

# OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES IN U.S. RELATIONS WITH THE GULF STATES

---

## HEARING BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE MIDDLE EAST, NORTH AFRICA, AND INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM OF THE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES ONE HUNDRED SIXTEENTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

---

May 8, 2019

---

**Serial No. 116-33**

---

Printed for the use of the Committee on Foreign Affairs



Available: <http://www.foreignaffairs.house.gov/>, <http://docs.house.gov>,  
or <http://www.govinfo.gov>

---

U.S. GOVERNMENT PUBLISHING OFFICE

36-211PDF

WASHINGTON : 2019

## COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

ELIOT L. ENGEL, New York, *Chairman*

BRAD SHERMAN, California	MICHAEL T. McCAUL, Texas, <i>Ranking Member</i>
GREGORY W. MEEKS, New York	
ALBIO SIRES, New Jersey	CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH, New Jersey
GERALD E. CONNOLLY, Virginia	STEVE CHABOT, Ohio
THEODORE E. DEUTCH, Florida	JOE WILSON, South Carolina
KAREN BASS, California	SCOTT PERRY, Pennsylvania
WILLIAM KEATING, Massachusetts	TED S. YOHO, Florida
DAVID CICILLINE, Rhode Island	ADAM KINZINGER, Illinois
AMI BERA, California	LEE ZELDIN, New York
JOAQUIN CASTRO, Texas	JIM SENSENBRENNER, Wisconsin
DINA TITUS, Nevada	ANN WAGNER, Missouri
ADRIANO ESPAILLAT, New York	BRIAN MAST, Florida
TED LIEU, California	FRANCIS ROONEY, Florida
SUSAN WILD, Pennsylvania	BRIAN FITZPATRICK, Pennsylvania
DEAN PHILLIPS, Minnesota	JOHN CURTIS, Utah
ILHAN OMAR, Minnesota	KEN BUCK, Colorado
COLIN ALLRED, Texas	RON WRIGHT, Texas
ANDY LEVIN, Michigan	GUY RESCHENTHALER, Pennsylvania
ABIGAIL SPANBERGER, Virginia	TIM BURCHETT, Tennessee
CHRISSEY HOULAHAN, Pennsylvania	GREG PENCE, Indiana
TOM MALINOWSKI, New Jersey	STEVE WATKINS, Kansas
DAVID TRONE, Maryland	MIKE GUEST, Mississippi
JIM COSTA, California	
JUAN VARGAS, California	
VICENTE GONZALEZ, Texas	

JASON STEINBAUM, *Staff Director*

BRENDAN SHIELDS, *Republican Staff Director*

---

## SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE MIDDLE EAST, NORTH AFRICA, AND INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM

THEODORE E. DEUTCH, Florida, *Chairman*

GERALD E. CONNOLLY, Virginia	JOE WILSON, South Carolina, <i>Ranking Member</i>
DAVID CICILLINE, Rhode Island	
TED LIEU, California	STEVE CHABOT, Ohio
COLIN ALLRED, Texas	ADAM KINZINGER, Illinois
TOM MALINOWSKI, New Jersey	LEE ZELDIN, New York
DAVID TRONE, Maryland	BRIAN MAST, Florida
BRAD SHERMAN, California	BRIAN FITZPATRICK, Pennsylvania
WILLIAM KEATING, Massachusetts	GUY RESCHENTHALER, Pennsylvania
JUAN VARGAS, California	STEVE WATKINS, Kansas

CASEY KUSTIN, *Staff Director*

## CONTENTS

---

	Page
WITNESSES	
Lenderking, Mr. Timothy A., Deputy Assistant Secretary for Arabian Gulf Affairs, Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, U.S. Department of State .....	7
INFORMATION SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD	
Washington Post article submitted for the record from Representative Lieu ....	20
APPENDIX	
Hearing Notice .....	37
Hearing Minutes .....	38
Hearing Attendance .....	39
ADDITIONAL MATERIALS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD	
Information submitted for the record from Representative Trone .....	40
RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD	
Responses to questions submitted for the record from Representative Deutch .	45
Responses to questions submitted for the record from Representative Chabot .	50
Responses to questions submitted for the record from Representative Malinowski .....	52
Responses to questions submitted for the record from Representative Trone ...	56



## **OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES IN U.S. RELATIONS WITH THE GULF STATES**

**Wednesday, May 8, 2019**

**House of Representatives**

**Subcommittee on the Middle East,**

**North Africa, and International Terrorism**

**Committee on Foreign Affairs**

*Washington, DC*

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 1:33 p.m., in room 2172 Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Theodore E. Deutch (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Mr. DEUTCH. All right. If we could take our seats, this hearing will come to order. Welcome, everyone. The subcommittee is meeting today to hear testimony on U.S. relationships with the Gulf States.

As you have heard, there are two votes on the floor. So I am going to offer my opening statement and then we will run to vote, and there are only two votes. We will come back for the hearing.

I thank Mr. Lenderking for being here today. We are pleased to have someone from the Administration discuss our policy and relationships in this very important region and I will recognize myself for the purpose of making an opening statement.

Thanks again, Mr. Lenderking, for testifying today and for your service to our country. Our hearing today will examine opportunities and challenges in our relationships with the States in the Arabian Gulf region.

Our partnerships with these States are enduring and many date back to the end of the Second World War. The Gulf has been a focal point of U.S. foreign policy under both Democratic and Republican administrations.

In his 1980 State of the Union Address, President Jimmy Carter articulated the Carter doctrine, which stated that the United States would use military force if necessary to defend its national interest in the Gulf.

The late President George H. W. Bush acted on this doctrine when he sent a half a million U.S. troops to liberate Kuwait in 1991.

In recent years, our relationships with the Gulf States have faced many challenges, from 9/11 to the Iraq War to disagreements over the Arab Spring.

Yet, these ties have endured. It is precisely because of this region's importance that I am perplexed and concerned that so many of our key partners lack U.S. Ambassadors.

We have no Ambassador in Qatar, we have no Ambassador in the UAE, and only last month was an ambassador to Saudi Arabia confirmed.

Mr. Lenderking, you are a talented and respected diplomat but cannot be everywhere all the time addressing all of the region's challenges.

I believe our partnerships with Gulf States are vital to our national security and geopolitical stability. We are grateful to the nations who host our service members.

Our forward-deployed presence is absolutely critical to peace and stability in the region. However, we must view these relationships through the prism of our own interests and values as well.

Where do our priorities align? What types of actions undermine our goals and our values? We should honestly evaluate where our interests and values diverge, identify actions that undermine our mutual objectives, and be willing to express our opposition when our regional partners do not live up to these standards.

We can never—we must never sacrifice our values even if it makes our partners uncomfortable. Unfortunately, we have seen senior members of this Administration turn a blind eye to actions that run counter to our interests and our values.

Their motivation is unclear but the impacts are manifesting themselves in numerous ways. Whether it be brutal human rights violations like the horrific murder of Jamal Khashoggi or troubling alliances of convenience with groups that have posed a threat to the United States in Yemen, the Administration's refusal to acknowledge the serious bipartisan concern with many policy decisions like the veto of the bipartisan bicameral legislation to remove U.S. support for the war in Yemen or the refusal to comply with a congressional request for a determination on Global Magnitsky sanctions with respect to the Khashoggi murder raises even further questions about its intentions and it is, quite frankly, unacceptable.

The focal point of the Administration's policy in the Gulf appears to be countering Iran. This is an interest that we share with States of the region. Even though we share this goal and recognize the very real threat that Iran poses to our partners and to our own interests, we cannot just give our partners in the Gulf a free pass if their behavior damages other U.S. interests or contradicts our values.

We cannot just look the other way while the Saudi-led war in Yemen results in the loss of more and more innocent lives and a growing humanitarian catastrophe and simply shift all of the blame to the atrocities committed by Iran.

We cannot stay silent if the UAE hacks into the personal information of activists and dissidents including U.S. citizens. We cannot avert our eyes when regional partners from Qatar to Saudi Arabia to Bahrain violate the human rights of foreign workers and their own citizens.

And if we are serious about countering Iran, we must resolve the GCC rift which has dragged on now for almost 2 years. We are stronger when there is unity among our partners and when we do not give bad actors like Iran any space to attempt to exploit discord.

I am worried that the Trump Administration has provided a free pass for our regional partners on too many issues and that ultimately that may undermine our goals.

I hope Mr. Lenderking can provide a clear assessment of the opportunities and the challenges facing the United States and how United States policy can foster an approach to the Gulf that secures our interests and that does so without sacrificing our values.

And with that, we will recess until after votes, come back and give the ranking member the opportunity to present an opening statement, and then we will turn to you, Mr. Lenderking, and we will recess until then.

[Recess.]

Mr. DEUTCH. All right. I call this hearing back to order and I recognize the ranking member for the purpose of making an opening statement.

Mr. WILSON. Thank you, Chairman Deutch, for calling this hearing today on relations between the U.S. and our allies in the Gulf.

The United States is fortunate to have many friends in such a critically important region of the world. Our country's relationship with Saudi Arabia was solidified aboard the USS Quincy in 1945 as President Franklin Delano Roosevelt met with the kingdom's founder, King Abdul Aziz.

Since that time, Washington and Riyadh have developed a robust historical relationship and close security ties. U.S.-Bahrain relations stretch back to 1903 in bilateral security ties with Bahrain back to the end of World War II.

Bahrain hosts 7,000 U.S. military personnel and serves as the headquarters for NAVCENT in the U.S. Navy's Fifth Fleet.

Kuwait now hosts over 13,000 U.S. military personnel. Only Germany, Japan, and South Korea host more U.S. troops than Kuwait. Extensive U.S.-Qatar defense and security relations were recently highlighted by the U.S.-Qatar strategic dialog in Washington in January 2018 and DOHA January 2019.

The United Arab Emirates host about 5,000 U.S. troops and the UAE forces have served alongside U.S. troops in Somalia, the Balkans, Afghanistan, Libya, and Syria.

Last, but certainly not least, Oman was the very first Gulf State to prevent U.S. military use of its facilities in 1980. Since that time, Oman has hosted U.S. forces during every military operation in the Middle East.

I look forward to our discussion with Deputy Assistant Secretary Lenderking today about how we can maintain these partnerships while confronting the many challenges to the region.

The ongoing war in Yemen between the Iran-backed Houthi rebels and the internationally recognized government of Yemen backed by a Saudi-led coalition has created a dire humanitarian crisis affecting Yemeni citizens.

I look forward to hearing from Mr. Lenderking about the status of the U.N. peace process and how Congress and the Administration can work together to support that process.

I am also increasingly concerned that Iran, the Houthi rebels' main backer, is simply not incentivized to see an end to the hostilities in Yemen.

Iran seeks to exert its influence in the region by fostering a network of armed groups and proxies loyal to Tehran. Last summer, the State Department designated the al-Ashtar Brigades in Bahrain as an Iranian-backed terrorist group for their designs to overthrow the government in Manama.

Better understanding the threats that Iran poses to our GCC partners can help Congress develop policy solutions to support the Gulf countries against this threat.

Internal GCC divisions remain a serious challenge. The GCC dispute resulting in Qatar's isolation has dragged on since June 2017. It has proven immensely counterproductive and problematic in both U.S. policy and regional stability.

I hope Mr. Lenderking can update us on mediation efforts and how the crisis is affecting the region. Finally, members on both sides of the aisle remain, of course, concerned by the human rights situation across the region but particularly in Saudi Arabia.

Concerning developments of the past year include the reported imprisonment of several U.S. citizens, the murder of Jamal Khashoggi, and the reported imprisonment and torture of peaceful women's rights activists.

We support Saudi Arabia's efforts to modernize its economy for long-term success but that modernization must include improvement on human rights issues.

I welcome an update from Mr. Lenderking on efforts to obtain justice for Mr. Khashoggi's murder and on United States efforts to leverage human rights reforms in Saudi Arabia.

I look forward to hearing from our witness today. Thank you again, Chairman Deutch, and I yield back my time.

Mr. DEUTCH. Thank you, Ranking Member Wilson.

Without objection, all members may have 5 days to submit statements, questions, and extraneous materials for the record subject to the length limitations in the rules.

It is now a pleasure to introduce our witness, Mr. Tim Lenderking. Mr. Lenderking currently serves as deputy assistant secretary of State for Arabian Gulf affairs in the Near East Bureau at the U.S. Department of State.

He is a career member of the senior Foreign Service having served in U.S. embassies in Riyadh, Baghdad, Kuwait, and Rabat and held numerous Foreign Service posts both domestically and internationally.

Mr. Lenderking joined the Foreign Service after a career in the refugee field where he held numerous positions with American NGO's and with the United Nations in New York, Sudan, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Thailand.

He has had a most distinguished career and on top of that distinguished career it is also DAS Lenderking's birthday, which I am certain he is thrilled to be spending with all of us here at the subcommittee.

So from all of us, Mr. Lenderking, we are glad you are here and we wish you a very joyous birthday.

Before you begin, let me just remind you that if you could limit your testimony to 5 minutes and, without objection, your prepared written statement will be made part of the hearing record.

I am really grateful that you are here with us today and I will recognize you for your testimony.

Mr. Lenderking.

**STATEMENT OF TIMOTHY A. LENDERKING, DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR ARABIAN GULF AFFAIRS, BUREAU OF NEAR EASTERN AFFAIRS, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE**

Mr. LENDERKING. Chairman Deutch, Ranking Member Wilson, first of all, thank you for the very kind birthday wishes and mine to yours, belatedly, but happy birthday to you.

Chairman Deutch, Ranking Member Wilson, distinguished members of the committee, thank you for inviting me to testify. As you know, the Middle East is a critical region for U.S. interests and the Arabian Peninsula remains a key focus of our foreign policy.

As Secretary Pompeo said earlier this year in Cairo, a strong, secure, and economically vibrant Middle East is in our national interest.

It is clear that we have a considerable stake in the region's stability. The most urgent challenge facing the region and one of the greatest threats to our national security is Iran's destabilizing activities.

Iran is the world's leading State sponsor of terror, spends millions of dollars supporting terrorist groups, and proxy organizations that threaten our interest and stoke deadly conflict.

Iranian malign activity in Iraq, Syria, and Yemen and Iran's continued support for designated terrorist groups such as Lebanese Hezbollah threatens Israel and prolongs regional conflicts.

Iran is pursuing dangerous ballistic missile technology that will potentially threaten our security. This Administration has engaged in a powerful pressure campaign to cutoff the revenues the Iranian regime uses to spread terror and destruction throughout the world.

That pressure campaign is working. Our oil sanctions have taken over 1.5 million barrels of Iranian oil exports off the market since May 2018. Twenty-three entities have reduced their purchases of Iranian crude to zero.

These actions deny critical revenue for Iran's malign activities. We have designated the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps—IRGC—as a foreign terrorist organization.

The Trump Administration is focused on protecting America's homeland and America's national security interests. We actively counter the threat from terrorist groups in States that sponsor terrorism.

We work to ensure natural resources and international commerce flow freely and we continue to main our steadfast commitment to the protection of our strongest partners including Israel.

We firmly believe that the challenges and opportunities in the Gulf region mandate continued U.S. engagement. One clear challenge noted heretofore is in the area of human rights. At the highest levels we regularly raise the importance of human rights and respect for international obligations and commitments.

We emphasize the importance of the humane treatment of detainees and thorough investigation of and accountability for allegations of abuse.

I know this subcommittee shares our concerns and we have spoken out publicly about them. We continue to do so in our private diplomatic engagement as well.

Our recently released human rights reports demonstrate the concerns we have with each of our Gulf partners to varying degrees.

For example, our policy in Bahrain is to encourage reform, reconciliation, and respect for freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association.

We were also horrified by the murder of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi. It was a heinous act and we want to be clear that full accountability for those responsible has not yet been achieved.

We have been forthright with the Saudi leadership that there must be honest credible justice for Mr. Khashoggi. We also continue to press Riyadh on its detention of several U.S. citizens and numerous human rights advocates.

Ambassador Abizaid arrived in Riyadh just this past week and I know that one of his priorities will be addressing these issues in the weeks ahead.

China's burgeoning economic influence in the Gulf is another challenge. We have been candid in sharing our concerns with governments in the region. This includes the telecommunications sector and the rollout of 5G in particular.

To ensure a fair playing field for U.S. companies we continue to stress the importance of market principles and transparent market access requirements.

A third challenge is the Gulf dispute with Qatar involving Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain, and Egypt. As Secretary Pompeo has said, we need the Gulf countries working together on the complex set of challenges that face each of our interests in the region.

We view a resolution to the dispute as in the best interests of the countries involved and in our national security interests as well. We have emphasized that the Gulf dispute benefits Iran.

We spend a lot of time talking about the challenges in the Gulf and they are, no doubt, there. But let us remember the opportunities for us that stem from our engagement.

Our shared interests countering terrorism, fostering economic development, countering Iran's malign activity provide an opportunity to bring our partners together. We are also asking the GCC countries to do more to resolve regional crises like Libya, Sudan, and Lebanon, and to partner with us in those endeavors.

We stand ready to work with all of our partners to address the challenges we face.

Chairman Deutch, Ranking Member Wilson, members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify and we welcome the opportunity to answer your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Lenderking follows:]

Testimony

Before the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Middle East, North Africa, and  
International Terrorism

Opportunities and Challenges in U.S. Relations with the Gulf States

Statement of

Timothy A. Lenderking

Deputy Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern Affairs

May 8, 2019

Chairman Deutch, Ranking Member Wilson, distinguished Members of the Committee, thank you for inviting me to testify on this important issue. As you know, the Middle East is a critical region and the Arabian Peninsula remains a key focus of our foreign policy. As Secretary Pompeo said earlier this year in Cairo, “a strong, secure, and economically vibrant Middle East is in our national interest.” It’s clear that the United States has considerable interests in the region’s stability.

The greatest emergency facing the region and one of the greatest threats to our national security is Iran’s destabilizing activities in the region. Iran is the world’s leading state sponsor of terror and spends billions of dollars supporting terrorist groups and proxy organizations that threaten our interests in the region and stoke deadly conflict. Iranian malign activity in Iraq, Syria, and Yemen, and its continued support for designated terrorist groups such as Lebanese Hizballah, threatens Israel and prolongs regional conflicts that radiate instability throughout the region. Iran is pursuing dangerous ballistic missile technology that will potentially threaten our security, and the security of our partners in the region.

This Administration is engaged in a powerful pressure campaign to cut off the revenues the Iranian regime uses to spread terror and destruction throughout the world. And that pressure campaign is working. Our oil sanctions have taken approximately 1.5 million barrels of Iranian oil exports off the market since May 2018. In addition, 23 entities have reduced their purchases of Iranian crude to zero. These actions deny critical revenue for Iran’s malign activities. We have designated the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps as a foreign terrorist organization.

The Trump Administration is focused on protecting America's homeland and America's national security interests. We work actively with our partners to counter the threat from terrorist groups and states that sponsor terrorism. We work to ensure natural resources and international commerce flow freely, preserving a vital lynchpin of the global economy, and we continue to maintain our steadfast commitment to the protection of our strongest partners, including Israel.

We continue to face challenges and opportunities that help us to face common threats and meet our mutual goals. We believe firmly these mandate continued U.S. engagement in a region juxtaposed with both opportunity and risk.

One clear challenge we face in the region is human rights. At the highest levels, we regularly raise with all of our partners in the region the importance of human rights and respect for international obligations and commitments, to include freedom from arbitrary or unlawful detentions, respect for fair trial guarantees including access to legal counsel, and respect for the rule law. We emphasize the importance of the humane treatment of detainees and thorough investigation of, and accountability for, allegations of abuse. I know this Subcommittee shares our concerns, and we have spoken out publicly about them and continue to do so in our private diplomatic engagements.

We believe our action and advocacy continue to guide our Gulf partners in the right direction. Our policy in Bahrain is to encourage reform, reconciliation, and respect for rights of freedom of expression, peaceful assembly, and association; these issues are at the center of the Administration's engagement with the government and people of Bahrain. We regularly engage the Bahraini government on these challenges, calling attention to Bahrain's restrictions on political societies,

undue restrictions on freedom of expression, and lack of due process in its legal system. Despite a ban on the highest-profile opposition parties, we were pleased to see that Bahrain's elections in 2018 saw a record turnout and unrivaled progress for women. Six women were elected to parliament, one of whom was elected Speaker of the Council of Representatives, the first ever female speaker of an elected parliament in the Arab World. This progress was just one step on the road to advance reform efforts for the benefit of Bahrain's long-term security and our mutual interests in regional stability. We acknowledge Bahrain has a long way to go.

While progress is being made in some areas, we are also clear-eyed about the very real human rights challenges that persist. We were all horrified by the murder of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi. It was a heinous act, and I want to be clear that full accountability for those responsible has not yet been achieved. We have been clear with Saudi leadership that there must be honest, credible justice for Mr. Khashoggi, and the U.S. government will continue to deploy all the tools at our disposal to advance accountability. We also continue to press Riyadh on its detention of several U.S. citizens and numerous human rights advocates as well as its support for proselytization that risks the spread of intolerant rhetoric and contributes to sectarianism. We are fortunate to have Ambassador John Abizaid in Riyadh to convey these concerns in a relationship that shares interests in combating terrorism, expanding economic cooperation, and countering Iran's malign behavior.

The burgeoning economic influence of China in the Gulf is another challenge. To ensure a fair playing field for U.S. companies, we continue to stress the importance of market principles and consistent and transparent market access requirements –

for government procurement, customs procedures, and protecting intellectual property rights. We have been candid in sharing our concerns with governments in the region. This includes the telecommunications sector and the rollout of 5G in particular. We are particularly concerned about reliance on equipment from vendors that are subject to unchecked or extrajudicial control by a foreign power. These vendors could be ordered to undermine network security – to disrupt service, skim personal information, or even conduct espionage. We have asserted to senior policy makers in the region that a diversified 5G architecture that excludes untrusted vendors will be more resilient and offer greater security for the region’s communication and data sharing. By maintaining and increasing the commercial and economic ties between the United States and our Gulf partners, we have supported and will continue to increase the prosperity of American businesses and investments.

A third challenge is the internecine dispute among some members of the Gulf Cooperation Council, or GCC. As you know, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain, and Egypt – the Quartet – severed diplomatic relations with and imposed restrictions on Qatar in 2017, in response to what these countries allege is Qatar’s support for terrorism. We’ve listened to the Quartet’s concerns, but we fundamentally disagree. As Secretary Pompeo has said, “we need the Gulf countries working together on the complex set of challenges that face each of them.” Not only do we view a resolution to the dispute as in the best interests of the countries involved, but it is in our national security interests, as well. The continued stability of the GCC is inherently tied to the stability of the region and the interests of the United States. Many of our initiatives on counter terrorism, terrorism finance, and defense cooperation are regionally based. For example, we

have a shared Terrorist Finance Targeting Center based in Riyadh. Kuwait hosts NATO's Istanbul Cooperation Initiative regional center.

Our cooperation is broad and we are constantly looking for ways to increase cooperation with our Gulf partners in order to bring security and stability to the region. One of the ways we are doing this is through a proposed initiative called the Middle East Strategic Alliance, or MESA. MESA is a proposed joint initiative of the United States, Jordan, and the six GCC countries – Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain, Oman, Kuwait, and Qatar. As the Subcommittee is aware, Egypt was initially a partner in MESA but has, for now, withdrawn its participation. The remaining MESA members, including the United States, have all expressed a wish for Egypt to return to MESA and we are optimistic they will change their minds in the future.

Our goal for MESA is to enhance multilateral cooperation in the political, economic, energy, and security spheres. Not only will MESA build a strong foundation for countering Iran's malign influence, but it will enhance our partners' capacity to be positive contributors to regional security. We continue to have detailed discussions with interested countries as we move forward to shape the initiative together. As Secretary Pompeo acknowledged last month, "It'll take us a bit, it won't be straightforward." Our shared interests provide an opportunity to bring our partners together.

We also rely on our Gulf partners to work with us to resolve regional crises like Libya, Sudan, and Lebanon. We are asking the GCC countries to do more in de-escalating these conflicts, and to do it in concert with us. Kuwait, for example, is a worldwide leader in humanitarian support to refugees around the Middle East. We

need the Gulf countries to work together to confront Iran's destabilizing proxies, such as Hizballah. As we ask Gulf countries to take more responsibility for their own security, we are also pushing them to take coordinated and concerted actions that preserve security and well-being throughout the broader Middle East.

We stand ready to work with all our partners to address the challenges we face, in order to ensure regional stability, international peace, and security. Chairman Deutch, Ranking Member Wilson, and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify. I welcome the opportunity answer your questions.

Mr. DEUTCH. Thank you very much, Mr. Lenderking, for your testimony.

We will now move to member questions, under the 5-minute rule. I will begin, followed by Ranking Member Wilson, and then we will alternate between the parties.

Let me just begin by acknowledging, Mr. Lenderking, that we ask a lot of some of our partners, often asking them to change behavior on issues that we do not always see eye to eye on.

We want cooperation on Iran. We want help countering the Russian and Chinese influence. We have asked in Syria and Libya and we want responsible action to bring the war in Yemen to a halt and we want to be clear that human rights is not a secondary concern. All of these affect U.S. national security.

I, personally, do not believe that we are asking too much. But it seems—it seems like the president and other top advisors believe that in order to get cooperation in some areas we have to push other issues further down the list.

So I would just ask you to—let me just give you the opportunity to share with the subcommittee what are our consistent messages to Gulf partners? If you could correct the record, help us understand what those messages look like and sound like.

Mr. LENDERKING. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I think, first and foremost, we talk about the threats that we are facing together, which we believe that are also issues that threaten the Gulf countries. I have mentioned Iran's malign influence. This plays out in varying degrees to each of the countries.

In Yemen, unfortunately, with the civil war continuing to rage we see that the Houthis were aided and abetted, although not proxies of the Iranians—that they, just as Ranking Member Wilson said, the Iranians show no inclination, unfortunately, to help bring that conflict to a close.

So we do see that the Iranians are supporting the Houthis in ways that are fueling the conflict. So we have a host of security issues.

We have talked about human rights and I think that is a crucial area where we do a lot privately when necessary. As I mentioned, our human rights reports, which are in the public domain, we do a lot of very private messaging with the Saudi leadership and I think Ambassador Abizaid will take that on as a key challenge.

Another primary area for us—

Mr. DEUTCH. Mr. Lenderking, so I understand private messaging you are not going to be willing to tell us exactly what the wording of that messaging is. But if you could give us some sense when it comes to human rights the general nature of that private messaging.

Mr. LENDERKING. Of course. I think in each of the countries the messaging is different. I mean, their commonalities, I would say, common principles—freedom of assembly, freedom of speech, et cetera—that are part of our human rights dialog.

But if you take the case of Bahrain, we have had an ongoing conversation stemming back to some of the concerns we felt about their handling of the Shi'a population that goes back several years.

That is a particular area of concern. On the other hand, we were heartened to see the record turnout in the recent parliamentary

elections, the election of a female speaker of Parliament very much on the positive side. Bahrain has a very good track record in terms of trafficking in persons so that is very much on the positive side.

Saudi Arabia, of course, the crucial issue has been the ones I have mentioned—the killing of Jamal Khashoggi, which we note in our human rights report was conducted by government agents. So we are quite public and quite direct about that.

Secretary Pompeo has indicated, including most recently in late April, we continue to investigate. We call on Saudi Arabia to take measures against those responsible all the way up to the highest levels.

Mr. DEUTCH. And what is the status of that investigation?

Mr. LENDERKING. The status of the investigation is that the Saudis have a legal process underway. We may not be totally satisfied with the pace of it. They have a different legal system. The Saudis have asked for our patience to let the legal proceedings continue.

This is not something that we are going to allow to be swept under the table or buried under other priority issues.

Mr. DEUTCH. So I appreciate that, Mr. Lenderking. But even as that investigation plays out—we could talk about the hurdles and the timing and why it takes so long—even as that plays out, we have seen the human rights activists, more than two dozen, detained since last May.

The question is how do we push back against—it is not just that horrific case—how do we push back against the Saudis' human rights violations.

Should the Administration consider applying Global Magnitsky Act sanctions against Saudi officials responsible for unjust treatment not just in connection with the Khashoggi case but unjust treatment of these activists if there is credible evidence, especially that—if there is credible evidence that there has been abuse or torture?

Mr. LENDERKING. Mr. Chairman, I think the Global Magnitsky parameters are something that we constantly look at. So if we feel that they apply in other cases we would, of course, take a serious look at that.

We have, as noted, identified 17 individuals. We did that sort of right off the bat within a month or so of Khashoggi's killing. We have utilized other legal measures to block visas for others whom we deem are—were involved in that case.

Mr. DEUTCH. But even—just as I wrap up—in addition to the Khashoggi case, are there ongoing—is there an ongoing review of Global Magnitsky Act sanctions and the potential application of those sanctions to individuals in connection with either abuse or torture if there is credible evidence that that exists?

Mr. LENDERKING. I will say that there is not directly at this particular time. I would say we are prepared to go in that direction should information come to us that would rise to that level.

Mr. DEUTCH. Thank you.

Mr. Wilson.

Mr. WILSON. And thank you, Mr. Chairman, and, Mr. Lenderking, thank you for being here today.

And in January, Representative Keating and I introduced H.R. 554, the Saudi Educational Transparency and Reform Act, which highlights Saudi Arabia's inflammatory education curriculum.

Is the State Department working with Saudi Arabia on this issue?

Mr. LENDERKING. We are indeed. This has been an issue that we have looked at—been looking at for several years. Particularly problematic are textbooks that we have sought to work with the Saudis on that has demeaning language toward, for example, Shi'a, which we think is not in keeping, certainly, with the direction that the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia wants to take the country.

He has talked about the importance of Saudi Arabia returning to a moderate Islam. Educational reform—what kids are taught in schools—we would see as a vital part of that. So we have worked with the Saudis on that effort.

We have seen some improvement. More work to be done.

Mr. WILSON. And with the effort in Saudi Arabia, the focus there of human rights and rule of law, what is the status of working with Kuwait and its level of progress in developing human rights and rule of law and what is the State Department doing to promote the most open society that could be?

Mr. LENDERKING. We also highlight a number of issues in our human rights report pertaining to Kuwait. So that is very much an active dialog. We do not have the same voracity, I would say, on the human rights issues that we do with the Saudis at this particular time.

But we have had concerns about freedom of assembly and other issues that we continue to raise with the Kuwaiti government.

Mr. WILSON. And also possibly detention issues of person in that country?

Mr. LENDERKING. Of detentions?

Mr. WILSON. Yes.

Mr. LENDERKING. Yes. We are aware of certain particular cases right now that we are working on and that we are working to resolve as quickly as we can.

Mr. WILSON. That is greatly appreciated.

And then the ongoing dispute with Qatar and its neighbors, how does this affect American interests in the Middle East?

Mr. LENDERKING. We believe that the blockade of Qatar's airspace, its land border, is beneficial to Iran and we do not believe that this blockade or dispute with Qatar serves even the interests of those who are doing it.

We have thrown ourselves at it quite strongly at various points. I have traveled with special envoys to the region on a number of occasions and we have sought to deliver messages to the leadership of all the countries concerned to work out their differences.

We have supported the Kuwaitis as a mediator and very much value the role that they have played. We are not there yet. We would also like to look at other measures.

We have assumed that the blockade could not necessarily be lifted in one bite, so to speak. Let us look at ways that pilgrims moving to the Haj, for example, can be helped to perform their religious duties.

Let us look at family reunification. There are numerous ways that we think the Gulf countries could chip away at some of the issues.

But I think the main point is that we are better united, just as you said, Congressman, that these countries, when we look at the region we count on them to work with us in confronting, you know, regional challenges across the board.

Mr. WILSON. And including working together with us. Sadly, there has been terror financing from the GCC countries. Have we identified who the recipients—which terrorist groups are receiving funds and what efforts are being made to deter further financing?

Mr. LENDERKING. We have a very strong dialog with the Gulf countries on terrorism financing. We partner with our Treasury colleagues who often have the lead on this particular issue.

We have seen some improvements. We have seen the Saudis move up the ranking in this particular area. We are very glad for that.

But I would say across the board there is more work that could be done, particularly as we look at Iranian financial flows in and out of the Gulf, and as we scrutinize that area more, we will be going to our Gulf partners to do more heavy lifting.

Mr. WILSON. And with your extraordinary background in the Middle East, do you believe that progress is being made in regard to human rights for the citizens of the region?

Mr. LENDERKING. Oh, I think there is progress. We oftentimes say there is three steps forward and two back. We are trying to avoid that. It would be great to have five steps forward and no back.

So that is very much the posture that we take is that the human rights improvements that we are pushing for we think are beneficial to those countries. We would not do it otherwise.

But we also think we have strong interests to advocate for and I am sure we will continue to do so.

Mr. WILSON. Thank you for your service.

Mr. LENDERKING. Thank you.

Mr. DEUTCH. Thank you, Mr. Wilson.

We have been joined by the chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee.

Chairman Engel, you are recognized.

Chairman ENGEL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It is strange to be all the way over on this side. I have not been here in years, you know.

But thank you and thanks to members of the subcommittee for letting me speak. So let me say, Mr. Deutch—Chairman Deutch—Ranking Member Wilson, Mr. Lenderking, members of the subcommittee, I welcome the opportunity to address the many challenges and opportunities in the U.S. relationship with the Arabian Gulf.

Right now, our relationships have been consumed by human rights and accountability issues. They have been hampered by foreign policy concerns where our interests diverge.

In Saudi Arabia, the murder of Jamal Khashoggi and the imprisonment of an American physician, of two American journalists, and

of women activists and bloggers have certainly hindered and made more difficult our relationship.

In order to move past these issues, the United States will need to see real changes. I want to move past the issue—these issues but we cannot really be business as usual.

With respect to the UAE, our security cooperation remains strong. But serious concerns remain about reports that military equipment made in the United States and sold to the Emiratis has ended up in the hands of third parties, even extremists.

We are also closely monitoring how the UAE is influencing various conflicts around the world from Sudan to Libya to Somalia, and Yemen has been a major concern of this committee.

Unfortunately, we have not seen nearly enough accountability for attacks against civilians—a funeral, a fishing boat, a Save the Children's hospital.

Our partners must be better than this and we need to insist on it and this committee, I believe, has a role to play. I believe that the best approach, moving forward, is to limit assistance to our partners including weapons transfers if they cannot meet our expectations.

Let me be clear, though. The Houthis are equally at fault. They have resisted implementation of the Stockholm Agreement, blocked humanitarian assistance in getting to vulnerable Yemenis, and committed atrocities against detainees.

But we cannot simply look the other way when our partner's behavior has been so troubling. At the same time, we have a real interest in continuing to work with these partners on issues of mutual concern.

Our Gulf partners are playing a constructive role in the Israeli-Palestinian context, reportedly building back-channel cooperation with Israel, and backfilling U.S. commitments to Palestinian assistance.

Qatar has made a positive impact in the stabilization of Gaza, working through Israel, not counter to Israel, and this is a welcome newer development.

The United States and Gulf partners share economic opportunities, anti-terrorism concerns and can be working together to counter the threat posed by Iran.

For this to happen, a unified Gulf is essential. But so far, we have not seen, unfortunately, enough progress to end the Qatar blockade.

It is in all parties' interests to end this blockade so that we can work together to counter the real threats in the region. At the very least, Gulf Countries should allow Qatar overflight rights so that each flight out of Doha is not putting money in Iran's pockets.

Again, I thank the members of the subcommittee, particularly the chairman and ranking member, for devoting much-needed attention to the opportunities and challenges in the Gulf, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. DEUTCH. The chairman yields back.

Mr. Lieu, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. LIEU. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you, Secretary Lenderking, for your service in both Democratic and Republican administrations.

I note that you were the deputy chief of mission at the U.S. Embassy in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, from 2013 to 2016. So I am going to ask you some questions about Saudi Arabia and then about Yemen.

Does the Trump Administration—so let me first ask about Jamal Khashoggi. As you know, Saudi Arabian officials lured him into a Saudi embassy, even though he was an American resident, and they murdered him and then cut his body into parts using a bone saw.

Does the Trump Administration know where Khashoggi body parts are?

Mr. LENDERKING. We do not.

Mr. LIEU. OK. Do you believe that Khashoggi's family should have the dignity and respect of having his body?

Mr. LENDERKING. Yes, I think we would support that, of course.

Mr. LIEU. Has the Trump Administration made a request to Saudi Arabia asking for Khashoggi's body?

Mr. LENDERKING. We have.

Mr. LIEU. OK. And how has Saudi Arabia responded to that request?

Mr. LENDERKING. Thus far, the Saudis have responded that they do not know where the body is.

Mr. LIEU. Do you believe that? They killed him.

Mr. LENDERKING. I think there were—there are things that we do not know about what went on in the consulate and thereafter, and I speak honestly when I tell all of you that when Secretary Pompeo says that there is more to be investigated, that is—that is the case including on this particular issue.

Mr. LIEU. Well, I am glad you raise that.

So I would like to enter into the record, Mr. Chair, an article in the Washington Post that is titled, "CIA Concludes Saudi Crown Prince Ordered Jamal Khashoggi's Assassination." It is dated November 16, 2018.

Mr. Chair, if I could enter that into the record.

Mr. DEUTCH. Without objection.

[The information referred to follows:]

Washington Post | National Security

## CIA concludes Saudi crown prince ordered Jamal Khashoggi's assassination

By Shane Harris, Greg Miller and Josh Dawsey  
November 16, 2018 at 6:11 p.m. EST

The CIA has concluded that Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman ordered the assassination of journalist Jamal Khashoggi in Istanbul last month, contradicting the Saudi government's claims that he was not involved in the killing, according to people familiar with the matter.

The CIA's assessment, in which officials have said they have high confidence, is the most definitive to date linking Mohammed to the operation and complicates the Trump administration's efforts to preserve its relationship with a close ally. A team of 15 Saudi agents flew to Istanbul on government aircraft in October and killed Khashoggi inside the Saudi Consulate, where he had gone to pick up documents that he needed for his planned marriage to a Turkish woman.

In reaching its conclusions, the CIA examined multiple sources of intelligence, including a phone call that the prince's brother Khalid bin Salman, the Saudi ambassador to the United States, had with Khashoggi, according to the people familiar with the matter, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss the intelligence. Khalid told Khashoggi, a contributing columnist to The Washington Post, that he should go to the Saudi Consulate in Istanbul to retrieve the documents and gave him assurances that it would be safe to do so.

It is not clear if Khalid knew that Khashoggi would be killed, but he made the call at his brother's direction, according to the people familiar with the call, which was intercepted by U.S. intelligence.

Fatimah Baeshen, a spokeswoman for the Saudi Embassy in Washington, said the ambassador and Khashoggi never discussed "anything related to going to Turkey." She added that the claims in the CIA's "purported assessment are false. We have and continue to hear various theories without seeing the primary basis for these speculations."

The CIA's conclusion about Mohammed's role was also based on the agency's assessment of the prince as the country's de facto ruler who oversees even minor affairs in the kingdom. "The accepted position is that there is no way this happened without him being aware or involved," said a U.S. official familiar with the CIA's conclusions.

The CIA sees Mohammed as a "good technocrat," the U.S. official said, but also as volatile and arrogant, someone who "goes from zero to 60, doesn't seem to understand that there are some things you can't do."

CIA analysts believe he has a firm grip on power and is not in danger of losing his status as heir to the throne despite the Khashoggi scandal. "The general agreement is that he is likely to survive," the official said, adding that Mohammed's role as the future Saudi king is "taken for granted."

A spokesman for the CIA declined to comment.

Over the past several weeks, the Saudis have offered multiple, contradictory explanations for what happened at the consulate. This week, the Saudi public prosecutor blamed the operation on a rogue band of operatives who were sent to Istanbul to return Khashoggi to Saudi Arabia, in an operation that veered off course when the journalist "was forcibly restrained and injected with a large amount of a drug resulting in an overdose that led to his death," according to a report by the prosecutor.

The prosecutor announced charges against 11 alleged participants and said he would seek the death penalty against five of them.

The assassination of Khashoggi, a prominent critic of Mohammed's policies, has sparked a foreign policy crisis for the White House and raised questions about the administration's reliance on Saudi Arabia as a key ally in the Middle East and bulwark against Iran.

President Trump has resisted pinning the blame for the killing on Mohammed, who enjoys a close relationship with Jared Kushner, the president's son-in-law and senior adviser. Privately, aides said, Trump has been shown evidence of the prince's involvement but remains skeptical that Mohammed ordered the killing.

The president has also asked CIA and State Department officials where Khashoggi's body is and has grown frustrated that they have not been able to provide an answer. The CIA does not know the location of Khashoggi's remains, according to the people familiar with the agency's assessment.

Among the intelligence assembled by the CIA is an audio recording from a listening device that the Turks placed inside the Saudi Consulate, according to the people familiar with the matter. The Turks gave the CIA a copy of that audio, and the agency's director, Gina Haspel, has listened to it.

The audio shows that Khashoggi was killed within moments of entering the consulate, according to officials in multiple countries who have listened to it or been briefed on its contents. Khashoggi died in the office of the Saudi consul general, who can be heard expressing his displeasure that Khashoggi's body now needed to be disposed of and the facility cleaned of any evidence, according to people familiar with the audio recording.

The CIA also examined a call placed from inside the consulate after the killing by an alleged member of the Saudi hit team, Maher Mutreb, a security official who has often been seen at the crown prince's side and who was photographed entering and leaving the consulate on the day of the killing.

Mutreb called Saud al-Qahtani, then one of the top aides to Mohammed, and informed him that the operation had been completed, according to people familiar with the call.

This week, the Treasury Department sanctioned 17 individuals it said were involved in Khashoggi's death, including Qahtani, Mutreb and the Saudi consul general in Turkey, Mohammad al-Otaibi.

The CIA's assessment of Mohammed's role in the assassination also tracks with information developed by foreign governments, according to officials in several European capitals who have concluded that the operation was too brazen to have taken place without Mohammed's direction.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has said his government has shared the audio with Germany, France, Britain and Saudi Arabia.

In addition to calls and audio recordings, CIA analysts also linked some members of the Saudi hit team directly to Mohammed himself. Some of the 15 members have served on his security team and traveled in the United States during visits by senior Saudi officials, including the crown prince, according to passport records reviewed by The Post.

The United States had also obtained intelligence before Khashoggi's death that indicated he might be in danger. But it wasn't until after he disappeared on Oct. 2 that U.S. intelligence agencies began searching archives of intercepted communications and discovered material indicating that the Saudi royal family had been seeking to lure Khashoggi back to Riyadh.

Two U.S. officials said there has been no indication that officials were aware of this intelligence in advance of Khashoggi's disappearance or had missed any chance to warn him.

Khashoggi "was not a person of interest" before his disappearance, and the fact that he was residing in Virginia meant that he was regarded as a U.S. person and therefore shielded from U.S. intelligence gathering, one of the officials said.

Trump has told senior White House officials that he wants Mohammed to remain in power because Saudi Arabia helps to check Iran, which the administration considers its top security challenge in the Middle East. He has said that he does not want the controversy over Khashoggi's death to impede oil production by the kingdom.

One lingering question is why Mohammed might have decided to kill Khashoggi, who was not agitating for the crown prince's removal.

A theory the CIA has developed is that Mohammed believed Khashoggi was a dangerous Islamist who was too sympathetic to the Muslim Brotherhood, according to people familiar with the assessment. Days after Khashoggi disappeared, Mohammed relayed that view in a phone call with Kushner and John Bolton, the national security adviser, who has long opposed the Brotherhood and seen it as a regional security threat.

Mohammed's private condemnation of the slain journalist stood in contrast to his government's public comments, which mourned Khashoggi's killing as a "terrible mistake" and a "tragedy."

U.S. officials are unclear on when or whether the Saudi government will follow through with its threatened executions of the individuals blamed for Khashoggi's killing. "It could happen overnight or take 20 years," the U.S. official said, adding that the treatment of subordinates could erode Mohammed's standing going forward.

In killing those who followed his orders, "it's hard to get the next set [of subordinates] to help," the official said.

John Hudson and Missy Ryan in Washington, Souad Mekhennet in Frankfurt, and Loveday Morris and Kareem Fahim in Istanbul contributed to this report.

Mr. LIEU. All right.

So the CIA has concluded that a Saudi conference ordered Khashoggi's assassination. Do you share that view?

Mr. LENDERKING. Mr. Congressman, I have not seen anything nor, I believe, has Secretary Pompeo to corroborate that point of view.

Mr. LIEU. So the article notes that the CIA has concluded that with high assessment. Have you gotten a briefing from the CIA on that issue?

Mr. LENDERKING. I have had—I have had some conversations, of course, with the CIA about this issue.

Mr. LIEU. So what is the State Department doing to try to get more information either on who killed Khashoggi if it is not the CIA saying the Crown Prince did it, and where his body is?

Mr. LENDERKING. Well, I would leave to intel channels the way that—you know, some of those issues. But I would say that in our—in our private engagement with the Saudis, this is very much a live issue and, as I said in my statement, we are not satisfied in a number of areas—accountability, credibility. You mentioned the body. These are things that I think the Saudis still owe us.

Mr. LIEU. Thank you. I would like to move on to Yemen. On March 26th, the 4-year anniversary of the conflict in Yemen, a hospital in northern Yemen, supported by Save the Children with funding from USAID, was partially destroyed in an air strike and several children and health care workers were killed.

Has the Administration made any efforts to investigate this incident?

Mr. LENDERKING. Sometimes our efforts to investigate on our own are quite limited, given the fact that we do not have a large presence inside Yemen to investigate directly. So we are reliant, to some extent, on the coalition.

But yes, we have pressed this issue with the Saudis, with the Saudi-led coalition, and we understand that the strike was on a hospital. It was not on—sorry, it was not on the hospital but on a nearby facility which there was some indication that there were Houthis elements. But we understand that Saudis have acknowledged that there was some civilian casualties.

Mr. LIEU. All right. Thank you.

Now, if there—an investigation determines that the Saudis and Emiratis are responsible for destroying part of a hospital supported with U.S. taxpayer dollars, what actions would the Administration plan on taking if that were the case?

Mr. LENDERKING. Well, you are pointing to, you know, a very live subject that we have with the Saudis—an ongoing conversation, a set of training, a set of using our influence to improve Saudi targeting techniques and overall conduct of the war in Yemen.

And so this would be very much folded into it. Unfortunately, it is not the first allegation of civilian casualties. I wish I would say it would be the last.

But this is—this is an area that we take very seriously and our leadership in Riyadh, you can imagine, under former CENTCOM Commander John Abizaid that we will continue to do that with the Saudis.

Mr. LIEU. Thank you. This is my last question.

I commend the Trump Administration for stopping the refueling of Saudi jets. I would like to know if you could tell us what is the Administration doing in terms of support to the Saudi-led military coalition in Yemen?

Mr. LENDERKING. Part of our support is political, of course, in the sense that we recognize that Saudi Arabia should not lose this conflict in Yemen—that the other side is backed by our enemies and that we need to continue to support the Saudi-led coalition to, at times, when appropriate keep military pressure on the Houthis.

And so we have a few limited ways that we do that. They are not terribly significant and you are right to point out that we did discontinue the refueling support.

Mr. DEUTCH. Thank you, Mr. Lieu.

Mr. Allred, you are recognized.

Mr. ALLRED. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Mr. Lenderking, for being here and for your service across multiple administrations.

I want to be clear, though, to followup on my colleague, Mr. Lieu's, line of questioning that you do not accept the CIA's assessment that Jamal Khashoggi's murder was directed by the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia?

Mr. LENDERKING. I have no independent basis to confirm or deny that one way or the other. I think what we are trying to say is that we have not gotten to the bottom of it yet.

Mr. ALLRED. By we, do we not rely on our intelligence services to make those assessments?

Mr. LENDERKING. Of course, and we also are relying on Saudis and Turks and others who might have information, and I think the fact that we have continued to identify individuals and whether it is restrict visas or look at certain individuals under the GloMag—the Global Magnitsky parameters—indicates that this is very much a live issue.

Mr. ALLRED. I just find that to be pretty remarkable—I really do—that this Administration continues to not accept the conclusions of its own intelligence services.

This is not the first instance of this on this committee. We hear this all the time now, that our intelligence services reach an assessment with high confidence that they do not do very lightly, that they do with corroborating information and they do in cooperation with our allies and with underlying facts, and that our administration and the president of the United States then says, I do not know if our intelligence service is correct—I am going to go off my own gut and talk to the Saudis or the Russians or whoever it might be and maybe they will be right and not our own intelligence assessments.

And I—to me, this is a larger issue that faces us here, which is who are we going to trust in our own government. Are we going to trust the intelligence that we receive from our American intelligence services that work very hard to assess this information, to source it, who have people putting their lives on the line at times to get that information?

Or are we going to trust the parties that have a self-interest in our own determinations who then later are allowed to get away with enormous violations of international law, of human rights,

and to me this is a larger national security issue for the United States and this region is rife with countries that have human rights violations.

I recognize that we need them as a counter balance to Iranian influence. I recognize that we have a military presence in every single one of these countries and that we use them for many purposes.

But, in my opinion, when we undermine our values and allow human rights violations to take place with our allies that hurts our overall national security. It makes us less safe because we then encourage extremism.

We encourage people to look at the United States as their enemy when we should be encouraging the spread of the values and rules-based order that rules the world and that we have installed since World War II and that is now, I think, being actively undermined around the world, at times with this Administration just nodding along.

And so, to me, this is a larger issue and I want to in the time that I have left talk about Bahrain because I have—several of my constituents have reached out to me about this and I want to thank them for reaching out to me about this and about the crackdown on free speech, on any opposition to its leadership, that has prevented any real development of any internal democratic institutions.

The Obama Administration imposed a ban on arms sales to Bahrain that has been lifted by the Trump Administration. Has that improved the human rights situation and why did we reach that decision?

Mr. LENDERKING. Thank you, Congressman.

On Bahrain, I think we do have a pretty active dialog with the Bahraini leadership about human rights issues. We also talk to human rights advocates inside Bahrain, outside Bahrain. It is helping to enrich and develop our understanding of what is going on there.

I could not make a direct correlation between the arms sales and the human rights situation. I know that, you know, Bahrain remains a critical partner and that Bahrain is on the front lines of the Iran, you know, threat network.

They are very close geographically to Iran. We see illicit material flowing into Bahrain. There is a very legitimate security concern that the Bahrainis have. So they got to watch—they got to watch that space.

Mr. ALLRED. Yes. Well, thank you. Yes.

Thank you. I certainly recognize Bahrain's importance. I want to finish by saying this, which is that private conversations about human rights, putting it in reports that we issue, is not the same as global leadership from the president of the United States and that is what we need to have on human rights issues.

It is a shame that the rest of world is now looking at the United States no longer as an ally in combating human rights violations and that we will not speak out more broadly and more forcefully on these issues.

And the fact that you are having private conversations is good. I am glad to hear that. But it is not enough, and the United States is better than that.

Thank you.

Mr. DEUTCH. Thank you, Mr. Allred.

Mr. Malinowski, you are recognized.

Mr. MALINOWSKI. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, Mr. Lenderking. Let me—let me actually pick up with the Bahrain discussion, and I appreciate your opening statement and your answer just now that we are apparently trying to raise these issues.

But I am confused because the first and most prominent statement on Bahrain policy that this Administration made was made by the president at the very beginning of the Administration.

He said, quote, “Our countries have a wonderful relationship together. But there has been a little strain. But there won’t be a strain with this Administration.”

And that statement coincided with the resumption of arms sales and was interpreted by everybody in Bahrain as a statement that human rights would no longer be an issue.

Has our policy changed since the president’s statement?

Mr. LENDERKING. No, it has not changed. I would say that the president is right to herald the good relationship that we have. It was mentioned that they host NAVCENT, a very important resource for us, as we try to support security in this vital waterway, the Persian Gulf.

But we do—let me assure you, Congressman, knowing of your interest in our conversations on this topic in the past that we do not give the Bahrainis a blank check.

We do have, you know, a pretty vital conversation both at the foreign minister level and through our embassy in Manama and back here when the Bahrainis visit.

This is very much a part of our discussion with the Bahrainis and we are looking for improvements in some of the areas that I have noted.

Mr. MALINOWSKI. Well, we will continue that conversation. Let me broaden this out a bit.

Your testimony and much of our policy is based on the belief that Iran continues destabilizing activities throughout the region and let me just State that is, of course, 100 percent correct, from Syria to Yemen to Lebanon and a perfectly appropriate focus of our policy.

But let me ask you a series of questions about some other countries. Is it correct to say that Saudi Arabia and the UAE are blockading Qatar? Yes or no.

Mr. LENDERKING. Yes, that is correct. That is part of the Gulf—

Mr. MALINOWSKI. Is it—would you agree that a short while ago the Saudi government kidnapped the prime minister of Lebanon in an effort to coerce that government to adopt policies more friendly to Saudi interests?

Mr. LENDERKING. I do not know that I would use the word kidnapped. But there was an unfortunate extra bit of time spent in

Saudi Arabia and we have talked to the Saudis about this, and I am glad we were able to help work this out.

Mr. MALINOWSKI. You are a good diplomat.

Is it fair to say that the world's worst humanitarian crisis right now is going on in Yemen and that the suffering is due at least in part—not wholly, but in part—to actions by the Saudi government and the UAE, that both—that two successive U.S. administrations have urged them to moderate?

Mr. LENDERKING. That is correct. Let us not give the Houthis a pass on this, OK?

Mr. MALINOWSKI. I am not. But is it correct to say that the UAE has funded and armed militias in Libya that right as we speak are trying to overthrow a government that both the United States and United Nations has recognized?

Mr. LENDERKING. I am not sure that is entirely accurate, Congressman.

I think that UAE has an interest in what happens in Libya. We have a very active dialog with them. We are coordinating with them very closely and I think we are starting to push for a political process, which is the desired outcome of the United States.

Mr. MALINOWSKI. As we should be.

Well, there is reporting that there are UAE—operated drones flying over Tripoli—armed drones on behalf of Haftar, who is in fact trying to overthrow the legitimate government.

Is it true that the Saudi government has operated a team—a security unit dedicated to harassing, kidnapping, perhaps even killing dissidents in other countries beyond even just the Khashoggi case?

Mr. LENDERKING. I believe there has been in the past some such organizations. I do not know all the—you know, all the parameters of them. I do not know the marching orders, et cetera.

This would be something that we would be concerned about and would address with the Saudis.

Mr. MALINOWSKI. So, look, you can see where I am going with this. I could go on to Somalia and Sudan and other examples but it seems to me we have two powers in the Middle East that are busy destabilizing the region because they are engaged in a civilizational war with each other—Sunni versus Shi'a.

Is it in our interests to take one side in that cold war, as we seem to be doing right now, when both sides are destabilizing the region?

Mr. LENDERKING. I think what we would like to see is Iran to come back in the fold, and the secretary has laid out 12 points that he—that we hope that the Iranians will recognize the wisdom of.

It may be a difficult leap for them. We are very concerned about the way that Iran spreads its tentacles throughout the Gulf into Syria. We have to support the Saudis and the Gulf countries to withstand, I think, the pressure that they are under from the Iranians.

Mr. MALINOWSKI. Are they in the fold?

Mr. LENDERKING. Sorry?

Mr. MALINOWSKI. Are the Saudis and the Emiratis in the fold, given the long list that we just went through of destabilizing activities?

Mr. LENDERKING. On many issues, they are, and where they are not, that is where we are trying to maneuver them into better positions.

Mr. MALINOWSKI. Thank you. I yield back.

Mr. DEUTCH. Thank you, Mr. Malinowski.

Mr. Trone, you are recognized.

Mr. TRONE. I just would followup with Mr. Allred's and Mr. Malinowski's comments. The maneuvering does not appear to be going too well.

I am just befuddled how you can say that our own CIA we are not buying their intelligence. I am befuddled how you can say he was not kidnapped—he was detained.

I mean, it must be hard for you to sit there and say that. It would be hard for me to sit there and say that, given your background and wonderful career.

That must be tough. Let us go back to Chairman Engel and Chairman Royce have sent a letter to President Trump invoking the Magnitsky Act that triggered a determination that was due February the 8th.

We have not heard a word since then. We sent another letter. Forty folks signed off on it. Can I enter this into the record, please?

Mr. DEUTCH. Without objection.

[The information referred to follows:]

Mr. TRONE. Thank you. So would not we expect to receive—it is mandated that we receive an answer as to the determination a who is responsible for Mr. Khashoggi's killing?

Mr. LENDERKING. I believe we owe you—we do owe you a response on that and I will certainly take that back and we will be as responsive as we can to that letter.

Mr. TRONE. February, March, April, May. When can we expect that? When the prime minister detained? Is this going to be one of those type things—detained, not kidnapped?

Mr. LENDERKING. No, I do not think so, sir. I think we will—we understand the obligation and we will move quickly on it.

Mr. TRONE. How is the Administration ensuring Saudi leaders do not believe they are free to kill dissidents and use diplomatic cover to do so? What is the top-to-top messaging?

Mr. LENDERKING. Sir, what is our messaging to the Saudis?

Mr. TRONE. That they do not have an open hand—a free hand, which they, clearly, think they do?

Mr. LENDERKING. Well, I think they do not get that from us, to be honest, and I think we have put in an avalanche of concern about that particular incident and where we would see such other behavior operating we would move to stop it.

Mr. TRONE. Yemen. Part of the Trump travel ban—36 plaintiffs sued Trump Administration March 2018 claiming the government failed to follow its own guidelines, its own procedures, for viewing the travel ban requests as required by law, waivers.

Some plaintiffs reported State Department officials refused to accept documents in support of their waiver requests. Others said they were never given a chance to apply for a waiver.

According to Reuters, U.S. Government granted waivers only 6 percent of visa applicants subject to the travel ban. When Secretary

Pompeo was here, I asked him about this when he testified in March. But we did not get a very clear answer.

What is the Administration's policy on reviewing and granting waivers and why is that percentage so abysmally low?

Mr. LENDERKING. Sir, I am sorry. I do not—I am not sure of the context in which your question is. I would be happy to respond but I am not quite sure I understand the question.

Mr. TRONE. So there is a Trump travel ban, as ability to get around the ban with waivers, and when folks apply for a waiver there is no response and eventually 6 percent get approved. It seems ridiculously low and, perhaps, punitive.

Mr. LENDERKING. I would have to take that back, sir. I am sorry. I cannot—

Mr. TRONE. We would appreciate it. If you can look into that, that would be good.

Mr. LENDERKING. OK. Happy to do it.

Mr. TRONE. Are you planning to increase your personnel and resources to maybe process these quicker and address it?

Mr. LENDERKING. I would be happy to look into that as well.

Mr. TRONE. Yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. CONNOLLY. If my friend would yield.

Mr. TRONE. I do.

Mr. CONNOLLY. I thank my friend, and without objection, Mr. Chairman, I would ask this time just be added to my 5 minutes.

Mr. DEUTCH. Without objection, so ordered.

Mr. CONNOLLY. I thank the chair.

Mr. Lenderking—and I thank Mr. Trone—Qatar. I want to make sure—I heard your answer earlier. I want to make sure I understand the policy.

The policy is we are encouraging our friends to stop it because the feuding with Qatar and the economic sanctions against Qatar are actually strengthening the interests of Iran in the region. Is that correct?

Mr. LENDERKING. Yes, that is correct.

Mr. CONNOLLY. And we have given that direction that is our official policy to our other allies in the region, Qatar being, of course, an ally as well?

Mr. LENDERKING. That is correct.

Mr. CONNOLLY. And have you gotten the warm fuzzies from the Saudis in that direction?

Mr. LENDERKING. Not really. I mean, we have understood that the Saudis have concerns about Qatari behavior that dates back a number of years. We have looked at those concerns. I think, you know, the overwhelming sense in the Administration is that we need to get on with Gulf unity.

It is important to our interests and we want to see those countries working together to partner with us on the kind of challenges that we are talking about here today.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Just in terms of trade flows and, you know, movement of goods and services, if the Saudis and their allies in the Gulf block Qatar from, you know, air rights and border crossings and the like, I just—obviously, Qatar has to turn to Iran, correct?

Mr. LENDERKING. That is correct.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Yes.

Mr. LENDERKING. And that is very unfortunate.

Mr. CONNOLLY. All right. I just want to be real clear that that is our policy and that is good to know.

Iran announced today that given the United States decision to renounce and walk away from the JCPOA that it was going to now limit one of the metrics set in the JCPOA, which is the sale and transshipment of enriched uranium.

Our allies seem—and our adversaries who were party to the JCPOA seem rather apoplectic about this and, frankly, hold us responsible for creating an unstable situation where there had been a stable one.

Our own government had admitted that heretofore all of the metrics set—metrics set in the JCPOA had been met and that Iran had not cheated.

What is the position of the Administration now? Do you still believe that we can get a better deal, given the fact we walked away from our own deal? Who is going to believe that? I am just curious.

Mr. LENDERKING. Congressman, I am not, unfortunately, an expert in the JCPOA. I look at it in particular from sort of my fox-hole, which is the Iranian threat into the Gulf and I know that the Administration is seeing a number of provocations that are emanating from the Iranians and are moving to address the immediate threat.

Of course, from where I sit, I have talked about the areas such as Bahrain and Yemen where the Iranians are particularly active. And so we look to thwart Iran extending its influence into the Peninsula.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Well, and I appreciate that and your perspective and responsibilities, Mr. Lenderking.

I guess I would urge you to take back that at least this Member of Congress, and I think I am not alone, believe the Administration itself is fomenting some of the Iranian behavior because we have renounced an agreement we wrote and encouraged all parties to participate in, and the sanctions we have reimposed are causing grief for our allies but, more importantly, obviously, are having effects in Iran that lead to the hardening of the positions, especially of the hardliners who are saying, we told you so—we told you not to trust the Americans—see what happens.

And I think that is self-defeating, speaking for myself. You can feel free to take it back. But I think it is having a very deleterious impact on our diplomacy in the region and the things you care about are being adversely because of that policy.

Khashoggi—Jamal Khashoggi was my constituent.

Mr. LENDERKING. Yes, I understand.

Mr. CONNOLLY. And he was brutally murdered in a consulate of the Saudi government in Istanbul. They lied about it. They—initially, their position was no, no, he left the consulate healthy and fine.

That was a lie. They had to retract that. Well, then it was, something happened—we are not quite sure what. Well, we know that two teams flew in on airplanes controlled by the Crown Prince with a bone saw, which is not normally a diplomatic tool unless you want to correct me.

Mr. LENDERKING. No corrections.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Let the record show he did not correct me. And they flew in, clearly, with malice aforethought, clearly planned. The Turks, to their credit, kept on issuing intelligence and even transcripts of the brutal murder, and finally the Saudis had to admit, yes, no, he was murdered and he was dismembered—things, you know, they denied earlier.

And now we are supposed to believe it was something that went wrong, it was a rogue element, and it just comes as a shock to the Crown Prince.

Our own intelligence and Turkish intelligence would suggest otherwise—that he in fact was the architect of this brutal murder.

What are we going to do if we finally have to confirm that the—and I understand it is speculation, but this is not idle speculation—that the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia, the heir to the throne, was in fact the architect of the murder of a U.S. legal resident in that consulate?

Mr. LENDERKING. Congressman, I think we will cross that bridge when we come to it, to be honest. I think there are things that we still do not know about what went down there, who actually did what.

It underscores, I think, what the secretary has said, that we are going to follow the trail as high as it goes and I know he will keep to his word on that, and his instructions to me and others are to continue to—

Mr. CONNOLLY. I would just say in closing, Mr. Chairman, I appreciate that and I asked Mr. Pompeo this series of questions in more detail when he was here a few weeks ago and he did say that.

We do not know what that means. What does that mean? There cannot be surprise that he is, at best, a suspect. At worst, much more than that.

And so crossing that bridge when we, you know, come to it, well, there are those who would argue we have come to that bridge long ago and we have crossed it, and I guess we are hoping—I do not know—somebody falls off the bridge or I do not know what.

But let me just say my constituent is dead. He was murdered. He was a gentle man who cared about his country, and for that he paid the price with his life. And it seems to me he is entitled to justice and I want my government to insist on it.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. LENDERKING. Thank you.

Mr. DEUTCH. Thank you, Mr. Connolly.

Mr. Lenderking, there are just a handful of members who have some additional questions, if that is OK with you.

Thank you. I will actually start with the ranking member, Mr. Wilson.

Mr. WILSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and just two questions.

What milestones or goals are you hoping to achieve this year in the path to forming the Middle East Strategic Alliance?

Mr. LENDERKING. Thank you for raising that, Congressman.

We are keen to bind the region together, as we have been talking, in a Middle East Strategic Alliance that brings together strategic and political and economic and energy interests.

We have had numerous meetings and I am glad to say that during 2019 this year alone we have had three meetings on MESA in which everybody has participated.

That means Qatar and Saudi Arabia and the Egyptians and others, and we think that this is an important initiative and a priority for us as a way of continuing to get at Gulf unity and using this mechanism to address some of the regional challenges that we have talked about.

Mr. WILSON. And then finally, an ongoing concern—what are each of the GCC countries' current relationships with the Assad regime? What strategies are you using to discourage these countries from normalizing the relationship with the regime and how can Congress help you?

Mr. LENDERKING. Well, thank you.

The Gulf countries have taken different approaches to the Assad regime. Some have reestablished relations, much to our discontent. Others are taking a harder line against that and would not—would not reestablish relations under current circumstances.

And we are leading an effort to ensure that Syria is not brought back into the Arab League and I think we have strong support from the Gulf countries not to move on that step.

Mr. WILSON. Thank you for your success.

I yield back.

Mr. DEUTCH. Thank you, Mr. Wilson.

Mr. Lieu, you are recognized for 2 minutes.

Mr. LIEU. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Secretary Lenderking, earlier you had said that after the Trump Administration terminated refueling there was still some support of the Saudi-led coalition. It was not very much, mostly political.

Could you put in writing to this committee what support the Trump Administration is still providing the Saudi-led coalition, just so we know what it is?

Mr. LENDERKING. Yes, of course.

Mr. LIEU. All right. Thank you.

And then you had also mentioned about the Jamal Khashoggi issue that you all are in contact with other authorities including Turkish authorities.

Public reporting is that Turkish authorities say that Khashoggi's body parts were delivered to the home of the Saudi consulate general in Turkey.

So you agree with that?

Mr. LENDERKING. I do not know that that is true or not. I am aware of the reports. I have seen that. But I do not know that that is true.

Mr. LIEU. OK. So the CIA has already concluded with high assessment that the Crown Prince ordered the killing of Jamal Khashoggi.

Is the State Department doing its own investigation?

Mr. LENDERKING. Yes, I mean in the sense of—

Mr. LIEU. Who is leading that investigation?

Mr. LENDERKING. We do not have our own tools necessarily. We have diplomatic tools. But we are relying on other agencies in our government to support that effort and fill in the blanks.

Mr. LIEU. So—all right. So Secretary Lenderking, you have nine superior honor awards from the Department of State. You have been in the Foreign Service since 1993. You know poppycock when you see it. You do not have to shred your credibility for the Trump Administration.

The CIA has an assessment of high credibility. If you all do not want to believe that, then you need to go do your own investigation. Tell us who is leading it and then tell us you found something else.

But for now, I just find it hard to believe you are just simply not agreeing to the intelligent professionals of our own American intelligence agencies.

With that, I yield back.

Mr. DEUTCH. Thank you, Mr. Lieu.

Mr. Malinowski, you are recognized for 2 minutes.

Mr. MALINOWSKI. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thanks for your patience, Mr. Lenderking.

A couple of other issues that are a subject of ongoing conversations amongst us. One, you and I have spoken about the case of an American citizen detained in Saudi Arabia, Dr. Walid Fitaihi, and I want to just ask you for an update on that case and for your assessment of why, given, the harm that the Khashoggi case has done to the U.S.-Saudi relationship the Saudis continue to hold without due process, without charge, an American citizen? It is sort of inexplicable to me.

Mr. LENDERKING. It is inexplicable to us as well, to be honest. We have raised this case. I have raised it personally on my last trip to Riyadh just a few weeks ago.

As an American citizen, the Administration—we always take these cases very seriously. We have not seen any justification for why he is detained.

We are able to see him on a regular basis, which is very important to verify his well-being, and we have sought to make sure that his family can also have regular access to him.

We are hopeful for a resolution.

Mr. MALINOWSKI. Thank you. And then the second quick issue—a number of us have sent the secretary a letter on the use of child soldiers by the coalition in Yemen.

There has been very, very significant public reporting that large numbers of child soldiers from countries like Sudan are doing the ground fighting.

If true, this would, obviously, violate the Child Soldiers Protection Act and would require some action on our part. I am wondering if we can expect an answer to that letter at some point soon.

Mr. LENDERKING. You can. The child support reports are very concerning to us and we are looking into them and we will respond.

Mr. MALINOWSKI. Thank you so much. I yield back.

Mr. DEUTCH. Thank you, Mr. Malinowski.

And finally, Mr. Lenderking, just a couple of questions before we close out.

On the GCC rift, the State Department recently said a United GCC is the backbone for regional peace, prosperity, security, and stability and is essential to countering the single greatest threat to regional stability, the Iranian regime.

Does the Administration believe that the intra-GCC dispute can be resolved in the near term or is this just now a part of regional politics?

Mr. LENDERKING. We do not think it is going to be just part of the regional architecture. We do think that with proper commitments and mediation, sticks and carrots, that we will get to a resolution here in the near term. We are very hopeful of that.

Mr. DEUTCH. Can you describe those sticks and carrots for us?

Mr. LENDERKING. Well, we have talked about how negative the situation is for the Gulf and the fact that it pushes Qatar to the unfortunate reality of having to use Iranian airspace, which puts money in Iranian coffers.

I mean, I think that is certainly counter to what we collectively are trying to do. We have called on the Kuwaitis to continue to mediate. We are prepared to support that effort in any way that we can.

So I can assure you we will keep at it.

Mr. DEUTCH. Well, I appreciate it. I think it is critical that we do everything we can to try to end that rift.

And Mr. Trone, I will recognize you for 2 minutes.

Mr. TRONE. Thank you.

It was recently in Republic that the Saudi government repeatedly has helped Saudi citizens evade prosecution and arrest in the United States and returned to the kingdom after they are accused of serious crimes in the United States.

Successive U.S. administrations have not raised the subject because of worries the confrontation might jeopardize U.S. interests, particularly counterterrorism cooperation by the Saudis.

The Trump Administration argues there is little the U.S. can do because we have no extradition treaty with Saudi Arabia. The State Department recently said the first time that it raised—said for the first time that it raised the issue with senior Saudi officials.

What specific concerns did the State Department raise and with which officials?

Mr. LENDERKING. Thank you.

This is—this is a concern for us and we have raised it with the Saudis. There seem to be more cases becoming known than originally thought. We are taking stock of each one of those cases.

It is true, we do not have an extradition treaty that could be an obstacle for us. But we do not think that this is a proper comportment for a diplomatic ally of ours. And so this is something that we will continue to press with the leadership.

Mr. TRONE. That is good. But what are the other—what are options we could actually do, given we do not have the extradition treaty? What are concrete steps?

Mr. LENDERKING. Not 100 percent clear, Mr. Congressman, and I think it may require some creative solutions. But first we have to I think get better cooperation from the Saudis on this.

Mr. TRONE. Thank you.

Mr. DEUTCH. I thank the witness and all the members for being here today.

Deputy Secretary Lenderking, thank you so much for your testimony.

Members of the subcommittee may have some additional questions for you and we ask that you please respond to those questions in writing and I ask that my colleagues submit any questions for the witness to the subcommittee clerk within five business days.

And with that and without objection, the subcommittee is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 3:23 p.m., the committee was adjourned.]

APPENDIX

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

**Subcommittee on the Middle East, North Africa, and International Terrorism**

**Ted Deutch (D-FL), Chairman**

May 8, 2019

**TO: MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

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

**DATE:** Wednesday, May 8, 2019

**TIME:** 1:30 p.m.

**SUBJECT:** Opportunities and Challenges in U.S. Relations with the Gulf States

**WITNESS:** Mr. Timothy A. Lenderking  
Deputy Assistant Secretary for Arabian Gulf Affairs  
Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs  
U.S. Department of State

**By Direction of the Chairman**

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

## COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

MINUTES OF SUBCOMMITTEE ON Middle East, North Africa, and International Terrorism HEARINGDay Wednesday Date 05/08/19 Room 2172Starting Time 1:33 PM Ending Time 3:23 PMRecesses 1 (1:39 P to 2:19 P) (\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_ ) (\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_ ) (\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_ ) (\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_ )

Presiding Member(s)

*Chairman Theodore E. Deutch*

Check all of the following that apply:

Open Session ☒Executive (closed) Session ☐Televised ☒Electronically Recorded (taped) ☒Stenographic Record ☒

TITLE OF HEARING:

*Opportunities and Challenges in U.S. Relations with the Gulf States*

SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

*See Attached*

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

*Elliott L. Engel, NY*HEARING WITNESSES: Same as meeting notice attached? Yes ☒ No ☐

(If "no", please list below and include title, agency, department, or organization.)

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

*IFR - Rep. David Trone**QFR - Rep. Ted Deutch**QFR - Rep. Steve Chabot**QFR - Rep. Tom Malinowski**QFR - Rep. David Trone*

TIME SCHEDULED TO RECONVENE \_\_\_\_\_

or

TIME ADJOURNED 3:23 PM  
Subcommittee Staff Associate

# HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

## SUBCOMMITTEE HEARING

### SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE MIDDLE EAST, NORTH AFRICA, AND INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM

<i>PRESENT</i>	<i>MEMBER</i>
X	Theodore E. Deutch, FL
X	Gerald E. Connolly, VA
	David Cicilline, RI
X	Ted Lieu, CA
X	Colin Allred, TX
X	Tom Malinowski, NJ
X	David Trone, MA
	Brad Sherman, CA
	William Keating, MA
	Juan Vargas, CA

<i>PRESENT</i>	<i>MEMBER</i>
X	Joe Wilson, SC
	Steve Chabot, OH
	Adam Kinzinger, IL
X	Lee Zeldin, NY
	Brian J. Mast, FL
	Brian K. Fitzpatrick, PA
	Guy Reschenthaler, PA
	Steve Watkins, KS

INFORMATION FOR THE RECORD

**Congress of the United States**  
Washington, DC 20515

April 5, 2019

The President  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue N.W.  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

This week marks six months since the brutal killing of Jamal Khashoggi at the Saudi Arabian consulate in Istanbul, Turkey. Following Mr. Khashoggi's murder, the Central Intelligence Agency reportedly assessed with high confidence that Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman ordered the assassination. Yet, your administration has neglected to provide Congress with a legally required determination of responsibility for this horrendous act.

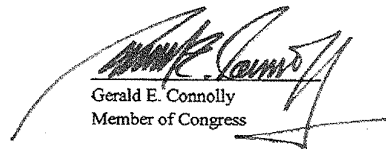
Members of Congress have been consistent and vocal in expressing their outrage at this abuse of human rights and human dignity. On October 10, then-Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Bob Corker and Ranking Member Robert Menendez sent you a letter that triggered a 120-day investigation and determination of responsibility for Mr. Khashoggi's killing under the Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act. That letter was followed on October 12 by a similar letter by then-House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Ed Royce and then-Ranking Member Eliot Engel. Your administration issued a statement on February 8, 2019 – the date the report was due – stating that you maintain “discretion to decline to act on congressional committee requests when appropriate.” The Corker-Menendez letter, supported by the Royce-Engel letter, started a process laid forth in the law, and it requires a report within a specified timeframe. We expect your administration to deliver this report as soon as possible.

Six months have passed since the murder of Jamal Khashoggi. Those who are responsible for his killing must be held accountable, no matter how high up it goes. The United States must reassert global leadership in protecting human rights around the world and allow no one, not even an American ally, to get away with cold-blooded murder.

Sincerely,



David Trone  
Member of Congress



Gerald E. Connolly  
Member of Congress



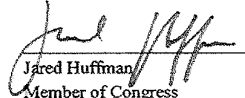
Debbie Dingell  
Member of Congress



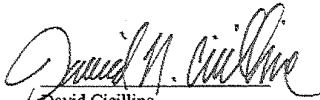
Brad Sherman  
Member of Congress



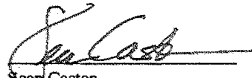
Adriano Espaillat  
Member of Congress



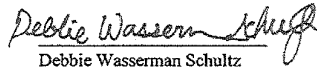
Jared Huffman  
Member of Congress



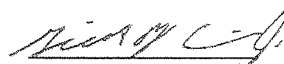
David Cicilline  
Member of Congress



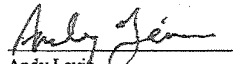
Sean Casten  
Member of Congress



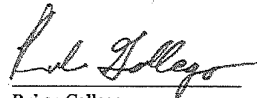
Debbie Wasserman Schultz  
Member of Congress



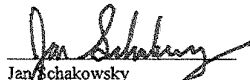
Gilbert R. Cisneros, Jr.  
Member of Congress



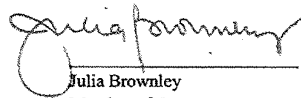
Andy Levin  
Member of Congress



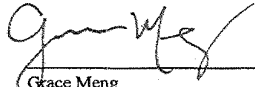
Ruben Gallego  
Member of Congress




Jan Schakowsky  
Member of Congress





Julia Brownley  
Member of Congress

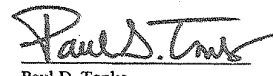
  
Grace Meng  
Member of Congress


  
Kathleen M. Rice  
Member of Congress

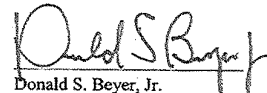
  
Colin Z. Allred  
Member of Congress

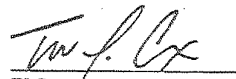
  
Ilhan Omar  
Member of Congress

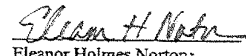
  
Juan Vargas  
Member of Congress

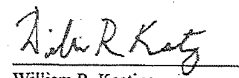
  
Paul D. Tonko  
Member of Congress

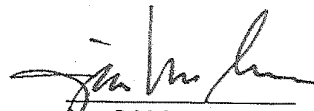
  
Betty McCollum  
Member of Congress


  
Donald S. Beyer, Jr.  
Member of Congress


  
TJ Cox  
Member of Congress


  
Eleanor Holmes Norton  
Member of Congress

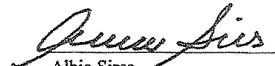
  
William R. Keating  
Member of Congress

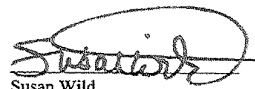
  
James P. McGovern  
Member of Congress


  
Donna E. Shalala  
Member of Congress


  
Ted Deutch  
Member of Congress


  
Karen Bass  
Member of Congress


  
Albio Sires  
Member of Congress

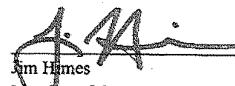
  
Susan Wild  
Member of Congress

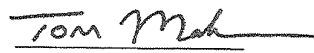
  
Emanuel Cleaver  
Member of Congress


  
Chussy Houlahan  
Member of Congress


  
Suzan DelBene  
Member of Congress


  
Jennifer Wexton  
Member of Congress


  
Jim Himes  
Member of Congress


  
Tom Malinowski  
Member of Congress

  
Rashida Tlaib  
Member of Congress

  
Tim Ryan  
Member of Congress

  
Jamie Raskin  
Member of Congress

  
Ro Khanna  
Member of Congress

  
Mike Doyle  
Member of Congress

## RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

**Questions for the Record from Representative Ted Deutch  
Opportunities and Challenges in U.S. Relations with the Gulf States  
May 8, 2019**

**Question:**

In March, the State Department transmitted to Congress the congressionally-mandated Yemen strategy, in which the Department stated that “there is no military solution to this conflict.” Have you communicated this view to the Saudi-led coalition? If the UN-led peace process falls apart, would you support the Saudi-led coalition and local Yemeni forces taking the Port of Hodeidah by force?

**Answer:**

**Mr. Tim Lenderking:** The Department continues to view a political resolution as the only durable solution to Yemen’s conflict and humanitarian crisis. The Department continues to urge all sides to take necessary steps to avoid military escalation, prevent civilian casualties, and ensure that the delivery of humanitarian assistance is not disrupted. The United States firmly believes there is no military solution to the Yemen conflict.

**Question:**

Does the Administration believe that military pressure can be useful in this context?

**Answer:**

**Mr. Tim Lenderking:** The Houthis must come to the table in good faith to negotiate a comprehensive political settlement to end the conflict. Any pressure applied on the Houthis would have to be calibrated to weaken their perceptions that a battlefield victory is possible. We continue to call upon all parties to take the necessary steps to prevent civilian casualties and to ensure that the delivery of humanitarian assistance is not compromised.

**Question:**

The Open Skies Act regulates which airlines are allowed to enter another country’s territory. The goal is open entry, unless a government subsidized carrier is using an artificial advantage to unfairly compete with private carriers. The United States and Qatar signed an agreement in January 2018 to limit Qatar Airways flights directly into the United States from Europe to avoid unfair competition. However, Qatar Airways recently bought a 49 percent stake in a failing carrier, Air Italy, which previously had flown only regionally in Europe. Air Italy launched an expansion that includes non-stop flights from Milan to New York, Miami, Los Angeles, and San Francisco. Air Italy’s low prices clearly seek to take passengers from U.S. carriers, using Qatar-government subsidies to make up for any losses. Does the State Department believe Qatar’s subsidizing of Air Italy constitutes a violation of the Open Skies Act?

**Answer:**

**Mr. Tim Lenderking:** The Department of State is committed to leveling the playing field and ensuring American companies have the opportunity to succeed globally. Some U.S. airlines have raised concerns about subsidized competition. Since 2017, the Department of State has led serious negotiations with Qatar (and the United Arab Emirates), which resulted in bilateral Understandings to address those concerns. We continue to press this issue diplomatically to ensure that Qatar honors all of its commitments, consistent with the rights and obligations contained in the 2001 U.S.-Qatar Air Transport Agreement and the broader Open Skies framework of U.S. international aviation policy that has brought so many benefits to the United States.

**Question:**

Has the State Department raised concerns about Air Italy with Qatar?

**Answer:**

**Mr. Tim Lenderking:** We take concerns relating to fair competition seriously and are closely examining the issue of Qatar and Air Italy, as Secretary Pompeo explained to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on April 10. The Department is engaging with the Government of Qatar at the most senior levels to ensure financial transparency and fair competition. Secretary Pompeo has engaged on the issue personally, most recently with the Qatari Foreign Minister in Washington on April 24.

**Question:**

Qatar supports the Palestinian people in Gaza through a mechanism with Israel that allows Qatari funding for projects outside of Hamas' purview. As rockets rained on Israel earlier this month, is Qatar in a position to use leverage to de-escalate the situation?

**Answer:**

**Mr. Tim Lenderking:** Yes. Qatar currently coordinates its work in Gaza closely with Israel and the UN. We appreciate the efforts of Qatar and other regional partners to bring the recent rocket attacks from Gaza into Israel to an end and to provide stabilization support to the people of Gaza.

**Question:**

What should Qatar be doing to help stabilize the situation in Gaza?

**Answer:**

**Mr. Tim Lenderking:** Qatar currently coordinates its work in Gaza closely with Israel and the UN. We appreciate the efforts of Qatar and other regional partners to bring the recent rocket attacks from Gaza into Israel to an end and to provide stabilization support to the people of Gaza.

**Question:**

Both Bahrain and the UAE re-opened their embassies in Syria in December. What is the Administration's view of both countries re-establishing diplomatic relations with the Assad government?

**Answer:**

**Mr. Tim Lenderking:** We are aware of reports of some countries normalizing relations with the Syrian regime. We urge all states to not re-establish or upgrade their diplomatic relations with the Assad regime.

The regime has continued to engage in systematic violence against civilians, striking hospitals, markets, and schools in assaults against opposition-held areas and detaining tens of thousands of men, women, and children for political reasons, many of whom are tortured and killed. It has also used chemical weapons against its own people, in clear violation of its international legal obligations. The regime has persistently refused to engage meaningfully in the United Nations-led political process.

**Question:**

Both the UAE and Bahrain argued re-establishing diplomatic relations with Syria would limit Iran's influence in the region. Do you agree?

**Answer:**

**Mr. Tim Lenderking:** Initiatives to re-engage the Syrian regime undercut U.S. and like-minded countries' efforts to encourage the Assad regime to seek a peaceful resolution to the crisis in Syria. These actions entrench Iran's influence in Syria and bolster Russia's efforts to rehabilitate and re-establish the Syrian regime in the international community.

**Question:**

Saudi Arabia continues to imprison and reportedly torture Walid Fitaihi, an American physician in declining health. At what level of Saudi government (if at all) has the State Department raised the case of the detention of dual U.S. – Saudi national Dr. Walid Fitahi without charge or due process?

**Answer:**

**Mr. Tim Lenderking:** Secretary Pompeo has raised Dr. Fitaihi's detention with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman Al Saud. Other Department officials, including myself, have consistently raised this case with senior Saudi leadership in both Washington and in Riyadh.

**Question:**

What has the Saudi response been?

**Answer:**

**Mr. Tim Lenderking:** The Saudi Arabian government does not recognize dual citizenship, and therefore contends that Fitaihi's detention is strictly a matter of Saudi law. Even so, through sustained State Department pressure, the Saudi Arabian government has allowed regular U.S. consular access to Fitaihi since December 2018.

**Question:**

What efforts exist to secure Dr. Fitaihi's release?

**Answer:**

**Mr. Tim Lenderking:** The Department's highest priority is the safety and well-being of American citizens abroad. We will continue to engage Saudi leadership in order to ensure Dr. Fitaihi's safety and well-being, and to press for his release.

**Question:**

CNN recently reported that the UAE transferred U.S. origin defense equipment to third parties in Yemen, including Yemenis who have ties to al-Qaeda. What is the State Department doing to investigate these claims?

**Answer:**

**Mr. Tim Lenderking:** The State Department investigation into the CNN report's allegations is ongoing. Senior Department officials and Embassy Abu Dhabi personnel are discussing this matter with the UAE government. We are reiterating the UAE's commitments to gain U.S. authorization prior to any retransfer of U.S.-origin equipment, and requesting more information regarding alleged transfers of U.S.-origin equipment. We will continue to keep Congress informed as we work to conclude our investigation.

**Question:**

I understand that the Emirati government has responded to the State Department's request for further information. Did the UAE admit to transferring this equipment?

**Answer:**

**Mr. Tim Lenderking:** State and DoD personnel have provided a number of briefings to Members and Congressional staff on this issue, including making the UAE response letter available and discussing the next steps in our investigation. We would be happy to make that information available to you and your staff.

**Question:**

What consequences will be imposed if these transfers did take place?

**Answer:**

**Mr. Tim Lenderking:** The State Department investigation into the allegations is ongoing.

**Question:**

How do you expect to treat weapons sales to the UAE in the future if these claims are accurate?

**Answer:**

**Mr. Tim Lenderking:** The UAE remains an important defense partner, with one of the most capable and professional militaries in a volatile region. We intend to maintain this strong security partnership – of which arms transfers are an important component – and the benefits it provides the United States. At the same time, we intend to work with our UAE partners to ensure adherence to the terms and conditions of transfers – certainly to include not re-transferring U.S.-origin equipment without the Department’s authorization.

**Question:**

The Administration is reportedly considering designating the Muslim Brotherhood as a terrorist organization. How would this designation impact the Qatari government, which has ties to movements affiliated with the Brotherhood? Would it undermine our cooperation with Doha?

**Answer:**

**Mr. Tim Lenderking:** We do not discuss deliberations or the potential deliberations of our designations process. However, we maintain a robust counterterrorism dialogue with the Qatari government, and we are confident that they will continue to work closely with us.

**Question:**

How would it impact U.S. mediation to end the intra-GCC rift?

**Answer:**

**Mr. Tim Lenderking:** We do not discuss deliberations or the potential deliberations of our designations process. Currently, we are not in a position to speculate on any potential impact. We do remain committed, however, to resolving the Gulf dispute.

**Questions for the Record from Representative Steve Chabot  
Opportunities and Challenges in U.S. Relations with the Gulf States  
May 8, 2019**

**Question:**

I've been made aware of what appear to be gross violations of due process and basic human rights in a case involving a businesswoman, Maria Lazareva, who has been detained by the government of Kuwait for the last year. Ms. Lazareva's 4 year-old son, is an American citizen.

I'm told that Secretary Pompeo has been briefed on the case and I hope the State Department is actively involved in discussions with the Kuwaiti government.

Additionally, Senator Wicker and I have contacted Secretary Mnuchin requesting that he initiate a Global Magnitsky Act investigation of Kuwaiti officials who have been participants in this matter.

Can this Committee get a commitment from you today that the State Department will investigate this serious situation in Kuwait, as described in many press reports, diplomatic cables and the aforementioned Global Magnitsky Act request and report back to us promptly?

**Answer:**

**Mr. Tim Lenderking:** The Administration is committed to actively pushing for the respect of the rule of law and impartiality in the administration of justice globally, including in Kuwait. We are engaged on this issue, and we have consistently encouraged Kuwait to respect due process in the adjudication of cases before its courts in a transparent, expeditious, and just way.

The Department takes Global Magnitsky sanctions very seriously and will continue to consider taking action on individuals for which sufficient evidence exists.

**Question:**

I first introduced the NOPEC Act, legislation to give the Attorney General tools he needs to hold OPEC countries accountable for their cartel-like behavior nearly 20 years ago, and since then I've reintroduced it several times. In fact, at the beginning of this Congress, the Judiciary Committee was able to report it favorably, and I hope that it will soon get floor consideration and to the President for his approval.

With that in mind, could you provide some insight as to why the United States government permits companies like Saudi Aramco to act as a private company when they seek access to our capital markets, but then also permit them to exploit sovereign immunity when it comes to antitrust issues?

**Answer:**

**Mr. Tim Lenderking:** We continue to work with the Saudi Arabian government to ensure that global oil markets continue to be well supplied, recognizing Saudi Arabia's important role as the world's single largest crude oil exporter and the holder of significant spare production capacity.

**Question:**

Wouldn't my legislation, *NOPEC*, solve this disparity?

**Answer:**

**Mr. Tim Lenderking:** The Department cannot comment on pending legislation. We will continue our engagement with the Kingdom on a range of security and economic issues, including ensuring that global oil markets continue to be well-supplied.

**Questions for the Record from Representative Tom Malinowski  
Opportunities and Challenges in U.S. Relations with the Gulf States  
May 8, 2019**

**Question:**

Please specify on which occasions you have raised violations of the UN arms embargo in Libya with Emirati officials?

**Answer:**

**Mr. Tim Lenderking:** Ongoing fighting in Libya is endangering innocent civilians, damaging civilian infrastructure, and jeopardizing U.S.-Libya counterterrorism efforts. U.S. government officials are consulting on a regular basis with our international partners, including the UAE, to press for stabilization and to bring Prime Minister al-Sarraj and General Haftar back to the negotiating table.

**Question:**

Have you raised with Emirati leadership the potential violation of end-user agreements pertaining to US-provided weapons through diversion of weapons to third parties in Yemen?

**Answer:**

**Mr. Tim Lenderking:** Yes. We are looking into these reports and we are discussing the allegations with the Emirati government. We have exchanged letters with the UAE government to ascertain further information.

**Question:**

Does the 2001 AUMF cover conflict with Iran?

**Answer:**

**Mr. Tim Lenderking:** The Administration has not determined that Iran is within the scope of either the 2001 or the 2002 AUMFs.

**Question:**

How does the FTO designation change RoE for US forces in the Gulf?

**Answer:**

**Mr. Tim Lenderking:** We must defer to the Department of Defense on the rules of engagement for U.S. Armed Forces in the Gulf.

**Question:**

Does the Iranian regime perceive signals from Washington as signaling a policy objective of regime change?

**Answer:**

**Mr. Tim Lenderking:** This Administration has been clear that we do not seek regime change in Iran. Our Iran strategy is designed to change Iranian behavior and compel Iran to the negotiating table. If the Iranians are willing to engage on ending their destructive activities, we are ready to talk to them. The United States will continue to impose maximum pressure on the regime until it abandons its destabilizing ambitions. Ultimately, the United States is seeking a deal with Iran that comprehensively addresses all of the regime's destructive activities – not just its nuclear program, but also its missile program, support of terrorism, and malign regional behavior.

**Question:**

Do members of the Saudi/UAE coalition risk violating the U.S. Foreign Assistance Act by prohibiting or restricting the transport or delivery of U.S. humanitarian assistance?

**Answer:**

**Mr. Tim Lenderking:** The ports of Hudaydah and Saleef remain open and operational. The Saudi-led Coalition's Evacuation and Humanitarian Operations Cell continues to clear vessels, including containerized cargo, carrying humanitarian and commercial items such as food, fuel, and medicine. Humanitarian cargo and international aid workers continue to arrive at Sana'a airport. Ongoing conflict remains the primary cause of access issues in Yemen. Bureaucratic impediments, most of which the Houthis impose in areas under their control, affect relief operations and can cause significant delays. We continue to urge all sides to support the UN-led political process, which is the only way to end the conflict and alleviate the humanitarian crisis.

**Question:**

Who do you assess is responsible for the reported 27+ extrajudicial killings of clerics in and around Aden over the past two years? Do these assassinations undermine the prospects for a Yemen political settlement? Have you considered initiating an investigation of these assassinations under the Global Magnitsky process?

**Answer:**

**Mr. Tim Lenderking:** Reports of the extrajudicial killings of clerics in and around Aden are troubling. The Administration condemns the killing of religious or political rivals, the conduct of which greatly undermines the prospects for a legitimate and representative political settlement. Unfortunately, the security situation in Aden is tenuous, to include a variety of violent extremist organizations, and our ability to get more information to make relevant assessments is hampered by the lack of U.S. government representation on the ground in Yemen. The Department will continue to coordinate with Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control to evaluate any evidence of serious human rights abuses under the Global Magnitsky process as it becomes available.

**Question:**

What steps have you taken to independently investigate reports of use of child soldiers in Yemen? Has your office consulted with NGOs and humanitarian groups on the use of child soldiers? Has the department conducted any investigations on this issue in Sudan as the primary reported source country for child soldiers?

**Answer:**

**Mr. Tim Lenderking:** The Department takes allegations of the recruitment and use of child soldiers in Yemen and other contexts very seriously, and places great importance on helping to end the practice wherever it occurs. The Department works with the United Nations, NGOs, as well as through other USG channels in order to evaluate and verify such reports. The list of countries that meet the criteria for listing under the Child Soldier Prevention Act is published annually within the Trafficking in Persons report, which is based on information on the use of child soldiers by both governmental armed forces and government-supported non-state armed groups globally.

**Question:**

Have you asked your KSA counterparts for an explanation of the airstrike on the hospital supported by Save the Children in March of this year? What was the Saudi explanation for this tragic airstrike?

**Answer:**

**Mr. Tim Lenderking:** Following news reports of the strike, Embassy Riyadh and the Yemen Affairs Unit contacted Saudi officials to request additional information about the strike on a gas station near the hospital, and they continue to investigate this incident. We are urging the Saudis, who have been receptive to our inquiries, to release the findings as soon as possible and will continue to work with the Coalition to help them find ways to minimize risk to civilians.

**Question:**

Is the United States continuing to provide no-strike list data to Saudi Arabia and the UAE? Was this particular hospital on a no-strike list?

**Answer:**

**Mr. Tim Lenderking:** I defer to the Defense Department for questions regarding no-strike list data.

**Question:**

When was the last time the United States delivered a no-strike list to KSA and the UAE?

**Answer:**

**Mr. Tim Lenderking:** I defer to the Defense Department for questions regarding no-strike list data.

**Questions for the Record from Representative David Trone  
Opportunities and Challenges in U.S. Relations with the Gulf States  
May 8, 2019**

**Question:**

Mr. Lenderking, Yemen is one of the countries included in the Trump Administration's travel ban. Thirty-six plaintiffs sued the Trump Administration in March 2018, claiming the government failed to follow its own guidelines and procedures for reviewing travel ban waiver requests as required by law. Some plaintiffs reported State Department officials refused to accept documents in support of their waiver requests. Others said they were never given a chance to apply for a waiver, which can only be done during a visa interview. According to Reuters, the U.S. government granted waivers to only six percent of visa applicants subjected to the travel ban. What is the Administration's policy on reviewing and granting waivers?

**Answer:**

**Mr. Tim Lenderking:** Our policy in reviewing and granting waivers adheres to Presidential Proclamation 9645 (PP 9645) and is available to the public through the Department's website. In sum, consular officers will issue visas to applicants subject to the travel restrictions of PP 9645 if they are otherwise eligible for a visa and fit within an exception to the travel restrictions as set forth in PP 9645. If an applicant cannot qualify for an exception, but is otherwise eligible for a visa, a consular officer will automatically consider the applicant for a waiver. There is no separate application for a waiver. For an applicant to be eligible for a waiver, the consular officer must determine: a) visa issuance is in the national interest, b) visa denial would cause undue hardship, and c) the applicant poses no national security or public safety threat to the United States. While ultimately the consular officer makes the determination on waiver eligibility, the results of a security screening process inform that determination.

**Question:**

Why is the percentage of granted waivers so low?

**Answer:**

**Mr. Tim Lenderking:** All visa applications are adjudicated on a case-by-case basis, as are waivers of the travel restrictions set forth in Presidential Proclamation 9645 (PP 9645). PP 9645 established a three-part test to determine whether a visa applicant subject to the restrictions of PP 9645 may avail themselves of a waiver. For an applicant to be eligible for a waiver, the consular officer must determine: a) visa issuance is in the national interest, b) visa denial would cause

undue hardship, and c) the applicant poses no national security or public safety threat to the United States. While ultimately the consular officer makes the determination on waiver eligibility, the results of a security screening process inform that determination. If all three prongs of the waiver test are met, consular officers may issue a visa with the concurrence of a consular manager. These steps take time to complete.

**Question:**

Is the State Department planning to increase personnel and resources to process waiver requests?

**Answer:**

**Mr. Tim Lenderking:** While the State Department recognizes the importance of timely processing cases covered by Presidential Proclamation 9645 (PP 9645), its assignment of personnel reflects staffing limitations and competing priorities. Preventing travel and prohibiting entry to the United States by those who might pose a threat is the highest priority of the Visa Office. While ultimately the consular officer makes the determination on waiver eligibility, the results of a security screening process inform that determination. No applicant can be found eligible for a waiver and issued a visa unless all screening checks are completed and any concerns raised through the screening process are fully resolved.