

**THE FY20 BUDGET: EXAMINING THE
ADMINISTRATION'S POLICY OBJECTIVES FOR A
TURBULENT MIDDLE EAST**

HEARING

BEFORE THE

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

OF THE

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**THE FY20 BUDGET: EXAMINING THE
ADMINISTRATION'S POLICY OBJECTIVES FOR
A TURBULENT MIDDLE EAST**

Tuesday, October 29, 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 2:34 p.m., in room 2172 Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Theodore E. Deutch (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Mr. DEUTCH. All right. This hearing will come to order. Welcome, everyone. The subcommittee is meeting today to hear testimony on the Trump Administration's budgetary and policy priorities in the Middle East for Fiscal Year 2020. We look forward to hearing from our witnesses about the FY20 budgets for the Department of State's Near Eastern Affairs Bureau as well as USAID's Bureau for the Middle East. I thank the witnesses for appearing today. I now recognize myself for purposes of making an opening statement.

Thank you, Assistant Secretary Schenker and Assistant Administrator Harvey for testifying today. Nearly 3 years into the Trump Administration, the United States faces a multitude of challenges in the Middle East. While the Administration touts its maximum pressure policy, Iran continues to destabilize countries from Iraq to Yemen to Lebanon. Despite President Trump's bellicose rhetoric, Tehran has been able to launch attacks on international shipping and regional States, undermining U.S. deterrence and credibility in the progress.

The Iranian nuclear program is more advanced today than it was that President Trump took office, and the international community is more divided in confronting it. Iran continues to unjustly imprison Americans, including my constituent Bob Levinson, and violate the human rights of its own people. Iran also continues to support Bashar al-Assad and fuel the conflict in Syria, which has led to the deaths of more than 600,000 people and the displacement of millions both inside Syria and in neighboring countries.

This conflict and the humanitarian crisis it created will reshape the Middle East for decades to come, but our policy in Syria remains ambiguous at best. President Trump has now twice announced the rapid and complete withdrawal of U.S. troops from Syria, with little notice given to international allies and partners on the ground. This approach has ceded U.S. leverage over a future political solution in Syria, placed American troops and civilians in danger, undermined our credibility, removed pressure on ISIS, and

betrayed our Syrian partners who fought valiantly in recent years to counter ISIS with American support.

I commend the successful operation this weekend to take out ISIS leader al-Baghdadi, but I caution that the removal of one individual should not validate our current withdrawal strategy. If anything, it should show us the importance of our counterterrorism mission and cooperation with partners on the ground in Syria.

The President has also provided a strategic victory to our adversaries. Russia has used military force, economic support, and weapons sales to become the arbiter of Syria's future and to increase its regional influence at the expense of the United States. Yemen remains ravaged by civil conflicts, foreign intervention, and the world's worst humanitarian crisis. The Trump Administration has offered unstinting support to Saudi Arabia and the UAE in their military campaign in Yemen, ignoring the bipartisan support in Congress for ending U.S. military support for coalition operations.

And while I understand the risk posed by the Houthis and Iranian forces, the conflict has led to tens of thousands of civilian casualties, shifted focus from al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula, and dramatically worsened a humanitarian catastrophe. The region also faces ongoing challenges. Israel confronts threats on its borders from terrorist organizations like Hezbollah and Hamas, and peace with the Palestinians remains elusive. People in the West Bank seek a prosperous future, while Gazans suffer in need of humanitarian aid.

The dispute splitting the Gulf Cooperation Council is at a stalemate. Libya, a state on the doorstep of Europe, is fractured and an arena for an expanding proxy war between regional powers. However, U.S. policy must not be solely reactionary and only respond to the many crises in the Middle East. It must also be forward-looking and grasp the many opportunities in the region.

A youth bulge—approximately 45 percent of the Middle East is under 25 years old—presents a chance to reset U.S. relations with the people of the region in the coming decade. Tunisia just completed a successful round of elections as the country moves forward on the difficult path of democratic development.

Protesters took to the streets in Algeria on Friday for the 36th week in a row to demand their government root out corruption and better meet the needs of the people. In fact, in recent weeks, protests have gripped other countries throughout the region including Egypt, Lebanon, and Iraq, and led to the resignation of Lebanese Prime Minister Saad Hariri earlier today. More than 8 years after millions took to the streets to protest corruption and autocracy, these demonstrations indicate that too many regional governments remain unaccountable to their people and opposed to open civil society, transparency, and human rights.

I am disappointed that the Trump Administration has offered an inconsistent message on human rights and democratic values. At a time when many are questioning American commitment to the region, the Administration has too often turned a blind eye to human rights abuses and equivocated in expressing support for good governance in the Middle East. The Administration often articulates maximalist goals in the Middle East, but has cut the resources needed to achieve them.

For the third straight year, the Trump Administration has proposed drastic cuts to our foreign affairs budget. The FY20 budget requested an estimated \$6.5 billion in total bilateral assistance to the MENA region, a figure that is 6 percent less than the FY19 request and 11 percent less than what Congress appropriated in FY19.

This subcommittee has oversight responsibility over the NEA Bureau and Middle East Bureau budgets and I hope this hearing today can help us get some better understanding of the Administration's strategy and a clearer articulation of U.S. policy in the Middle East and how we are allocating resources to accomplish our objectives in the region. I am grateful to the witnesses for appearing, and with that I will turn it over to Ranking Member Wilson for his opening statement.

Mr. WILSON. Thank you, Chairman Ted Deutch, for calling this important hearing, examining the Trump Administration's policy objectives for the turbulent Middle East. We appreciate our distinguished witnesses, Assistant Secretary David Schenker and Assistant Administrator Michael Harvey, for their extraordinary service and for their testimony before the committee today.

Formulating U.S. policy is not easy, but letting alone to crafting a policy of so many complexities in a region like the Middle East with centuries of conflict, but our two witnesses surely have their jobs cut out for them and we thank them for their positive efforts. Indeed, the Middle East has vexed both Republican and Democrat administrations alike.

But despite the difficulties, the United States has remained engaged in the region. We have been invested in the people and the potential of the Middle East. Although we may have disagreed across the aisle about specific policies, we can all agree that U.S. engagement and commitment to the Middle East is necessary. It is definitely preferred to a Middle East in which rogue regimes like Russia, Iran, or China are power brokers.

To be fair, the Trump Administration has presided over many important successes in the Middle East. Today's hearing comes just days after the U.S. Special Forces successfully conducted a raid in northwest Syria, which led to the deserved death of the leader of ISIS, the murderous Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. But to ensure that this murderous ideology of ISIS does not resurrect from the ashes of Syria and Iran will require an enduring American commitment. Not just to the global war against terrorism, but to the stability of the Middle East itself.

I also commend this administration for spearheading the maximum pressure campaign against Iran. This is the right approach against the world's foremost State sponsor of terrorism, but I am deeply concerned about the current approach is simply not enough. In the past year alone, Iran has cemented its stranglehold over Iraq and Lebanon and significantly increased the amount of territory it controls in Syria.

It appears that there is only so much that can be accomplished through economic sanctions. How are we working to push back the increased Iranian influence in the region in ways other than sanctions? Consistently over the decades, the Iranians have remained committed to exporting their evil ideology throughout the Middle

East, fostering terrorism, sectarianism, and violence everywhere. Meanwhile, the United States has sought to support democracy in the region, hemming and hawing about its role in the region.

There are plenty of reasons for the U.S. to renew its resolve and commitment to the region. The Middle East today is teeming with potential. In the past year alone, we have seen the citizens of Sudan, Egypt, Algeria, and most recently Iraq and Lebanon, take to the streets and give expression to their democratic aspirations. I am even hopeful that the spark of liberty will 1 day ignite a democratic movement in Iran as well, which has a historic background reflective of the Persian culture.

Just last week, the world as we inspired as the runner-up in Tunisia's Presidential elections met with the country's newly elected president, a sign of strengthened faith in Tunisia's democratic institutions. I was fortunate to travel to Tunisia last month with the Helsinki Commission and I was inspired to see this fledgling democracy in action.

The U.S. must not concede influence to those who counter the spirit of democracy and freedom in the Middle East. There is simply no substitute for U.S. leadership in the region. I look forward to hearing from the distinguished witnesses today and I yield back my time.

Mr. DEUTCH. Thank you, Ranking Member Wilson. It is now my pleasure to introduce the witnesses. And before I do, without objection, all members may have 5 days to submit statements, questions, and extraneous materials for the record subject to the length limitation in the rules.

Assistant Secretary David Schenker is the Assistant Secretary of Near Eastern Affairs at the U.S. Department of State. He was sworn in on June 14, 2019. Prior to joining the Department of State, Assistant Secretary Schenker was director of the Program on Arab Politics at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy. He previously served in the Office of the Secretary of Defense as Levant country director, and he was awarded the Office of the Secretary of Defense Medal for Exceptional Civilian Service in 2005. Before joining the government in 2002, he was a research fellow at the Washington Institute and a project coordinator of large, centrally-funded USAID projects in Egypt and in Jordan.

Assistant Administrator Harvey, Michael Harvey, was appointed Assistant Administrator of USAID's Bureau in January 2019. He comes to the position after serving more than 30 years as a Foreign Service officer for USAID, with multiple overseas assignments including Mission Director in Nigeria, Mission Director in the West Bank and Gaza, Deputy Mission Director in Iraq and Jordan. He most recently served as a faculty member of the National War College in Washington, DC, and chaired USAID's Task Force to Defeat the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria as Assistant to the Administrator. Assistant Administrator Harvey has received numerous awards from the Department of State and USAID for his exceptional service.

Thank you both for being here today. Let me remind the witnesses to please limit your testimony to 5 minutes. And, without objection, your prepared written statements in their entirety will

be made part of the hearing record. Again, thank you so much for being here today.

Assistant Secretary Schenker, you are recognized.

**STATEMENT OF DAVID SCHENKER, ASSISTANT SECRETARY,
BUREAU OF NEAR EASTERN AFFAIRS, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF
STATE**

Secretary SCHENKER. Chairman Deutch, Ranking Member Wilson, thank you for inviting us here today to discuss the President's—

Mr. DEUTCH. Can you pull the microphone a little closer?

Secretary SCHENKER. Yes. Is that better?

Mr. DEUTCH. Yes.

Secretary SCHENKER. OK. Thank you for inviting us here to discuss the President's FY20 budget request. Stability is the Administration's imperative in the Middle East and North Africa to protect the American people and our interests abroad. That core objective, which benefits U.S. interests as well as the region's, drives our diplomatic and foreign assistance.

The President's FY20 foreign assistance budget request of \$6.6 billion for the region will support national security priorities to counter Iran's malign influence, ensure the enduring defeat of ISIS, support persecuted religious and ethnic minorities throughout the region, and maintain support to key allies and critical partnerships across the region. The request also recognizes that the United States cannot alone bear sole responsibility for addressing challenges in the region.

The President's request places an emphasis on burden-sharing, leveraging the U.S. taxpayer dollars against investments from our regional partners and the international community. The Administration's Iran strategy focuses on neutralizing Tehran's destabilizing influence and constraining its malign activities, particularly its support for terrorism and militants. Strong diplomatic, economic, and security measures must be bolstered by U.S. assistance programs that support key partners and seek to deny access and influence to Iran and its proxies.

Resource requested in this budget will counter Iran's malign influence in Lebanon, Iraq, and Yemen by working through our partners, our local partners. The territorial defeat of ISIS in Iraq and Syria is a major milestone that should not be underestimated. The FY20 request reflects significant progress in encouraging our allies to support stabilization activities in Syria. We also continue to hold ISIS accountable for the atrocities it committed including genocide against Iraq's persecuted communities.

Ensuring the survival of Iraq's minority religious and ethnic communities is a vital interest of the United States and stands in direct opposition to the extremist vision ISIS sought to impose on Iraq. U.S. assistance will enable Iraq to become a constructive, stabilizing influence in the region. The FY20 request of \$166 million supports U.S. assistance that promotes further integration of Iraq into the global economy, which in turn will create opportunities for U.S. businesses and jobs here at home.

As we have seen over the last few weeks, stabilization in Syria will require more resources than one country alone should provide.

We expect our allies and partners to increase contributions to stabilize Syria and ensure that ISIS cannot return. In Yemen, we are working with international donors to address critical humanitarian needs that will help create a foundation for durable peace. In addition, the FY20 budget requests \$41 million in economic assistance to support the Yemeni people and their institutions.

The FY20 budget reflects our commitment to comprehensive Arab-Israeli peace, which hinges on a safe and secure Israel. Consistent with the 2019 through 2028 MOU between the United States and Israel, the President's budget requests 3.3 billion of FMF for Israel, the single largest foreign assistance investment in the region. The Administration continues to work toward a comprehensive and lasting peace between Israel and Palestinians.

In support of these efforts, the President's FY20 request includes 35 million in security assistance for the Palestinian Authority security forces, and includes funding in the Diplomatic Progress Fund that could also be used for assistance for the West Bank and Gaza. Encouraging deeper partnerships between Israel and its neighbors will reduce Israel's international isolation and improve regional security.

The FY20 request includes \$1.275 billion for Jordan, consistent with the 2018 bilateral MOU. I would like to thank the subcommittee for sharing the Administration's staunch support for the U.S.—Jordan relationship. The U.S. assistance has helped Jordan weather the impact of the Syrian crisis and supports the long-standing U.S.-Jordanian relationship.

Egypt, the region's most populous country, is also important to U.S. interests. The FY20 request includes 1.3 billion in FMF to support the Egyptian Armed Forces' capacity to counter terrorism in the Sinai and secure the country's land and maritime borders, including the Suez Canal.

In closing, the President's FY20 request contributes to achievement of our national priorities in the region and supports investments to advance our interests. Thank you for your enduring support to our diplomacy in the region and our foreign service investments, foreign assistance investments. Our ability to respond quickly to needs in the region and allocate funding effectively requires your continued support. I look forward to answering your questions. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Secretary Schenker follows:]

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

Statement of
David Schenker
Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern Affairs

Thank you for inviting me here to discuss the President's FY 2020 budget request for foreign assistance to the Middle East and North Africa. I welcome the opportunity to testify with my colleague, Michael Harvey, Assistant Administrator for the U.S. Agency for International Development's Bureau for the Middle East.

Stability is the Administration's imperative in the Middle East and North Africa to protect the American people and our interests abroad. That core objective, which benefits U.S. interests as well as the region's, drives our diplomatic and foreign assistance. We face three key threats to our security interests in the region: the malign influence that Iran projects throughout the Middle East and beyond; the scourge of terrorism, in particular the threat posed by ISIS and al Qaeda; and the growth of Chinese and Russian influence. Iran is a provocative, malicious actor, threatening our partners and meddling in the affairs of Iraq, Lebanon, Yemen, and Syria to name a few. While we have defeated the so-called territorial caliphate of ISIS, its fighters are scattered across the region, posing an imminent threat to U.S. national security interests, as well as our partners'. We are working to find political solutions to the region's three active conflicts – Syria, Yemen, and Libya. Throughout the region, the specter of global power competition looms as Russia and China offer empty alternatives that threaten to undermine U.S. interests and longer-term state and regional stability. Addressing these threats requires active diplomatic engagement accompanied by strategic foreign assistance investments.

The President's FY 2020 foreign assistance budget request of \$6.6 billion for the region will support national security priorities to counter Iran's malign influence; ensure the enduring defeat of ISIS; support persecuted religious and ethnic minorities throughout the region; and maintain support to key allies and critical partnerships across the region. Our foreign assistance resources support these policy priorities by strengthening local security and ensuring security forces are more responsive to their communities; by supporting nascent democratic institutions; by advancing human rights and accountability, good governance and rule of law; and by broadening the range of economic opportunities and civil participation available to citizens of the region, including women, religious and ethnic minorities and the growing number of youth.

The request also recognizes that the United States cannot bear sole responsibility for addressing challenges in the region. The President's request places an emphasis on burden-sharing - leveraging U.S. taxpayer dollars against investments from our regional partners and the international community.

The Administration's Iran strategy focuses on neutralizing Tehran's destabilizing influence and constraining its malign activities, particularly its support of terrorism and militants. Strong

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diplomatic, economic, and security measures must be bolstered by U.S. assistance programs that support key partners and seek to deny access and influence to Iran and its proxies. Resources requested in this budget will counter Iran's malign influence in Lebanon, Iraq, and Yemen by working through our local partners. For example, this budget provides \$50 million in Foreign Military Financing (FMF) to continue U.S. support for the Lebanese Armed Forces; this U.S. support seeks to counter the influence of both Hizballah and its patron, Iran. A strong and independent LAF capable of defending Lebanon is critical to undermining Hizballah's false claims of legitimacy. This request also increases support to the Iranian people and the free flow of information.

The territorial defeat of ISIS in Iraq and Syria is a major milestone that should not be underestimated. The FY 2020 request reflects significant progress in encouraging our allies to support stabilization activities in Syria. We will also hold ISIS accountable for the atrocities it committed, including genocide against members of Iraq's persecuted communities. Ensuring the survival of Iraq's minority religious and ethnic communities is a vital interest of the United States and stands in direct opposition to the extremist vision ISIS sought to impose on Iraq. The FY 2020 budget request includes \$150 million in assistance for persecuted minority religious and ethnic communities, not only in Iraq, but globally. Members of these communities have suffered genocide, crimes against humanity, and ethnic cleansing at the hands of ISIS.

U.S. assistance will help enable Iraq to become a constructive, stabilizing influence in the region. The FY 2020 request of \$166 million supports U.S. assistance that promotes further integration of Iraq into the global economy, which will in turn create opportunities for U.S. businesses and jobs here at home. The Iraqi government will need to implement economic reforms, secure international financing and investment, sustain and diversify economic growth and fuel reconstruction. Our support to civil society, local governments and security and judicial institutions strengthens Iraqi capacity to address the needs of the population and build resiliency against threats to its sovereignty, mainly from Iran. Assistance also is directed at restoring services, improving the business environment, and attracting foreign investment. These efforts will generate economic growth, jobs and integration into the global economy, while promoting self-reliance and independence from Iranian economic and political influence.

As we have seen over the last few weeks, stabilization in Syria will require more resources than one country alone should provide, which is why we must work together. The President has been clear that the United States expects our allies and partners to increase contributions to stabilize Syria and ensure that ISIS cannot return. This budget does not request bilateral foreign assistance specifically for Syria; however, the Administration's budget, as with any global contingency need in our national security interest, includes resources that could be made available for Syria, for example if there is significant progress in the political process called for by UN Security Council Resolution 2254.

In Yemen, we are working with international donors to address critical humanitarian needs that will help create a foundation for durable peace. In addition, the FY 2020 budget request includes \$41 million in economic assistance to support the Yemeni people and their institutions to address development and security issues, particularly countering threats from ISIS and al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula. The United States is confronting the devastating humanitarian toll of the conflict, particularly cholera and food security crises. In December 2018, the UN estimated that

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more than 24 million Yemenis – 80 percent of the population – were in need of humanitarian assistance. The United States remains one of the largest donors of humanitarian assistance to Yemen, providing over \$2 billion since October 2015, and we urge all parties to allow unfettered humanitarian access to populations in need. The funding we request, in tandem with international efforts, will bolster stabilization activities, invigorate economic activity, and provide basic services while the United States and our partners press for a comprehensive political settlement. However, no amount of humanitarian or development assistance will end this conflict and suffering of millions. Our support for an inclusive political settlement in Yemen counters Iranian efforts to use Yemen as a pawn in its power struggle with the Gulf states, and supports a comprehensive political solution that will enable the people of Yemen to determine a secure and prosperous future.

The FY 2020 budget request reflects our commitment to comprehensive Arab-Israeli peace, which hinges on a safe and secure Israel. The 2019-2028 \$38 billion Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on military assistance between the United States and Israel is the cornerstone of our regional policy. Consistent with the MOU's disbursement schedule, the President's budget requests \$3.3 billion in FMF for Israel, the single largest foreign assistance investment in the region. The Administration continues to work toward a comprehensive and lasting peace between Israel and the Palestinians. In support of these efforts, the President's FY 2020 budget request includes \$35 million in security assistance for the Palestinian Authority security forces, and includes funding in the Diplomatic Progress Fund that could also be used for assistance for the West Bank and Gaza. Normalizing political and economic relations between Israel and the Arab League States is also a crucial step towards peace and prosperity in the Middle East. Encouraging deeper partnerships between Israel and its neighbors will reduce Israel's international isolation and improve regional security.

The FY 2020 request includes \$1.275 billion for Jordan, consistent with the 2018 bilateral MOU. I would like to thank the Subcommittee for sharing the State Department's staunch support for the U.S.-Jordan relationship. Jordan is an invaluable partner for the United States and ensuring Jordan's security and internal stability is a key U.S. national security imperative. Jordan continues to be a close partner in our counterterrorism efforts and has been a leading member of the coalition to defeat the ISIS. We appreciate Jordan's hospitality in hosting 655,000 registered Syrian refugees and the many more who have sought shelter there. U.S. assistance has helped Jordan weather the impact of the Syrian crisis and supports the long standing U.S.-Jordanian relationship.

Egypt, the region's most populous country, is also important to U.S. interests. The FY 2020 request includes \$1.3 billion in FMF to support the Egyptian Armed Forces' capacity to counter terrorism in the Sinai and secure the country's land and maritime borders, including the Suez Canal.

U.S. assistance seeks to support unified, inclusive, and accountable Libyan governance capable of providing security, denying safe haven to ISIS and other terrorist groups, and building prosperity for all Libyans. The FY 2020 request of \$21.8 million will strengthen Libya's ability to address security, economic, and political needs that drive the current conflict and threaten U.S. interests. The United States remains committed to supporting UN-led efforts to achieve a ceasefire, restore international unity and respect for the arms embargo, and facilitate

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reunification of Libyan institutions and a return to an inclusive political process. Libya presents a challenging environment in which to implement assistance. Although modest, U.S. assistance is key to our ability to play an influential role in the country's progress.

The Administration is requesting \$86.4 million to support our partnership with Tunisia, a partnership that has lasted over 200 years. Tunisia is consolidating its democratic institutions, developing its economy, and strengthening its security. Tunisia is a capable security partner and shares common objectives with the United States. This assistance will bolster Tunisia's security sector and civil society as the Government undertakes economic and political reform.

In Morocco with \$16.0 million, U.S. assistance will support the kingdom's efforts to counter terrorism and the long-term drivers of instability, such as social and economic marginalization, by improving education and local governance and increasing livelihood opportunities.

In closing, the President's FY 2020 request contributes to achievement of our national priorities in the region and supports investments to advance our interests. Economic assistance can reinforce stability in the region by providing opportunities for disaffected populations that would otherwise be susceptible to violent extremism. But the benefits are more than just security. We seek a prosperous Middle East with open markets and investment opportunities for U.S. firms. Programs like the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) foster partnerships between the private sector, civil society, and governments, to encourage innovation and introduce measures that advance stability and prosperity in the region. Elsewhere in the Middle East, we support responsive governance, if not full-fledged democracy, which reinforces our imperative for security and stability. We foster democratic organizations and strengthen the rule of law and respect for human rights across the region from Morocco to Iran. By matching diplomatic advocacy with support for regional partner capacities, we promote the development of responsive institutions, investment and market opportunities, respect for the rule of law, and protection of human rights.

Thank you for your enduring support to our diplomacy in the region and our foreign assistance investments. Our ability to respond quickly to needs in the region and allocate funding effectively requires your continued support. I look forward to answering your questions.

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Mr. DEUTCH. Thank you, Assistant Secretary Schenker. Assistant Administrator Harvey, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

STATEMENT OF MICHAEL HARVEY, ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR, BUREAU FOR THE MIDDLE EAST, U.S. AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr. HARVEY. Thank you. Chairman Deutch, Ranking Member Wilson, and distinguished members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on the important role of the development and humanitarian assistance programming in the advancing U.S. interests in the Middle East and North Africa. It is an honor to be here with Assistant Secretary Schenker and to be representing Administrator Green and the professionals of USAID.

USAID recognizes that most of the nations in this region are actually middle-income countries, countries with young populations whose energy, education, and inspiration can be tapped to help speed their countries' journeys to self-reliance. We believe well-targeted investments by the United States and other donors can play a critical role in helping these countries lock in democratic advances where they have occurred and drive job-creating, economic growth through modern, free-market economies.

In line with administration policies, USAID focuses its programming to support our friends and allies and steadily work toward graduating countries from foreign assistance. Helping partners build self-reliance is key to the broader U.S. effort to counter malign influences coming from outside, while demonstrating American values in the context of renewed great power competition. In Iraq, we continue to support the government's initiatives to strengthen fiscal management and improve service delivery. Progress in these areas will strengthen Iraqi sovereignty and provide an effective counter to Iranian influences within the society.

Another key area of focus is our support for religious and ethnic minorities in Northern Iraq. Building on the \$400 million investment we have made thus far to help communities recover from the atrocities of ISIS, the Administration is requesting \$150 million to support vulnerable, religious, and ethnic minority groups globally. This investment will help ensure these communities are able to remain in their historical homelands and to thrive as crucial components of their larger societies.

I want to note that as part of our effort to expand USAID's partner base as a global initiative, earlier this month Administrator Green announced six direct awards to local Iraqi organizations who are working to implement our programming with ethnic and religious communities who have been targeted for genocide. We point with pride to our pilot early grade reading and high school programs targeting science, technology, engineering, and math programs in Egypt. The Government of Egypt has now expanded these programs across the country, demonstrating the capacity to take on these successes and address and forward the country's development effort.

But let's be clear, job creation across the region is a key concern. Our work with the private sector is yielding results. We recently handed diplomas and employment contracts to the first group of lo-

gistics students who graduated in the Suez Corridor logistics training program and we are doing similar job-matching projects across the region, helping both the firms and the young people they will employ.

In Tunisia, with the support of Congress and in particular this subcommittee, the United States has played an important role since 2011 in solidifying the country's democratic transition. During my recent visit there, I was very honored to officially reopen the USAID Tunisia office as a full mission, and on that same trip to sign our first 5-year bilateral agreement with Tunisia. While there, I traveled to Kairouan, in Tunisia's interior, where I had the pleasure of visiting USAID businesses that are now growing and with young people who are actively participating with their local governments in setting the path forward for their communities.

And before I close, a word on burden-sharing just to echo the Secretary's remarks. The Administration's foreign assistance request prioritizes investments matched by host government commitments and encourages international donors to share the burden of development. Our work in Syria is an example. USAID programs have restored water and electricity to hundreds of thousands of Syrians in areas liberated from ISIS. We helped revitalize agriculture, rehabilitate canals, and all of these activities were funded by our coalition partners.

We will continue to put U.S. interests first and to be full partners in advancing U.S. national interests in this region. With the support of Congress and through the strategic efficient use of resources, we will continue to present the best of the American people to the people of the Middle East and North Africa. Thank you, sir, and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Harvey follows:]

Statement of Michael T. Harvey
Assistant Administrator, Bureau for the Middle East
U.S. Agency for International Development
Subcommittee on the Middle East, North Africa and International Terrorism
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“U.S. Interests in the Middle East and the FY20 Budget”
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Chairman Deutch, Ranking Member Wilson, and distinguished members of the subcommittee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on the important role of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) in advancing U.S. interests in the Middle East and North Africa. It is an honor to be here with Assistant Secretary David Schenker, to represent Administrator Mark Green and the professionals of USAID who work every day to advance U.S. national security, demonstrate American generosity, and promote self-reliance and resilience in our partner countries.

The Middle East and North Africa present one of the most complex and high-stakes development contexts in the world. The region faces interrelated challenges of conflict, instability, unemployment, and a lack of responsive and inclusive systems. We at USAID frequently find ourselves operating stabilization and longer-term development programs in the same countries where our colleagues from our Offices of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance and Food for Peace are providing immediate, life-saving humanitarian assistance.

USAID recognizes that most of the countries in the region are middle-income, with young populations whose energy, education and inspiration can be tapped to help make their communities self-reliant. We believe the region can be an example of what Administrator Mark Green envisions in the Journey to Self-Reliance. With well-planned and targeted investments by USAID and other donors, the large youth demographic in the region can advance democracy and drive inclusive growth in modern, free-market economies.

In line with Administration priorities, the President's \$1.3 billion Budget Request for Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 for the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) is designed to work toward achieving our regional goals of enhancing security, promoting economic growth, improving democratic processes, and supporting vulnerable religious and ethnic minorities. USAID's Middle East Bureau focuses on supporting our friends and allies and steadily working toward strategic transitions away from foreign assistance in partner countries. Helping governments, civil society, and the private sector in the Middle East and North Africa build self-reliance is a key part of the broader U.S. effort to counter malign influences, particularly from countries such as Iran, China, and Russia, and make the case for American values in a renewed global power competition.

Promoting the United States Model

This budget request will enable us to elevate our work to counter malign influences, particularly from Iran and its proxies, through governance programming to improve institutional checks and

balances as well as the delivery of basic social services, increase citizen participation, oversight, and public accountability. For instance, we are supporting the Iraqi Government's initiative to improve its fiscal management and service delivery and strengthen the monitoring and oversight of these services and overall public expenditure to build public confidence and avoid dependency. Promoting Iraq's sovereignty is an effective way to counter Iranian influence.

Earlier this month, Administrator Green announced that the first six direct awards in his New Partnership Initiative are going to local organizations that are working with ethnic and religious communities targeted for genocide in Northern Iraq. We make it a priority to support local organizations and expand our partner base, and the FY 2020 Budget Request will bolster these efforts.

Our support for ethnic and religious minorities is not limited to Northern Iraq. Through a requested \$150 million investment to support vulnerable religious and ethnic-minority groups throughout the Middle East and beyond, the U.S. Government will work to help ensure these communities can remain in their historical homelands, are included in national and local decisions on governance and the economy, and have access to basic social services and economic opportunities to rebuild and thrive as crucial components of their larger societies.

Consistent with the Administration's policy, we promote American values every day as we work closely with our partners to provide a viable, inclusive model for free-market development and citizen-responsive governance that contrasts starkly with those of our global power competitors.

Supporting U.S. Interests

Citizen responsive governance and economic opportunity lead to stable and prosperous societies -- which, in turn, create good security and trading partners. Modernizing economies will accelerate economic growth and creating jobs - that is why our USAID Missions in Egypt and North Africa are working to leverage our economic-growth programs and find opportunities to accelerate trade and investment in support of the whole-of-Government Prosper Africa initiative.

USAID will increasingly engage with the private sector to address the thorny economic challenges in the Middle East and North Africa, which include elevated youth unemployment, barriers to trade, and low access to finance (particularly for small- and medium-sized enterprises), energy, health, and education.

We have capitalized two U.S. Government-endowed investment funds to support private-sector development in Republic of Egypt and the Republic of Tunisia. In addition, USAID's Middle East North Africa Investment Initiative works with the private sector on funds in Iraq, Lebanon, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, and the Kingdom of Morocco that target early-stage and start-up companies. We are encouraged by the success of these funds, and are examining what lessons we can learn from their experiences to date, to assess the degree they can serve as a model for additional investment instruments -- including for the International Development Finance Corporation and by other donors that can share the funding burden -- in other parts of the Middle East, and beyond.

Jordan

In Jordan, where our partnership goes back almost 70 years, USAID works across sectors to harness the economic potential of the next generation. We work with the Government of Jordan and the private sector to provide on-the-job training and employment to youth in sectors where they have the most need. We expand internships, training programs, and employment opportunities in promising sectors like hospitality, water, and civil society so young people can gain practical skills for the workplace and join in Jordan's economic growth and prosperity.

Lebanon

Lebanon remains a strategic priority for the United States, and we view recent protests as a reflection of the Lebanese people's desire for economic reform and political accountability. The President's Budget Request for FY 2020 prioritizes programs that address economic and political challenges and promote a strong governance alternative to more authoritarian models. Our programs address development needs across the country, including in communities that are hosting large numbers of Syrian refugees, an influx that has especially strained public social services. We continue to be concerned by Iran's malign influence over Lebanon, especially its support for Hezbollah, which is undermining the Lebanese Government from within.

Egypt

Egypt is another example of how USAID is working in partnership with governments, civil society and the private sector in the Middle East on their Journey to Self-Reliance. If you have had a chance to look at our Roadmaps, you know we plot a chart with measurements of a country's COMMITMENT to the development journey, as well as the CAPACITY to stand on its own. Based on the Government's COMMITMENT to transformational development, USAID helped lay the groundwork for improvements on the CAPACITY side: from supporting essential social services like water and sewage to working with Egyptian partners to build the backbone of a modern free-market economy.

I am proud of USAID's efforts to develop early-grade reading and high-school science, technology, engineering, and math programs. But the greater achievement was building the Egyptian Government's capacity to better manage its education programs, so it could expand our pilot programs to schools across the country.

Preparing young people for jobs that do not exist does not achieve our goals. That is why we are working so closely with the private sector in Egypt and elsewhere in the Middle East - to make sure we build the human CAPACITY needed for a prosperous, modern, inclusive, free-market economy. We recently witnessed the graduation of the first 55 students from a logistics course co-designed with the private sector in the Suez Canal Corridor. We not only handed out diplomas - we were also able to hand each one of the 55 graduates an employment contract.

Tunisia

In Tunisia, with the support of Congress and in particular this Subcommittee, USAID has been supporting the Tunisian people in their push for citizen-responsive democratic governance and inclusive growth since the 2011 revolution.

The country just completed an impressive series of Presidential and Parliamentary elections, assessed by domestic and international observers as conducted effectively and orderly by an

independent electoral body. Though not without some challenges, the process included the airing of live political debates, domestic observation by thousands of citizens to ensure the integrity of the polls, and a Tunisian electorate that treated the elections with enthusiasm and respect.

USAID's projects played an important role in helping the Tunisian Government to expand voter rolls dramatically, conduct civic and voter-education campaigns, and monitor the vote. These elections marked an important milestone for the Tunisian people on their path toward democratic consolidation.

We passed two important milestones in August that demonstrate the maturity of our program and partnership with the Government of Tunisia: Establishing a full USAID Mission and signing of a new, five-year Development Objective Agreement with the Government of Tunisia. This is the first-ever comprehensive bilateral development agreement between our two countries, and it outlines the long-term U.S. commitment to ensure the success of Tunisia's democratic transition and accelerate its economic-reform agenda. These steps position us to build on our successes and focus future programs.

Behind all of USAID's work are stories of real people whose lives our investments are transforming for the better. While in Tunisia, I traveled to Kairouan in the interior of the country, where I had the pleasure of visiting two USAID-funded businesses, one of which entirely owned and operated by women, and which produced botanical-oil beauty products. I was able to see how our programs improved their operations, unlocked new business, and created a demand for more workers. I also had the honor of joining local government officials to commemorate the grand opening of a renovated community park, identified as a key investment by the neighborhood, which USAID's local governance program funded. More important than the park is the participatory process that fostered Tunisian citizens' public trust in their local government and opened a channel of communication and participation that we hope to continue to deepen between elected officials and their constituents.

West Bank and Gaza

Although USAID's assistance in the West Bank and Gaza ceased earlier this year, USAID continues to implement conflict management and mitigation grants with Jewish and Arab participants from Israel. We have begun to take steps to reduce our staffing footprint of our Mission for the West Bank and Gaza to align with current funding realities, but we have not closed the Mission. We stand ready to develop appropriate programming under the Diplomatic Progress Fund proposed with the President's Budget Request for FY 2020 as needed to support a comprehensive and lasting Middle East peace.

Burden Sharing

The Administration's foreign-assistance Budget Request for FY 2020 prioritizes investments matched by host-country commitments, and encourages international partners to share the burden of economic and development assistance. Every USAID Mission in the Middle East and North Africa is committed to working with other international donors, as well as governments, civil society, the private sector and host communities toward the goal of self-reliance.

Syria is one example where burden-sharing has been important for our stabilization work. While it is important to recognize that our programs are currently adjusting to new policy directives, over the past several years, USAID has awarded and managed programs that restored water and electricity to hundreds of thousands of Syrians in and around Raqqa, helped revitalize agriculture and rehabilitated canals and bridges. But, in the last year U.S. taxpayers have not funded these activities- they have used money generated from Coalition partners, including the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and the Federal Republic of Germany. The United States is also an original member of the multi-donor, \$260 million, Syria Recovery Trust Fund (SRTF), which is operating over 35 projects in health, food security, water, electricity, agriculture, and waste management. Even before the current situation, we recognized that stabilization in Northeast Syria will require more than one country can provide - and in which more countries than the United States hold a vested interest. The President's Budget Request for FY 2020 includes resources under the Relief and Recovery Fund for unanticipated contingencies that arise in fragile states, including Syria.

We are pursuing burden sharing vigorously and have examples of cooperation with private sector and international donors in every country in the Middle East where USAID has programs. In Tunisia, a crucial entrepreneurship program is successful because of a partnership with Hewlett Packard, the Government of Italy and a Tunisian Ministry. In Northern Iraq, we are coordinating assistance under Memoranda of Understanding with the Governments of Hungary and Poland and the Knights of Columbus, and leveraging our presence and assistance to generate private-sector interest in funding projects. In Morocco, we are co-funding programs with the United Kingdom to help provide options for your people to prevent their possible radicalization to violent extremism. These programs are designed to avoid creating dependencies, while building countries' capacities for their journey to self-reliance.

Conclusion

At the core of the Administration's Budget Request for FY 2020 is the guiding principle that we must use taxpayer dollars wisely, and that stable prosperous countries make good trade and security partners. Administrator Green and the professionals at USAID believe we use assistance wisely when we are working to help governments, civil society and the private sector in our partner countries become self-reliant, when they move from being beneficiaries of international assistance to donors that help advance the stability and prosperity of others. We maintain a commitment to produce successful, measurable, outcomes to make programs more effective and create resilience to lessen the need for humanitarian assistance.

Our humanitarian-assistance, stabilization, and development programs are critical to helping the region get beyond its current challenges. We are increasingly working to ensure that our various programming streams support one another, and that we design and manage them jointly.

USAID will continue to put U.S. interests first and be a beacon of freedom to the world. With the support of Congress, and through the strategic, efficient use of resources, my colleagues in USAID Missions and Offices here and around the region will continue to present the best of the American people to the Middle East and North Africa. We appreciate the bipartisan support we receive from Congress, and I look forward to your questions at this hearing, or at any time.

Mr. DEUTCH. Thank you very much. Thanks to both of you again for being here, and sincere thanks for your work in service to the country advancing American interests and admirably representing American values throughout the region. We will now begin 5-minute questioning. I will begin followed by the ranking member and then we will alternate between the parties.

Secretary Schenker, last week the Iranian Foreign Ministry reportedly sent to the United States a list of people it is demanding in a proposed prisoner swap. The regime also made another proposal for a prisoner exchange back in April. Could you speak to the Administration's view of Iran's recent proposal and tell us whether the Administration would engage in a prisoner exchange with Iran or does it reject the idea on principle?

Secretary SCHENKER. Thank you for the question, Congressman. The United States and the Administration, a priority is to get back our Americans held unjustly in Iran, basically hostages over there. This is not a prisoner exchange. We are talking about exchanging people who have been kidnapped, Americans who are in Iran versus Iranian prisoners, people who have done illegal things here like try and, for example, kill the Saudi Ambassador in Georgetown through an Iranian plot.

That said, it is a priority to get our people back and we are looking into all sorts of opportunities if they should present themselves. But I cannot get into details on that.

Mr. DEUTCH. Now, can you comment on these reports of this proposal?

Secretary SCHENKER. I cannot.

Mr. DEUTCH. Can you tell us whether there are any talks underway with Iran to secure the release of Americans and U.S. legal permanent residents held hostage?

Secretary SCHENKER. Yes, I am not going to get into those details here. What I would say that it is a priority for us to get our people back, but there has been a history, actually, of these types of offers and Iran generally leverages them. And when you pay for this type of behavior and when you pay for kidnapping you generally get more.

Mr. DEUTCH. To both of you, let me ask about the Administration's freezing of assistance to West Bank Gaza in August 2018. If Congress acts to remove the constraints imposed by the Anti-Terrorism Clarification Act, should the United States consider resuming certain types of aid to Palestinians and, if so, which types and under which conditions?

Secretary SCHENKER. Well, let me start by saying that the Administration supports the victims of terrorism. This is an important piece of legislation.

Mr. DEUTCH. Assistant Secretary, does the Administration support the so-called active fix?

Secretary SCHENKER. We are willing to engage with Congress on every level to fix that.

Mr. DEUTCH. Assistant Administrator Harvey, can you answer the question about whether aid should and, if so, which type of aid should flow again assuming the active fix addresses that issue?

Mr. HARVEY. Well, I will let the Assistant Secretary address the issue of whether there should be an active fix. That is a broader

conversation. If assistance were to resume, if the political decision were made that the circumstances would justify that, we would take a look very closely with our Palestinian partners to determine where to start. I would not want to prejudge it now, but historically water and wastewater have been very high priorities for both the Israel neighbors and the Palestinians themselves, and I am sure that would be at least one place where we would start.

Mr. DEUTCH. OK, so Assistant Secretary Schenker, let me get back to you. So assuming that—thank you for your offer to work with us. Assuming that an active fix is achieved, should aid start to flow? Would the Administration recognize the benefits of any type of aid flowing to West Bank and Gaza?

Secretary SCHENKER. I think that would be something that would have to come after the rollout of the peace plan, but I cannot really comment on whether—

Mr. DEUTCH. And why is that?

Secretary SCHENKER. Well, I think that there is this enormous aid package that awaits the Palestinians that underpins this, the peace proposal.

Mr. DEUTCH. So, let—Assistant Secretary, let's talk about that. Do you have—can you tell us what role your desk has played or that you personally have played in helping to draft this peace process?

Secretary SCHENKER. None.

Mr. DEUTCH. But you are aware of what is in it?

Secretary SCHENKER. No. I have seen public statements from Special Advisor Kushner about this, the talk about raising money to underwrite that.

Mr. DEUTCH. OK, then let me just focus on the one issue of U.S. security assistance. Help me understand why we should wait for a peace proposal that may come soon or may never come at all to resume the funding of the security coordinator that helps to protect Palestinians and Israelis.

Secretary SCHENKER. Yes. No, that is a great question.

Mr. DEUTCH. Thanks.

Secretary SCHENKER. We would love to spend that right now. We have allocated \$35 million. We have the security coordinator out there. We have it fully staffed. We are underwriting that. We would like to spend this 35 million to do the train and equip; we are just being held back by the ATCA.

Mr. DEUTCH. And, finally, all of—

Secretary SCHENKER. But that is good to go, that 35 million.

Mr. DEUTCH. And any other projects, are there any other projects since—my understanding, Assistant Administrator Harvey, is operations have essentially wound down in West Bank and Gaza as a result of both the combination of ATCA and the Administration's decision to withhold all funds. So are—can you prioritize where funds would be spent?

Secretary SCHENKER. I do not have a list right now, but I can get back to you on that.

Mr. DEUTCH. I would appreciate—

Secretary SCHENKER. I would think, by the way I would think that the wastewater management would be, as Mike Harvey said, would be a leading factor of public health.

Mr. DEUTCH. OK, I appreciate that.

Mr. Wilson, you are recognized.

Mr. WILSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Again, I thank both of you for being here. Thank you for your service. And both of you, I know, make a difference on behalf of freedom and democracy in the world.

Assistant Secretary Schenker, what is the Near Eastern Affairs Bureau of the State Department doing to counter Iranian influence in the region?

Secretary SCHENKER. Well, first of all, we are implementing crushing sanctions on the Iranians. This, as a result, denied some \$50 billion in oil revenue and is likely going to result in a constriction of their economy by double digits by the end of 2019. This economic pressure provides them with less money with which to fund their regional proxies, terrorist organizations like Hezbollah which are facing increased pressure because of the lack of funds available to them. That is on one side.

We are working with our partners to multilaterally constrain Iran's malign behavior. This is building coalitions in the region whether through the international maritime security construct, also known as Operation Sentinel, and also calling out Iran by name, something the E3 did to hold Iran responsible for what it did in Aramco a few weeks back. That is sort of unprecedented.

Likewise, we are exposing Iran, the Iranian regime's brutality and governance problems. We are working through local partners. We are strengthening and financially backing the Lebanese armed forces which someday could serve as a counterbalance to some of Iran's pernicious activities in Lebanon. We are pressing our Saudi allies and, actually, with some prospect of success to get a peace agreement in Yemen which would roll back Houthi, the pernicious Houthi influence.

Mr. WILSON. Well, we appreciate each of your initiatives. And can either of you here today guarantee to the subcommittee that no U.S. taxpayers' funds are sent to the Iraqi Government which, including the Iraqi Federal Police, which could be disbursed to the Iranian-backed militias operating in the country?

Secretary SCHENKER. I believe that is the case. We are not providing any FMF to Iraq this year, but I will have to check on the other funds. I believe that they are not funding the Hashtashabi directly.

Mr. WILSON. Thank you.

And then, Assistant Secretary, what is your assessment of the relationship between the U.N. operations within Syria and the Assad regime in Damascus? Would you say the Assad regime benefits from U.S. programming in Syria?

Secretary SCHENKER. Well, if I can punt to Mike Harvey on that my understanding is no, that it does not benefit the Assad regime.

Mr. HARVEY. Congressman, you are raising a very serious issue that concerns us greatly. As you know, the one place that—the one activity that we do have in Assad-controlled areas is our humanitarian assistance program that is implemented almost exclusively through U.N. agencies with a few exceptions and the issue of keeping control over resources and ensuring integrity of that program is a constant challenge. But it is something we work very closely

with our U.N. partners on, we watch very closely, and it is—please do keep the attention on it as we will as well.

Mr. WILSON. And I am grateful that we have bipartisan legislation on this point. And I know it is not covered very often, but actually people of both parties can work together substantially, particularly in the Middle East.

And then, Secretary Schenker, are there any U.S. citizens currently held or detained by the Saudi Government and what efforts is the Administration making for their release?

Secretary SCHENKER. Thank you. This is an issue of concern. There is Walid Fitaihi, who is a dual national, who is being held by the Saudis. We have been engaging with the Saudi Government continuously about the case that Mr. Fitaihi had been held for some 2 years without charge. And recently he was charged and released and they are going through a trial. We view that as a positive development and hopefully that trial will be over soon and then Mr. Fitaihi will be exonerated and be able to come home.

Mr. WILSON. And thank you for following through on that and I yield back my time.

Mr. DEUTCH. Thank you, Mr. Wilson.

Mr. Allred, you are recognized.

Mr. ALLRED. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And I want to thank our witnesses for your service to our country. I am trying though to discern this Administration's policy in the Middle East.

On this subcommittee we have heard testimony that has been widely ranging and I think been conflicting as well. The President says he wants to support Israel, but I think he has taken many steps that have empowered Iran. The President says that he wants to destroy ISIS, but we have handed them a lifeline in Syria with our actions. And, Mr. Schenker, you have talked about how this budget is intended to stabilize the region while you are also calling for large cuts to that budget.

And so I am trying to understand what our policy is in the Middle East and I want to begin with these cuts to foreign aid and to the priorities that you have laid out that many of them I agree with, and the justification has been to increase "burden-sharing" across international partners. Do you believe that this is actually going to lead to our allies contributing more or are we just giving Russia, Iran, and China a bigger opening to increase their influence in the region?

Secretary SCHENKER. Thank you, Congressman. No, I believe that actually our partners have stepped up. I think the best example of that would be Syria, where the President, the Administration zeroed out the budget last year of \$300 million for humanitarian assistance and we raised among our partners 325 million, including 180 million from Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. They stepped up and they have stepped up again and made similar commitments for this year.

So I think, you know, across the board we find our allies—

Mr. ALLRED. And do you find these commitments to be sustainable? I am wondering because we have a national security interest in this region. We do not use foreign aid out of the goodness of our hearts in all cases, we use it because it stabilizes countries. It allows us not to have to commit our brave men and women to con-

flicts abroad. We have a national security interest in it. If we are shaking down our allies and getting them to step in while we are not going to pay, then maybe in the short term that is something that we can do. But I do not see that as a sustainable Middle East policy for the United States.

Secretary SCHENKER. Sir, I understand your concern. So far we have been successful in raising funds from our allies. I think that we have to go every day and make the case to them about why it is not only in our interest but it is in their interest. Certainly, Saudi Arabia and the Emirates have stepped up on Syria, but, you know, across the board they see things and share in many ways the same threat perception in the region and are willing to back our efforts.

Mr. ALLRED. Yes. Let's talk about Syria and let's talk about how this Turkish incursion impacts this budget request. Is this reflective, this budget request reflective of these current events or is this something that was formulated before these events?

Secretary SCHENKER. The budget was formulated before the Turkish invasion.

Mr. ALLRED. And so how is this invasion going to impact this request and your plans in the region?

Secretary SCHENKER. Yes. Well, that is a good question. We have in the budget quite a bit of flexibility. Not only the President had said immediately after the invasion that we would provide \$50 million plus another 4.5 million to support the White Helmets and 50 million for humanitarian assistance, we have also obligated funds, if necessary, if there is a mass refugee flow of Syrian Kurds or Syrians into Iraqi Kurdish area.

And we have flexibility through the Relief and Recovery Fund, which has \$145 million in it, and through the Diplomatic Progress Fund.

Mr. ALLRED. OK. OK, so I understand, you know, we want to be, if we are going to appropriate, we need to be part of the discussion about how this is going forward. That is what I am trying to get to. So I see you have some plans, but, Assistant Administrator Harvey, if you could talk about what USAID's role will be in this potential refugee crisis that we are seeing unfolding in northern Syria.

Mr. HARVEY. Well, when we are dealing with the issue of refugees we will be working very closely with our State Department colleagues in the Refugee Bureau. We have been supporting the humanitarian assistance program within Syria which includes both people who are in their homes but also people who have been displaced by the conflict. We have about 90,000 people displaced from the recent Kurdish Turkish actions whom we will be supporting through the ongoing and existing humanitarian assistance program.

For the most part, we have access to them and our partners are implementing programs remarkably. If there is a—we have about 12,000 refugees who have crossed into Iraq. The systems are in place and the resources are in place to deal with that population. We, actually, are using a planning figure of about 50,000. If we are lucky, we will not get anywhere near that if the cease-fire holds and Turkish operations stay where they are.

My worry is less of dealing with the immediate humanitarian situation as it is reestablishing political stability in that area and that is going to be a serious challenge for all of us.

Mr. ALLRED. I agree. And that is why I disagree with the budget request. We will formulate what we think is necessary as we did in FY19. And thank you for your time.

Mr. HARVEY. OK. Thank you, Congressman.

Mr. ALLRED. I yield.

Mr. DEUTCH. Thank you, Mr. Allred.

Mr. Kinzinger, you are recognized.

Mr. KINZINGER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you both for being here. Specifically, on USAID, I want to say you, I do not think you guys get enough credit. And just generally with State Department you guys do not get enough credit, because when you alleviate a conflict, obviously, you do not know that it has been alleviated until we have, when it is unsuccessful. So I want to thank you and your folks for all the good work.

And, you know, specifically, I think it is important to try to make sure we are spending taxpayer resources effectively and efficiently in a targeted way. I think we should not cut those resources simply to cut them. We should make sure they are efficient. But I also, you know, it is important to make sure when we do that, we are following the President's priorities even if we disagree. And that is, you know, where we come into play especially in an area like this.

But especially I want to commend, obviously, the people who took out al-Baghdadi this weekend. It was a great thing. It is not the end of the war on ISIS, this is a generational fight. This is going to go on for a long time and I think we have to accept and understand that. That is where you guys come in extremely importantly as well, making sure that that next generation is not radicalized. And that not only are they not radicalized that they actually push back against radicalization. But, you know, the more leaders we kill, the dumber they get. It is like in Iraq when we did that during the surge. You just, you take them out and you accelerate the number you are taking out and pretty soon they run out of people to lead and it capitulates.

So I wanted, obviously, I have expressed a lot of concerns, generally, with Syria's policy, but I will leave those for now, but I do want to turn to the regime who I think the corruption was key to Baghdadi's caliphate and there is a whole lot on the inception of ISIS and what Bashar al-Assad did. But I think now it seems all but certain that Assad will consolidate much control over the country.

Mr. Harvey, you mentioned about, you know, rebuilding and USAID projects within Assad-controlled territory. I want to echo what my colleague Mr. Wilson said. We do not want taxpayer dollars going to prop up Assad. And so you can add me to that list and I know you guys are with me on that too, so. But as the founder of the Syria Caucus, I am going to continue to urge my colleagues to hold those responsible for war crimes in Syria accountable.

So, Mr. Schenker, if President Trump were to sign—I think he has said he is willing to do it. We have one Senate hold-out, but if he signs into law the Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act of

2019, what kind of impact would that have on the Assad regime and their supporters?

Secretary SCHENKER. Thank you and I share with you the pleasure at the killing of Baghdadi. This was—

Mr. KINZINGER. It is worth celebrating, for sure.

Secretary SCHENKER. Yes. No, it is a great thing, but there is no knockout blow. So, I think that it is important that we recognize what Assad has done. We are spending money in funding projects to document the mass atrocities. We are working on recordkeeping and underwriting some of that. This is a regime that is beyond the pale.

And we are focused narrowly, remain to focus narrowly on three things in Syria, you know, preventing the resurgence the ISIS. We are working on preventing, you know, Iranian influence in the country and rolling that back and also a political future through the implementation of 2254. And this is the issue about Caesar. This is a regime that cannot be allowed to persist as-is, the people have to have a say in the direction of their country. Refugees were not ancillary to this conflict. Assad ethnically cleansed his country of Sunni Muslims. He wanted to get rid of them. So the Caesar Act, I think, is very important in that regard in holding to account.

Mr. KINZINGER. And I think another point on that is, look, it is going to be out of those refugee camps that Assad created where you get radicalization because people are hopeless, uneducated in many cases, you know, and it is easy to blame whoever, and that is where you find radicalization so countering that is going to be important.

And can you also address, you know, with Putin obviously standing up the Assad regime, how are you guys working to counter their malign influence in the region?

Secretary SCHENKER. The Iranians are—I am sorry. The Syrians are—the Russians are playing a pernicious role across the region. It is not just in Syria. It is Libya and elsewhere. We are working on a number of strategies. We are trying to contain them by working with our allies. We are certainly hammering our allies with warnings about CAATSA sanctions and others, but also letting them know, I think having a frank dialog, about what Russia does when they are on the ground.

Mr. KINZINGER. Yes. And I think—I am out of time and I appreciate your service, but I think it is important to—it is a lesson when they, you know, basically showed up in Syria in 2012 or 2013. It is a lesson, because we see them in Venezuela and we will see them elsewhere. Stop them early. Prevent them from coming in. Thank you both for your service. Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Mr. DEUTCH. I thank you, Mr. Kinzinger.

Mr. Malinowski, you are recognized.

Mr. MALINOWSKI. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Assistant Secretary Schenker, I am going to start off by just reading the lead of a story in the Wall Street Journal from yesterday about Egypt and about one young woman in particular, Esraa Abdel Fattah, who is a political activist in that country.

The lead of the story is, Egyptian security officers grabbed her from her car in the country's capital on October 12th and blindfolded her, took her to a secure facility, two lawyers who visited

her in prison said she was slapped, beaten on her arms and back, threatened with electrocution as officers demanded the password to her mobile phone. When she refused, the officers bound her hands and legs, choked her with her own jacket, forcibly used her fingers to unlock the phone.

And you know as well as I do, I know your experience and you know mine, that this is a routine story in Egypt and things have gotten worse in the last month. More than 4,000 people detained since protests seeking the removal of President Sisi started up, the largest, I think, wave of arrests that the country has seen since he came to power. And, you know, I do not think I need to ask you if this is wrong because I am sure you agree that it is, but I will ask this.

Since our policy toward Egypt is based or allegedly based on advancing our security interests, does this kind of repression which is escalating now help or hurt legitimate efforts to fight extremism or terrorism in the country?

Secretary SCHENKER. Thank you, Congressman. I am familiar with that story. I know Esraa. I met her several times. I think it is outrageous. You should know that I had the Egyptian ambassador in my office last week to talk about Esraa. This matters greatly to the Administration. Egypt has a long way to go on human rights.

You heard we—the Administration made a statement in September talking about the rights of Egyptians to demonstrate peacefully and the obligation of the Egyptian authorities to protect demonstrators. This is something that is very important to the Administration and we talk about it.

Mr. MALINOWSKI. Well, thank you and I am glad that you did that. But I guess I am asking a more fundamental question, because I remember sitting in your chair a few years ago saying something along the lines of Egypt has a long way to go. And it seems to have an even longer way to go today, and yet here we have the same security relationship that we used to have. You know, any progress in Sinai over the last several years?

And, once again, the question I would ask you, do their tactics help or hurt in the fight against what we say is our shared enemy?

Secretary SCHENKER. Actually, on Sinai, they have made some progress. I think it is incremental. They have received training that is more narrowly tailored to that type of counterterrorism mission, but more importantly they have recognized and I think through our counsel that counterterrorism requires than just a military component. And I will actually let my colleague Mike Harvey talk about what we are doing and what the Egyptians are doing in the Sinai in that regard.

Mr. MALINOWSKI. Well, actually, hold on. I do not have that much time so.

Secretary SCHENKER. OK.

Mr. MALINOWSKI. Because I have a different question I wanted to ask Mr. Harvey.

But, look, I would just say the fundamental problem here is that, you know, even as the President pulls back from Syria, claims that it is just a bunch of sand and we need to get out of the Middle East and we cannot do these things forever, when the people we were

helping, both Kurdish and Arab, are actually fighting and dying with us to fight terrorism, many of whom actually share our values, incredibly brave civil society activists who we are no longer supporting because we have pulled back so much of our programming there, and yet we continue to spend \$1.3 billion of the taxpayers' money helping the Egyptian military put on military parades with their tanks, and that does not sit well with me.

I have a very quick question with very little time left for you, Mr. Harvey, and it is about Yemen. When was the last time we, USAID or through the United Nations, provided a no-strike list to the Saudi military in terms of humanitarian locations, targets that we ask them not to hit in Yemen?

Mr. HARVEY. Congressman, I actually cannot answer that question, I do not know. But I do know that it is a constant point of discussion between our two governments.

Mr. MALINOWSKI. OK, so—but we have provided them with no-strike lists?

Mr. HARVEY. We certainly have, both through AID and through our DOD colleagues.

Mr. MALINOWSKI. OK. I think that is a very important thing to confirm on the record, because we have, you know, not just broad concerns about human rights and targeting that we have shared with the Saudis that they have not always listened to, but specific locations and coordinates that they have hit that we have specifically given them as locations not to hit. I think that elevates this to the highest possible level of concern. Thank you. I yield back.

Mr. DEUTCH. Thank you, Mr. Malinowski.

Mr. Chabot, you are recognized.

Mr. CHABOT. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and I want to apologize for not being here to hear the testimony. I had an honor flight at the World War II Memorial and that is obviously a priority. And we see those great American heroes. It used to be mostly World War II veterans like my father who would be a hundred, if he were still alive, next month, but now it is Korean War veterans and Vietnam War veterans and on and on.

But it is one of those things, so I apologize for not being here a little earlier. And if I repeat some of the questions that were already answered, I apologize for that too. But I certainly appreciate the tougher line that this Administration has taken against Iran, for the most part, which under the free hand given by the JCPOA greatly expanded its influence in the region and I would like to focus on Iran's so-called land bridge to the Mediterranean.

A critical goal of this quarter is for Iran to be able to threaten and potentially, ultimately, attack one of our most significant allies in the world and that is Israel. Could either one of the gentlemen here discuss the Administration's plans to curtail Iran's ability to move equipment or supplies or fighters into and through Syria and onto the Israeli border? So, thank you.

Secretary SCHENKER. Thank you, Congressman. The land bridge is an issue of enormous concern to the Administration. Before the Turkish incursion into northern Syria, the positioning of our troops there as an ancillary benefit to being present and fighting ISIS there had limited Iran's ability in some way to do everything it wanted. We still have residual presence there that as long as we

are able to provide security and stability and work with our SDF partners in these areas, which we continue to do, that may limit Iran's ability somewhat.

But this is a priority and if we curtail our presence then it becomes, it would become more difficult to do so. As you know, the Israelis appear to be, they have hit Iranian targets in Syria for some time, attempted weapons transfers to Lebanon, this is something that is not a secret. So that in some way is also curtailing the efforts to establish this land bridge full-time.

Mr. CHABOT. Thank you.

Did you want to add anything?

Mr. HARVEY. Not specifically, Congressman, because we are a few steps to the side of that broader debate. But much of what USAID's sort of premises its development activities in this region on is that enabling these countries to stand on their own as fully sovereign countries that control their destiny, it better enables them to push back from the nefarious intent of both Iran, Russia, and others.

Mr. CHABOT. Thank you.

Secretary SCHENKER. Yes. If I might add, I mean in some ways the weak link there has been Iraq more than Syria. As you know, Iran is storing ballistic missiles in Iraq. Iraq is not able to exert its sovereignty and push back. This is a real problem and will remain a problem for some time until Iraq can exert sovereignty.

Mr. CHABOT. Thank you very much. And I am sure that my next question has probably been mentioned and discussed prior to my being here. Obviously, the taking out al-Baghdadi was a huge victory. Just a horrific, horrible individual, the head of probably the most despicable organization that we have seen in a long, long time, so I want to commend the President and all those that worked with him in accomplishing this and obviously, principally, our men and women in uniform who, you know, took the action to end this horrible person's time on this earth.

Could you discuss the Administration's plans moving forward to ensure that ISIS does not reestablish itself under, you know, and a new caliphate under, especially in Syria under a new leader? What are the Administration's plans at this point in ensuring that that does not happen?

Secretary SCHENKER. Thank you, Congressman. That is a top priority for the Administration, the fight against ISIS, the prevention of the resurgence of ISIS 2.0. Contrary to what many people say, the Administration continues to work with our SDF partners on the ground in Syria. We have troops embedded with units and we continue to fight ISIS there. And that will be a key point of our presence going forward, whether in At Tanf or outside that area.

So I would anticipate the counterterrorism mission will remain a very high priority for the indefinite future. This is as I think as Congressman Kinzinger said, it is a generational mission.

Mr. CHABOT. Very good. Thank you very much.

My time has expired, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. DEUTCH. Thank you, Mr. Chabot.

Mr. Keating, you are recognized.

Mr. KEATING. Well, thank you.

A question just following up on Iraq. It is a great concern. We have seen the demonstrations. We know the situation there in detail. We know that there was an order for nonemergency personnel in May to leave. That is going to run out next month. It seems from the budget there has been a cut in security funds. Does that represent what the future is there? It is such a critical area along with so many areas, but without a presence there it is going to be that much more difficult from the Stateside. Could you comment on what the prospects look like in this critical area right now that often gets overlooked?

Secretary SCHENKER. Thank you. I share your concern. The safety and well-being of the diplomats in NEA is a top priority for me. It is my responsibility in many ways. And so, we are on ordered departure, we have been, and in 8 days or 7 days it will be 6 months. The security situation is such that this is what I believe is the new normal.

That said, while we have not the height of the numbers that we had before, we have sufficient numbers on the ground to do our mission. And, in fact, even under ordered departure, this year, even so far, we have done more visits with the Iraqi, more engagements with Iraqi parliamentarians outside of the embassy compound than we did when we had our full complement the year before we went on ordered departure.

So we are engaged diplomatically in a way that, you know, as we were before, even more so. Our military presence there, while the FMF has been zeroed out, part of this is burden-sharing, but part of it also is that the military has CTEF funding where it can do train and equip and fund and work with the Iraqi military, notwithstanding the absence of FMF. So we remain engaged. We have numbers of troops there. We have a full diplomatic corps. I have been in Iraq maybe four times in the past 4 months, so this is a priority for us. If you want to roll back Iran in the region, this is the beachhead and we are there and we are not leaving.

Mr. KEATING. Yes. Well, thank you for your engagement in that. Just briefly, too, I mean there has been 14 million Yemenis on the verge of starvation, 85,000 have died of famine. Are we engaging with multilaterals? What are we doing there to try and help one of the worst humanitarian situations in the world?

Mr. HARVEY. I am sorry, Congressman. Did you say Yemen?

Mr. KEATING. Yemen, sorry. Oh, your microphone is on. Yes, your mike is—there.

Mr. HARVEY. Yemen is a remarkable challenge for all us. It is one of the largest humanitarian assistance programs anywhere. It is an extremely difficult place to do work. The de facto authorities in the north, the Houthis, make it very difficult and yet despite that we are extremely proud of the performance of our WFP colleagues in particular, but also UNICEF, WHO, and the panoply of American and international NGO's who have been working in Yemen.

Mr. KEATING. Thank you for your work. I just wanted to touch one other—

Mr. HARVEY. Yes.

Mr. KEATING [continuing]. Topic too. It is hard in 5 minutes.

But I have long felt that we could have a greater significance if we could better work with our EU allies on their development programs and sort of coordinate better what they are doing and what we are doing in critical areas of the world. Is there an opportunity to even have a multiplier effect beyond what we are doing now, because I think there is an enormous opportunity that way.

Mr. HARVEY. Congressman, I could not agree with you more. The EU is an interesting institution and I will leave it at that. What is in countries like Yemen where we are almost entirely dependent upon the United Nations, it is easier because that mechanism sort of forces joint pooled funding of activities. In countries where we have more bilateral programming there is more coordination than you might see.

But they are, to be perfectly honest, challenging partners because their bureaucracy is even slower than ours. And whenever I am feeling frustrated about USAID's bureaucracy, I just look at the others and I feel a little better, but it is something that we are committed to. We have folks assigned in Brussels where we meet with our Brussels counterparts. But let's not forget that the German, the French, the British bilateral assistance programs, especially the British and the Germans, are huge around the world and those bilateral partnerships are extremely close. I mean, I just, having spent 4 years dealing with Boko Haram in Nigeria, not successfully but that is another conversation, the partnership we had with the Brits and the Germans was as good as it could get.

Mr. KEATING. Good. I hope it is something that our committee and the subcommittee I chair can continue to work on. Thank you for your service. I yield back.

Mr. DEUTCH. Thank you, Mr. Keating.

Mr. Trone, you are recognized.

Mr. TRONE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Assistant Secretary Schenker, accountability for the murder of Jamal Khashoggi is vital to the broader U.S. interest in supporting the rights and freedoms of individuals, in particular freedom of the press. Does not failing to provide consequences for the Khashoggi assassination embolden the perpetrators, and what is the Administration doing to prevent this possibility?

Secretary SCHENKER. Thank you, Congressman.

Accountability, the Secretary has said, is critical in the murder of Jamal Khashoggi, getting to the bottom of it. I knew Khashoggi. It is something that matters to me, personally, as well. In 2018, the Administration sanctioned some eleven—17 Saudis involved in the murder of Khashoggi with the Global Magnitsky sanctions. Right now, there is some 11 defendants in Saudi Arabia in the middle of a trial. I think both the defense and the prosecution have finished their cases and we are waiting on verdicts. I think the judicial process as we see it falls short of full accountability and we have indicated that to the Saudis. We are encouraging, nonetheless, a fair and transparent judicial process.

Mr. TRONE. It certainly seems like we are not getting that at the end of the day, but under crown prince, again, the Saudi Government has intensified its crackdown on dissidents, human rights activists. In 1918, the repression was directed against the women, leading women's rights advocates who were seeking to end the

male guardianship system that enables systematic abuse and repression. In May 2018, authorities arrested a dozen prominent women's rights activists and accused several others of grave crimes, including treason, directly related to their activism. There is also reports that women were subjected to sexual harassment and torture.

What is the State Department's view on Saudi Arabia's crack-down against these activists and dissidents?

Secretary SCHENKER. Thank you. It is a concern of the Administration and the State Department some of these human rights allegations of abuse, but I would like to say that it is a bit of a mixed bag here. For example, the Saudi Government in the last 4 months lifted, ended the guardianship law, so now women can travel abroad without the permission of their children, for example, or a male guardian. Several of the women drivers have been released from jail. Walid Fitaihi, who I talked about before, a dual national U.S. citizen has now been charged and is on trial, but has been released from jail.

You know, on other issues and they have been very positive as well, the Saudi Government is working to put the Yemeni Government back together by fostering negotiations between the Southern Transitional Council and the Hadi government. They are about to get an agreement on that. They have a deescalation with the Houthis that actually appears to be taking hold. At our encouragement, they gave, last month, \$500 million to humanitarian assistance in Yemen.

So let's say that Saudi, too, has some way to come or some room for improvement in terms of human rights, but they are working on it. They are putting together a committee on trafficking human persons to look into this more closely so they do not have some sort of bad rating next year from the assessment from the U.S. Government next year. I actually think they are making an effort and, in some places, succeeding.

Mr. TRONE. So it is an effort, but it looks like there is lots of room to go. We still have dissidents in jail. We still have lots of conversation about torture and abuse that they are suffering. We still have a crown prince that has not been held accountable. So, yes, progress is great, but we are not where we need to be and I think we need to continue to pressure and push for where we should be. We all know, morally, where we should be.

Secretary SCHENKER. Well, thank you. This is a topic of ongoing discussion between us and the Saudis, but I think that while we should continue pushing, where credit is due, I think we should give them credit.

Mr. TRONE. Quickly to Tunisia, the legislative—the elections just happened in Tunisia. We would like to see them move in a good direction, but we cut foreign aid from 86 million roughly in half. Do you have concerns about the message that sends?

Secretary SCHENKER. Thank you. We think that the number is right on Tunisia, in two parts. By the way, we too think that the elections were a dramatic success and see this as really a positive development. I was just in Tunisia last month right before the elections. I met with the independent electoral commission. It is something that is a source, I think should be a source of pride for them and certainly for the region. It is unusual.

We think the number is the right figure. The FMF, the INCLE, the money that we provide for the security forces is the same, basically, but some of the ESF has decreased. And if we need to, we can make that up with MEPI. They also get a great deal of money from Europeans, once again, burden-sharing. And all this money, there is an issue of absorptive capacity, so we think we are at the right amount.

Mr. TRONE. Thank you.

Mr. DEUTCH. Thank you, Mr. Trone. I just had a couple of followups and then, Mr. Wilson, if he has any.

Assistant Secretary Schenker, you said Iraq is a beachhead. I think you were referring to Iraq as a beachhead in confronting Iranian aggression; is that right?

Secretary SCHENKER. Right.

Mr. DEUTCH. November is the 6-month statutory deadline for extending the ordered departures and you have got to decide the future of U.S. Government presence in Iraq. Are there plans to strengthen the security of the U.S. embassy in Iraq to enable the return of U.S. personnel? Or tell me where that stands.

Secretary SCHENKER. Yes. This has been something that I spend a great deal of time on, actually, you know, safety and security of diplomatic personnel in Iraq, in particular. I do not want to get into the details of how we came to it, discussions, we think security at the embassy is adequate. Actually, better than adequate.

Mr. DEUTCH. Sufficient for the return of personnel, to enable U.S. personnel in the resumption of the—

Secretary SCHENKER. To accomplish the mission.

Mr. DEUTCH. Yes.

Secretary SCHENKER. And we have got a number of diplomats that we think is appropriate and I can brief you about this in another setting.

Mr. DEUTCH. OK.

Secretary SCHENKER. But yes, we are committed to the mission.

Mr. DEUTCH. Great. Right, I would like to do that if we can arrange that.

And then, finally, also on the topic of Iran, this time in Syria. I think if I understood you, you said if we curtail our presence it would be more difficult to prevent, effectively, the land bridge that was asked about earlier. Did I understand you correctly and when you say if we curtail our presence, if we curtail our presence the way we are doing, if we curtail our presence beyond what we are doing, what were you referring to?

Secretary SCHENKER. For basically beyond what we are doing. But as Ambassador Jeffrey said during, I believe during his testimony to you, our presence is a stabilizing force and to the degree that we are present it sets better conditions for the right things to happen in Syria.

Mr. DEUTCH. So are you—so I will ask. So are you confident that the current strategy effectively prevents Iran from establishing that land bridge that we have, this committee in particular has worried so much about?

Secretary SCHENKER. I think it complicates Iranian efforts to do so.

Mr. DEUTCH. Does the Administration assess U.S. efforts to prevent the spread of Iranian influence in Syria and Iraq and Lebanon as successful?

Secretary SCHENKER. Sir, it is a work in progress. In Iraq right now a lot of the intercommunal violence that you are seeing is based on, our belief is, Iranian overreach because Iran is so enmeshed in the society. Many Shiite there like everywhere throughout the region are Shiite nationalists and are pushing back on this.

Mr. DEUTCH. OK. And so, let me just wrap up again on this issue of the land bridge. So there are, how many troops are in Tanf?

Secretary SCHENKER. I am not at liberty to say.

Mr. DEUTCH. But the withdrawal of troops from northern Syria, the withdrawal—I just want to make sure I understand.

Secretary SCHENKER. There is still a residual U.S. presence that goes beyond At Tanf.

Mr. DEUTCH. And you are confident that whatever that number is that residual presence is sufficient to prevent Iran from establishing a land bridge from Tehran through Baghdad and Damascus over to Beirut?

Secretary SCHENKER. I think it plays a positive role on that front.

Mr. DEUTCH. Well, I am sure some is better than none. I am just asking whether it is a sufficient number to prevent Iran from establishing that.

Secretary SCHENKER. I really cannot comment.

Mr. DEUTCH. OK. I appreciate it.

Anything further, Mr. Wilson?

Great. Well, thanks. I thank the witnesses and all the members for being here today. Thanks for your testimony, Assistant Secretary Schenker and Assistant Administrator Harvey. Members of the subcommittee may have some additional questions for you and we ask our witnesses to please respond to those questions in writing. I would ask my colleagues to submit those questions for the hearing record within five business days.

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

[Whereupon, at 3:48 p.m., the subcommittee 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

October 29, 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: Tuesday, October 29, 2019

TIME: 2:00 pm

SUBJECT: The FY20 Budget: Examining the Administration's Policy Objectives for a Turbulent Middle East

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

The Honorable Michael T. Harvey
Assistant Administrator
Bureau for the Middle East
U.S. Agency for International Development

By Direction of the Chairman

The Committee on Foreign Affairs seeks to make its facilities accessible to persons with disabilities. If you are in need of special accommodations, please call 202/225-3021 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 HEARING

Day Tuesday Date 10/29/19 Room 2172

Starting Time 2:34 PM Ending Time 3:48 PM

Recesses 0 (to) (to)

Presiding Member(s)
Chairman Theodore E. Deutch

Check all of the following that apply:

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

TITLE OF HEARING:
The FY20 Budget: Examining the Administration's Policy Objectives for a Turbulent Middle East

SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:
See Attached

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

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.)*
QFR - Rep. Ted Deutch

TIME SCHEDULED TO RECONVENE _____
or
TIME ADJOURNED 3:48 PM

Aina Abdul
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
	Gerald E. Connolly, VA
	David Cicilline, RI
	Ted Lieu, CA
X	Colin Allred, TX
X	Tom Malinowski, NJ
X	David Trone, MA
	Brad Sherman, CA
X	William Keating, MA
X	Juan Vargas, CA

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

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

Questions for the Record from Representative Ted Deutch
The FY20 Budget: Examining the Administration's Policy Objectives
for a Turbulent Middle East
October 29, 2019

Question:

Over the last few months, major protests have developed in Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt, and Algeria. Although driven by country-specific and local issues, these demonstrations share a common theme: frustration with unemployment, corruption, and a lack of political and economic opportunity.

How are these protests movements shaping how State and USAID approach the Middle East and how will they influence future budget requests?

Answer:

Assistant Secretary Schenker: State and USAID assistance programs and budget requests are informed by regional dynamics, including the challenges that are causing widespread frustration. State and USAID continue to seek in our budget request flexibility from Congress that enables the Administration to direct funding towards unanticipated contingencies and other opportunities for the United States to advance our interests in the Middle East and North Africa. The Administration prioritizes assistance programs that encourage partner countries to improve transparency and responsiveness in government, expand economic opportunity, and spur job creation. We continue to support stabilization efforts in areas affected by ISIS, working to rebuild infrastructure, facilitate the return of refugees and internally displaced persons, and support religious and ethnic minorities. State and USAID will continue to prioritize high-impact interventions that promote economic growth and regional stability.

Question:

Are you concerned that cutting development and economic assistance to the region – as the Trump Administration has tried in recent years – will exacerbate the outcomes and trends that fuel these protests?

Answer:

Assistant Secretary Schenker: In addition to re-focusing our programs to address the foundational challenges that fuel these protests, the Department is utilizing diplomatic tools and assistance resources to increase burden sharing from other donors and encourage governments to take the steps necessary to move toward self-reliance. For instance, economic assistance programs in Egypt and Jordan support those governments as they continue working with the international community to implement broad economic reforms. These reforms aim to increase long-term stability through private sector-led economic growth. By leveraging our assistance

resources to promote good governance and build donor networks, we can move assistance recipients forward on their journey to self-reliance.

Question:

On May 15, the State Department ordered non-emergency U.S. personnel to leave U.S. diplomatic facilities in Iraq in response to increased threats. This followed Secretary Pompeo's decision in September 2018 to suspend operations at our consulate in Basra because of "threats to our personnel and facilities" from Iran and its proxies. In November, the six-month statutory limit for extending the ordered departure ends and the Department must decide the future U.S. government presence in Iraq.

Are there plans to strengthen the security of the U.S. embassy in Iraq to enable the return of U.S. personnel and the resumption of their vital work?

Answer:

Assistant Secretary Schenker: U.S. Embassy Baghdad maintains a robust and heightened security posture to meet the challenges of an enduring, uncertain political and threat environment. By monitoring threats and the security situation on a 24/7 basis and coordinating closely with other U.S. Government and Host Nation agencies, U.S. Embassy Baghdad is effectively mitigating risk to Chief of Mission personnel. The Department lifted Ordered Departure status on November 5, 2019.

Question:

The GAO has shown in preliminary findings that the absence of sufficient Office of Security Cooperation in Iraq (OSC-I) personnel is tangibly harming progress toward advancing U.S. security interests in Iraq.

Are these impacts being factored into decisions on future staffing?

Answer:

Assistant Secretary Schenker: We regularly review and evaluate the safety, security, and operations of our facilities worldwide.

In September of last year, Secretary Pompeo announced the suspension of operations at our consulate in Basrah due to threats to our personnel and facilities from Iran and its proxies. Maintaining Consulate General Basrah in a suspended operations status, rather than closing it, offers the U.S. government maximum flexibility should conditions warrant resuming normal operations.

In May of this year, all of Mission Iraq went on Ordered Departure (OD) due to the security situation. In late June/July, the Mission's agency heads conducted a zero-based staffing review to assess the minimal staff needed to advance the President's strategic objectives while

minimizing the number of personnel at risk in a high-threat, volatile environment. On November 5, the Department terminated OD and implemented that new staffing pattern. We will continue to assess the security situation and staffing level as appropriate.

Question:

The FY20 budget contains a \$50 million decrease in diplomatic security for Iraq because of the suspension of operations at Basra. This indicates that we will not be restarting operations at the consulate anytime soon.

What is our plan to re-open the Basrah consulate?

Answer:

Assistant Secretary Schenker: There are currently no plans to resume operations at the Consulate. Embassy Baghdad covers Southern Iraq issues, including Basrah. Maintaining ConGen Basrah in a suspended operations status offers the U.S. government maximum flexibility should conditions warrant resuming normal operations.

Question:

How is the State Department countering Iran's malign influence in the absence of staff responsible for the political and aid programs that promote U.S. interests in Iraq?

Answer:

Assistant Secretary Schenker: The United States remains committed to our bilateral relationship with Iraq, which is key to our national security priorities in the region, and continues daily diplomatic engagement to counter malign Iranian influence there and throughout the region. Ambassador Tueller leads a team of our best and most effective diplomatic professionals at our Embassy in Baghdad and our Consulate in Erbil. Our efforts are aimed at helping the Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government to improve delivery of essential basic services, build professional security forces loyal to the state, develop durable and responsive democratic institutions, and promote adherence to the rule of law. Iranian efforts to undermine the Iraqi government and propagate sectarianism have alienated many Iraqis, as has become clear during the current protests. In contrast, our public diplomacy outreach highlights the marked difference between positive, constructive American engagement and the exploitative and destructive malign influence of Iran in Iraq and the broader region.

Question:

Does the Administration commit to brief the Committee in a closed setting on the status of U.S. personnel at the Embassy in Baghdad and plans surrounding the consulate in Basra?

Answer:

Assistant Secretary Schenker: The State Department is happy to brief this Committee on the status of U.S. personnel at the Embassy in Baghdad and any plans surrounding the consulate in Basrah whenever the Committee wishes.

Question:

In August, the *Wall Street Journal* reported that the Administration was preparing to initiate direct talks with Houthi forces to try to end the war in Yemen.

Is this still a goal of the Administration?

Answer:

Assistant Secretary Schenker: We have been in contact with the Houthis periodically since the war started, especially on the issue of American detainees. This is not a shift in policy. We are grateful to the Saudis for their efforts at de-escalation, and are encouraged by the cessation of cross-border UAV and missile attacks by the Houthis into Saudi Arabia. We fully support a political process led by United Nations Special Envoy Martin Griffiths and are encouraging all parties to come to the table to bring about a negotiated end to this conflict, which has gone on for far too long. The people of Yemen have suffered too much.

Question:

The current LNA offensive delayed scheduled UN-sponsored peace talks for Libya.

What is the U.S. doing to support a diplomatic solution in Libya?

Answer:

Assistant Secretary Schenker: The United States is engaging all Libyan parties, and their external backers, to press them to de-escalate, agree to a ceasefire, and return to UN-facilitated political mediation. The United States has hosted meetings aimed at maintaining Libya's oil production and increasing transparency on how revenues are shared, to help address economic drivers of the conflict. In addition, the United States supported the UN Security Council's unanimous adoption of strong language supporting the arms embargo when it renewed the UN Support Mission in Libya's mandate in September (UNSCR 2486), and is participating in German-hosted discussions as part of the three-point plan UN Special Representative Salame outlined to the UN Security Council. The United States supports Libya's sovereignty and territorial integrity in the face of Russia's attempts to exploit the conflict against the will of the Libyan people.

Question:

How should the U.S. respond as outside powers dramatically increase their military intervention in Libya? Should the United States sanction countries that violate the UN arms embargo?

Answer:

Assistant Secretary Schenker: The United States supported the UN Security Council's unanimous adoption of strong language supporting the arms embargo when it renewed the UN Support Mission in Libya's mandate in September (UNSCR 2486), and has urged all parties, and their external backers, to de-escalate, agree to a ceasefire, and return rapidly to dialogue and UN-facilitated political mediation.

As part of a broader diplomatic strategy and in coordination with international partners, UN and U.S. sanctions are an important tool in preventing the misuse of Libyan resources, upholding human rights, and imposing consequences for those who threaten Libya's peace, security, and stability or undermine its transition. UN and U.S. sanctions provide the legal authorization to impose sanctions on those who threaten the peace, security, or stability of Libya.

The United States supports Libya's sovereignty and territorial integrity in the face of Russia's attempts to exploit the conflict against the will of the Libyan people.

**Questions for the Record from Representative Ted Deutch
The FY20 Budget: Examining the Administration's Policy Objectives
for a Turbulent Middle East
October 29, 2019**

Question:

Prior to the ordered departure from U.S. Embassy Baghdad in May 2019, the Administration proposed significant reductions in the staff overseeing assistance in Iraq. USAID proposed to cut direct hire positions, even while it surged assistance to select populations in the Ninewah Plains, much of which is going through smaller, less experienced organizations requiring more oversight and assistance.

What is the rationale for cutting these positions?

Answer:

Assistant Administrator Harvey: The President and Secretary of State repeatedly have underscored the necessity to rethink U.S. objectives in Iraq and the resources required to achieve them. The U.S. Department of State and the U.S. Agency for International Development regularly review and evaluate the safety, security, and effectiveness of operations at our facilities worldwide. Our number one priority is security, given regional security concerns. The Department of State reviewed current U.S. diplomatic and foreign-assistance commitments in Iraq to ensure the safety of personnel under Chief of Mission authority in Baghdad. USAID/Iraq is exploring options to increase remote support to monitor, oversee and implement programs from Washington, D.C. and other locations.

Question:

How can these reductions be justified in the face of increasing assistance – and therefore, increased risk to U.S. taxpayer dollars – in Iraq?

Answer:

Assistant Administrator Harvey: Since 2017, USAID has invested over \$1.5 billion in Iraq, including over \$400 million to assist ethnic and religious minorities. The number of individual development and stabilization projects managed by USAID/Iraq has continued to rise, from three in 2017 to eight in 2018, and to seventeen in 2019. While this additional programming includes small grants to multiple organizations, which can increase the management burden, USAID/Iraq has created permanent positions based in Erbil (from which the Agency manages many of these investments) and is planning to increase remote support for oversight from Washington, D.C. and other locations. (This programming does not include ongoing humanitarian assistance managed by USAID's Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA)).

Question:

Given the push to use small, local partners that require more oversight and guidance in implementing programs, why is USAID seeking to cut staff in Iraq?

Answer:

Assistant Administrator Harvey: The U.S. Department of State and the U.S. Agency for International Development regularly review and evaluate the safety, security, and effectiveness of operations at our facilities worldwide. USAID/Iraq is exploring options to increase remote support to monitor, oversee and implement programs from Washington, D.C. and other locations.

Question:

Despite significant proposed and actual cuts to assistance by the Administration, we've seen a dramatic increase in assistance to selected communities in Ninewah in Iraq.

How do you justify an increase in U.S. funding to a relatively small area and population, while freezing other stabilization and reconstruction assistance?

Answer:

Assistant Administrator Harvey: The Trump Administration has made responding to the genocide committed by the so-called Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) against religious and ethnic minorities a top priority. Responding to this genocide has spanned administrations and is underpinned by strong bipartisan support in Congress. ISIS' barbarism was first declared genocide in March 2016 by House Resolution 75, subsequently reiterated by former Secretary of State John Kerry days later. In 2018, the U.S. Congress passed the bi-partisan Iraq and Syria Genocide Relief and Accountability Act (H.R. 390), which President Trump signed into law on December 11, 2018, to reaffirm this position.

Assistance to religious and ethnic communities targeted by ISIS is not a departure from the norm, but rather a continuation of the rich history of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) of promoting inclusive development, defending human dignity and religious freedom in our partner countries, and coming to the aid of communities in times of need. Previous examples of U.S. Government support for assistance to communities marginalized or targeted because of their faith, ethnicity, or identity span the globe and can be seen in Burma, Bangladesh, Sudan, and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

While provinces populated largely by religious and ethnic minorities in Iraq have received over \$400 million in U.S. assistance, total Fiscal Year (FY) 2017 and FY 2018 U.S. assistance for all of Iraq from USAID alone totaled just over \$1.5 billion, the majority for areas inhabited by Sunni and Shia Muslims. Before the emergence of ISIS, the U.S. government provided over \$6 billion in economic and humanitarian assistance for Iraq between 2006 and 2013.

In addition to recent programming in Northern Iraq, in April 2019, the United States announced an additional \$100 million for Anbar Province to help stabilize areas once held by the so-called Islamic State. USAID provided the funds to the Fund for Stabilization managed by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP).

Question:

Does USAID currently have a strategy to deliver humanitarian assistance in Libya? If not, why?

Answer:

USAID remains committed to relieving the suffering of the Libyan people. Since Fiscal Year 2017, USAID's Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA) has provided more than \$13 million in humanitarian aid to help Libyans who are affected by ongoing conflict. USAID's strategy for humanitarian assistance is developed to include the critical needs identified in the United Nations 2019 Humanitarian Needs Overview and the Humanitarian Response Plan, and is informed by USAID's regular engagement with its implementing partners and participation in donor forums on humanitarian assistance, and USAID's own internal planning exercises.

As such, USAID/OFDA prioritizes health and humanitarian protection assistance, as well as strengthening coordination among international humanitarian actors. As part of our current strategy, USAID/OFDA partners are working to improve access to comprehensive health care services for internally displaced populations and conflict-affected populations in Libya. Our partners are providing primary health care services at health clinics, operating mobile health teams in rural and hard-to-reach communities, conducting health-related community education activities, and training medical staff. In addition, we are supporting emergency medical teams to augment essential, emergency, and trauma health services in hospitals, as well as providing medicines and medical supplies to health facilities. USAID protection partners also provide legal assistance and psychosocial services for conflict-affected adolescents, as well as support for the prevention of and response to gender-based violence and sexual exploitation and abuse.

Question:

At the Values Voters Summit in October, President Trump announced the U.S. would provide \$50 million in assistance to Christians in Syria.

Which accounts is this money coming from and to which accounts is it going?

Answer:

Assistant Administrator Harvey: USAID is working with the Department of State to identify the appropriate accounts for the \$50 million to protect persecuted ethnic and religious minorities, and advance human rights. This funding will provide assistance to Syrian human rights defenders, civil society organizations, reconciliation efforts, livelihoods, and restore essential services in support of ethnic and religious minority victims of the conflict. It will also go toward

increased accountability, removal of explosive remnants of war, community security, documentation of human rights abuses and international humanitarian law violations, and support for survivors of gender-based violence and torture.

Question:

How can the U.S. responsibly program \$50 million in assistance when we have pulled out DoD, State, and USAID personnel from Syria?

Answer:

Assistant Administrator Harvey: Currently, U.S. troops are still in Syria and our Syrian Defense Force partner forces remain in control of large swaths of territory in northeast Syria. USAID is experienced in remote programming (including in Syria before civilians were inside at START Forward) and will constantly monitor, evaluate, and adjust programming inside Syria as the environment on the ground changes.