have been fairly evenly matched in terms of holding their turf—continue to believe they can count on external support to tip the scales and avoid reaching the limits of their impoverishment, hurt or exhaustion, intermittent, low intensity warfare will continue, contributing to human suffering, refugee flows, and penetration of Libya's vast territory by foreign fighters, Al Qaeda and ISIL/Daesh. This is good neither for Libya nor for us.

Stability requires good governance. The fundamental role of any government is to provide its citizens equitable access to the nation's wealth, however defined, through the provision of security, a regulatory framework for commerce, and rule of law. Any "Libyan Solution" will require buy-in at the municipal levels for a governing regime that ensures the equitable distribution of national wealth (in this case oil revenues); a certain degree of autonomy (including on security matters) at local and regional levels; and the reintegration of militias or the rehabilitation of their members. It must be inclusive and allow for the return and rehabilitation of all Libyans. It must begin with a ceasefire, monitored by the international community with Libyan acquiescence and support, as well as the gathering of heavy weapons throughout the country and continued cooperation in the war against ISIL/Daesh and others wishing to exploit Libyan territory. Libyans must agree to all of this. Otherwise, they must accept that the international powers will increasingly act in their own immediate, short-term national interest. But "hit and run" is not a viable long-term strategy.

Libya is not easy. Civil conflict creates deep and lasting scars, as we have seen in our own experience. But it is a worthwhile project, and there is no alternative. As our Founding Fathers knew so well, legitimacy cannot be imposed; it must be earned. I have shared with Libyans both enormous joy and tremendous sorrow, deep frustration and moments of profound emotion and reconciliation during the negotia-

tion process that brought me to tears. I cannot forget the optimism and hope of Libya's youth and their desire to create a modern Libya that is inclusive and nurturing of that hope; I cannot forget my conversations with former "thewar," or revolutionaries, young men, brave, scruffy and unsure, demanding of the politicians wise leadership and good governance so that they can raise families and work with dignity in a safe environment.

Libyans have not asked us to fight their battles for them; the least we can do is support their dreams, dreams inspired by our example.

Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you so much.

Senator Cardin.

Senator CARDIN. Well, let me thank both of our witnesses.

There are clearly great differences between Syria and Libya. Syria has ethnic clashes that are very deep and historic, whereas Libya does not have that burden. But we saw where Russia intervened in Syria and the damage it caused by Mr. Putin's engagement in Syria, making it extremely difficult to get all sides together in a peace process, which is the ultimate answer in Syria, as it is the ultimate answer in Libya.

So now we see very disturbing trends about Russia's engagement in Libya. We see where they are actively engaged in supporting this General Haftar, who has been extremely difficult in recognizing a civilian government and, according to Human Rights Watch, has committed war crimes.

So my question first would be what is Russia's intentions in Libya. Why have they been able to get the cooperation of Egypt, one of our partners, in allowing the use of Egypt's facilities in the military operations in Libya? And what is the U.S. interest in dealing with Russia's engagement in Libya?

So, Dr. Wehrey, do you have some suggestions here to try to help me understand the road map here?

Dr. WEHREY. Sure. Thank you.

Well, again, I think it is one of Libya's saving graces that it is not serious. So the level of regional interference, international interference I think pales compared to Syria. That regional interference is not simply Russia. And I would point to the Gulf States as the most harmful actors in a lot this, stemming back to the 2011 revolution where you had two Gulf States playing out their regional rivalry on Libyan soil.

The Egyptian role I think came before Russia. The Egyptians have had longstanding economic and security interests in Libya. They were among the first backers of General Khalifa Haftar's Operation Dignity when it started in 2014. And indeed, when General el-Sisi took power in Egypt, that really was felt in Libya. So again, the Egyptian policy toward Libya really shifted after Sisi.

Senator CARDIN. Is it your testimony that the respect for civilian controls is critical to the stability of that country? General Haftar has certainly not been helpful in that regard.

Dr. WEHREY. Correct.

Senator CARDIN. So Russia seems to be siding up with General Haftar.

Dr. WEHREY. Exactly.

So, enter Russia. And so again, I think Russia's interest in Libya stems back to the Qaddafi era. They had enormous arms contracts. They had infrastructure projects. They explored a naval base. But

General Haftar is a useful ally to them. They sensed a vacuum. It is very useful for their narrative. NATO broke the country. Here comes Russia to clean it up, so to speak. They are backing him reportedly with spare parts, with training, with medical care. They printed currency for the Eastern government. And this is one of the alarming things about Libya: the parallel institutions. So this Eastern, unrecognized faction has its own central bank. Russia was printing Libyan currency to help prop it up.

So again, I think their role has been unhelpful. It has been theatrical at times. This visit of General Haftar to the aircraft carrier was highly theatrical. But the question is, can they really pull a Syria in Libya, and do they want basing or do they want to present themselves as an indispensable broker? They want to be the ones that forge a new government that is favorable to their strategic and economic interests.

Senator CARDIN. So if the United States were to withdraw interest in Libya, would that give a greater opening for Russia?

Dr. WEHREY. I think so, Senator, yes. And again, my conversations with Libya, with the United Nations chief last week is everyone is on edge waiting for the U.S. to give a signal. So the absence of a signal creates a freeze. It creates a vacuum, and that is an invitation for other powers to——

Senator CARDIN. And I have heard that also. What type of signal are they waiting for?

Dr. WEHREY. Well, I think a high visibility signal about our diplomatic engagement, about our support for the government, I mean, the role of special envoys from the State Department, of supporting the Europeans, I think just a more visible and vocal signal, and certainly not a signal that we are washing our hands of this country.

Senator CARDIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. If I could, before I turn to Senator Johnson. I have saved time for interjections.

But, I mean a signal. I am sorry. I heard your two points and our staff was in yesterday talking about that. And I realize we were certainly very helpful in Sirte with what happened with ISIS. But I am not understanding what that really means relative to our leadership there. I am truly seeking an answer. I know that Italy, France, and other countries are very involved. But tell me what it is specifically that the United States should do to move towards a political agreement here.

Dr. WEHREY. Again, I think just a more visible support to these regional initiatives, statements, I think convening some sort of new negotiating track in tandem with the United Nations, in tandem with these regional partners, and signaling I think also to the Libyan people, to the Libyan political actors that we are prepared to engage along a broad spectrum of initiatives to really help Libyan society, to help the Libyan government.

I think one example of what I am talking about was when the Libyan factions moved their fighting to the south, when they started clashing south of the oil crescent, the P5 issued a statement all together, all five of the P5, saying that this was bad for Libya. And that is the sort of consensus where the U.S. needs to play a leading role, not just a background role.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Johnson.

Senator JOHNSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I want to thank the witnesses.

Just in my notes, I am seeing political disarray. I see Libyan technocrats. Do they still exist? Is there any hope of reassembling the Libyan technocrats to provide kind of a governing authority? I will ask the Ambassador.

Ambassador JONES. I think when it comes to the National Oil Company, to the bank, and to others, there are technocrats. However, the political leadership is in disarray and needs guidance. It needs support. And we were able to do that as long as we were engaged with that. And I think that is important to remember. We have not had physical presence of a diplomatic nature in Libya since we withdrew in July of 2014. That sends a huge message to the Libyans. And unfortunately, obviously, for political sensitivities and the rest, the U.S. was very hesitant to reinsert following the second withdrawal personnel into Libya, worried about the paralysis that might cause at home. But in fact, we brought the Russians and the Chinese into the dialogue process. We were very actively engaged in that. And having the U.S. on board signaling that it supports a political, as well as a military solution is extremely important.

On a purely practical note, Haftar has never, at least in my time there and I do not think yet—Fred will know this—controlled more than 12 percent of the country at any given time. It is huge. You are never going to defeat ISIS or any other group that is there unless you have cooperation across the board. If you go into supporting Haftar wholeheartedly, you will have a civil war. It will turn into something existential for Libyans I am afraid.

Senator JOHNSON. How many significant militias are there? How many significant groups are there competing?

Dr. WEHREY. I would say there are thousands. I mean, one of the tragedies of Libya is that power is so fragmented. So it is neighborhood by neighborhood. It is town. Even within the town of Misrata, there are 100. But within Tripoli, there are probably four or five.

Senator JOHNSON. Are there major ones? We hear the same thing in Syria, 1,200. But I mean, are there 10 major groups, or is it really that——

Dr. WEHREY. It really is that fragmented. I mean, there are talks now about, with this track of security dialogue, of bringing in—you know, who would be the maybe—you probably could get 12 to 15 leaders of the armed groups, and that would get you there. But again, the chance for spoilers to play a role is very high.

Senator JOHNSON. So with that level of fragmentation, I mean, what role has diplomacy? You really do have to start with military control. Correct? I mean, somebody is going to have to control the ground militarily. Somebody is going to have to bring these factions together.

Dr. WEHREY. I mean, in certain areas and towns, a lot of these militias are tied to towns, and they have arrangements with municipal councils, so in Zintan, Misrata, even in the east in Tobruk and Benghazi. So there is a measure of control. It is negotiated control between businessmen, between municipal councils. So the notion that you would have one actor unify the country through a

conquest is fanciful. I think what we need to look at is sort of growing it from the ground up.

Senator JOHNSON. Who is going to be the countervailing force to, right now, Haftar and Egypt and UAE and Russia? Who would be the most trusted foreign power to try and exert some level of stability and control?

Dr. WEHREY. Foreign power?

Senator JOHNSON. I mean, for example, was Italy not the primary trading partner prior to the——

Dr. WEHREY. Italy is playing a huge role right now in terms of brokering a dialogue. They are playing a role in Tripoli and Misrata. They have offered help to the east.

Senator JOHNSON. What kind of military presence does Italy have in Libya right now? Do they have troops?

Dr. WEHREY. Sorry?

Senator JOHNSON. Does any foreign power have troops there?

Dr. WEHREY. There is a contingent of Italian soldiers at a hospital in Misrata. There are reportedly troops in Tripoli doing some very low-level training.

Senator JOHNSON. But they are very limited numbers. Correct? Nothing to exert control. Just kind of help and advice.

Dr. WEHREY. Correct.

Senator JOHNSON. Do they need more? I mean, should we be encouraging European allies to step up to the plate? Somebody is going to have to insert some kind of military power to try and gain control. Are they not?

Dr. WEHREY. I do not think so, no. I mean, this is not something—I mean, at the invitation of Libyans—this is something that needs to be agreed upon, a stabilization force under the mandate of the U.N. or EU. But that needs to be worked out with Libyans. I think any foreign presence—you know, it could be an antibody. It could play into the jihadist narrative. I think what needs to happen first is the Libyans need to agree upon a road map for their military. There needs to be a plan for the security of Tripoli.

Senator JOHNSON. It is in political disarray, and there are thousands of militias. Again, I am trying to come up with what is it really going to take. It is going to require some kind of international coalition invited in by the Libyans to try and stabilize the situation first. Correct?

Dr. WEHREY. I do not think so, no.

Ambassador JONES. No.

Dr. WEHREY. I think what is happening is there are talks underway, including a security track, to try to get these armed group actors on board for organization, for a structure, for leadership, for who gets to stay in the military, for which militias have to leave, for demobilizing the young men. A lot of these young men want to go back to jobs and schooling. So there needs to be a Libyan-led strategy for doing this.

Senator JOHNSON. Okay.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. And the Libyans are asking for that?

Dr. WEHREY. They are, yes.

The CHAIRMAN. Including Haftar?

Dr. WEHREY. Sorry?

Ambassador JONES. No. Haftar is not asking for that.

Dr. WEHREY. Haftar is talking to the U.N. about a military structure. The problem, though, is that he wants to be part of this Presidency Council. He wants to be supreme commander.

The CHAIRMAN. It is kind of reality, not a problem. Is it not?

Ambassador JONES. It is a problem.

Dr. WEHREY. It is a problem.

Ambassador JONES. Because the reality is that the dispersal of heavy weapons and also the opposition to Haftar is so deep and the Misratans do have the capability, as we saw in July and August of 2014. They do have the command and control, and they do have the sense of protecting their own turf that will drive them to combat this if Heftar is in the lead. They have said before, when we were engaged with them in dialogue, that they were prepared to work with others in a command and control system. But Haftar's restated opposition to living with—to be subordinate to civilian command creates a lot of discomfort with people, particularly given some of his ties and the supporters outside of Libya where people do not know what the point is.

I think all countries in the Security Council were in agreement that we wanted a stable Libya. But there are other factors here. We do have friends. We do have partners, including Egypt and others, who are adamantly opposed to the notion that any Islamist group or Muslim Brother group have any access to Libyans' wealth, which they believe will lead eventually to some kind of Islamist takeover and competition for their own principalities or their own governments. And so, therefore, their objective has been to do something that stabilizes it, that keeps it away, and Haftar has been a bit of a tool for them in that regard. Everyone recognizes that he has been unable to consolidate his gains outside of the Benghazi area essentially, and this has been going on now for 3 years.

So I agree with Dr. Wehrey, with Fred, completely on this. Unless you have a Libyan agreement, again, on distribution, on an organization that is going to ensure transparent distribution of national wealth under a more localized government, they are not going to accept anything else. And they do not want foreign troops on the ground. This is a country that was devastated during World War II——

The CHAIRMAN. I got it. Thank you so much.

Senator Booker.

Senator BOOKER. Yes. Dr. Wehrey, you write in your testimony—and I want to just read a portion. You said that the promotion of economic development and entrepreneurship, multilevel governance, education, and civil society is a vital adjunct to traditional counterterrorism tools like intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance, border control, train and equip, and direct action. And you seem to describe an environment where ISIS is thriving in areas where there is no government, no civil society, and they are taking advantage of the vacuum.

And I just want to put that in the context of what seems to be administration policy right now in reducing State Department resources to build civil society. I mean, it is very shocking to me the sort of budget that they have outlined in light of what you seem

to be indicating as a prescription to ultimately bring stability back to Libya.

Could you comment on that?

Dr. WEHREY. Well, I agree, Senator. And where ISIS set up camp in Libya, it was these marginalized areas that had fallen off the map of post-revolutionary Libya. So you look at a city like Sirte, Qaddafi's hometown, that was brutalized and neglected after the revolution; it was lacking services, lacking governance, lacking representation. There were tribes there that welcomed the Islamic State simply as protection, simply for what they provided. So it's very expedient.

The same thing in the West. You had smugglers sort of doing deals with the Islamic State because there was no local economy. Down in the south, there is absolutely no governance. This is where AQIM thrives. The same thing in Benghazi.

So, again, how do you deny the sanctuary? How do you fortify the resilience of Libyan society to jihadist penetration? And that is where a civil society, that is where municipal governance comes in and it is so essential.

Senator BOOKER. Whatever the strategy is, once this administration presents one, part of that is essential that it is us doing that kind of civil society investments and building that the State Department is critically able to do.

Dr. WEHREY. I think so, Senator, and us, along with local partners, along with the UNDP.

I went down to southern Libya to a town called Ubari that is a very remote town that was wracked by tribal fighting. It has really just fallen off the map. There is nothing there. But the young people there talked about a USAID computer center that was set up that basically connected them to the globe. It gave them critical computer skills, and they were pointing to this. Unfortunately, the center was destroyed in fighting, but they look at that as a visible indication of U.S. commitment.

Senator BOOKER. And another thing that sort of disturbs me is that we seem to be operating under an AUMF from 2001. And I am just curious. Is our intervention, both military and I hope to see more sort of civil society work—do you think the administration wants to continue to use the AUMF in 2001 as a justification for their intervention militarily? I will open that to either one.

Ambassador JONES. I cannot say because I am not involved anymore because I am no longer in the government. But I am hearing from contacts on the special forces side and others that they are hearing signals that in fact we are essentially going to go to a hit and run policy in Libya as opposed to trying to knit together the kind of enduring solution that you were talking about.

The CHAIRMAN. So let me, if I could. So what you are saying is it is going to be an ISIS-specific whack-a-mole issue. It is not going to be an enduring presence which would mean the 2001 AUMF is operative. You do not hear any plans of any long-term ground. And you all are just saying it is unnecessary anyway. I am hearing nothing to that end.

Ambassador JONES. Right. I am hearing what I call tactical impatience. People want to act against what they see there, really not considering the overall Libyan context, which is that Libyans, un-

like Syrians or Iraq, do not have indigenous ISIS by and large. It is opportunistic, as Dr. Wehrey has said. And they do not want to share their wealth and will not allow—they have been the ones to call ISIL out in their own country.

Senator BOOKER. That is problematic for me on a number of levels. But I just want to jump real quick in my remaining few seconds.

Human trafficking is a serious concern in this country. The IOM reported last month that migrants are being held hostage through slave markets in Libya, Niger, furthermore trafficking and smuggling from militias in Libya which are driving the conflict there. I just want to know if you have any input for us—either one—about what we should do to address this larger humanitarian crisis. Obviously, I imagine quelling the conflict that is allowing this to proliferate. But if this was a critical objective for the United States, what should we be doing?

Ambassador JONES. Well, first, I am sorry to say that human trafficking, piracy, and slavery has been part and parcel of Libya's history even when you had a strong authoritarian government in Qaddafi, such as it was, because it is not something that they have really paid the kind of attention that the international community would like for them to pay.

So, again, this is one of the areas that when you have a political dialogue and you have a government that engages across the country and makes the distribution of wealth part and parcel of working against those kinds of things, replacing those activities, smuggling, which has long been the bread and butter for many Libyans particularly in the south but also for those on the borders who have brought in sub-Saharan Africans especially and traded them and others. This is precisely the kind of thing that you can only address with civil society and with governance.

Dr. WEHREY. Just to add to that, it is a symptom of Libya's economic collapse that the circle of complicity in this lucrative smuggling trade has really widened. So, again, down in the south, it is how people make their living. The same thing in the north. Promoting programs for alternative livelihoods down in the south—I mean, fixing Libya's economic crisis, but then again being careful who we partner with. The notion of training a Libyan coast guard—who are we talking about? Many of the coast guards are militia-run. They are, in fact, complicit with the smuggling trade. Returning these migrants to these horrendous detention centers—and I have seen several of them—is just simply inhumane and immoral.

Senator BOOKER. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, sir.

Senator Young.

Senator YOUNG. Thank you, Chairman.

Ambassador, Doctor, thanks so much for your testimony here today.

I just want to highlight the importance of the United States working on multiple fronts to defeat ISIS in Libya. You have spoken some to this. But on April 20th, President Trump, as you know, held a joint press conference with the Italian foreign minister. And at that press conference, he said he does not see a role

for the United States in Libya apart from defeating Islamic State militants. And that was actually a press conference with the prime minister.

Do you both agree that defeating ISIS in Libya or anywhere else, for that matter, is going to require the establishment of inclusive and effective governance, not just CT strikes?

Dr. WEHREY. I do agree, Senator, absolutely 100 percent. As I outlined in my testimony, who joins ISIS? It is the losers in the political order. It is people that are shut out of the political process. So any government that excludes people on the basis of ideology or belief—those people are going to get radicalized, and it is going to increase the pool of terrorism.

Senator YOUNG. And that in turn has some ramifications for our needs to invest in USAID, State Department, and the civil society that they can help facilitate, bring to bear on some of the challenges in the region and the municipal administration that you spoke to that are necessary to bring stability. Is that correct?

Dr. WEHREY. Absolutely, Senator. I mean, I think one of the bright spots in Libya is the fact the municipal authorities enjoy elected legitimacy. When you go around to towns, there are certain cases where they have had success. So I think one of the strategies that I am seeing from the United Nations and others is going straight to those municipal authorities, including the budget, I mean, helping them finance themselves. What is so worrisome about the Haftar-controlled east or the areas under General Khalifa Haftar's control is that he has replaced elected municipal officials with uniformed military governors.

Senator YOUNG. Ambassador?

Ambassador JONES. I would only say again that in Sirte, for example, what we saw was support that was opportunistic for Sirte from groups who were politically opposed to the Misratans. It had nothing ideologically to do with it. It was all about competition for resources. So until you have a government that does what governments are supposed to do, which is to ensure equitable access to national resources through security, regulatory framework, rule of law, you are going to have this kind of problem in Libya.

Senator YOUNG. So, Ambassador, my previous line of questioning was prospective. Being a little retrospective here, let us think about the lessons learned and whether there are some broader applications to the Middle East.

In your prepared remarks, you note that many thought a Dubai on the Mediterranean would emerge following the overthrow of Qaddafi. And you comment that such an expectation was, in hindsight, wishful thinking.

The Powell doctrine poses eight questions we should consider before taking any sort of military action. Number six of those was whether the consequences of our action have been fully considered. This really applies to both of you, but first, Ambassador.

In 2011, do you believe there was a failure to ask the question what comes next, and, more broadly, what broader lessons for U.S. policy in the Middle East, based on the experiences in Libya, might we draw?

Ambassador JONES. Senator, I do think—and I was not part of the decision-making process then, of course—but I do believe that

it was a very different situation. I think people forget that it was, in fact, the Arab League that came to us and asked us to take action to provide a no-fly zone because Qaddafi, unlike leaders in Tunisia, Egypt, and Yemen where similar uprisings were taking place, the so-called Arab Spring uprisings, the leaders were not attacking their own populations, but whereas Qaddafi had threatened to do so, to kill those rats. And so when you had a situation like that, particularly on the heels of events like Rwanda or other things, I think politically it would have been very difficult to stand by and do nothing and watch a dictator who we had dealt with as a dictator who had been responsible for a number of terrorist actions throughout the world, to stand by and say, well, we prefer the stability to supporting those who are trying to overthrow him.

And again, remember, we were speaking to people on the revolutionary side like Dr. Gebril, who presented a very articulate vision of what they could do. There was a lot of over-promising. So, yes, we did not understand the situation well. I will accept that. However, I do not know that we would have changed or that we could have known it differently because we were not involved in Libya for a long period of time as the United States.

Senator YOUNG. So it sounds as though the political imperative to intervene was strong based on a number of reasons you put forth. But the planning took place in an atmosphere where we had limited information, not just lack of critical thinking. It sounds as though that is what you have said.

Ambassador JONES. I think also that people were surprised. It is not that we did not allocate resources or go in with our international partners and European partners to try to assist Libya. It is important to remember that Libyans, A, did not want foreign military on the ground. B, they did not want a lot of foreign presence, period. What they asked for was the U.N. special mission in Libya, and that is what they got with Tarek Mitri who did begin by writing a white paper on organizing some kind of security structure and military.

I think it was only later that people on the Western side realized the depth of the fragmentation and, as I said before, that the revolution was, in fact, unfinished because successive transitional governments in Libya proved entirely incapable of de-arming the militias, rehabilitating, taking away their areas of control. And it was clear that they were not all that interested in having any Western groups, who would have been, frankly, injured—I mean, killed—I think in the process, come in and do so.

The CHAIRMAN. I will say retrospectively one of the things that has occurred is the young leader of North Korea has learned that if you give up your weapons of mass destruction, then you likely will be taken out. And we are having to deal with that dynamic right now.

Senator Menendez.

Senator MENENDEZ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And thank you both for your testimony.

The Government of National Accord, the proposed U.N.-facilitated agreement supported by some factions, has failed to achieve broad support in the country. Does that still represent the best way

forward for Libya? As you talk about trying to put all the factions together, is that really an avenue still?

Dr. WEHREY. Senator, I think the Libyan political agreement really remains the touchstone, and most Libyans would agree upon that. According to a lot of polls that have been done, they still see that agreement that was signed in December 2015 as the foundation.

Now, the question is what kind of political structure. So it is the Government of National Accord, but you are talking about the composition of the Presidency Council. You are talking about the other bodies, the state council. That is what is being worked out. There was a five-person Presidency Council that was tremendously unwieldy that was rife with divisions. There were other sort of structural problems. And so the talks now are how do you revise that.

But, again, the key question—and this has been the sticking point—is elected civilian control over the military, and the question is, are these new negotiations sort of a covert way for General Haftar to come on to some sort of new council where he would be, de facto, ruler of the country?

Senator MENENDEZ. Well, then it seems to me if that is a fundamental question, do we not have leverage? I mean, we give Egypt an enormous amount of money. The Saudis are our ally. Are we leveraging our relationship with those two countries vis-a-vis the support they are giving Haftar and the circumstances in Libya in a way that we should be? You are both smiling. I do not know what that means.

Ambassador JONES. This is one of those "thank you for that question, Senator."

Senator MENENDEZ. We hear that at confirmation hearings: "thank you for that question."

Ambassador JONES. As you know, no relationship is purely bilateral. We have many engagements in different areas in the region, and the nature of our relationships with Egypt, with the United Arab Emirates, with Turkey, with Qatar, and others are deep and they are multilayered. And I think that when it comes to priorities or how much leverage you actually have in some areas, it is quite limited, you find, because what is existential for others is not necessarily seen as such by us and vice versa. And so I think that some of our friends have made a decision that they believe they live in the neighborhood and they cannot tolerate what they believe we naively think is the ability to have Islamists in a government that has access to a lot of money and a location.

And so there are ways around this I think, building in safeguards, building in transparent systems, I mean, that we would say as Americans you have institutional ways around this in these settings where institutions are not always the predominant feature. I mean, they see things differently.

Senator MENENDEZ. The bottom line is you are saying that their interests are going to trump any influence that we may have over this because we have a multilayered interest with them. So therefore, this is not at the top of their pole. I mean, it just seems what we are resigned to, if we do not use leverage with countries that can influence the situation in Libya and continue to exacerbate the circumstances as they exist, is that what we are destined to is a

continuing internal conflict and us, on occasion, striking ISIS targets as we see it necessary. But that is a long-term proposition for failure at the end of the day.

Ambassador JONES. I am not sure failure. I think that is just the nature of U.S. international relations and diplomacy is that it is a matter of priorities and trying to influence others when your priorities do not always jibe on these things.

Senator MENENDEZ. Dr. Wehrey, do you see it the same way?

Dr. WEHREY. I do. I think the Egyptians, for instance, are in fact coming around. And so they have actually pushed for negotiations between General Haftar and the West. And so they have an interest on their border. They do not want the division of Libya. I do not think they want military conquest of the country. So, again, they have certain security interests.

I do think the U.S., especially this new administration, has more leverage since we are sending these signals to certain Gulf States that we have your back on Iran. I think that can translate into more leverage on Libya. I mean, Libya is a country whose spillover affects multiple U.S. allies, perhaps even more than Yemen, and yet we are not getting involved in Libya.

So I think in the case of the UAE—and I am going to call them out—I mean, their interference has been almost purely ideological, driven by this phobia of the Muslim Brotherhood. And that is not a recipe for a country that is going to be immune to terrorism. So, again, I think we need to have stronger leverage with these states.

Senator MENENDEZ. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

And I would point out, I mean, Egypt has certainly from a security interest standpoint been very aligned with Israel recently. So our interests in the region are complex, and I do agree that there is some leverage right now that we have not had in the past that hopefully will be useful as we move ahead in Libya.

Senator Rubio.

Senator RUBIO. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you both for being here.

Let me begin with a specific question and then kind of a broader one because Libya is often pointed to as an example of a foreign policy mistake or what have you. And I want to revisit that for a moment. You are both keen observers of it. Obviously, the Ambassador was there in the aftermath.

But I want to talk about the Benghazi Defense Brigade. As you know, Libya has become a terrorist safe haven, and a veritable alphabet soup of organizations are fighting for control of the country. What are your views regarding cooperation between the Benghazi Defense Brigade and elements like Al Qaeda or AQIM? I think that they have attempted to deny links to terrorism, but is it not the fact that they are a well-known coalition of Islamic militias and extremists? So how would you characterize the BDB and, in particular, whether we believe that the Libyan National Army has the capability to defeat them?

Dr. WEHREY. The BDB at its core was formed by Islamist figures who were ejected from Benghazi. So many of them were leaders in Benghazi. They came out. They got support from the City of

Misrata, from other sources, from Tripoli, allegedly from Qatar as well.

At its core, what the BDB is a symptom of is the massive displacement from Benghazi, the fact that they are fighting, they say, to return families to Benghazi. Many of them have families.

The Al Qaeda element—I mean, look, this is a small country of 6 million. If you go to any Islamist leader, chances are he is going to know someone in Al Qaeda. He is going to be affiliated with Al Qaeda. There is a 6 degrees of separation. Are there people that had Al Qaeda pasts in the BDB? Probably. But is the group itself an Al Qaeda affiliate or organization? No. Is its involvement and escalation unhelpful? Yes. And I do not think that the Libyan National Army has the ability to fully defeat a force that could challenge it in the oil crescent. The key thing is that oil crescent is going to be a site of contention for years. It has been ever since 2015 at least.

Ambassador JONES. And I would only add that there were many who argued that when Haftar engaged in Benghazi, that in fact he undid the work that had been done of parsing off the extremists from the core of some of these militias and in fact drove them all back together because their sole objective became to defeat him instead of what they had been doing before is paring off coming back into the national grouping after the revolution and marginalizing the extremists.

But, again, as Dr. Wehrey says, just about every Libyan family—it is like rebels and Yankees—they have got somebody in it that they would rather not see at the table that they admit to, and then they feel sorry when that person passes away too. I mean, I have watched Libyans who are pro-Haftar weep over the death of Benghazi revolutionaries because they are cousins or they are someone else.

I would say the hard-core Al Qaeda group has been in Derna—a lot of them—or the affiliates. And Derna historically has been kind of a refuge for people because it is filled with caves. It is isolated and it is easily cut off, so even when Qaddafi was there, people were there. The Christian saints used to hang out there in the 4th century and 5th century because it was so isolated.

So that is, yes, a problem. Benghazi is a mix. But I think it is hard to say that the whole group of the revolutionaries is part of this problem. They drove out ISIL, by the way, from Derna—a lot of them—and from Benghazi.

Senator RUBIO. On the broader question about Libya, this is what I hear from a lot of people, and I am simplifying it. Qaddafi was a really bad person, but at least he kept the country stable. He was overthrown, and now all the Islamists are there and it has become a playground.

My counter to that argument has been, number one, the Islamists, the jihadists are not the people that overthrew Qaddafi. It was the Libyan people. That was driven by the Libyan people who wanted to get rid of him. He was gone one way or the other. The choice before us at the time was not whether or not Qaddafi stayed, but whether or not a vacuum would follow.

Is my assessment of what happened back in the beginning of this revolution accurate? And the reason why that is relevant is it is

now being extrapolated to Syria and to other parts of the world. The fact of the matter is that the uprising that led to the ouster of Qaddafi was not led by the radical elements as much as it was by the Libyan people who did not want to live under this lunatic criminal.

Ambassador JONES. I think you are absolutely right, Senator. But what happened was that immediately following the revolution—it gets back to what we were saying before—the infighting over control of the nation's assets have led to these divides that are not fundamentally ideological in nature. I mean, this is a country, again, 98 percent of whom are Malachi Sunnis, Sunni Malachi school of Islam. That is not the issue. The issue is who controls the wealth. And that it why I say I see it more—and I think Fred does too—in terms of status quo ante, who owned the goods versus distributive democracy of people who felt that it was time now to share the wealth and also have a democratic group.

Now, I think there are some who are—indeed, they are Salafists, but they are still democrats, small "d" democrats. There are those who are, in fact, ideologues and who are extremists, and they have always been there around and they are dabbling now, fishing in very troubled waters. But at the end of the day, I still believe in my heart of hearts that a political reconciliation that provides for equitable distribution of national wealth in a transparent way will bring people together against those narrow group of extremists. I believe that, naively perhaps, but I believe it.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, sir.

Senator Markey.

Senator MARKEY. Thank you.

So let us go to this diplomatic breakthrough that the Italians have made bringing together the GNA and Tobruk factions in some kind of preliminary negotiation to reach a negotiation with Donald Trump saying I do not want to have any part of getting the United States in the middle of this. But like you are saying, at the end of the day, a diplomatic resolution is the only way that we are going to be able to resolve these difficulties, including splitting up the oil revenues or whatever. And so it is all going to be on the table.

So can you talk a little bit about this Italian initiative and what hopes you may have for it to be a building block to actually have a resolution reached that is diplomatic and not military?

Dr. WEHREY. Senator, I think the Italians deserve enormous credit for brokering this. I think it is a start. I am not sure if I would herald it as a breakthrough. What it is is the head of the state council, the head of the HOR agreeing to talk, meeting for the first time.

The question is what is next, and the devil is in the details. And so what new body emerges from this. But then, again, I have to underscore this question about who controls military force. And this was what led to the fighting back in 2014, the monopoly on the use of force. And the question will be what is General Haftar's willingness to engage in this process.

Senator MARKEY. Do you think this indicates that he is willing to participate in the process, given the fact that both factions are now going to be talking? What do you think this portends?

Dr. WEHREY. I do not know, Senator. I mean, we have seen these things happen before, these initiatives, and then there is always room for spoilers in Libya. So I just do not know at the moment what his stance on this is. I know the Algerians and the Tunisians have their own initiative going. I think it is encouraging that he is starting to meet with a number of high-level officials as well. But as I understand it in his communications with the U.N., he wants a seat at the table that could be the head of the table.

Senator MARKEY. Ms. Jones.

Ambassador JONES. I was just going to say that talks in a good way—process is the opposite of conflict. So that is a good thing. However, the political valence of these kinds of negotiations is really thrown off when you have external elements making promises to people or giving them added weight in the equation that then leads to them staying out of the process. And I think that is the case with Haftar right now and with other groups, unfortunately.

Senator MARKEY. Reports are that Sarraj is coming to the United States to meet with President Trump, and reports also are out there that Sarraj is going to talk to Haftar before he comes to Washington to meet with Trump. So does that give you some reason to believe that the United States, President Trump, should play a hands-on role and not a hands-off role in terms of trying to resolve this view?

Ambassador JONES. Of course, I think that the President can play a helpful role in that if he underscores the importance of a political solution and civilian authorities over the military. If anyone can make a deal, I think he probably believes he can.

Senator MARKEY. So you are saying this is for President Trump to try to make a deal. So he should play a hands-on role in trying to bring these two parties together?

Ambassador JONES. If it is, indeed, the case that Sarraj has met with Haftar and is coming to see the President, I do believe that the President should offer something more than saying this is an Italian problem and we are going to help you militarily and that is it. Yes.

Senator MARKEY. Thank you.

Doctor.

Dr. WEHREY. I would agree with that. And, you know, it is not simply the deal, but it is what comes next. It is the guarantees. It is the involvement to make the deal stick. And so that is where this sort of whole-of-government approach is so important. So we should be ready to engage beyond this handshake.

Senator MARKEY. But do you see this as a big moment, that you have a number of events that are all kind of converging heading towards this meeting in the White House with President Trump?

Dr. WEHREY. Again, I do not want to sound pessimistic, but I am guardedly optimistic maybe. But, again, it is something that we have seen—and this is where the regional states are so important. The role of the Emirates, of Egypt, the fact that they, in principle, agreed to the 2015 agreement, they said yes, and we thought that was a breakthrough. But meanwhile, they hedged. They hedged. So the role of regional spoilers and especially spoilers on the ground. So can Sarraj deliver the rejectionists in his camp? Are there going

to be people in Haftar's camp that feel left out? How much control does Haftar really have?

Senator MARKEY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Senator Gardner.

Senator GARDNER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And thanks to both of you for being here today.

And I apologize if I am asking you a repetitive question here. But with the rising tension between Libya's House of Representatives and the Government of National Accord, there was a report from The Guardian on March 14th that stated—and I quote—"Russia appeared to have deployed special forces to an airbase in western Egypt near the border." It goes on in the article to explain that "U.S. and diplomatic officials have said any such Russian involvement might be part of an attempt to support the Libyan military commander, Khalifa Haftar."

Could you provide any insight into involvement of Russia's special forces perhaps in Libya and what you have seen and heard?

Ambassador JONES. I am going to yield because I have no information on that.

Dr. WEHREY. I have no information beyond what I have read, Senator.

Senator GARDNER. If Russia were to do that—open source reports talked about the special forces deployed in Libya—what role do you think these special forces, should they be there, be playing?

Dr. WEHREY. Senator, again, we know foreign special forces have played a role with General Haftar in the past in his campaign in Benghazi. There have been Russian offers of training in Russia. There have been offers of medical help. I am not sure what value added those get him right now. His principal theater of combat is almost over in Benghazi, save for a few neighborhoods. He has not shown a willingness to go after the terrorists in Derna. So I think the question is, is this a symbolic gesture, yet another arrow in the quiver of Russia that they are using to sort of signal their involvement?

Senator GARDNER. And I guess I would follow up on that. Is it then in the national security interest of the United States—a concern of our national security interest—that there are Russian special forces, if they are in Libya indeed?

Ambassador JONES. You know, I think this is one of those where we have to be very cautious. I mean, we have had special forces in Libya. The British have had special forces in Libya. The Italians, others have had. This is all a matter of common knowledge now. I am not giving anything away. I think it all depends on what their intent is, as Dr. Wehrey says, what is their purpose there. And I think a lot of it may be, again, Russia putting in our face that they are there. I think we have to be careful in how we respond to it.

Senator GARDNER. But so far we have seen no increase in or concern of migration, refugee flows out of Libya that could jeopardize Italy, Greece stability?

Dr. WEHREY. Concern from—sorry, Senator?

Senator GARDNER. Is there a concern that Russian special forces or activities could spur a refugee crisis or migration again into Greece or Italy?

Dr. WEHREY. I do not think so, Senator. I mean, most of those migrant flows are coming up through the central area, the desert, the west. So I do not think that would have any consequence for the flow of migrants at all.

Senator GARDNER. And according to the 2017 USAFRICOM posture statement, the instability in Libya and North Africa may be the most significant near-term threat to the U.S. Could you talk a little bit about that statement, how you feel about it, perhaps what your concerns are in terms of agreeing with that posture statement?

Dr. WEHREY. Senator, I think the notion of the problems in Libya spilling over is really profound. And so we are talking about a number of U.S. interests in the region, whether it is the success and stability of Tunisia. We know that terrorists have plotted attacks on Libyan soil in Tunisia. The security of U.S. ally Egypt. There is huge concern about the spillover of arms and jihadists into the Sahel to the south. So, again, I think Libya is really this epicenter that affects the surrounding region.

Senator GARDNER. Ambassador.

Ambassador JONES. Can I add, Senator, though that I think it is important to remember, though, too that particularly Tripoli and Misrata have a fairly normal day-to-day life on the scale of things. What I am saying is a lot of the refugees, as Dr. Wehrey said, are coming from other places and flowing through Libya because it is not governed properly. There is internal displacement in Libya, but the wealthy Libyans have other places to live. But it is the planning that goes on there. It is the smuggling of weapons. It is the flow of these other groups that is really problematic. Libyans will point out to you that the terrorists, Ansar al Sharia, were Tunisian not Libyans. But that is the problem, that Libya provides a playing field particularly in the south. On the other side of that coin, though, they do not provide in the south the kind of urban centers that ISIL or Daesh typically exploit to extort from people, to steal oil or things like that. And we have already seen that Libyans in the city states are prepared to fight. Particularly Misrata and Tripoli are not prepared to allow those kinds of inroads there.

Senator GARDNER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

I may have to step out for a moment and may not be here at the end. I want to thank you both for being here and for your testimony. It has been very, very helpful, and we look forward to following up again with questions afterwards.

With that, Senator Merkley.

Senator MERKLEY. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to start by returning back to the conversation about the U.S. intervention initially being requested by the Arab League to provide a no-fly zone. It seems like at some point we went beyond providing a no-fly zone to merely becoming the air force of the opposition. And in that transition, did we adequately, in terms of our national security analysis, evaluate the consequences of that and thoroughly understand the challenge that would be faced in filling the vacuum following the demise of Qaddafi's regime?

Ambassador JONES. Again, I was not part of the planning, and I think the military would have to address that, as well as people in the Security Council and the State Department at the time.

However, I do believe that we did not believe that there was a vacuum in the sense that we were speaking to people, Libyan so-called leaders, some of them quite articulate supporters of the revolution who, I think, assured people that they were prepared to come in and take over and provide the kind of institutional replacement for Qaddafi that would allow them to organize the country.

I do not think the Libyans themselves were even aware of what a mess this would become, to be honest.

Dr. WEHREY. I would agree with that. I think there was this overly optimistic assessment that Libya would get back on its feet. I mean, a small country, oil reserves, the infrastructure was not destroyed. I think there was this sense that, okay, we have handed this off to the Europeans and the United Nations. Now there is Syria happening. Again, the Libyan role was essential here in the sense that they told us—you know, we got this as well—they did not want a large presence on the ground. I think there was an excessive focus on elections as a success marker that we got to get these elections right. Meanwhile, the security piece of it is not addressed. So there is a lot of lessons learned here in terms of how we do this.

And I will also add the regional role. Regional states had their own security plans for Tripoli. They had their own proxies. They had their own allies, and they were doing things on the ground that were ultimately unhelpful for unity later on.

Senator MERKLEY. I do think it is something we should keep in mind as situations arise around the world. We have very articulate spokespersons in Iraq who assured us that there would be, following Saddam Hussein, no challenge there in terms of the transition. And those individuals will always exist. But when there is a long-term dictator, if it is Tito, if it is Qaddafi, Saddam Hussein, the transition can be extraordinarily difficult afterwards. And I just feel like we should give that full analysis.

I want to turn to the nonproliferation side. Following Pan Am 103, years of negotiations with Libya, Libya decides to try to rectify that. Out of those negotiations comes a lot of conversations that also address their nuclear program. Bush had said that Qaddafi, if he followed through on his plans to dismantle his nuclear program, could regain a secure and respected place among nations and then touted this example as I hope other leaders will find an example in Libya's action. There were 10 nuclear-related sites that were addressed.

At the time that we were considering Libya, I asked the administration what message this sent to Iran and to North Korea. And they were extremely dismissive that there was any reverberations in terms of how world leaders would perceive Qaddafi's vulnerability following the agreement to dismantle his nuclear program. I think that was a tremendous diminishment of a potential message being sent to other countries we were working on.

I just want to get your all's sense on that particular point.

Ambassador JONES. Senator, again, these are probably questions better directed to people like Bill Burns who were engaged in those negotiations back in the day with Qaddafi.

But I would also say that I think there was a sense at the time—and again, I am out of my lane on this, but there was a lot of discussion with Saif al-Islam, Qaddafi's son. And there was a lot of talk—and Saif was very close to Mahmoud Gebril, who ended up leading part of the revolution and the head of the first transitional national council that led the government afterwards—where Libya was actually talking and doing, looking at reforms, and looking at economic reforms and opening up in certain ways. And I suspect that there was an element of hope.

First, there was the concern that it is never a good thing for the United States to not talk to large, centrally placed, strategically placed countries that can have a dangerous impact on the rest of the region. But two, that Libya was at a point where we might be seeing the openings of some sort of transition to a more open system, more economically vibrant, something that we would find ways to influence later on. Obviously, the Libyan people did not feel the same way when it came to 2011.

Senator MERKLEY. The question I am really asking is in the context of the role that we and other nations played in dismantling the Qaddafi regime and the messages that that sent both to North Korea and to Iran.

Ambassador JONES. Well, I cannot speak for the leaders of North Korea. I mean, I could probably speak more to the thinking of the Iranians because it strikes me they have a far more rational system of governance than the Koreans do. Obviously, they are weighing their own survival success in that, but very different situations, I think, and circumstances. But I am not qualified to address that here.

Dr. WEHREY. I would just echo that, Senator. I think it is a very different context. Again, North Korea and Iran—totally different strategic contexts, histories, traditions. So I just do not know what lessons they took from that.

Senator MERKLEY. Okay. I just find it a bit of a dodge really, at a time we are trying to persuade other countries to dismantle their nuclear programs, to not recognize that dismantling a nation that gave up their nuclear program would be seriously—the other countries would pay very serious attention to that. So I do not really accept that you are not all qualified to address the question. I think you are being very tactful and polite.

Dr. WEHREY. Senator, can I just add the notion of dismantling, the U.S. dismantling a country—what happened was there was a failing government in Libya that was unable to meet the needs of its people. And the reform project was dead by 2010, and there were serious problems. You had an uprising.

Senator MERKLEY. I did not refer to dismantling the nation. I referred to Libya dismantling their nuclear program.

Dr. WEHREY. But you were talking about 2011. The result of that was he did not have the ability to deter the intervention or that this led to his downfall. That is the lesson——

Senator MERKLEY. I am really talking about the message that it sent to have worked with a nation to have them forgo their nuclear

program, dismantle their nuclear program, a nuclear weapon program, and then be vulnerable to outside intervention. That is kind of the core issue that drives a lot of nations like North Korea and Iran to want to secure a nuclear weapon is to say it kind of gives them a bit of a guarantee. Our actions in regards to North Korea would probably be very different if they did not already have nuclear weapons in existence.

Ambassador JONES. With all respect, Senator—and I am really not trying to dodge, but I think that a similar situation would only be if the North Korean people themselves were rising up against their leader and being slaughtered.

Senator MERKLEY. I did not describe it as a similar situation. So I think that is a change in the context.

Ambassador JONES. Right, but I think that that is what makes it difficult to say because, again, the United States and the international community's choice was, yes, maybe they are taking a message from this. Would Qaddafi have used nuclear weapons on his own people? I am not so sure. And frankly having participated in the final destruction of the precursors for chemical weapons, I am pretty glad that we actually went in there and were able to clean up a lot of that stuff because the last thing you want is to have it in the hands of the militias or other groups now. So I do not know.

Senator MERKLEY. Well, on that point, we do agree. Thank you.

Senator CARDIN [presiding]. Senator Shaheen.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And thank you to our panelists. I am sorry. I was at a hearing on North Korea. So I am sorry to be late and miss your testimony, which certainly is another threat facing the United States.

I wonder if either of you could speak to—and again, I apologize if some of these questions have been answered. But can you speak to the current status of the Government of National Accord? My understanding is that while they have not been able to govern very well, that they do seem to still have support from a lot of Libyans. Is that the case, and how long would we expect that to continue if the current chaos extends for a long period of time?

Dr. WEHREY. I think again the support from Libyans is for this agreement. And I was in Libya last year, and you sense it in the capital. There is tremendous frustration with the government in Tripoli, with the Government of National Accord, with the Presidency Council. They are not able to meet people's basic needs. I mean, long lines in front of the banks, rolling electricity blackouts. They have not been able to get their budget under control. There is a dispute with the Central Bank. They really do not control security in the capital. These militia flare-ups happen and people are diving for cover. So there is a sense that something needs to be renegotiated. But, again, I think the foundational accord still sticks, and I think a lot of Libyans recognize that. You better not jump into the darkness unless you have got something to replace this.

Senator SHAHEEN. So are you optimistic that there might be progress as a result of the discussions in Rome and the potential—what appears to be maybe they are getting close to a compromise agreement? Is that something that is promising that may offer some hope for people?

Ambassador JONES. I would agree, Senator, with Dr. Wehrey that people do not want to throw out the baby with the bathwater in this case, and the fact that the international community and the United Nations endorsed this agreement and supported it after a long time—it took a long time. And in the process Libyans actually learned a lot about political dialogue. It was a politically illiterate country in so many ways, and having been part of that process for those years, I saw this firsthand.

So I think, again, they want to modify, they want to extend. They would like to see—my sense is and what I hear from Libyans—they would like to see a final integration between the House of Representatives with an authority that is not overly overwhelming. They do not want a strong central authority like Qaddafi. They do not want a dictator. But they would like to see a unified authority and they would like to see General Haftar under the civilian authority or even marginalized quite frankly. A lot of people would like to see him in some kind of honorary role on the outside, promoted up and out as it were. But Libyans want stability. They want predictability, and they want their economy to go again. That is what they really want.

Senator SHAHEEN. And so what about the discussions in Rome? Are they really making progress?

Ambassador JONES. You know, I am not privy to a lot of the details of that right now. I think discussion is always better than the opposite. But as Dr. Wehrey said before you came in, Senator, we have seen a lot of discussions in the past. Libyans are very good at talking and throwing chaff and then going back and fragmenting even more so that you come back with a whole new ball game. But I think at least it is a step. And the Italians do know Libya very, very well, and Libyans I have spoken to do believe that the Italians are taking the correct approach. I will say that.

Senator SHAHEEN. And how concerned are you that the United States seems to be missing from the discussions and from a leadership role right now in what is going on?

Ambassador JONES. Very.

Senator SHAHEEN. And what does that mean? You talked about the economy of Libya and how people want to see the economy going again. And as they are beginning to get their oil reserves producing again and we are looking at other nations coming in, Russia, I assume China, to come in and provide assistance with those oil reserves, what does that mean for the United States in the future?

Ambassador JONES. I will say only that if the perception becomes and spreads that the only time the United States was interested in post-revolutionary Libya was when we thought we could make a lot of deals and make a lot of money and the minute that it became difficult, we pulled out and focused solely on military instead of what we believe as Americans or claim to believe, you know, the four freedoms the principles of those, then we have a problem.

Senator SHAHEEN. So you would both like to see the United States take more of a leadership role there? That is a question.

Ambassador JONES. I think we need to be present, and we need to make clear what our vision is. I think that we have very successfully—Libya was one of these first situations, certainly in my 34-

year career, where it was a bilateral assignment as Ambassador, but it was a multilateral process throughout where we were supporting buttressing U.N. positions but also having to work and coordinate very closely with Security Council permanent representative allies and our other allies across the board and deal with regional powers and parties as well. So Libya has got many parties in it. The U.S. needs to play a signature role and a very important symbolic role there certainly, and then it needs to be—presence matters. Our presence matters. Our absence sends a message.

Senator SHAHEEN. Dr. Wehrey, do you agree with that?

Dr. WEHREY. Completely. I mean, that was a great characterization. Again, it is not us leading the charge on this but playing a coordinating function, and we are, in many senses, sort of the glue that keeps it together with many of these different players, the leverage with regional states, relationships with the Europeans. So, again, just being present at the table is so essential.

And again, just to echo from my conversations on the ground with Libyans across the country, whether the south, Benghazi, I mean, this notion that we are there simply for counterterrorism or we are there for the oil—these narratives are out there. So these visible initiatives that signal that we do care about the Libyan people, about progress are so important.

Senator SHAHEEN. I know I am over my time, Mr. Chairman.

But as we look at the future of Africa, North Africa, and the Middle East, do we not have to include Libya as part of whatever strategy we come up with with respect to this region?

Ambassador JONES. That is a simple one. Yes, because Libya, of many of the states, has the potential again to be a resource and a really important boundary for a lot of Africa. It should be a major tourist area for Europe, I mean, with five World Heritage sites. It is beautiful and great fish and all these things. It should be a major medical center for sub-Saharan Africa and other places around. It should be a place of universities. It has a history. It has a presence. It has a place. As I tell people, it is closer to Rome than Mecca. Libya is actually closer to some parts of Italy than it is to its neighbors or the capital. So it is important. It cannot be dismissed because it is not just Libya.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator CARDIN. Thank you for your questions.

Let me just ask one or two questions, if I might.

The Commander of the U.S. Africa Command, General Waldhauser, before the Senate Armed Services Committee on March 9th warned that Libya—we must carefully choose where and with whom we work in order to counter ISIS and not shift the balance between factions and risks sparking greater conflict in Libya.

So what lessons have we learned from the Sirte campaign last year that should guide us in any of our operations that we support in Libya today?

Ambassador JONES. I will say very briefly—Fred has been there more recently—it was our policy prescription back in March of 2015 that the only way that we could defeat Daesh or ISIL in Libya was to partner across the board because of the land mass of

Libya and the current fragmentation right now. We cannot choose one partner. And I think at the time the chairman agreed that anyone who shared our views on ISIS and Daesh could be a partner with us in this fight in Libya to deny them any toehold in that country. And to do so, you have to partner with likeminded or with people who share your views on Daesh and ISIL. And we found those partners across the board. We worked and we found them. So I think it has been successful in that regard.

Dr. WEHREY. I would just add to that, Senator, and I was there in Sirte last summer. Again, the very loose constellation of militias that attacked Sirte and drove out the Islamic State were, in fact, tied to the Government of National Accord, but only very loosely—very loosely. And some of them were opposed to it, and they have now turned on that government.

So, again, we did form a partnership, but I think it was a very limited and target-specific partnership where we assisted them on a specific geographic threat. Now, we are not talking about training militias, you know, writing them a blank check, giving them aid because that could really upset the factional balance, and that was what was mentioned in the testimony, that if we side with one faction against terrorism, that could cause the other faction to go against us, to turn to another regional patron. So there are all sorts of second and third order effects of this.

And we have seen this also in the east where certain countries were giving support to the LNA, which was an unrecognized force, and that had a political effect on negotiations.

Senator CARDIN. If the head of the Presidency Council, Mr. Sarraj, actually comes to Washington, if that were to take place as there are some rumors—I want to follow up on Chairman Corker's follow-up to my question—what should the United States expect in deliverables from the leader of the Presidency Council, if he were to come to the United States, as a prerequisite for a visit here in America?

Ambassador JONES. Mr. Chairman, I was going to turn that around and say my advice to Mr. Sarraj would be that he needs to come prepared to firmly articulate what he needs, one, but also what he can do right now, what the situation is, but what he is prepared to do as well in terms of either compromise or political deal-making or what have you to bring things to closure.

But so often we find that when the Libyans come, again, due to this kind of what I call a political immaturity in a way, they are kind of looking for someone else to tell them what to do, and then they want to bicker with it. You know, then they want to quibble with it. They cannot do this; they cannot do that.

So he needs to come with a clear, articulate vision of where he sees the process going. He should be prepared to lay out what the Italian dialogue is producing, and he should be prepared to put out there de minimis their red line, you know, what their minimum standards are for any kind of compromise or for expanding and also revising the agreement I think.

The U.S. should not be put in a position of having to offer something larger, but he should be able to articulate what it is they need to do.

Senator CARDIN. So he should come with a specific game plan. Is there something more we could expect from that type of a high visible opportunity?

Dr. WEHREY. No. Unfortunately, I think he is not in a position of strength to really deliver. So, again, it has to be, okay, this visit happens within the context of a broader consensus that includes other players, that includes the HOR, the state council. So it is not simply the visit alone. He may ask for a million things, and we have seen these visits before. But then they go back. They cannot execute the programs. They cannot write the check for them. We have seen this movie before. So, again, we need to demand, when he comes, that who is on board with this project, what is the consensus, what is the road map.

The CHAIRMAN [presiding]. Thank you. Listen, this has been very informative and we appreciate your insights and hope the upcoming visits do create some opportunities for us. But we thank you both for sharing your deep knowledge of the situation.

We will keep the record open until the close of business on Thursday. I know both of you have busy lives, but if you could respond to questions fairly promptly, we would appreciate it.

We look forward to seeing you back here in the near future. And again, thank you very much for your testimony.

The meeting is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 11:25 a.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

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