

**EMPOWERING WOMEN AND GIRLS
AND PROMOTING INTERNATIONAL SECURITY**

HEARING

BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL SECURITY
OF THE
COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND
REFORM

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EMPOWERING WOMEN AND GIRLS AND PROMOTING INTERNATIONAL SECURITY

Thursday, July 23, 2020

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL SECURITY
COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND REFORM
Washington, D.C.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:08 a.m., in room 2154, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Stephen F. Lynch (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Present: Representatives Lynch, Welch, Rouda, Maloney, DeSaulnier, Grothman, Gosar, Green, Higgins and Comer.

Mr. LYNCH. Good morning. The committee will come to order.

Without objection, the chair is authorized to declare a recess of the committee at any time. I now recognize myself for an opening statement.

Today, our subcommittee will examine the role of women and girls in overseas crisis prevention, diplomacy, peacekeeping, and post-conflict reconciliation.

According to an October 2016 report from the Council on Foreign Relations, the substantial inclusion of women and civil society groups in a peace negotiation makes that peace negotiation “64 percent less likely to fail,” closed quote.

Moreover, several studies have shown that higher levels of gender equality are associated with a lower propensity for conflict, both between and within states.

The consequences for a U.S. national security policy are clear. Not only do women deserve a seat at the table, but meaningful consideration of their voices and interests will lead to greater security and stability in fragile states and post-conflict environments around the world.

To that end, in October 2017 Congress passed the Women, Peace, and Security Act, which requires the administration—the Trump administration—to produce a strategy to support the meaningful participation of women in all aspects of overseas conflict prevention, management, and resolution and post-conflict relief and recovery efforts.

In June 2019, the Trump administration released the U.S. Women, Peace, and Security Strategy and on June 11, 2020, the Departments of State, Defense, Homeland Security, and the U.S. Agency for International Development each released implementation plans to support the Women, Peace, and Security Strategy.

While the Women, Peace, and Security Strategy looks good on paper, the administration has repeatedly refused to demonstrate a firm commitment to defending the rights of women and girls, nota-

bly, by attacking access to sexual and reproductive health and then by sidelining women during conflict resolutions and peace negotiations.

For example, the peace deal negotiated between the United States and the Taliban earlier this year does nothing to protect the rights of Afghan women and girls, threatening to reverse nearly 20 years of progress helping them to become successful participants of Afghan political and civic life.

The administration has also repeatedly attacked global women's access to sexual and reproductive health. In April 2017, the Trump administration announced it would suspend funding to the U.N. Population Fund, which provides family planning and reproductive health services in over 150 countries.

In September 2019, Secretary of Health and Human Services Alex Azar told the U.S. General Assembly that the U.S. does not support, quote, "references to ambiguous terms and expressions such as sexual and reproductive health rights in U.N. documents," closed quote.

I am also concerned that the administration may not have the political will to invest the necessary commitment and resources to advance the ideals enshrined in the Women, Peace, and Security Strategy.

In fact, the document kneecaps itself in its opening pages, cautioning that the United States will, quote, "engage selectively," closed quote, and will likely not be able to advance women, peace, and security principles in every corner of the globe.

We should also take this opportunity to seriously examine whether the United States is doing enough to promote and encourage women to serve in senior leadership positions within our own government.

For decades, the national security field has been dominated by men, and I look forward to hearing from today's witnesses about how their departments are working to address gender disparities and inequalities within their own ranks.

Finally, I would like to thank our witnesses for testifying before us today. The subcommittee previously invited the Department of State, Defense, Homeland Security, and the U.S. Agency for International Development to testify at a virtual hearing in June. But the agencies refused, citing, quote, "White House OMB guidance sent to all House and Senate committees on May 29," closed quote.

So, let me be clear. Congress does not—it is Congress, not the executive branch, that determines how to conduct its own business, but the subcommittee is pleased to accommodate the administration in this case, given the importance of the subject matter at hand.

With that, I will now turn the floor over to Congressman Grothman, our ranking member, the gentleman from Wisconsin for the great state of Wisconsin, for his opening remarks.

Mr. GROTHMAN. Thank you, and thank you for having this hearing.

First of all, I will point out at least as far as I am concerned, this is the first or second hearing that I have had since I have been here in which all four of our witnesses sent over by the administra-

tion are women. So, just pointing that out. A little bit historical to me, anyway.

Second thing, I am a little bit concerned about a letter here—I don't know if you want to bring this up—that you and Carolyn Maloney signed to the Secretary of State and Secretary of Defense being critical of the administration.

In this letter, I think you are kind of holding them to an absurdly high standard. You are a little bit upset that we didn't get more rights for women in Afghanistan, and I will point out I think it is true, rightfully or wrongfully, and I am not a big fan of interfering in Afghanistan.

But if the United States gets involved in other countries, wherever it is—Iraq, Afghanistan—probably human rights, rights of women and human rights in general go up, and when the United States leaves countries human rights probably go down.

I think that is probably true of Afghanistan, at least I—I think I am among the majority of Americans who felt that we probably had a lot of people in Afghanistan for a long time, disrupting their families, sometimes dying, and our plea is that President Trump is drawing down the number of troops in Afghanistan.

But I think one has to understand that as one pulls down the number troops in Afghanistan our influence in Afghanistan wanes and we have to be aware that it is a little bit hypocritical on one hand to say American troops out of Iraq, American troops out of Afghanistan, and then complain when the human rights of people in general and women in particular drop because most countries around the world, historically, are not like the Westernized United States.

So, it just—you know, this letter is, obviously—I am concerned about the rights of women in Afghanistan but I want you to be aware there is kind of a contradiction between saying I want U.S. out of Afghanistan and then saying I want the U.S. to Westernize Afghanistan.

Mr. LYNCH. Would the gentleman yield for 30 seconds?

Mr. GROTHMAN. Sure.

Mr. LYNCH. The letter is informed by the fact that myself and a bipartisan group of Members of Congress met with the negotiating team at the Munich Security Conference and we asked the negotiating team if they had put rights of Afghan women and girls on the negotiating table in the negotiations with the Taliban.

So, it was the U.S. Government and the Taliban negotiating bilaterally. I asked if we had put the rights of women and girls in Afghanistan on the negotiation table. They said they did not, and they would not.

That is what the letter is referring to. You don't have to stay in Afghanistan with a heavy troop presence in order to proffer the rights of women and girls in Afghanistan as an issue in the peace negotiations and that is what we were complaining to.

So, I will yield back. I thank the gentleman for his courtesy.

Mr. GROTHMAN. OK. Just one other comment.

We talk a lot about, you know, I guess, the right of choice or whatever, and I will point out that right now the United States is, I believe, one of seven countries in the world, according to the

Washington Post, to allow what would amount to late-term abortion or at least an unfettered right to a late-term abortion.

I don't think it is necessarily a positive thing for the United States to throw our substantial economic might around and impose that belief in other countries around the world.

I think some of the people are a little concerned that the U.S. may do it. But now I will give my opening comment here.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for holding this important hearing and thank you for all the witnesses here today. I am grateful that this hearing is taking place in person.

Thank you for allowing us to do that, and I acknowledge the current public health crisis but think it equally important that we heard from the witnesses directly. I always get a little bit more out of the live hearing.

You have insinuated the administration, by advocating for in-person hearing, is intentionally putting workers in jeopardy. I think that is a wild accusation.

I do not feel right now that I am being threatened in this hearing and, quite frankly, I am closer to people whenever I get home usually in a retail setting or whatever.

I hope we can work together in the future to ensure our hearings are in-person while abiding by the safety protocols. It is an important topic in an effort by the Trump administration that should be heralded.

In October 2017, President Trump signed the historic Women, Peace, and Security Act. In fact, this law made the U.S. the first country in the world with a comprehensive law on women, peace, and security.

The act emboldened the president to set unprecedented U.S. policies, promoting global equality by recognizing the contribution that women and girls make to the world's security and stability.

The president released the first U.S. Strategy on Women, Peace, and Security in 2019 in June. The strategy focuses on both increasing women's participation in political, civic, and security endeavors and creates conditions for long-term peace.

Both goals are noble and unequivocally bipartisan. It is clear from past experiences that promoting women and girls in government leads to a more robust global harmony. The president said—President Trump—nations that empower women are much wealthier, safer, and more political stable.

We are here today to learn what each of these agencies are doing to advance the cause. The Department of State is increasing women's participation in decisionmaking, protecting against gender-based violence and counter violent extremism.

The Department of Defense is promoting the safety of women and girls during conflicts. USAID is strategically investing in international programs that promote women's leadership and empowerment and Homeland Security is acting in support of all the other agencies' missions.

This is a global effort led by the Trump administration to make us safer and the world more prosperous. The administration is committed to expanding the role of women in peace and security.

These efforts work and we commend the Trump administration. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I yield back.

Mr. LYNCH. The gentleman yields back.

At this point I would like to introduce our witnesses. Our first witness today is the Honorable Kelley Currie, who is the Ambassador-at-large for Global Women's Issues at the Department of State.

We will also hear from the Honorable Michelle Bekkering, who is the assistant administrator at the Bureau for Economic Growth, Education, and Environment at the U.S. Agency for International Development.

We will also hear from Stephanie Hammond, who is the acting deputy secretary—excuse me, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Stability and Humanitarian Affairs at the Department of the Defense.

And, finally, we will hear from Cameron Quinn, who is the Officer for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties at the Department of Homeland Security.

It is the custom of this subcommittee to swear our witnesses. So, I would ask our witnesses to please rise.

Raise your right hand.

Do you swear or affirm that the testimony you are about to give is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

[Chorus of ayes.]

Mr. LYNCH. OK. Let the record show that the witnesses have answered in the affirmative. Please be seated.

Without objection, your written statements will be made part of the record.

With that, Ambassador Currie, you are now recognized for your—for a summary of your testimony.

**STATEMENT OF KELLEY CURRIE, AMBASSADOR-AT-LARGE
FOR GLOBAL WOMEN'S ISSUES, DEPARTMENT OF STATE**

Ms. CURRIE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Ranking Member Grothman and thank you, Chairwoman Maloney, for joining us today in this important hearing, and to the other members of the subcommittee.

I am delighted to be here to share with you the successes the United States has achieved since the passage of the bipartisan Women, Peace, and Security Act of 2017 and to talk about how the United States continues to lead the effort to empower women worldwide.

I would like to take a moment to also recognize the great contributions and support that we received from the Women, Peace, and Security Caucus here in Congress that was recently formed, and especially note its co-chairs, Congresswoman Lois Frankel and Congressman Mike Waltz, who have been really important leaders on this issue and people that we turn to for support and encouragement as we continue to move this effort forward.

I also want to say that thanks to the incredible bipartisan support and cooperation between President Trump and Congress, as we head into the 20th anniversary of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, which established the Women, Peace, and Security agenda item on the Security Council agenda, the United

States remains the world's leading voice for women's empowerment politically, economically, and socially.

When Congress passed and the president signed the WPS Act in 2017, we became the first and still the only country in the world to enshrine these commitments into national legislation.

This is a remarkable bipartisan achievement and it is one that we take very seriously, and we hold it as a strong—as an important trust as we carry this work out.

In 2019, the United States reaffirmed our commitment with the release of the U.S. National Strategy on Women, Peace, and Security by the White House.

This whole of government approach charged the four leading agencies represented here today with—to develop Women, Peace, and Security implementation plans that were mission specific, innovative, and perhaps most importantly, measurable.

The State Department is uniquely positioned to reinforce Americans'—the leadership in Women, Peace, and Security in four key areas: policy, diplomacy, partnerships, and innovation. Sorry, innovative programs.

Through the department's global presence, we have a structural comparative advantage to engage partners on the ground through our actions with nearly 300 embassies, consulates, and diplomatic missions all around the world as well as through our robust presence here in Washington and our excellent mission in New York.

Last month, the State Department released our Women, Peace, and Security implementation plan, which provides a roadmap to achieve measurable progress by 2023.

The department's work has been in close partnership with the interagency, our allies and partners, and undertaken an extensive consultation with women's groups, civil society organizations, and local implementing partners.

Our efforts are laser focused on countries that are currently experiencing armed conflict, violent extremism, or gross systematic abuses of women and girls.

We are also looking at those nations that are emerging from conflict and those that are most at risk of falling into conflict or crisis throughout partnership with the Conflict and Stabilization Bureau that is working on the Global Fragility Act.

These two complementary pieces of legislation have given us excellent tools to tackle these problems. The department is also monitoring and engaging in countries with a history of atrocities, especially those with a pattern of inflicting systemic abuse against women and girls, including sexual violence, and again, this is in response to the Elie Wiesel Act that Congress passed.

So, we have really, again, great partnership through congressional action and administration implementation.

The department's Women, Peace, and Security agenda is at work in more than 30 countries in conjunction with more than 10 regional and international organizations.

Here at home, the department offers nearly 50 training programs to ensure state personnel have the tools they need to bring WPS into U.S. diplomacy.

I would like to highlight one specific example of our Women, Peace, and Security work in action that demonstrates America's

leadership on this issue as well as tangible results of U.S. engagement led by the Department of State, and here I am referring to our commitment to Afghanistan, which has been remarked upon before.

All of us recognize how much is at stake if women are not able to participate meaningfully at the negotiating table in Afghanistan. Now, more than ever, women's voices must be heard to define not only their futures but the future of their nation.

Afghanistan still has far to go on women's meaningful inclusion in decisionmaking and political processes. But the Afghan government took an important step earlier this month in announcing that it will appoint one female deputy Governor in each of Afghanistan's 34 provinces. Seven of them are already in place.

Following sustained U.S. engagement, we can today also report that four women have been named to their government's negotiating team for inter-Afghan negotiations, representing nearly 20 percent of the negotiating team.

Finally, I would like to end with one thought about something that has been threaded through my work here in the administration for the past three years, and this is regarding the malign influence that we are seeing from Russia and the People's Republic of China through the United Nations and other international organizations and, more broadly, how they are attacking the fundamental human rights that we all hold dear in this country and the normative framework that upholds them through international organizations and joint action.

The United States remains strongly committed to ending the horrible scourge of sexual violence in armed conflict, holding perpetrators accountable, and supporting survivors. The U.S. has been a leading supporter, both politically and financially, of the United Nations Secretary General's Special Representative on sexual violence in armed conflict since the creation of this mandate, which the United States led.

I have personally worked with the SRSG on sexual violence in armed conflict, Pramila Patten, over the past three years to advance the remarkable work of her office.

By contrast, malign actors such as Russia and China threaten global peace and security by weakening international norms and manipulating legitimate security concerns to justify denial of human rights, and they do this in the Security Council and the General Assembly and everywhere else they can.

We will continue to fight these influences by empowering women and girls worldwide and promoting and protecting the human rights and dignity of all.

Diplomacy in the 21st century demands effective, creative, and innovative foreign policy that spurs diversity of thought and inclusive durable solutions.

Women, Peace, and Security is an example of how the United States has adapted to this imperative and as I look down this beautiful witness panel today and see my fellow leaders in this important effort, I know that we are doing what we need to be doing in this area.

We are building a strong foundation for worldwide consensus including through effective multilateral fora to advance genuine sustainable and prosperous opportunities for women.

While we may not always agree on every aspect of the implementation of this agenda, I firmly believe we must focus on the critical work we can do together and there is areas that enjoy strong consensus to build effective initiatives that yield meaningful results.

The women of the world are counting on us to do this. The United States will continue to be a champion for women and human rights worldwide.

It is in support of these foundational principles that together we have the opportunity to change the futures for millions of women and girls around the world.

Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.

Mr. LYNCH. Thank you, Ambassador.

Now we will turn to Administrator Bekkering.

Administrator Bekkering, you are now recognized for five minutes.

STATEMENT OF MICHELLE BEKKERING, ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR, BUREAU FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH, EDUCATION AND ENVIRONMENT, U.S. AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Ms. BEKKERING. Well, thank you, Chairman Lynch, Ranking Member Grothman, Chairwoman Maloney, and the other distinguished members of this subcommittee.

I, too, am grateful to be here today to testify before you on this critical national security issue of women, peace, and security, and the role that the U.S. Agency for International Development plays in supporting the U.S. government's WPS strategy along with our success to date.

It is an honor as well to join my colleagues from the U.S. Department of State, Defense, and Homeland Security, and I, too, would like to take this opportunity to recognize the newly formed WPS Caucus and express sincere appreciation to Representatives Waltz and Frankel for their long-standing commitment to the WPS agenda.

Women leaders are often at the forefront of movements to demand greater political freedoms, peace, and justice, yet they are frequently excluded from meaningful participation in the very peace negotiations and political settlements where their countries' futures and theirs are being shaped.

Studies show that when women participate in peace processes the resulting agreement is 35 percent more likely to last at least 15 years.

At USAID, we understand that investing in women's leadership and empowerment is critical for breaking the cycles of conflict and instability that threaten our global security and for advancing our mission of supporting our partner countries on their own journeys to self-reliance.

USAID's new implementation plan is an important opportunity to focus our efforts on women, peace, and security through effective coordinated action across our development and humanitarian assistant efforts.

Since 2017, USAID activities have funded the participation of 70,000 women in political and peace-building processes while providing critical care, psychosocial support, legal aid, and economic services to more than 6 million survivors of gender-based violence.

In fiscal years 2018 and 2019, the agency invested over \$200 million in programming to empower and protect women and girls affected by crisis and conflict.

USAID works to implement all four lines of effort in the WPS strategy and I would like to highlight just a few examples of these efforts.

We continue to support programs which increase women's meaningful participation and leadership in peace and political processes.

In the Republic of Guinea, USAID works through local partners to empower women to serve as young peace Ambassadors and as members of local peace-building platforms.

The agency has also expanded our programming to address the needs of women and girls affected by violent extremism and to increase women's participation in preventing and responding to radicalization in their communities.

In the kingdom of Morocco, programming will interrupt recruitment activities and bolster the resilience of women to counteract the influence of violent extremism organizations.

We also continue to prioritize activities to protect women and girls from violence in humanitarian emergencies with \$178 million in programming designed to improve the safety and well being of women and girls and other vulnerable populations who are at risk for gender-based violence.

We are also investing in our internal capabilities to ensure our personnel have the skills to integrate women's empowerment priorities in strategies and programs.

In the last two fiscal years, USAID has offered 80 training sessions or courses aligned with the requirements of the WPS Act of 2017, which reached more than 10,000 of our staff.

We also encouraged our partner countries to improve the meaningful participation of women in peace and security decisionmaking and institutions.

Through support for a continental results framework, USAID's partnership with the African Union has contributed to an increase in the number of member states that have adopted national and regional action plans for the implementation of the WPS agenda.

And finally, we are consistently seeking innovative better ways to measure our results. USAID remains committed to monitoring and evaluating our efforts to ensure the effective stewardship of taxpayer resources.

I look forward to our continued collaboration with Congress, including the WPS Caucus, this committee, the interagency, and all of our partners to advance this important agenda.

Thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you today and I welcome your questions.

Mr. LYNCH. Thank you.

Next, from the Department of Defense, we will have Assistant Secretary Hammond.

Secretary Hammond, you are now recognized for five minutes.

STATEMENT OF STEPHANIE HAMMOND, ACTING DEPUTY ASSISTANT OF DEFENSE FOR STABILITY AND HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS, DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

Ms. HAMMOND. Good morning, Chairman Lynch and Ranking Member Grothman, distinguished members of the House Oversight and Reform Subcommittee on National Security.

It is an honor to testify before you today on the Department of Defense implementation of the U.S. Strategy on Women, Peace, and Security, or WPS.

DOD supports the whole of government implementation of the WPS Act and Strategy, and views this effort as essential to our national security.

Global conflict is evolving, and the need to identify sustainable security solutions that meet the needs of an entire population is greater than ever.

As our adversaries and competitors continue to seek the strategic advantage, the United States and our partners must be better prepared to meet security challenges by recognizing the diverse roles that women play in conflict and by incorporating their perspectives throughout our plans and our operations.

The destabilizing effects of malign actors highlight the importance of the global WPS agenda in upholding international human rights and the rules-based international order the United States and our allies and partners seek to maintain.

Advancing the U.S. Strategy in WPS provides a unique engagement opportunity to strengthen relationships with our allies and partners through collective efforts to reinforce women's empowerment, meaningful participation and decisionmaking, protection from violence, and access to resources.

Earlier this month, in accordance with the WPS Act in 2017, and the U.S. Strategy on WPS, the Department of Defense, alongside our interagency partners, launched its WPS strategic framework and implementation plan.

This document is the first department wide implementation plan that outlines how we will support the intent of the U.S. Strategy in WPS through attention to the composition of our personnel and the development of our policies, plans, doctrine, training, education, operations, and exercises.

This approach will support the National Defense Strategy and increase our operational effectiveness by helping the department to strengthen alliances and attract new partners by demonstrating U.S. commitment to human rights and women's empowerment, making the U.S. the partner of choice and to reform the department for greater performance and affordability by developing more effective strategies to mitigate risks and optimize mission success.

This plan details three overarching defense objectives to orient the department's implementation of the U.S. Strategy in WPS, which are as follows.

First, the Department of Defense exemplifies a diverse organization that allows for women's meaningful participation across the development, management, and employment of the Joint Force.

Second, women in partner nations meaningfully participate and serve at all ranks and in all occupations in the defense and security sectors.

And third, partner nation defense and security sectors ensure women and girls are safe and secure, and that their human rights are protected, especially during conflict and crisis.

Recognizing these objectives cannot be accomplished overnight. The plan also includes intermediate defense objectives achievable over the life of the plan.

This plan will support and advance the department's ongoing activities to implement WPS, which have significantly increased since the enactment of the WPS Act with the support of funding from Congress.

The department currently has an active network of WPS advisors of the combatant commands as well as in the Joint Staff and in the Office of the Secretary of Defense.

These personnel advise commanders and staff on how to integrate gender perspectives into operations and organize engagements with our partner nations.

To date, we have engaged more than 50 partner nations to demonstrate the value of women's meaningful participation, empowerment, and safety to our national security, to share best practices on the recruitment, employment, development, retention, and promotion of women in our military forces.

These engagements have included conferences, training events, standard operating procedure development, and integration in WPS principles in military operations and multilateral exercises such as Flintlock, Khaan Quest, and Pacific Sentry.

One example of a partner nation engagement is in Niger, where DOD is working to help their armed forces adapt their recruitment methods to increase the number of women in their ranks and to promote women into leadership positions.

In fact, Niger's air force now has its first female pilot, who was trained by the United States as a part of a program to combat Boko Haram. She is now an operational squadron commander and has conducted multiple combat deployments.

Another example is in the Indo-Pacific Command, where our WPS advisors have engaged with local organizations in countries such as Mongolia to work with women in rural areas in building their resiliency and leadership skills such as in disaster response and in relief efforts.

With the department's own forces, formal training programs are being developed and piloted beginning with WPS advisors and senior leaders. We have also worked to integrate WPS into training modules such as training on combating trafficking in persons.

Now, with the launch of the department's WPS strategic framework and implementation plan, the department will further institutionalize and expand on this critical WPS engagement across all components and continue to coordinate closely with our interagency partners on this initiative to make the United States safer and more secure.

We are grateful for the congressional support of this important initiative and are particularly grateful for the WPS funding that DOD has so generously received from Congress over the past several years.

Thank you very much for this opportunity to testify.

Mr. LYNCH. Thank you very much.

We will now hear from the Department of Homeland Security Officer for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties, Ms. Cameron Quinn.

Ms. Quinn, you are recognized.
Microphone.

STATEMENT OF CAMERON QUINN, OFFICER FOR CIVIL RIGHTS AND CIVIL LIBERTIES, DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

Ms. QUINN. Sorry. And thank you as well, Chairwoman Maloney, Ranking Member Comer, Ranking Member Grothman, and other distinguished members of the committee for this opportunity to speak before you today on the Department of Homeland Security's implementation of the homeland security—excuse me, implementation of the Homeland Security Implementation Plan.

Also, a pleasure to be here today on such a panel with my key colleagues for implementing Women, Peace, and Security across the entire U.S. Government.

As the Nation's largest law enforcement and security agency, the Department of Homeland Security recognizes well the importance and the impact that women have in senior leadership positions and really helping to value those aspects that they bring.

The department works systemically to advance the inclusion of women across the department as well as other underrepresented populations to reflect the United States.

The department also has extensive contacts with foreign partners in trying to advance its mission and to provide—and, as a result, provides training and exchange opportunities to position DHS to influence in a focused way international efforts to improve women's inclusion in foreign security partners' activities.

While the department's official efforts related to when peace and security are just getting started, we have been able to identify across the department already a number of initiatives underway that really do help advance Women, Peace, and Security, and this act brings a welcome focus on being able to capture the metrics to actually demonstrate with the department has been doing under Women, Peace, and Security.

Since January, the department's focus has been to identify baseline efforts that are already underway and to identify a really key group of working partners across the department and the various components that can help us support the WPS goals.

The focus for our first reporting period next year will be the collection of data showing what it is that has already been occurring across the department and what kind of funding is being spent, whether the department's or other partner agencies' funding, to support this training.

Using this baseline, we will then be able to develop better sort of our plans for promoting Women, Peace, and Security and improving what we are doing over the future.

DHS leaders, including executive leadership, really are very excited about this opportunity to partner with our fellow agencies across the government to really significantly impact the Women, Peace, and Security Strategy that had such strong bipartisan support.

They recognize, as I do, that Women, Peace, and Security helps the department to achieve its goal of safeguarding the American people, our homeland, and our values—the department’s mission.

On a personal note, I will share that very early in my Federal career I spent a little bit of time over at the Department of Labor’s Women’s Bureau. We are the only Federal agency that is actually mandated to represent the needs of wage-earning women in public policy.

About a decade later, I was at the U.S. Merit System Protection Board and was very involved in the first ever women’s—excuse me, glass ceiling study. Somehow it seems a fitting capstone to have the opportunity now to be the first woman leading the Department of Homeland Security’s efforts in Women, Peace, and Security.

So, I really appreciate this opportunity and I thank you, again, for the chance to appear today and look forward to answering any questions you have.

Thank you very much.

Mr. LYNCH. Thank you, and thank you got your service.

At this time, that concludes the witness testimony. At this point, I would like to recognize the full chairwoman for the Committee on Oversight and Reform, the gentlelady from New York, Ms. Maloney, for five minutes.

Mrs. MALONEY. Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman, and Ranking Member Grothman. I appreciate your steadfast leadership on this issue and especially regarding the rights of women and girls in Afghanistan, and this is one of many hearings that Chairman Lynch has had on women in Afghanistan.

We know the story, the cruel treatment—not allowed to be educated, terrible treatment of women—and the research noted by the panelists today—thank you all for your service and your testimony—that in countries where women are respected and empowered there is more stability. There is less terrorism. It is an investment in peace to invest in the empowerment of women.

So, I do want to put this hearing in perspective. Last week, the full committee held a hearing to examine whether the United States should create a national cyber director to coordinate our national cybersecurity policy. It was bipartisan and we are moving together to make that happen.

I think Congress should consider establishing a similar position or council at the White House to advance women, peace, and security principles like the one that President Obama had advanced.

This would send a strong signal about the United States commitment to empowering women and girls in political and civic life, both overseas and here at home, while coordinating whole of government implementation of Women, Peace, and Security Strategy.

I also think it is very important that the department and agency officials tasked with this implementation of peace and security report directly to the secretary.

Ambassador Currie, the Office of Global Women’s Issues at the State Department is within the Office of the Secretary. Is that correct?

Ms. CURRIE. Yes.

Mrs. MALONEY. Can you briefly speak to how that direct access to the secretary is beneficial to your ability to advance the Women, Peace, and Security agenda?

Ms. CURRIE. I certainly can. Thank you for the question.

Being able to work directly for the secretary is actually—and I have worked in other positions in the department, and as some of you have worked in Federal agencies know, bureaucracy is often an impediment to getting things done quickly.

I am able to move things very quickly through the system because I do enjoy direct access to the secretary. I work directly with his team on these issues and can move paper and move ideas and initiatives through very quickly and it gives us an added imprimatur of authority that we are working directly under the secretary.

So, I think it is a very beneficial structure. This is the way the office was set up by the Obama Administration and we retained it, and the White House strongly supports keeping the Office of Global Women's Issues directly reporting to the secretary.

Mrs. MALONEY. Thank you. I also think it is very important that senior agency officials tasked with implementing the Women's Peace and Security agenda are focused exclusively on that mission.

So, Ms. Quinn, in addition to your role in implementing the Women's Peace and Security Strategy for DHS, can you describe some of your other responsibilities as Officer for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties?

Ms. Quinn?

Ms. QUINN. Madam Chairman, the—in addition to that, we are responsible for the EEO programs across the department.

We are responsible for the public complaint system across the department, working in conjunction with our component agencies and we also proactively provide advice and assistance to the secretary and other senior leaders across the department on civil rights and civil liberties, of which we feel Women's Peace and Security fits very nicely.

Mrs. MALONEY. OK.

Ms. Hammond, I would like to ask you the same question. Can you describe some of your duties as Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Stability and Humanitarian Affairs in addition to your responsibilities related to Women, Peace, and Security Strategy implementation?

Ms. HAMMOND. Well, thank you very much for being here today and highlighting the importance of the WPS initiative.

Within the Office of Secretary of Defense where I sit, so I, too, have that immediate access to Secretary Esper, who has been very supportive of our WPS implementation plan.

Within the Office of Stability and Humanitarian Affairs, the office in which I lead, we coordinate all the international COVID-19 assistance, so working very closely with our State Department and USAID colleagues on the robust interagency of response on behalf of our allies and partners in their desperate time of need for COVID-19 assistance.

We also work on humanitarian affairs issues in general, especially coming alongside our USAID humanitarian affairs colleagues to coordinate logistical support where there is a unique DOD capa-

bility need that can be met to come alongside the robust efforts of USAID and state in natural disasters or chronic refugee responses. Stabilization, peacekeeping, so it is a robust portfolio.

Mrs. MALONEY. OK. Great.

Ms. Bekkering, my time is up and I would ask you to submit the same answer to the record, and I thank all of you. And I am sure you are all wonderful and capable and talented and hard work, but I think a senior officer responsible for implementing the Women's Peace and Security Strategy at each department should be focused on that exclusively while also having direct access to the secretary.

So, I will be submitting legislation to achieve that. I hope Chairman Lynch and Ranking Member Grothman will join us. The record is very clear and all research. If women succeed the country succeeds. There is less terrorism. There is more stability.

Again, I thank you, Mr. Chairman, for your extraordinary sensitivity, really, and leadership on so many areas in national defense but also the role, important role of women that they can play in helping to achieve security and national defense.

Thank you. I yield back.

Mr. LYNCH. I thank the gentlelady for her kind remarks. The gentlelady yields back.

The chair now recognizes the ranking member for the subcommittee, the distinguished gentleman from Wisconsin, Mr. Grothman, for five minutes.

Mr. GROTHMAN. Sure. Thank you for all your testimony. There are always, you know, parts of the testimony I wish we could flesh out a little bit more because they—and I will start with you, Ms. Currie.

I think you were the one talking about the problems we had with China and Russia and how they were trying to kind of muck up our goals.

Could you elaborate on them a little bit?

Ms. CURRIE. Certainly.

During my time in this administration, I have had a front row seat at how these countries, which do not share our values on human rights, do not share our commitment to the core principles that underpin human international human rights law, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the advancement of women economically, socially, politically, and the use of multilateral fora to accomplish these goals.

They are—the fundamentals of human rights are really under attack within the multilateral system. You have countries that are—in particular, the People's Republic of China—seeking to replace the established norms that, again, have a root in our Declaration of Independence and our founding documents and reflect a commitment to human rights attaching at the individual level that belonged to us by birth of our own humanity, and they wanted to replace that concept with a concept of human rights where the government is responsible for deciding which rights you get to have and how long you get to hold them and how expansive they are without any check and that these rights don't attach at the individual level and they don't belong to individual people by birth-right.

So, it is a completely different ideological vision of human rights and they are using every tool in their playbook to try to implement this vision.

Mr. GROTHMAN. Yes, and there are always a lot of Americans who kind of buy into the idea that Marxism is wonderful, of course, and, of course, there have been different times in our history where a lot of Americans like to view, you know, communist China or communist Russia as the wave of the future, and it kind of interests me that those are the two countries you singled out as being the biggest problem when there was a time when so many Americans thought that was the answer to all human suffering.

Could you give us some more examples of how they trample on human rights in China or things that this communist country does that we would never think of doing in this country?

Ms. CURRIE. Well, I can—in the context of the Security Council where we have seen it very profoundly, they try to strip out any human rights language in Security Council resolutions.

They try to remove language for protection of women and girls from sexual violence in Security Council resolutions and they try to keep the Security Council from talking about human rights or even holding sessions where we hear from the U.N.'s human rights experts, and I saw this first hand when I was serving in New York.

Most recently, you have probably seen reports coming from Xinjiang about enforced population control of Uighurs and other Turkic Muslims where the Chinese Communist Party and the People's Republic of China are enforcing extreme draconian measures to limit the births of Uighur and other Muslim minorities in this area of China.

And it is—the reports are profoundly disturbing. The secretary has spoken out very strongly about this, and we at the department are taking action on this, more than just talking about it.

We are sanctioning individuals and the U.S.—the U.S. Government is working together with Treasury and with Commerce to sanction individuals and entities that are involved in these gross violations of human rights.

Mr. GROTHMAN. OK. I remember when I was just first involved in politics back in the 1970's or interested, you know, hearing all the young college kids thinking that China was the wave of the future. So, I am glad we had your testimony here.

Ms. HAMMOND, I think you were the one who talked a little bit about human trafficking. Was it you? I think—could you elaborate on that? I know a lot of times human trafficking is another word for just plain prostitution.

But you can tell me if this—is that what you mean by human trafficking and can you give us some examples there?

Ms. HAMMOND. Sure. We at DOD believe that WPS promotion is integral to our work in combating human trafficking. So, we incorporate—

Mr. GROTHMAN. Is human trafficking—is that another word for prostitution sometimes? Is it more slave labor? What is it?

Ms. HAMMOND. We incorporate the U.S. Government definition of human trafficking within the Department of Defense—

Mr. GROTHMAN. Yes. Yes. What is it? What is it? What does human trafficking entail? What do these people do if they are trafficked?

Ms. HAMMOND. It would involve sexual trafficking, labor trafficking—

Mr. GROTHMAN. Slavery?

Ms. HAMMOND. Yes. So, we incorporate—

Mr. GROTHMAN. In which country does slavery happen in this world today?

Ms. HAMMOND. We see that happening throughout Southeast Asia, for instance, and African countries.

Mr. GROTHMAN. OK. Which countries?

Ms. HAMMOND. Burma. There is a huge trafficking issue there. So, with the training that we have undertaken with WPS and combating—

Mr. GROTHMAN. Slavery in Burma, huh?

Ms. HAMMOND. Yes.

Mr. GROTHMAN. Isn't that kind of a left-wing country? Is it kind of another left-wing country?

Ms. HAMMOND. What we have been doing there is working closely—

Mr. GROTHMAN. Yes, I know. Is Burma—I am under the impression it is more of a left-wing country, right?

Ms. HAMMOND. It is very corrupt, unfortunately. There are—

Mr. GROTHMAN. You don't like to say left-wing. I know.

OK. Thank you for giving us all the time.

Ms. HAMMOND. Thank you.

Mr. LYNCH. The gentleman yields back.

I will now recognize myself for five minutes, and again, I want to thank you all for testifying today. Really appreciate the work that you do, and I know that your commitment is sincere, deeply felt, and solid in terms of the work that you do to follow and pursue the objectives of the Women, Peace, and Security Strategy. I know you take that work very seriously.

I am less convinced that the work that you do and the passion that you feel for your cause and your mission and your jobs is necessarily reflected in the administration policy, and that is where the—that is where the gap exists.

For my own part, I came into office—I was elected in the Democratic primary in Massachusetts on September 11. So, Afghanistan loomed large when I first came into office.

I have been there about 20 times, you know, initially on defense-related initiatives, but as time went on, more and more with this committee and members of this committee from both sides of the aisle looking at the efforts to stabilize the country and the work that is being done around the role of women and girls in Afghan society.

I think one of the best programs that I have seen over there and one that I think, if you look back 50 years from now, one that gets no notice is a program that we adopted with the Italians and the French and the Germans to teach Afghan women to read.

It only went up to the third grade, but we taught about a half million Afghan women to read, and I think what will happen

now—and they all wanted to go to the fourth grade after the—after they completed the program.

But it planted the seeds and those women, I am sure, are teaching their children how to read. And in Afghanistan, which had, I think, 11 percent of the women in Afghanistan knew how to read—could read, that will be a huge game changer, I think.

But I know the Taliban position. That program, women would have been subject to the death penalty from the Taliban leadership if they sought to be educated in Afghanistan before we went in and removed the Taliban.

So, I am deeply disappointed that the peace agreement signed between the United States and the Taliban earlier this year does nothing.

It is really silent on the issue of protecting the rights of Afghan women and girls following the eventual withdrawal of U.S. forces. And I am not the only one.

One of the people I have had the pleasure to work with both in Afghanistan but also in Syria was General John Allen, who commanded the NATO International Security Assistance Forces, and he had—I think he said it best.

He said, and this is a quote, “To leave the fate of Afghan women and girls to the Afghan government and Taliban dialog is a massive abdication of American and international responsibility to support universal human rights.”

We should all be very clear on something. The Taliban will never accord Afghan women and girls the respect and the place in the future Afghan society that they deserve. For the U.S. Government to believe otherwise is either the height of naiveté, or the willful abandonment of these women or, perhaps, both.

Ambassador Currie, you are the Ambassador-at-large for Global Women’s Issues at the State Department. Do you think Afghan women and girls will be better off or at least be able to retain the rights and privileges they have right now with U.S. forces protecting those rights once the—once the U.S. leaves Afghanistan?

Ms. CURRIE. I think that, as you know, and I am sure you have spoken to many Afghan women over the years and seen what—how resilient and tough and just—I have, personally, been amazed by the toughness and strength of these women, what they have endured, and how they have lived through it and come out on the other side as just made of steel.

I know that the United States investment and the investment of our other partners in these women over the past 20 years has put them in a position that it won’t be up to the Afghan government and the Taliban to secure those rights because these women will not let these rights go away.

And at the end of the day, you know, it has never been great to be a woman in Afghanistan. Let us be honest. It was not—it was a terrible place to be a woman on September 1, 2001, and it is still a tough place to be a woman.

But today, more than—out of 9 million students that are enrolled in school, and you talk about the importance of this, 39 percent are girls, and the life expectancy—

Mr. LYNCH. Ms. Currie, I just have to interject.

Ms. CURRIE. We have done a tremendous amount of work to get—

Mr. LYNCH. Yes. Yes. So, I only have five minutes and you are eating up all my time.

Ms. CURRIE. Sorry.

Mr. LYNCH. OK. So, I have had an opportunity—like I said, been there about 20 times—driven through Taliban country.

Women aren't even allowed to leave the house—women are not even allowed to leave the house unless they are in the company of a—their husband or a male spouse—excuse me, a male sibling. Excuse me.

So, they are not even allowed to leave the house. They are, you know, and from head to toe covered completely. It is a different world.

So, I do not believe that the women in Afghanistan will have the ability to fight to their own fight. If they had, they wouldn't be in this predicament, and I just—I just think that we had an opportunity here and I greatly regret that I am seeing that commitment to women and girls in Afghanistan slip.

With that, I will yield back.

I now recognize the gentleman from Tennessee, my friend, Mr. Green, for five minutes.

Mr. GREEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I appreciate your leadership of this subcommittee and the opportunities that you and I have had to get together and do some joint legislation. Really excited about the amendment getting added to the NDAA. I think it is the right thing to do to take care of those soldiers.

I want to thank Chairman Maloney, too, for coming in today and if it hadn't been for her, here we are talking about advancing the rights of women and you got a bunch of guys here and a bunch of girls there. It just—the look isn't that great.

[Laughter.]

Mr. GREEN. So, I was very grateful to see that the chairwoman came in and shared a few thoughts.

And thanks too to the ranking member for his presence and wisdom.

As a nation and as people, the United States recognizes the dignity of each and every human being. Each one of us—man, woman, child—possesses natural rights granted to us by God, not by government.

The purpose of government, of course, our Founders knew well, is to protect the rights of its citizens. People suffering under oppression around the world look to America as a beacon of hope, that shining city on a hill.

When the brave people of Hong Kong stand up to the communist regime in Beijing and demonstrate for freedom, they look to America for inspiration and moral support. They are waving the American flag and holding up small statues of the Statue of Liberty.

America's commitment to human rights does not just stop at our borders. It is a key aspect of our foreign policy and the Trump administration recognizes how important it is that human rights, including the rights of women and girls, be promoted and protected.

Indeed, the president's National Security Strategy states that, and I quote, "Governments that fail to treat women equally do not

allow their societies to reach their full potential, while societies that empower women to participate fully in civil and economic life are more prosperous and peaceful,” end quote.

This isn’t just a platitude. President Trump has backed his policies with action. As we have seen over the past four years, the Trump administration has mounted an extensive concerted effort to promote the rights of women and girls abroad.

The United States Strategy on Women, Peace, and Security details the various avenues that the Trump administration is taking to promote the dignity and well being of women across the world through the promotion of women’s participation in civic life to robust efforts to combat the evils of sex trafficking, as has been mentioned. Each of the agencies before us is working to fulfill the aims of this strategy.

The Trump administration has also sought to help women across the globe empower themselves to better their economic condition.

In 2019, the president established the Women’s Global Development and Prosperity Initiative, spearheaded by advisor to the president Ivanka Trump, which aims to reach 50 million women in the developing world by 2025.

It is the first ever whole of government approach focused on women’s full and free participation in the global economy. The WGDP seeks to enhance opportunities for women to participate meaningfully in the economy and advance both prosperity and national security.

WGDP focuses on three pillars: women prospering in the work force, women succeeding as entrepreneurs, and women enabled in the economy. This groundbreaking initiative recognizes the fact that free market policies are the key to empowering women across the globe.

These actions stand in powerful contrast to bad actors in the world who use oppression and injustice as tools of power. It is no accident that our greatest adversaries in the world are among the worst violators of human rights.

The theocratic regime in Iran prosecutes religious minorities and restricts the rights of women, all while funding terrorist groups like Hezbollah and Hamas.

We have also seen shocking actions by China’s totalitarian regime, and I will blast through this because it has already been amply noted by some of our witnesses.

One thing that wasn’t mentioned, Christians—Christian churches in China right now, they are actually forcing them to take down the image of Christ and the cross and replace it with a picture of Xi Jinping. That state will suffer no other god.

Members from both sides of the aisle are boldly and unceasingly speaking out against the tyranny of the Chinese Communist Party as well as other oppressive governments who abuse the rights of their own people, especially women.

We are blessed to live in a country that protects women’s rights and the rights of human beings, and I hope this committee will continue its work in a bipartisan fashion.

I appreciate the leadership of our chairman, working closely with the Trump administration to promote human rights abroad.

One quick question in five seconds. What can we do better? And I open that to anyone.

Ms. CURRIE. First of all, I want to say that we do need our male colleagues to help advance this agenda.

[Laughter.]

Ms. CURRIE. So, we are not going to hold that against you.

Mr. GREEN. Thanks.

Ms. CURRIE. And it is not enough for women to advocate on behalf of these issues, but we need everybody in our society and it is—just like in Afghanistan, we need the male leaders in Afghanistan to recognize and advocate for the rights of women. It won't be enough to have the female negotiators doing that. So, we are really working on that.

As far as what we can do better, I think that, you know, we are very fortunate that we do have such robust bipartisan support around this issue and in this age of divisive—everything being politicized all the time.

I would just make a plea that we keep this as an area of strong bipartisan cooperation because it is an area where we have so much in common and so much consensus where we can really do good in the world and work together in this way.

Thank you.

Mr. LYNCH. The gentleman's time has expired.

The chair now recognizes the distinguished gentleman from California, Mr. Rouda, for five minutes.

Mr. ROUDA. Thank you, Chairman Lynch, for organizing this meeting and this hearing.

I would like to start out and say that I do agree with my colleague across the aisle that the United States has been a beacon for democracy for other countries to look to, including demonstrators in Hong Kong.

Unfortunately, though, under this administration when we see an administration, a president of the United States, use Federal troops to literally walk over innocent protestors for a photo op in front of a church and to send Federal police, a term not typically associated here in the United States, to, again, attack peaceful protestors without any identification whatsoever, unfortunately, we no longer hold that mantle that we have held for so long as a beacon of democracy for many countries across the Nation, and I look forward to the day when we can get back to being that beacon.

I appreciate the comments that the Ambassador made earlier about human rights, and I know that all of us hold those near and dear here in this room and across our country.

According to the Office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights, quote, "Women's sexual and reproductive health is related to multiple human rights including the right to life, the right to be free from torture, the right to health, the right to privacy, the right to education, and the prohibition of discrimination."

Is there anybody here that disagrees with that comment, from our witnesses?

[No response.]

Mr. ROUDA. Great. Thank you.

Unfortunately, since assuming office in 2017, the Trump administration has restricted access to sexual and reproductive health for

women and girls around the world, limiting their ability to meaningfully engage in political and civic life.

Three days after his inauguration, President Trump reinstated the Mexico City policy, also known as the Global Gag Rule, which prohibits international NGO's receiving U.S. funding from performing or promoting abortions.

This includes NGO's that also seek to expand access to contraception, prevent and treat HIV and AIDS, combat malaria, and improve maternal and child health.

More recently, the Trump administration has sought to weaken, if not outright remove, language in United Nations documents that refer to women's sexual and reproductive health. In fact, the Trump administration has also sought to remove sexual and reproductive rights language from U.N. Security Council resolutions.

In September 2019, U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services Alex Azar told the U.N. General Assembly that the U.S. does not support, quote, "references to ambiguous terms and expressions such as sexual and reproductive health and rights in U.N. documents," unquote.

In May 2019, U.S. representatives reportedly attempted to remove references of sexual and reproductive health in a G-7 communication that described how improved health care access, quote, "is critical to women's empowerment," unquote.

Ambassador Currie, as the Ambassador-at-large for Global Women's Issues, will you commit today to speak truth to power and call out the administration when its agenda is actually harmful for women and girls around the world?

Ms. CURRIE. Thank you for your question, Congressman.

[Clears throat.]

Ms. CURRIE. Excuse me. Sorry.

First of all, I wanted to clarify that there is no internationally recognized human right to an abortion. That is not a recognized right. It is not in the Beijing 25.

It wasn't codified in Beijing 25 years ago, and under U.S. law, under the Kemp-Kasten Amendment, which has been included in every foreign operations appropriation act since 1985, the administration is required to ensure that no U.S. taxpayer funds be made available to any organization or program—

Mr. ROUDA. And is it your position and the Trump administration that that applies to contraceptives as well?

Ms. CURRIE. We do not restrict access to contraceptives. The United States is the world's larger provider of family planning assistance and I am sure my colleague from USAID can provide you with the exact figures on that.

We remain the world's largest provider of family planning assistance and continue to do that through massive expenditures of bilateral and multilateral assistance.

We will not, however, provide funds to the United Nations Family Planning Agency because they continue to have a cooperative relationship with China's Family Planning Administration.

China's Family Planning Administration continues to use coercive family planning methods. We have done a comprehensive finding on this and, as a result, we cannot provide funding to UNFPA.

Again, as I mentioned earlier when we were talking about the Security Council, the Security Council negotiations are very complicated and I think that there has been a gross oversimplification of what happened last year in the sexual assault and in conflict resolution.

There were a lot of process issues involved with that. But I assure you that we did not remove language because that language has never appeared in any UNSCR on that topic and we have been the pen holder on that UNSCR for—since its creation.

So, I know that we feel very strongly in our role as a permanent member of the Security Council that we have to protect the consensus around this when countries such as Russia and China are trying to remove this agenda item from the Security Council's agenda, and we are very protective of it. It is unfortunate that this has become a politicized issue where it never was before.

Thank you.

Mr. ROUDA. Thank you, and actions always do speak louder than words, and with that, I yield back to the chair.

Thank you.

Mr. LYNCH. The gentleman yields back.

The chair now recognizes the ranking member for the full committee, the gentleman from Kentucky, Mr. Comer, for five minutes.

Mr. COMER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I would like to begin talking about Afghanistan.

Many members in Congress, including myself, are pretty adamant about wanting to pull back most if not all of our troops in Afghanistan.

But one of the things that we need to talk about here in today's hearing is the successes we have had in Afghanistan from the Bush Administration, Obama Administration, Trump administration with respect to women.

Ambassador Currie, over the past 17 years have Afghan women gained significantly more rights in Afghanistan than before, such as the ability to participate in entrepreneurship and political leadership?

Ms. CURRIE. Yes, sir.

Mr. COMER. Can you list some of the advances?

Ms. CURRIE. Their rights are constitutionally protected now. Their rights are enshrined in the constitution of Afghanistan.

You have more than a 100,000 women enrolled in universities in Afghanistan and you have two female ministers in the government now, nine female deputy ministers, four female Ambassadors including our Ambassador here in Washington, who I work very closely with and is a good friend, and Afghanistan's Ambassador to the United Nations, two of their most senior and important roles.

Twenty-eight percent of women in the lower house of—28 percent of the lower house of Parliament is women, which beats us, thank you very much.

[Laughter.]

Ms. CURRIE. And 26 percent in the upper house of Parliament, also better than our record.

So, I think that you can say that women have made substantial progress in Afghanistan.

Is Afghanistan still a very difficult place to be a woman? Absolutely, and the farther you get from Kabul the more difficult it gets. If you are out in Helmand, your life is terrible. I am not going to lie about it or even try to sugarcoat it because it is pretty awful.

But the goal here, peace is going to be better for women in Afghanistan than continued conflict, and coming to a place where they are creating their own future and charting it on their own and on their own path, self-reliance without having to rely on the United States for security is a better deal for the Afghan women in the long run. That is what we are working toward.

Mr. COMER. That is good to hear.

Let us switch gears and talk about the Taliban. What are the—what is the Taliban's record with respect to women's rights?

Ms. CURRIE. Abysmal.

Mr. COMER. So, there was an agreement in February that stated on March 10 the Taliban would start intra-Afghan negotiations for peace.

Ambassador Currie, are women involved in those negotiations?

Ms. CURRIE. Yes, sir. They represent 20 percent of the negotiating team from the government side.

Mr. COMER. Well, I know the Trump administration is committed to defending the long fought for and earned rights of women in Afghanistan. Protecting these rights will not only lead to stronger and safer Afghanistan but also a stronger and safer America.

I look forward to continuing the discussion with all of you all today. Please keep the committee updated on negotiations as they continue.

And, Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Mr. LYNCH. The gentleman yields back.

The chair now recognizes the ranking member of the subcommittee, Mr. Grothman, for any closing remarks.

Mr. GROTHMAN. Sure. I would like to thank you all for being here today. I appreciate all your work.

My couple comments or as far as suggestions, you mentioned that so much of our problem comes from China and Russia, which are, you know, maybe the two most dominant communist or Marxist countries in the world.

And the reason I wanted you to repeat that or bring it up again is we always have a danger here in this country that our young people will be told that if only we adapted a more Marxist line of things that things would get better here, and I think it is important to educate people around the world where Marxism leads and the absolute power of the state.

I notice people on the other side of the aisle. When they look at women's rights they primarily associate it with reproduction.

I will caution you because there are some things in the United States that I don't think we should be proud of and I don't think we should be exporting around the world, and there are always going to be politicians who are going to try to be pushing them.

I mentioned the United States as one of seven countries in the world that allows late-term abortion. I don't think we should, as the United States, be using our economic might to be imposing those values around the world.

I know in this country we fund Planned Parenthood, which may put young gals 14 or 15 years old on the Pill without their parents' knowledge.

I don't think that is necessarily a good thing. I think a lot of Americans would be concerned if they found out that American dollars were going to oppose those values on young girls around the world.

But I appreciate you all being here today. It is really refreshing to see, as we get so many people from the administration, people who are enthusiastic about their job and so knowledgeable.

So, I learned a lot today and I guess the most enjoyable thing I learned was meeting you guys. Thanks so much for being here.

Mr. LYNCH. The gentleman yields back.

In closing, I do want to thank you for your testimony here today and for participating in this hearing, and also for the work that you do. We deeply appreciate that.

I also want to commend my colleagues for participating in this important conversation in this hearing.

With that, without objection all members will have five legislative days within which to submit additional written testimony, questions to the witnesses to the chair, and which will be provided to the witnesses for their response.

I ask our witnesses if you do receive such requests to please respond as promptly as you are able.

This hearing is now adjourned. Thank you.

[Whereupon, at 11:22 a.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

