

**STATE, FOREIGN OPERATIONS, AND RELATED
PROGRAMS APPROPRIATIONS FOR FISCAL
YEAR 2023**

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 27, 2022

U.S. SENATE,
SUBCOMMITTEE OF THE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS,
Washington, DC.

The subcommittee met at 2:35 p.m., in room SD-192, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Christopher A. Coons, (Chairman) presiding.

Present: Senators Coons, Leahy, Durbin, Van Hollen, Graham, Moran, and Hagerty.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR CHRISTOPHER A. COONS

Senator COONS. I call this hearing of the State and Foreign Operations Subcommittee, the Senate Appropriations Committee to order. We have one witness today, the Secretary of State, Anthony Blinken.

It is great to have you here, Mr. Secretary. We have a lot to cover, so I will be relatively brief.

We have, many of us, just come from a moving, and a powerful service in memory of a former Secretary Madeleine Albright. An extraordinary person who lived a remarkable life and career, and whose impact on the Department, on the Senate, on our Nation, on the world rooted in her commitment to democracy, to advancing the role of women was profound.

I intend to propose naming a portion of the Fulbright Fellows for her, as we did for one of her predecessors for whom she also worked, former Senator and secretary, Edmund Muskie. The National Democratic Institute where she long served as Board Chair is naming their Annual Democracy Award for Secretary Albright.

And Mr. Secretary, we very much look forward to suggestions from you as to how the State Department may want to also honor her service, especially as a defender of democratic principles, and someone who advanced the role of women leaders around the world.

I have just returned from a number of Nations, including Georgia where the President, in particular, cited the mentorship and the example of Secretary Albright.

No Secretary of State has an easy job, but yours, in particular at this moment in our modern history, is exceptionally demanding.

And you have done exceptionally well at it. We are grateful both for the way in which you have represented us in the world, and for your recent trip to Kyiv which we look forward to hearing about, but also for your responsiveness to the committees of the Senate. You have testified frequently, at great length, and been very accessible.

And so I wanted to thank you both for your service more broadly, leading the State Department, and representing us in the world, but also for your engagement with this Committee.

We face a number of challenges, more than I need to take the time to recite in detail. Russia's unprovoked, unjustified, and brutal invasion of Ukraine, with regional and global security implications that we need to confront, and will be felt for decades.

A global food security crisis greatly exacerbated by the war in Ukraine, now threatening hundreds of millions with food insecurity, a global pandemic that has infected half a billion, killed a million Americans, caused immense economic damage, and that continues to pose threats to all of us as new variants may emerge, climate change which continues to accelerate and threatens the entire world.

Iran and North Korea, both, whose non-proliferation, whose efforts at nuclear proliferation threaten their regions; China which continues to be a peer competitor, and expands its influence around the world in ways we need to confront; and a growing clash between the forces of democracy and authoritarianism, to say nothing of a record refugee crisis, and ongoing conflicts in Syria, Yemen, Ethiopia, South Sudan, Libya.

On the positive side, Mr. Secretary, you and the President have rallied a NATO in defense of Ukraine, its people, and its sovereignty. This administration is embracing our alliances and building coalitions, not embracing isolationism. You have shown the world that, as Secretary Albright so often said, we are the indispensable Nation, and the critical role that we can and must play.

We have provided hundreds of millions of U.S.-manufactured COVID vaccine doses which, unlike those provided by Russia and China, are effective against all the variants. You have reaffirmed, and the role that the United States must play in advancing democracy and human rights around the world, and shown strong leadership on tackling climate through a variety of means, including the Development Finance Corporation.

You are tackling global challenges, like economic instability, and violent conflict with new tools, like the Global Fragility Act, and you are addressing deeply rooted staffing and diversity challenges at the State Department with new resources provided by Congress.

We here in this Committee have worked hard to find a bipartisan path forward and to support and promote our national security diplomacy interests.

I am thankful for my Ranking Member, Senator Graham, who has been a good partner over a number of Congresses to myself, and to the former chairman of the subcommittee, and the chairman of the full Committee. Yet we have genuinely struggled to get either the allocation that this subcommittee deserves, or to fully meet the objectives that this subcommittee has taken on.

We faced huge challenges last year with an allocation of \$4 billion below the budget request, and we were able to soften that impact, really, only by rescinding \$2 billion from the Afghanistan account. An option we will not have again this year.

We have done nothing to address our UN arrears, we have not done enough to face the growing food security, and refugee crisis, and we have a great deal of work to do together. So as our NATO partners have, we need to demonstrate that we can pull together and work together in the way this subcommittee traditionally has.

We look forward to hearing from you, Mr. Secretary, how you see this year unfolding, what your highest appropriations' priorities are, and how we can work together to achieve our Nation's goals. Senator Graham.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR LINDSEY GRAHAM

Senator GRAHAM. Thank you Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Secretary, welcome. You are a very hard worker, and I enjoy working with you where we can, and we have our differences.

This subcommittee has had a good track record of trying to put money into programs that produce value for the American people, and make the world a safer place. The World Food Program is under siege so there is a lot of talk in the building about another supplemental. Count me in. I am willing to look at Ukraine in terms of what their needs are.

So you are just going to have to come to reality here, that as the world changes this subcommittee has a role to play when it comes to the State Department. I want to thank those under your command.

Mr. Secretary, you know, I have spent a lot of time in the military, a lot of us go to war-torn regions, but it is the diplomat, the foreign service officer, the USAID worker, they are in harm's way just as much as anybody. And the work they do on behalf of stability can sometimes create a peaceful world, better than dropping a bomb. And I think the military agrees with that. So the military is a big fan of this account, because without developmental assistance in showing up you are going to lose ground.

I just got back from Japan, Taiwan, and Australia. They want to do more. There is a backlash brewing against China's misadventures. One of my colleagues, I think, had a discussion with you yesterday about: What is the big deal about Ukraine, it used to be part of the Soviet Union?

I think we can find common ground here that that Putin has no legitimate claim on Ukraine, it is a sovereign nation. Back in the '90s they did the Budapest Memo, where Russia, the United States, and Great Britain guaranteed the sovereignty of Ukraine if they would turn their nukes over to Russia. That agreement has been stepped upon.

I think most of us here believe that Putin wants to recreate the Old Russian Empire, the Soviet Union, Ukraine is just a warm-up act, Moldova; he will go until somebody stops him.

So this is not about a buffer zone between Russia and NATO, it is about a man with an ambition that I think is going to destroy his country, and has killed thousands of innocent people. And I ap-

preciate the flow of weapons. It has been on the increase. I hope we can do more, and I think we should do more.

But I want you to understand, Mr. Secretary, most Republicans do not see Putin's endeavors as any way legitimate, and that we all understand, if we don't stop him in Ukraine he will keep going.

Now, when it comes to China, Japan is going to increase their military spending, the Solomon Islands, I haven't heard about that much since World War II, China is in play there. Appreciate you sending some diplomatic presence there. Developmental Finance Corporation is a brilliant idea, I think. It is now time to have a DFC component for Asia to compete with the Belt, Road Initiative by China. And I would like to work with the Chairman and the Secretary in beefing up our developmental aid presence in Asia to combat China.

Afghanistan is heartbreaking. We will talk about all of that. It seems to be that the Iranians are making a demand on the administration to change the designation of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps, no longer to be a foreign terrorist organization. I hope you resist that demand, and we will have a discussion about that.

But Putin gave a speech today to the Duma. He said he vows to accomplish the goals of the invasion. He will not be deterred.

So as we meet in Ramstein where Defense Ministers of NATO, and the "coalition of the willing" talk about providing more aid to Ukraine; Putin is basically telling his people, through the Duma that he is committed to see this through.

My commitment is this will be the end of Putin one way or the other. That when this is over the Russian people will see they have no future under his leadership, that we keep the sanctions on, that we increase sanctions at every turn, we provide the brave Ukrainians the ability to fight back and that, over time, the world isolate Putin.

I met with the International Criminal Court Prosecutor, Mr. Khan, yesterday, I think he has a good plan for those who are committing war crimes in Ukraine wearing Russian uniforms. So to Putin, you are committed to the invasion. We are committed to Ukraine's freedom. We are going to win, and you are going to lose. Thank you.

Senator COONS. Thank you Senator Graham. Chairman Leahy.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR PATRICK LEAHY

Senator LEAHY. Thank you Mr. Chairman. I am listening to the travel—I have been watching, and I have talked with Secretary Blinken again this morning about the amount of traveling he has done for us. And I must tell you, I worried greatly when you and Secretary Austin were going into Ukraine, because they announced it ahead of time.

I suspect that was not the way you would like to have done it. But I am glad you went, and I am glad you got back safely. Senator Coons and Senator Graham have been traveling quite a bit lately. I went to Vermont, but I am going to be doing some of those trips later this year.

I missed chairing this subcommittee, but I would note, Mr. Chairman, that over the years there are different chairs, myself,

Senator Graham, Senator McConnell and I chaired this Committee. We got things done, always in a unified fashion, and I can think of no one more qualified, or better suited for the job than Senator Coons.

And I am delighted that he is here. He cares passionately about it, not only in public, but in private he talks about these issues, and scurrying for diplomacy. I think the budget in this and the budget in the Department of State are extremely important in what we do in our non-military. I mean the military is obviously important, but we do in the non-military.

I know that in some of our issues of foreign aid, I remember former Secretary Mattis said, if you want to cut these programs, foreign aid, and other things. And the State Department would say, if you want to cut those programs, buy more bullets because he is going to need them. And I agree.

But the role you play with President Biden and Secretary Austin in marshalling the NATO countries, and all, to stand up united against Russia's unprovoked aggression, brutality in Ukraine, that is so important. And I know we spoke briefly, prior to leaving the funeral today, about how we have to stand up, and the fact that you were able to bring our NATO allies together. Sometimes they can be a disparate group, but they came together and this that is extremely important, and it shows a critical need for our country's leadership in NATO.

I think if it was just a couple years ago, I don't think it would have happened that way, and here we are facing the greatest challenge to democracy since the '40s.

Now, we are going to have another hearing on the global COVID and food security crisis. The pandemic continues to spread, it is mutating in scores of countries, the food security crisis has been greatly exacerbated by the skyrocketing commodity prices due to the war in Ukraine. COVID is important worldwide, because there is no place having a covert outbreak that is more than an airplane trip away from our shores.

And we know that 161 million people are facing starvation, another 227 million are facing acute food insecurity. We are the wealthiest, most powerful nation on earth; we have to step in on that. So I hope, Mr. Secretary, you can get the White House to ask for additional supplemental funds to address these global humanitarian emergencies. They have far-reaching economic security.

I have got to step outside for a phone call, but I am going to be coming right back in to hear this.

And Mr. Chairman I am so glad you are doing this.

Senator COONS. Thank you very much, Chairman Leahy. And thank you for your very long, and very effective, and very engaged stewardship of this subcommittee over three decades. You have steered this subcommittee ably through some really hard budget times, political times, global environments, and I cannot possibly hope to succeed in living up to the record that you have established, of focus and excellence in delivering on our role in the world.

Given the challenges we face, Mr. Secretary, if you can give us a broad overview, both of your insights from your trip to Kyiv, and

the challenges facing the State Department, and your priorities for appropriations this year, we would be grateful.

STATEMENT OF HON. ANTHONY BLINKEN, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Secretary BLINKEN. Mr. Chairman, thank you very, very much, to you, to Chairman Leahy, Ranking Member Graham. I am grateful for this opportunity to talk about the administration's proposed budget for the State Department.

Let me just start by saying that later today we will welcome back to the United States Trevor Reed, who was wrongfully detained in Russia. We are deeply grateful to our allies and partners who helped in this effort to bring him home. And I especially want to thank Special Presidential Envoy for Hostage Affairs, Ambassador Roger Carstens, known well to all of you; Ambassador John Sullivan in Moscow, and others in our Government, including in this Congress, who worked relentlessly to bring Trevor home, and who continue to press for the release of Paul Whelan, and other U.S. citizens wrongfully detained abroad.

As you have noticed, several of us just came from the ceremony honoring Madeleine Albright. And just to take a moment to honor her extraordinary service.

She was a friend to me, a mentor to me, someone I sought counsel in. She had, I think as you all know, an incredible clarity of voice, a voice that I think we can all still hear, and an ability to really get to the essence of things. Few diplomats have so clearly embodied the ideals for which our country stands, or done more to project them around the world.

We mourn her passing, which is softened only by knowing that her example is going to continue to guide our Department and our foreign policy for years to come. I look forward to finding ways to honor her in the Department.

And Chairman Leahy left the room but I did want to say to him that this may be the last time that I have the privilege of speaking on a budget request before a Committee that that he leads, and let me just simply join in the chorus of people thanking Chairman Leahy for his extraordinary service, not just for the service, but for the way that he has served and continues to serve.

Always championing the vital importance of investing in diplomacy and development, always insisting that human rights be at the heart of our foreign policy including, of course, by authoring a law requiring our government to withhold support for foreign security forces that commit gross human rights violations. And always being a partner to Secretaries of State eight administrations. The Department will always appreciate Chairman Leahy's support for our people, and for the work they do around the world.

I read about a surprise tribute that Chairman Leahy received last week in Vermont's General Assembly. I was struck by something that he said, and I quote, "I think Vermont is a place where you can develop your conscience. I think of the Senate as a place that should be the conscience of the Nation, and sometimes is."

So I would say for a long time, Senator Leahy has, in fact, been the conscience of this institution, when I served here I certainly felt that very strongly. Our Nation and the world are better for it.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Graham, I have a statement that goes to the budget proposal, it goes to our modernization agenda, but in the interest of time, I am happy to submit it for the record so that we can get to a conversation, and to questions.

[The statements follow:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. ANTONY BLINKEN

Chairman Leahy, Chairman Coons, and Ranking Member Graham, I'm grateful for the opportunity to speak with you about the Administration's proposed budget for the State Department.

I just returned from Kyiv, where Secretary of Defense Austin and I demonstrated the United States' stalwart commitment to the government and people of Ukraine.

Moscow's brutal war of aggression against Ukraine has brought into sharp focus the power and purpose of American diplomacy, and why it's more crucial than ever to our national security and the interests of the American people. Our diplomacy is rallying allies and partners around the world to join us in supporting Ukraine with security, economic, and humanitarian assistance, imposing greater costs on the Kremlin, strengthening our collective security and defense, and addressing the war's mounting global consequences, including the refugee and food crises.

President Putin's war of choice has achieved the exact opposite of his objectives. Uniting, rather than dividing, Ukrainians. Strengthening, rather than weakening, NATO and the U.S.-EU partnership. Undercutting, rather than asserting, the Kremlin's claims of military might. And that's not only because of Ukraine's bravery and resilience. It's also because of effective U.S. diplomacy.

We must continue to drive that diplomacy forward to seize the strategic opportunities and address risks presented by Russia's overreach, as countries reconsider their policies, priorities, and relationships. The budget request before you predated this crisis, but fully funding it is critical to ensuring Russia's war in Ukraine is a strategic failure for the Kremlin and serves as a powerful lesson to those who might consider following its path.

As we focus on this urgent crisis, the State Department continues to carry out the missions traditionally associated with diplomacy, like responsibly managing great power competition with China, facilitating a halt to fighting in Yemen and Ethiopia, and pushing back against the rising tide of authoritarianism and the threat it poses to human rights.

We also face evolving challenges that require us to develop new capabilities, such as the emergence and reemergence of infectious diseases, an accelerating climate crisis, and a digital revolution that holds both enormous promise and peril.

Last fall, I set out a modernization agenda for the State Department and U.S. diplomacy to respond to these complex demands, built on five pillars. Deepening our expertise in areas that are critical to the future of America's national security. Continuing to attract, retain, and develop the world's best diplomats. Fostering greater innovation and feedback. Modernizing our technology, communications, and analytical capabilities. And reinvigorating in-person diplomacy and public engagement—to get our diplomats beyond Embassy walls and engage the people we need to reach most.

In no small part thanks to the significant fiscal year 2022 budget approved by Congress, we've been able to make real progress on this agenda, though much remains to be done.

To give just a few examples, we've strengthened our capacity to shape the ongoing technological revolution, so it protects our interests, boosts our competitiveness, and upholds our values. With bipartisan Congressional support and encouragement, we recently launched a new bureau for cyberspace and digital policy, with 60 team members to start.

We're also making headway on ensuring our diplomats reflect America's remarkable diversity, which is one of our nation's greatest strengths. Our Department's first ever Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer, Ambassador Gina Abercrombie-Winstanley, has spearheaded an effort to analyze the obstacles that prevent underrepresented groups from joining and advancing at State, and will soon release a four-year strategic plan to tackle these problems. We've expanded the Pickering and Rangel fellowship programs and paid internships at State—again with strong Congressional input and support.

These efforts are showing results. We recently welcomed a new cohort of 179 exceptional Foreign Service professionals, putting the Department on track for its largest annual intake in a decade.

My first 15 months in this job have only strengthened my conviction that these and other reforms are not just worthwhile, but essential to delivering for the American people.

Today's meeting marks the 102nd time I've briefed Congress in meetings or calls, which is one of the ways I've worked to meet the commitment I made in my confirmation hearing to restore Congress's role as a partner both in our foreign policy-making and in revitalizing the State Department. These engagements have also helped further refine and strengthen our modernization agenda.

Ensuring we can deliver on that agenda will require sustained funding, new authorities, and most importantly, partnership from Congress.

If we want to deepen our capability in key areas like climate, public health, and multilateral diplomacy; expand on Secretary Powell's vision of a foreign service training float; strengthen global capacity to prevent, detect, and respond to future outbreaks; and equip our workforce with the training, tools, and technology that today's challenges demand—we need additional resources.

If we want to be able to swiftly stand up new missions . . . deploy diplomats when and where they're needed . . . and make those decisions based on risk management rather than risk aversion—we need to reform the Secure Embassy Construction and Counterterrorism Act and Accountability Review Board statute to enable greater flexibility, while meeting important security standards.

If we want to rapidly scale up in response to crises like refugee surges and epidemics, while also avoiding costly overhead, we need more flexible domestic hiring authorities.

This is not about advancing the goals of any one administration or party. It's about refocusing our mission and purpose on the forces that will affect Americans' lives, livelihoods, and security for decades to come.

So I appreciate the opportunity to speak today about why this matters, and look forward to continuing to make this committee, and Congress as a whole, a partner in these efforts.

Thank you.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL, UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Chairman Coons, Ranking Member Graham, and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today for this hearing on the U.S. Department of State's fiscal year 2023 budget.

The Office of Inspector General (OIG) for the U.S. Department of State (Department) inspects embassies and diplomatic posts throughout the world to determine whether policy goals are being achieved and whether the interests of the United States are being represented and advanced effectively. OIG performs specialized security inspections and audits in support of the Department's mission to provide effective protection to our personnel, facilities, and sensitive information. OIG also audits Department operations and activities to ensure that they are as effective, efficient, and economical as possible. Finally, OIG investigates instances of fraud, waste, and mismanagement that may constitute either criminal wrongdoing or violation of Department regulations. In short, OIG plays a crucial role in overseeing the funds Congress appropriates to the Department for its many programs and activities and we believe that our work can assist Subcommittee Members in making funding decisions.

In this testimony, I will discuss the impact of our work and highlight some of our recent and ongoing projects, including our Afghanistan-related work. Finally, I will conclude by discussing some of the challenges we face in fulfilling our oversight mission in the current budget environment.

MISSION AND RESULTS

OIG's mandate requires us to oversee both Department and U.S. Agency for Global Media (USAGM) programs and operations, which include more than 80,000 employees and more than 270 overseas missions and domestic entities. We also provide oversight for the U.S. International Boundary and Water Commission, United States and Mexico (USIBWC), a Federal agency that operates under the foreign policy guidance of the Department. In terms of dollars, we are responsible for the oversight of more than \$81 billion in Department, USAGM, and foreign assistance resources.

In pursuit of this mission, OIG provides valuable return on investment through its audits, evaluations, inspections, and investigations. In fiscal year 2021, OIG identified more than \$700 million in questioned costs and taxpayer funds that could

be put to better use. Additionally, OIG's criminal, civil, and administrative investigations produced \$17 million in monetary results (including fines, restitution, and recoveries) in the last fiscal year. Most recently, the contribution of our investigative efforts led to a nearly \$1 million settlement in a false claims case involving a contractor that provided medical services at Department facilities in Iraq and Afghanistan.¹

Beyond the quantifiable, our work produces benefits that add enormous, if unmeasurable, value. First and foremost, our safety and security work is a source of immense pride. By helping the Department improve its security, OIG's work safeguards the lives of the thousands of people who work in or visit U.S. posts abroad and at home. For example, our recommendations frequently address inadequate compliance with emergency planning standards, facility safety and security deficiencies, and the lack of adherence to motor vehicle safety standards in the operation of official vehicles overseas.

Finally, our investigative work consistently holds Department and USAGM employees, contractors, and grantees accountable. In fiscal year 2021, OIG obtained 22 indictments or informations and 17 convictions. One conviction led to a former Department employee being sentenced to 1 year in Federal prison for wire fraud. OIG special agents determined that, over the course of 3 years in his role as a budget analyst at Embassy Port-au-Prince, the employee embezzled more than \$150,000.² We also obtained nine debarments in fiscal year 2021.

OVERSIGHT EFFORTS

Our oversight work has identified persistent challenges that can be sorted into three categories: safety and security, stewardship, and staffing. Key findings in these areas are described below.

Safety and Security

Safeguarding people, facilities, property, and information is a continual challenge for the Department. While the Department's efforts to promote security are commendable, our work continues to find issues that pose health and safety risks, including physical security and safety deficiencies at residences. Many of our reports and findings on the topic of security are sensitive but unclassified or classified, but I will share some of our efforts that are appropriate for this setting.

One example of our work exposing a health and safety risk comes from the inspection of the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations' Office of Fire Protection, which oversees a fire safety program responsible for promoting safe living and working conditions for Department employees at overseas posts.³ Our inspectors found that the Department's annual process used to assess management controls within Department entities did not require chiefs of mission to attest or certify that their posts had an effective fire protection program. We concluded that the lack of assurances that missions are complying with requirements related to fire protection could increase the risk of fires and expose staff to unsafe facilities.

Another example comes from a wire fraud case that led to a sentence of nearly 3 years in Federal prison and \$200,000 in fines and restitution.⁴ In coordination with other law enforcement agencies, OIG special agents helped reveal that a Texas man had been selling substandard Chinese-made military helmets, body armor, and other products to the Department and other Federal agencies while falsely claiming that his company manufactured the goods in Texas. Some of the equipment had been used at Mission Iraq but was removed from service when concerns about its quality were exposed.

In addition to the security of people and property, we often focus on information security, and our oversight of the Department's IT security program continues to identify numerous control weaknesses. The fiscal year 2021 Federal Information Security Modernization Act (FISMA) audit concluded again that the Department had not fully developed and implemented an effective organization-wide information se-

¹Department of Justice (DOJ), "Medical Services Contractor Pays \$930,000 to Settle False Claims Act Allegations Relating to Medical Services Contracts at State Department and Air Force Facilities in Iraq and Afghanistan," March 8, 2022.

²DOJ, "Former State Department Employee Sentenced to Federal Prison for Embezzling more than \$150,000 from Department of Defense," December 1, 2021.

³OIG, Inspection of the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations' Office of Fire Protection (ISP-I-21-22, May 2021).

⁴DOJ, "Texas Man Sentenced for Selling Chinese-Made Military Helmets and Body Armor to Federal Agencies," March 23, 2022.

curity program.⁵ We reported that the Department is operating below an effective level in eight of the nine FISMA domains, making it vulnerable to cyberattacks and threats to its critical mission-related functions.

Another issue of concern is the large number of outstanding recommendations addressed to the Bureau of Information Resource Management, the entity responsible for developing and administering the Department's computer and information security programs and policies. In a report issued in December 2021 that analyzed open OIG recommendations addressed to the bureau, we identified 90 recommendations awaiting action, including some that have been open since 2014.⁶ As a result of the concerns described in the report,⁷ OIG recommended that the Under Secretary for Management verify that the bureau is developing plans of action and milestones to address each open recommendation.

Information systems security officers are like frontline enforcers of Department information systems security policies that ensure the protection of the Department's computer infrastructure, networks, and data. Unfortunately, OIG has found widespread deficiencies in the performance of such duties. In a review of 51 OIG inspections issued from 2016 through 2019, we found nearly half identified repeated deficiencies related to reviews of user accounts, information systems audit logs, or proper configuration, operation, and system maintenance.⁸

Stewardship

Efficiently and effectively managing its significant resources is another longstanding challenge for the Department. OIG's work demonstrates that the Department could enhance its stewardship of taxpayer resources by improving its ability to identify and address weaknesses in financial and property management and contract and grant oversight. Additionally, identifying and addressing weaknesses in its internal controls is an element of the Department's stewardship challenge.

During one audit, we reported that the Department did not consistently use a general budget object code in accordance with requirements when recording expenses.⁹ Recording expense data to the appropriate code is essential for management officials to have complete and accurate data for assessing spending patterns. Until deficiencies in the use of the budget object codes are addressed, the Department will not have a full understanding of the specific purpose of its expenses or a method to easily identify how billions of dollars of funds were used.

Property management deficiencies are likewise common, as we frequently report in our inspections of overseas posts. We often note problems with managing the acquisition, storage, distribution, and monitoring of fuel. In a recent review of our own reports addressing fuel management from fiscal year 2016 to fiscal year 2020, OIG identified systemic weaknesses in the Department's management of its overseas fuel stock and we assessed the Department's progress toward addressing common deficiencies.¹⁰ The resulting information report serves as a reference for posts seeking to strengthen fuel management practices and the Department expressed its intention to use the report in applicable training. Additionally, a recent referral prompted us to review gift vault access controls at the Office of Chief of Protocol.¹¹ We determined stronger inventory controls were needed in order to ensure accountability of office staff and protect items stored in the gift vault, many of which are of significant value.

Turning to contracts, in a series of audits published last fiscal year, we examined myriad management and oversight shortfalls related to contracts in support of overseas contingency operations. Because of the Department's frequent use of non-competitive contracts for securing support services for its operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, we took a closer look at compliance with Federal regulation and acquisition policies when awarding such contracts. Our audit found that none of the

⁵ OIG, (SBU) Audit of the Department of State fiscal year 2021 Information Security Program (AUD-IT-22-06, October 2021).

⁶ As of March 31, 2022, OIG identified approximately 90 open recommendations addressed to the Bureau of Information Resource Management.

⁷ OIG, Management Assistance Report: Support From the Under Secretary for Management Is Needed To Facilitate the Closure of Office of Inspector General Recommendations Addressed to the Bureau of Information Resource Management (AUD-AOQC-22-07, December 2021).

⁸ OIG, Management Assistance Report: Department Can Take Further Steps to Improve Executive Direction of Overseas Missions (ISP-21-14, June 2021).

⁹ OIG, Audit of the Department of State's Use of "Not Otherwise Classified" Budget Object Codes (AUD-FM-22-21, February 2022).

¹⁰ OIG, Information Report: Systemic Deficiencies Related to the Department of State's Fuel Management From fiscal year 2016 Through fiscal year 2020 (AUD-MERO-22-20, March 2022).

¹¹ OIG, Management Assistance Report: Office of the Chief of Protocol Gift Vault Access Controls (ESP-22-01, November 2021).

awards we reviewed had been publicly justified, as required.¹² We also had concerns that the Department did not fully take the required steps to ensure that fair and reasonable prices were paid on noncompetitive contract awards, a risk inherent in foregoing competition when awarding contracts.

Further, we issued a management assistance report calling on the Department to reduce its use of “bridge contracts,” which are sole-source, short-term awards to the incumbent contractor to avoid a lapse in service when there is a delay in awarding a follow-on contract.¹³ We found these types of contracts were frequently used in Afghanistan and Iraq over multiple years to noncompetitively extend contract services. Such a practice limits the Department’s ability to realize potential cost savings by maximizing full and open competition. Another audit related to this body of work concluded that the Department, as a result of poor acquisition planning, noncompetitively awarded two contracts for essential services at Mission Iraq.¹⁴ Because Federal law does not permit poor planning as justification for the use of noncompetitive awards, we questioned the full value of the two contracts at a combined cost of \$663 million.

Likewise, proper oversight and management of grants and cooperative agreements continues to be a challenge for the Department. In an audit to determine whether recipients of certain Department grants and cooperative agreements complied with the cost-sharing requirements of their award agreements, we concluded that internal controls meant to ensure proper oversight of such awards needed improvement.¹⁵ For example, we found that monitoring plans were not tailored to awards, monitoring controls were not adjusted when the pandemic prevented site visits, and training for oversight staff did not provide adequate instruction regarding oversight of cost-share requirements. Such deficiencies led to unsupported or unallowable cost-share transactions for the Department.

During an ongoing audit related to grants and cooperative agreements awarded by the Department for countering Iranian influence, we issued a Management Assistance Report concerning internal control deficiencies at the Global Engagement Center (GEC).¹⁶ These lapses resulted in a situation where third-party contractors were performing inherently governmental functions on a large percentage of the awards reviewed. GEC did not ensure that grants officer representatives were properly assigned and designated throughout each award’s period of performance, which posed risks for award management and oversight. Finally, in an inspection of the Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, we highlighted instances where monitoring and grant oversight activity was not properly documented in award files, an issue frequently noted in our inspections of other entities.¹⁷

Our work also highlights the Department’s numerous difficulties related to internal controls. In a review of our own previous inspection reports, we found that 51 of the 52 reviewed contained findings that involved vulnerabilities in internal controls, which placed programs, personnel, resources, or sensitive information at risk.¹⁸ OIG found that missions did not effectively use the Department’s annual statement of assurance process to identify and address these deficiencies. In a more specific example, a recent audit concluded that internal controls involving the process to prepare residences for occupancy at Embassy Cairo were not fully effective in safeguarding expenditures related to this process.¹⁹ Internal control weaknesses contributed to questionable expenditures and a potential for over reliance on over-time.

¹² OIG, Audit of Noncompetitive Contracts in Support of Overseas Contingency Operations in Afghanistan and Iraq (AUD-MERO-22-03, October 2021).

¹³ OIG, Management Assistance Report: Improved Guidance and Acquisition Planning is Needed to Reduce the Use of Bridge Contracts in Afghanistan and Iraq (AUD-MERO-21-37, July 2021).

¹⁴ OIG, Audit of Acquisition Planning and Cost Controls While Transitioning Support Service Contracts in Iraq (AUD-MERO-21-43, September 2021).

¹⁵ OIG, Audit of Compliance With Cost-Sharing Requirements for Selected Department of State Grants and Cooperative Agreements (AUD-CGI-22-12, November 2021).

¹⁶ OIG, Management Assistance Report: Internal Controls Are Needed To Safeguard Inherently Governmental Functions at the Global Engagement Center (AUD-MERO-22-19, February 2022).

¹⁷ OIG, Inspection of the Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons (ISP-I-22-01, October 2021).

¹⁸ OIG, Management Assistance Report: Department Can Take Further Steps to Improve Executive Direction of Overseas Missions (ISP-21-14, June 2021).

¹⁹ OIG, Audit of the Process To Prepare Residences for New Tenants at U.S. Embassy Cairo, Egypt (AUD-MERO-22-23, March 2022).

Staffing

Our work reveals that many of the critical challenges facing the Department are caused or compounded by staffing gaps, frequent turnover in key positions, and inexperienced or undertrained staff. Moreover, instances of poor leadership, lack of coordination between and within Department bureaus and offices, and conflicting lines of authority have, at times, undermined the Department's effectiveness and negatively impacted employee morale.

We took a closer look at some of these human resources issues during an audit conducted in the Bureau of Global Talent Management, which has the critical responsibility of recruiting, developing, assigning, and supporting the Department's workforce.²⁰ We audited certain human resources services provided to eight other Department bureaus and found that over 90 percent of competitive hiring recruitment actions were not completed within required timeframes. Some of the bureau's difficulties were a result of its own staffing challenges, which hampered its ability to help other bureaus recruit, classify, and fill mission-critical Department positions.

Another example of challenges related to staffing comes from our inspection of the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, a bureau encompassing a region with many crucial foreign policy priorities, including U.S.-China relations.²¹ There, we found that inefficient organizational structures, staffing constraints, large numbers of temporary staff that frequently turnover, and increasing workloads hindered operations in some offices.

Our inspectors regularly measure senior officials' practices against the Department's leadership and management standards and note where leaders fall short. In one review, we noted numerous leadership failures in the Bureau of Consular Affairs contributed to a stunning lack of progress on a long running initiative to modernize and consolidate approximately 90 discrete consular legacy systems into a common technology framework.²² Even though the office responsible for the initiative has continually missed deployment dates, we found no evidence that leadership scrutinized the office or held staff accountable for missed deadlines. More worrisome, even though the modernization effort has cost millions of dollars and is critical to the bureau's ability to meet its mission in the future, leaders were unable to provide a clear, uniform definition of the initiative, what components it included, and which contracts supported it.

AFGHANISTAN-RELATED WORK

In the wake of the Department's suspension of operations in Afghanistan last year, OIG devoted substantial time and directed significant resources to planning and coordinating oversight activities that focus on key aspects of the situation and its aftermath. Our plans include reviews of the Special Immigrant Visa program, the resettlement of Afghan evacuees, and Embassy Kabul emergency planning and evacuation efforts. The latter work will focus on whether the Embassy followed established Department guidance in preparation for the evacuation of U.S. Government personnel, private U.S. citizens, Afghans at risk, and others from Afghanistan prior to and following the suspension of operations. These projects are in progress, and we continue to closely coordinate our ongoing and planned work with other relevant OIGs.

In January, we completed a project that reviewed open recommendations specific to Embassy Kabul and analyzed whether, in consideration of the suspension of operations, they should be closed, redirected, or remain open.²³ The review allowed us to identify issues that had been rendered moot by the events of last August. We have also attempted to add value in ways that do not require new work to be performed. For example, we published a report on lessons learned for establishing remote missions when events dictate that Department operations must cease in another country.²⁴ Although not directly related to Kabul, after the suspension of operations, we provided a copy to the Embassy Kabul management team to use as a reference when establishing the Afghanistan Affairs Unit.

²⁰ OIG, Review of the Bureau of Global Talent Management, Office of the Executive Director, Office of Technology Services' Information System Processes (ISP-I-21-29, July 2021).

²¹ OIG, Inspection of East Asian and Pacific Affairs (ISP-I-22-06, December 2021).

²² OIG, Review of the Bureau of Consular Affairs' Consular-One Modernization Program—Significant Deployment Delays Continue (ISP-I-22-03, November 2021).

²³ OIG, Information Report: Office of Inspector General's Analysis of Open Recommendations Specific to U.S. Embassy Kabul, Afghanistan (AUD-MERO-22-18, January 2022).

²⁴ OIG, Audit of Department of State Protocols for Establishing and Operating Remote Diplomatic Missions (AUD-MERO-21-33, July 2021).

RESOURCES

We appreciate this Subcommittee's ongoing support of our work. In particular, we are grateful for the inclusion of supplemental funding for Ukraine-related oversight work in the fiscal year 2022 omnibus appropriations bill. The Subcommittee's timely foresight in recognizing the draw on OIG resources created by Ukraine-related events means that OIG will be able to initiate important oversight work without compromising other mission-critical oversight projects as would be necessary without the additional funds. We are in the process of planning Ukraine-related oversight projects and will be in contact with you and your staff as we progress.

However, OIG's budget has remained relatively flat in recent years, jeopardizing our ability to sustain high-quality oversight work across the wide spectrum of programs and activities at the Department and USAGM. Increased IT costs (including costs associated with cybersecurity), unforeseen pandemic-related expenses, mandated work, and large-scale oversight projects like our oversight work on Afghanistan-related events, have resulted in an increasing and alarming strain on our budget and required us to delay some previously prioritized work.

OIG has been grappling with these funding challenges while facing perhaps its greatest challenge—advancing OIG's oversight mission in the midst of a global pandemic. On this front, I am particularly proud to highlight OIG's remarkable adaptability. Despite 2 years of restrictions that made traveling overseas to conduct inspections and audits of embassies and posts nearly impossible, we continue to meet our unique oversight requirements under the Foreign Service Act by performing audit work remotely and by developing and deploying remote and hybrid inspection models. However, with an anticipated increase in travel costs in fiscal year 2023, OIG will be forced to decrease the amount and scope of work we complete in order to support the resumption of travel unless additional funding is provided.

OIG also has demonstrated remarkable ingenuity and resilience in the face of ever-evolving IT challenges. After years of operating within the Department's IT systems, OIG made the decision to migrate to an independent IT architecture in 2015, a congressionally supported initiative. We believed then, and continue to believe today, that an independent IT network is critical to OIG's independence, security, and ability to fulfill its mission. Since then, OIG has striven to be a model within the Federal government; in the annual FISMA report, we received one of the two highest ratings across all five risk categories, a major and rare accomplishment across the Federal Government, despite the significant IT challenges we faced related to the pandemic. Yet, with increasing IT and labor requirements, adequately providing the necessary maintenance, support, and cybersecurity for the network is a challenge in our current budget environment. Moreover, recent IT modernization and cybersecurity requirements, including Executive Order 14028, "Improving the Nation's Cybersecurity," issued on May 12, 2021, place additional strain on existing labor resources and require adequate funding to accomplish.

Beyond making the sustainment of current operations a challenge, a largely static budget also presents implications for our ability to take on important discretionary work, including work on big initiatives of congressional interest such as Afghanistan. OIG developed its Afghanistan-related oversight plans in close coordination with the broader IG community. OIG's Afghanistan-related projects will—when combined with the work being performed by other agencies' OIGs—provide a comprehensive, whole-of-government review of recent and ongoing developments related to Afghanistan. In order to fund the timely completion of this important work, OIG had to abandon or delay plans to conduct eight non-Afghanistan-related projects and shift an estimated \$5.5 million in resources to the emerging Afghanistan priority.

Unfortunately, without supplemental funding for this unexpected work, OIG does not have the means to undertake these Afghanistan-related projects and complete the eight non-Afghanistan projects from which OIG diverted the required resources. Such work included Worldwide Protective Services (WPS) II Contracts, the Central America Regional Security Initiative, Counter-narcotics Assistance in East and Southeast Asia, Overseas Construction Contracts, the Department's COVID-19 response, and Whistleblower Protection Notifications to Contractor and Grantee Employees. Due to increasing resource constraints, we are unfortunately having to delay or cancel projects that were designed to target high-risk areas and that could have led to significant improvements in the programs and activities we oversee. I want to take this opportunity to clearly communicate the nature of these difficult trade-off decisions so that Members may consider alternative approaches to funding OIG's operations going forward.

CONCLUSION

I am incredibly proud of the work done by my colleagues in OIG and the value we provide to the Department, USAGM, Congress, and U.S. taxpayers. We are a talented and committed team of professionals dedicated to helping the Department and USAGM successfully accomplish their respective missions through robust oversight and solution-oriented recommendations. I want to thank my team for their resilience, ingenuity, integrity, and leadership.

I also want to again thank Chairman Coons, Ranking Member Graham, and Members of the Subcommittee for the opportunity to submit testimony. I take my statutory requirement to keep Congress fully and currently informed seriously, and I appreciate your interest in our work.

Senator COONS. Terrific. Thank you very much Mr. Secretary. I will begin what are 7-minute questions. We may get to a second round, but there is a vote scheduled for 3:30. So if Members intend to come back for a second round please make sure that my staff knows.

Thank you for your tireless work on pulling together our allies in support of Ukraine. Ukraine faces a brutal invasion by Russia, and I would be interested, first, just in a few questions about a supplemental that we understand may be coming soon.

Bridget Brink has been nominated to be the next U.S. Ambassador to Ukraine. Will you be resuming operations in Kyiv as well as in the rest of the country, and will the supplemental include funding to return U.S. Embassy personnel, and provide for their security; first? Second, in addition to military and humanitarian assistance do you think this supplemental will or should include funds for the global food security crisis, and the pandemic?

And then last, I have just returned from Georgia, many of us have expressed concern about Moldova, and Georgia, which are also roughly in the position that Ukraine is, meaning not members of the EU, not members of NATO, countries that are receiving Ukrainian refugees, and where there is a real and present threat of Russian aggression against Moldova and Georgia.

So if you would, Mr. Secretary; that is my opening set of questions.

Secretary BLINKEN. Mr. Chairman thank you very, very much. So a few things; first of all with regard to the supplemental, that should be coming forward in the next couple of days, and it will include very robust assistance requests for Ukraine, for partners and allies, and as well as, of course, our ability to function in Ukraine.

With regard to our diplomatic presence, we have diplomats going back to Ukraine this week, as we speak, to begin the process of looking to reopen the Embassy in Kyiv, and my anticipation is that they will start in Lviv, in western Ukraine, and look to reopen the Embassy as quickly, but also as safely as possible. And we look forward to working with you on that.

A number of other countries that left with the onset of the Russian aggression are also coming back, reopening their missions, it was very important for Secretary Austin and I to go, to show the flag, but we want to be able to show the flag every day. But it is a process that we take very seriously in terms of making sure that we do it in a way that ensures the safety and security of our personnel, but I think this will play out over the next few weeks.

We very much appreciate the Senate's prompt consideration of Bridget Brink to be Ambassador to Ukraine, she is extraordinarily

qualified for this job. I think she is known to many Members of this Committee, and hopefully she will be confirmed quickly once she is sent formally to the Senate.

I anticipate the supplemental will include a request for resources for food security, something that we can and should talk about. This is, as Chairman Leahy said, a very, very dramatic problem that already existed of course, and has been exacerbated by Russia's aggression, by the invasion.

We have Ukrainian farmers, who, instead of being able to deal with their crops, they have been forced to fight or to flee for their—because of the Russian aggression. We have Russia blockading Black Sea ports, so that even though Ukraine is actually producing a lot of wheat, it can't get out of the country because of this blockade.

And all of that is having an effect, not just in the immediate region, but literally around the world. And I know in all of your travels, you have heard this too, everywhere we go, everywhere I go I am hearing this. We have we have plans to address this, not just with the supplemental, we are trying to get countries to support the World food Program with additional funding, the Food and Agriculture Organization with more funding, they both have needs for resources.

We are looking at countries that have large stockpiles of food to use those stockpiles, to not hold them back, to not put export restrictions on food. The President has incentivized the production of fertilizer here in the United States, and we are working in a variety of ways to try to address this.

The last thing I will say on this, Mr. Chairman, is that we have the presidency of the UN Security Council in May. I intend to focus our month of the presidency on food security, and I will be spending some time there as well. And again, very much look forward to working with this Committee.

Finally, on Moldova and Georgia, I share the concerns that you have expressed about the vulnerable position they are in. We are working very closely with both. I was in Moldova a few weeks ago, our Assistant Secretary for Population, Refugees and Migration, Secretary Noyes, was just there as well. We have contributed, through a German pledging conference, an additional \$100 million to help support Moldova.

The request that you have before you would fund programs to do a number of things, including bolstering cybersecurity, economic stabilization and resilience, to counter disinformation where they are on the receiving end, to try to integrate their energy system to Europe. There is, I think a significant development in the connection of Moldova, as well as Ukraine to the European security grid, but there is work to do to make that work.

We also need to get the UN agencies to be prepared for a potential huge influx of additional refugees to Moldova. They have already taken in a lot of people. It is a small country.

Anyway, in the interest of time, there is more on Georgia. I could speak to that as well. But the point that you make is exactly right, we need to be looking out for these countries that are at risk, and in between we see, again, in Moldova, some things happening in Transnistria that we are looking at very, very carefully as well.

Senator COONS. Thank you Mr. Secretary. To the United Nations, if I might, just a few points and then I will lead to the Ranking Member.

First, we did not succeed last year in paying anything in our UN arrears. We have arrears now totaling a billion dollars, and in my view failing to pay what we could, and should, weakens our credibility, and frankly strengthens some of our global competitors, who would take advantage of that opportunity.

I was just in Paris, and had the chance to meet with Director General Azoulay of UNESCO. I would be interested in your thoughts, on whether in our absence, our competitors have used that absence to expand their role.

And then last, on the UN Human Rights Council, on March 4th the UN Human Rights Commission adopted a resolution opening a Commission of Inquiry for the human rights violations, the war crimes being committed in Ukraine. I would be interested in whether the administration supports an ICC or other war crimes investigation into a prosecution of Russian soldiers and leaders, and what assistance we could provide there, and how significant you think it is that Russia has been suspended now from the UN Human Rights Council, the first permanent member of the UN Security Council to be so suspended? And whether you would make a case for our renewing our participation in that Council?

And with that I will yield to the Ranking Member, if you would take a minute and answer those.

Secretary BLINKEN. Thank you very much. I very much share your view that it is to our detriment to not be making good on our commitments to the United Nations in terms of the budget, in terms of dealing with arrears. It puts us in a position of disadvantage in a place that we should be in a position of advantage.

And to your point some of some other countries are able to make the rhetorical case because of this, that U.S. leadership, U.S. influence can't be counted on, and it also, of course, contributes to some operational challenges. So we think that paying our dues, paying into the budget is vital both for the functioning of the UN, but also for our standing and our ability to carry the day, and carry the debate at the UN.

I think we have some proof positive of this, by the way, in what you just referenced, because we are back on the Human Rights Council we were able to actually lead in the creation of this Commission of Inquiry for Ukraine. So it is something we are going to very much support, looking at the atrocities and human rights abuses that were committed by Russia in Ukraine.

Similarly, we support and welcome the fact that the ICC has opened an investigation, we found ways to support the ICC in a number of instances in the past, including most recently with the prosecution of Janjaweed from Darfur that prosecution resulted, in no small measure, from information and evidence we were able to bring forward.

Our main focus when it comes to Ukraine is on helping the Prosecutor General and her team that is investigating these war crimes allegations. We have experts who are working very closely with that team to make sure that they can do their jobs effectively.

And finally, on UNESCO; this is, I think, a perfect example of a situation where our absence is clearly to our detriment because, among other things, UNESCO is in the business of setting standards, norms around the world for education, for the way new, emerging technologies like artificial intelligence are used, to cite just two examples.

So when we are not at the table shaping that conversation, and so actually helping to shape those norms and standards, well, someone else is, and that someone else is probably China. So it really does not make a lot of sense for us to be absent from that body.

Now, there is a very understandable concern expressed in the past because of the Palestinians seeking ignition, and that going forward, that Congress chose to act to make it difficult for us to continue our participation. We believe that having waiver authority would be important, and necessary. And I can say with authority that our partners in Israel feel the same way. They would support our rejoining UNESCO, and I think it is in the national interest to do that precisely because these debates are so important, and we should be at the table making sure that we shape them, not someone else.

Senator COONS. Thank you Mr. Secretary.

I will yield to the Ranking Member, Senator Graham.

Senator GRAHAM. If it is okay, I will let Senator Moran go first. He has a hearing to chair in about 5 minutes.

Senator MORAN. Someday I hope to chair a Committee again, but at the moment I am only the Ranking Member. But I appreciate your willingness, not only to promote me, but to allow me to go ahead of you. So Senator Graham, thank you.

Mr. Secretary, thank you. I would join in my commendation for the chair of the full Committee, and the chair of this subcommittee, and I always appreciate the opportunities I have to work with them.

Mr. Secretary, yesterday you told the Foreign Relations Committee that you believe our allies and partners are prepared to sustain and build upon the sanctions imposed. And I am a member of the NATO Observer Group, so I am talking about NATO, and I am talking about the circumstances that we all face in regard to the invasion, the evil invasion of Ukraine.

From your conversations with our allies, and particularly Germany, who have pledged to increase their defense budgets, what do you—what do you see as happening next? Will this last longer than this particular circumstance? And you indicated that they would build it—build upon sanctions imposed, what do you anticipate that building to include?

Secretary BLINKEN. Senator, thank you very much. And thank you for your leadership at this critical time on this issue.

A couple of things; first, I think what we have seen to date is extraordinary, in terms of allies coming together both in support of Ukraine, but also in exerting pressure on Russia. We said before this Russian aggression took place, as we saw it coming we tried to head it off, but Putin went ahead, we said back in December that there would be massive consequences imposed on Russia if it went ahead with the aggression.

The reason we were able to say that with confidence is because for many months we have been working with allies and partners to build those massive consequences, including unprecedented sanctions. And I think that many of us would not have fully expected that we would actually be able to carry that through.

Thus far we have, and we are seeing, as a result of the pressure imposed on Russia, an economy in free fall. Most predictions suggest it will contract by 15 percent this year. We are seeing capital flight from the country to the extent that Putin is not able to prevent that. We are seeing an exodus of companies, more than 600 businesses, international businesses, with brand names, leaving Russia, denying Russian consumers the ability to get those products.

And the export controls that we have been able to impose working with other countries mean that Russia will not be able to effectively modernize critical parts of its economy, and a system, including the defense sector.

But to your point, it is vitally important that we sustain this effort. And that means making sure that as we have done to date, allies and partners come along as we do this. We are in constant contact with them. We will continue to roll out sanctions in the weeks ahead. This is not stopping as long as Russia is not stopping. And the European Union itself is continuing to do that.

I think the next step is one of the things that they are looking at is an oil embargo on Russia. They are working on that. We are looking to see what they do. We will continue to focus on additional sectors of the Russian economy to make sure that we continue to ratchet up the pressure.

I anticipate that this is going to go on for some time, and all the more reason why we have to make sure that we sustain what we have been able to put in place.

Senator MORAN. Mr. Secretary, thank you. I was on the border of Ukraine a few weeks, just a couple weeks ago. My takeaway then, as it was previously, and continues to be, and what I am looking for is reassurance. I want to make sure the United States, in my view, it would be immoral for us just to provide enough assistance for the Ukrainians to survive, and not win.

And I also think that our help should include more than defending Ukraine, the offensive capabilities of Ukraine to attack those areas that are attacking them. Can you assure me that that is policy; that is what we are doing? Or would you want to dissuade me from my views?

Secretary BLINKEN. A couple of things; first, thanks to the tremendous support, generosity of the American people, through this Congress, we have been able to date to provide the Ukrainians with exceptional support. And this is something that started well before the Russian aggression.

The initial presidential drawdown took place back in Labor Day of last year, \$60 million, then there was another significant drawdown of about \$200 million around Christmastime. All that was done relatively quietly, the Russians had not yet committed their aggression, but we wanted to make sure that Ukrainians had in hand what they needed if Putin carried this forward.

And when he did, the main reason that the Ukrainians have been so successful thus far in repelling the Russians is, of course, because of their own courage, remarkable. But it is also because they had in hand the tools they needed to do that, and in particular the Javelins, the Stingers, systems of that nature were critical in winning the battle for Kyiv.

I can tell you that, broadly speaking, when it comes to anti-armor systems, and anti-air systems, for every Russian plane, and every Russian tank in Ukraine, we, and allies, and partners have been able to provide the Ukrainians to date with about systems for every plane and every tank.

But to your point, the nature of the battle has now shifted, and what is happening in the East and Southern Ukraine is very different than what was happening around Kyiv in terms of what the Ukrainians need to be able to repel the Russian aggression. And so heavier artillery has been critical, and we are working assiduously, and others are, to get them that.

Shore-to-ship weapons, and to deal with the challenges in the Black Sea are also vital, heavier armor, tanks, et cetera, all of that is in train.

Secretary Austin was in Germany yesterday, as you probably saw. A pretty remarkable scene, 40 Defense Ministers sitting around a huge table, all working on coordinating the effort to get to the Ukrainians what they need. We spent three hours with President Zelenskyy, his Minister of Defense, his Chief of the Armed Forces, the Foreign Minister, et cetera, and a chunk of that time was spent on going in detail through Ukraine's needs going forward.

So the short answer is, we are determined to get them what they need to deal with this Russian aggression, and to push the Russians out of the country. It is another matter as to whether the Ukrainians should take actions that go beyond their borders.

My own view is that it is vital that they do whatever is necessary to defend against Russian aggression. And the tactics of this are their decisions, but what we are doing with all of these systems is making sure the Ukrainians have the means to defend themselves, that is what this is about, and making sure that they can do whatever is necessary to push the Russians out of the country.

Senator MORAN. Mr. Chairman, I won't ask another question, but if I can complement, or at least support a decision that the Secretary has made. I encouraged you several weeks ago, a week or more ago, to return to Kyiv with our diplomatic Embassy, you are headed that direction, it sounds like it is going occur in stages, but I am supportive of the United States having its Embassy in Kyiv as quickly as it is safe for our personnel.

And I want to thank you for a couple of folks, several of your folks, Nas, Courtney, Paul, Jeff, Consular Affairs folks who have been exceptionally helpful to us in our efforts to solve problems for Kansans-Americans around the globe. Thank you.

Secretary BLINKEN. Senator, thank you for saying that. We very much appreciate it, and we look forward to continue to work with you.

Senator MORAN. Thank you.

Secretary BLINKEN. Thank you.

Senator COONS. Chairman Leahy.

Senator LEAHY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And Secretary Blinken, I stepped out, but I heard your kind words outside. I didn't jump back in because I didn't want to interrupt you guys, enjoying it too much. But thank you, it was undeserved but greatly appreciated.

And regarding Ukraine, that some have urged the U.S. to liquidate the Russian Central Bank's nearly—was it \$100 billion, I believe, in foreign exchange reserves that are frozen at the Federal Reserve, to use all those funds to help the people of Ukraine, does the Department have that capacity to identify the assets of Russia, and other oligarchs? And can they coordinate with the Treasury and Justice Departments in seizing and freezing such assets?

Secretary BLINKEN. Mr. Chairman, we are working very closely with Treasury and Justice to look at both how we can effectively freeze, but also seize assets. And we have blocking sanctions, as you know, in place against a variety of individuals and institutions that effectively freezes their property in the United States.

The question when it comes to the seizure piece, is do we have the relevant provisions in place, civil criminal forfeiture authorities, Justice is in the process of reviewing that. And I know that there are a number of ideas that I find compelling about finding ways to use these assets to support Ukraine. The short answer is, the Justice Department lawyers are looking at all of that.

Senator LEAHY. Of course it doesn't help that a lot of those assets are behind various walls, one after another, fake corporations, and things of that nature.

Secretary BLINKEN. Yes. And I think it goes to the importance of having transparency, beneficial ownership, rules, et cetera.

Senator LEAHY. And I can't think of anything I have seen more shocking than the scenes of what the Russian soldiers are doing, machine gunning families as they are trying to run away from something, the children, innocent civilians have been murdered. And can that be investigated by the International Criminal Court? Should it be? And can we help?

Secretary BLINKEN. We welcome the fact that the ICC has opened an investigation, one of the critical things they are doing is making sure that potential evidence of atrocities is being compiled effectively. As I mentioned, I think when you are out of the room Mr. Chairman, besides the ICC work, I think the critical focus that we have is on supporting the work of the Ukrainian Prosecutor General. And we have experts who are working every single day with that team to make sure that they have what they need to document, compile the evidence. And actually look at potential prosecutions.

But those two efforts, as well as the Commission of Inquiry established by the Human Rights Council of the United Nations, with our leadership, are three of the critical vehicles we see, going forward, to get accountability to deal with this.

And to your point, some of the things we are seeing are, I think, beyond almost our collective imaginations. For example, there are very credible reports that the Russians have been, in retreat, booby-trapping things like people's washing machines, and toys, so

that when people are able to return home and go about their lives they are killed or injured as a result of one of these booby traps.

Senator LEAHY. I look at some of the land mines, and cluster mines used this Javelin type—

Secretary BLINKEN. That is right.

Senator LEAHY [continuing]. Mine that you won't even have to touch it, if you come near it and it's off.

Secretary BLINKEN. That is exactly right. And Mr. Chairman, part of our request, and I think this will be in the supplemental, will be for some additional funds for demining because, unfortunately, we have to deal with that now as a result of what Russia has been doing.

Senator LEAHY. Thank you for mentioning it, because I know your request is \$18 million below what was requested last year. I have a feeling you are going to need a lot more for humanitarian demining. And as you know, I have long sought to rid the world of landmines, but I think also what the prosecutors are getting, it is going to be extremely important for historians. You know, those who don't understand the mistakes of history, it is almost a cliché, but they are condemned to repeat them.

The world is going to see this, because there is no question that it is crimes against humanity. And we are going to need, I think, the World Food Program, projects the unmet need of \$10 billion. I would hopefully have a request to beef that up. And the President's budget request is about \$8 billion above the fiscal year 2022 enacted level, but the war in Ukraine, the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, and so on, this is not the moment—we should be investing more in the State Department, and other agencies, and more. I know this is something Chairman Coons has talked about at length, putting more in Foreign Ops, not less.

Secretary BLINKEN. Yes.

Senator LEAHY. And lastly, and my time is running out, the Leahy Law, would you and your staff please talk with us, how that—the one that prohibits assistance, are units of foreign security forces that are committing gross violations of human rights, I think you have some money in your budget for Leahy Law vetting, but are you confident that that is being carried out as much as it should be?

Secretary BLINKEN. Mr. Chairman, in my judgment it is, I think it is being consistently and effectively applied. We have million dollars in the budget this year to conduct the vetting. It is a critical part of what we do, and I think we have the resources, as well as the focus necessary, to carry that out in the way it was intended.

Senator LEAHY. And I would just mentioned, Mr. Chairman, your plane was delayed, but we had a meeting, some extensive meeting. I know Senator Durbin and I were there yesterday with the President, and others, about Cuba. Nobody condones the crackdown on the people who are peacefully protesting in there, but I also don't—I don't condone the total rollback of the policy that we had under the Obama administration.

I hope that attention is given to finding a way that we can start having normal relations with Cuba for the good of their own people, and for us.

Secretary BLINKEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I look forward to catching up with the President. I haven't talked to him since your meeting, but I look forward to hearing from him on the meeting.

Senator COONS. Thank you Mr. Chairman. Senator Graham.

Senator GRAHAM. Thank you very much Mr. Chairman. I won't request a second round; we will try to make this as quick as possible, but there is a lot going on in the world, and let us start here at home.

Mr. Secretary, do you believe if we repeal Title 42 authority to deport illegal immigrants because of the threat of a COVID outbreak that we will have more illegal immigrants coming?

Secretary BLINKEN. Senator, two things on that. First, as you know, Title 42 is a CDC authority.

Senator GRAHAM. Right.

Secretary BLINKEN. Public health authority.

Senator GRAHAM. Right.

Secretary BLINKEN. It is not an immigration policy——

Senator GRAHAM. Yes, that is right.

Secretary BLINKEN [continuing]. Authority. The question is what practical effect would its repeal have? I think we are likely to see more people seeking to enter the country, but if they cannot present a credible claim of asylum they will be returned. That is the policy. That doesn't change. The order is not opening with the repeal of Title 42, if that is what happens.

Senator GRAHAM. I am just saying the border is completely broken. We have 1.2 million illegal crossings since October of last year, and there will be a tsunami more coming if we repeal Title 42. Will there be COVID money in the supplemental?

Secretary BLINKEN. I can't speak to that at this point because I think the White House is still looking at that.

Senator GRAHAM. Okay.

Secretary BLINKEN. One way or another, Senator, in my judgment we need COVID money.

Senator GRAHAM. Okay.

Secretary BLINKEN. Internationally, whether that is in this supplemental or in some other vehicle, I don't know, but we need it.

Senator GRAHAM. Yes. I think we do need money for COVID internationally, I will agree with that. And I think if you want to stop, as Senator Leahy said, one country away from an outbreak, you would revisit Title 42. I would encourage you to do that.

Let us go to Afghanistan. What is the state of play in Afghanistan for women right now?

Secretary BLINKEN. The state of play is extremely mixed to negative, and the——

Senator GRAHAM. What is the upside for women?

Secretary BLINKEN. The only upside that we have seen at all, is that somewhat, ironically, you might say there is, in the country at large, greater stability, and relative peace than there has been. That is about the only upside I can think of.

Senator GRAHAM. Okay.

Secretary BLINKEN. The downside of course is that we have seen, including most recently, the Taliban fall back on its commitment that it had made to ensure that girls can go to school above the

sixth grade. This is, among many things, something that is a deep, a deep concern.

Senator GRAHAM. Is our homeland more at risk now than it was before the withdrawal in Afghanistan, from al-Qaeda, and ISIS presence in Afghanistan?

Secretary BLINKEN. If you look at the—if you look at the presence and the threat, I would say there are three things that are going on. First, there is al-Qaeda itself, and I can go into more detail in another setting—

Senator GRAHAM. We will do it. It is just a general question. Is al-Qaeda and ISIS more free to roam now that we are out of Afghanistan than they were before we left?

Secretary BLINKEN. ISIS-K is, as you know, is of course an enemy of the Taliban. And the issue there is not the will of the Taliban to take them on.

Senator GRAHAM. Yes.

Secretary BLINKEN. It is their capacity. That is, right.

Senator GRAHAM. Right.

Secretary BLINKEN. When it comes to al-Qaeda, and the Arab al-Qaeda Corps, there are a very, very small number of people in Afghanistan.

Senator GRAHAM. How do we know?

Secretary BLINKEN. Based on the—again, without going into detail in this setting—

Senator GRAHAM. Well, Mr. Secretary, with all due respect, if you are a Shiite in Afghanistan, it had been a good week for you. There is no upside to the Taliban in charge, for women anywhere in Afghanistan, and I think our homeland is far more at risk now that we have no presence on the ground, no ability to detect what al-Qaeda, and ISIS-K are up to. So to me, that is an easy question to ask.

President Biden said he had no regrets about leaving Afghanistan. Do you have any regrets?

Secretary BLINKEN. I don't Senator, in the sense that—

Senator GRAHAM. Okay.

Secretary BLINKEN [continuing]. This was America's longest war.

Senator GRAHAM. No. That is fair enough. Is the war over? Have we ended the war between us in radicalism by leaving Afghanistan?

Secretary BLINKEN. As much as we—we went to Afghanistan, as you know well, for one reason which is to deal with the folks who attacked us on 9/11. We decimated al-Qaeda in its ability to continue attacks beyond Afghanistan. Osama bin Laden was brought to justice more than a decade ago. It was time to end, end the longest war.

Senator GRAHAM. Have you heard the assessment by the Secretary of Defense, and others that: How long would it be before an attack against America originating from Afghanistan would mature? And they said 2 years. Is that a successful withdrawal? That is what they said. I asked them.

Secretary BLINKEN. And I don't want to, myself, put words in their mouths, but the question—

Senator GRAHAM. Anyway I just think it is—

Secretary BLINKEN [continuing]. Goes to if the threat could potentially—

Senator GRAHAM. Yes. It is just ridiculous to say that we are safer by letting the Taliban take over Afghanistan, and that women have any upside.

Let us go to the Ukraine. Are you pursuing Russia being a state sponsor of terrorism?

Secretary BLINKEN. We are looking at that. And the question is—

Senator GRAHAM. What is hard about that?

Secretary BLINKEN. The question is this, and this is something that the lawyers are looking at. There is no doubt in my mind, Senator—

Senator GRAHAM. Right.

Secretary BLINKEN [continuing]. That the Russians are terrorizing the Ukrainian people.

Senator GRAHAM. Well, what about Syria?

Secretary BLINKEN. The question is this, and again, this is something that the lawyers are looking at, to make sure that we actually meet the statutory requirements of that designation.

Senator GRAHAM. Well, if you need to change the law so that Russia fits in, you will have 100 votes. I don't know what more you would have to do as a country to be at state-sponsored terrorism. They have decimated the Ukraine—Ukraine, and they are all over Syria dropping barrel bombs on people. So you mentioned that you are looking at it. I would encourage you to look at it, and act upon it.

Putin vowed today in the Duma that he would stay committed, even though there have been heavy losses to accomplishing the goal of the invasion. What would you like to say to him?

Secretary BLINKEN. Very simply, end this aggression. End it now.

Senator GRAHAM. Well, it seems not to be working. What are the consequences to him if he keeps this up?

Secretary BLINKEN. I think we have already seen devastating consequences for Russia. And let me say this first, in terms of his actual objectives, as stated in his own words.

Senator GRAHAM. Uh-huh.

Secretary BLINKEN. He has already failed, because those objectives were to eliminate Ukraine as an independent and sovereign country, to subsume it back, in some fashion into Russia, we know already, as a result of the extraordinary courage of the Ukrainians, that that is not going to happen.

And as I have said, there is going to be an independent and sovereign Ukraine around a lot longer than Vladimir Putin will be on scene. So it is already a strategic—

Senator GRAHAM. From your lips to God's ears. And I want to help you where I can in that endeavor. When it comes to winning in Ukraine, describe very briefly what winning looks like for Ukraine and the United States?

Secretary BLINKEN. Winning is going to be defined by the Ukrainians, and we will support whatever they decide is in their interest.

Senator GRAHAM. Have they told you what winning looks like?

Secretary BLINKEN. Right now for them, and I don't want to put words in their mouths, but I think their focus is, of course, on repelling the Russian aggression, and getting the Russians out of their country.

Senator GRAHAM. As said by Senator Moran, that our goal was to get Russia out of Ukraine. Is that our goal?

Secretary BLINKEN. That is Ukraine's goal, and as a result that that is our goal as well.

Senator GRAHAM. Okay, great. If Russia uses banned chemical weapons in Ukraine, what will our response be?

Secretary BLINKEN. The President has been clear, that there would be severe consequences for any use of weapon of mass destruction by Russia. We have been working, not only within our government, but with allies and partners across.

Senator GRAHAM. Can we put a parameter on what severe consequences would look like?

Secretary BLINKEN. I am not going to telegraph in public, what we would do. I can tell you that a lot of work has gone into planning against every possible scenario. And again, in a different setting I am happy to get into that.

Senator GRAHAM. Okay. We will take that up. If Russia explodes a tactical nuclear device in Ukraine would you consider that an attack on NATO because the radiation would go well beyond Ukraine?

Secretary BLINKEN. All of this, including the potential use of a nuclear device, attack with a nuclear device is part of the planning we are doing. And again, we can get into that in more detail in a different setting.

Senator GRAHAM. Well, just a couple more minutes. Do you think our policy regarding Russia and Ukraine has been successful?

Secretary BLINKEN. To date, in my judgment?

Senator GRAHAM. Yes.

Secretary BLINKEN. Yes. In the sense that we said this, Senator, before—when we saw the likelihood of a Russian aggression, many months ago—

Senator GRAHAM. So you think this is successful?

Secretary BLINKEN. I would say two things. First, when we saw this as a possibility, we did two things, and we did both of them at the same time. We worked to see if we could head it off through diplomacy, and that—

Senator GRAHAM. And that didn't work.

Secretary BLINKEN [continuing]. And at the same—that did not work.

Senator GRAHAM. Right.

Secretary BLINKEN. But we also said at the same time that we would make sure that we, and the Ukrainians, and the world, were prepared if Russia went through this aggression; and we have been. Ukraine has done an extraordinary job in pushing the Russians back from Kyiv, the world has come together to support the Ukrainians as a result of American leadership in American engagement. The world has come together to impose massive consequences on Russia for its aggression, again as a result of the Russia's invasion.

Senator GRAHAM. Well, with all due respects I don't—

Secretary BLINKEN. So I think in terms of what we set out to do, so far, this has been successful, but it has to be sustained.

Senator GRAHAM. I just take issue with the fact that we are being successful in Ukraine, one, they invaded and we told them not to, they did. They are killing people right and left, and you know we are slow getting weapons in. I hope it turns out well.

But do you think our withdrawal from Afghanistan affected Putin's decision to invade at all?

Secretary BLINKEN. I do not. Senator I think he looks at these things on their own terms when——

Senator GRAHAM. Why did he pick this year?

Secretary BLINKEN [continuing]. When he went, well, he went into Georgia in 2008 we had more than 150,000 troops between Afghanistan and Iraq.

Senator GRAHAM. Yes.

Secretary BLINKEN. That did not deter him. When he went into Ukraine in 2014——

Senator GRAHAM. But he hasn't dismembered the State of Georgia, he has occupied—you know, there is two provinces there, but why did he choose to invade Ukraine this year, you believe?

Secretary BLINKEN. I think a number of factors came into play. I think he saw Ukraine moving inexorably to the west, to Europe, and he saw nothing that was going to interrupt that process, it was democratizing, it was strengthening its system. And having a successful democracy on Russia's borders was bad for Putin, and he had the ambition that he said in his own words——

Senator GRAHAM. Last year.

Secretary BLINKEN [continuing]. Ending its sovereignty and independence, and this was all that——

Senator GRAHAM. He doesn't recognize Ukraine as a separate nation.

Secretary BLINKEN. That is correct.

Senator GRAHAM. Yes. So it is not really about them being—they have been moving toward democracy for a long time. I think he invaded this year because I thought he——because he thinks he can get away with it.

So very quickly, 1 minute here. China, I just got back from the region. The people in Taiwan are very concerned about what happens in Ukraine. Do you agree that the outcome in Ukraine can influence what China does regarding Taiwan?

Secretary BLINKEN. I do. I think China is looking at this very carefully, and the fact that it is seen, as a result of our leadership, 40 countries or more, come together in a variety of ways to impose these massive costs on Russia for its aggression, that would have to factor into its calculus about Taiwan going forward.

Senator GRAHAM. Are you, as administration, committed to following Putin to the ends of the earth in supporting war crimes investigations and prosecution against him, individually? Do you believe that we could ever forgive and forget when it comes to Putin? Do you believe it is the right policy for the international community to pursue him as a war criminal in perpetuity?

Secretary BLINKEN. Senator, we are committed to doing everything we possibly can for as long as it takes to ensure that there is accountability for the crimes that have been committed.

Senator GRAHAM. That includes Putin himself?

Secretary BLINKEN. That includes—whoever committed the crimes, whoever ordered the crimes.

Senator GRAHAM. Thank you.

Senator COONS. Thank you Mr. Secretary. We both went about 10 minutes. We will endeavor to encourage others to stick to about seven, but I appreciate your forbearance.

I am going to ask Senator Durbin, who is next, if he would both question, and then preside if I have to run to vote during the next few minutes. You may uniquely, among the cabinet, be familiar with exactly how this all works, so thank you for your forbearance.

Senator Durbin.

Senator DURBIN. Thanks Mr. Chairman I want to make a point of being here today, Mr. Secretary, after I witnessed on television last night the exchange between you and the junior senator from Kentucky.

I hope that no one left that hearing, or believes today that his questioning represents the feeling of America. If Putin, or the Russians, or anyone take comfort in his questioning they are making a mistake. I think it should be clear, and you tried to make it as clear as you could, that we are not conceding any sphere of influence to Vladimir Putin, we are not conceding an anxious effort to understand what he is doing in Ukraine.

I understand what he is doing in Ukraine, it is very clear what he is doing, he has launched a vicious, barbaric, genocidal attack on this nation, unprovoked by them, and unsustained by international law as we know it. And I did not want any friends and allies of the United States to think that the junior senator from Kentucky expresses our point of view.

I cannot imagine the reverberations of that comment in the Baltics, for example. The Baltics were part of the Soviet Union because of the aggression of Adolf Hitler and Joseph Stalin, it had nothing to do with the people of those countries, asking to be part of any Soviet Union. And they survived to this day, a small, vibrant democracy that is loyal to the United States, because they are part of NATO, and they share our values. And we are not giving that up to Vladimir Putin under any circumstances. I hope what I have just said you agree with.

Secretary BLINKEN. I do.

Senator DURBIN. Good. Let me talk to you about a sentiment that has been expressed by Senator Moran, and also by Senator Graham, and I share. And the sentiment is this: The earliest analysis of what would occur when the Russians invaded Ukraine suggested, and this is before the invasion, that Kyiv would last a matter of days, the bulk of the country a matter of weeks, but the resistance that would be formed against any Russian occupation could go on for months or years.

And Putin would have learned under those circumstances that he had won a pyrrhic victory, if he even wanted to call it that. The reality of the situation is much different. Kyiv has not fallen, you were able to visit that city with the Secretary of Defense, the bulk of Ukraine is at least stable, though there are terrible examples of fighting going on at this point, and my concern is this, we are try-

ing to scramble in the last 53 days; is that correct, 54 days, to readjust our thinking about the future of Ukraine.

We underestimated the courage and resiliency of the Ukrainian people, the determination they have shown to defend their own country. We perhaps overestimated the power of the Russian Military, and as a consequence we have to readjust to the fact that Ukrainians have won significant victories.

My concern, as expressed by my Republican colleagues, is this, are we throwing a 10-foot rope to someone drowning 20-foot offshore? Are we falling short of what they need for something decisive to happen in our interest and their interest? Are we doing enough from a diplomatic or military viewpoint, from your point of view?

I would hate to be able to—I would hate to see the situation where we are seeing how proud we are of NATO coming together with all its strength, and at the end of the day a devastated Ukraine with refugees by the millions, and people in unmarked graves is what is left behind by Putin. That is hardly a NATO victory. Would you comment on that?

Secretary BLINKEN. Thank you, Senator. What Russia has done and continues to do to Ukraine every day, the brutalization of the country, and the parts where Russia is engaged, is a tragedy that in and of itself can't be undone; people have died, been killed in the most awful ways, that can't be undone. People have been displaced from their homes, 5 million refugees, 7 million displaced persons inside of Ukraine, including, by most estimates, three-quarters of the children of the country have been displaced at one point. Some are moving back; and even if they come—when they come home that is not going to fully erase the trauma that they have been through.

So some of the—some of the damage that has been done is quite, literally, irreparable. Having said that, I believe that we are—the United States, many other countries coming together to make sure that—to the best of our ability—the Ukrainians have what is necessary to push back this Russian aggression.

They have done that successfully in and around Kyiv. They are engaged now in a ferocious fight in Southern and Eastern Ukraine. And as I mentioned a few moments ago, Secretary Austin was just in Germany yesterday with 40 Ministers of Defense to make sure that we are all coming together to get the Ukrainians the kind of weaponry that they need in a battle that has changed in its nature, to continue to do what they need to do to push back this Russian aggression.

We are focused like a laser on that, and on making sure that they have what they need. Some of that is coming from the United States, some of it is coming from many other countries that are engaged, and it is being done in an organized and coordinated fashion, and it is being done in full consultation with the Ukrainians. But as I said we have to continue to sustain that and follow through.

Let me just cite one quick example though, of how this has evolved. It used to be that when you—the President made a draw-down order, it might take some weeks for—between the time the order was given, and the time the equipment in question got into

the hands of those it was going to. This is now happening in many cases in as little as 72 hours. From the time the President did the drawdown to the time weapons are getting into the hands of Ukrainians to use them against the Russian aggression, 72 hours.

We were just there as you noted, and talked with all of the folks on the ground who are helping to make sure and coordinate the security assistance getting in to the Ukrainians. It is a remarkable operation, and it is working in real time. We have to keep that going, and we have to make sure that they are getting what they need to deal with the actual threats that they face.

Senator DURBIN. The President has made it clear that a patch of Polish real estate is a tripwire. He said that over and over again. I assume there are other tripwires which you may not want to be as explicit with us in this Committee setting in describing. I hope that they will include the consideration of the genocide which is taking place there as well, if there is a point beyond which we cannot, with good moral conscience, justify or even look the other way, or wait for a day to resolve it.

On the question of war criminals, I was surprised to learn that current American law does not give us any criminal authority to prosecute those who committed war crimes in other countries, nor does it give us any civil, anyone any civil authority over those same people. I have legislation to change that.

We should make it clear to anyone that has been engaged in Putin's strategy, they will never find a comfortable, safe home in the United States. And I hope that I can bring that to your attention and that you will—your people will take a look at it.

Secretary BLINKEN. I look forward to looking at that, Senator. Thank you.

Senator DURBIN. If I could mention two or three other things, Senator Hagerty, I will wrap it up quickly, because I know you probably are waiting to vote as well.

Afghanistan, Mark Frerichs, I wanted to make a point of making a record of our continuing concern about this Illinois resident, who is being held captive in Afghanistan; are you familiar with this situation?

Secretary BLINKEN. I am more than familiar with it. It is something that I am intensely focused on.

Senator DURBIN. Thank you. We hope that we can bring him home.

The Chinese bullying of Lithuania over their decision to recognize the Taiwanese office; are you aware of this situation?

Secretary BLINKEN. Again, more than aware of it; extremely focused on it. We jumped in very quickly when that happened, to make sure that we could bolster Lithuania, including with economic assistance, creating greater opportunities for trade and investment. We have also rallied countries and partners in the European Union to do the same thing. The European Union has stood up against this kind of coercive action by China, to combat the bullying that it has tried to use. And Lithuania has been extraordinary in its resilience and fortitude against it. But yes, very focused on that as well.

Senator DURBIN. Is there a path forward in Haiti with the situation that we currently face?

Secretary BLINKEN. It is a—it is long path forward, there are, as you know very well from the time you spent on this. There are two things that they rely on. First, we need to see the government, civil society, all actors come together to get us to elections, free and fair elections, that reestablish a fully legitimate Haitian Government and leadership. And that work is in progress. We are trying to facilitate that, and support that.

But having said that, the problems are so deep-rooted, and so challenging that I think that the road is very long, the criminality, violence, the lack of basic law and order is a fundamental problem that we are working to address, including by supporting and strengthening the Haitian National Police, and getting other countries to do the same, that is very much a work in progress.

The endemic poverty, and lack of economic opportunity, one of the challenges, Senator, is that, you know we have—we and other countries, over many years have devoted substantial resources to Haiti, but to date the honest truth is that it has not made a sustainable difference. We have to be, and we are, looking at: How can we do this more effectively, to help Haiti get to a place where it is sustainable.

And of course, it has been on the receiving end of one horrific thing after another, including natural disasters that continue to set back what progress is made. So the short answer is: This is a long road, we are looking at and focused on trying to get the elections, and having a government that can fully represent the people.

We are trying to work on basic security by bolstering the police, and dealing with the criminality, the gangs which are terrorizing parts of the country, but then there is a much longer project in helping Haiti to really stand on its feet in a self-sustaining way.

Senator DURBIN. Thank you I am going to send you a written question related to my efforts to secure the release of Philippine Senator Philippine Sen. Leila de Lima.

Secretary BLINKEN. Yes.

Senator DURBIN. One of the critics of the Duterte Regime.

Secretary BLINKEN. Yes.

Senator DURBIN. I would like to know your take on the current state of affairs there? I will save that because I see Senator Hagerty waiting, I know he has to vote. So Senator, please take it away.

Senator HAGERTY. Thank you, Senator Durbin.

And Secretary Blinken, it is good to see you again. I appreciated our interaction yesterday at the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, as we talked about the importance of the U.S.-Japan Alliance, the Quad, the Indo-Pacific, and I look forward to continue working with you on those issues.

I would like to turn my discussion with you today, though, on something else that is related to the region but also it hits us right here at home. And that is China's refusal to stop the flow of fentanyl and its precursors into the Western Hemisphere.

I have raised this issue with your assistant secretaries, with your deputy assistant secretaries, but I want to raise it with you today because it is that important. I feel like we need decisive action, and it is for the safety of Americans, it is for the safety of our children. We are both parents. I am sure you feel the same.

Today in America, the number one cause of death for young people between the age of 18 and 45 is drug overdose, 100,000 lives were lost last year to drug overdoses, and most of those drug overdoses were fentanyl-related. And the DEA continues to assess that fentanyl coming from China into Mexico is the major cause of this.

It is it is something that I talked about with Mexican officials last May when I traveled to Mexico. They talked about the fact that Chinese entities are sending technicians, they are sending equipment, and setting up production in partnership with Mexican cartels there. And these cartels are multi-billion-dollar industries that have basically taken control of the northern border of Mexico.

I met with your counterpart, Foreign Minister Ebrard, and asked him what we could do to cooperate, what we could do to help. And he told me that they would greatly appreciate help with things in the nature of scanning technologies, anything that would help them determine whether fentanyl, or its precursors, or the machinery to produce it was coming into his country.

I appreciated his concern there, and I think it is something that we ought to continue to focus on. You know, I was on the phone with White House Staff during the Buenos Aires G20, when President Trump directly asked President Xi to stop sending fentanyl to the United States.

My sense is that we need to really double down on our pressure with China on this. If President Xi and the Chinese Communist Party can shut down a city the size of Shanghai, one of the three largest cities in the world, I think they could certainly shut down the flow of fentanyl and its precursors into our hemisphere.

And I know you have many difficult conversations with your Chinese counterparts, but I would like to hear your thoughts on what our strategy might be, and encourage you to take on this difficult challenge too?

Secretary BLINKEN. Senator, thank you for raising that. I very much share your concern I appreciate your focus on it, and the efforts you have been making. And I agree with you, this is a problem that needs intense focus and solutions. We have been working on this in a number of ways. We have been working to add some of the precursors to a prohibited list to make clear that you can't get fentanyl or variants in through the back door by using precursors that are, for one reason or another, not on a prohibited list.

We have made some progress there. We are working with the Mexicans on exactly this question, to reestablished the security dialogue with them last year, and part of this is looking at the—of course the flow of drugs of any kind into the country. And what assistance do they need to more effectively police it.

I am going to follow up on the specific suggestion that you referenced, to make sure that we are, if we haven't already done it, actually looking at that, and doubling up back with them on what it is they need to effectively police fentanyl. I can tell you this has come up in engagements between President Biden and President Xi. So it has been raised to that level as well,

But I would also welcome working with you and your team on ways that we can effectively address this problem.

Senator HAGERTY. I appreciate that very much. And again in my conversations with Foreign Minister Ebrard that may have predated what you have been talking about. But he sincerely believed that there were technology solutions that we could help provide that would help them. I have seen some of those technology solutions deployed at our southern border.

I went to our southern border earlier this month to see what is happening there, it is a travesty in terms of the flow of narcotics coming across the border. But again, I saw the technology that we are putting in place now that sense, in a very sophisticated manner, the illegal substances that, at least where they may be hidden. So I appreciate any efforts that you might make to work on that.

I also wanted to take on, for just a moment longer, the topic of India, and our U.S.-India relations. The world's oldest democracy, of course, is the United States, but India is the world's biggest democracy. And I think they have you know—I think what I see before us is something I am certain that is very frustrating in the short term, when we have our differences, and you deal with that every day.

But in the long term, this strategic partnership that we have with India I think poses the opportunity to do more good in the 21st century, and have more consequence, more impact than anything that the CCP could do, coming from their perspective. And I believe that there is great, untapped potential there in terms of developing that partnership for the good of all.

And I would look forward to hearing your views in terms of what concrete steps the United States and India could take together to deepen our strategic alliance.

Secretary BLINKEN. Senator, I very much share your perspective. I think this partnership has the potential to be one of the most important and foundational partnerships that we have going forward, over the next decades. This has actually been, I think, a success story over multiple administrations, going back to the end of the Clinton administration, through the Bush administration, particularly with the Peaceful Nuclear Cooperation Agreement that, by the way, now President then Senator Biden helped shepherd through this institution; through the Trump administration as well, and prior to that, the Obama administration; and now through ours.

President Biden spent a lot of time directly engaged with Prime Minister Modi and India's leadership. Of course, as you know very well, we have energized the Quad that brings India together with Australia, and Japan, and us. This has been a very important vehicle for strengthening our collaboration across a whole variety of fronts with India, I have spent a lot of time with my Indian counterpart, and very much agree with you.

What is interesting, and we talked about this a little bit yesterday at the Foreign Relations Committee is, this is a moment of, I think, strategic inflection, by which I mean this: A number of countries are now re-looking at some of their relationships, and some of their interests, particularly when it comes to their relationships with Russia.

And of course in the case of India, there is a relationship that goes back decades, and Russia for India was out of necessity, a

partner of choice when we were not in a position to be a partner. Now, we are. And we are investing in that effort. I think there is a growing strategic convergence between the United States and India, and of course China is a big part of that.

Senator HAGERTY. Yes.

Secretary BLINKEN. But I very much share your perspective, and this is a major area of focus for the administration, and for me, to make sure that we are doing everything we can to strengthen and to build on that partnership going forward.

Senator HAGERTY. I appreciate that very much, Mr. Secretary. And I would just add one more point of encouragement. On my recent trip to Japan I spoke with Prime Minister Abe, who developed a very good relationship with Prime Minister Modi, and I know you know Prime Minister Abe as well. And I would encourage you, as you talk with your Japanese counterparts, to engage them in finding good ways to work together with India, because they seem to be on the same track and the same mindset as we are. Thank you very much for your comments today.

Secretary BLINKEN. Thank you.

Senator HAGERTY. Appreciate your testimony.

Senator COONS. Senator Van Hollen.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And let me start by congratulating you on assuming the chairmanship of the subcommittee first hearing. And look forward to working with you, and the Ranking Member.

And I also want to commend the Chairman of the Full Committee, Senator Leahy, as others have done, for his incredible service.

Mr. Secretary, good to see you. We had a chance to talk yesterday in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, so I am not going to retread that ground. But I do want to circle back on the sanctions issue now, because I think you, and the President, and the Secretary of Defense, the whole team have done a really good job in accelerating now the deployment of weapons. And also isolating Russia to the extent we can, at the UN and other places, and moving forward on sanctions.

But as the sanctions go on, sustaining them is going to be key, and expanding them is going to be key. And leakage in the sanctions only helps Putin. And there are countries that right now, and other entities, that are violating the sanctions. As you indicated yesterday when I asked, we have not applied any secondary sanctions, so far. I think we have got to use the secondary sanctions authority the administration has, including against countries, and entities and countries that are not simply maintaining their current or pre-war imports of Russian oil and gas, and other commodities, but have increased them.

And I would just urge you to do it, because I think you are going to see growing movement for mandatory sanctions in the Senate and the House if you don't use the existing authorities that you have got within the administration. I just want to make that really clear.

Let me say something about the Czech Republic, and you and I, and others, just came from a beautiful memorial service for Secretary Albright. Of course she and her family came the United

States from then Czechoslovakia when I think she was about 11 years old.

I had a meeting with the Czech Foreign Minister yesterday and, yes, he indicated that they were willing and wanting to provide some of their Soviet-era helicopters Mi-24s to Ukraine, but wanted sort of a swift agreement for us to replace those with Vipers, and if not new Vipers, with some of the Vipers out of our inventory now. So I just want to encourage you to move forward on that as fast as possible.

Secretary BLINKEN. And Senator, just on that.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Yes.

Secretary BLINKEN. The Defense Department is looking at that right now.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Yes.

Secretary BLINKEN. This is something that I think is very important across the board, which is a number of allies and partners have provided weapons from their stocks to the Ukrainians, in some cases that leaves a void that understandably they want to fill. One of the things that we will be coming forward with in the supplemental, are funds to help provide additional foreign military financing to partners, and allies. That is one vehicle by which they can make up any of the systems that they have shared with the Ukrainians that leave a void with them.

At the same time, of course, we are looking at what we have on hand. The Pentagon is focused on this particular case, as well as a number of others.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Great. No, I appreciate that. No, I know you are trying to overturn every stone, but anything we can do to accelerate that effort.

Of course something else Secretary Albright was very involved in was trying to stop the bloodshed and atrocities in the Balkans at the time, and I also had a chance to meet with the Foreign Minister of Bosnia and Herzegovina yesterday, and I think Senator Shaheen raised this issue, and I just want to underscore it. I think we are worried about what will happen in November when, as I understand the process, the UN Security Council has to continue to authorize the presence of international forces, and if Putin exercises that sanction—that veto it is a real problem.

I know it is on your radar screen I think. I am pleased to see the actions the United States has taken with respect to a DODIC in the IRS, I hope we will encourage our European allies to work in that direction. As you said yesterday to try to accelerate the integration of Bosnia and Herzegovina into the European family.

A couple other issues; Senator Menendez raised yesterday, the fact that Turkey had now, essentially, convicted Osman Kavala to a life sentence; you know, clearly a political prosecution, no legitimate basis for it, the administration did make a sort of a tepid statement, you know, showing unhappiness. But this combined with the fact that Turkey is continuing to move forward in their effort to ban the main Kurdish Party in Turkey from participating in the elections, seems to me something that the administration really needs to press hard on.

In the case of the HDP you have got, just last Tuesday, April 19th, you know, they were challenging it in the court, this effort

to ban them, but Turkey's top court accepted an indictment filed by the prosecutor seeking closure of the HDP. I mean this is just a blatant disregard for any standards of democracy. And so I just hope we will be very strong on it, and obviously we have a complicated relationship with Turkey, there are lots of pieces. But this, something you have been involved in for years trying to support our allies, the Syrian Kurds that, you know, Turkey continues to try to take them out whenever they can, so I think we have a lot of work to do on that front.

Let me just close by asking you about the President's pledge during the campaign. And I think you reemphasized again when you were asked last October, about the Consulate in Jerusalem, to establish, you know, greater—reestablish that Consulate for our relations with the Palestinians. Can you give us an update on where that stands?

Secretary BLINKEN. We are committed to reopening the consulate in Jerusalem for the Palestinians. It is something that we are working on with the Israeli Government. I was in Ramallah just a few weeks ago, and saw President Abbas. We talked about that, among other things.

As you know, we reestablished support for the Palestinians a year ago, January, including significant humanitarian and economic assistance that had been previously held back. We have re-engaged them across the board, and the consulate is a piece of that.

It does, of course, require coordination with and support from Israel including, for example, providing privileges and immunities for the staff of the Consulate to be. So it is a work in progress, but it is something that we continue to work on.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Thank you. I appreciate your efforts. And thank you for going through a whole lot of issues very quickly.

Secretary BLINKEN. All right.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have got to go vote I think.

Senator COONS. Thank you. And Mr. Secretary, it is my understanding we have no other members seeking recognition.

If I might; I just have two or three quick questions on some very specific programs that Senator Graham and I have worked together on over a number of years, both to get them authorized in law, and then to fund them. I have a lot of other questions I would be happy to ask, but we both have other things we need to get to.

The Global Fragility Act, as you know, one of the things that Secretary Albright contributed to was the development of Plan Colombia. And the whole concept of a coordinated plan between diplomacy, development, and security came out of Plan Colombia. Senator Graham and I worked over several Congresses to, ultimately to get the Global Fragility Act signed into law. And I would welcome a chance to talk in more detail about the selection process, the path forward, the strategy to prevent conflict, and promote stability.

I would be interested just in hearing briefly now from you, a timeline for the development of implementation plans, and the requests for funding were very modest relative to the scale of the problems. We have many other areas where we have requests that outstrip the budget of this Committee, I would just be interested

in your view on the timeline for implementing these strategies, and what we might be able to do together to improve the focus, and investment in this area?

Secretary BLINKEN. Mr. Chairman, the timeline for implementation of that is now, because just a few weeks ago the President signed off on our proposed focus, including the countries in question that we would focus on, and so this is something we are moving out on, and very much welcome working with you on, as we move forward in actually implementing it. But it is right on the—right on the front burner.

Senator COONS. Thank you. The Development Finance Corporation, I am planning to have a hearing with Scott Nathan, the CEO, to discuss their fiscal request. But I just wanted your view of their performance to date, and their role in supporting the administration's priorities.

Senator Graham asked about China, there are a number of other members that see its significant potential, whether it is in climate resiliency, and combating climate change, whether it is in the West Bank, or in developing better opportunities for economic development that might promote stability in other areas. What is your view of how they have performed?

Secretary BLINKEN. And I am sorry could you just repeat that the last part of that?

Senator COONS. Well, the Development Finance Corporation—

Secretary BLINKEN. Yes.

Senator COONS [continuing]. Has a, potentially, very broad range of areas of activity, each senator has their own view as to whether it should be principally countering China, or dealing with climate, or working in the Middle East, in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict or elsewhere. I would just be interested in your overall view as to whether they have achieved the potential that the Act that created the Development Finance Corporation imagined for.

Secretary BLINKEN. Thank you. First, I am a very strong supporter of the DFC. I think it is a very important and powerful tool, one that that I appreciate. And it gives us the ability to do a number of things. One of the things it gives us the ability to do is to more effectively offer an affirmative, positive alternative to China's development programs, including Belt and Road.

We can make this a race to the top, not a race to the bottom, including by using DFC, not only of course with its own resources, but the fact that it has the ability to leverage significant private-sector resources.

And so that is one area of focus for me, is making sure that we use this effectively as a way of actually advancing concrete projects that are, again, attractive and affirmative, and don't bring with them, for example, many of the burdens that we see countries take on when they are, for example, working with China. Debt, workers brought into—from China to actually build the projects instead of using local workers, no respect for the environment, for worker rights, corruption, et cetera. But we needed the tools to do that, the DFC is one of them.

We also have to make sure, and this is an area of real focus, that we have, and the DFC can be engaged in viable projects. So the money may be there, we have got to make sure that the projects

are there, and in a way that really brings the private sector in, so we are very focused on that.

It also joins up with a couple of things. It joins up with Build Back Better World, which I think is a very important initiative that the President has undertaken. Again, to make sure that in critical areas, including energy, and climate, health, and technology we are investing in, engaged in projects that will be a race to the top for the countries that are—that we are doing them with.

And DFC is one of the tools that we can bring to bear on making Build Back Better World effective. We have been identifying projects in different parts of the world that makes sense. I think we will be moving out on a number of them shortly.

Now, having said that, I think we need to look at ways to maximize the potential of DFC. I am not convinced that we have gotten to that point yet. So we have a lot of focus on it. I actually, by statute, chair of the Board. The Deputy Secretary of State for Management and Resources, Brian McKeon, is intimately involved with DFC, and working on that on a regular basis.

I would welcome, actually, sharing ideas with you about how we can use it even more effectively going forward.

Senator COONS. Thank you. As of right now, the way that the equity provisions of it are scored, is causing me some—I respect and understand the concerns of long-standing staff on the Appropriations Committee about the secondary or follow-on consequences it might have if we were to change the treatment of the DFC Equity Authority.

But I think we are under utilizing a very powerful tool, and I would welcome interacting with you, and with my other colleagues on this Committee, and the administration, on how we can make sure that the DFC and Build Back Better World fund together, are allowing us to really combat China's pernicious influence.

In my first 6 years here as Chair of the Africa subcommittee, I saw it in country after country, all over the Continent. I was with former President Sirleaf of Liberia last night, and was reminded of my very first conversation with her a dozen years ago now, where she was asking for U.S. help rebuilding the Mount Coffee dam that had been destroyed in their civil war.

And after several meetings she basically said, well, I guess the United States doesn't do this anymore, we will have to take Chinese funding. Ultimately our partners in Europe were able to provide funding for the restoration of that critical source of clean energy, and stability for Liberia. But there are dozens of countries around the world that would rather work with the United States than work with China, if we can just provide them with the source of funding. And I think DFC could be a critical part of the answer, to that, Secretary.

Secretary BLINKEN. I couldn't agree with you more. And I think one of the things that we really have to work on with DFC and other vehicles is the speed with which we are able to engage on things, because what exactly what you described, I have heard again and again, that the process across different agencies, I am not—I am not just talking about DFC, is slow, laborious.

Now, we have to do the right due diligence. That is vital. But I think there are ways to make what we do more efficient, quicker,

more responsive to needs. And I agree with you the DFC is a major—can be a major part of that so we should work on making it work even more effectively.

Senator COONS. Thank you. Mr. Secretary, thank you for your testimony before the subcommittee today. I think the conflict in Ukraine, Russia's completely unjustified and unacceptable brutality against the civilians of Ukraine, its attempt to rebuild the Russian Empire, and the ways in which it is shaking the very foundations of peace in Europe, the rules-based international order, is the most pressing issue of the day.

I am grateful that you and Secretary Austin have taken the initiative to engage with our allies, to deploy resources, to travel to Kyiv, personally, and to testify before this Committee today when you have just returned, at a moment when it is so critical. That we continue to work in close partnership to show the impact of American diplomacy, and to show the impact of the resources that we can and should provide to support our critical NATO allies, to support the Ukrainian people and their resistance, and to meet the pressing humanitarian needs of all impacted by this conflict.

ADDITIONAL COMMITTEE QUESTIONS

Senator COONS. Questions for the record will remain open—they need to be submitted—excuse me—by 5:00 p.m., Tuesday, May 3. So the hearing record will remain open until that point.

[The following questions were not asked at the hearing, but were submitted to the Department for response subsequent to the hearing:]

No questions were submitted for the record.

SUBCOMMITTEE RECESS

Senator COONS. And again, Mr. Secretary, thank you for your testimony.

Secretary BLINKEN. Thank you.

[Whereupon, at 4:15 p.m., Wednesday, April 27, the subcommittee was recessed, to reconvene subject to the call of the Chair.]