

GREAT POWER COMPETITION IN AFRICA

HEARING

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

September 11, 2024

Serial No. 118–129

Printed for the use of the Committee on Foreign Affairs



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

U.S. GOVERNMENT PUBLISHING OFFICE

56–652 PDF

WASHINGTON : 2026

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GREAT POWER COMPETITION IN AFRICA

Wednesday, September 11, 2024

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
Washington, DC.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:10 a.m., in room 2172, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Michael McCaul (chairman of the committee) presiding.

Chairman MCCAUL. The full committee will come to order.

The purpose of this hearing is to discuss the great power competition in Africa. How the Department of State is looking to counter Russia, China, and Iran's growing influence in the region. I recognize myself first though.

OPENING STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN MICHAEL MCCAUL

As you may have heard, Joe Wilson was taken to the hospital last night. We have been told that he's in a stable condition and on the mend.

I'm lucky to call him my friend. He and I went to the Indo-Pacific in August. I think I speak for everyone when I say we're wishing him a speedy recovery and as anyone know, Joe will attest he loves his job representing South Carolina's 2d District.

I know he'll be eager to get back and to work. Cannot wait to have him back in his seat and I pray for him and wish him well.

Twenty-three years ago America was attacked without warning or provocation. The pain we felt as a nation and the aftermath was unspeakable but our resolve remains unbreakable.

In honor of the nearly 3,000 innocent people who perish that day, please join me in a moment of silence to honor them.

[Moment of silence.]

Chairman MCCAUL. Two days ago I released my report on the failed Afghanistan withdrawal. This report outlines the systemic failures of the Biden-Harris administration's ill-fated decisions leading to the deadly and chaotic NEO from Afghanistan.

Under Secretary Bass, I want to say thank you for the role you played during that and I appreciate you being here today.

You were critical to the U.S. mission in Afghanistan as the Ambassador who took over Ambassador Wilson's position in Afghanistan as the Ambassador until 2020, and I know that wasn't easy what you were thrown into.

In fact, through the last Senate-confirmed Ambassador to the country you were asked to return to Afghanistan for the NEO with

only 24 to 48 hours notice after the Biden-Harris administration failed to order an evacuation until the Taliban overran Kabul.

It's shameful to me that the NSC only spoke to you on Afghanistan once before your return. That is a key reason why I've asked National Security Advisor Sullivan to testify before this committee and will compel that if necessary.

I've subpoenaed Secretary Blinken to come and testify next week and we'll be moving for contempt should he fail to appear. There was no actionable plan. As Benjamin Franklin said, if you fail to prepare you prepare to fail.

Today, Afghanistan has returned to being a haven for terrorists and extremists. Meanwhile, terrorism continues to flourish around the globe, especially in Africa.

More than 20 African nations are actively suffering under consistent attacks from groups like ISIS, Boko Haram, al-Shabaab, and al-Qaeda.

In addition to the expansion of terrorism we find ourselves amid a great power competition. The failure of leadership from the Biden-Harris administration has led to a world in chaos and a rise in adversaries around the globe, none more threatening than China, and the African continent is ground zero for the CCP with its manipulative Belt and Road Initiative, crippling debt trap diplomacy.

Keep in mind many CCP-funded projects are dual use and can be used by China's military including potential naval bases in strategic locations such as their port in Djibouti.

Meanwhile, Putin continues to profit off their backs—off the backs of Africans to finance his invasion of Ukraine and expand military partnerships at the expense of America like in Niger.

Putin has also used mercenaries throughout Africa, fostering instability around the continent. In this global power struggle a key component of our diplomatic efforts must be to deepen and establish partnerships in African countries, especially through the Development Finance Corporation.

I was pleased this committee could pass a bipartisan reauthorization to strengthen the DFC and I hope our colleagues in the Senate can do the same. It's absolutely critical.

This committee also ensured the extension of PEPFAR, a 20-year success story. The president of Botswana personally told me that PEPFAR saved a generation.

I was also pleased the committee passed my bipartisan International Conservation Foundation Act which prioritizes conservation efforts through public-private partnerships to help China—to help us counter China and Russia, and also I'm sure you would agree to ensure the success of these and related efforts we need to have our embassies fully staffed and ensure our FSOs are fully paid.

America's soft power is key to fostering freedom while also preventing the spread of authoritarianism around the globe.

So with that, the chair now recognizes the ranking member, the gentlemen from New York Mr. Meeks.

**OPENING STATEMENT OF RANKING MEMBER GREGORY
MEEKS**

Mr. MEEKS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I too want to join in praying for our friend Joe Wilson, who I've known and talk with on a frequent basis. In fact, my family comes from South Carolina.

In fact, he represents many of my family in Rock Hill, South Carolina. We talk about that all the time, and he's one that I do work with very closely on this committee and wish him a speedy, speedy recovery.

And I also want to acknowledge those that lost their lives on this day some 23 years ago. Being a New Yorker and watching those Twin Towers come down is still today as devastating to me as it was on that day, and to see this morning as the bells were rang and to see the grandchildren of many of those that were killed who would not have ever the opportunity to see their grandparents or their parents or their spouses or their cousins or their uncles or their aunts because of the actions of a terrorist group and their attack.

And the loss of lives of the men and women of the New York Fire Department, the courage that they had in going in and trying to get as many people out of that building as they possibly could, the—they were heroes and sheroes trying to get people out and save their lives.

Likewise, I know from the ceremony yesterday those men—those 13 that lost their life trying to get people out and those that were successful because we did get 120,000 people out, we cherish them. They are heroes, they are sheroes, and we worked together.

I'm little bit shocked that at this committee we are now looking to subpoena Secretary Blinken who has testified here many a times, and as I put out my response to the report of the chairman that put out what clearly is political, I mean, I don't think it's accidental that we're talking about it now, especially on the heels of the debate.

The fact of the matter I think listening to the president last night—the former president—maybe we should be subpoenaing Mr. Abdul who he met with at Camp David. Maybe we'd get some more information about what took place and why he gave in to the Taliban and did not give the Afghan government and didn't invite them and set deadlines.

But I think he answered that question for himself and I would love to hear from Mr. Abdul, this guy. You know, maybe that great democratic leader from Hungary, Orban, might be able to say something about this too. I don't know.

But I would be glad to maybe talk to him too to see what he thinks about all of this because he's a great democratic leader, and I would love to do that.

But let me get back to you, Mr. Secretary.

Welcome, Mr. Secretary, and thank you for being here today and I'm looking forward to the opportunity to discuss Africa in a full committee hearing because many of the issues we deal with in the United States and Africa relations are fundamental to our foreign policy and our national security.

Today's hearing titled "The Great Power Competition in Africa" sends the wrong message, in my opinion. Africa holds tremendous promise. Engagement with the continent is an end of itself.

The continent will experience the largest growth in working age population in the world between now and 2050 and is currently home to some of the fastest growing economies.

The United States and Africa mutually benefit when we work together to increase the two-way trade and investment and to address conflicts both on the continent and around the world.

We thrive when an African democracy thrives and look forward to hearing from our witnesses about how we can deepen our relationships with the African partners.

The President's strategy toward Sub-Saharan Africa released in 2022 lays important groundwork for this. None of this can happen, however, if we don't show up—if we're not present.

To be the partner of choice for African countries we need to demonstrate that we are committed to their success for the long term and this means presence and investment and keeping Africa on the front burner, and we don't—and when we don't show up the People's Republic of China does.

The PRC has been playing the long game with respect to Africa and they have been very strategic. Just last week during the forum on China-African cooperation President Xi announced billions of new projects in Africa over the next 3 years.

But we know that Beijing uses its presence, its diplomacy, and the Belt and Road Initiative in Africa to extract natural resources and harm the environment, lower labor standards, gain a security foothold, and create influence for political leverage.

Similarly, Russia has demonstrated a renewed interest in Africa in recent years, most notably establishing a large presence via private military contractors like the Wagner Group and related groups like Africa Corps run by the Russian government, and Moscow exploits insecurity in African countries and stokes mistrust of democratic institutions through sophisticated information influence operations. Russian disinformation campaigns in Africa have quadrupled in the last 2 years alone.

And so I'm going to stop there. We can go on, but I just want to thank you, Mr. Bass, for you as well as NSC, Mr. Sullivan, Mr. Blinken, what you all have done and the diplomacy, and I look forward to hearing your words and concerns.

I left out Sudan. I want to talk about that and make sure that comes up also. Very important.

Thank you, and I yield back.

Chairman McCAUL. The gentleman yields.

Other members are reminded opening statements may be submitted for the record.

We're pleased to have Honorable John Bass, acting under secretary for political affairs at the United States Department of State, before us. I think all of us know him very well. Proud of your record, sir, and you now have 5 minutes.

STATEMENT OF JOHN BASS

Mr. BASS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Meeks, members of the committee, Mr. Chairman, let me first join you on behalf of all my colleagues at the department in extending our best wishes to Congressman Wilson for a speedy recovery. Our thoughts and prayers are with him and his family.

Thank you very much for this opportunity to discuss great power competition in Africa and other important issues on the continent. As you noted, today marks 23 years since 3,000 innocent people were killed in attacks in the United States.

We honor their memory and the memory of over 7,000 service members lost in the war on terror, along with a number of our fellow diplomats and development professionals, and we also remember today our four colleagues killed in the terrorist attack that began on this day in 2012 in Benghazi, Libya.

Africa is at a pivotal moment, home to the fastest—the world’s fastest growing and youngest population. By 2050 one in four people on the planet will be African. The continent hosts diverse and irreplaceable natural resources and critical minerals. African nations play an influential role as a regional voting group in the U.N. and in advancing global priorities to the benefit of Africans and Americans.

The region, as you’ve noted, is also of acute interest to our strategic competitors who are coaxing or compelling African countries into trajectories of debt, negative growth, and exploitive security relationships.

China has established a one-way trade relationship with Africa, dumping goods at below market prices while the United States, in contrast, has for years promoted African exports to the United States through the African Growth and Opportunity Act.

And the PRC is also working to expand its military presence and relationships in Africa. At the same time, Russia has committed widespread human rights abuses while providing “security,” and I put security in quotes, to unelected governments, sown disinformation about health programs that are benefiting a wide number of Africans and exploited Africa’s natural resources.

In this environment the United States seeks to demonstrate the value of our partnerships while promoting fairness and transparency.

Terrorist activity, as you noted, Mr. Chairman, has grown over the past decade on the continent with violent events nearly tripling since 2014, and efforts to build capable, professional, and accountable security forces which continue must support and complement investments in good governance, human rights, stabilization and economic opportunities.

The Biden-Harris administration laid out our priorities in the U.S. strategy toward Sub-Saharan Africa in August 2022, a strategy that is grounded in partnership and respect.

In December of that year President Biden hosted the U.S. Africa Leaders Summit, bringing together leaders from 49 African countries in the African Union alongside members of civil society and the private sector.

The summit catalyzed U.S. public and private investment and partnership including the commitment of \$55 billion in U.S. Gov-

ernment investment and over \$15 billion in private sector investment on the continent.

We have bolstered our commercial diplomacy in order to create a modern economic partnership on the continent and to reduce African nations' dependency on aid.

A signature example is the Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investments development of the Lobito Corridor from Angola through the DRC to Zambia.

We and our partners have created, we believe, a once in a generation rail project to improve east-west connectivity, integrate Africa with global markets, and under this initiative expand opportunities in energy, digital, transportation, and agriculture sectors that are going to boost trade and create jobs both in Africa and here in the United States.

We are grateful to have had bipartisan congressional support for several critical historic aspects to our policy. Ranking Member Meeks, I'd like to thank you on behalf of the department for putting forward a bill to institutionalize the U.S. African Leaders Summit to ensure it is held on a regular basis and I would ask that the committee continue to work closely with your Senate colleagues to pass legislation as soon as possible to reauthorize AGOA, PEPFAR, the Development Finance Corporation, and to make some adjustments to how the Millennium Challenge Corporation is able to operate on the continent.

I can't emphasize enough how transformative these programs have been to Africa's economic development and to advancing our interests on the continent. These programs have and continue to set us apart from our competitors.

I'd also like to request your support for the extension of a critical authority for overseas comparability pay, or OCP, in any Continuing Resolution or other funding legislation pursued before the end of the fiscal year.

Currently, the last day that Federal employees in the Foreign Service are authorized to receive OCP is the end of this Fiscal Year on September 30th, and if it lapses all of our dedicated professionals working on the continent will take an immediate pay cut averaging tens of thousands of dollars.

So, obviously, that will undercut our ability to recruit and maintain staff at all of our embassies on the continent but equally in all of our missions around the world.

As my colleagues and I and as many of you have traveled across the continent we have seen a thirst for more U.S. engagement. The American model of development and investment is highly valued.

We're appreciated for our efforts to uphold democracy and human rights as well as our ongoing efforts to lead a number of peace processes, addressing crises on the continents.

Our partners seek our support on security and there are several critical steps we believe must be taken to sustain this momentum and working together I am confident we can continue to do so.

So thank you once again for your commitment to strengthening the U.S. Africa partnership and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Bass follows:]

Statement of
Acting Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs John Bass
U.S. Department of State
“Great Power Competition in Africa”
September 11, 2024

Chairman McCaul, Ranking Member Meeks, Members of the Committee:

Thank you for this opportunity to discuss great power competition in Africa and other important issues on the continent.

Today marks 23 years since 3,000 innocent people were killed in attacks in the United States. We honor their memory and the memory of over 7,000 service members lost in the war on terror, along with fellow diplomats and development professionals. We also remember our four colleagues killed in the terrorist attack that began on this day in 2012 in Benghazi, Libya.

Africa is at a pivotal moment. Home to the world’s fastest growing and youngest population, there is little doubt the world’s future will be shaped in large part by Africans. By 2050, one in four people on the planet will be African. Africa hosts diverse and irreplaceable natural resources and critical minerals. African nations play an influential role as a regional voting group in the United Nations and in advancing global priorities to the benefit of Africans and Americans.

The region is also of acute interest to our strategic competitors, who are coaxing African countries into trajectories of debt, negative growth, and exploitative security relationships. China has established a one-way trade relationship with Africa, dumping goods at below-market prices, while the United States has for years promoted African exports to the United States through the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA). The PRC is also working to expand its military presence and relationships in Africa.

Meanwhile, Russia has committed widespread human rights abuses while providing security to unelected governments, sown disinformation about

health programs that benefit Africans, and exploited Africa's natural resources. In this environment, the United States seeks to demonstrate the value of our partnership while promoting fairness and transparency.

Terrorist activity in Africa has also grown over the past decade with violent events nearly tripling since 2014. Efforts to build capable, professional, and accountable security forces must support and not replace investments in good governance, human rights, stabilization, and economic opportunities. The Biden-Harris Administration laid out our priorities in the U.S. Strategy Toward Sub-Saharan Africa in August 2022. The strategy is grounded in partnership and respect. In December 2022, President Biden hosted the U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit, bringing together leaders from 49 African countries and the African Union, alongside members of civil society and the private sector. The summit catalyzed U.S. public and private investment and partnership, including the commitment of \$55 billion in USG investment and over \$15 billion in private sector investment.

We have bolstered our commercial diplomacy efforts in order to create a modern economic partnership with Africa and reduce dependency on aid. A signature example is the Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment's (PGI) development of the Lobito Corridor from Angola through the Democratic Republic of the Congo to Zambia. We and our partners have created a once-in-a-generation rail project to improve east-west connectivity and integrate Africa with global markets. Our strategic infrastructure projects in the energy, digital, transportation, and agricultural sectors will boost trade and create jobs in Africa and here at home.

We are grateful to have had bipartisan Congressional support for several critical and historic aspects to our policy in Africa. I would like to thank Ranking Member Meeks for putting forward a bill to institutionalize the U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit, so it is held every four years. In addition, I encourage you to work with your Senate colleagues to pass legislation as soon as possible to reauthorize the AGOA, PEPFAR, the DFC, and modifications for MCC. I cannot emphasize enough how transformative these programs have been to Africa's economic development – and to

advancing U.S. interests in Sub-Saharan Africa. These programs set us apart from our competitors.

Another aspect to our historic approach to the continent, which our rivals are now copying, are educational exchanges, including our English-language training, our visitors' programs, and our support for independent media. Even as we have experienced cuts to these programs over a period of years, China and Russia have dramatically expanded theirs. We hear again and again that students and visitors would prefer to come to the United States, but we lack the funding to meet this demand – foregoing a key opportunity to invest in our future relationships with the continent.

I would also like to request your support for the extension of a critical authority for Overseas Comparability Pay (OCP) in any Continuing Resolution or other funding legislation pursued before the end of the fiscal year. Currently, the last day that federal employees in the foreign service are authorized to receive OCP is September 30. If OCP lapses, all of our dedicated professionals working on the continent will take an immediate pay cut. This will undercut our ability to recruit and maintain staff at our African posts – and all of our posts globally.

As my colleagues and I have traveled across the continent, we have seen a thirst for more U.S. engagement. The American model of development and investment is highly valued; we are appreciated for our efforts to uphold democracy and human rights, as well as our efforts to lead peace processes during crisis, and our partners seek our support on security. There are several critical steps we must take to sustain this momentum. Working together, I am confident we can do so.

Thank you again for your commitment to strengthening the U.S.-Africa partnership. I look forward to your questions.

Chairman McCAUL. Thank you, Mr. Bass.

Let me just say the ranking member and I on most days work very well. GFC is a good example. We have reauthorized it I think at a good pace. It should be on the national authorization bill and it's being held up in the Senate for, in my view, very petty reasons.

And so I would ask the ranking member to join me in speaking with Mr. Cardin—Senator Cardin—and Senator Risch to get through this logjam because it is so—it's so vitally important to counter China but also to strengthen our economic ties with Africa.

The Lobito Corridor is really the only success story I see. It's about a \$500 million loan. Can you discuss other projects that are underway in Africa that we should be focused on?

Mr. BASS. Certainly. I think it's important, Mr. Chairman, to look at the portfolios of both the Development Finance Corporation and MCC in this larger context. Four of the 10 largest portfolios that DFC has are on the continent.

In some cases they dovetail very well with priority countries under the Global Fragility Act. Mozambique is the largest portfolio that DFC has on the continent and that's not by accident.

That is part of using all of our tools to try to get at the most compelling challenges and take advantage of the opportunities to build out African-led African-owned growth and development through the private sector. Similarly, most of the largest MCC compacts are on the continent and that certainly is not by accident.

Chairman McCAUL. And I think the MCC will pass in the National Defense Authorization. If our equity fix is accomplished it will double the amount of financing and I think it will be a big difference.

I'm also looking forward to seeing the implementation of our conservation bill for which we're very excited to join our philanthropists in a two private/one government match. It's rare you see something like that in Congress, seeing the private sector stepping up to the plate like that.

Mr. Meeks and I were in Africa—AFRICOM—in the summer and one disturbing trend—excuse my voice. I came back from the Indo-Pacific and I don't know what I caught but it's not fun.

But one disturbing trend I saw was the al-Shabaab and the Houthi rebels forging an alliance, taking an Iranian proxy from that region in the Middle East directly into the African continent obviously in a terrorism alliance.

As we speak on 9/11 does that concern you?

Mr. BASS. The short answer is yes, very much so and it—you know, it's one of the probably most compelling examples of why we are so focused on trying to bring the conflict between Israel and Hamas to an early conclusion because of all of the unpredictable ripple effects we're seeing.

You know, if you contrast the Houthis a year ago, as problematic as they were with their appetite and desire today to be playing a much larger role in the region in a profoundly destabilizing way it's very concerning to us.

We're really focused first and foremost on tracking specific threats and be happy to update you in a classified setting.

Second, very focused on working with our colleagues in the European Union and with other governments on the post-ATMIS transi-

tion in Somalia to ensure we can continue to provide key support and enabling elements to allow the Somali security forces to continue to hold their ground and not create conditions that would allow al-Shabaab to resurge and take a more commanding position throughout Somalia.

Chairman McCAUL. Thank you.

Well, actually I just want to again say thank you for your brave efforts in Afghanistan. As I read the report—and I know some believe it's political—I see it as historic. A lot of what's in that report is direct testimonies from people like yourself, sir, and I read your testimony.

Being put in the position you're in I know is very difficult. One of the goals I want to achieve is not to engage in a partisan blame exercise but, rather, try to fix problems, many of which stemmed, in my judgment, from the NEO or lack thereof of a plan to evacuate on a timely basis.

It was very clear when you came onto the scene with Ambassador Wilson there was a lot of confusion as to who was in charge, what the duties were, clearly defined responsibilities, and it seems to me that Congress—and I look forward to working—I know Mr. Meeks will engage with me in a bipartisan measure and I even talked to the secretary as well, who is very willing to work with us on fixing that whole process through legislation.

And I know you being in such a critical role could play a very strong role in that effort so that, God forbid, we have something like that happen again we're not going to have so much confusion and chaos on the ground that could lead to the deaths of so many people, especially the 13 servicemen and women who we bestowed the—posthumously the congressional Gold Medal of Honor on, sir.

And so I look forward to working with you. It's not a question for you to answer. It's just a—it's an invitation to work with us on that. So thank you so much.

I now recognize the ranking member.

Mr. MEEKS. Thank you. Thank you, Secretary Bass.

I just want to reemphasize that I think that it's important that we understand it's the right thing to engage with Africa. Whether China or Russia was there, it would be important for us to be engaging with Africa, not there just because of Russia and trying to compete against them.

So that is really important to do that so—and not forcing as a result the African nations and think they got to make a choice. I want them to know that we are the best partners to deal with and I think that's essential.

And one of the ways of doing that is, as I said in my opening, is making sure that we're showing up and making sure that we're there and one of the things that I find that as far as diplomacy is concerned, for example, China has brought in more consulates on the continent than we have now and that's interacting with the African people to let them know that we're there sincerely.

Now, one of my concerns on my first question to you I'm concerned because money makes a difference, too, and in the last fiscal cycle we have cut the State Department's foreign assistance, for example, 12 percent. Everyone else is increasing. That's engagement, that 12 percent.

So my question to you is with the ranks of the Foreign and Civil Service in recent years being cut short does the State Department currently have the necessary resources in terms of both funding and personnel to fully engage with African countries in pursuit of American foreign policy and national—and our national security interests, and how does proper resourcing factor into our ability to position the United States as the preferred partner for African countries?

Mr. BASS. Well, Congressman, thank you for that overview. The immediate answer is no, we do not have sufficient resources to capitalize on all of the opportunities we have across the continent and to get the balance right between the essential work we have to be doing to respond to and help address the wide range of crises on the continent and also take advantage of proactive opportunities to deepen relationships, to generate new trade and investment opportunities to help Africans build capacity of government and the private sector and to grow their economies and create better employment in the future.

And when I speak to insufficient resources it's both on the programmatic side in terms of foreign assistance and the ways we can use that but also on the operational side where we're digging out of a hole that we have experienced in the last five, 10 years in particular in terms of our ability to fully staff our missions overseas.

That hole disproportionately impacted our embassies in Africa. We have come a long way in the last 3 years in hiring above attrition but we still have a way to go and our ability to do that is going to depend on continued strong support from Congress.

Mr. MEEKS. And let me—and, you know, in the little time we have I've got to talk about Sudan, which is the largest humanitarian crisis in the world now. As many as 150,000 people have been killed in the brutal fighting between the Rapid Support Forces and the Sudanese Armed Forces since April 2023.

More than 12 million people have been displaced and over half of the country's population is facing a crisis level food insecurity. People are starving and where—you know, folks are asking me, where's the international attention? Where's the—you know, the United States?

What—you know, where's the outrage that we see when it happens in some other parts of the world? This is something that's important to Africans also, where it is—where is it.

Now, I compliment Special Envoy Tom Periello for what he's doing and he's organized last month, I believe, a conference and trying to talk to people to try to figure out efforts to resolve the conflict.

But tell me what is the State Department doing to address some of the external support that the RSF and the SAF has been receiving and what steps can you—have you taken so far?

What are you looking to do? What are the points of leverage available to get outside actors to stop who are bringing in the weapons, et cetera?

We have got to do something. This is something that should be on the front pages so the people know what's taking place, and not just because of the continent of Africa as many of them come tell

me that they're ignored and there is no human outrage about the worst human catastrophe on the planet as we speak today.

Mr. BASS. Congressman, completely agree that this crisis and the impacts which, as you note, are the worst humanitarian crisis in the world today, have not begun to get the attention and focus they deserve from a wide range of countries.

The limited progress we have made in recent months in securing renewed humanitarian access to parts of the country where many people have been suffering that's a direct result of U.S. leadership and our efforts to, notwithstanding everything else going on in the world that is distracting from addressing this conflict, begin to get the right focus on, first and foremost, addressing the suffering; second, bringing the violence to an end.

We're very focused in supporting Special Envoy Perriello's efforts. The Secretary has been personally engaged and we're trying to do several things simultaneously. We're first looking to ensure the current humanitarian access that was agreed last month is sustained, that we're able to build off of that and expand it both in space and time, that hopefully we can secure some localized cease-fires, particularly in and around Al-Fashir, to ensure that there is good, strong access for humanitarians, but then, importantly, to your point continuing to work with a range of countries, some of whom have been supporting one or the other side in this conflict to shift their focus from fueling the conflict and using their influence to get these—

Chairman MCCAUL. I'm sorry—We're going well over time and there are other members. I hate to do that to you.

Mr. MEEKS. That's Okay. I just want to say—

Chairman MCCAUL. But they're all waiting.

Mr. MEEKS. Mr. Chairman, just affirmatively I look forward to working with you—

Chairman MCCAUL. Absolutely.

Mr. MEEKS [continuing]. To going over to the Senate and making sure we get this bill unstuck there—

Chairman MCCAUL. Absolutely.

Mr. MEEKS [continuing]. And working with you in a bipartisan manner for looking at and, from my viewpoint, the entire 20 years of what took place in Afghanistan so that we never make those same mistakes again.

Chairman MCCAUL. And we'll have your help as well.

The chair now recognizes Mr. Mast.

Mr. MAST. Thank you, Chairman.

Mr. Bass, let's talk about the peacekeeping mission in Mali or the ended peacekeeping mission in Mali. I want to start with just trying to understand a few points. I know that there was over a period of time—I don't know what period, I'd love for you to expand on it—somewhere to the range of a hundred tons of weaponry moved into Mali to support this.

Was that a quick dump of ordnance and bullets? Was it rifles? Was it armor? What was that and how soon—how recently before that mission was ended did that take place?

Mr. BASS. Congressman, are you referring to support for the U.N. peacekeeping mission in Mali?

Mr. MAST. Yes. I think that's what I said.

Mr. BASS. I just wanted to clarify because there's—there have been a couple of different missions.

I don't have the specifics on that particular provision of equipment. My recollection is that we were intent on ensuring that as the mission was phasing down and withdrawing they had what they needed to be able to responsibly consolidate and leave safely before the mission ended.

Mr. MAST. I don't know that that exactly makes sense. Maybe you could expand on that. Before they were leaving you wanted to make sure that we put more lethal items into there? And let's layer one more thing on top of this.

I'm trying to make sure that's what you're saying. Before we were leaving we wanted to make sure there was enough lethal items in there but now you're requesting from us an additional \$141 million for the purposes of withdraw to help get this more stuff that we put in there out of there?

Help me understand this because it's not adding up to me.

Mr. BASS. So, broadly speaking, my recollection is that we—

Mr. MAST. How about specifically speaking?

Mr. BASS. So I'm afraid I don't have specifics on that historical piece at this time.

Mr. MAST. You should. You're at the highest level of U.S. Government. We expect specifics.

Mr. BASS. I'd be happy to come back to you with more specifics, sir.

Mr. MAST. I'll let you expand right now, though. Let's go.

Mr. BASS. My recollection is that we sought to ensure, along with other contributing nations and supporters of the U.N. mission, that as the force consolidated it was deployed well outside the capital in some remote locations, that it had the capabilities it needed to be able to safely consolidate and retrograde to the capital and depart the country.

Mr. MAST. Fair in theory. Fair in theory, safely conduct that consolidation. To your expertise what do you think those resources are that would be needed? What would you be requesting?

Mr. BASS. So I'm not a military professional and wouldn't suppose, in this context, to speak for force commanders.

I would imagine they would be looking for a set of ammunition and related logistic supplies to make sure if they needed to they were able to fight their way out of incidents with the combatants in Mali.

Mr. MAST. Does Russia have those armaments now?

Mr. BASS. I believe to the best of my knowledge, Congressman, that materiel that remained behind went into the possession of the armed forces of the government—the regime in Mali.

Mr. MAST. Okay. So let's move on to the request for \$141 million for withdrawal purposes. What for?

Mr. BASS. Are you referring to withdrawal from Mali?

Mr. MAST. Yes, the—my understanding is specifically the withdrawal for the peacekeeping mission. But if it goes beyond that I would love to have the specifics because we don't have the specifics.

Mr. BASS. Let me take that back and get you a better answer.

Mr. MAST. What can you tell me on it now? And then I'd be happy to hear the more that you can tell me on it but I'd love to know what you know about it now.

Mr. BASS. So I'm not sure in this moment what aspect of that \$140 million request is specific to Mali or specific to our support for the transition, for example, of the peacekeeping mission in Somalia or—

Mr. MAST. I'll read it to you specifically as I see it.

The Fiscal Year 2024 CBJ requested \$141 million for withdrawal purposes from MINUSMA, or however you pronounce the acronym correctly—obviously, which was established back in 2013 so we're at the tail end of it.

That's what was requested. So what can you say you know about that \$141 million requested in the 2024 request by CBJ?

Mr. BASS. I have to get back to you with more specifics. It may be that this is part of balancing the books for the mission as it—

Mr. MAST. What does that mean, balancing the books for the mission?

Mr. BASS. That means as the U.N. winds down this mission and closes it out formally that it's accounted for what the mission actually cost as opposed to what it was projected to cost.

Mr. MAST. Thank you, Chairman.

Mr. JAMES [presiding]. Thank you, Mr. Bass.

The chair now recognizes Mr. Sherman from California.

Mr. SHERMAN. I'd like to respond to the chairman's opening statement on Afghanistan for just a minute. Obama accomplished something in Afghanistan. We got Bin Laden. Biden accomplished something in Afghanistan.

We accomplished the withdrawal that by then all Americans wanted and the most impressive evacuation in terms of the number of people evacuated that, perhaps, the world had ever seen. We lost 13 of our bravest and most sacred lives.

But what did Trump accomplish? He surrendered to the Taliban. Yes, there's a few—a little bit of gloss in the documents about vague, unenforceable statements about working with the Afghan government. He signed a surrender document.

Now, under that document the Taliban is obligated not to serve as a base for terrorism. Well, every country has that obligation anyway. So it was a pure surrender document and we lost 61 of our soldiers there and 57 of those coffins came back to America for a dignified transfer that President Trump chose not to attend.

So we fought and died and spent tens of billions of dollars and transferred equipment from 2017, 2018, 2019, and 2020 and accomplished absolutely nothing.

Now, I want to thank the chair for holding this hearing on Africa because though if you look at the media you would think that the only things going on in the world are Ukraine and Gaza when in fact the greatest humanitarian difficulties, the greatest tragedies, are taking place in Africa.

First, in Ethiopia we saw 600,000 Tigrayans die, a million and a half displaced. The humanitarian relief fund is only 4 percent funded.

Mr. Secretary, when Secretary Blinken was here last he committed that of the \$9 billion mostly unearmarked humanitarian

dollars that Congress provided in the April supplemental that some would be spent in Ethiopia.

I'll ask you to respond for the record exactly or at least with greater detail how that money or some of that money will be spent and how much will be spent in Ethiopia.

In Sudan, as the ranking member pointed out, this is the greatest humanitarian tragedy occurring right now. Perhaps 150,000 people have died, 15,000 in just one city in Darfur, and I would hope that you would respond for the record as to what our plans are to deal with that terrible war.

But I want to focus your attention now on Eritrea which the dictator there, Afwerki, has carried on attacks in Tigray in northern Ethiopia and has created a government that is properly referred to as the North Korea of Africa.

I met recently with Mr. Baduri, the—one of the leaders of the opposition, and I wonder whether the State Department will work with those around the world who are working for democracy in Eritrea and a government that can be a positive influence on the world.

Mr. BASS. Thank you, Congressman.

With regard to Eritrea, as you note it has a long record of repression, a monolithic government, largely, since independence and has been, largely, impervious to our and other allies' and partners' efforts to open up society and change the character of that regime.

Mr. SHERMAN. I would hope that we would be meeting with the opposition and funding the opposition because the people of Eritrea will not have freedom and its neighbors will not have peace until we see a democratic government there.

What are we doing to prevent Eritrea from collecting this diaspora tax, particularly on those who aren't even citizens of Eritrea but may have come from there?

Mr. BASS. I'd like to get back to you with a more specific answer on that particular aspect of our policy. I can assure you that we continue to actively engage the government.

To the best of our ability, it is limited in addressing a number of our concerns including political repression and the lack of space for political opposition.

Mr. SHERMAN. And, finally, this is 9/11 when we were hit with Islamist terrorism. What can Congress do to support our anti-terrorist efforts in Africa and particularly the Sahel?

Mr. BASS. So I would say continue to both strongly fund our anti-terrorism account that enables us to help African nations build their capacity but also to continue to invest in our economic growth and opportunity programs and to fund our exchange programs because we have to be addressing the root causes that are driving so many young Africans, whether by ideology or by a lack of an alternative, to take a paycheck from whether it's al-Shabaab or Boko Haram or ISIS in the Sahel.

Mr. SHERMAN. Thank you.

Mr. JAMES. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The chairman now recognizes Mrs. Kim from California.

Mrs. KIM OF CALIFORNIA. Thank you, Chairman, and I want to thank Ranking Member Meeks for holding today's hearing.

Before I begin I also want to convey my—you know, a speedy recovery to our colleague, Congressman Joe Wilson, and we look forward to having him back joining us, and thank you, Under Secretary Bass, for joining us at our hearing today.

The People's Republic of China and PRC private sector companies conduct destructive and oftentimes illegal mining, drilling, logging, and fishing in Africa while disregarding environmental and public health, as you know.

So I introduced the Stopping PRC Environmental Exploitation and Degradation Act, or SPEED Act to hold the PRC accountable for its deliberate environmental degradation and harm African communities.

But despite these coercive and exploitative nature of these investments, PRC investment in Africa is growing. So how is the State Department working to inform African governments that the PRC's approach to engagement on the continent is transactional and unsustainable?

Mr. BASS. So thank you, Congresswoman for—completely agree with you about the predatory nature of so much of the PRC's activities on the continent.

We are approaching this in a range of ways and to Ranking Member Meeks' observations earlier, right, we're trying to ensure that we are not making the continent about this competition between the United States and China.

Our policy is about Africa and it's about helping Africans develop a better future for themselves in partnership with support but informed and guided by choices they are making.

And so we in the process of trying to offer a better offer point out the many ways in which—

Mrs. KIM OF CALIFORNIA. So what ways do you think we're doing? Do you think we're doing enough currently to better partner for, you know, like, African nations to counter PRC's growing influence? How are we doing it? Can you give some specific examples?

Mr. BASS. Sure. I don't think we're doing enough in that we're dealing with an enormous flood of disinformation and misinformation from the PRC and Russia.

So supporting our efforts through the Global Engagement Center and other activities we have in the department and in the executive branch to deal with misinformation is a critical piece of this.

Second, ongoing support for our wider efforts to talk about the nature of partnerships with the U.S. private sector based on the rule of law, based on respect for contracts, and informing, whether it's governments, whether it's chambers of commerce, about the perils of some of these, quote/unquote, "investments" from the PRC I think is going to continue to be a really important part of our efforts.

Mrs. KIM OF CALIFORNIA. Thank you.

You know, as you correctly pointed out, we were concerned about China's model that promotes, like, propaganda, disinformation, and censorship activities in Africa.

So glad to hear that you're addressing those issues because CCP, as you know, has a very active campaign to export its digital authoritarian model and very, very intrusive surveillance technologies to Africa.

That really undermines our civil societies and human rights issues. So we'd like to see more active engagement in that regard so thank you for addressing that.

The CCP uses political training as a strategic tool to export its authoritarian governance style throughout Africa. The CCP funds political schools in Tanzania, Ethiopia, and South Africa, among others, which emphasize Chinese governance and economic models.

I believe they also host African military and political leaders regularly to cement their influence. So how is the State Department seeking to counter CCP's brazen attempts to coerce the next generation of African leaders?

Mr. BASS. We continue to support a wide range of educational opportunities. USAID invests heavily in basic primary education, which is essential in so many countries on the continent.

Our exchange programs that bring a large number of students to the states for higher education or in some cases for training as university professors, remains the gold standard on the continent and we have constant demand, well exceeding our supply based on the funding available to us, for our exchange program.

So, you know, the best way we're trying to deal with this is to target those places where we're seeing the greatest pernicious effect but also to ensure that the CCP—the PRC—is not getting traction in other countries to the same degree.

Mrs. KIM OF CALIFORNIA. Thank you. My time's up so I yield back.

Mr. JAMES. Thank you, Mrs. Kim.

The chairman now recognizes Mr. Bera from California.

Mr. Keating from Massachusetts. Welcome, Mr. Keating.

Mr. KEATING. Thank you.

And I do want to convey my strong feelings of support in the recovery of our colleague Joe Wilson who's demonstrated enormous bipartisanship with me personally and other members of this committee in general, particularly on his most recent efforts to support Ukraine against Russia's illegal and criminal war. Godspeed in your recovery, Joe.

We're also remembering 9/11 today and it brings me to the point of as we remember those who've lost their lives, the innocent civilians and the first responders that were there and many that live with those injuries, we have to remain vigilant against terrorism.

And the U.S. intelligence community, among others, has labeled Africa as a center of gravity in the Sunni global jihad, and particularly talking about the Sahel, not just with al-Shabaab but also with Islamic State affiliates in Mozambique and the Democratic Republic of the Congo and those threats and the importance of working with our European partners on that effort in Africa as well has been emphasized.

So I have a question. It seems that Hungary under Viktor Orban is freelancing with its European effort, particularly in Chad last November, deploying 200 of his own military there, and also the mystery that surrounds Viktor Orban's son, Gaspar Orban, and what's his activities there as Orban's own son is involved in this.

Can you enlighten us on what heck Hungary is doing in this area?

Mr. BASS. So we continue to have a wide range of concerns about the behavior of President Orban's political party and its efforts to——

Mr. KEATING. Do you think his actions are really something to be mirrored? The image of what the U.S. should be doing right now?

Mr. BASS. No, I do not and, again, analogous to discussing our challenges that the PRC presents on the continent, this is about providing better offers and stronger support in ways that are consistent with our values.

Mr. KEATING. So what about the mystery man? What about Gaspar?

Mr. BASS. I can't speak to his specific activities but happy to come back to you with more details to the extent they're known.

Mr. KEATING. It's a concern because it's Orban's own son, and given the fact that Hungary is so out of step with most democratic actions in the West and particularly our European partners it's a concern to me.

But if you could speak to the importance of working with our European allies in this issue because this is something that we can't do alone and we have found that out.

Mr. BASS. Completely agree with you. We have a wide range of robust partnerships with a number of our European allies and partners, sometimes on a bilateral basis, sometimes in conjunction with a number of countries, depending on the circumstances in the country or section of Africa where we're trying to help improve conditions.

That partnership starts with ensuring that we have robust information sharing about threats emanating from the continent that may impact our homeland or those of our allies and partners in Europe to make sure we're sharing that information, we're dealing with those challenges, and hopefully to the best of our ability preventing people from getting off the continent.

Mr. KEATING. Absolutely, because, you know, the Islamic terrorists continue to try and reconfigure themselves and move forward and that information is extremely important because we saw the importance of information sharing and terrorist activities with the Taylor Swift, you know, concert threat that was there as well.

So we're seeing these things come closer to home. I don't think perhaps we're at this stage yet but if this continues to grow this could be a homeland threat, do you think?

Mr. BASS. We continue to see some of the groups operating on the continent. By and large, they are focused on the continent itself but we're very attuned to any indications of aspirations or plans to conduct attacks beyond specific geography on the continent, in the United States, or in Europe and we work very closely with our counterparts in those countries to ensure those attacks do not move forward.

Mr. KEATING. Well, our alliances are important. Thank you very much and I yield back.

Mr. JAMES. Thank you. The gentleman's time has concluded. I now recognize myself as much time as I may consume.

The short answer is the administration doesn't care. We see it in the fact that there are more foreign commercial service officers in Paris than there are in the entirety of Africa.

The Chinese commercial attaches outnumber U.S. 15 to one. We see it in the fact that we—you said yourself you do not have adequate funding to accomplish your mission.

You don't have the adequate bodies to accomplish your mission, and just today on September 11th, the anniversary of one of the most heinous—the most heinous terror attack in our lifetimes, today as reported in the Wall Street Journal that U.S. forces try to regroup as al-Qaeda and Islamic State to sow terror in west Africa.

Hope is not a method. Hope is not a plan. It is not good enough. Continuing to offer lip service to what's going on in African continent is not good enough.

As chairman of the Subcommittee on Africa I've conducted nine hearings and proposed multiple bills that aim to close the growing gap between America's waning influence on the continent and our adversaries, a gap that's widened even further under the Biden-Harris administration, which promises to be all in on Africa.

What a disappointment. Africa contains immense demographic and economic potential that we are ceding in the great power competition because this administration's dismissal of realpolitik in favor of ideological colonialism.

Now, the Sahel is in a complete State of freefall and I fear as the farther we get away from September 11th, the closer we get to September 10th, we are making the same mistakes we made decades ago with taking our eyes off the ball in Africa.

What's going on in the Sahel, particularly with how it affects west Africa, there are many places in west Africa that are closer to the United States of America than Europe.

We need to pull our heads out of our backsides and in this administration really focus on what needs to happen to fix this situation with ruling juntas and Islamic extremists, an ever increasing amount of Russian mercenaries running unchecked from the Red Sea to the Atlantic.

China continues to export its model of party over State authoritarianism governance across the continent and continues to pursue an Atlantic Ocean military base.

Last week in Beijing at the forum for China-Africa Cooperation Summit, President Xi Jinping pledged \$51 billion in new financial commitments to the continent, the majority of which will be loans that will enable Beijing to continue its strategy of debt trap diplomacy to gain leverage of African leaders and control over critical mineral supply chains.

It is these crucial mistakes over security and supply chains, two things I know as a combat veteran and as logistics—as a logistician—that are most danger to our national security right here at home, not just on the African continent.

The PRC continues to put export controls on critical minerals, most recently antimony. Anybody know what antimony is? Well, you should or you will. It's essential for our own munitions as we're running short on our own supply.

This could starve our own industrial supply base of the resources we need in the event that we come into direct conflict with our adversaries.

Additionally, I led this committee in reviewing our bilateral relationship with South Africa because the administration's inaction in the face of the ANC's clear and overt alignment with Russia, China, and Iran.

I thoroughly commend Ambassador Brigety for holding a firm and principled line in Pretoria in the face of a leadership void coming from Washington, DC.

Similarly, this committee led in declaring the current actions of the RSF, the Rapid Support Force of Sudan, as a genocide, a policy decision that the department has tied up in its bureaucratic system hiding behind lawyers despite the abundance of affirmative evidence.

H. Res. 1328—in Sudan 25 million people are experiencing acute food insecurity with over 700,000 people on the verge of famine. April 23d most estimate the actual figure of casualty since this civil war began is closer to 150,000 people.

As the war continues to unfold an abundance of evidence points to a genocide being committed by the RSF forces against the Masalit and likely against other non-Arab ethnic communities as well.

You know what that sounds like? Black people. My resolution formally declares that the atrocities committed by the RSF and allied militias are acts of genocide.

You see, the reason why people are so ticked off at America around the world, particularly in Africa, is because they see Ukraine getting billions, they see Gazans getting a pier, and the Sudanese that are neither white nor have a vital diaspora in the United States of America and they get crickets. They get crickets from this administration who are doing nothing to fix that problem.

And, yes, I'm saying nothing because trying our best isn't going to bring back those lives. We must do better. We will do better and when we take back control of the Congress we're going to force this issue and hold all those accountable on both sides of that war accountable.

We're going to bring this to the national and to the international consciousness because it is a blight on all of our morality to have this war continue and no one in the press saying a damn thing about it.

Additionally, on the legislative front PEPFAR is the most successful foreign policy tool since the Marshall Plan and we have to have a long-term reauthorization.

AGOA is the base of the U.S.-Africa economic relationship and anything other than early reauthorization this year will send the clear signal to African leaders that they are not a priority regardless of the accompanying empty rhetoric from this Nation.

We must show our partners in Africa that they are enough in themselves. We must show them that our words will be backed up by actions.

I'm saddened to say this administration continuously failed to stand by their words and we have to stand up in Congress to make

sure that we hold them and any other administration accountable to their failures on the continent.

With that, I will acknowledge Mr. Bera from California.

Mr. BERA. Thank you. I appreciate my colleague from Michigan's passion about Africa. I'm very willing to work with the other side to get a long-term reauthorization of PEPFAR, which really is—I don't think it's my side of the aisle that has any issues with reauthorizing PEPFAR.

I also applaud the Biden administration for their renewed focus on Africa. President Biden organized the first U.S. Africa Leaders Summit since 2014, committing \$55 billion through 2025. So I do think the Biden administration understands the importance of this and I just contrast that with the prior administration.

I don't like using this language but President Trump talked about African countries as shithole countries. That is not how we talk about the importance of Africa. This is a vital region and incredibly important.

And, again, I look forward to working with my colleague and folks on the other side to get Africa, get Sudan, the necessary resources to address this crisis. I don't think you'll find any resistance on the Democratic side to try to address some of these issues.

Secretary Bass, thank you for your service and thank you for talking about the career Foreign Service officers and the importance of what they do.

I'm very concerned that we are losing ground in Africa, not because of lack of regard but, you know, when I look at surveys of Africa China now is more popular than the United States, and when I think about how China approaches the continent, you know, I think the number I've heard is for every dollar that they provide in investment they saddle many of these low and middle income countries with \$9 of debt.

You know, I was in Kenya last summer. Saw a beautiful train from Nairobi to Mombasa. I had never actually saw any trains on there and I don't think anyone's using that train but they're now saddled with a real challenge.

I applaud you for emphasizing the importance of reauthorizing the GFC and, you know, certainly plussing up that budget.

You've touched on, you know, some of the challenges that—you know, my colleague talked about Mali, you know, some of the Russian disinformation that has led to, you know, the French troops being kicked out of Mali.

You know, I worry about what we're seeing in Niger with U.S. troops being kicked out. If you could just take a few moments to talk about this and what we in Congress could do to help support your efforts, you know, from public diplomacy to, you know, investment and so forth—what you'd like to see.

Mr. BASS. So with regard to providing better offers on the continent, one of the challenges with the Chinese model is that it focuses on things, not people, and so they're—and they deliver something relatively quickly.

So for leaders who are looking at reelection or trying to demonstrate some positive impact they have something tangible to point to.

However, after a not very long period of time, right, there tends to be buyer's remorse with that model, and so what we are seeking to do with help from this committee on a bipartisan basis is to continue investing in and expanding those programs that provide that better alternative through developing local capacity, through improving Africans' ability to make their own choices and set up their own businesses that grow their economy.

We're going to need, I think, in the years to come to be able to make substantial additional investments in helping agriculture on the continent adapt to an evolving climate and, you know, this year we have put \$150 million against the VACS initiative—the Vision for Adapted Crops and Soil.

That is resonating in an enormous way on the continent because it is responsive to their immediate needs.

So programs like that that deal with the rural economy are quite important.

Mr. BERA. You know, I would love to work with you on getting educational resources, getting universities into Africa.

We have had conversations, you know, with Ambassador Whitman and thinking about how we—you know, we'd love to bring those students to the United States but we could also work, you know, on an education city type of model to build a campus in East Africa and Kenya, potentially a west African campus, to educate the young people to build capacity and to use that soft power.

So I would love to work with you on that.

Mr. BASS. Be happy to explore that with you.

Mr. JAMES. Well, thank you. I hope what about-ism about some expletives from President Trump from 4 years ago helps my colleagues sleep at night while there's a genocide going on in Sudan.

But right now what this Presidential administration is doing is failing to request in the budget for the Global Fragility Act what Congress has already authorized. Actions speak louder than words and we expect more in actions out of this administration.

The chairman now recognizes Mr. Davidson from Ohio.

Mr. DAVIDSON. Thank you. Thank you. I appreciate this hearing, and to our subcommittee chairman for the Africa Subcommittee Congressman James from Michigan I really appreciate the work in getting this hearing set up.

So it's an important area for American foreign policy and we're at risk of being outmaneuvered, frankly, in particular by China's Belt and Road Initiative but in part by the Biden administration because they continue to put their own hyper partisan agenda ahead of America's national interest.

And I tried to highlight this as we were reauthorizing the Developmental Finance Corporation, which has laudable goals and important things to accomplish in Africa, among other places.

But while we use EV mandates, IRA subsidies to push battery technology at breakneck speed, it's becoming clearer by the day that we risk national security by allowing all the critical resources to come mostly from Africa and process through China without any recourse to developing the supply chain at home.

And instead of addressing these things a lot of times the Development Finance Corporation and, frankly, our own State Department is more interested in about Pride Month agendas and wheth-

er women can abort their babies in countries where we have critical risks.

So, sir, I just wonder what your take is on the lack of focus and how well we're doing in terms of focus on accomplishing what we should be in Africa.

Mr. BASS. So, Congressman, I'd say we are quite focused on the challenges, particularly in ensuring we are able to compete effectively in gaining access to critical minerals for the new high ground in our economy and in the global economy in the coming years.

The administration has put enormous effort into developing critical minerals partnerships with a wide range of countries that allow them to develop—

Mr. DAVIDSON. Okay. Specifically who are they developing with? I mean, DRC, things don't seem to be going well there. What are they doing there in particular and what are they doing if that's not going well to supplement it with some others?

Mr. BASS. Well, with the Lobito Corridor we're creating opportunities for the DRC to have a choice and there's an enormous amount of interest in seeing development for those critical minerals in the southern DRC be able to go out through Angola to markets other than China and in partnerships that are going to be longer term and to the benefit of the DRC as opposed to primarily benefiting the People's Republic of China.

Mr. DAVIDSON. All right.

Secretary Bass, what were the warning signs in the State Department and the Department of Defense to the extent you know about their take about force deployment in Niger?

You know, under this administration America has had to evacuate 11 embassies so the last count I had. It might have gone higher than that. We evacuated Burma, Chad, Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Ukraine, Belarus, Russia, Nigeria, Sudan, Niger, and Haiti.

Is that a comprehensive list? But let's talk about Niger. What were the warning signs?

Mr. BASS. So in Niger we reduced the size of our mission complement for a period of time after the coup that brought the current junta to power when we saw indications that our principled opposition to that coup was creating potentially some friction with the junta and they might take action or create broader instability in the capital.

We have since returned all of our diplomats and development professionals that were temporarily taken out back to the country. They're back on the job advocating and advancing the Nation's interests there and that's been the case in most of the other places where we temporarily reduced our footprint, depending on the circumstances.

That's one of our principal tools for mitigating risk and managing risk around the world, to enable us to continue to be present in dangerous and dynamic environments.

Mr. DAVIDSON. Well, I find two common themes under this administration, and I thank you for your long career service. You've served under Republican and Democrat administrations and as a career State Department employee, you know, I don't expect you to engage in necessarily the partisan behavior.

But what I see the agenda consistently left of center for the State Department regardless of who becomes president or who becomes secretary and I see weakness under this administration—that's certainly a common theme—and it's experienced all over the world and it's being exploited.

And I also see an administration that is focused on DEI ideology, kind of far left political agendas, instead of our own national security agenda.

So I hope you can help correct that. I yield back.

Mr. JAMES. Thank you. The chairman now recognizes Ms. Kamlager-Dove from California.

Ms. KAMLAGER-DOVE. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I thank you for—Honorable Bass, for showing up today. This is a long time coming. I think this is the first full hearing we have had on Africa since Congress began. Woefully inadequate but here we are.

I want to start by discussing the most urgent continent—the most urgent crisis on the continent, which is the conflict in Sudan, and the ability to be a force for peace and stability in Africa makes the United States a more influential actor and a desirable partner than strategic competitors like Russia who, unfortunately, have been able to run the table on the continent because the prior administration had a zero Africa party—I mean zero Africa policy.

Unfortunately, we are failing in Sudan where it took over a year to appoint a special envoy to manage the U.S. response to the conflict, and the shortage of high level attention to the largest humanitarian crisis in the world does not go unnoticed by African partners that we are encouraging to turn away from Russia and China and, in fact, they hosted not long ago a 3-day forum on the continent, really trying to take advantage of the space that we left because of the zero policy from the prior administration.

So last month I led a letter with 50 of my colleagues urging the administration to use the momentum from the U.S.-led peace talks convened in July to prioritize the scaling up of humanitarian aid into Sudan.

And, Mr. Chairman, I request unanimous consent to submit that letter for the record.

[The information referred to has not been submitted:]

Ms. KAMLAGER-DOVE. Thank you so much.

Acting Under Secretary Bass, how is the U.S. planning to increase the cost to the two warring parties of waging this conflict?

Mr. BASS. Congresswoman, thank you for again flagging the enormous challenges in Sudan.

We are working on several fronts to try to bring the conflict to a close including by increasing pressure on both parties to the conflict.

We're partly working with some of their patron countries, the countries that have been supporting one side or the other with weapons, with materiel, et cetera.

In recent months, and I think you see this as an outflow of the diplomacy last month in Switzerland—successful diplomacy—some of those patrons are realizing that this conflict is expanding and taking on unpredictable dimensions, attracting even other countries such as Iran prospectively and realizing that it is time to bring it to a close.

We're also developing additional potential sanctions against leaders on both sides of the conflict should they continue to resist our efforts to bring the parties to the table and start talking through their differences instead of fighting.

Ms. KAMLAGER-DOVE. Well, that is a problem because the parties are not coming to the table and sanctions only work if they have teeth associated with them, and if we have had embargoes in the past and they're still getting weapons into the country I hope that you expand the discussions around sanctions to include those parties that are actually continuing to supply them the arms because the deaths are going to continue as long as folks are able to obtain weaponry.

So how is the U.S. planning to leverage the upcoming U.N. General Assembly to elevate this crisis?

Mr. BASS. So we—to your point about sanctions, we have sanctioned a number of entities outside of Sudan, some of them in the UAE, that have been involved in enabling the RSF in this case to evade the embargo that's been in place and we continue to actively develop additional cases along those lines.

With regard to the General Assembly, high level week coming up in 2 weeks, we have a range of diplomacy underway now, consulting in capitals with a number of neighboring countries and countries that have influence over the parties, and we will be holding a high level event during high level week to reflect on the results of this latest round and to talk about how we can generate additional momentum to build off of the success last month—limited success—in Switzerland.

Ms. KAMLAGER-DOVE. You can't build a momentum if you're not talking about the issue and the special envoy needs more support, needs more staff, needs more resources, and Blinken needs to be talking about this issue more.

My time is up. I yield back.

Mr. JAMES. I agree with my colleague from California 100 percent on that issue. We need more light. We need more support to resolve the conflict, not continue to talk about it.

We're going to skip a little bit in the order right now and the chairman now recognizes Mr. Self from Texas.

Mr. Self?

Mr. SELF. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I hear a lot of talk about helping other people. I want to talk about U.S. national interests.

I want to go back to something that Mr. Davidson opened the door to here because when we look at China and critical minerals, I don't have the charts here with me but when you look at the production of critical minerals there's a diversity of countries.

But when you get to the processing capability it's almost exclusively China. Eighty-five percent of the processing capability in the worldwide critical mineral area China controls it, which makes us—our national interests are directly tied to China's processing of critical minerals.

What is the State Department—first question is what is the State Department's role when a U.S. company in, let's say, the Congo—DRC—sells to a China company? What would be the State Department role in that case? Have any role at all?

Mr. BASS. Our role would simply be to ensure that that company is complying with U.S. law and providing information to domestic agencies here if we received inquiries from them or if things came to our attention that indicated they were outside U.S. law.

Mr. SELF. That's what I thought. How does Congress help you strengthen our ability to hold on to the critical minerals that we have?

Now, I understand. I would prefer to mine the critical minerals in the U.S. but the Biden administration has pretty much shut that down, bowing to the climate religion.

For instance, I think there are now 66 actions against a mining interest in Alaska alone and Alaska has 49 of the 50 critical minerals and we need to understand that. Alaska alone has 49 of the 50 critical minerals that we need.

So what can Congress do to help you to maintain our control? What would you need to help our companies in Africa who are already doing it from—stopping them from selling their interests to China?

Mr. BASS. So, Congressman, the most important things to do are to reauthorize the Development Finance Corporation and to make sure it's appropriately capitalized to provide seed capital for partnerships between U.S. companies and companies in Africa to develop processing on the continent and that's a that's a key piece of the Lobito Corridor concept that we're developing.

The core of it's a rail line but the goal here is to help use that rail line to build processing on the continent and I can tell you all three governments are very interested in that because they see the perils that you point to and the lack of opportunity and job growth in their own countries as a result of their minerals just walking out the door.

Mr. SELF. I was hoping for something stronger than that because I believe that this is a critical national interest that we need to get a handle on.

I would recommend the State Department recommend to Congress what we can do. What is this? What would you need to strengthen our ability to determine where we get critical minerals.

If we're not going to mine them and process them in the United States how do we meet U.S. national interests around the world?

I think this is one of the critical areas. Semiconductors is another one. I think those two areas need more attention by the State Department to advance U.S. national interest around the world.

With that, I yield back.

Mr. JAMES. Thank you, Mr. Self.

Those statements actually reminded me of something of a statement of—that's very important but we'll get to that later.

The chairman now recognizes Ms. Titus from Nevada.

Ms. TITUS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Before I ask you a question, Secretary Bass, I want to mention that in your opening remarks you said something about the overseas comparability pay authority and the fact that this mission critical authorization, which has great national security authorization, is about to expire.

I completely agree with you. We need to continue this. If we let it lapse the State Department—the Foreign Service officers are

going to face up to a 22 percent cut and that will certainly hinder our ability to recruit and retain these professionals.

So I want you to know that I'm leading a letter to Speaker Johnson about this issue and urging him to include it in the CR so we can be sure that we continue to operate effectively.

And I want to invite any of my colleagues to sign on to that letter who might be interested in protecting our national interest.

Another—related to this, another thing that presents a challenge for us in Africa is the diplomatic presence there on the continent. There are currently six U.S. missions—I know I'm not telling you anything—but in Africa that do not have a Senate-confirmed Ambassador: Eswatini, Lesotho, Libya, Malawi, Mauritania, and Sudan, and Sudan we have already heard about in the throes of one of the worst humanitarian crisis out there.

Now, except for Sudan, which the position has just been recently vacated, there are nominees for these positions, five nominees, but Republican senators have put sweeping blocks on these nominees for various political—I don't know what kind of reasons.

So I wonder if you would address this and comment on how our lack of Ambassadors in those countries affects our diplomatic relations not only with those countries but with surrounding parts of the continent—what it says to people that we don't even care enough to send an ambassador or that our level of involvement is inadequate or certainly not what we see in other parts of the world.

Mr. BASS. Well, Congresswoman, thank you very much particularly for your advocacy for sustaining OCP, which will be an essential part of our ability to be effective on the continent and in the immediate future.

With regard to confirmed Ambassadors, it undercuts our ability to be as effective as we need to be when we do not have confirmed Ambassadors in the field. Countries draw conclusions from that.

We have a number of countries that think that we're signaling to them that they're not important to the United States. We have countries that are very protocol conscious that won't see our chargé to discuss critical issues and that undercuts our ability to carry the effort forward.

And whenever we have an ambassador absent in most cases it pulls everybody else in that embassy out of position because you've got a series of people in acting roles to ladder up to that principal role. And I can assure you, you know, when the PRC changes Ambassadors there is not a lengthy gap.

The other area where this really concerns me as a career professional is we're starting to see some of our really talented, capable officers who should be competing to be Ambassadors stepping away from it because they don't want to or can't afford to put their lives in limbo for an indefinite period of time, sometimes going up to 2 years or longer, wondering if they're going to have that opportunity.

Ms. TITUS. Wouldn't this be a first step? At least fill these positions if we want to strengthen our hand against China or Russia there on the continent?

Mr. BASS. It would certainly reduce the unforced errors, if you will, if we could make sure all of our missions were led by confirmed Ambassadors.

Ms. TITUS. Thank you.

Just briefly, could you talk about how the Global Fragility Act is playing out on the continent and how that's helping us get at promoting democratic institutions against the face of violence?

Mr. BASS. So happy to.

Briefly, it has enabled us to organize and think differently about how we address some of these challenges that transcend geographic or—you know, geographic boundaries between countries.

Particularly effective in helping us think about a broader strategy for coastal West Africa as we're dealing with the instability that is emanating out of the Sahel right now, for example.

Ms. TITUS. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. JAMES. Thank you, Ms. Titus.

The chairman now recognizes my good friend from west Michigan Mr. Huizenga.

Mr. HUIZENGA. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And while we're on west Michigan I want to—here's the connection then. I want to talk about Sudan. It might seem like a disconnect but in my time in Congress I have a case worker who has done a tremendous amount of work with Sudanese refugees and the Sudan crisis and has brought a number of those refugees into west Michigan, and that's why it's, I think, you are hearing such broad consensus and disappointment in what has been the response or lack thereof of what is going on in Sudan.

And, again, I just—I won't belabor points that have been repeated here but just underscore again there is a perception from many of us that this is a failed diplomatic resolution or lack of prioritization of a diplomatic resolution, I should say, and please go back and emphasize this to your superiors and to the folks that you work with that we need answers up here on the Hill.

I'm going to talk—transition to China and talk a little bit about what's been happening there—obviously, China's roles in destabilizing our foothold in places like Djibouti.

They are—they have a base six miles from Camp Lemonnier and it's the only permanent base we have in Africa, I believe, and PRC has a permanent naval presence and exclusive rights to that territory.

And, certainly, we know that China has a core strategy about gaining an Atlantic base as well. Gabon and Equatorial Guinea and Angola are often raised as potential locations for that.

I would like to know what is the diplomatic message that the department has been giving to these Atlantic coast countries to dissuade them from allowing a PRC base and are we offering them anything instead?

I mean, there's reports of—we know, obviously, China has put, I believe, somewhere around \$50 billion as a target of what they want to invest into Africa over the next 3 years alone.

So tell me what the State Department is doing in communication with those countries and discouraging them. What are we offering them instead and, hopefully, I'll have a quick question after that.

Mr. BASS. Sure. Thanks for the opportunity to talk about this critical issue.

We're doing a range of things. First and foremost, we have got active diplomatic engagement with all the countries along the At-

lantic coast to underscore to them the perils of either affirmatively or, perhaps, passively slipping into an arrangement where the PRC is able to establish a naval base, and the PRC base in Djibouti is Exhibit A, B, and C of the perils of doing that.

The Djiboutian government doesn't have any access to that base, doesn't know what's going on in that—

Mr. HUIZENGA. Even though it's their sovereignty territory?

Mr. BASS. Exactly. And so that—I think part of the reason you haven't seen a PRC success on the—in the Atlantic basin is precisely because African countries are paying attention to what is happening in Djibouti.

Mr. HUIZENGA. And are we specifically underscoring that?

Mr. BASS. Absolutely.

Mr. HUIZENGA. We know about their base in Peru in South America and the footholds that they may be trying to get to hem in on the Pacific side and seeing this happen on the Atlantic side. I mean, that is just an expansionist action that has got to raise red flags, I would hope.

Mr. BASS. Yes, absolutely, and we are warning them or cautioning them. But we're also in dialogs with a number of these governments to understand, Okay, what is it that you're concerned about that would prompt you to think about this and how can we try to address that and work in partnership with you.

So we're improving a number of the basin countries' ability to deal with their own maritime security so they can take care of these issues themselves.

Mr. HUIZENGA. And real quickly in these last seconds, what are they saying to you? What are their concerns that are even allowing them to have these conversations?

Mr. BASS. They're—in many cases they're concerned about their ability to understand what's happening in their territorial waters, in their exclusive economic zones. They're concerned, in some cases, about what their neighbors might be doing about piracy.

So we have a range of capacity building programs underway to address those and would be happy to followup with you and get you more detail.

Mr. HUIZENGA. Appreciate it. My time is expired. I yield back.

Mr. JAMES. Thank you, Mr. Huizenga.

The chairman now recognizes Ms. Jacobs for—from California.

Ms. JACOBS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for your partnership in leading the Subcommittee on Africa for this body.

Under Secretary Bass, thank you for testifying. It's been really great to hear us spend so much of this time talking about Africa, an issue that, you know, doesn't often get the attention it deserves here in Congress.

I'm first going to talk about the Global Fragility Act. I know you've had a few questions on that already and I just want to build on what some of my colleagues have already asked.

You know, in particular it's been mentioned already that the Sahel has seen an increase in violent extremism despite 20 years of U.S. investment and I think the Global Fragility Act was really designed to apply lessons learned from previous conflicts like the Sahel to make sure that we're learning what didn't work so that we can do things differently.

And, you know, one of the things I think was the most important lesson there is the need for an integrated response with the State Department in the lead because, at the end of the day, these conflicts require political solutions, not just military or security solutions and, frankly, not just foreign assistance programming, right. These are political problems that require political solutions.

So as the manager of the regional bureaus, the folks who do the day-to-day diplomacy, how are you and the department doing diplomacy differently and pushing for political solutions pursuant to the GFA?

Mr. BASS. Well, thank you, Congresswoman, for your championing of GFA and effective implementation. We're approaching it differently in terms of thinking more holistically about these conflicts and ensuring that we have the full range of expertise across the department at the table on a regular basis to proactively be working through dealing with these challenges and I think—and I'll be the first to say, right, we're as equally dissatisfied with where we are in Sudan as members of the committee.

But the progress we have made in recent months on securing humanitarian access is a reflection of some of these new habits of cooperation and effort to mutually reinforce between the department, AID, working with our mission in New York, and the wider humanitarian community to make sure we are not working at cross purposes and strengthening that overall diplomatic engagement.

Ms. JACOBS. That's great, and I'll continue making sure we're doing everything we can to support you in that.

You mentioned Sudan. Obviously, it's been a topic of conversation in this hearing, rightly so—the largest displacement crisis in the world, the largest hunger crisis in the world, and something that doesn't get enough attention.

I applaud Special Envoy Periello's work to open the humanitarian corridors and protect civilians but, unfortunately, we're not seeing either of the main parties really have the political will to come to the table.

I know you've already mentioned a little bit about outside actors here but I guess I want to ask you a little bit more specifically, the UAE is the RSF's largest arms backer.

They are literally providing the way the RSF is able to commit what many experts determine as genocide, and we have a significant relationship with the UAE.

In fact, we are their biggest provider of weapons. So given this, what are you and the department doing at the highest levels to push the UAE specifically to utilize all of our leverage with the UAE to get them to stop arming RSF and stop enabling these war crimes and crimes against humanity?

Mr. BASS. So, Congresswoman, we're engaged in intensive near daily dialog with the government of the UAE and with a number of the other countries that are fueling the conflict to underscore the perils associated with continuing to prolong this conflict through enabling the parties to continue to go at it.

We, as I noted earlier, have already designated some entities resident in the UAE. I think that got their attention in a helpful way and we have seen them playing a quite constructive role in recent months, particularly to get us as far as we did last month.

Now, that was necessary but wildly insufficient and we're going to stay at it and try to use the best of our—to the best of our ability, the leverage we have—the influence we have—to persuade them to get the RSF to the table for a constructive set of political negotiations.

Ms. JACOBS. Well, thank you, and I urge you and the department to do even more on this front because what we're seeing in Sudan right now is truly horrific.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Mr. JAMES. Mr. Chairman, what's today's date?

Mr. BASS. I'm sorry. Mr.——

Mr. JAMES. What's today's date, Mr. Chairman?

Mr. BASS. September 11th.

Mr. JAMES. Okay. On April 19th Chairman McCaul, Ranking Member Meeks, Chairman Cardena, and Ranking Member Risch wrote a letter requiring the administration to determine whether or not to apply Global Magnitsky sanctions against the RSF and specific individuals in the RSF.

This is a requirement of law, Mr. Chairman, to respond within 120 days. One hundred and 20 days from April 19th is August 17th. There's no response.

Those responsible are breaking the law and we'll do everything we can to hold them accountable here so that we can hold those who are funding the RSF and SAF accountable there.

The chair now recognizes Mr. Hill from Arkansas.

Mr. HILL. I thank the chairman.

Mr. Secretary, thank you for taking time to be with us today. I'm just back a few weeks ago from a visit to west Africa on behalf of the House Intelligence Committee to Cameroon, Ghana, and Nigeria.

We also had an extensive visit with ECOWAS, and the security situation in West Africa is severely deteriorating. I know you've addressed that today. I just want to add my concern that I'm not sure what American strategy is in Africa and so we really appreciate you coming and helping members clarify that.

It's of deep concern in a great power conflict that a continent as large and as important and significant as Africa as Members of Congress say it's uncertain, you know, what America's strategy there, and I would say the same for our European colleagues. So thanks for your being with us today.

When I was in Nigeria we had excellent meetings in the Lake Chad Basin area in Cameroon. We visited our forward operating facilities and talked extensively about Lake Chad and, clearly, the fact that we don't have ISR resources in the region is of concern to our partner countries there.

But also when I was in Abuja I had the opportunity to go out to Kujay Prison and visit with an American that has been wrongfully detained by the Nigerian government, Tigran Gambaryan.

Tigran was lured, in my view, to Nigeria in February under false pretenses and then wrongfully arrested and detained by the top officials in Nigeria because the Nigerians have a conflict with the company Finance.

And, of course, America has had issues with Binance and we have a deferred—essentially a deferred prosecution arrangement with that company ourselves.

But Tigran was a compliance officer with them. He's not at the top echelons of Binance, and when I visited him with my colleague Chrissy Houlahan in Kujay Prison he was clearly in distress. His physical condition is weakening.

We saw a video last week where he can barely walk as he's being drug through a court process there and my colleague, Dr. McCormick, I know will raise this with you. He's been deeply concerned about it as well. We have his resolution before the House on this matter.

And so while I appreciate the DAS Mike Heath—great followup with me, your consular officers in Abuja are excellent—I don't understand why we don't have more action by the U.S. Government here.

Why has the State Department not designated Tigran Gambaryan as wrongfully detained by the Nigerian government?

Mr. BASS. So, Congressman, thank you for your personal interest in Mr. Gambaryan and your visit to him.

We remain deeply concerned about his continued incarceration. We're working intensively, irrespective of whether he's been designated or not, to secure his release. The process under the Levinson Act requires constant evaluation.

Mr. HILL. Let me interrupt you and say thank you for that. You need to press forward here because my concern is in this administration we have seen a lot of action on Americans held wrongfully detained abroad and they frequently get a designation.

But suddenly here we have a country like Nigeria where we didn't—we removed them from the list in the Biden administration on religious freedom issues. We have signed a commercial and investment partnership with that country in the middle of this personal tragedy and I don't think the leadership—the national security adviser, the president, the cabinet leadership in Nigeria—gets they're putting our relationship on the line because of the way they're handling this situation.

What do you think the sticking point is for getting Tigran Gambaryan home to his family in Dr. McCormick's district?

Mr. BASS. I think we're picking our way through some complicated tangles within the Nigerian system but I'm hopeful we're going to be able to resolve those in the near future, and I can assure you that the Secretary and Deputy Secretary Campbell, along with myself, are seized with this and we're doing everything possible to—

Mr. HILL. I think the response of the government is embarrassing in Nigeria and I think while our Ambassador is doing their best on the ground there we need to press harder. We need the President engaged here. This is wrong. This is a dispute that is in no way involves Tigran Gambaryan and we're watching him decline in his health and it's a horrifying situation.

And this is one with a friend of the United States. We're not talking about Iran or Russia here. We're talking about Nigeria.

Will you give me your word you will do everything you can in your power to get Tigran home to his family before Christmas?

Mr. BASS. I will certainly do everything I can.

Mr. HILL. Yield back.

Mr. JAMES. Our government's efforts in Africa are a disgrace and the level of execution and attention we're getting from this administration. We and the people of Africa demand more.

But in the meantime, the chairman recognizes Ms. Manning from North Carolina.

Ms. MANNING. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I would like to wish a full and speedy recovery to my good friend Joe Wilson. We look forward to his return to Congress.

Under Secretary Bass, thank you for being here with us today. Thank you for your testimony. I am deeply concerned about the case South Africa brought to the IJC targeting Israel for its operations in Gaza and accusing Israel of genocide, which our own State Department has said is unfounded.

So what are you doing to make clear that we oppose South Africa's move and that it undermines our relationship with South Africa?

Mr. BASS. Well, Congresswoman, thank you for raising that and I would just echo Secretary Blinken's observations that the ICC prosecutors' request for arrest warrants are shameful.

This is not the proper focus of the ICC. As you know well it was intended from the outset to focus on countries where there is not an effective independent judiciary and that's obviously not the case in Israel.

What we're focused on now is ways in which we can most effectively influence the court's deliberations of this request. We have submitted a brief in support of Israel articulating and underscoring why we believe these—that this request is unwarranted and we're continuing to pursue that with intensity.

Ms. MANNING. I understand and I appreciate that, but I am concerned about how we are making sure that South Africa understands our position on this issue, and we talked earlier in this hearing about the humanitarian disaster taking place in Sudan where 11 million people have been displaced, more than 25.6 million people are facing acute hunger with 700,000 on the brink of famine, and we know that South Africa refused to arrest Sudanese dictator Omar al-Bashir when he visited South Africa after the International Court of Justice had issued arrest awards for his crimes against humanity and genocide.

And this past January South Africa hosted Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, a Sudanese warlord accused of war crimes, crimes against humanity.

So is South Africa doing anything to address the ongoing disaster in Sudan?

Mr. BASS. So, Congresswoman, we have a vigorous ongoing dialog with the new government in South Africa and we'll be later this week sitting down with some of the senior officials in their foreign ministry to discuss these and other issues on the continent that are of such acute concern to us.

Ms. MANNING. But, to your knowledge, they're not actually engaging in trying to improve the situation in Sudan.

Do you have any idea why South Africa is ignoring a disaster so close to them but is instead setting its sights on Israel, including

hosting Hamas leaders after October 7th? They hosted Hamas leaders in December knowing full well that Hamas had committed grotesque atrocities against Israelis on October 7th and took 240 hostages, including Americans.

Mr. BASS. Well, certainly have not agreed with South Africa's position on the conflict at any point in time and we have made that clear to them, and we continue to vigorously engage them to try to change their views and position.

Ms. MANNING. Thank you. When I was in South Africa earlier this year we heard repeatedly about the level of government corruption that has become normalized, and I was also surprised by the daily electricity blackouts that are now expected and accepted by the South African people.

Can you comment on these issues and how this is impacting our relationship with South Africa?

Mr. BASS. Well, it's clear the electricity blackouts that you're referring to are clearly a function of a long-standing many year underinvestment in basic infrastructure in South Africa, the impacts of which are now being felt.

I think we're seeing some indications from the new government that they are recognizing the enormous dilemmas they have with their ability to sustain economic development and opportunity for their own citizens and we're seeing some indications they are prepared to think differently about some of these subjects.

Ms. MANNING. Let me end by raising one last issue.

In July the State Department unveiled the Global Guidelines for Countering Anti-Semitism, a major commitment by more than 40 countries and international organizations to act against rising anti-Semitism, implement best practices to protect the Jewish communities around the world.

I would like to note that no African country or organization has yet endorsed these very noncontroversial guidelines, and as acting under secretary for political affairs will you commit to making sure that chiefs of mission across the regional bureaus are aware of this and actively engage in advancing these guidelines to our partner countries in Africa?

Mr. BASS. Yes, and we're continuing to work closely with Ambassador Lipstadt in building off of the very strong foundation of the initial commitments.

Ms. MANNING. Thank you very much and I yield back.

Mr. MORAN [presiding]. The gentlelady yields back.

The gentleman from Indiana Mr. Baird is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BAIRD. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I want to thank my colleague Mr. McCormick for allowing me to have this spot. Appreciate you very much.

You know, agriculture and food products accounted for the third largest nonenergy sector for AGOA, which is African Growth and Opportunity Act, exports in 2023 and they were valued at \$732 million.

The Southern African market especially presents an opportunity to augment and not directly compete with the domestic agricultural produce because of the Southern Hemisphere's different harvest times.

I have heard examples of AGOA-eligible agricultural products being stymied because of long APHIS commodity import approval process for agricultural products to enter the United States.

So, Mr. Under Secretary, we appreciate you being here and I want to know how does the department engage in various inter-agency approval processes for these applications that deal with foreign policy interests and how swiftly that we can take care of those and make sure that they're not mired in bureaucracy?

Mr. BASS. Congressman, thank you for bringing that to my attention. We have an ongoing interagency process that looks at a range of trade issues including agricultural trade.

I know we have got in many different instances over the years challenges with different inspection regimes and we work closely with APHIS and our colleagues at USDA to make sure their notable desire to make sure any product coming into the U.S. is safe for American consumers, that we're applying a common sense standard to that approach.

Mr. BAIRD. Well, you know, I certainly agree with making sure that it's safe because I understand some of the diseases of someone that we have in foreign countries we don't want them to come here.

But I've also been to Africa a couple of times in the last year and I think trade is an extremely important part of developing a good relationship. So I would just add my thoughts there and appreciate any efforts you can do to enhance that process.

Thank you. I yield back.

Mr. MORAN. The gentleman yields back.

The gentleman from Texas Mr. Castro is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. CASTRO. Thank you.

Under Secretary Bass, the State Department's Minerals Security Partnership, or MSP, is an important effort to coordinate how critical minerals are extracted and used.

So far there's been significant interest in Latin America to join MSP. While Latin America is certainly a significant producer of these minerals countries in Africa by many accounts hold some of the largest reserves in the world, mostly being extracted and processed by PRC companies, as you know.

What is the State Department—what is the State Department doing to work with African partners on critical minerals and have any African nations join the MSP, and what is the department doing to bring them on board?

Mr. BASS. So, Congressman, thank you for that continued focus on critical minerals.

My colleague Under Secretary Fernandez has been engaged intensively in developing the Minerals Security Partnership and engaging individual governments to solicit their interest.

I know he's been on the continent a couple of times recently and is making good progress in that regard. Related to that, our efforts on the Lobito Corridor development is demonstrating through the deals that are being developed under that rubric the value to African countries of engaging in the MSP and in those kinds of relationships which are going to bring higher value processing, better quality jobs, and actual investment onto the continent as opposed to simply seeing the raw materials leave.

Mr. CASTRO. No. Well, thank you, and I hope that you all will work as hard as you can to continue to develop those partnerships and relationships.

And following up on the PRC's presence in Africa and the growing Chinese influence in Africa, as you know China for several years now has had a very aggressive Belt and Road Initiative and it includes ambitious plans for different places in the world including Africa, and by most public accounts I've seen in recent years the PRC'd diplomatic presence and staffing has exploded all over the world and Africa is at the forefront of the PRC's diplomatic push.

And I'm pleased to hear that we have announced plans to open new embassies in Comoros and potentially other countries in Africa with U.S. diplomatic installations.

I'm sure you've heard the saying that half the battle is showing up so I wanted to ask you what are we doing to show up in Africa and how has the administration strengthened our diplomatic presence on the ground on the African continent?

Mr. BASS. So, as you noted, Congressman, we have opened an embassy in Comoros. We have supported, reinforced our presence in the Seychelles as well and we're looking at other opportunities on the continent.

We're also focused on ensuring to the best of our ability with the workforce we have, with the resources we have available to us, that our embassies in Africa are fully staffed.

We got a ways to go there because we have a worldwide shortage, if you will, in terms of people relative to the positions we have. But, importantly, we're making sure that the people we have on the ground to the best of our ability to have the tools—to your point, showing up.

We want to make sure that through our exchange programs in particular and through our support for Chambers of Commerce and other parts of American society we have got a much wider range of the United States present in these countries engaging them on issues that are of interest to those people and those societies.

Mr. CASTRO. Where are we opening this embassy and are there additional countries where the United States is establishing a new diplomatic presence?

Mr. BASS. So we're in the process of evaluating, again, depending on what the budget looks like for Fiscal Year 1925, where we can potentially open some additional small embassies to make sure we have got a persistent presence.

Mr. CASTRO. Thank you. I yield back.

Mr. MORAN. The gentleman yields back.

The gentleman from Pennsylvania Mr. Perry is now recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. PERRY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Secretary, thanks for being here. I'm going to turn our attention or your attention to Somalia. As you know, we have U.S. troops there and there are other actors—Turkey, UAE, Egypt—playing a role right now.

Somalia just received lethal aid from Egypt and I'm wondering now that al-Shabaab and the Houthis are coordinating more close-

ly, assuming that Iran has a stake in that as well with what's happening in the Red Sea and commercial traffic being rerouted.

What's your honest assessment, let's say, of the next 6 months in Somalia?

Mr. BASS. I think in the next 6 months we're going to continue to see al-Shabaab putting pressure on government forces. We haven't as yet seen a qualitative improvement in their capabilities but, clearly, in—

Mr. PERRY. In the government's capabilities or al-Shabaab's?

Mr. BASS. In al-Shabaab's capabilities.

Mr. PERRY. Okay.

Mr. BASS. So I think you're going to continue to see tension. I think al-Shabaab is going to be looking for new opportunities as we transition from the current AU-centric ATMIS mission to the successor mission.

They're going to look to see if that creates new opportunities for them and potentially we're going to have a continued big distraction from Ethiopia's ongoing engagement with regional leaders in the north about trying to open a port.

Mr. PERRY. Does al-Shabaab become more capable because of its and through its affiliation with the Houthis?

Mr. BASS. I think it depends on how that affiliation develops, the extent to which the Houthis share technology, provide weapons, improve their—al-Shabaab's TTPs.

My understanding is this is a nascent relationship and we're watching it closely and going to try to do what we can to prevent it from growing.

Mr. PERRY. What should be—what do you recommend the posture of the United States is toward that emerging, nascent, but growing threat in coordination with the Houthis, Iran, et cetera?

Mr. BASS. Well, our posture is to oppose it. Yes. But in terms of what we can—

Mr. PERRY. Well, Okay. But can you get granular about it?

Mr. BASS. What we can do about it we're looking at ways to first understand the scope of it, A; B, try to prevent it from getting larger and more intensive; and C, ensure that Somali forces have the capacity and the capability to deal with an improved capability from al-Shabaab should that develop.

Mr. PERRY. Okay. We'll keep an eye on that.

Let's turn your attention to the DRC. More than 600 people have died there regarding Mpox and I'm wondering do you know or are there any level two labs there funded by the U.S., and maybe as importantly as that funded by the World Health Organization, and our concerns for the security of any such labs?

Mr. BASS. I don't have specifics regarding that degree of capacity within the DRC but happy to come back to you on that one.

Mr. PERRY. You don't have the information regarding the labs or where they were funded or if they exist or what—can you be specific about that?

Mr. BASS. Sure. I don't have with me the precise details about the laboratories that exist in the DRC at what level and who they're funded by.

Mr. PERRY. Okay. Could you then make a commitment to inform the committee—

Mr. BASS. Yes.

Mr. PERRY [continuing]. Of that information?

And then just, you know, based on the pandemic that originated in the Wuhan Institute of Virology and the World Health Organization's involvement and mishandling of that to very grave effect around the world what is the department doing in interacting with the World Health Organization regarding the DRC and the Mpox outbreak?

Mr. BASS. So Dr. Nkengasong, the head of our global health security and diplomacy bureau, is in active discussions with the WHO, with the Africa, CDC, and with a range of other donors and partners as well as the government of the DRC to understand how the epidemic is evolving to make sure that we are providing support to them to try to contain it and to help the neighboring states prepare to deal with it if it spreads.

Mr. PERRY. Does the United States have a posture that is independent, shall we say, regarding the DRC and the Mpox outbreak? Do we have a independent posture from the World Health Organization or will we be following their lead, so to speak, based on their past performance?

Mr. BASS. Congressman, to the best of my understanding we are taking our lead, first and foremost, from the DRC government officials in terms of what they need.

We are sharing information with the WHO and AF CDC in terms of what they're hearing in part to ensure, along with other donors, that we're not overlapping in terms of a response and we're trying to be as effective as possible with our contributions.

Mr. PERRY. Thank you, sir. I yield.

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

The gentleman from Arizona Mr. Stanton is recognized for five—

Mr. STANTON. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Like other members of this committee, first, let me say that we are wishing all the best to our colleague Joe Wilson. He has been a outstanding friend and leader on this committee working in a bipartisan way, particularly for me on the issue of supporting the people of Syria in their fight against Assad and the fight for freedom in that country. I appreciate him very much.

Let me begin by saying that I am gravely concerned about the conflict and resulting humanitarian crisis in Sudan. The people of Sudan are experiencing the largest hunger crisis in the world—the first official famine declared since 2017, more than 25 million people are displaced, the largest displacement crisis in the world.

In the face of such incredible suffering the U.S. must take extraordinary measures to support Sudanese civilians and I continue to urge the State Department to prioritize humanitarian aid during peace talks and to encourage a worldwide surge of contributions to support the people of Sudan.

My first question will focus on global trade, particularly critical minerals. My home State of Arizona is benefiting from generational investments in our semiconductor sector and other 21st century technologies like electric vehicle batteries, solar panels, and other important items.

But to continue manufacturing these advanced technologies to increase production as we intend the United States needs a reliable and secure access to dozens of raw minerals from around the globe including vast mineral deposits in the African continent.

However, the world supply of raw minerals is increasingly controlled by China. For example, more than 70 percent of the Democratic Republic of Congo's cobalt and copper mines, one of the largest deposits on Earth, are owned by the People's Republic of China and PRC-linked firms with well documented histories of awful labor and environmental practices.

Many African countries want to take advantage of the growing global demand for their natural resources in ways that drive prosperity for their people. But to build mutually beneficial relationships with African nations we need to be strategic about how we resource ourselves and compete with the other world's players.

Under Secretary Bass, the U.S. has signed a memorandum of understanding with the DRC and Zambia to jointly develop a supply chain for electric vehicle batteries. This is important to hit some of our goals for EVs.

How can the United States' involvement in the DRC's crucial mineral sector help to raise standards and strengthen critical minerals governance and how will this also benefit the Congolese people?

Mr. BASS. Well, thank you, Congressman.

The whole underlying principle under the PGI initiative is to provide highest quality—not just investment but highest quality opportunities for the countries in which we are making those investments and the—you know, in stark contrast to how, as you noted, the PRC approaches these issues, and the Lobito Corridor and the mineral developments you're talking about we believe are providing a compelling alternative that is resonating with the governments of all three countries and, frankly, with a number of governments of countries in the surrounding region who are seeing the alternative and want to be a part of it in the future.

Mr. STANTON. Let me ask a question about PEPFAR. I know that's been discussed by our leadership of the committee as well as through questions. But it is a plan or a program worth talking about, one of the most successful foreign policy programs in American history led by President—former President Bush.

It has saved the lives of more than 25 million people and that—and PEPFAR—support for PEPFAR has always been and must be bipartisan.

But right now the program is due to expire in the spring and I want you to talk about that, Under Secretary Bass. What do we stand to lose in terms of public health outcomes in Africa if PEPFAR is not reauthorized on time?

Mr. BASS. So, Congressman, we will set back a generation of efforts to continue improving the capacity of these societies to deal with HIV/AIDS but also with a wider range of infectious diseases.

A key piece of PEPFAR has been building out the capacity of public health institutions, educational networks, and nongovernmental organizations in many of these societies, and in the absence of this organizing program inevitably we will see reductions in capacity and effectiveness.

Mr. STANTON. The United States invests more in global health in Africa at a magnitude unmatched by any other donor country. I hope that continues. It needs to continue.

And I'll ask for a question but you can probably answer offline because I'm running out of time. But how do our African partner countries view these U.S. investments? We want to make sure that we invest the right way and that our partners in Africa understand the level of those investments and how important it is. So we'll get a question offline.

Thank you for your answer offline. Thank you.

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

The gentleman from Georgia Mr. McCormick is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. MCCORMICK. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

First of all, I'd like to recognize, just like everybody else, our thoughts and prayers are with Joe Wilson, one of my favorite Congressmen, one of the most gregarious people you'll ever meet in your life.

Africa—near and dear to my heart. Spent a couple tours over there. Spent a lot of time off the coast of Somalia, in Kenya, Nigeria, in Tanzania, both as a Marine and also as a civilian climbing Kilimanjaro.

It's an area of interest. It's got more strife, more immigration problems, more terrorism, more starvation, more migration, all kinds of things that are happening over there that are of dire consequence.

General Langley, a Marine, who's the sixth commander of that area, AFRICOM, is a personal friend and somebody I am in regular contact with.

All that said, none of that matters when it comes to a certain citizen that's already been brought up today, Tigran. You said a couple things I want to kind of drill down on, and just to refresh anybody who might be watching, Tigran is one of my constituents who was lured into Nigeria as part of finance just to be held hostage, essentially, by the government, which I think everybody understands what's happening right now.

Very poor health. He didn't go there in poor health. He's in poor health now. He has malaria. His health is deteriorating. I think anybody who had him as a relative or a friend would understand how dire his situation is.

And he's isolated. He doesn't have human contact that's friendly except for when he's visited by French Hill and other folks that have also taken an interest, thank God.

With all that said, you said a couple things and I want to frame the conversation. First of all, Mr. Gambaryan is a former law enforcement colleague who wrote attesting to his character and integrity and I, along with several of my colleagues and the chairman, sent a letter asking for his case to be transferred to the Special Envoy for Hostage Affairs.

Now, is this possible, by the way? Is it a possibility that he could be transferred to the Special Envoy for Hostage Affairs? Is it possible?

Mr. BASS. It's possible under the law if we conclude that on evaluating that the evidence that he is designated as wrongfully detained.

But I can assure you that even in the absence of that designation we have been working intensively to secure his release.

Mr. McCORMICK. Is it possible that the President cut a deal like he's done for so many other unfairly and sometimes questionably detained Americans? Is it possible?

Mr. BASS. I can't speak for the President. What I would tell you is in the case of all Americans who are incarcerated for the wrong reasons, for a lack of reason overseas, we work intensively to find a way to get them home even if they're not designated as wrongful detainees.

Mr. McCORMICK. Okay. What evidence are you lacking to make that critical decision?

Mr. BASS. Let me circle back to you, if I may. I'm not—today I don't have the details precisely on what our lawyers have assessed might be lacking. I'm not sure that there is something lacking.

Mr. McCORMICK. I think there's something lacking. I do think there's something lacking. It's called backbone, because, quite frankly, all the chips are on the table.

All the evidence has been presented and there is no case against a citizen of the United States of America, which I've seen the President go to bat for several people who have smoked dope, people who are accused of spying.

None of this is true with Tigran. None of it. You specifically said you're concerned. I get it, but I don't believe when you say we have done everything that's possible. I don't believe that. I'm sorry, I don't believe it.

Basically, anybody who's involved in this case does not believe that everything that you can do has been done. It just doesn't make sense when you lay it out there and that's why I ask you the specific question what's possible and what's holding it up.

It's not meeting in the middle. I expect more. When Paul was accused of something by his elders he said, I appeal to Caesar. We are not worse than the Roman government. We are better.

I appeal to the President on behalf of his citizen that he gets a fair treatment by the U.S. Government that has an obligation to stand up for him, and I charge you with that, sir.

Please get back to me with the details of what you're missing to give him that special consideration to get him the hell out of Nigeria.

Thank you.

Mr. BASS. Congressman, I commit to coming back to you personally.

Mr. MORAN. The gentleman yields back.

The gentleman from California, Mr. Costa, is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. CASTRO. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and appreciate the committee's efforts here to focus on as this committee hearing is titled the great power competition in Africa.

I am, I must say, disappointed that USAID is not included in this hearing. They are a major donor of humanitarian aid in Africa

that includes food assistance, health care support for refugees and internally displaced persons.

And when you talk about trying to utilize all the diplomatic tools in our diplomatic toolbox it seems to me that when we talk about America using its resources in this great competition in Africa as well as with our allies that they should have been a part of this hearing.

Having said that, let me—couple, with limited time, Sudan, as Representative Meeks indicated, is a disaster at this point in time.

I was there over a dozen years with a group of Members of Congress. We were in Al-Fashir. We went down to Juba. Sadly, things have gone from bad to worse.

What would you say in your opening comments in response to our efforts with our allies? Are we trying to put together some sort of a plan to deal with not only the humanitarian crisis that's in Sudan but all the other facets that are part of the horrific efforts or the challenges that are going on there?

Mr. BASS. So, Congressman, thank you.

First, we remain the largest humanitarian donor, as you may know, to the response in Sudan. Our colleagues at USAID and other parts of the government work closely with other donors and with the U.N. to understand where the need is the greatest.

Mr. CASTRO. But do we have a plan to deal with not only the triaging, to your point, but trying to figure out how we can be—to end the civil war and to try to figure out how we can move forward?

Mr. BASS. Yes. We're engaged in an intensive diplomatic effort now to build off of the—

Mr. CASTRO. Working not only with our allies but with our African partners who are responsible in that area?

Mr. BASS. Absolutely, including the African Union chair and a number of the surrounding neighbors who have influence to some degree over the combatants.

Mr. CASTRO. This is critical. I'd like to know more about that but let me move on.

The Belt and Road Initiative that China has—and we know China's policy toward Africa is dominated by minerals and energy. But in your analysis these summit agreements that China has reached with Africa how ironclad and what's—what do you think the longer term influence is a part of those agreements?

I mean, I think a lot of these African nations are aware and understanding that they come with incredible strings attached and a lot of these Chinese companies are, obviously, very corrupt.

Mr. BASS. So I don't think it's an accident that the top line number out of this recent meeting in China is very similar to our announced support at the African Leaders Summit of \$55 billion. Obviously, a big difference between our support and the way we invest as opposed to China making \$50 billion in predatory lending available on the continent.

I think what we're seeing as we get deeper into the Belt and Road being implemented is many more tales of buyers' remorse and a higher degree of caution on the part of governments who may be offered a certain amount of lending from China, given the examples

under which China is deeply resistant to changing loan terms or extending repayment terms as we saw in Sri Lanka.

Mr. CASTRO. Do you sense an imbalance taking place? Of course, France is one of our allies but with France's changing participation and Russia's engagement, obviously, Russia is an adversary of the United States and they certainly will provoke as much havoc as they possibly can.

How do you see that playing into the current challenges we face?

Mr. BASS. It's a substantial challenge on the continent to the extent that Russia is opportunistic and predatory, and they're seeking, largely, to distract us from key security challenges elsewhere and strip mine revenue for—to underwrite the regime back in Moscow.

But it's not taking us off the core elements that we focus on on the continent and, increasingly, governments on the continent see that we offer a better deal.

Mr. CASTRO. More to be discussed further.

Mr. Chairman, my time has expired. Thank you very much.

Mr. MORAN. The gentleman yields back.

The gentleman from New Jersey Mr. Kean is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. KEAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to our witness for being here today.

Under Secretary Bass, examples in northern Mozambique and in Syria have shown that Russian mercenaries are, largely, ineffective fighting forces as well as being exploitative and having a complete disregard for human rights.

What message is the department communicating to our Afghan partners who are considering deepening security ties with Russia and how are we communicating the ineffectiveness of the Russian mercenaries?

Mr. BASS. So, Congressman, thank you. You've said it much better than I could have.

We, on a constant basis in countries that are particularly stressed with internal conflict, with challenges from terrorist organizations or violent extremists, are underscoring the peril of what might look like a great deal at the front end because it comes with no strings attached in terms of standards of accountability, adherence to laws of armed conflict, but in reality comes with a lot of strings down the road.

And, importantly, we're indicating to them, look, don't just take our word for it. Talk to your colleagues, your fellow partners on the continent, about their experiences.

Mr. KEAN. Okay. And one of Russia's most effective strategies to undercut U.S. influence is through carefully constructed misinformation campaigns aimed at catalyzing anti-U.S. and anti-Western sentiment throughout Africa.

These campaigns provide a cheap way for the Kremlin to erode our interests and have proven especially successful in west Africa and in South Africa. I am concerned that too often the department is focused on countering misinformation rather than engaging in a proactive information campaign to highlight the value that the U.S. brings to the continent.

How is the department prioritizing not just countering misinformation in a reactive way but also creating a clear, proactive strategy to the information space?

Mr. BASS. So we—in addition to the work we do on disinformation we charge each of our embassies on the continent with having precisely that proactive, affirmative stance tailored to their society to demonstrate, you know, is it formal media, is it social media, is it in-person engagements that is going to get the greatest impact, and we're trying to use to the best of our ability all of the tools available to us.

Mr. KEAN. Public diplomacy's actions are often the most understaffed in embassies around the continent. Recognizing the importance of PD officers to create effective localized media campaigns what is the department doing to incentivize and attract qualified individuals to these roles?

Mr. BASS. So we're continuing to balance our global responsibilities to staff our embassies with some of the acute needs on the continent.

We've—this year, for example, to deal with our shortfall in staffing we took some positions off the list of opportunities in other regions in part to make sure that we had more people filling the need in Africa.

I'd note in addition to the individual public diplomacy sections we also have some pretty effective regional tools. We have a media hub, for example, that covers the continent that provides opportunities for U.S. Government officials to reach wider audiences, brings journalists from a number of countries together, and we find that's a pretty effective way to reach a wider audience and get our message out there.

Mr. KEAN. And then, finally, how can the U.S. development agencies such as USAID, DFC, and MCC expand their role in promoting sustainable and inclusive economic growth in Africa, particularly in contrast to Chinese and Russian investments that often create long-term dependency and debt?

Mr. BASS. So the most important thing at the moment is to reauthorize each of those programs. They are playing essential, vital roles. They are the cornerstones of our ability to provide a better offer that is clearly in the interest of African societies, of African companies, and where we're seeing an enormous amount of demand to take advantage of those opportunities.

Mr. KEAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

Mr. MORAN. The gentleman yields back.

I now yield to myself 5 minutes for a period of questions.

Under Secretary Bass, thank you for your time today. I've got two areas of concern I want to talk to you about. The first is this.

The Central Bank of Central African Economic and Monetary Community, also known as CAEMAC, has implemented an arbitrary deadline of September 30th for international oil and gas companies to agree to controversial foreign exchange regulations that create double jeopardy risk.

I'm concerned that if this regulation progresses it is going to have a negative impact for American oil and gas companies that operate in the region and the countries within CAEMAC.

By 2050 it's estimated that this regulation would reduce capital investment for the region by \$45 billion and reduce government revenue for CAEMAC countries by \$86 billion.

Under Secretary Bass, can you speak to the department's engagement with Treasury and the interagency on this issue? Has there been coordinated interagency advocacy to the IMF on the importance of clarifying that these restoration funds are ineligible to go toward the gross 4X reserves of these countries?

Mr. BASS. Congressman, to the best of my knowledge we are engaged and focused on this issue but with your permission would circle back to you with a more detailed answer.

Mr. MORAN. Thank you. I'd appreciate that.

The specifics of that interagency action is very important to this committee and we'd like to know what you guys are doing to push back against these regulations.

What happens—a second question on that—what happens when existing Western countries' companies are run out of the region due to these regulatory issues?

Who fills this vacuum? How does this undercut U.S. interests in the region?

Mr. BASS. So I think it depends circumstantially on individual countries. Sometimes there's a local actor who thinks they're going to fill that space and there's often buyer's remorse down the road.

Other times there might be other foreign investors who are less principled, lower scruples. So just underscoring your concerns about this taking legitimate companies with high standards out of the market.

Mr. MORAN. Yes. It's not a good thing if that happens. I think you and I can agree that we want more Western oil and gas companies in that region. Would you agree with me on that?

Mr. BASS. Yes.

Mr. MORAN. Thanks.

All right. Now, on the second issue I want to talk to you about illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing around Africa. China operates the largest illegal, unreported, and unregulated, also known as IUU, as you know, fishing fleet throughout the world, notably in Africa.

IUU fishing off the coast of Africa costs the continent an estimated \$11.2 billion in annual revenue loss and is a direct threat to the food and economic stability of coastal African countries by robbing fishermen of their catch, and we know when there's this instability from a food standpoint that just drives folks to terrorist organizations or other organizations that are contrary to our national interest.

It's been estimated that more than 60 percent of the global catch of China's global distant water fishing fleet worth \$5 billion takes place in West Africa.

The CCP directly encourages these illegal operations by providing subsidies for its distant water fleets worth \$1.75 billion in 2019 alone and China's highest court has published a ruling stating that these distant water fleets are pursuing a strategic national priority that benefits them, not us for sure.

Under Secretary Bass, I've introduced legislation focused on improving the capacity of African partner countries to counter IUU fishing off the coast.

What's the department currently doing to help African governments understand the intent and scale of the damage being done by Chinese fishing fleets in their waters?

Mr. BASS. Well, Congressman, I want to thank you for your personal interest in this issue. It is an acute concern of coastal nations in Africa particularly, I think, on the Atlantic Basin, and I think it's one of the reasons why, again, you've seen some hesitation about allowing a permanent Chinese naval presence in a country.

We're engaged in trying to address disinformation in promoting the facts about how Chinese fishing fleets are strip mining the oceans around the continent.

We are also engaging on a practical basis with a number of countries on the coast to help them tell us what they need to be more effective in addressing their maritime awareness and being able to properly understand and regulate what's happening in their exclusive economic zones off their coasts, and I'd welcome the opportunity to work closely with you on your legislation.

Mr. MORAN. I would very much appreciate that as well. When you get answers back from these countries about what support they need I'm very confident that this is in our national security interests.

It's in our economic interest to stop this illegal and unregulated fishing by China in that region, and so I'd be glad to work with you and the State Department to finish that up.

My time has expired. I thank Under Secretary Bass for his valuable testimony and the members for their questions. The members of the committee may have some additional questions for the under secretary and we will ask you to respond to these in writing.

Pursuant to committee rules, all members may have 5 days to submit statements, questions, and extraneous materials for the record subject to the length limitations.

Without objection, the committee stands adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 12:42 p.m., the committee was adjourned.]

APPENDIX

MATERIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE HEARING RECORD



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

Michael T. McCaul (R-TX), Chairman

September 4, 2024

TO: MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

You are respectfully requested to attend an OPEN hearing of the Committee on Foreign Affairs to be held at 10:00 a.m. in room 2172 of the Rayburn House Office Building. The hearing is available by live webcast on the Committee website. <https://foreignaffairs.house.gov/>.

DATE: Wednesday, September 11, 2024
TIME: 10:00 a.m.
LOCATION: 2172 RHOB
SUBJECT: Great Power Competition in Africa
WITNESSES: The Honorable John Bass
Acting Under Secretary for Political Affairs
U.S. Department of State

*NOTE: Witnesses may be added.

By Direction of the Chair

The Committee on Foreign Affairs seeks to make its facilities accessible to persons with disabilities. If you are in need of special accommodations, please call 202-226-8467 at least four business days in advance of the event, whenever practicable. Questions with regard to special accommodations in general (including availability of Committee materials in alternative formats and assistive listening devices) may be directed to the Committee.

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
MINUTES OF FULL COMMITTEE HEARING

Day Wednesday Date September 11, 2024 Room 2172 RHOB

Starting Time 10:10 Ending Time 12:42

Recesses ☐ (____ to ____) (____ to ____) (____ to ____) (____ to ____) (____ to ____) (____ to ____)

Presiding Member(s)

Chairman McCaul, Rep. James, Rep. Moran

Check all of the following that apply:

Open Session ☒

Executive (closed) Session ☐

Televised ☒

Electronically Recorded (taped) ☒

Stenographic Record ☒

TITLE OF HEARING:

Great Power Competition in Africa

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Attached

NON-COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Attached

HEARING WITNESSES: Same as meeting notice attached? Yes ☒ No ☐

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

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

Attached

TIME SCHEDULED TO RECONVENE _____

or

TIME ADJOURNED 12:42

Meg Wagner
Full Committee Hearing Coordinator

Committee on Foreign Affairs

118th Congress

ATTENDANCE

Date: SEPTEMBER 11, 2024 HEARING

Representative	Present	Absent	Representative	Present	Absent
Mr. McCaul	X		Mr. Meeks	X	
Mr. Smith		X	Mr. Sherman	X	
Mr. Wilson		X	Mr. Connolly		X
Mr. Perry	X		Mr. Keating	X	
Mr. Issa	X		Mr. Bera	X	
Mrs. Wagner		X	Mr. Castro	X	
Mr. Mast	X		Ms. Titus	X	
Mr. Burchett		X	Mr. Lieu		X
Mr. Green		X	Ms. Wild		X
Mr. Barr		X	Mr. Phillips		X
Mr. Jackson		X	Mr. Allred		X
Mrs. Kim	X		Mr. Kim		X
Mrs. Salazar			Ms. Jacobs	X	
Mr. Huizenga	X		Ms. Manning	X	
Mrs. Radewagen		X	Mrs. Cherfilus-McCormick		X
Mr. Hill	X		Mr. Stanton	X	
Mr. Davidson	X		Ms. Dean		X
Mr. Baird	X		Mr. Moskowitz		X
Mr. Waltz		X	Mr. Jackson	X	
Mr. Kean	X		Mrs. Kamlager-Dove	X	
Mr. Lawler		X	Mr. Costa	X	
Mr. Mills		X	Mr. Crow		X
Mr. McCormick	X		Mr. Amo	X	
Mr. Moran	X		Mr. Schneider		X
Mr. James	X		Mr. Mfume		X
Mr. Self	X				
Mr. Zinke	X				
Mr. Moylan		X			

Ranking Member Gregory W. Meeks
“Great Power Competition in Africa”
Opening Remarks as Prepared
September 11, 2024

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Under Secretary Bass, welcome and thank you for being here today. I’m looking forward to the opportunity to discuss Africa in a full committee hearing because many of the issues we deal with in U.S.-Africa relations are fundamental to our foreign policy and national security.

Today’s hearing title, “Great Power Competition in Africa”, sends the wrong message. Africa holds tremendous promise; engagement with the continent is an end in-and-of-itself. The continent will experience the largest growth in working-age population in the world between now and 2050 and is currently home to some of the fastest growing economies. The U.S. and Africa mutually benefit when we work together to increase two-way trade and investment and to address conflicts both on the continent and around the world. We thrive when African democracy thrives. And I look forward to hearing from our witness about how we can deepen our relations with African partners. The President’s Strategy Toward Sub-Saharan Africa, released in 2022, lays important groundwork for this.

None of this can happen, however, if we don’t show up. To be the partner of choice for African countries, we need to demonstrate that we’re committed to their success for the long term. This means presence and investment.

And when we don’t show up, the People’s Republic of China does. The PRC has been playing the long game with respect to Africa, and they have been very strategic. Just last week during the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, President Xi announced billions in new projects in Africa over the next three

years. But we know that Beijing uses its presence, diplomacy, and the Belt and Road Initiative in Africa to extract natural resources and harm the environment, lower labor standards, gain a security foothold, and create influence for political leverage.

Similarly, Russia has demonstrated a renewed interest in Africa in recent years, most notably establishing a large presence via private military contractors under the Wagner Group and related groups like Africa Corps, run by the Russian government. Moscow exploits insecurity in African countries and stokes mistrust of democratic institutions through sophisticated information influence operations. Russian disinformation campaigns in Africa have quadrupled in the last two years alone.

Of course we must compete against these corrosive influences, but I will repeat what I've consistently said time and again: we cannot approach Africa solely through the prism of great power competition and, if we want to be the partner of choice for African nations, our motivations cannot be or perceived to be purely geopolitical.

And when we slash our foreign assistance – for example, with a 12% cut like the one Republicans pushed through the House for Fiscal Year 2025 – we actively undercut American national security and foreign policy interests. So, let's be honest that one of the most important things we can do to compete against China and Russia is fund the foreign operations budget.

This is especially critical in places like Sudan. Today, Sudan is the largest humanitarian crisis in the world. As many as 150,000 people have been killed in the brutal fighting between the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) since April 2023. More than 12 million people have been displaced and over half of the country's population is facing crisis level food insecurity. People are starving – and where is the international attention? Where is the outrage?

I am appalled at the way the RSF and SAF have stolen the dream of democracy from the Sudanese people, while committing war crimes and taking innocent civilian lives. I am outraged by the external actors who continue to enable this war by supporting the warring parties. United Arab Emirates support for the RSF is prolonging this brutal conflict. Period, full stop. It is important that Congress recognize this fact. I urge Emirati leaders to be a part of the solution in Sudan, starting by immediately cutting off financing, weapons, and other support for the RSF.

It will be important to build on the achievements from the talks the Administration and Special Envoy Tom Perriello organized last month, and I ask my colleagues to join in putting our full support behind efforts to end the conflict.

Finally, I want to commend the Biden-Harris Administration for revitalizing the U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit in 2022, and I urge you to keep your foot on the gas for implementation. This type of direct engagement with African leaders is precisely how we show up and position the United States as the partner of choice for Africa. I look forward to institutionalizing the holding of the summit, and with that, I yield back the balance of my time.

**“Great Power Competition in Africa”
 HFAC Full Committee Hearing
 10:00 AM, Wednesday, September 11th, 2024
 Rayburn 2172
 Rep. Gerald E. Connolly (D-VA)**

Under the Biden Administration, the United States has expanded its diplomatic, security, economic, and humanitarian engagement on the African continent. The unilateral retreat of the Trump Administration was sadly exemplified by an Africa policy that narrowly focused on commercial ties and counterterrorism, at the expense of the longstanding development programs that facilitate economic growth and stability. Our assistance and relationships are values-based and enduring. These draconian cuts to U.S. financial and human resources on the continent which have been continued by House Republicans, threaten the decades of U.S. investment and pave the way for eager adversaries, including China and Russia, to fill the void. We cannot give in to the temptation to have entirely transactional relationships with our African partners. I am heartened that the Biden Administration has executed a strategy that seeks to revitalize ties with the region, and I look forward to hearing witnesses clarify exactly how the administration will follow through on this new, refined approach.

In its Africa strategy, the Biden administration maps out four important pillars that recognize Africa’s importance in the world. In their efforts to adopt a strategy that further embeds Africa’s position in shaping a shared U.S.-African future, the administration broadly intends to foster openness and open societies, deliver democratic and security dividends, advance pandemic recovery and economic opportunity, and to support conservation, climate adaptation, and just energy transition. In a region where a majority of countries are considered not free, and over 282 million people suffer from chronic hunger, these development, recovery and collaborative areas require intensive attention and investment from the United States and allies. The Biden Administration will have to expand their outreach to leaders in the region, and I commend them for rising to the occasion as we observe a steady uptick in the number of high-level calls and visits by U.S. officials to their counterparts in Africa.

China has wasted no time in seizing economic opportunities and strategic alliances in Africa. Sino-African trade increased fortyfold in the past 20 years, and China surpassed the United States as Africa’s largest trade partner in 2009. According to an analysis by AidData, based at the College of William & Mary in Virginia, Chinese financing to Africa totaled \$121.6 billion from 200 to 2014. In 2017, China established its first overseas military base in Djibouti, just miles from a critical U.S. military base. As Washington withdrew its diplomatic presence and foreign assistance under Trump, Beijing is sending its cash and laborers to seize natural resources and build infrastructure. This investment is not informed by values, but instead a cold, calculated search for profit, regardless of the consequences on vulnerable populations.

Russia has also ramped up its influence in sub-Saharan Africa, mainly focusing on arms sales, military training, intelligence exchanges, and access to minerals. According to reports, Russia has signed at least 19 military cooperation deals with African countries since 2014, and Moscow recently announced plans to build a logistics hub in Eritrea. I was proud to support the Chairman in the passage of his legislation, the Countering Malign Russian Activities in Africa Act,

legislation that would hamstring the Kremlin's corrupt and illicit activities in Africa to fund their illegal and brutal war.

On November 7, 2022, Uganda reported confirmed 136 cases of Ebola virus disease (EVD), which resulted in 53 deaths. Public health emergencies such as this one will continue to occur, often in fragile settings. The United States needs to promote global health security as a core national security interest and be prepared to respond to these crises as they arise. That is why I worked closely with a bipartisan group of members to establish U.S. global health security policy in statute. The Global Health Security Act finally designated a senior official, Dr. Stephanie Psaki, to coordinate the interagency response to a global health security emergency.

The United States has long been the top bilateral donor of emergency humanitarian and disaster assistance in Africa and the greatest contributor to United Nations peacekeeping operations, the majority of which are located in Africa. The United States must protect our varied interests in Africa by working closely with our partners to build on our investments, meeting security and development challenges, and seizing the opportunities inherent in U.S.-Africa relations. President Biden has expressed support for Africa's bid, among others, to have a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council, and I look forward to hearing how the administration has mapped out a strategy to accomplish this.

It is worth examining whether the current allocation of resources offers the best balance between meeting security and development needs. However, it is clear that when the United States retreats from robust engagement in Africa, the world's second-largest and second-most populous continent has somewhere else to turn.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Under Secretary John Bass by
Representative Gabe Amo #1
House Foreign Affairs Committee
September 11, 2024**

Question:

Last year, the Biden Administration announced a bold 10-year plan to implement the Global Fragility Act in five coastal West African countries, including my father's home country of Ghana. How do the five ambassadors and embassies in the selected countries plan to collaborate to implement this 10-year plan, and what additional resources do they need to make their mission successful?

Answer:

The United States has a regional approach to promoting peace and stability in Coastal West Africa (CWA). Ambassadors communicate regularly through monthly calls and biannual meetings to affirm strategic priorities.

The Prevention and Stabilization Fund (PSF) provides flexible resources to bolster Global Fragility Act efforts in CWA. It is critical that Congress continue to fully fund and reauthorize the PSF through appropriations and by supporting the bipartisan Global Fragility Reauthorization Act.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Under Secretary John Bass by
Representative Gabe Amo #2
House Foreign Affairs Committee
September 11, 2024**

Question:

The Africa Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) will expire in 2025, and Congress must quickly work to reauthorize this program. As we work towards reauthorizing AGOA, how can Congress modernize this essential program and encourage further bilateral and regional trade between the United States and African nations?

Answer:

The Biden-Harris Administration strongly supports AGOA's timely reauthorization and modernization. We are committed to working with Congress, African partners, and other key stakeholders to make AGOA as impactful as possible. As noted in the U.S. Trade Representative's 2024 Biennial Report on AGOA Implementation, opportunities for Congressional reform include: supporting continental integration; improving utilization rates; exploring ways to deepen economic engagement post-graduation; and providing additional tools for assessing and reinstating eligibility.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Under Secretary John Bass by
Representative Gabe Amo #3
House Foreign Affairs Committee
September 11, 2024**

Question:

The African Union is a key forum to address challenges facing the continent and has become increasingly important to regional security across the continent. The African Union has supported United Nations peacekeeping missions in addition to deploying its own peace support operations to provide peacekeeping and counterterrorism support. How can the United States support the African Union's work to provide regional stability and an alternative to adversarial security forces in the region?

Answer:

Our support of United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolution 2719 (December 2023) resolved a long-standing impediment to the African Union's (AU) ability to promote regional stability and access predictable financing for AU Peace Support Operations (PSOs). The 2719 framework will complement UN efforts by enabling AU PSOs to deploy into settings where UN peacekeeping missions have traditionally struggled. While no concrete proposal has yet been made under the framework, we remain engaged with the AU and other partners to ensure a successful first mission.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Under Secretary John Bass by
Representative John James #1
House Foreign Affairs Committee
September 11, 2024**

Question:

Throughout this Congress I have made repeated mention of inaction from the Executive branch on South Africa policy and I thoroughly commend Ambassador Brigety for holding a firm and principled line in Pretoria in the face of a leadership void coming from Washington. In my role as Chairman of the Subcommittee on Africa my House-passed legislation calling for a review of the U.S.-South Africa bilateral relationship. The only way that the ANC and the new Minister of International Relations and Cooperation should be concerned about this review is if they have something to hide in their dealings with Russia, China and Iran. Under Secretary Bass, how does the Department assess the stability of the Government of National Unity (GNU) in South Africa? What are you watching as the first real test of its cohesiveness?

Answer:

The 10 parties that form the Government of National Unity (GNU) are finding their footing as national coalition partners. There are initial signs that the parties are willing to negotiate on substantive matters and prevent disagreements that could threaten GNU stability. An early example of compromise was the Basic Education Law Amendments bill, which was strongly opposed by coalition partners. President Ramaphosa signed the bill

into law but delayed implementation of two clauses contested by members of the GNU to allow further negotiations.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Under Secretary John Bass by
Representative John James #2
House Foreign Affairs Committee
September 11, 2024**

Question:

Under Secretary Bass, where does the Department see opportunities for productive engagement with this GNU? Do you expect new Foreign Minister Ronald Lamola to continue the overtly pro-Hamas, pro-China and pro-Russia alignment of his predecessor?

Answer:

The Government of National Unity has indicated South Africa will maintain an independent, non-aligned foreign policy. South Africa will likely continue to pursue its core foreign policy principles – emphasizing solidarity with the Global South, Pan-Africanism, and transformation of global governance institutions. We are seizing opportunities for deeper engagement on trade and investment (including with the reauthorization and modernization of the African Growth and Opportunity Act), health, labor, artificial intelligence, regional security, and human rights.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Under Secretary John Bass by
Representative John James #3
House Foreign Affairs Committee
September 11, 2024**

Question:

The Biden-Harris Administration has contributed \$1 billion towards the 'Just Energy Transition Partnership' which plans to transition the South Africa power grid towards "clean energy solutions" by paying owners to close their coal plants earlier than they otherwise would. Today, coal-fired power plants provide over 80% of South Africa's electricity and with the current energy crisis this policy is extremely unpopular with the South African population. The Department should be focusing its resources on facilitating market-oriented reforms that will provide job opportunities to South Africans and benefit the over 600 U.S. businesses based in the country. Under Secretary Bass, why is the Administration continuing to push this broadly unpopular policy on South Africa that is motivated by a domestic political agenda here at home?

Answer:

The Just Energy Transition Partnership supports the South African government as it implements market reforms to liberalize the electricity market. South Africa recently passed a law that calls for establishment of an independent transmission system operator. The government is unbundling state-owned electricity utility Eskom, with the new National Transmission Company of South Africa now legally separated from Eskom and starting

operations in July. Private, off-grid solar installations increased substantially in 2023, and now totals over 5 gigawatts.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Under Secretary John Bass by
Representative John James #4
House Foreign Affairs Committee
September 11, 2024**

Question:

Systemic state capture and corruption by the ANC has had a severe chilling effect on investment and impacted the business operating environment and economic trajectory of South Africa. In 2024 alone three major international companies –Shell, Rolex and BNP Paribas – have announced that they will end most or all of their operations in South Africa. South Africa has a 33.5% unemployment rate and a 62% unemployment rate for young adults (aged 15-24). Under Secretary Bass, how is the Department encouraging privatization of South Africa’s state-owned enterprises, especially Eskom and Transnet?

Answer:

The United States continues to advocate for accelerated unbundling of state-owned utility Eskom into separate transmission, distribution, and generation entities. The new National Transmission Company of South Africa has legally separated from Eskom and started operations in July, with plans to serve as an independent transmission system operator. The United States also is supporting U.S. companies to compete in sectors such as rail, logistics, and critical minerals as South Africa explores opportunities for privatization or third-party services.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Under Secretary John Bass by
Representative John James #5
House Foreign Affairs Committee
September 11, 2024**

Question:

How is the Department working with our private sector and our like-minded allies to provide a credible alternative to this Chinese offer to the DRC government?

Answer:

The Department of State works with a number of partners, including the private sector, to promote sustainable and inclusive long-term development in Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Initiatives such as Prosper Africa and the Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment promote two-way trade and investment benefitting both Americans and Africans. During the United Nations General Assembly, the U.S. government welcomed the DRC to the Mineral Security Partnership Forum to further bolster public and private sustainable investment in DRC's critical minerals sector.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Under Secretary John Bass by
Representative John James #6
House Foreign Affairs Committee
September 11, 2024**

Question:

How do we ensure that a repeat of Freeport-McMoRan (which sold two of the largest cobalt assets in Congo directly to Chinese competitors in 2016 and 2020) does not happen again?

Answer:

The State Department promotes supply chain resilience and diversification through the Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment and the Minerals Security Partnership. We are working with the U.S. Development Finance Corporation to identify potential transactions that would advance strategic competition priorities in critical minerals supply chains. Congressional reauthorization of AGOA to include a critical minerals component would also incentivize non-Foreign Entities of Concern firms to invest upstream in the African minerals sector.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Under Secretary John Bass by
Representative Sydney Kamlager-Dove #1
House Foreign Affairs Committee
September 11, 2024**

Question:

When it comes to strengthening our relationship with African countries, we have no greater strength than the vibrant and diverse African diaspora in the United States. I am working on a bill to codify the President's Advisory Council for African Diaspora Engagement, which I hope my colleagues on both sides of the aisle will support.

Under Secretary Bass, can you share some examples of how the Administration is working with the African diaspora in the United States to deepen people-to-people, business, and educational ties with African partners?

Answer:

The President's Advisory Council (PAC-ADE) has been enhancing our dialogue with the African diaspora since Vice President Harris swore in the Council last October. For example, during Kenyan President Ruto's May visit, PAC-ADE facilitated a framework of cooperation agreement between U.S. and Kenyan higher education institutions. These engagements have led to impactful educational exchanges between African universities, historically

Black colleges and universities (HBCUs), and other programs designed to strengthen personal, cultural and economic ties.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Under Secretary John Bass by
Representative Sydney Kamlager-Dove #2
House Foreign Affairs Committee
September 11, 2024**

Question:

The PRC is using stadium diplomacy to gain influence with African countries, funding the development of sports infrastructure that these nations cannot afford. African countries understand, as we do in Los Angeles, that sports means opportunities: sports create jobs, help young people access education, promote infrastructure development, and deepen people-to-people ties. I believe sports diplomacy is a critical tool in our diplomacy toolbox, especially given the mega-sporting events coming to the United States in the next 5 years. Under Secretary Bass, how is the Administration using sports diplomacy to counter PRC influence and create new areas of cooperation with African countries?

Answer:

The United States is leveraging the next decade (2024-2034) of U.S.-hosted international sporting events to demonstrate U.S. leadership and values to Africa and the world. Further, in January, Secretary Blinken, the President's Advisory Council on African Diaspora Engagement, and a delegation of U.S. sports figures attended the Africa Cup of Nations, Africa's largest sporting event. The State Department also coordinates sports-based

exchanges that build profound people-to-people ties and create lasting U.S. influence, including eight programs in Africa in 2024.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Under Secretary John Bass by
Representative Tom Kean, Jr. #1
House Foreign Affairs Committee
September 11, 2024**

Question:

Once reserved for the world's great powers, the creation of national space programs has become more common throughout the global south. More than 20 African countries have space programs, and with them come opportunities for China to establish a base for earth observation.

What are the potential consequences for U.S. intelligence and defense operations if China were to achieve global, space-based LiDAR mapping capabilities before the United States?

Answer:

The Department of State concurs with the Office of the Director of National Intelligence's 2024 Annual Threat Assessment indicating the PRC is a competitor that is organizing, training, and equipping its forces to undermine U.S. and allied security in space. The Department of State defers to the intelligence community and the Department of Defense on the consequences of global, space-based LiDAR mapping capabilities.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Under Secretary John Bass by
Representative Michael McCaul #1
House Foreign Affairs Committee
September 11, 2024**

Question:

What progress has the State Dept. made with respect to the National Security Memo on IUU and Forced Labor to countering IUU fishing and the use of forced labor in seafood supply chains in African countries?

Answer:

The State Department co-chairs the Maritime SAFE Act Interagency Working Group, which brings together 21 agencies and offices to address IUU fishing and labor abuses. The Department works through our overseas missions and the Maritime SAFE Africa sub-working group to coordinate U.S. assistance and programming in Africa, including a Department-funded regional project to strengthen legal pathways to accountability for IUU fishing, build greater regional political will to address labor conditions, and provide judges and prosecutors in-region with training on IUU fishing cases.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Under Secretary John Bass by
Representative Michael McCaul #2
House Foreign Affairs Committee
September 11, 2024**

Question:

How has the State Dept. been cooperating with African maritime forces and AFRICOM to improve anti-IUU capacity and encouraging the adoption of the Port States Measures Agreement in countries?

Answer:

The State Department is an interagency member of AFRICOM's annual maritime exercises planning group. The exercises provide training and at-sea operations to build African countries' capabilities to counter maritime threats, including IUU fishing. We also advocate for the adoption of the Port State Measures Agreement (PSMA), with Africa having one of the highest levels of adoption of any region. Our African partners need sustained support to improve their capacity to address IUU fishing and not just adopt, but fully implement, the PSMA.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Under Secretary John Bass by
Representative Michael McCaul #3
House Foreign Affairs Committee
September 11, 2024**

Question:

Where does DEI promotion rank on the priorities pushed from Washington to the African continent?

Answer:

The Department of State engages civil society, foreign governments, multilateral partners, and the private sector to promote equitable, inclusive, and accessible democratic principles and practices. The U.S. Strategy Toward Sub-Saharan Africa prioritizes supporting regional civil society that advances diversity, equality and equity, women's rights, and inclusion. The Strategy also highlights the need to engage with a diversity of local voices during outreach. In August 2024, Chiefs of Mission in Africa met with our Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer to discuss their ongoing DEIA efforts.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Under Secretary John Bass by
Representative Michael McCaul #4
House Foreign Affairs Committee
September 11, 2024**

Question 4:

What are the actions the United States can take at this stage to lay the groundwork for Wagner's removal from the African countries in which it operates? Is Wagner too deeply embedded in these countries?

Answer 4:

U.S. efforts focus on addressing the root causes of instability, which Moscow, by contrast, exploits to further its influence on the continent. Key U.S. lines of effort include supporting peace processes and working to strengthen governance and security institutions, along with exposing, countering, and building resilience to Kremlin-sponsored disinformation. The best weapons in this fight against disinformation are truth and transparency.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Under Secretary John Bass
Representative Michael McCaul #5
House Foreign Affairs Committee
September 11, 2024**

Question:

Violent Extremism is growing in the Sahel while at the same time, the U.S. has lost key counterterrorism partners, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) capabilities, and bases in the region. The loss of two U.S. air bases in Niger, including Airbase 201, which cost millions of taxpayers dollars, has severely hindered U.S. presence in the region. U/S Bass, how is the State Department incorporating the need of counterterrorism capabilities into the reality of the Sahel today?

Answer:

The United States concluded its withdrawal of military assets in Niger on September 15 at the request of the Nigerien government. The Department continues to support limited, non-lethal foreign assistance to Niger and other countries in the Sahel in support of U.S. interests. The Department is engaging at the technical level with Sahel governments to track potential threats to the U.S. homeland, U.S. persons and facilities, and regional partners, while maintaining the ability to surge support to address terrorism concerns stemming from the Sahel.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Under Secretary John Bass by
Representative Micheal McCaul #6
House Foreign Affairs Committee
September 11, 2024**

Question:

Sudan is one of the largest humanitarian crises in the world today. There are almost 11 million internally displaced persons, over 25.6 million people facing acute hunger, and over 700,000 on the brink of famine. Famine has been declared at an internally displaced persons camp in North Darfur. The official death count is unknown, but estimates suggest it may be as high as 150,000. Reports of genocide occurring by the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) against the Masalit, and other ethnic groups continue to amass. Yet, U.S. diplomatic efforts continue to fall short of achieving any real progress towards a ceasefire agreement. Under Secretary Bass, why has the Biden Administration failed to prioritize the diplomatic resolution of this conflict given the enormity of the humanitarian crisis?

Answer:

We have engaged at a high level with warring parties, regional partners, and other stakeholders on the need to end the war and allow the unhindered delivery of humanitarian assistance. This includes regular engagements by the Secretary, Administrator Power, Ambassador Thomas-Greenfield, Assistant Secretary Phee, and Special Envoy Perriello. The Administration is committed to pressing the warring parties to agree to a

ceasefire and allow increase humanitarian aid to address the suffering and needs of the Sudanese people.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Under Secretary John Bass by
Representative Micheal McCaul #7
House Foreign Affairs Committee
September 11, 2024**

Question:

External actors are fueling the war in Sudan allowing both the Sudanese Armed Force (SAF) and Rapid Support Forces (RSF) to perpetrate more violence. The United Arab Emirates has provided weapons and support to the RSF under the guise of humanitarian aid while Iran has provided support for the SAF. Russia is supporting both sides of the conflict. Under Secretary Bass, how is the State Department working to ensure this conflict does not escalate into a wider regional war which would most negatively impact civilian populations as well as global economic interests?

Answer:

Any external support that enables the warring parties to continue the conflict is unacceptable; we have made this position clear publicly and privately. We have urged the UAE to use its influence to press the warring parties to agree to a ceasefire. Additionally, we have successfully led efforts with partners in the UN Security Council to renew the sanctions regime and arms embargo for Darfur for another 12 months. We have also coordinated with the Treasury Department on sanctions designations for nine entities

contributing to the conflict by raising funds, procuring arms, and other measures.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Under Secretary John Bass by
Representative Michael McCaul #8
House of Foreign Affairs Committee
September 11, 2024**

Question

The Biden-Harris Administration decided to spend hundreds of millions of dollars to send Kenyans to Haiti, and despite months of oversight and critical engagement from this Committee urging for a concrete plan to avoid past mistakes, the Multinational Security Support Mission is failing from inadequate planning. What makes you sure that a few hundred Kenyan police can stop heavily armed and fortified Haitian gangs?

Answer

Kenyan mission personnel have supported the Haitian National Police's (HNP) capacity by conducting joint patrols, securing key infrastructure, seizing illicit weapons, and directly confronting gangs. Reporting indicates this has raised public confidence in the mission's ability to help the HNP improve security. Jamaica announced September 10 its personnel would deploy on September 12, and Belize announced September 9 it would deploy senior officers imminently. In addition, Kenya will substantially increase its component in the next two months. Support from the international community, including the United States, enables MSS

mission personnel to reclaim momentum from gangs and ensure a path for elections.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Under Secretary John Bass by
Representative Michael McCaul #9
House of Foreign Affairs Committee
September 11, 2024**

Question

Can you guarantee that the State Department will not ask for U.S. troops to be deployed to Haiti?

Answer

Deploying U.S. troops in Haiti is not under consideration. The MSS mission, authorized by the UN Security Council, is led by Kenya and includes Belizean and Jamaican personnel. The United States has supported these efforts financially and in-kind. Several additional countries intend to provide personnel; with these contributions, the MSS mission personnel will increase.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Under Secretary John Bass by
Representative Michael McCaul #10
House Foreign Affairs Committee
September 11, 2024**

Question:

How is the Department intending to build upon and utilize the major non-NATO ally designation for Kenya to increase cooperation with and the capacity of the Kenyan military?

Answer:

The Department of State will continue to deepen bilateral relations and invest in Kenya's defense capabilities. Since the designation, the Department has awarded a contract to expand Manda Bay Airfield by building a 10,000-foot runway and is working with Kenyan Defense Forces to prepare for the delivery of 16 U.S.-manufactured helicopters. In October, the United States will transfer 144 M1117 Guardians under the Excess Defense Articles program, and the Department continues to support Kenyan military procurements through a portfolio of 35 Foreign Military Sales cases.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Under Secretary John Bass by
Representative Michael McCaul #11
House Foreign Affairs Committee
September 11, 2024**

Question:

Under Secretary Bass, Kenya has displayed itself as an anchor state in a volatile region with security aims that align with those of the United States. Have you discussed with Under Secretary Jenkins how this major non-NATO ally designation can be operationalized for Kenya?

Answer:

I will continue to coordinate across the Department of State to operationalize Kenya's designation as a major non-NATO ally by working to strengthen Kenya's capabilities to confront shared priorities such as regional stability, counterterrorism, and border security. Kenya's status as the first major non-NATO ally in sub-Saharan Africa complements the Department's effort to support Kenya's regional stability mediation role through capacity building in the use of conflict risk reduction and confidence-building measures.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Under Secretary John Bass by
Representative Michael McCaul #12
House Foreign Affairs Committee
September 11, 2024**

Question

Under Secretary Bass, I am concerned that despite U.S. leadership, it is proving difficult to achieve a lasting ceasefire on the ground in eastern DRC. We have seen reports of a new agreement between DRC and Rwanda's intelligence services to create scenarios for an end of the conflict. Has the Department seen the details of this agreement? Does the Department view this agreement as realistic?

Answer

The Department of State supports African-led diplomatic solutions to the eastern DRC crisis. This includes the Luanda Process, led by Angolan President Joao Lourenco since 2022. The ongoing Angolan-led negotiations have made halting, but real, progress on developing a mutually agreed de-escalation plan for the conflict, which we believe will help restore peace and stability to the region if both sides abide by their commitments.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Under Secretary John Bass by
Representative Michael McCaul #13
House Foreign Affairs Committee
September 11, 2024**

Question:

In 2020, the Trump Administration designated Nigeria as a Country of Particular Concern. In 2021, the Biden Administration removed that designation. Mr. Undersecretary, was there any markable improvement in freedom of religion in Nigeria that would have led the State Department to remove it as a CPC? If not, do you have any understanding as to why Nigeria was removed?

Answer:

The Secretary determined that Nigeria did not meet the legal threshold to designate it a Country of Particular Concern. The Department remains concerned about the state of freedom of religion or belief in Nigeria, which we have raised with Nigeria's government at the highest levels. The Secretary also designated Boko Haram and ISIS-West Africa as Entities of Particular Concern for religious freedom. The Department will continue to engage Nigeria's government on religious freedom issues and press for accountability of religious freedom violations.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Under Secretary John Bass by
Representative Michael McCaul #14
House Foreign Affairs Committee
September 11, 2024**

Question:

Coastal West Africa is the undisputed frontline of the fight against global terrorism and our allies in the region are communicating that they urgently need assistance. Demonstrating receptivity to a partner country's request is an integral part of being a trustworthy bilateral partner. How does the Department balance the direct requests from Coastal West African governments with the Department's own internal analysis of what they need most?

Answer:

The Department engages closely with partners in Coastal West Africa (CWA) on national and regional security challenges, working with defense and civilian authorities in these countries to identify and prioritize counterterrorism and other security needs. In response to increased security threats emanating from the Sahel, we have significantly increased counterterrorism programming to CWA in recent years. We are partnering with CWA countries to continue to protect U.S. persons and to improve partner capacity to deter and mitigate terrorism and other security threats.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Under Secretary John Bass by
Representative Michael McCaul #15
House Foreign Affairs Committee
September 11, 2024**

Question:

The situation in Zimbabwe continues to deteriorate and the Mnangagwa government has expressed disdain towards U.S. assistance, including the forced removal of USAID personnel from the country earlier this year. The Mnangagwa government has also engaged in human rights abuses, rampant corruption, political violence, and more. The Zimbabwean people are suffering greatly under this regime. Yet, the State Department just recently submitted a justification to Congress as to why broad-ranging additional assistance for Zimbabwe is within the U.S. national security interests. In this discouraging environment, why does the Department continue to expend disproportional resources in Zimbabwe?

Answer:

We share your concerns about the Government of Zimbabwe's human rights violations and abuses, rampant corruption, political violence, and much more. Our assistance prioritizes the Zimbabwean people, providing life-saving support in public health, agriculture, and food security, while supporting civil society, democracy advocates, and human rights organizations that have been ruthlessly targeted under Mnangagwa and need our support.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Under Secretary John Bass by
Representative Michael McCaul #16
House Foreign Affairs Committee
September 11, 2024**

Question:

What is the United States' national security interest in Zimbabwe?

Answer:

The United States is committed to the region's stability. Our support for the Zimbabwean people strengthens our national security by countering destabilizing influences and illicit activities linked to PRC and Russia in the region, while tackling climate change and food insecurity and improving the resilience of vulnerable populations. We promote global health, combat corruption, and advocate for peace, democracy, and human rights. We remain concerned about the Government of Zimbabwe's continued human rights violations and abuses, suppression of democracy, and corruption.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Under Secretary John Bass by
Representative Michael McCaul #17
House Foreign Affairs Committee
September 11, 2024**

Question:

Can you commit to providing an inter-agency briefing to this committee on the U.S. government's strategy towards engagement with Zimbabwe?

Answer:

I cannot speak for other agencies, but the Department of State welcomes the opportunity to brief the Committee on the U.S. government's strategy towards engagement with Zimbabwe.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Under Secretary John Bass by
Representative Michael McCaul #18
House Foreign Affairs Committee
September 11, 2024**

Question:

Gabon experienced a military coup in August 2023 and the Department of State subsequently announced the application of Section 7008 restrictions, ending most assistance to Gabon until it returns to a democratic process. However, the Department has communicated its plans to use the first national security waiver for Section 7008 to provide maritime domain awareness support to Gabon. The impetus for this waiver seems to be an attempt to counter China's growing relationship with Gabon's Transitional President and Beijing's desire to gain an Atlantic military base in the country. Under Secretary Bass, I am concerned that the use of this waiver might be perceived by many as a reward for bad behavior. How is the Department ensuring that this initial use of the waiver for Gabon is not viewed by other African leaders as a reward for Gabon's flirtations with Beijing?

Answer:

The United States reaffirms our commitment to support Gabon in conducting a timely and durable transition to a democratically elected civilian government and advancing shared security interests in the Gulf of Guinea. We continue to emphasize that steps we are taking to provide assistance are directly tied to concrete and progressive actions taken by the transitional government toward establishing a democratic government.

Since the Gabonese transitional government announced a timeline for elections, we have seen them make progress over the past year.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Under Secretary John Bass by
Representative Michael McCaul #19
House Foreign Affairs Committee
September 11, 2024**

Question:

How does the Department plan to message this waiver authority around the continent, especially in the other countries that are affected by Section 7008 restrictions?

Answer:

The Department does not plan to message proactively the limited Section 7008 waiver in place for Gabon. Gabon is on a path to establishing a democratic government and is meeting established milestones. The Department is able to highlight Gabon's positive actions and our support of Gabon during the transition period as an example.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Under Secretary John Bass by
Representative Michael McCaul #20
House Foreign Affairs Committee
September 11, 2024**

Question:

Commercial attaches in Chinese embassies across Africa outnumber their US counterparts 15 to 1. There are more Foreign Commercial Service officers in Paris than the entirety of the African continent. These staffing shortfalls undoubtedly hinder our ability to provide U.S. private sector alternatives to Chinese investments. Under Secretary Bass, do you agree that this staffing shortfall is significant and is bad optics to our African partners of our commitment to the continent? Both in this role and in your previous role as Under Secretary for Management how have you sought to address this problem?

Answer:

The Department works closely with Commerce's International Trade Administration (ITA), which is responsible for staffing Foreign Commercial Service Officer positions overseas, and other U.S. agencies to drive commercial diplomacy efforts in Africa and worldwide. We would refer you to Commerce for details on their Foreign Commercial Service (FCS) corps. However, the joint Commercial Service State Partner Post Program enables 60 U.S. embassies without an FCS presence to provide services to U.S.

companies. Broadly, we agree that more resources within ITA and the State Department would advance our commercial objectives in Africa.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Under Secretary John Bass by
Representative Michael McCaul #21
House Foreign Affairs Committee
September 24, 2024**

Question:

Acting Under Secretary Bass, Turkey is becoming an increasingly influential player in Africa, especially in East Africa. Turkey's role on the continent has evolved from providing mainly humanitarian aid to broad economic and security cooperation. In August, Turkey hosted talks between Ethiopia and Somalia in an attempt to mediate tensions emerging from the two countries' dispute over Somaliland. How does the Department view the growing role of Turkey as a geopolitical player in Africa?

Answer:

We support Türkiye's efforts to resolve the impasse between Ethiopia and Somalia related to the January 1 Ethiopia-Somaliland Memorandum of Understanding. Türkiye is an influential partner for many African countries with growing interests in key sectors, including security and defense, energy, and infrastructure. We look forward to working with Türkiye to promote peace, stability, and economic development across the continent.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Under Secretary John Bass by
Representative Michael McCaul #22
House Foreign Affairs Committee
September 11, 2024**

Question:

Does the Department assess there to be potential for increased U.S.-Turkish cooperation on the African continent to achieve shared goals? If so, how are you planning on accomplishing this?

Answer:

Yes, there are opportunities for enhanced cooperation and coordination with Türkiye. In East Africa, the United States and Türkiye have interests in increased security and stability in the Horn of Africa, particularly in Somalia. The United States supports Türkiye-led diplomacy to reduce tensions between Somalia and Ethiopia involving Somaliland. The United States and Türkiye are invested in Somalia's security and are exploring ways to increase coordination on military training and force integration.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Under Secretary John R. Bass by
Representative Michael McCaul # 23
House Foreign Affairs Committee
September 11, 2024**

Question:

The African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) is a crucial component of the U.S.-Africa trade relationship. First passed in 2000, it has been extended three times – with the current authorization expiring in September 2025. The program creates real economic impact, and a failure to reauthorize it could have a significant effect on both U.S. economic and diplomatic relationships with many African countries. A lapse of AGOA would also open the door for other countries, like China, to deepen economic ties on the continent. I am concerned that the Administration, despite its rhetoric, is not properly committed to an early reauthorization. Under Secretary Bass, as a unilateral program AGOA is at its core a part of our foreign policy to the continent. Is the State Department properly making AGOA reauthorization a priority? Does the U.S. Trade Representative share in the importance of an early reauthorization?

Answer:

The Administration strongly supports AGOA reauthorization and urges Congressional passage of a legislative extension prior to AGOA's expiration in 2025. President Biden has encouraged Congress to reauthorize and modernize AGOA to seize the economic opportunities of the coming decade. At the July AGOA Forum, U.S. Trade Representative Tai, Secretary Blinken, Commerce Deputy Secretary Graves, and Treasury Deputy Secretary

Adeyemo, alongside delegations from 29 AGOA countries and U.S. private and civil society leaders, called for AGOA's early renewal.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Under Secretary John Bass by
Representative Michael McCaul #24
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
September 11, 2024**

Question:

The United States is the largest financial contributor to U.N. peacekeeping. In FY23, approx. \$1.15 billion was contributed for the four largest missions, all of which were in Africa. Under Secretary Bass, do you feel that the investment into these peacekeeping missions is a responsible use of taxpayer funds when the missions fail to restore peace and order?

Answer:

UN Peacekeeping missions make important contributions to stabilizing conflicts through protecting civilians, promoting elections and national reforms, monitoring or enforcing peace agreements or ceasefires, supporting disarmament programs, and facilitating humanitarian access. When missions fall short of fully executing their mandates, I support advocating within the UN system and in the UN Security Council to strengthen performance, enhance implementation, and ensure they are delivering value for our investment.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Under Secretary John Bass by
Representative Michael McCaul #25
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
September 11, 2024**

Question

As discussions are underway at the UN regarding implementation of 2719 guidelines, can you commit to prioritizing the first use of a UNSCR 2719 peacekeeping mission on the African continent as was the intention of resolution?

Answer

The United States intends to leverage UN Security Council resolution 2719 (2023) to support AU Peace Support Operations (PSOs) in Africa. No concrete proposal has yet been presented to the UNSC for an AU PSO under the new framework. We will consider support for any AU PSO on a case-by-case basis on the merits of the proposal and assessed against the requirements laid out in UNSC resolution 2719.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Under Secretary John Bass by
Representative Michael McCaul #26
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
September 11, 2024**

Question #26:

How do you expect the UN Security Council Resolution 2719 to be utilized as the future of peacekeeping missions evolve?

Answer #26:

AU Peace Support Operations (PSOs) and UN peacekeeping operations are distinct tools to promote peace and stability. The UNSCR 2719 framework enables UNSC-authorized AU PSOs to access UN-assessed contributions. The UNSC should consider, among other factors, whether an AU PSO would have a comparative advantage over a UN peacekeeping mission before authorizing its deployment. The fact that AU PSOs may now access UN-assessed contributions does not mean that UN peacekeeping operations are no longer relevant.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Under Secretary John Bass by
Representative Michael McCaul #27
House Foreign Affairs Committee
September 11, 2024**

Question:

It is widely recognized that the State Department must improve the training of U.S. government foreign affairs personnel. With this Committee's support, the 2023 National Defense Authorization Act (section 9205) requires the Department of State, working with other government institutions and the private sector, to "provide the opportunity [to federal personnel] to participate in courses using computer-based or computer-assisted simulations, allowing civilian officers to lead decision making in a crisis environment." How is the State Department using such computer tools to train federal personnel who will serve overseas as interagency members on an ambassador's Country Team to better handle crises that impact U.S. interests in African and other countries, including Global Fragility Act countries?

Answer:

The Department requires all overseas diplomatic posts, including those in Africa and in Global Fragility Act countries, to participate in regular crisis management exercises. Each exercise is designed to consider the threats specific to a country's operating environment, offering the opportunity for participants – regardless of their agency, position, or rank – to practice skills that are critical during crises. Professional facilitators use

computer and AI technology to design video-based simulations of scenarios like natural disasters, major political and civil unrest, and terrorist attacks.

**Question for the Record Submitted to
Under Secretary John Bass by
Representative Chris Smith #1
House Foreign Affairs Committee
September 11, 2024**

Question:

In May 2021, Somaliland held a successful parliamentary election to which the UK, Sweden and the EU contributed \$2 million, and Taiwan a like sum, while the U.S. contributed nothing. What, if anything, is the State Department doing to ensure the success of Somaliland's upcoming November election? Are we sending election observers? If not, why not?

Answer:

The State Department supports Somaliland's realization of free and fair elections. We have repeatedly urged Somaliland authorities to follow through with presidential elections this November, noting that further delays will raise new concerns about the Bihi administration's commitment to democratic principles. Due to security concerns reflected in our travel advisory, we have no plans to send election observers in November. Somalia, including Somaliland, remains under a Level 4 travel advisory.

**Question for the Record Submitted to
Under Secretary John Bass by
Representative Chris Smith #2
House Foreign Affairs Committee
September 11, 2024**

Question:

I have received unofficial and unconfirmed reports of the PRC funding conflict in Las Anod, in the Sool region of Somaliland, which has valuable oil reserves that a Taiwanese company is helping develop. PRC funding is said to flow through Garowe in the Puntland region of Somalia. Is the State Department aware of this PRC activity?

Can the State Department provide a classified briefing on this, as well as on unconfirmed reports that the PRC is also seeking to bribe family members of Somaliland officials in an effort to counter Taiwan's relationship with Somaliland?

Answer:

The State Department does not have information to substantiate allegations that the PRC is funding the violence in Las Anod. We are prepared to provide a classified briefing on reports of PRC engagement in or related to Somaliland.

**Question for the Record Submitted to
Under Secretary John Bass by
Representative Chris Smith #3
House Foreign Affairs Committee
September 11, 2024**

Question:

What is the State Department doing to support Taiwan's efforts in Somaliland as a counter presence to the PRC in the region, both diplomatically and in terms of helping develop alternative sources of lithium?

Answer:

The United States meets with Taiwan regularly to discuss issues of mutual interest in Somaliland and the Horn of Africa, including supporting regional stability and economic and democratic development. Taiwan is a global leader in public health, advanced manufacturing, and democratic governance, to name just a few areas in which the international community, including the United States, benefits from engagement with Taiwan.

**Question for the Record Submitted to
Under Secretary John Bass by
Representative Chris Smith #4
House Foreign Affairs Committee
September 11, 2024**

Question:

Given Congressional interest in a change in the One Somalia policy, and given the fact that the U.S. will see a new Administration take office in January, what steps is the State Department taking now to prepare for greater engagement with Somaliland, including as a follow up to the studies the State Department was to conduct with the Defense Department following my FY 2023 NDAA amendment and subsequent directives by Senator Risch incorporated in the NDAA?

Answer:

The United States recognizes the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Somalia, which includes the region of Somaliland. We engage with Somaliland authorities within this framework on issues of mutual interest and intend to continue this approach.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Under Secretary John Bass by
Representative Joe Wilson #1
House Foreign Affairs Committee
September 11, 2024**

Question:

One of Russia's most effective strategies to undercut U.S. influence is through carefully constructed misinformation campaigns aimed at catalyzing anti-U.S. and anti-Western sentiment throughout Africa. These campaigns provide a cheap way for the Kremlin to erode our interests and have proven especially successful in West Africa and in South Africa. I am concerned that too often the Department is focused on countering misinformation rather than engaging in a proactive information campaign to highlight the value that the U.S. brings to the continent.

How is the Department prioritizing not just countering misinformation in a reactive way, but also creating a clear, proactive strategy to the information space?

Answer:

The Department's Global Engagement Center is focused on countering foreign state and non-state propaganda and disinformation overseas through public exposure reporting and proactive programming, while our missions and other bureaus focus on amplifying the benefits of U.S.-African partnerships through strategic public messaging to African audiences. Our overseas posts, alongside the Department's Bureau of Global Public Affairs

and Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, focus on clear, proactive messaging through press engagements, social media, exchanges, and cultural programming.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Under Secretary John Bass by
Representative Joe Wilson #2
House Foreign Affairs Committee
September 11, 2024**

Question:

China uses political training as a strategic tool to export its authoritarian governance style throughout Africa. The Chinese Communist Party funds political schools in Tanzania, Ethiopia, and South Africa among others which emphasize Chinese governance and economic models. Beijing also hosts African military and political leaders regularly to cement their influence.

How is the Department seeking to counter the Chinese Communist Party's brazen attempts to coerce the next generation of African leaders?

Answer:

The Department advances U.S. national security interests and counters problematic CCP influence via programs such as Fulbright and Humphrey fellowships, building partnerships with African leaders. These programs reinforce shared values and amplify the positive U.S. role in the region. U.S. missions in Africa issued over 40,000 student visas to African applicants in FY 2023—the most in the past decade. The Department also continues to implement the International Military Education and Training program in sub-Saharan Africa.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Under Secretary John Bass by
Representative Joe Wilson #3
House Foreign Affairs Committee
September 11, 2024**

Question:

How does the Department message the repressive nature of the Chinese Communist Party's political model to our African partners?

Answer:

The Department uses exchanges, youth leadership, sports, and cultural programs to build partnerships with African leaders and forge people-to-people ties to advance U.S. national security interests and counter CCP influence. These programs build marketable skills, reinforce shared values, and amplify the positive U.S. role in the region. The Department continues to implement the International Military Education and Training (IMET) program to bring African military personnel to the United States to participate in professional military education and training.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Under Secretary Bass by
Representative Joe Wilson #4
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
September 11, 2024**

Question:

The UN peacekeeping mission in Mali (MINUSMA) cost the U.S. taxpayer billions of dollars and completely failed. The junta in Mali revoked the peacekeeping mission mandate and invited Russian forces in, compounding the violence and enabling radical Islamic groups like JNIM and ISSP to expand their territory. To make matters worse MINUSMA shipped more than 100 tons of lethal aid under the control of the UN outpost in eastern Mali to Burkina Faso on Abkan Air, a sanctioned Russian entity.

For more than a year staff of this committee have been asking for an inventory of equipment and lethal material left behind by the UN, now we see this lethal assistance being moved by Russia throughout the region, with no credible assurance that the aid will be destroyed rather than used against civilians. Will you commit to sending Embassy staff to inspect the integrity of the lethal aid transferred to Burkina Faso on Abkan Air and report back to this committee?

Answer:

In August, a UN inspection team fully accounted for the 106 tons of MINUSMA ammunition that the Burkina Faso government transported out of Mali under a letter of assistance with the UN. Per the Committee's request, the Department shared the nationalities of the UN inspection team with Committee staff in a classified setting. The UN and government of

Burkina Faso are negotiating an arrangement to dispose of the ammunition under supervision of the UN Mine Action Service. A final list of MINUSMA assets transferred, abandoned, repatriated, sold, donated, and disposed will be provided in the Final Disposition of Assets Report to the UN Fifth Committee upon completion of the mission's liquidation in 2025.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Under Secretary John Bass by
Representative Joe Wilson #5
House Foreign Affairs Committee
September 11, 2024**

Question:

We have seen the destabilizing role that China has been able to play from its base in Djibouti – only six miles from Camp Lemmonier. My District Director was deployed with his South Carolina National Guard Unit to Djibouti. A core motivation of Beijing’s Africa strategy is gaining an Atlantic base. Gabon and Equatorial Guinea are often raised as examples for this. What is the diplomatic message that the Department is giving to these Atlantic coast countries to dissuade them from allowing a PRC base? What are we offering them instead?

Answer:

The Department is engaging with both Gabon and Equatorial Guinea to dissuade them from allowing a PRC base. In Gabon’s case, their positive steps toward democratic governance have allowed the U.S. government to begin limited security cooperation with a Section 7008 waiver. In Equatorial Guinea (EG), we are concerned by both PRC and Russian efforts to increase their influence. We continue to look at ways to engage EG to build our relationship in a manner consistent with our law.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Under Secretary John Bass by
Representative Joe Wilson #6
House Foreign Affairs Committee
September 11, 2024**

Question:

What are the specific dangers to the US if the PRC were to get an Atlantic base?

Answer:

The Department takes PRC expansion of its overseas logistics, basing, and collection infrastructure seriously, and we are especially concerned about PRC attempts to build up security infrastructure to project military power farther afield, including in the Atlantic, and enable forward deployment of PLA forces. We engage at high levels with governments, including nations along the Atlantic Ocean, that are considering hosting PRC military installations and share information with them about the risks. We coordinate with allies and likeminded partners to amplify these concerns.

**Question for the Record Submitted to
Under Secretary Bass by
Representative Joe Wilson #7
House Foreign Affairs Committee
September 11, 2024**

Question:

Acting Under Secretary Bass, Türkiye is increasingly becoming an influential player in Sub-Saharan East Africa. Türkiye's role on the continent has evolved from providing mainly humanitarian aid to broad economic and security cooperation. Türkiye has also been engaged in soft power diplomacy in Africa, through projects such as the construction of the indoor stadium in Kigali, Rwanda by Turkish construction companies. In August, Türkiye mediated talks between Ethiopia and Somalia over the tensions emerging from their dispute over Somaliland. How should the United States view the growing role of Türkiye as a geopolitical player in Africa?

Answer:

We look forward to working together with Türkiye to promote peace, stability, and economic development across the continent. Türkiye is leveraging its long presence in the region to advance its commercial and military interests, and its business interests can help foster African commercial development. Türkiye is also an attractive partner for countries seeking diversity in their security partnerships, particularly in the face of serious terrorist threats. We support Turkish mediation between Somalia and Ethiopia and are coordinating on developing Somali security forces.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Under Secretary John Bass by
Representative Joe Wilson #8
House Foreign Affairs Committee
September 11, 2024**

Question:

Is there potential for increased U.S.-Turkish cooperation on the African continent to achieve shared goals, or are their alternative motives behind the increasing Turkish influence attempts?

Answer:

Yes, there are opportunities for enhanced cooperation and coordination with Türkiye. In East Africa, the United States and Türkiye have interests in increased security and stability in the Horn of Africa, particularly in Somalia. The United States supports Türkiye-led diplomacy to reduce tensions between Somalia and Ethiopia involving Somaliland. The United States and Türkiye are invested in Somalia's security and are exploring ways to increase coordination on military training and force integration.

**Question for the Record Submitted to
Under Secretary John Bass by
Representative Joe Wilson #9
House Foreign Affairs Committee
September 11, 2024**

Question 9:

Qatar has also been making significant investments in Africa. The state-owned Qatar Airways has made significant financial advancements as part of their “Africa growth strategy” including purchasing 25% of the Johannesburg-based Airlink airline, ongoing negotiations for the purchase of a 49% stake in RwandAir the national airline of Rwanda as well as continuing to finance the construction of a new international airport in Kigali. In May before the UN, Qatar stressed the importance of enhancing the role of African nations in countering security and global development challenges. What opportunities exist for the U.S. to work with Qatar or independently to promote self-sufficiency and foreign direct investment on the continent?

Answer 9:

The Department discussed engagement with Africa during the U.S.-Qatar Strategic Dialogue in March 2024. During the dialogue, we invited the Qatari government to work with us to support peace in the Sudan and the Horn of Africa. In addition, the Department, in coordination with the interagency, seeks to collaborate with the Government of Qatar through efforts such as the Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment and Prosper Africa to promote sustainable, inclusive development, and will seek to expand our efforts.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Under Secretary John Bass by
Representative Joe Wilson #10
House Foreign Affairs Committee
September 11, 2024**

Question 10:

Acting Under Secretary Bass, examples in Northern Mozambique and Syria have shown that Russian mercenaries are largely ineffective fighting forces with a complete disregard for human rights. How can the U.S. communicate to our Africa partners with existing security ties to war criminal Putin about the ineffectiveness of Russian mercenaries, and alternatives to fighting domestic terrorism in Africa?

Answer 10:

We are clear with our African partners that Kremlin-backed groups undermine sovereignty, exacerbate terrorist threats, threaten the lives of their citizens, and exploit their natural resources. The U.S. government also supports the UN and other investigations into allegations of wrongdoing, as well as efforts to illuminate and correct the record on Russian disinformation.