

THE STATE OF AMERICAN DIPLOMACY IN 2024:
GLOBAL INSTABILITY, BUDGET CHALLENGES,
AND GREAT POWER COMPETITION

HEARING

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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THE STATE OF AMERICAN DIPLOMACY IN 2024: GLOBAL INSTABILITY, BUDGET CHAL- LENGES, AND GREAT POWER COMPETITION

Wednesday, May 22, 2024

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

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 1:57 p.m., in room 2172, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Michael McCaul (chairman of the committee) presiding.

Chairman McCAUL. The purpose of this hearing is to discuss the State Department's Fiscal Year 2025 budget request and explore the myriad of challenges facing the United States and its diplomats around the globe.

I now recognize myself for an opening statement.

OPENING STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN MICHAEL T. McCAUL

Chairman McCAUL. Mr. Secretary, might I say first thank you for being here today. As you know, we are living in dangerous times. The world is on fire.

We are witnessing the largest land invasion in Europe since World War II. The Middle East is on the brink of a full-scale war and an increasingly aggressive China is testing our resolve as they look to invade Taiwan.

The similarities between a war in Europe and increased aggression in the Indo-Pacific are dangerously parallel to the events leading up to World War II. Russia, China, and Iran are all connected in their efforts to destroy freedom and democracy.

Weakness invites aggression and our adversaries see that, and it all began with the fall of Afghanistan. This deadly and chaotic withdrawal was catastrophic and will remain a stain on American foreign policy for generations.

Despite warnings from the DOD and the intelligence community, the State Department, Mr. Secretary, failed in its execution of the NEO despite the dissent cable from your own staff on the ground warning of dire consequences of abandoning Afghanistan.

Despite the President's promise to get everyone out we now know over 1,000 Americans and almost 200,000 Afghan partners were left behind.

Following the shameful withdrawal from Afghanistan this administration projected weakness on the world stage. Shortly after the withdrawal we saw the satellite imagery of the Russian Fed-

eration amassing troops on the Ukrainian border. Then we failed to provide the Ukrainians with the lethal assistance they needed until after the invasion.

Out of fear of provoking the Russians this administration slow walked weapons necessary for Ukraine to win, giving them just enough to bleed out but not for victory.

If fear of provocation bound American foreign policy the Nazis would never have been defeated. The Berlin Wall would still stand. The world's evil empire would never have been said and nuclear missiles would still be in Cuba.

American leadership must never be dictated by the whims of despots. That's why I mandated the administration in the supplemental bill send long-range ATACMS and other weapon systems to Ukraine as soon as possible to ensure a victory.

When it comes to China we have failed to establish the deterrence necessary to counter the malign threat of the CCP. We now know that China is supporting the Russian defense industrial base.

Failure to project strength on the world stage has only led to an increasingly hostile China. Weapons I signed off on 5 years ago for Taiwan have yet to be delivered into that country and I'm also disappointed that the President failed to certify AUKUS ITAR exemptions on the April 19 deadline.

This trilateral partnership, as you know, is key to deterring China, for Chairman Xi is watching and I believe he's the only one satisfied with this administration's actions.

Finally, we are on the brink of a total destabilization in the Middle East. Israel is in the fight for its very existence from the terrorist threat of Hamas, Hezbollah, and Iran, and during their darkest hour what did this administration do?

They turned its back on our ally. President Biden's decision to withhold weapons approved and appropriated by this Congress is tantamount to an arms embargo.

This administration is preventing Israel from their final key military objective of taking out the remaining battalions in Rafah. We need to put maximum pressure on Iran and its proxies. By not enforcing energy sanctions Iran now has over \$80 billion in oil revenue. We have appeased the Ayatollah and funded his terror operations including their ability to attack Israel directly, which they did for the first time in history.

By projecting weakness on the world stage this administration has invited increased aggression. So why is it after this administration came into office that we now have a war in Ukraine, a war in the Middle East, and a potential war in the Indo-Pacific? Why are we limiting our allies' ability to win wars they didn't start?

Mr. Secretary, red lines are for our enemies, not for our allies and our friends. You go back to Chamberlain, Churchill. We know that appeasement only invites aggression, conflict, and war, and Churchill proved that to us, and Ronald Reagan taught us peace through strength.

I believe it's time that we return to the Ronald Reagan doctrine of peace through strength. And with that, I yield the balance my time.

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

We are now pleased to have the seventy-first Secretary of State Antony Blinken before us today. Sir, your full statement will be made part of the record and I ask that you keep your remarks to 5 minutes, and I will strongly encourage—I will enforce the gavel with all members to 5 minutes so that all members can participate in this extremely important hearing.

With that, I now recognize Secretary Blinken for his opening statement.

**STATEMENT OF HON. ANTONY BLINKEN, SECRETARY OF
STATE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE**

Secretary BLINKEN. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and to you, to Ranking Member Meeks, to all the members of the committee, it is very good to be with you today.

I thank you for the opportunity to testify and I thank you also for the partnership that we have had to advance American leadership in the world, leadership that is so essential to delivering on the priorities that matter to our people here at home.

The need for U.S. global leadership and the need for cooperation, collaboration with allies and partners, has never been greater. We have the People's Republic of China that's pursuing military, economic, geopolitical preeminence, challenging our vision for a free, open, secure and prosperous international order.

Russia is committing aggression not only against Ukraine but against the principles at the heart of the United Nations charter—territorial integrity, sovereignty, independence—that are the building blocks for global peace and security.

In the Middle East we're standing with Israel and its efforts to ensure that what happened on October 7th never happens again as we do everything we can to bring to an end the terrible human suffering in Gaza and prevent the conflict from spreading.

U.S. leadership is needed to address humanitarian crises elsewhere in the world including in Sudan, Haiti, other places, where millions have been displaced and many have been killed but also to address global issues that no country can solve alone including food security, changing climate, transnational corruption, the fentanyl crisis.

But with the support of Congress we can and we are approaching these challenges from a position of strength. Because of the actions we have taken the United States is stronger economically, diplomatically, militarily than it was a few years ago.

We have made historic investments here at home in our competitiveness, our innovation, our infrastructure. We have renewed alliances, built new ones, secured unprecedented alignment with key partners in Europe and in Asia on the challenges of our time.

We delivered essential aid to Ukraine. In fact, the United States rallied 50 countries around the world to come to Ukraine's defense to make sure it wouldn't be erased from the map as Vladimir Putin sought.

We have rallied the international community to share the burden. For every dollar that we sent in economic and development assistance others have collectively invested three more.

Now, many doubted whether bipartisan support for Ukraine and other urgent national security priorities could endure. But last

month Congress demonstrated to the world that we will not pull back when you passed President Biden's supplemental budget request by an overwhelming margin.

Our investment abroad does not come at the expense of our strength here at home. Far from it. Most of the supplemental, as you know, is being spent here in the United States building up our defense industrial base, supporting good American jobs.

We need to keep up the momentum and that requires a State Department budget that will fully resource our response to the challenges of this time. The President's Fiscal Year 2025 budget requesting \$58.8 billion to the State Department and USAID does that in two key ways.

First, it funds the essential missions of our department and USAID. The budget will ensure that the United States continues to be the partner of choice for countries to turn to when they need to solve big problems that also affect our own security and economic well being.

In an era of renewed great power competition we have to be able to present the strongest possible offer, one that is relevant and responsive to the country's needs and one that advances our security and economic interests.

That's why, among other things, we're requesting \$2 billion for a new fund to build high-quality, sustainable infrastructure around the world. Crucially, investments like these create good jobs here in America. They expand markets for our businesses overseas.

We are requesting resources for the World Bank. With \$1 billion in U.S. funding we can unlock another \$36 billion in development fund capacity to direct to the top priorities of emerging economies.

That's an enormous return on our own investment and essential for competing with China around the world. The budget also includes \$1.7 billion for international organizations including the United Nations, APEC, the Inter-American Development Bank, to help shape them in ways that reflect our interests and values.

We're asking for \$500 million to give more people around the world access to secure internet, digital technologies. Doing so will support our own economy through the export of technology products that are made here in the United States. It will help ensure that we and our fellow democracies remain the leaders and standard bearers when it comes to key technologies like artificial intelligence.

The budget includes funding to address global issues that affect the lives and livelihoods of the American people as well as people around the world, especially the synthetic drug crisis.

It also funds our response to irregular migration, global food insecurity, public health, climate and energy security, problems that may be taking place in other parts of the world, but we know that what happens on the far end of the world will come back to bite us if it's not addressed and addressed effectively including with our engagement and leadership.

We're also asking Congress to fully fund the State Department's educational and cultural exchanges. They're one of the best, most cost effective tools that we have for advancing our values and our interests around the world.

They support students, researchers, young professionals from our communities who study and work abroad. We also need to guard against attempts by our competitors to spread disinformation and misinformation around the world.

Our Global Engagement Center is critical. It's a critical tool for countering the threat of information manipulation by China, by Russia, and others, and we urge you to extend its sunset clause before it goes into effect in the coming months.

To out compete our rivals we need to invest in the foundation of our strength abroad and that's our diplomatic corps. That's the second pillar of the budget. The budget makes a strong investment in expanding our overseas presence, opening new posts in the Pacific Islands, the eastern Caribbean.

We will also continue our modernization of American diplomacy. We have reorganized the department to make sure that it can be fit for purpose for the challenges of this time.

Whether that comes to dealing with new technologies, whether that comes to dealing with global health, climate, dealing with China, we are making the necessary investments to try to attract and retain the most talented workforce possible.

We're investing in our people in Washington, at our posts overseas, with training with technology. We're promoting more agility, innovation, and efficiency in our processes.

Last year's enacted budget, Mr. Chairman, represented a 5 percent cut from the year before and that challenges our efforts to deliver the results that Congress and the American people deserve.

So we urge you to support this budget which helps us address the most pressing foreign policy priorities of our time and lays the foundation for continued strong American engagement and leadership in the years ahead.

With that, I thank you and happy to take any questions.

[The prepared statement of Secretary Blinken follows:]

**Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken
FY 2025 State Department Budget Request
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
May 22, 2024**

Chairman McCaul, Ranking Member Meeks, distinguished members of the Committee: thank you for the opportunity to testify before you.

And thank you for your partnership to advance American leadership in the world that is so essential for delivering on the priorities that matter to our people at home.

The need for U.S. global leadership – and cooperation with allies and partners – has never been greater.

The People's Republic of China is pursuing military, economic, and geopolitical preeminence, challenging our vision for a free, open, secure, and prosperous international order.

Russia is committing aggression not only against Ukraine, but against the principles at the heart of the UN Charter – sovereignty, territorial integrity, independence – that are the building blocks of global peace and security.

In the Middle East, we're standing with Israel in its efforts to ensure what happened on October 7th never happens again, as we do everything we can to bring an end to the terrible human suffering in Gaza and prevent the conflict from spreading.

U.S. leadership is needed to address humanitarian crises elsewhere around the world, including in Sudan and Haiti, where millions have been displaced and many killed... and to address global issues that no country can solve alone, including food security, the changing climate, transnational corruption, and the fentanyl crisis.

But, with support from Congress, we can and we are approaching these challenges from a position of strength. Because of the actions we've taken, the U.S. is stronger economically, diplomatically, and militarily than we were three years ago.

We've made historic investments at home in our competitiveness, innovation, and infrastructure. We've renewed our alliances, built new ones, and secured unprecedented alignment with key partners in Europe, Asia, and beyond.

We've delivered essential American aid to Ukraine... and we've rallied the international community to share the burden. For every dollar we've sent in economic and development assistance, others have collectively invested three more.

Many doubted whether bipartisan support for Ukraine and other urgent national security priorities could endure. But last month, Congress demonstrated to the world that we will not pull back, when you passed President Biden's supplemental funding bill by an overwhelming margin.

Our investment abroad does not come at the expense of our strength at home – far from it. Most of the supplemental is being spent here in the United States, building up our defense industrial base and creating and supporting thousands of American jobs.

We need to keep up this momentum. That requires a State Department budget that will fully resource our response to the challenges of our time.

The President's FY 2025 budget – requesting \$58.8 billion for the State Department and USAID – does that in two key ways.

First, it funds the essential missions of our Department and USAID. The budget will ensure the United States continues to be the partner of choice that countries turn to when they need to solve big problems. In an era of renewed great power competition, we must present the strongest possible offer: one that is relevant and responsive to countries' needs, and that advances our security and economic interests.

That's why we're requesting \$2 billion for a new fund to build high-quality, sustainable infrastructure around the world. Crucially, investments like these create jobs for Americans and expand markets for our businesses.

We're requesting resources for the World Bank. With \$1 billion in U.S. funding, we can unlock another \$36 billion in development fund capacity to direct to the top priorities of emerging economies. That's an enormous return on our investment – and essential for competing with China around the world.

The budget also includes \$1.7 billion for international organizations, including the United Nations, APEC, and the Inter-American Development Bank, to help shape them in ways that reflect our interests and values.

We're asking for \$500 million to give more people around the world access to secure Internet and digital technologies. Doing so will support the U.S. economy through the export of our technology products... and it will help ensure we, and our fellow democracies, remain the leaders and standard-setters in key technologies like artificial intelligence.

Our budget includes funding to address global issues that affect the lives and livelihoods of the American people, as well as people around the world – especially the synthetic drugs crisis. It also funds our response to irregular migration, global food insecurity, public health, and climate and energy security.

We're also asking Congress to fully fund the State Department's educational and cultural exchanges. They are one of our best and most cost-effective tools for advancing U.S. values and interests around the world – and they support the students, researchers, and young professionals from our communities who study and work abroad.

To outcompete our strategic rivals, we need to invest in the foundation of our strength abroad: America's diplomatic corps. That's the second pillar of this budget.

Our budget makes a strong investment in expanding our overseas presence, opening posts in the Pacific Islands and Eastern Caribbean.

It will also continue our modernization of American diplomacy. We are organizing the department and attracting and retaining the talent needed to take on 21st century challenges... investing in our people in Washington and at our posts overseas with training and technology... and promoting agility, innovation, and efficiency in our processes.

Last year's enacted budget level represented a five percent cut from the year before. That challenges our efforts to deliver the results Congress and the American people deserve.

I urge you to support this budget, which helps us address the most pressing foreign policy priorities of the coming year... and lays the foundation for strong U.S. leadership in the years ahead.

I'm grateful for this committee's partnership and your time. And I look forward to answering your questions.

Chairman MCCAUL. Thank you, Mr. Secretary.

Let me ask first, we, as you know, have been conducting an investigation into the Afghanistan withdrawal and will be releasing a report of that in September.

Will you commit to appearing before this committee for a hearing on Afghanistan. We have had the top brass of the Pentagon do so and I think the Gold Star families deserve that as well.

Secretary BLINKEN. Mr. Chairman, for the Gold Star families, for the President, for me, for everyone involved, we grieve with them the losses they suffered including over 20 years in Afghanistan. We honor their sacrifice and one of the ways we do that, of course, is by taking part in oversight, answering questions, giving the American people the answers they deserve, and we have engaged in very good faith in this.

I think by our count we facilitated transcribed interviews with 15 current or former officials——

Chairman MCCAUL. Mr. Secretary, my time is limited. But is that a yes?

Secretary BLINKEN. Mr. Chairman, I've appeared before this committee five times including one time dedicated solely to Afghanistan but every time taking questions on Afghanistan. That's more than any of my recent predecessors have done and——

Chairman MCCAUL. Well, we look forward to your testimony in September.

Secretary BLINKEN. Well, we can have our teams talk about that, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

Chairman MCCAUL. Okay. You testified before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee yesterday that you denounce the International Criminal Court's arrest warrants against Israel's leaders and committed to working with Congress on a bipartisan basis to find an appropriate response.

I've been working with the speaker and the ranking member and others in the Senate on potential proposed legislation to address this issue.

Will you commit to working with this committee to find a bipartisan bill that would place meaningful sanctions on the International Criminal Court?

Secretary BLINKEN. Mr. Chairman, first, let me say again that that decision was totally wrongheaded and any equivalence that it implied between Hamas and Israel and its leaders was shameful, and we commit to engaging on a bipartisan basis in finding an appropriate response.

Chairman MCCAUL. Yes, and I completely agree with you on that. Earlier this month the President stated on CNN that if Israel conducted a major military operation in Rafah that, quote, "we're not going to supply the weapons and artillery." Is this still the Biden administration's policy and what specific weapons do you plan to withhold beyond the 2,500-pound bombs?

Secretary BLINKEN. Well, first, Mr. Chairman, no one has done more than President Biden, no one will do more, to make sure that Israel has what it needs to defend itself. He was there days after the attack on October 7th, the first president to go to Israel when it was at war and under attack.

In the time after that he made sure that we deployed resources and assets to deter any further aggression against Israel from other quarters which was very much a threat and, of course——

Chairman MCCAUL. And we all know the history. Are you planning to withhold more weapons if Rafah is invaded?

Secretary BLINKEN. I'm happy to get you that and, of course, it's also important—it's also important to note that when Iran conducted an unprecedented attack, a direct attack for the first time on Israel from Iran the United—actively took part——

Chairman MCCAUL. But if Israel invades Rafah will you withhold more weapons?

Secretary BLINKEN. We actively took part for the first time ever in Israel's defense and rallied a coalition of countries. When it comes to Rafah——

Chairman MCCAUL. That doesn't answer my question. Are you going to withhold more weapons——

Secretary BLINKEN. I'll come to your—yes, I'll come to your question, Mr. Chairman. I'm happy to do that.

Chairman MCCAUL. Okay.

Secretary BLINKEN. When it comes to Rafah, we have made known for a long time our concerns about a full-on military assault of Rafah, the damage that could do to the civilian population absent a clear and credible plan to protect it and also to achieve the results that we and Israel both want, which is to deal effectively and durably with Hamas.

And so in that context, particularly with regard to 2,000-pound bombs which in a dense urban environment could do terrible damage, we have been in discussions with Israel about that particular weapon and those discussions continue. Those were private discussions.

It's unfortunate that it leaked to the press. It did. But those discussions continue and our concerns about a full-on military assault in Rafah remain. We have other ways of dealing with the challenge posed by Hamas that we believe can be more effective and more durable.

Chairman MCCAUL. Okay. Let me just ask you this. We didn't find out about the withholding of weapons until we saw the President's interview on CNN. Congress was never notified of this decision. We just marked up a bill out of committee that requires advanced notification.

If you decide to withhold more weapons from Israel, which I would say was the intent of Congress when we passed the supplemental and when I approve these weapons, will you at least give us advance notification?

Secretary BLINKEN. Mr. Chairman, we have gone out of our way—we have gone well above and beyond in previewing for Congress——

Chairman MCCAUL. I had no notification or did anyone in this committee or Congress until we saw the President on CNN. That's hardly an adequate way to notify Congress.

Last, Ukraine. We have a really bad situation going on, as you know. This is a sanctuary zone that the Russians have created and what they're doing is they're lining up all their artillery and rock-

ets and missiles just across the Ukraine border that they then use to attack the Ukrainians.

However, your administration and Jake Sullivan have restricted the arms use so that Ukraine cannot defend itself and fire back at Russia. That's why I mandated the ATACMS in the supplemental—the long-range, short-range and the HIMARS that your administration is tying their hands behind their back, Not unlike what you're trying to do in Israel.

Will you change this policy so Ukraine can fight without one hand tied behind its back?

Secretary BLINKEN. Well, as you know, we have rallied 50 countries over the last 2 years to come to Ukraine's defense to provide it with the weapons it needs to defend itself to push back against Russian aggression.

When it comes to enabling, endorsing attacks outside of Ukraine that's not something we have done but Ukraine will have to make and will make its own decisions and I want to make sure it gets the equipment that it needs to effectively—

Chairman MCCAUL. Well, you know, Congress got them the equipment, and thank you for implementing that, but Congress did not put restrictions on the use of these weapons.

It's Jake Sullivan and your administration that has put the restrictions on these weapons, and I talked to them and this is not—they cannot achieve victory with these restrictions that you, not the Congress, have placed on them and I hope you'll take that back to the national security adviser and the National Security Council and change this policy decision that is very dangerous and damaging to the Ukrainian people.

My time has expired. I now recognize Mr. Sherman.

Mr. SHERMAN. Mr. Secretary, thank you for being here and presenting your budget request, which I strongly support.

Dr. Afridi did more for America than any other foreigner in the last 200 years. Yet, he remains in jail in Pakistan. All Americans are dedicated to his release but some not dedicated enough to agree with Pakistan for a Afridi-Siddiqui trade and I would hope that you would urge the administration to make such a trade.

I'm confident the Pakistanis would accept it. Obviously, the Pakistanis should release him without conditions but it's very hard to ask any other non-American to cooperate with the United States when the person who did the most for us remains in jail.

I hope you would also direct the U.S. Ambassador to Albania to visit Camp Ashraf and demonstrate our continued concern for those who fled Iran and then fled Iraq.

This is particularly relevant because President Raisi of Iran died, and while some mourn his passing he was personally responsible for the deaths of tens of thousands of Iranians including many who are the family members of those who are in Camp Ashraf.

Thirty thousand people, apparently, have died in Gaza. Perhaps half or more are civilians. Congress has provided you with \$9.1 billion in humanitarian aid.

But there's other things going on around the world. Three hundred thousand died in Darfur two decades ago and now we see a new genocide in Darfur for where tens of thousands have been killed.

Looking at the rest of Sudan, 18 million people face acute food insecurity. Six hundred thousand Tigrayans have died just in the last few years and now millions of people face food insecurity in Ethiopia.

In eastern Congo we see 7.1 million people displaced. One point two million Rohingya are in camps in Bangladesh where countries have not contributed enough for their food and, therefore, the food World Food Programme has reduced rations by 30 percent.

The entire population of the Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh, or Artsakh, has been ethnically cleansed and now lives as refugees in Armenia.

Can you commit that—and hopefully this is a just a yes/no answer—can you commit that when you allocate that \$9.1 billion of humanitarian aid you will do so on the basis of where is the greatest need rather than which conflicts get the most publicity?

Secretary BLINKEN. Yes.

Mr. SHERMAN. Thank you. People think that the Middle East is as bad as it can possibly be. That's not true. Iran has a nuclear weapons program I'm sure my colleagues will ask you about and I want to focus on Saudi Arabia.

Some think Bin Salman is going to be a good friend to the United States but even they must take the examples from the 1970's where the shah was a friend of the United States and every weapon system that he had was in the hands of the ayatollahs by the end of that decade.

Saudi Arabia will want a nuclear cooperation agreement with the United States. Can you commit to us that you will not send up to Congress a nuclear agreement with Saudi Arabia that does not include the additional protocol and does not meet the gold standard that we saw in the UAE nuclear cooperation agreement?

Secretary BLINKEN. Any nuclear cooperation agreement that we reach will have to address all of our nonproliferation goals and we want to make sure that, of course, we have gold standard agreements with whomever we reach these agreements.

Mr. SHERMAN. Thank you. Hamas had allied organizations. The Palestinian Islamic Jihad is the better known but there is also the Popular Resistance Committees, the third biggest terrorist organization based in Gaza, which has not been designated a foreign terrorist organization and I wonder if you can commit to either designating them as either an FTO or otherwise as a terrorist organization such as a specially designated global terrorist, or at least come back to this committee in 30 days and tell us why you haven't done so.

Secretary BLINKEN. I'm happy to come back to you. We're always looking to see appropriate designations to use whatever tools we can against terrorist organizations—

Mr. SHERMAN. They are proud participants in the killing of 1,200 Israelis on October 7th and they've killed Americans. They meet more than all the standards.

Chairman MCCAUL. The gentleman's time has expired and I'm going to recognize Mr. Smith for 5 minutes. Then we will recess for 10 minutes. We have two votes on the floor.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Last Friday, Mr. Secretary I chaired my fourth congressional hearing within the year on UNRWA, the U.N. Relief Works Agency, and its decades-long complicity in the most vicious forms of anti-Semitic hate with a focus on the so-called independent review—U.N. review by Ms. Catherine Colonna.

I've read her report very carefully and our witnesses including the former general counsel, James Lindsay—he was the general counsel for UNRWA and he admonished us in the strongest terms do not give money to UNRWA. He used to be their guy. Now he's not.

Hillel Neuer, who's the executive director of U.N. Watch, testified and said the Colonna review was not independent, the verdict was determined in advance, and he pointed out all of the conflicts of interest of the people, the players.

It was very narrowly focused, too focused, just on October 7th and even there it whitewashed that the only thing that came out of it that was any good was to say that UNRWA "does not vet employees for connections or sympathies with Hamas or Islamic Jihad," quote/unquote.

Twenty-one years ago in 2003 I offered an amendment to redirect the money away from UNRWA to other entities that could be vetted to ensure non-anti-Semitism. This year my legislation to stop UNRWA Act—Stop Support for UNRWA Act of 2024—was passed by this committee.

It completely prohibits any U.S. contributions to UNRWA. It made clear, however, that nothing in the Act may be construed to preclude the provision of humanitarian assistance through any agency or entity as long as you certify, Mr. Secretary, that it doesn't promote, espouse, or affiliate with entities or individuals that promote violence or terrorism or anti-Semitism and does not employ individuals who promote, espouse, or are affiliated with such entities or individuals.

Then in March the bipartisan foreign aid bill made it absolutely clear no funds for UNRWA. Both sides of the aisle, both House and Senate, and that's until March 25th, 2025.

My question is are U.S. taxpayer funds to UNRWA still paused. Second—that's the other funds that were already in the pipeline or may be coming in from other spigots—second, can you assure the committee that the Biden administration's investigation will be in depth, a top to bottom review?

From the moment your administration announced it and when the U.N. announced it they said—they drew such a narrow look. They're not going to see much.

They'll know that 12 to 18 people committed atrocities but, unfortunately, UNRWA has been a child abuse factory, turning little wonderful kids who happen to be Palestinian into child soldiers by inculcating in them a hatred toward Jews and to Jerusalem and to the Jewish State.

So, please, about your report when is that coming and hopefully it will be very comprehensive.

Secretary BLINKEN. Thank you. Just a few things on this.

First of all, we do support the implementation of the recommendations in the Colonna report. We think those are important

and important before. But then second, there is a separate investigation that's going on.

This is a U.N. internal report on the specific allegations, as you know, about the participation of UNRWA employees in the horrific events of October 7th.

We await those results and we will pull all of that together along with our own hard look at this.

Second, we, of course, are abiding by the law in making sure that funds——

Mr. SMITH. No other funds are finding their way into——

Secretary BLINKEN. No other funds can or should be going to UNRWA.

Mr. SMITH. Is it planned in the near future?

Secretary BLINKEN. No, and we'll abide—now, I will tell you we do have a difference in view because for all of the manifest problems and deficiencies with UNRWA it's also been playing an absolutely critical and, in many ways, at least in the near term, irreplaceable role in terms of being able to provide assistance for people who desperately need it.

It has an infrastructure that no one else has. It has people that no one else has. So there needs to be a way to make sure one way or another that that assistance gets to people who desperately need it.

And so we can look at what can be done for the future, but in the near term I got to tell you we still see that as essential. But, no, we are not and will not provide the funding pursuant to the law.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you, sir.

Let me ask you, if I could, on child abduction—international child abduction. I've written a major law on it named after David Goldman.

When the president of China—of Japan was here I gave him a letter asking him to get engaged. I would ask the administration—I would ask the president—you know, we all speak out on behalf of—he met with people, Japanese who have been abducted to North Korea. But the big concern is what about our own children who have been abducted, 500 of them, to Japan?

And, finally, the World Health Assembly is meeting. They're violating their own rules of that procedure. Are you going to submit the WHO pandemic treaty, which is rife with problems, to the Senate for ratification?

Secretary BLINKEN. Thank you. On child abduction I'm, like you, seized with this and for a long time. I applaud what you're doing and your leadership on this, and when we have countries that are not abiding by the Hague Convention or are otherwise engaging in practices that are keeping children away from their parents this is something we take action on and I always welcome working with you on that.

Second, and very quickly, on the pandemic agreement the way things stand right now I don't see that coming to a conclusion in the near term.

There's just not consensus on it. It's something we continue to work on but continue to work on making sure that we uphold our

own interests and values including on, for example, intellectual property.

Chairman McCAUL. The committee will take a short recess for two votes on the floor.

[Recess.]

Chairman McCAUL. The committee will reconvene. The chair now recognizes Mr. Keating.

Mr. KEATING. Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to thank the Secretary for his extraordinary efforts—the travel, the stress, everything that has been involved not just with yourself but your staff and the other members of the Cabinet. They've been extraordinary.

I want to center on Ukraine for the focus of my attention, a war that began in 2014, 6 years before Joe Biden became president of the United States and one that as that war escalated while he was president he put together a coalition—unprecedented coalition of 56 different countries dealing with a contact defense group working to—in conjunction with all our allies and the NATO allies, in particular 32 NATO allies that expanded under his watch as well.

I would like to talk about—recently I was just a few weeks ago in Ukraine, spoke with President Zelensky, spoke with the minister of defense there among others, and saw the impact of the 6-month delay that occurred in this Congress.

As grateful as we are that we finally had a vote on it the Speaker held this up for 6 months in spite of the fact there were 311 Members of Congress in bipartisan fashion that voted for that and it did have an effect. That's the one thing that became clear from that visit and became clear afterwards.

That also is a concern that people had. Our NATO allies that I'm in contact with all the time are concerned, not about our current president but our former president who in spite of the fact that about two-thirds of our NATO countries and NATO allies have reached their threshold has said that if all of them aren't by that time, including a country like Luxembourg, then they'll be on their own. That's where the concern rests today.

But the war has taken a terrible toll and taken terrible concerns. There is somewhere in the vicinity of 120,000 documented war crimes by Russia.

The kidnapping of children still remains a very difficult issue and chemical weapons have been documented as being used as well, and the attacks on the infrastructure are enormous, particularly in a major city—the second biggest city of Kharkiv.

And along those lines, Mr. Secretary, I just want to see what you can say in an open hearing in this regard. I know some things will be classified but if you could give us some indication, even if there's an openness and general discussion on the issue.

I do believe when you look at what's happening in Kharkiv myself that just something that's maybe five miles away where they're lobbing these weapons, destroying the infrastructure of the second biggest city, that this should be more of a clear message from the United States with U.S. weapons that at least they can retaliate in a defensive position in that kind of proximity to go back at the source of that.

So could you share with us what you can? Is there an openness to that discussion with the United States and with the coalition that we have so that that can be more clear? Because President Zelensky, members of their parliament, other officials that I've spoken with, are concerned that they won't be able to do that.

Secretary BLINKEN. Well, first of all, we are grateful that the supplemental was approved and is not only approved but the materials that are being paid for by the supplemental are now getting there.

I wish it hadn't taken 6 months, really, just in the nick of time. I was just there as well. I was in Ukraine about a week ago, 10 days ago, and I also want to applaud the chairman of the committee for the work that he did to make sure that we got the supplemental through.

We are determined to make sure that not only does Ukraine have what it needs to defend itself but we, obviously, constantly have to look at what those needs are in any given moment and how it can most effectively deal with this. So we're always—

Mr. KEATING. Are there just at least an openness to that discussion because I had another question.

Secretary BLINKEN. We're always open to—we're always open to conversations with our allies and partners about what their needs are. We want to make sure that they have what they need and what—

Mr. KEATING. I'll convey to you at least my feeling, that they should be able to do that and I hope that that discussion can occur quickly.

Just quickly—I've got a few seconds left and it's tough—I just wanted to deal with Georgia, for instance. There's a real concern in Georgia now about backsliding that's going on now, the controversy about the, you know, foreign agents press bill in Georgia. Could you just comment on our efforts to try and deal with that issue?

Secretary BLINKEN. Yes. We're very concerned about the foreign agents law that was passed. I think it's right out of Moscow's playbook, unfortunately, and I think it clearly counters the desire of the overwhelming majority of Georgians to move toward the EU and the EU integration.

So we are looking very hard at what we can do in response to that and I anticipate we will take actions. The EU is looking at the impact on the accession process for Georgia so I would anticipate that there will be things to come because of the impact that this law may have.

Mr. KEATING. Due to the constraints at this time I'll have to followup with some written questions.

Secretary BLINKEN. I'd be happy to—

Mr. KEATING. Again, I thank you for your extraordinary service and I yield back.

Secretary BLINKEN. Thank you.

Chairman MCCAUL. The gentleman yields.

The chair recognizes Mr. Wilson.

Mr. WILSON. Secretary Blinken, earlier this week I was grateful to achieve a phone call with the very dynamic and dedicated

daughters of the late Majd Kamalmaz who was identified as having been murdered by the Assad regime.

Dr. Kamalmaz, an American psychologist, was kidnapped by the Assad dictatorship in 2017 while visiting an elderly family member. He was a devoted person to counseling people who have suffered from extreme danger. He was the father of four children.

Dr. Kamalmaz is a Syrian American. Can you explain the refusal of the administration to say his name or condemn his murder at the hands of the Assad regime? Will there be a criminal investigation into his murder?

Secretary BLINKEN. I'm happy to pursue that with you and I need to make sure that I know the full facts of this.

Mr. WILSON. And, hey, we're going to get them to you——

Secretary BLINKEN. Happy to pursue that.

Mr. WILSON [continuing]. Because Dr. Kamalmaz was a great American, a Syrian American who was flat out murdered. Additionally, as so accurately exposed by Chairman Mike McCaul, the war criminal Putin is attacking Ukrainian citizens from Russian territory.

It's just 30 miles to the second largest city of Kharkiv with a population of 1.4 million, and I'm really grateful we see with Congressman Bill Keating that our concern is bipartisan. Hey, we want you to do good. We want to succeed.

War criminal Putin is murdering Ukrainian civilians as we speak, sacrificing Ukrainian lives to satisfy the false escalation narratives that has been repeatedly being—seen as false. It's also immoral.

When will the administration allow Ukraine to use the equipment to end the war and save lives? This is important. To delay equipment could lead to the legacy of Biden-Blinken with a never-ending war as has been warned by the Washington Post even.

Secretary BLINKEN. Thank you, Congressman.

In every step along the way we have endeavored to make sure that Ukraine has what it needs when it needs it, can use it effectively, can maintain it effectively. As I said to Congressman Keating, we're always open to listening to our partners and as necessary making adjustments. So we'll continue——

Mr. WILSON. And, hey, this is so clear. This is response to an illegal invasion. This should be to deter mass murder that's being conducted and to not allow the people of Ukraine to respond properly is putting so many people at risk.

And then we have dictators with rule of gun invading democracies with rule of law and our enemies are clear. War criminal Putin claims Ukraine does not exist. The murderous regime in Tehran and its puppets claim Israel does not exist and the Chinese Communist Party says that Taiwan does not exist.

Sadly, Taiwan has paid for defensive weapons which are being delayed and there must be a deterrence to save millions of lives of the people of Taiwan. It's crucial for anti-ship missiles, air defense, and F-16 advances.

I particularly appreciate the people of Chinese heritage as the only son of a—serving in Congress of a World War II Flying Tiger who liberated China. And so we liberated China but now the people

of Taiwan are subject to a potential invasion and the way to deter it is to provide the equipment. They paid for the equipment.

We authorized funding for the equipment. What is your commitment to expedite the delivery to deter a murderous catastrophe?

Secretary BLINKEN. Thank you very much, Congressman.

We have notified more than \$6 billion in foreign military sales during this administration, 13 proposed sales in 1922 that I went forward with, another seven in 1923. That's by far the largest single and 2-year notifications that we have made of weapon sales.

The challenge that we have, as you know, in terms of moving forward on them is with our production time lines and we are doing everything we can for a whole variety of reasons including Taiwan to make sure that those production lines are moving more quickly, more efficiently, to be able to deliver on the weapons that we're providing to those who need them for their self-defense.

We're committed to Taiwan's defense. We're committed to making sure that it has what it needs to defend itself commensurate with the threat it faces. But the challenge that we have, as I think many members of this committee know, is with production and making sure that moves as quickly and efficiently as possible.

Mr. WILSON. And time is of the essence. There must be deterrence to avoid an invasion and that can be done if we provide the equipment and with the prepositioned equipment that we have around the world that there should be expedited to the people of Taiwan to avoid what will be the most catastrophic world incident after, sadly, the abandonment of the people of Afghanistan with 13 dead Americans.

Secretary BLINKEN. Indeed, we have used—

Mr. WILSON. And so every effort must be made to prevent an invasion. With that, I yield back.

Chairman MCCAUL. The gentleman yields.

The chair recognizes Mr. Bera.

I'm sorry. I recognize the ranking member, Mr. Meeks, for an opening statement and questions.

Mr. MEEKS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for allowing me to make my opening statement. As you know, I was with President Ruto and the Speaker. Thank you very much.

I'll begin by welcoming Secretary Blinken to the House Foreign Affairs Committee, and I know there's much that has already been talked about and much more that demands your attention all over the world. I'd just say phew with your travel schedule.

Mr. Secretary, I appreciate how generous you've always been with your time and how responsive the department has been to the request made by this committee during your tenure.

By my count this is your fifth appearance before this committee, which is certainly way more than your immediate predecessor. Since you've last testified before us the geopolitical landscape has only grown in complexity, plagued by continued rise in conflict, democratic backsliding, and humanitarian catastrophes.

Hamas' October 7th terrorist attack, the most horrific and brutal terrorist attack in Israel's history, has prompted a war against Hamas that has now cost tens of thousands of lives including innocent civilians, children, and women.

The people of Gaza now face famine like conditions, which is why I commend the State Department and this administration's tireless efforts to broker a cease-fire that would free the hostages, which would include five Americans, and allow humanitarian aid to reach the population.

I appreciate the administration's efforts to caution Israel against launching a large-scale military operation in Rafah without a credible plan for minimizing civilian casualties and stabilizing a post-war Gaza and we look forward to hearing more from you, Mr. Secretary, on the department's ongoing efforts to address this crisis.

Gaza is one of many humanitarian crises around the world and I know your department remains focused on alleviating human suffering in places like Sudan where we see the largest number of people facing extreme food shortages in the world.

The situation in Haiti has only grown more dire with Port-au-Prince having devolved into lawlessness resulting from horrific violence including systemic sexual violence perpetrated by gangs.

And I'm grateful that President Ruto, who I just met with, of Kenya is here in Washington, DC, this week as Kenya is not only vital for sustained U.S. engagement with Africa, it is also leading the multinational security support mission to Haiti that is key to promoting stability as Haitians work to restore democratic governance in their country.

And since your last testimony we have also seen Putin's illegal war on Ukraine into a new deadly phase as Russian forces pummel civilian infrastructure with warheads on a level not seen since the beginning of the war and pushed to once again take Kharkiv. Ukraine has fought desperately to hold ground against Russian advances amid shortages in ammunition and defense weapons—defensive weapons caused largely in part, of course, by the efforts of extreme MAGA Republicans to block the President's national security supplemental.

Thankfully, Democrats worked across the aisle to pass the supplemental package and I look forward to hearing more on how the State Department is working to quickly fulfill deliveries of those arms shipments so that Ukraine can replenish its stockpiles and continue its existential fight against Moscow.

And it's clear that the atrocities of the world—the autocracies of the world are coordinating now more than ever to challenge the free democratic world and undermine U.S. interests and the international rules-based system that has for decades promoted peace and prosperity.

Under President Biden and your leadership in the State Department we have strengthened American leadership, revitalized our alliances and our partnerships, as well as forged new cooperative agreements like AUKUS to promote U.S. national security, particularly in the Indo-Pacific.

This diplomacy will be pivotal to ensuring the Indo-Pacific remains free, open, and secure, particularly as Beijing is increasing its aggressive actions in the South and East China Seas and the Taiwan Strait, using economic coercion to advance its malign interests.

However, we cannot outcompete Beijing diplomatically—however, we cannot outcompete Beijing diplomatically or economically if we are

not willing to make serious investments in our diplomatic and development tools, which brings me to the reason why you're here today, Mr. Secretary.

The Biden administration's Fiscal Year 1925 budget is clear eyed about the complex challenges we face and is in stark contrast to the America first isolationism of many of my colleagues across the aisle who continue pushing for draconian cuts to the State Department's budget.

For all the talk we hear from my Republican colleagues about the need to outcompete China they seem unwilling to make the requisite investments into our State, foreign, and operations and related programs a budget that meets the moment.

So I conclude that with this. Our diplomatic and development personnel in the State Department need Congress to do its job and authorize a budget that makes investments commensurate to their needs and modernizes the State Department to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

We need to stand by the State Department. We need State authorization bill passed on a regular basis for the heroes of the State Department, the men—the American men and women who are standing and I salute them as I salute our military. I salute them for their courage, their bravery, and for being the representative to the United States of America all over the world.

And with that, I yield back and now I guess I can do my questioning. Thank you.

So in the three and a half years the administration has realized our alliances, as I've just stated, in a partnership in the Indo-Pacific in ways that we could not have foreseen a few years ago.

Before the Biden administration, the Quadrennial dialog—I can't even pronounce it—quadrennial—quadrilateral dialog with Japan—

Chairman MCCAUL. Say Quad.

Mr. MEEKS. Say Quad—that's right.

With Japan, Australia, and India ever met at the leaders level before the Biden administration, had the Quad—you have Japan, Australia, and India—did they ever meet at the leaders level?

Secretary BLINKEN. We elevated it to the leaders level. That's correct.

Mr. MEEKS. And has the AUKUS security partnership that the administration launched with the U.K. and Australia been a game changer in bolstering deterrence and keeping the peace in the Indo-Pacific?

Secretary BLINKEN. It's moving in that direction.

Mr. MEEKS. And regarding the trilateral partnership with Japan and Korea are we cooperating with our two Northeast Asian allies in ways that we had not before?

Secretary BLINKEN. That's correct.

Mr. MEEKS. That is correct? And how many countries in the Pacific Islands has the Biden administration expanded our diplomatic footprint?

Secretary BLINKEN. We now have an additional two embassies that have opened. We're looking at an additional two more. So we have—we'll have representation in more than half of the Pacific Island countries.

Mr. MEEKS. So would you say this is building resiliency against the PRC's malign influence in the Pacific Islands?

Secretary BLINKEN. Yes, I would.

Mr. MEEKS. And how has our relationship with the Philippines rebounded under the Biden administration?

Secretary BLINKEN. Well, I think we have seen an extraordinary relationship develop over the last—especially over the last year, both President Biden and President Marcos working more closely together than ever and that partnership—and by the way, you mentioned the trilateral relationship with Japan and Korea. We also now have a trilateral partnership with the Philippines and Japan where we're doing work together.

Mr. MEEKS. And does this cooperation across Asia—does that help ensure a free and open Indo-Pacific?

Secretary BLINKEN. Absolutely. We have got the most dynamic fastest growing region in the world. We have more than 50 percent of global GDP in that region and, of course, the United States is a Pacific power.

But being able to align so many different countries to have all of us working together and in the same direction that multiplies the impact of our diplomacy. It multiplies the impact we're having on advancing our interests.

Mr. MEEKS. Does it counter the PRC's undermining of rules-based order?

Secretary BLINKEN. Absolutely, and the fact that we're able to do it together makes the difference.

Mr. MEEKS. And let me just ask this. Could the United States of America have achieved this cooperation without the State Department?

Secretary BLINKEN. Well, admittedly, I have a biased view on this but the answer would be no.

Mr. MEEKS. It's a great job that the State Department and this administration is doing. Let me turn to the concerning situation, of course, in Sudan. On May 14th the administration sanctioned two RSF forces commanders for perpetrating violence in Darfur and threatening the peace, security, and stability of Sudan.

However, the RSF leader has not been sanctioned. The current fight against the RSF and Sudanese Armed Forces for the city of Al Fashir and Darfur risk escalating a humanitarian catastrophe.

What's the State Department doing to demand accountability in Sudan?

Secretary BLINKEN. Well, we're focused on a few things. First, we have, as you know, our senior envoy, Tom Perriello, who is out there every single day trying to drive forward on getting an end to the war, getting a civilian transitional government formed, unifying the professional armed forces, getting unhindered humanitarian access to people who desperately need it and, of course, returning to the democratic transition that Sudan was on before it was disrupted by the generals.

We think the best way forward is to resume the Jeddah negotiations that Saudi Arabia had been hosting with all of the key stakeholders, with the Saudis, with Egypt, with the UAE, with the African Union, with IGAD, and also, yes, as appropriate to impose

costs on individuals or entities that are escalating the conflict and committing atrocities. So we're very much looking at that as well.

Mr. MEEKS. Thank you. Let me also ask this. Is it critical that Congress reauthorize the Global Engagement Center this year?

Secretary BLINKEN. In my judgment, it is. In fact, I addressed that in my opening statement. This is the one place in government where we bring together all of our efforts to counter Russian, Chinese, and other disinformation and misinformation and it's been one of the most effective tools I've seen both in exposing that disinformation and misinformation, giving other countries the capacity themselves to deal with it, and to take more effective collective action.

So as I mentioned in my opening statement, I very much hope that it will be reauthorized because it sunsets a little bit later this year and it's a critical tool. If we take that tool away we are disarming ourselves in the fight against mis- and disinformation coming from China, coming from Russia, coming from others.

Mr. MEEKS. My last question—is there any merit to the allegations, some from the far right, that the GEC is censoring conservative voices here in the United States?

Secretary BLINKEN. No, and, of course, we're always prepared to work with Congress on any concerns as we have when concerns were raised. We tried to make sure we provided all the necessary information so that people have confidence and we'll always continue to do that.

But those questions have been answered and I believe, again, this tool is essential for us in order to deal with what really is a new front in the global competition and that's the information front. We have to be able to fight effectively on that front.

Mr. MEEKS. Thank you, Mr. Secretary. Thank you for the great work you're doing and please say thank you to all of the employees of the State Department. I yield back.

Chairman MCCAUL. The gentleman yields. The chair recognizes Mr. Perry.

Mr. PERRY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Secretary, for being here.

Two of our allies have been attacked, unprovoked, right—Ukraine by Russia, Israel by Hamas—and I'm trying to juxtapose the situation here. I see that according to reports the President wants Israel to outline what governance in Gaza will look like after an invasion, how Israel will reduce civilian harm in dense urban environments, and how to free as many hostages as possible prior to sending capability to Israel.

On the other hand, I've got from the State Department here the integrated country strategy, and I went through it. What I see here is the mission and goal objective is to win the war, which I fully support.

Nothing that I would like more than to see Vladimir Putin run out of Ukraine on a rail and worse. Restore Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and we have essentially given Ukraine over \$100 billion and said, go fight Russia. Go defeat Russia. Regain your territory. Fully supportive of Ukraine winning that war.

But at the same time we have established a set of conditions on Israel. Can you—how about this condition? We have built at the

cost to the American people—\$320 million—a port, right. Operations were started on Friday, halted on Sunday because Hamas attacked the port, right.

Hamas attacks Kerem Shalom, the crossing there, which would allow aid from Israel in and from the United States. So Israel has to pay for the aid of the people that attacked it and has to provide this information on a plan.

Can you tell me what the difference is? What's the difference between Ukraine and Israel?

Secretary BLINKEN. In a sense, there isn't and as we have made clear from the start, these are both close partners of the United States.

Mr. PERRY. Well, Mr. Secretary, with all due respect, if there's no difference why do we have these conditions? They have to come up with a plan of governance in the people that attacked them. They've got to have a plan for the hostages.

I mean, Russians have thousands of Ukrainian hostages, right, and have we—has the U.S. Government, has President Biden, restricted Ukraine's use of weapons in urban areas to reduce civilian casualties? Has that happened?

Secretary BLINKEN. So, first of all, Congressman, no one has done more, will do more, to ensure there's—

Mr. PERRY. I know you say that but it seems like—

Secretary BLINKEN. No, I don't normally say—

Mr. PERRY. Look, I'm just—I'm just reporting what I'm reading. I'm just going with the facts. You can say that all day long but the fact is that others have done more and we're doing more right now for Ukraine than we are for Israel.

President Biden is doing more for Ukraine than Israel. We took, roughly, half of the money or more from the aid package passed for Israel and gave it to Hamas, who's taking it from the citizens in their country and using it to fight Israel. So while you say—so please skip the narrative and just tell me what the difference is between Ukraine and Israel. How come conditions on one and no conditions on the other?

Secretary BLINKEN. These are not conditions. We give our—to our close friends, our best friends, our best partners. One of our obligations is to give them the best possible advice we can and so when it comes to dealing with Hamas we're committed to seeing that Hamas cannot govern Gaza again, cannot pose the threat that it did that led to the October 7th attack.

We have been doing everything we can to support Israel's efforts to defend itself and make sure that can't happen, and when it comes to—when it comes to Rafah the concern that we have had and that we have expressed as friends do and have an obligation to do is that the effort to go in full force into Rafah to remove the—to remove the remainder—

Mr. PERRY. Where the enemy is. Where the enemy—it was just reported, as you know, Mr. Secretary, 600 tunnels into Egypt, into Israel, traversing weapons and military equipment to attack Israel.

So when you say we're doing all we can we're providing advice. With all due respect, sir, they need to win the war against Hamas and eliminate them and anything that we're doing that stands in

their way of that is unacceptable including supporting Hamas, which is what we're doing.

At the same time you're saying no one has done more, well, no one has done more for Hamas either.

Secretary BLINKEN. I, to say the least, don't follow that. Let me say that very quickly, one, we want to make sure that the defeat of Hamas is an enduring defeat, and even if they go into Rafah and remove the remaining battalions there'll be thousands—thousands—of armed Hamas left. Absent a plan for what comes after—and this is not a condition, it's simply our advice—one of three things can happen. Either Hamas will remain—

Mr. PERRY. What is Ukraine's plan for Russia once they kick Russia out of their country?

Secretary BLINKEN. I actually laid that out just about a week ago in Ukraine and I'm happy to share that with you.

Mr. PERRY. It's not in here, sir.

Secretary BLINKEN. I'm happy to—I'll share it with you. We are—

Mr. PERRY. Sir, there are two different standards. You must admit that and we in Congress wonder why and the American people wonder why.

With that, Mr. Chair, I yield.

Chairman MCCAUL. The gentleman yields. The chair recognizes Mr. Bera.

Mr. BERA. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and, again, thank you for being here and the hard work that you're doing. I'm tired from all the travel that I do and I can only imagine. I'm going to focus in on the Indo-Pacific.

The ranking member, I think, took a lot of my talking points but I do want to emphasize the work that the administration's done there from the early days of the administration, really focusing in on a strong trilateral relationship between the—between Korea, Japan, and the United States, and it really is at the best place that I've seen it in my 12 years.

So really want to applaud the administration from early two by twos, State visits, and then the Camp David accords. I know we are working on something very similar on a trilateral basis so Congress, the General Assembly, can also emphasize the importance of the trilateral with Japan, the Philippines, the United States that, you know, was unveiled, you know, just last month is incredibly important and I think we'll continue to see that prosper.

The ranking member talked about the Quad coalition, again, a very important strategic coalition. Elevating that to the leaders level is extremely important. AUKUS is coming together in a very strategic way.

So with the goal in mind of maintaining a peaceful, prosperous, stable Indo-Pacific I think the administration gets an A+. It has done a remarkable job and, again, we will continue to work on that from the congressional perspective.

I recently had the chance to—you talked a little bit about the Pacific Islands and reestablishing a diplomatic presence—led a delegation to Fiji, Tonga, and Tuvalu and in Nuku'alofa when we were there, and I think you were actually there previously as well, just

reestablishing an embassy there you could sense the excitement of the Tongan individuals.

We have got a great diplomatic staff. It's small but very enthusiastic and, again, small investments like that go a long ways. The one thing that the Tongans raised was the lack of being able to get visas.

There's a large vibrant Tongan-American administration. We did raise that with the embassy staff back there. You know, right now they've got to fly to Fiji but, again, hopefully in the Fiscal Year 1925 budget we can continue to expand services and do that.

I also want to applaud opening embassies in the Seychelles and the Maldives—incredibly important areas. We see in the Maldives, you know, obviously, a large exclusive economic zone.

We're watching, you know, this tete-a-tete between India and China. But our being there, our having an embassy there, our having an ambassador there is incredibly important.

My question would be if you can talk a little bit about the Fiscal Year 1925 budget request with regards to the Pacific Islands but also the Indian Ocean region and the embassies in Tonga, the Solomon Islands, the Seychelles, Maldives, and others.

Secretary BLINKEN. Thank you very much. I appreciate the comments on the work we're doing.

Look, as you know, and your own engagement has demonstrated this, when it comes to the Pacific Islands they, of course, inhabit this vast, vast stretch of ocean between the United States and our allies in Asia and so geographically it's usually important.

We—the President has hosted, as you know, two White House summits with all of the leaders from the Pacific Islands for the first time coming to the White House and many of us have been there repeatedly, and when it comes to our presence our embassies, of course, are critical.

We now have embassies in eight of the 14 Pacific Islands. We have two more that we hope and expect to open. We're looking at Vanuatu, actually, within the balance of this year, hopefully Kiribati after that.

We have the newly recognized Cook Islands and Niue which our embassy in Wellington represents and, of course, we need the resources to make sure that not only can we establish these missions but the human resources can be there, too. You mentioned that we have small operations, yes, small but mighty but we want to make sure that they're properly resourced because you have to cover a vast amount of territory.

There's something else that's important and you mentioned it. The collaboration that we have built with key partners in the region and particularly with Japan, with Korea, with Australia, with New Zealand, that allows us to multiply our efforts and to cover even more territory than we would if we were doing it alone.

And so the coordination there, the work that we're doing together, for example, to bring undersea cables to the islands, doing that with Japan, with Taiwan, and others to connect people that is all vital as well.

But it also requires resources in order to do that, to generate the private sector investment in partnerships that we need. All of that's reflected in the budget.

Mr. BERA. And, again, I applaud that, and when I was in Tuvalu last month getting the Japanese to drop cables incredibly important.

So with that, I yield back.

Chairman MCCAUL. The gentleman yields.

The chair recognizes Mr. Issa.

Mr. ISSA. Mr. Secretary, thank you once again. I've got more questions than time but hopefully we can get through some of them fairly quickly.

We talked a little bit earlier. Currently, at my border—my 100 miles of the Mexican border—we have a massive amount of immigrants coming not from South or Central America but from disparate places and I'll just take one example.

The people coming there from China, over 20,000 of them in the last month, they flew typically to Turkey, then to Mexico, and then came into the United States.

Turkey does not allow Chinese to enter Turkey without a visa. Mexico does not allow people to enter including Chinese without a visa. However, they are currently entering because they say, oh, just let us off the plane and we'll go to America.

As our head diplomat with these two allies, one of them a NATO ally, can you or will you attempt to tell them that under international law if they don't have a visa to the United States you do not want them to come to make a claim that they could have or should have made before they got to our border?

Secretary BLINKEN. In short, yes. I think you've identified a very important problem. You mentioned the case of China. We have a record increase in the number of Chinese who are seeking to get into the United States who presented themselves in one way or another and there are other nationalized, too, that are far afield from our own hemisphere.

Mr. ISSA. I mentioned China mostly because as we both know they won't take them back once they get here.

Secretary BLINKEN. So you've identified an important problem and we have been acting on it. We have been working with countries in the region to get requirements for visas so that people can't simply come to those countries without a visa and then use that as a platform to come into the United States.

We have reached agreements in a variety of ways with Colombia, with Ecuador, with El Salvador, with Guatemala, with Mexico, actually, as well as with Panama and we continue to make sure that to the best of our ability those countries put in place what's needed so that people from far afield can't avail themselves of the opportunity to—

Mr. ISSA. Excellent. Thank you, Secretary. As I said, I've got a bunch here.

Secretary BLINKEN. Please.

Mr. ISSA. Hopefully, what we passed out of the committee this morning giving export controls for AI will be a tool that will be used heavily out of Commerce and will benefit our war against a number of countries and I'm going to just deal with one for a moment.

When President Biden entered office there were about 300,000 barrels a day leaving Iran. Today there are reported to be over 2

million barrels a day leaving Iran. They had about 70 ships. They now have about 400 ships. They are called ghost ships.

I know that you do not run a military force but as our chief diplomat and a member of the National Security Council couldn't or shouldn't we be able to, essentially, capture those ships on the high sea and take them out of commission to ultimately enforce sanctions?

You're our number-one sanctions supporter but your sanctions, now that they've circumvented SWIFT and the other economic trades, have become somewhat muted. What should we do in combination with the other entities?

Secretary BLINKEN. Yes, so I think there are a few things, Congressman.

First, we have sanctioned in the oil/petroleum product sector more than 200 Iranian entities or individuals who have been engaged in that trade. We have done it across multiple jurisdictions. Anyone who has a role in the production, the sale, the shipment of these petrochemicals or petrol chemicals. But we also identified, yes—

Mr. ISSA. But, Mr. Secretary, in the limited time can you get to the ships?

Secretary BLINKEN. Yes. So on the ships we have identified to date through our laws 50 vessels that we have determined are blocked property. In other words, people can't deal with them—they can't go to a port, they can't get service—and we'll continue on that effort to identify those vessels, block them.

We're also looking at getting countries to deflag these vessels so, again, they won't be able to move around, travel around, get the services they need.

The sanctions that we have imposed have made all of this a lot more expensive for the Iranians. As they try to evade them, get around them, they're not getting the revenues that they anticipated getting from their massive efforts to sell oil.

Mr. ISSA. Mr. Secretary, as I run out of time, let me just ask one final followup on that. I believe if Ronald Reagan were president or someone like him those ships would not be on the high sea.

Do you have or would you accept the authority from Congress if you don't have it to, in fact, seize those clandestine ships as Ronald Reagan would have?

Remember, Ronald Reagan sunk two Iranian ships because of what they were doing. I believe strongly that if you don't have the authority the Congress on a bipartisan basis would give you the authority to intervene, to capture those ships, to work with the flagged nations to put all 400 out of commission. Will you commit to work with us on that effort?

Secretary BLINKEN. Well, as I think you mentioned or one of our colleagues mentioned, we don't actually have a military at the State Department so that's not our business. Our focus is on working with other countries and using our own authorities in the areas that we can to go after anyone who's engaged in shipping, supplying, transporting this—these products and that's what we'll continue to do.

Mr. ISSA. Thank you, Mr. Secretary. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

Chairman McCAUL. The gentleman yields. The chair recognizes Mr. Castro.

Mr. CASTRO. Thank you, Chairman. Thank you, Secretary, for your testimony today.

Before I start with my questions I wanted to say thank you so much for your work, the work of Director Burns, our national security adviser, and others who have worked hard to achieve a cease-fire in the Israel/Palestine situation and also release of the hostages. So thank you for your hard work on that.

I understand your position regarding jurisdiction and views on the recent announcement by the International Criminal Court's prosecutor to recommend warrants for the arrest of the Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu and Israeli Defense Minister Gallant as well as Hamas leaders.

You've also been a long-standing champion of both the U.N. system and other international organizations. The United States has also supported ICC investigations of Russian crimes in Ukraine and of crimes committed in Sudan and the Central African Republic.

So I wanted to ask you do you believe that the independence of the International Criminal Court should be respected?

Secretary BLINKEN. I have to tell you, Congressman, that the decision that the prosecutor made is both incredibly wrongheaded and, in my judgment, undermines the credibility of the court.

You're right that we have sought to find ways to work with the court to support its efforts including in Ukraine, Sudan, other places, but to have gone forward with these warrant requests to do it in the way that it was done, first of all, the court itself—and I had a long conversation with the——

Mr. CASTRO. But the court—but do you believe the court should maintain its independence?

Secretary BLINKEN. Well, I think it should maintain its independence but I also think it should act pursuant to its own mandate and charter, and what's clear from the creation of the court is it's supposed to be a court of last resort to act where other countries cannot or will not.

Mr. CASTRO. No, and I think you all put out a strong statement. I want to ask you——

Secretary BLINKEN. Israel has——

Mr. CASTRO. But at the same time——

Secretary BLINKEN [continuing]. On time investigations of itself and it's demonstrated time and time again that it will investigate alleged violations of the law. There are multiple——

Mr. CASTRO. At the same time—but, Secretary, let me ask you, at the same time you would agree that there shouldn't be any intimidation or coercion of the ICC?

Secretary BLINKEN. It's not a question of intimidating or coercing. It's a question of seeing a wrongheaded decision but also seeing what was genuinely a shameful—a shameful comparison——

Mr. CASTRO. This court is going to have to exist well beyond even what's going on now, right? I mean, there will be other issues that it takes up with other nations in the future.

Secretary BLINKEN. It will have to determine what it does and where it goes. But in this instance I can tell you that not only was it wrongheaded but there was a shameful equivalence.

Mr. CASTRO. Let me ask you this. As you know, the previous administration attempted to coerce the ICC by imposing sanctions on its then prosecutor and their staff. In April 2021 you rescinded those sanctions and said that, quote, "Concerns about these cases would be better addressed through engagement with all stakeholders in the ICC process rather than through the imposition of sanctions."

Do you continue to impose sanctions on the ICC as you did 3 years ago?

Secretary BLINKEN. When we lifted those sanctions it was, first and foremost, to make sure that we can do everything possible to protect our own service members including those who served in Afghanistan and also to see if we could find a basis for supporting the court's efforts in critical places and we were able to do that.

But the actions that were taken really call into question whether that's possible and, certainly, not possible in this instance.

Mr. CASTRO. Sure. Let me get to one more question.

Last week Israeli minister of national security Itamar Ben-Gvir stated that no humanitarian aid should be provided to Gazans until the hostages are returned, stating that, quote, "Want food for the children in Gaza? Then they should return the hostages."

I fully believe that Hamas' kidnapping of children was a war crime and have said so repeatedly and publicly, and that they should be unconditionally returned to their families. I also believe that withholding food from children cannot be the way to achieve that goal.

Would you agree with that?

Secretary BLINKEN. I fully and absolutely agree, and we have been working every single day to try to make sure that the children who so desperately need the food, the assistance, the mothers, the fathers, everyone gets it and holding anyone hostage in terms of food aid anywhere in the world is wrong.

Mr. CASTRO. Well, let me ask you this.

Given the senior role—given the senior role of Israeli ministers expressing these views—these are people very high up in the prime minister's cabinet—can you categorically say that relevant authorities in the Israeli government are not restricting humanitarian assistance to reach Gaza?

Secretary BLINKEN. Again, that's not the policy. As I've said repeatedly, we have seen over these seven or 8 months now a clear gap—

[Disturbance in the hearing room.]

Chairman MCCAUL. The committee will suspend while the Capitol Police restore order.

Secretary BLINKEN. Thank you.

Chairman MCCAUL. Mr. Secretary, you may continue.

Secretary BLINKEN. Yes, thank you. We are determined to do everything possible to make sure that people who so desperately need this aid get this aid, and when it comes to the policies of the government we're focused on those. When individuals make these statements we condemn them.

Mr. CASTRO. Sure, and I'm out of time. But I wanted to say again thank you for the work that you all are—the hours, everything you're doing. Thank you.

[Disturbance in the hearing room.]

Chairman McCAUL. The committee will suspend while the Capitol Police restore order. The committee will suspend.

The gentleman yields. The chair recognizes Mrs. Wagner.

Mrs. WAGNER. I thank the chairman and I thank you, Secretary Blinken, for your service. I know this is a tough, a tough time for all of us.

Sir, this administration is waffling, first in Afghanistan and today, shockingly to me, in Israel it has created instability on a massive scale.

Secretary Blinken, the world, as we have all discussed here, is on fire and conflicts have engulfed Europe and the Middle East, emboldening every single dictator from Putin to Xi to Khamenei to attack U.S. allies and interests.

The administration's decision to withhold weapon sales and deliveries to Israel in a—during a time of war, sir, just weeks after Iran launched unprecedented missiles, upwards of 350 cruise ballistic missiles, drones, attacked on Israel directly from Iranian soil is nothing less than a betrayal of our ally. It is foreign policy malpractice and I guarantee you that Iran and Russia and China are watching the United States turned its back on its most important Middle Eastern ally.

Secretary Blinken, on May 7th I sent you a letter asking for a full accounting of the weapon sales and deliveries to Israel. The administration is delaying and I want to focus right now very specifically, sir, in particular on the delay of the sale of 6,500 JDAMs.

I'm sure you're familiar with them. These are the high precision GPS-oriented—you know, with the least amount of collateral damage in an urban area you wanted JDAM and we have sent out tons of them to Israel and everywhere else.

They also just happen to be made in the St. Louis metropolitan area in St. Charles in my district and since I have not yet received a response to this letter let me ask you why this?

Why has the administration failed to move forward with a notification process for the sale of 6,500 JDAMs to Israel and when will the administration resume the notification process?

Secretary BLINKEN. First, and I'll respond to your question directly—first, when Iran launched that unprecedented attack that you referred to on Israel for the first time ever the United States actively participated in Israel's defense and we brought—

Mrs. WAGNER. I know. I know, and so did Jordan and so Saudi—we know this.

Secretary BLINKEN. Yes, that's right, and what we noticed Iran noticed and Israel noticed.

Mrs. WAGNER. I don't need history. I want answers.

Limited time, sir. Please. My JDAMs.

Secretary BLINKEN. Yes. So there are a number of different sale proposals that are in different places at different points in the process and Congress—

Mrs. WAGNER. This has been months and months and months, sir, and we sent them to them in the past.

Secretary BLINKEN. Congress right now is still reviewing a JDAM sale that it hasn't—that we sent forward that's not gone forward.

Mrs. WAGNER. What specific issues remain outstanding for the review?

Secretary BLINKEN. We are—we follow the process and we have gone out of our way to prenotify Congress and even——

Mrs. WAGNER. What bureaus object to the sale?

Secretary BLINKEN. It's not a question of objecting. We want to follow the process and make sure that we move forward.

Mrs. WAGNER. Sir, please, because it has truly been months and months and months. Will you commit to bringing your personal engagement to ensure the process for this specific case moves expeditiously?

Secretary BLINKEN. We're going to make sure that all of the cases move appropriately and expeditiously including this one.

Mrs. WAGNER. Well, this one sure has not, and have any divisions within State conducted any economic analysis to measure the impact of potential even job losses and furloughs because of your decision to pause this pending arms sale and, if not, why not?

Because you know what, sir? My constituents in St. Louis greater metropolitan area they were—this whole region they rely on these jobs to pay for their mortgages, their car payments, the daycare costs, and they can't afford to lose their jobs to support this partisan stall tactic.

Secretary BLINKEN. There is no pause.

Mrs. WAGNER. They're sitting in a warehouse, 6,500 of them.

Secretary BLINKEN. There is no pause, and as I said in many cases including this one we have previewed with Congress, which we are not at all obligated to do, sales that we were contemplating and had not yet decided on and there are things——

Mrs. WAGNER. You have not come to us to tell us this. We read about this in Axios, the Wall Street Journal, and CNN. Arms sales to trusted partners like Israel, Taiwan, and NATO allies are a critical component of our national security.

Secretary BLINKEN. They are.

Mrs. WAGNER. Are you concerned that delaying sales to Israel will diminish our credibility as the arsenal of democracy?

Secretary BLINKEN. Again, we're following the process and, again, I invite you to look at——

Mrs. WAGNER. Well, the process has taken too darn long and they've been sitting there for months and no one's explaining what's holding them up but you all. They have been signed off on.

I mean, the United States, sir, has obligations to our friends and allies including Israel and our unshakeable commitment to Israel's security is clearly laid out in the 2016 MOU that Congress has fully funded every year since it was signed.

Secretary BLINKEN. And Joe Biden was the one who brought that MOU.

Mrs. WAGNER. And when we honor our obligations the world is a safer place. But when the United States fails to keep its promises and the commitments the U.S. is now failing to keep its promise to Israel.

We are telling our enemies that we are unreliable and irresolute partners. That is incredibly damaging to global security and the administration needs to right this ship and fully restore U.S. security assistance to Israel.

My time has expired and I yield back.

Chairman McCAUL. The gentlelady yields.

The chair recognizes Ms. Titus.

Ms. TITUS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Secretary, as you know I represent Las Vegas and we have an economy that's pretty uniquely dependent on tourism. Just last year we had 359,000 jobs in tourism, \$20 billion in wages, and almost \$80 billion in overall economic input.

But the excessive wait times for visas are really hurting communities like mine at the different U.S. consular posts around the world.

And just to put this in perspective, the World Cup is coming to the Americas in 2026. It's expected to attract 8 million international visitors. Some, we think, will come to Las Vegas from southern California. Tickets go on sale December 2025.

But in many countries the wait time for getting a visa might make it already too late. In Mumbai the next available interview is October 2025, just 2 months before tickets go on sale.

In Bogota it's February 2026, nearly 2 months after they go on sale and in Mexico City it's already too late. The available interview is in August 2026, which is a month after the World Cup is over.

Now, I know you all have been making progress lowering wait times. You have a expanded interview waiver authority. But what about the people who haven't been here before?

And I think this problem is not only hurting us economically but it's part of our soft power and our cultural diplomacy.

So could you talk a little bit about how we can address this problem? Do you need additional resources? What the situation is.

Secretary BLINKEN. Thank you. No, I very, very much agree with you. We're intensely focused on this. In Fiscal Year 1923 we issued more nonimmigrant visas by over 20 percent than we did before the pandemic, which is when we started to have real challenges with both visas outside of the country, passports inside of the country, and we have reduced now interview times—the wait times for interviews—to prepandemic levels in every category except one and the one is first time visitors to the United States who are from nonvisa waiver countries.

So that's what we're intensely focused on now, making sure that those wait times come down along with every other wait time. The wait times that have come down, again, to prepandemic levels include the categories that are most impactful on the United States economy—students, temporary workers, maritime crew renewals, et cetera.

But the focus now is on making sure that those who are coming for the first time and are not coming from a visa waiver country that those times come down.

Ms. TITUS. Are you keeping in mind the World Cup that's coming rapidly to our city?

Secretary BLINKEN. Very much. Very much so.

Ms. TITUS. Well, we appreciate that. Thank you.

My other question has to do with the Global Engagement Center. The Republicans on this committee seem to be confused about what that does or, maybe more importantly, what it doesn't do and that's been made pretty manifest in this flawed so-called investigation that they're conducting.

Would you talk about the national security consequences of failing to reauthorize the GEC?

Secretary BLINKEN. Yes, thank you.

As I mentioned, it's the only part of the U.S. Government that is singularly dedicated to directing and coordinating our efforts to counter foreign propaganda and disinformation abroad, and I think if it were to be terminated—that is, if the sunset was allowed to happen without being reauthorized—we would have a policy and operational incoherence.

We'd have degraded public response to information manipulation by China, by Russia, by Iran, by other foreign actors, and a growing number of allies who rely on the GEC to help them develop the tools to expose and to deal with misinformation and disinformation also would be let down.

We have seen time and again now the effectiveness of this organization in exposing that disinformation in other parts of the world including in our hemisphere.

Ms. TITUS. Could you give us an example of that so it's really clear what the GEC does?

Secretary BLINKEN. Sure. I mean—so, for example, we have seen that Russian websites that were producing and disseminating disinformation and misinformation in the Western Hemisphere, in Africa, they were exposed. They were removed.

We revealed a campaign by Russia targeting U.S. and Western health initiatives in Africa trying to undermine the credibility of those initiatives. They were exposed and we were able to deal with that.

We revealed a campaign to launder Kremlin disinformation through local media in the Western Hemisphere trying to gin up arguments against Ukraine, against NATO, in our own hemisphere. Exposed, and we were able to more effectively deal with that.

Similarly with China we have seen Chinese disinformation in third countries about elections. We have done open source mapping through the GEC of their efforts to use surveillance and data collection in Xinjiang, which we have made available to people.

So in a whole variety of ways we have been able to not only expose this but also working with countries we now have 29 countries that use the GEC platform and hundreds of users to not only expose but also help develop the tools themselves to take action to remove and deal with disinformation.

But I want to emphasize this has nothing to do with the United States. It's not focused on that.

Mrs. WAGNER [presiding]. The gentlelady's time has expired.

Ms. TITUS. I'm sorry. You took a little more extra time. So could you finish?

Secretary BLINKEN. Not focused on this country at all. It is entirely about misinformation and disinformation abroad being perpetrated by adversaries like——

Mrs. WAGNER. The gentlelady's time has expired.

Secretary BLINKEN. Thank you.

Mrs. WAGNER. The chair now recognizes the gentleman from Florida, Mr. Mast, for 5 minutes.

Mr. MAST. Thank you, Chairwoman. Thank you, Mr. Secretary.

I want to talk about a few different areas of spending. My colleague just brought up the Global Engagement Center. Now, whether we're talking about GEC or State officially or USAID or U.S. Agency for Global Media, the fact of the matter is you guys put out solicitations, grants, sub grants, to the agencies that—or to the entities that get grants, NGO's, you name it—dollars spread across the globe, and this is the statement—what I believe should be a statement of policy bipartisanly between Republicans and Democrats in the House, those in the Senate.

Until State, USAID, all those agencies, start giving us notice of every one of those grants, sub grants, solicitations—start giving us notice of every single one of them we should not be giving you one more dollar and I think the proof for why that is the case is in how—in far too many circumstances you all really have no idea where the money is going.

And I'm not saying it's easy to figure out where it's going in every circumstance but that can't be the situation and I'm going to reference a few different places.

You have NAS sitting behind you here. We had a hearing for a couple hours here in this very room where we discussed just a half million dollar grant to expand atheism in Nepal. It was denied for a couple hours until we held up the actual solicitation for the grant and then, of course, it was acknowledged that it did actually take place.

And then we got a call a couple weeks later saying, oh, and by the way, the agency that we gave it to they didn't even give us all of the information on it in the slides. It's just one example. I'm not going to hash it all out.

But it's one example of you all didn't know where the money that you sent out there from the U.S. taxpayer was going. I was reading over the last 24 hours the Special Investigation into Afghanistan Reconstruction—the SIGAR report—and looking at the amount of money that has gone directly to the Taliban.

It's not a mystery. It's not something to argue about. It is a fact money going directly to the Taliban that's gone out through all of these agencies that State works with and, specifically, 144 partners were referenced in this SIGAR report.

And when it talks about it it talks about the 144 partners and the questions that they were asked, but of those partners only 65 of them actually chose to answer to the inspector general about where the dollars were going. The other 79 didn't even feel like they had to answer questions about where the U.S. taxpayer dollars were being spent.

We saw it from the Pentagon just in the last day that—on this massive pier that was built that was worked on by you all, that

none of the aid has yet made it to the people of Gaza yet. It's sitting in warehouses and other places.

Again, just to the point that there's not nearly enough accountability and we should be receiving every grant, every sub grant, every awardee, every solicitation that should be sent through this body for review whether in a classified or unclassified setting.

Now, I do have a couple of questions on that. I spoke about the 79 grantees in part that did not respond to the SIGAR report and I have a question about them.

Since that time, have you frozen any of the bank accounts of those 79 entities?

Secretary BLINKEN. Congressman, we have looked very hard at the SIGAR report. I think it's important to note that money does not go directly to Taliban. It goes to the United Nations, NGO's. We have dedicated about \$2 billion so that the people in Afghanistan—

Mr. MAST. No, no. Now you're literally telling lies to the American people. These State dollars went directly to those that were solicited to do it—these implementing partners as it's referred to—and they paid directly money to the Taliban.

Sometimes they labeled it taxes. Sometimes they labeled it value added taxes. Sometimes they labeled it a host of different things.

But do not pretend that money did not go directly to the Taliban.

Secretary BLINKEN. It did not go directly to the Taliban. Let me—again, if you'll give me one chance to just lay this out very quickly.

Mr. MAST. No.

Secretary BLINKEN. It went—well, Okay. I mean, I'm here to answer questions. If you don't want—

Mr. MAST. Because anybody can go out there and read the SIGAR report.

Secretary BLINKEN. I invite them to do that.

Mr. MAST. That's a—

Secretary BLINKEN. So I acknowledge that helping the Afghan people, 10 million—.05 percent were—

Mr. MAST. The answer is no. Not looking to have you filibuster the time for this. I do have some more questions. Have you frozen any of the bank accounts of the 79 entities that just chose to say, piss off, America—we don't feel like answering your questions about where—

Secretary BLINKEN. We have just gotten the report and we'll work on any consequences that need to followup on it.

Mr. MAST. So no, though? That's the answer? Nothing frozen yet.

Any shuttered offices or deregistration from lists of partners that you have worked with?

Secretary BLINKEN. Again, I think this report came forward just a few days ago. We are, obviously, looking at it. We're working at it and we'll see what steps need to be taken to deal with it.

Mr. MAST. Good. Do look at that and do work on that. One other question here and I will read a statement here from the SIGAR. They did ask this question to affirm the accuracy and completeness of the responses provided.

They requested that State attest to the questionnaire that it was distributed to all implementing partners, that responses were not

altered, and attempts were not made to influence the implementing partners and State refused to answer if that was the case. Would you answer that?

Secretary BLINKEN. I'm certainly not aware of that. I'm happy to look into it.

Mr. MAST. Thank you.

Mrs. WAGNER. The gentleman's time has expired. The chair now recognizes the gentleman from Minnesota, Mr. Phillips, for 5 minutes.

Mr. PHILLIPS. Thank you, Madam Chair. Welcome, Mr. Secretary.

Let me start by defending you, the overwhelming majority of those of us on this committee, in this entire Congress, Americans, Jews, Muslims, Christians, Buddhists, agnostics, around the world, even Israelis and Palestinians, which is to say we're all disgusted.

We all want peace. We do not want war. We want prosperity, not misery, and to accuse any of us including you of being butchers or ignorant is shameful, and I want to remind those protesting you have that right because this is America but you can't make peace with terrorists and we probably can't make peace as long as Benjamin Netanyahu is the prime minister of Israel.

I think those two things can be true at once. But I want to remind everybody here that we're in this business to make peace, not war, and that's what I want to focus on—not bombs but peace and say too that one child being murdered is too many, whether that's in a school here in the United States because of sickening gun violence, whether it's a terrorist attack in Tel Aviv, or whether it is a bomb in Gaza. One is too many.

Mr. Secretary, where do we go from here? A lot of the questions have been retrospective about holds and bombs and missiles and support. Where do we go from here? Seventy-five years of misery.

You have one of the hardest jobs in the world. I know where your heart is. What happens next and what do we need to do to finally end this nonsense, identify a path to peace and prosperity and mutual security?

Secretary BLINKEN. I appreciate your comments, Congressman, and I would say that I think there is a clear path and the clear path goes with the following.

One is there's an extraordinary opportunity for Israel to achieve what it has sought from the day of its founding and that is acceptance by its neighbors to be—to have normal relations with all the countries in the region starting with Saudi Arabia, and we have been working intensively on that normalization process and we are very close to being able to complete the agreements necessary between us and Saudi Arabia.

But then it will require Israel to make decisions about Gaza and ending the conflict there as well as creating a credible pathway to a Palestinian State. If that happens then Israel will get what it has long sought which is, again, acceptance in the region.

It will have partners who will be looking out for it as we saw on April 13 and April 14 when countries in the region because of the United States came to its defense against this unprecedented attack by Iran.

Its number-one threat and one that we face as well, Iran, will be isolated and, of course, the resolution, finally, of the Palestinian problem can be achieved in ways that guarantee Israel's security.

The bottom line is you have, roughly, 5 million Palestinians between the West Bank and Gaza, roughly, 7 million Jews in Israel.

Neither is going away. The Palestinians aren't going anywhere. The Jews are not going anywhere. There has to be an accommodation. Absent that accommodation we are in for an endless repeat of this cycle.

We will always do everything we can to make sure that Israel can defend itself and defend Israel as necessary. But this path forward is clear, it's compelling, and it answers Israel's most profound needs. So I hope we can move down it.

Mr. PHILLIPS. Is it fair to say that based on your experience and the basic human condition that when humans have something to protect they act defensively, not offensively?

Is one of the paths to peace that Israelis, we Americans, Palestinians, the Arab world, should understand and recognize the Gulf states that people need something to protect?

Secretary BLINKEN. Yes. When you have something to protect, when you have something that you take pride in then, of course, that's what you want to do.

Mr. PHILLIPS. I'm the ranking member of the Middle East Subcommittee, of course, with my dear friend Chairman Wilson. We traveled to the Middle East last—in August.

Of course, a lot has changed since then. I've been to Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Israel twice. A lot has changed, of course, but my question is relative to the PA.

You know, why is this not more of a focal point right now? We can't make peace with Hamas. What do we need to do? What does Israel need to do? What can we do to at least identify a potentially principled leadership group to represent Palestinians at a table knowing—absent that there is no path?

Secretary BLINKEN. Well, look, I agree with that. In the category of you can't beat something with nothing one of the answers to durably getting rid of Hamas and making sure it can never come back again is to have a real alternative, one that can actually advance the interests of the Palestinian people and not destroy them as Hamas has done.

Mr. PHILLIPS. And I only have a few seconds.

Is Abu Mazen the man or are there other able competent next generation—

Secretary BLINKEN. We have a new—there is a new prime minister. There is a new government. There's a new program to get it reformed to deal with corruption. We have engaged with the new prime minister.

He's a serious individual who's trying, but he also needs the resources necessary so that the PA can deliver more effectively for the people it represents.

Mr. PHILLIPS. Thank you for sharing my sentiment. With that, I yield back. Thank you, Mr. Secretary.

Mrs. WAGNER. The gentleman has yielded back.

The chair now recognizes the gentleman from Tennessee, Mr. Burchett, for 5 minutes.

Mr. BURCHETT. Thank you, Chairlady.

Mr. Secretary, what do you think of Code Pink?

Secretary BLINKEN. I think that there are very passionate people who are expressing deep-felt feelings. I may disagree with their views. I respect the right of people to make known their views. That's what this country is all about.

Of course, to do it in a peaceful way, to do it in ways that don't disrupt the ability to have a conversation and engagement. But I know that people are, for the most part, motivated by deep felt feelings, beliefs, and passions.

Mr. BURCHETT. Well, I disagree with them when I'm crossing the street and a lady tells me that they're going to kill my wife and daughter. So I think you all need to rethink your support of groups like that.

Do you believe the Afghanistan withdrawal was a success?

Secretary BLINKEN. I believe that the President did the right thing in ending America's longest war.

Mr. BURCHETT. You know, Staff Sergeant Ron Knauss—his family is a constituent of mine—was killed there and we were given testimony, and then this has been told many times where the Marine sniper had the suicide bomber in his sights twice and were told that leadership, the State Department, both canceled that—his ability to take out that suicide bomber and 13 brave American police—

Secretary BLINKEN. The State Department has nothing to do with that. We don't give orders to the military. I know that—

Mr. BURCHETT. Do you advise the military?

Secretary BLINKEN. We don't advise the military. We don't give orders to the military.

Mr. BURCHETT. Are you in contact with the military?

Secretary BLINKEN. Of course. Yes, absolutely.

Mr. BURCHETT. All right.

Should we be paying taxes to the Taliban?

Secretary BLINKEN. We don't pay taxes to the Taliban. As I think we were discussing with—

Mr. BURCHETT. Mr. Secretary, the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction has found at least \$10.9 million of U.S. taxpayer money was paid to the Taliban in the form of taxes since the withdrawal of 2021. Are you saying that they are not telling the truth?

Secretary BLINKEN. So what happens is this—yes, what happens is this, Congressman. We provided lifesaving desperately needed assistance to NGO's and the United Nations, which has spent in Afghanistan \$2 billion. Of that, according to the report, about \$10 million or 0.5 percent—

Mr. BURCHETT. Ten million maybe not a lot to you, sir, but I can guarantee to the people in Tennessee that's a heck of a lot of money. That's a heck of a lot of money, and to brush it off as a minuscule amount, I think, just shows how out of touch you are with the American people.

Secretary BLINKEN. The question is what are—

Mr. BURCHETT. I didn't—that was a statement. That wasn't a question. You provided aid to get Gaza, which was then stolen by

Hamas. How many terrorist groups are we funding or supplying with aid?

Secretary BLINKEN. None.

Mr. BURCHETT. None? You're here to tell me that none of this money is flowing into—

Secretary BLINKEN. We're not—we're not funding them. We're not supplying them. When it comes to humanitarian assistance in Gaza there have been instances where Hamas has seized the assistance but it's not being done in—ask the Israelis—in a systematic way.

To the extent that assistance is being diverted typically it's because people are so desperate that they self-distribute the convoys. There have been incidents where it's been Hamas. I don't—

Mr. BURCHETT. Self-distribute—you mean they just—

Secretary BLINKEN. Yes, they come in—

Mr. BURCHETT. Hamas stops the convoy and steals it and then it gets—and then—

Secretary BLINKEN. Hamas just—no, desperate people. Desperate people, and then—

Mr. BURCHETT. And then the people—and their leadership in Qatar or Qatar, whichever the case may be, end up billionaires.

Secretary BLINKEN. Yes, and that was actually Israel's policy for a decade. In fact, the administration today—swears today made clear that that was a big mistake.

Mr. BURCHETT. Let me ask you this. Why are you allowing—I'm going to be a jerk here and reclaim my time.

Secretary BLINKEN. Please go ahead. Go ahead.

Mr. BURCHETT. Thank you, brother. I appreciate that.

Why are you allowing Iran to sell so much dad gum oil?

Secretary BLINKEN. We are working every day to cut that off. I mentioned earlier that we have sanctioned more than 200 entities and individuals. We have blocked more than 50 ships. We continue to look for others. We're working to deflag the ships and it's an effort that we're making.

Mr. BURCHETT. Well, President Biden has lessened the sanctions on Iraq oil sales in February 2021. Since then it's been estimated Iran has made an additional hundred billion dollars from selling oil. They were a bankrupt country, basically, when you all took over and now they're literally rolling in it and they're exporting that terror with that terrorism.

Secretary BLINKEN. Well, if you look at their economic situation I don't think that accords with the facts and the fact of the matter is we haven't lifted a single sanction against Iran and we continue to work to cutoff the oil and the petrochemicals.

Mr. BURCHETT. Well, how can Iran be selling 1 million more barrels of oil per day than in 2020?

Secretary BLINKEN. They're determined to do whatever they can and we're working to make sure that wherever we can we can deal with that.

Mr. BURCHETT. Well, I appreciate that. But the time for Iranian appeasement is over, Mr. Secretary. The administration's policy toward the Middle East have not only made our allies in the Middle East less safe but it also has made the U.S. homeland less safe. Iran is far richer now than it was 4 years ago.

Nobody can argue with that. You can say all the—you know, statistics don't lie, just statisticians, and I believe you're following in their footsteps, and they are using this money to sponsor terrorism.

Look around you, Mr. Secretary. Your plan is not working again. Again, I go back to my original statement about Afghanistan. A young man lost his life. Every night—every day at my farm I drive out on the street named after Staff Sergeant Ryan Knauss. His life was taken short—13 brave Americans should be here today—by a failure on your all's part.

I yield back, Lady Chair.

Mrs. WAGNER. The gentleman yield yields back.

The chair now recognizes the gentleman from Virginia, Mr. Connolly, for 5 minutes.

Mr. CONNOLLY. I like Mr. Burkett but I don't think I've heard such a radical alternative expression of reality in a long time.

Mr. BURCHETT. It's Burchett.

Mr. CONNOLLY. With respect to Afghanistan, Mr. Secretary, remind us who negotiated a deal with the Taliban and excluded the Afghan government from those negotiations and agreed to the release of 5,000 Taliban prisoners, many of whom then took to the battlefield that led to the fall of Kabul. Would you remind us who negotiated that agreement and under whose presidency that occurred?

Secretary BLINKEN. That was the previous administration.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Again, Mr. Secretary, we have done this before. Did that previous administration have a name?

Secretary BLINKEN. The Trump administration.

Mr. CONNOLLY. The Trump administration. Thank you.

And with respect to Gaza, the idea that Hamas—and I have no truck for Hamas. They are a terrorist organization that committed repugnant acts and atrocities on October 7th. But with respect to the blockage of, or interference with truckloads of food, fuel, medicine, coming into Gaza who has blocked the entrances into Gaza? Was it Hamas or was it the IDF?

Secretary BLINKEN. I don't think either has blocked the entrances into Gaza. The issue has been making sure that there were more entrances so more aid could get in and we have been working every single month with Israel—when it comes to Hamas—

Mr. CONNOLLY. Mr. Secretary—Mr. Secretary, in the previous 10 days 350 truckloads were allowed into Gaza. That's 35 a day. They need 600. It isn't Hamas or Palestinian Authority that is blocking those trucks. It's somebody else.

Secretary BLINKEN. Well, I'll give you an example. In the last—just in the last couple of weeks because of the operations around Rafah—the Rafah gate, one of the essential gates, was closed down and we want to see that reopened.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Right.

Secretary BLINKEN. Now, as it happens right now the Egyptians are not moving forward with some assistance to go through Rafah because they're concerned about the ability to distribute the aid once it's on the other side of the gate because of the combat operations.

So we're working to find a way to do that. Doing this in a combat environment is incredibly challenging.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Yes. Speaking of that, we now have sort of a floating port with—that you promised——

Secretary BLINKEN. That's right.

Mr. CONNOLLY [continuing]. And that is now up and operable. But it was reported that none of the food that was offloaded has been distributed to the Palestinians in need. Can you enlighten us as to why not and what are we doing to correct that?

Secretary BLINKEN. So two things. That port was designed to be a complement to, not a substitute for, these land access points. We have new ones in the north in Erez and Zikim.

We have the critical ones in the south but they've been challenged by the recent operations, and when it comes to the port we began to move things through the dock just a few days ago. There was an initial attempt to deliver some of the things that had been coming through the port.

Trucks went out and then, as I mentioned in another conversation, desperate people went at the trucks in an effort to get at the food before it could get to where it was supposed to go in order to be distributed.

This is one of the reasons why it's so imperative that we surge assistance because when people are so desperate and they believe their only chance to get some food may be to go with that one truck that they see that's what they'll do.

If you get a lot of assistance in people won't have that worry anymore and, by the way, those who divert the assistance, who steal it and then resell it, that won't be a profitable business because the prices will come down if more assistance is in.

Mr. CONNOLLY. And for the record, Mr. Secretary, how would you characterize communications between your office and the White House and the Israeli government with respect to Rafah and with respect to humanitarian aid?

Secretary BLINKEN. Virtually daily is how I would describe it.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Now, how would you characterize those communications?

Secretary BLINKEN. It is an ongoing, constant discussion and that's been from day one and our purpose has been to try to maximize the assistance that gets to people and also to maximize the protection of civilians who find themselves in a horrific crossfire of Hamas' making.

Mr. CONNOLLY. I think it's really important to emphasize that because I think sometimes the President and you have been subject to criticism as if you were not making those daily communications and presumably they're pretty emphatic.

Secretary BLINKEN. Well, I'm—I won't characterize diplomatic conversations except to say that we have intense discussions, conversations, and as I said, for us it's imperative that we see as much done as possible to protect and help civilians who are being harmed.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Thank you, and thanks for doing that. I yield back.

Mrs. WAGNER. The gentleman yields back. The chair now recognizes the gentleman from Kentucky, Mr. Barr, for 5 minutes.

Mr. BARR. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Secretary Blinken, since 2021 Iran has generated, roughly, \$80 billion in revenue from its illicit oil sales in part due to the administration's policy to chase another nuclear deal and relaxed sanctions against the Iranian government.

The administration's gamble enabled Iranian oil exports to hit a 5-year high, and according to multiple reports Iran's funding to Hamas ballooned to \$350 million in the months leading up to October 7.

Does the administration—do you now admit that reversing the maximum pressure campaign, the sanctions relief was a mistake?

Secretary BLINKEN. There really hasn't been sanctions relief. All of the sanctions programs are in effect. We have applied sanctions more than 600 times against Iranian entities, against Iranian individuals, 200 times in petrochemical sector.

Mr. BARR. Let me read from a report of the Associated Press February 18th, 2021. Now, you say there was no sanctions relief, and I'm quoting the article: "The Biden administration on Thursday rescinded former President Donald Trump's restoration of U.N. sanctions on Iran, an announcement that could help Washington move toward rejoining the 2015 nuclear agreement aimed at reining in the Islamic Republic's nuclear program."

Are you suggesting that that report was false?

Secretary BLINKEN. Our own sanctions, those programs, none of them have been lifted and, again, when it comes to the nuclear agreement it was one of the worst mistakes that was made to get out of that agreement because at least we had Iran's nuclear program in a box. The breakout time to develop fissile material was over 1 year.

Mr. BARR. I think—

Secretary BLINKEN. That's now come down to two or 3 weeks. That's a real problem.

Mr. BARR. I think we can all see that—I think that we can all see that allowing Iran to renew its oil exports was a colossal error that helped finance this terrible attack against our key ally on October 7th.

Let me move to the ICC prosecutor's decision to submit an arrest warrant for Israel's prime minister and defense minister. Obviously, that decision is as absurd as it is outrageous and I credit the President first for calling it outrageous.

The problem, though, Mr. Secretary, that I have is that on May 12th you stated that the civilian casualty numbers reported by Hamas make it, quote, "reasonable to conclude that there are instances where Israel has acted in ways that are not consistent with international humanitarian law." Is that correct? Is that what you said?

Secretary BLINKEN. That's what the report says, yes.

Mr. BARR. Well, so here's my concern is that your words may very well have contributed to the ICC's attempt to prosecute Prime Minister Netanyahu. Do you not see how your words could very well be used against our own policy?

Secretary BLINKEN. No, because the report goes on to say that those incidents which Israel itself acknowledges is actually investigating and the court—the International Court—the reason this is so wrongheaded, among other things, is that it is engaging in a

way that it was not supposed to do, which is to be a court of last resort where another country is either unwilling or unable to investigate itself and the report makes clear that not only are we investigating instances where arms may have been misused, so is Israel. A criminal investigation——

Mr. BARR. So do you disavow Hamas' own statistics? Do you disavow those?

Secretary BLINKEN. What the——

Mr. BARR. Do you disavow the idea that Israel has acted in a manner inconsistent with international law?

Secretary BLINKEN. As I said, given the totality of the damage that's been done, given the fact that American weapons have been used, it is reasonable to assess that there are instances in which international humanitarian law was not followed and, indeed, as I said——

Mr. BARR. Well, this is the problem that we have and maybe this is why you all are making——

Secretary BLINKEN. Israel is investigating instances itself.

Mr. BARR [continuing]. This is why maybe the administration is holding arms from our ally that would enable them to finish the job as they did. You did not put a hold and the administration did not put a hold on bombs when the IDF went into Gaza City, correct?

Secretary BLINKEN. That's correct.

Mr. BARR. And Gaza City is a dense urban environment just as you described Rafah, correct?

Secretary BLINKEN. That's correct.

Mr. BARR. So what's the difference?

Secretary BLINKEN. We have seen and we have had concerns about the way these large yield munitions have been used in dense urban environments and we want to make sure——

Mr. BARR. Well, what I'm concerned about is that the difference is that the domestic political environment in the United States has changed.

Secretary BLINKEN. No, the——

Mr. BARR. But withholding these weapons from Israel is sending a terrible signal to our enemies. Is the administration's view that the only acceptable response is air defense rather than preventing attacks before they happen?

Secretary BLINKEN. No, absolutely not and, in fact, we have a better way to get at the enduring problem with Hamas and that's what we have been discussing with Israel for many weeks now, including in Rafah.

Mr. BARR. Well, Israel is facing threats from Iran, Hezbollah, Hamas, and other Iranian terrorist proxies. They need these weapons to deter—to deter—further attacks and we need to come to their defense and not accuse them of violating international law.

My time has expired but I hope that the administration will reverse course and give our ally everything they need to finally deradicalize Gaza including in Rafah. I yield.

Mr. GREEN [presiding]. The gentleman yields. I now recognize Mr. Allred from Texas for 5 minutes of questioning.

Mr. ALLRED. Hello, Mr. Secretary. Thank you for joining us this afternoon.

I want to take the conversation back to Haiti, the first post-colonial black republic and what was once a beacon of abolition and self-determination and racial equality has, unfortunately, fallen into tragic times.

What was once a proud country that had the strength and determination to break free from French colonial rule over two centuries ago now remains in limbo of political and economic turmoil compounded by natural disasters.

I bring this up because for my constituents in Texas and the folks that I represent we are seeing this also show up in our backyard.

Since 2023 our law enforcement authorities have encountered Haitian migrants nearly 146,000 times on the southwest border seeking asylum. Homeland Security has actually had to revise the CBP One app to include Haitian Creole since its launch to deal with the volume.

I've seen this myself in my visits to our border, and with the arrival of President Ruto and the Kenyan command staff arriving in Haiti ahead of their multinational security support force effort can you share how you see that Kenyan-led effort going?

What's their mission? How are we supporting them and can we support them as we continue to keep our other commitments around the globe?

Secretary BLINKEN. Thank you. I think this is a vital mission precisely because Haiti is really on a precipice, on a precipice of becoming a failed State. But we have seen positive developments in the last weeks that we need to build on.

One, we have a transitional Presidential council which is starting to enable Haiti to get back on the democratic track and to get to elections in which it will have a properly mandated government.

Second, we have actually seen the Haitian National Police, which is outmanned and outgunned by these gangs stand up in more effective ways including regaining control of the airport. Commercial flights have resumed.

We expect American carriers to start moving very soon as well as other critical infrastructure. But this is critical. To get back security control, to take it away from the gangs, the police are trying. They need more help.

The purpose of this mission, which Kenya and a number of other countries have stood up and volunteered to do, is basically to provide operational as well as static support to the Haitian National Police to counter the gangs, to reestablish security, to create the conditions for elections, to create the conditions for aid and development assistance to actually get into Haiti.

It's time bound, it's focused on police, and it's really focused on strengthening and bolstering the capacity of the Haitian National Police to take this on for themselves and to get that handoff. But they need some near-term support. That's what the mission would do.

For us this is not us policing the world because there are no Americans involved in this. Yes, the financing and the funding it's critical that we play a lead role in that. But we have a number of other countries that have contributed significant sums to this and

now we really need to make the decision to be able to go forward with that funding.

Mr. ALLRED. And it's your belief that we can support this multinational effort while also keeping our commitments to Ukraine and Taiwan, our other allies?

Secretary BLINKEN. Yes. Given the sums involved, absolutely, and DOD is providing some in kind support but we also need some direct assistance that we're prepared to move forward with.

Mr. ALLRED. Yes. I also wanted to ask you about recent reports of Russia's Wagner forces working to expand their operations in Haiti. Can you discuss that in this setting?

Secretary BLINKEN. In Haiti, did you say?

Mr. ALLRED. Yes, sir.

Secretary BLINKEN. So let me come back to you on that. I haven't seen myself reports of Wagner. Unfortunately, we have seen reports of Wagner or its successors in too many parts of Africa making terrible trouble for people in those countries. But I'll come back to you on that.

Mr. ALLRED. Okay. Well, I'm sure they're looking to take advantage of every spot where they can. And we have seen reports of international crime syndicates like the Colombian cartel that are providing automatic weapons to the gangs, which are now becoming more militias in Haiti.

How can we counteract that and what are we doing to address that?

Secretary BLINKEN. So I think that's critical. It's critical not only in Haiti but it's critical in other parts of our hemisphere including in Mexico and we want to make sure that these gangs do not get guns including guns coming from the United States.

It's one reason why it was important that Congress Federalize the crime of gun trafficking so that we have better authorities to get at guns that are being illegally trafficked in our own hemisphere including to Haiti.

And the points you made I want to come back to earlier is that the challenging—more than challenging situation in Haiti is a driver of irregular migration and it's clearly in our interest to make sure that we're doing what we can to give Haiti a better way forward so that we don't have that driver of irregular migration.

Mr. ALLRED. Well, thank you, Mr. Secretary. I wanted to make sure that—you know, my constituents and folks in Texas and here in the country understand that we have a stake in what happens in Haiti as well and that our efforts to stabilize Haiti benefit us and that this Kenyan-led effort deserves our support that we can do it consistent with our other commitments.

So thank you for your testimony.

Secretary BLINKEN. Thank you.

Mr. GREEN. The gentleman yields.

The chair recognizes Mrs. Kim from California for 5 minutes of questioning.

Mrs. KIM OF CALIFORNIA. Thank you, Secretary Blinken. Thank you very much for coming to our committee today. I want to switch gears to Indo-Pacific.

Last month CCP orchestrated the passage of the draconian Article 23 legislation in Hong Kong that is part of, as you said, inten-

sifying repression and could be applied outside of its borders as part of China's ongoing campaign of transnational repression.

Despite the State Department's determination and actions taken to impose some visa restrictions there have been no Hong Kong officials that were sanctioned since 2021 and it should be noted that in 2020 it took the administration only 5 weeks after passage of Hong Kong's National Security Law to issue sanctions and Article 23 is much worse by all accounts.

So could you tell us why the administration hasn't sanctioned officials in Hong Kong since 2021 despite intensifying repression in the last year?

Secretary BLINKEN. So we have designated, first and foremost, seven officials from the PRC for the actions that have been taken in Hong Kong including exactly what you've just cited and as well we are imposing visa restrictions on Hong Kong officials for the actions that they've taken to undermine freedom, to undermine autonomy, to undermine basic law.

Mrs. KIM OF CALIFORNIA. Secretary, I want you to know that I have introduced Hong Kong sanctions act that list 49 Hong Kong judges, prosecutors, officials, playing an active role in persecuting dissidents in Hong Kong.

So if my office transmits the list of these individuals to you can you assure me that you will evaluate whether these individuals can be sanctioned under existing authorities?

Secretary BLINKEN. Yes.

Mrs. KIM OF CALIFORNIA. Thank you very much.

I also want to ask you if you have any plans to impose targeted sanctions on perpetrator of that repression based on Article 23 that we talked about earlier?

Secretary BLINKEN. Yes. We're looking across the board at taking necessary actions including sanctions against individuals who are undermining Hong Kong's basic autonomy and we'll continue to do that. But I'm happy to look at the list that you have.

Mrs. KIM OF CALIFORNIA. Thank you. Let me turn to Korean Peninsula issue. Special Envoy Julie Turner was finally sworn in by the State Department last October but, as you know, she was confirmed by the Senate and it took months before she was finally sworn in by your department.

So while I'm pleased that she's in the position and carrying out the mandate as noted by the legislation that we passed I'm concerned that the Special Envoy office is not given the proper attention by the State Department leadership.

I've also heard some concerns from outside stakeholders that the office relies on staff from the Korea desk and other offices to carry out its mandate.

So can you tell us what you're doing to ensure that the Special Envoy and the Office of Special Envoy and Human Rights in North Korea is given all the tools it needs to fulfill that mandate based on the legislation?

Secretary BLINKEN. Well, in fact, I think as we speak Special Envoy Turner is in Korea right now, in South Korea working on this critical portfolio and, yes, I'm going to make sure that she continues to have the resources, the support that she needs. And in all of our engagements with—

Mrs. KIM OF CALIFORNIA. Does she have a separate staff just dedicated to this so she doesn't have to outsource staffing and support from other offices within the bureau?

Secretary BLINKEN. We want to make sure that she has what she needs. But, of course, it would help if we got our budget passed and we were able to actually resource the department including with the staff that we need across the department.

Mrs. KIM OF CALIFORNIA. Let me talk to you about Taiwan. As you know, Taiwan is a critical public health partner to the U.S. and plays an important role in the global health community and, you know, I passed the legislation Taiwan WHO Act.

That was signed into law 2 years ago and it directs the administration to support Taiwan's observer status in the World Health Assembly.

As you know, WHA is convening next week and as of today Taiwan has not been invited to be the observer at the 77th World Health Assembly. So what is the status of the State Department and your plan to implement this legislation and ensure Taiwan has a seat at the table?

Secretary BLINKEN. I fully agree with the legislation and we have been working to achieve the results that it seeks including Taiwan's participation in the World Health Assembly and organization as well as in a whole host of other international organizations. The timing is—

Mrs. KIM OF CALIFORNIA. Why not this year? Is there still time to invite Taiwan?

Secretary BLINKEN. We're going to work on it until the last second if necessary. We have been going around trying to lobby other countries to engage on this and, of course, we have taken this to Beijing directly. It denies to people around the world the benefits of the extraordinary knowledge and expertise that Taiwan has and Taiwanese have.

Mrs. KIM OF CALIFORNIA. We are seeing Taiwan has been time and time again how reliable a health partner it is. I think it's critically important that you do more to make sure Taiwan has a seat there.

Secretary BLINKEN. I agree with you.

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

Mrs. WAGNER [presiding]. The gentleman's time—the gentlelady's time has expired. The chair now recognizes the gentleman from California, Mr. Lieu, for 5 minutes.

Mr. LIEU. Thank you, Madam Chairwoman.

Thank you, Secretary Blinken, for your public service. I want to start off by talking about an action that you took that was very commendable. You eliminated the majority of assignment restrictions and on a going forward basis you are eliminating all of them.

So I just want to say thank you for trusting State Department employees. I thank you for taking that courageous action and thank you for your leadership.

I'd like to now ask some questions about Ukraine. Russia invaded Ukraine for the second time in February 2022 and you were one of the folks that, in my view, made a decision to win. You went

out there and tried to get air power to Ukraine. You were fighting to get fighter jets to Ukraine.

As we saw things play out, unfortunately, the Pentagon appeared to have opposed that. Turned out you were right because now the Pentagon is, guess what, getting air power to Ukraine.

What I'd like to know is does, in your view, the Pentagon and the National Security Council support Ukraine pushing Russia back to pre-invasion lines of 2022? Do they support that?

Secretary BLINKEN. Yes, absolutely, and I think that the challenge is this and it goes with every weapon system that's come up over the last 2 years. It's not sufficient to provide an F-16 or an Abrams tank.

We also have to make sure that the Ukrainians have the training they need to operate them. We also need to make sure they have the ability to maintain them.

So I think when the Pentagon is looking at these things it wants to make sure that we can do it in a comprehensive way. So, for example, F-16s, yes, I very much support that but—and have supported that but there also have to be pilots to fly them.

So we have engaged in a training program with other countries to make sure that the pilots were there. I say that only because I think it's—we can't look at these decisions just through the—solely through the prism of do we provide a tank, do we provide a plane, do we provide a particular weapon. We need to know that they can be used with the proper training and maintained.

Mr. LIEU. I totally agree with you. It's just that had the Pentagon started earlier it would have been far better and, by the way, the Pentagon actually didn't quite say that. They actually said F-16s were unnecessary and I think they realized that they were just wrong on that.

Now, in terms of not allowing Ukraine to strike Russia with U.S. weapons I've heard what other people have asked. I'm not going to ask you to reState what you've already said. I listened very carefully to what you said.

What I'm trying to understand is in the mix of weapons—because the United Kingdom has clearly said Ukraine can use U.K. weapons to strike inside of Russia. How much of these weapons are U.S. and how much are supplied by other countries? Is there a general percentage?

Secretary BLINKEN. I think it really depends on the category of weapons. So you have to look—you'd have to distinguish between munitions, between missiles, between tanks, between armored vehicles. I can get you a breakdown, but it varies according to the category—

Mr. LIEU. Thank you. If you could do that and I just urge you personally to get the Pentagon and NSC to do what you did, which is to make the decision to win.

Now, I'd like to ask something about an action completely within the State Department's control and just trying to understand the reasons why it hasn't happened yet.

Russia has supported terrorist groups and I believe when we looked at it they meet the technical definition of a State sponsor of terrorism. What is their policy reason or reasons for why that designation has not happened yet?

Secretary BLINKEN. So I think there are a few things.

First, of course, we have unprecedented and a variety of sanctions, export controls, you name it, on Russia—war crimes, atrocities—and I think that frame that they’re committing war crimes and atrocities is the most accurate one and using the authorities that we have in those areas we think is most appropriate.

Aggression is not terrorism. These are distinct things. Second, the concern, I think, with the SST designation besides we don’t think it actually fits what Russia is doing is it does run the risk of undercutting some of the multilateral cooperation and coordination we have had on sanctions.

It would be extremely difficult to reverse if we ever got to a place where there were peace negotiations and that was something that you wanted to put in play in order to get over the goal line.

But the other real problem is it could interfere with the efforts that we’re making—very vigorous efforts we’re getting—to make sure that Russia pays for the terrible damage it’s done to Ukraine including the use of its sovereign assets because those could be tied up in litigation if we have a State sponsor of terrorism designation.

So there are a number of practical reasons why, again, we don’t think it’s the best way to go for it. We think we have the necessary authorities. We’re using them.

They’re more accurate in terms of describing what Russia is doing, and we don’t want to have unintended consequences, second and third order effects that could actually make things more complicated in achieving what we’re trying to achieve.

Mr. LIEU. Thank you. I yield back.

Mrs. WAGNER. The gentleman’s time has expired. The chair now recognizes the gentlelady from Florida, Ms. Salazar, for 5 minutes.

Ms. SALAZAR. Thank you. Welcome, Mr. Secretary. Wonderful to have you here.

You know, I just want to make the observation of what a great republic we have. You, the foreign minister of the most important country in the world, you have to come to talk to the representatives of the people and have to go through this very torturous process, you know, and I’m sure that that is agony for you.

But my constituents in Miami would love to have the foreign minister of Venezuela or Cuba, right, or Nicaragua right in front of us sitting in the same chair you are.

So, once again, thank you for being here, for your service, and long live the United States for that beautiful system.

I just mentioned Cuba. A week ago your State Department took Cuba out of a semi black list for countries that support terrorism. Not the main one but the second one.

On Monday Cuban officials were at the Miami International Airport that I represent reviewing how we do counterterrorism Cuba. Those two facts are a clear indication, sir, that you have all the intentions in the world to take Cuba out of the list of terrorist countries even though Cuba supports Hamas and harbors American fugitives.

So my question is simple. Have you begun the 6-month process required by the export controls law to remove the island from the list?

Secretary BLINKEN. Very quickly, first, just to clear up a couple of things, if I can, though I will come to your question as quickly as I can.

Ms. SALAZAR. Yes, but remember that my time is running and I have four more countries. So tell me are you—did you start the process required by the export controls to remove Cuba? It's 6 months and you need to start the process by July 21st.

Secretary BLINKEN. We have an annual requirement to review the not fully cooperating list. We did that and there were changed circumstances including the fact that Colombia was no longer seeking the extradition of the ELN members who were in Cuba and that Cuba was harboring.

Ms. SALAZAR. But that's a little excuse, sir. Cuba has fugitives from the United States. It supports—come on.

Secretary BLINKEN. They do for sure. But they were not—but they're not being pursued for terrorism.

Ms. SALAZAR. All right. So then but my question is are you going to take them off the main black list which is the terrorist list for sponsor of terrorism?

Secretary BLINKEN. In the near term, no, there's no intent to do that. But as necessary we'll review and we always have to—

Ms. SALAZAR. But you have to—you have to review up until July 21st according to the law. So are you planning to do that?

Secretary BLINKEN. I'm not seeing anything happening by July 21st.

Ms. SALAZAR. So will you commit like you did last year and you fulfilled your promise not to remove it from the list this time from now until November 5th election time?

Secretary BLINKEN. Right now—

Ms. SALAZAR. Can you commit to that?

Secretary BLINKEN. All I can tell you is that right now in terms of July that is not happening.

Ms. SALAZAR. July 21st.

Secretary BLINKEN. Yes, July 21st.

Ms. SALAZAR. Colombia—let's go to President Petro who has threatened to change the Colombian constitution without going through the Colombian congress, similar to what Hugo Chavez did 25 years ago.

Last month Petro broke relations with Israel and you know that President Biden loves President Petro, and my question to you is this. If Petro dares to break the Colombian constitution just like Chavez did do you think that President Biden will change the perception he has on President—

Secretary BLINKEN. I'm not going to comment on President Biden's views or his—

Ms. SALAZAR. Will you change—will you change what you think of Colombia?

Secretary BLINKEN. Let's see what actions are taken. We look to see in any country—partner, ally, adversary—the actions of the individuals.

Ms. SALAZAR. Mr. Secretary, President Petro has said that he is going to change the constitution.

Secretary BLINKEN. I'm not going to—

Ms. SALAZAR. He has said it himself.

Secretary BLINKEN. I appreciate that but let's see what actions are taken. I don't want to engage in hypothetical.

Ms. SALAZAR. And if he were to take that action of changing the constitution and becoming another Chavez?

Secretary BLINKEN. I am not expert enough in Colombia's constitution or its laws to know exactly what he is contemplating and what that would do or not do.

Ms. SALAZAR. Contemplating on perpetuating—of staying in power forever and ever, amen, just like Chavez did. That's what he's planning to do.

Secretary BLINKEN. Presumably, that would be something we would object to. But, again, I don't want to get into hypotheticals. I just don't know the—

Ms. SALAZAR. By your answer you're giving him a green light to do that and you know that.

Secretary BLINKEN. Hardly. Hardly.

Ms. SALAZAR. All right. Well, at least send the message that the United States is going to be very aware of what he's doing.

Let's go to Venezuela. You know that Maduro will steal the Presidential election July 28, 2 months from now. He's going to steal it. You and I know it.

I salute you and the White House for having reimposed oil sanctions on the Maduro regime. We both want democracy in Venezuela. What can we do from this chair to help you, sir?

Secretary BLINKEN. I think actually doing what you've been doing which is—

Ms. SALAZAR. Which is?

Secretary BLINKEN [continuing]. Which is to keep the pressure on to make clear that the things that Venezuela and Maduro may want they cannot and he cannot achieve absent actually moving down the path to free and fair elections and doing what's necessary.

The unitary platform, which, as you know, reached an agreement with Maduro we have looked to see whether that agreement is being implemented and in critical aspects it's not being implemented.

Ms. SALAZAR. Now Maduro is going like that on us. So let's go to Argentina. Javier Milei is the most pro-American president in the history of Argentina. He supports your agenda. Ukraine, Israel, anti-China, Venezuela, Cuba, Taiwan, open markets.

I just sent to President Biden a letter asking for Argentina to be asked, to be joined, or to be put in the APEP. Would you consider putting them in that signature economic plan for Latin America?

Secretary BLINKEN. In short, yes. I was in Argentina just a couple months ago with President Milei. I think—

Mrs. WAGNER. The gentlelady's time has expired.

Secretary BLINKEN [continuing]. And we have had—

Ms. SALAZAR. We need more Mileis in Latin America, don't you think, sir?

Secretary BLINKEN. I'm happy to look at your letter and certainly happy to consider that.

Ms. SALAZAR. Wonderful.

Mrs. WAGNER. The gentlelady's time has expired and I know she's got other countries to get through, Mr. Secretary, so she's going to send you those in writing.

The gentlelady yields back. I now recognize the gentlelady from California, Ms. Jacobs, for 5 minutes.

Ms. JACOBS. Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you, Secretary Blinken, for testifying today.

I first want to talk about Sudan where conditions are getting more horrific by the day. The RSF and SAF continue to encircle Al Fashir where more than 1.8 million displaced people are trapped in what has been described as, quote, "hell on earth" and is at imminent risk of famine.

The UAE, a top buyer of U.S. arms, has continued to fuel this war by providing materiel support to the RSF despite repeated urgings from the Biden administration including, I know, your own entreaties.

It's time, in my opinion, to take stronger action which is why I'm introducing legislation that prohibits the transfer of U.S. arms to the UAE until the President can certify to Congress that the UAE is no longer transferring arms to the RSF.

Now I want to turn to Israel. Hamas' attack on October 7th was despicable and inexcusable, and I've also been horrified by the Israeli military's response which has reportedly killed over 30,000 Palestinians.

So while I support President Biden's pause on the 2,000-pound bomb sales I was also disappointed by NSM-20 report that laid out compelling evidence of law of war violations but stopped short of making a conclusive determination.

Meanwhile, we're seeing in recent reporting that in Rafah the IDF has intensified air strikes, deployed ground troops, and closed the Rafah border crossing.

The U.N. has reported that over 500 civilians have already been killed and 450,000 Palestinians have been displaced.

President Biden rightly drew a red line for U.S. support on a full-scale invasion of Rafah but I think it's unclear to the public the difference between what we're seeing now and what would be crossing that red line. So could you explain the difference to us, please?

Secretary BLINKEN. What we're seeing now is an operation principally designed to take control of the border area or at least parts of the border area between Egypt and in Gaza in order that the smuggling—the tunnels that are there are taken out of action and I understand that objective.

At the same time, because it's been near Rafah and around Rafah it has disrupted operations at the Rafah crossing which have been critical to getting aid into people who so desperately need it. It also, for a time, disrupted operations at Kerem Shalom, although those have resumed.

So we're working intensely with Israel and Egypt right now to try to get Rafah up and running again so that more can get in. It's more challenging in a combat environment.

Ms. JACOBS. Yes. Well, thank you for that clarification and I hope we hold firm to the red line that President Biden has enumerated.

As you know, I'm the ranking member of the Africa Subcommittee. I frequently travel to the continent and talk about human rights issues, and I'll be honest I've been hearing a lot from our African partners that the U.S. is not consistent in living up to our values—that they don't feel like we're a good partner because they perceive we're not holding Israel to the same standards that we're holding them to.

In the NSM-20 report our own intelligence community assessed that Israel could do more to avoid civilian harm. Could you talk about specifically what we are urging Israel to do to mitigate and avoid civilian harm that they aren't already doing?

Secretary BLINKEN. There are very detailed processes, procedures, lawyers, who engage, for example, in the targeting decisions and we have looked at the—over many months at the details of what on paper they're doing but we see a gap between the stated intent of the policy and the actual results.

Now, it's also a fact that is not always recognized that they're dealing in an environment and a terrain that is almost unique because you have an enemy that hides behind and hides underneath civilians in apartment buildings and hospitals and mosques and schools and that makes what they're doing incredibly challenging.

But from our perspective we think it's imperative that a priority be placed on civilian protection and I'm making every possible effort to try to ensure that even in that usually challenged environment civilians are not harmed and, relatedly, get the assistance they need to survive.

Ms. JACOBS. Yes. Well, I agree with you and I would hope the department is leveraging the intel community's assessment to urge Israel to do more because, frankly, not only human lives but our international reputation depends on it.

Last, the NSM-20 report said that they didn't reach an affirmative conclusion about Israel's use of U.S. weapons because Israel's failure to share complete information. How are we addressing this lack of transparency?

Secretary BLINKEN. There are two things in the report. One goes to the use of any weapons provided by the United States and there, as the report noted, based on the totality of the damage done and the use of weapons it's reasonable to assess that in some instances they acted in ways that were inconsistent with international humanitarian law.

Those instances are all under investigation by us but also, critically, by Israel itself. Separate from that is the provision of humanitarian assistance and there it's been important to get as much—

Mrs. WAGNER. The gentlelady's time has expired.

Secretary BLINKEN [continuing]. Cooperation as possible on getting more access.

Ms. JACOBS. Thank you. I yield back.

Mrs. WAGNER. The gentlelady yields back.

The chair now recognizes the gentleman from Michigan, Mr. Huizenga, for 5 minutes.

Mr. HUIZENGA. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Secretary Blinken, appreciate your being here but I do have to express some deep concerns. You and the administration are holding munitions hostage from our ally Israel in what many believe

is an effort to score a few political points in swing states like mine back home.

Meanwhile, as in actual hostages being held, some of whom are American and documented to be Americans, that would be perceived by many of us as a complete slap in the face to those hostages who are yet being left behind.

Meanwhile, oil profits in Iran have skyrocketed under your and the Biden tenure due to a lack of sanctions enforcement. I sit on the Financial Services Committee. I'm part of those sanctions, the creating of those.

In 2020 Iran was exporting 400,000 barrels per day of oil. 2023 that has reached 2 million barrels a day, and what has changed and why have the ayatollahs decided to flip the switch under the Biden administration is something that many of us have been concerned about and are expressing, and meanwhile we have a situation where the president of Iran went down in a helicopter crash and one of your deputies at the U.N. and yourself had expressed condolences over this.

I'm curious. Is the world a safer place because of your efforts to offer respect to a leader who murdered, tortured, and exterminated thousands of Iraqis—I'm sorry, Iranians—has been behind every proxy war that we have been involved in, which is responsible for American deaths? How is that bringing any respect—how is that advancing your agenda on the world stage?

Secretary BLINKEN. Our views of Mr. Raisi and the horrific actions he took both as a judge and as a president in repressing his own people, our policies toward Iran, including working to impose sanctions on more than 600 individual entities, 200 in the petrochemical sector, none of that has changed or will change, as I mentioned earlier.

Mr. HUIZENGA. But why would you offer condolences and the official condolences of the U.S. Government to somebody who has murdered our troops?

Secretary BLINKEN. This is—when the leader of another country dies, as in the past this has often been the case we have expressed official condolences. But it doesn't go to our feelings about that person or the actions that he's taken.

Mr. HUIZENGA. I wonder what my friend from Miami would think about us offering condolences to many of those Latin American leaders that we were just talking about. I think I know the answer because I would agree with her.

Well, in the meantime I've introduced a resolution condemning this inappropriate decision by your department and I urge all my colleagues to sign on to that.

I'm going to transition to NATO here for a couple of minutes. Just last week I did something that's rarely done here in the U.S. Congress. I united foreign diplomats and a few members on this committee who were in a bit of an uproar when I dared to mention that certain countries are not pulling their weight by meeting the 2 percent defense spending benchmark in the NATO alliance.

It was, certainly, I think, fair game on my end. It seemed a bit unexpected from them, especially when we see some countries heading in the wrong direction with their defense spending, literally going backward in this.

Do you believe your efforts will get the remaining eight nations of Belgium, Canada, Spain, Luxembourg, Turkey, Slovenia, and Portugal across the 2 percent threshold by the agreed upon 2024 time line?

Secretary BLINKEN. I think by the end of this year, Congressman, we'll probably have maybe 20 or 21 of the 32 allies that are across the 2 percent threshold. The others should have clear plans to achieve that threshold. We have gotten more countries to achieve—

Mr. HUIZENGA. Okay. What about those nations that are offering no real timetable and instead are going backward?

Secretary BLINKEN. Yes, we want to see them offer a timetable and make it clear how they're going to get to the 2 percent.

Mr. HUIZENGA. But how are—how are you getting those conversations moving?

Secretary BLINKEN. We are—believe me, we're engaged with them on a constant basis to get that done and President Biden has been deeply engaged. I've been deeply engaged and we have made significant progress in having well over now two-thirds of the alliance that will meet the mark and we want to make sure that we have clear plans from the others to do it.

Mr. HUIZENGA. I guess I'm still not hearing what you are doing to make sure that those plans are being—come forward. Are you demanding or requesting those plans to be presented?

Secretary BLINKEN. We are, certainly, requesting them, yes. Absolutely.

Mr. HUIZENGA. And will you be sharing those with this committee?

Secretary BLINKEN. As soon as we get, you know, information from partners about what they plan to do and it's public information we'll make it known.

Mr. HUIZENGA. Well, we have to—America is not safer abroad right now. Whether it's our southern border or what's been happening in the Middle East we need to make sure that we have a strong front on that.

And with that, I yield back.

Mrs. WAGNER. The gentleman yields back. The chair now recognizes the gentlelady from North Carolina, Ms. Manning, for 5 minutes.

Ms. MANNING. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Mr. Secretary, thank you for your very dedicated service to our country and your tireless efforts to find a path forward in the Middle East.

Secretary Blinken, what in the world happened with the cease-fire negotiations between Israel and Hamas in Egypt? We were told first that Israel put a very, very good offer on the table with the approval of the U.S.

Next, Hamas claimed that they accepted that offer. They blamed Israel for walking away. Then we recently met with the Egyptian ambassador who blamed the failure of those talks on Israel and today we heard reports that the Egyptians actually changed the terms of the Israeli offer before relaying that offer to Hamas.

We have hostage families desperate to see their loved ones. We have no proof of life for the majority of hostages. We have Amer-

ican families desperate for an agreement that will release their loved ones and now we learn that Egypt, a country we give millions of dollars in aid every year, failed to accurately and honestly convey a good cease-fire offer and then put the blame on Israel when the talks failed. What's really going on there?

Secretary BLINKEN. First of all, like you I've met with so many of the hostage families repeatedly over these seven or 8 months and I am determined that we continue to do everything we possibly can to get them home with their loved ones.

I know these people and it's personal. Beyond that, what I can tell you is this. Both Egypt and Qatar have been intensively involved in the efforts to get a cease-fire hostage agreement.

The last degree—the last proposal that was before it, and as I said, yes, it was a strong proposal by Israel that was put forward, Hamas said it agreed to it. But it, Hamas, made changes to the agreement that were unacceptable and at that point—

Ms. MANNING. So the Egyptians did not make changes to the agreement?

Secretary BLINKEN. So all I can tell you is the Egyptians have been an important partner in this effort along with the Qataris and we're continuing to try to get this agreement. I think it's the fastest way, of course, to get people home and to change the equation.

Ms. MANNING. But the Israelis did not walk away from that—from the agreement?

Secretary BLINKEN. The Israelis—no, the Israelis did not walk away and, again, Hamas is responsible for not—again, it shouldn't have taken a negotiation to get to this point.

Ms. MANNING. Okay.

Secretary BLINKEN. Hamas could have and should have given up the hostages, given—put down its weapons, come out of hiding, surrendered. All of this would have been over on day one.

Ms. MANNING. Thank you.

I have heard repeatedly that the U.S. wants to ensure that October 7th never happens again and that we will do everything necessary to make sure that Israel can defend itself, and that's the term I keep hearing over and over.

Do you consider Israel's war against Hamas to be a defensive war?

Secretary BLINKEN. Yes, in the sense that it needs to ensure that Hamas cannot do what it did on October 7th again.

Ms. MANNING. Okay. And do you consider Israel's fight against Hezbollah to be a defensive fight?

Secretary BLINKEN. In terms of deterring it from attacking Israel, in terms of making sure that people who have been forced from their homes in northern Israel and Israel's lost sovereignty over its own territory because people have been forced from their homes, yes, dealing with that threat is important.

Ms. MANNING. Okay. Okay.

In contrast to my colleague, I was surprised that the NSM-20 report clearly stated that there was no direct evidence that Israel has violated international law and, yet, the report suggested that the high number of casualties reported by Hamas are akin to circumstantial evidence of violations, and I was particularly surprised by that because our own military experts have described Gaza as

the most difficult battle space any military has faced in modern warfare.

And isn't it reasonable to assume that that is a significant factor for the high level of casualties?

Secretary BLINKEN. It's certainly a contributing factor and the report makes that very clear. But I think we also have to hold ourselves and Israel has to hold itself to the highest possible standards when it comes to preventing civilian casualties.

Ms. MANNING. But there was no clear evidence of violation found as reported in that report.

Secretary BLINKEN. Again, the individual instances these are—many of them are being reviewed both by us and by Israel.

Ms. MANNING. And they are being reviewed by the Israelis, correct?

Secretary BLINKEN. By the Israelis. That's also correct.

Ms. MANNING. Okay. I want to move on to another subject.

I was recently in Israel. I visited Kfar Aza and the site of the Hamas massacre at the Nova music festival. I last night saw important film created by Sheryl Sandberg documenting once again the horrific sexual violence that was used by Hamas as a weapon of war against Israeli women and girls of all ages.

Do you have any reason to doubt that Hamas uses sexual violence—rape, mutilation, barbaric humiliation—against Israelis as a weapon of war?

Secretary BLINKEN. No.

Ms. MANNING. Why do you think so many international organizations have been so slow to condemn that sexual violence and so many people continue to deny that that sexual violence against Israelis took place?

Secretary BLINKEN. It's a very good question. I don't have an answer for you.

Ms. MANNING. Could it be anti-Semitism?

Secretary BLINKEN. Again, I don't want to speculate but it's a good question.

Ms. MANNING. Thank you. I yield back.

Mrs. WAGNER. The gentlelady's time has expired. The gentlelady yields back.

The chair now recognizes the gentleman from Florida, Mr. Waltz, for 5 minutes.

Mr. WALTZ. Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Mr. Secretary, I have a—I just have a simple question for you. Is the world safer under your tenure, Mr. Secretary?

Secretary BLINKEN. I think the world is an incredibly dangerous place but we're able to deal with it more effectively and in a more secure manner because we have rebuilt our alliances, created new ones. We have more partners—

Mr. WALTZ. How is our alliance with our Afghan partners and allies. How's that going?

Secretary BLINKEN. The ones that—the many that we have brought to the United States since withdrawing from Afghanistan—

Mr. WALTZ. Did deterrence fail Putin from invading Ukraine?

Secretary BLINKEN. Putin was prevented because of our leadership in not erasing—preventing from erasing Ukraine from the map.

Mr. WALTZ. Should the invasion have happened?

Secretary BLINKEN. The—I'm sorry.

Mr. WALTZ. Did deterrence fail? We had a whole panoply of threatened sanctions, isolation, diplomatic isolation, but at the end of the day he still invaded.

Secretary BLINKEN. He did indeed.

Mr. WALTZ. Failed.

Secretary BLINKEN. And—no, on the contrary—

Mr. WALTZ. Has deterrence failed Iran supporting terrorism and its terrorist organizations and attacking Israel?

Secretary BLINKEN. Iran has supported—unfortunately, horrifically, Iran has supported terrorism for decades.

Mr. WALTZ. Mr. Secretary, I have here the disastrous Afghanistan withdrawal, the invasion of Ukraine, the unholy alliance between Russia and China, Hamas and Hezbollah attacks on Israel, Houthi attacking international shipping, hostages in Gaza, Iran flush with cash, the reemergence of ISIS-K now, six thwarted attacks in Europe, increased Chinese aggression, and the collapse of our influence in Central Africa in the Sahel.

We get 5 minutes for the million people I represent in a public hearing and you're going to tell the American people with this list they're safer?

Secretary BLINKEN. Let's go down that list. We ended America's longest war.

Mr. WALTZ. Please.

Secretary BLINKEN. We're better off for that. Russian invasion of Ukraine—we repelled it by bringing 50 countries together, getting the Ukrainians what they need to make sure that it couldn't be erased from the map. The cooperation between Russia and China, we have now aligned more countries in the world to deal with China—

Mr. WALTZ. Mr. Secretary, you're a smart man. You cannot—I mean, at some point you have to look back—take a step back, look in the mirror and say our policies are failing.

Secretary BLINKEN. No, I think just to the contrary—

Mr. WALTZ. Deterrence is crumbling.

Secretary BLINKEN. I fully disagree with you.

Mr. WALTZ. The American people do not feel safer—

Secretary BLINKEN. Totally disagree.

Mr. WALTZ [continuing]. Around the world. Okay. Let me ask you this. Do you agree with the National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan who said publicly in October 2023 the Middle East is quieter than it has been for decades?

Secretary BLINKEN. In that moment it was.

Mr. WALTZ. And then he stated it again except you then stated just a few months later, I would argue, that we have not seen a situation as dangerous as the one we're facing now across the region.

What did you get wrong? What did he get wrong?

Secretary BLINKEN. Well, I'd have to look at this. Well, first of all, again, in that moment that was an accurate statement. Second, we have been working very—

Mr. WALTZ. Do you have your head in the sand?

Secretary BLINKEN. We have been—we have been very—

Mr. WALTZ. Did Jake Sullivan have his head in the sand?

Secretary BLINKEN. Again—

Mr. WALTZ. I mean, like, literally did he have his head in the sand to say the region was the most—really a braggadocios moment. It's pretty amazing then when you have to retract your own kind of treaties in foreign affairs and change the language after the entire region blows up. That's a bit embarrassing, isn't it?

Secretary BLINKEN. On the contrary. I think what we have seen as well is a very effective effort to prevent the conflict that we have seen in Gaza from spreading as a result of American leadership.

Mr. WALTZ. But it's spreading. Hundreds of attacks on our bases. Tell that to the three American Gold Star families. Let me ask you this. Did the Iranian government offer condolences to our Gold Star families on their death? Did they?

Secretary BLINKEN. I sincerely doubt it.

Mr. WALTZ. I doubt it. But we offer it to the man behind their murder, Raisi, right? Okay.

Let me ask you one more and this one is near and dear to my heart, and I've engaged you privately. I've engaged you publicly.

I've asked you about some—a particular SIV that is literally hiding day in and day out, being hunted by the Taliban, and I've gotten no response, Mr. Secretary, and that man is being hunted down as we speak who stood and fought with us.

Secretary BLINKEN. Can I—can I come back—let's take that up. Can I come back to you on that because I want to make sure—

Mr. WALTZ. Please. I mean, I'm begging you in public for this man because I'm waiting for the moment when his family tells me he's dead.

Secretary BLINKEN. Let me make sure I come back to you on that.

Mr. WALTZ. But more broadly, your department has testified they're processing a thousand a month—a thousand SIVs a month. At that rate with 125,000 that we're looking at we're looking at 12 years. Is that acceptable as these people are being hunted down by the Taliban?

Secretary BLINKEN. We have issued—since withdrawing from Afghanistan we issued 45,000 SIVs which is—

Mr. WALTZ. Is 12 years acceptable to get our allies out?

Secretary BLINKEN. I want to do it—I want to do it faster. I want to issue—

Mr. WALTZ. It's a yes or no question. Is 12 years acceptable?

Secretary BLINKEN. No, we ought to be able to do it faster. But part of that is—

Mr. WALTZ. I would just think that would be a simple no.

Secretary BLINKEN. Well, no—of course, we want to make sure that we—I'd like to get everyone here tomorrow.

Mr. WALTZ. Ten years?

Secretary BLINKEN. But you got to get people out of the country. You have to—

Mr. WALTZ. Five years?

Secretary BLINKEN. It's not a question of our processing ability. It's the ability to get them out of country.

Mr. WALTZ. But the veterans groups that are literally exhausting their own savings as the Taliban receives aid—portions of our aid, by the way—for these veterans groups, some of which have exhausted their kids' 529 plans, their savings plans, still trying to get these people out.

What expectation can we give them?

Mrs. WAGNER. The gentleman's time has expired.

Secretary BLINKEN. The expectation is that we are working every single day to do that. I hope the program, by the way, gets extended through 1926 because we desperately need it. We need more—

Mr. WALTZ. We'll get the more numbers but if it takes 10 years to get there—

Mrs. WAGNER. The gentleman's time has expired.

Secretary BLINKEN. And if you can increase the cap, too.

Mr. WALTZ. We'll get it for you.

Mrs. WAGNER. The chair now recognizes the—

Secretary BLINKEN. And we'll followup on—

Mr. WALTZ. Okay. Thank you.

Secretary BLINKEN. Thank you.

Mrs. WAGNER. The chair now recognizes the gentlelady from Florida Mrs. Cherfilus-McCormick for 5 minutes.

Mrs. CHERFILUS-McCORMICK. Thank you so much. Thank you so much for being here, Secretary Blinken, I have a few questions for you about what's going on in Haiti.

We have heard a lot of conversation during this hearing about holding back funds, partisan stalling tactics, but as we see right now with the MSS program the U.S. has pledged over \$300 million of which \$80 million is being withheld by Republicans who are sitting on this committee right now.

And it's unfortunate that I haven't heard of anyone on the Republican side actually mention what's going on in Haiti where we have more than 1.4 million people who are actually facing a famine.

We have close to 400,000 people who have been displaced and then we have gross acts of violence against women, girls, and boys every single day.

And so my question to you really has to go down to, now, what is going to be the cause or the impact of the delay of the funding to Haiti's MSS program?

Secretary BLINKEN. Well, the delay of the funding would mean that potentially the program can't go forward and that we have, I think, a very important opportunity to turn things around and help the Haitian people turn things around by giving the Haitian National Police the support they need to fully and finally regain control of Port-au-Prince, the capital city, to deal more effectively with the gangs, to allow democracy to move forward in terms of an election, to allow humanitarian assistance and development aid to move forward, because in the absence of having control over the basic transportation hubs and infrastructure none of that can happen.

And we have countries that have stood up that are willing to take on this mission of supporting the police in a time limited fashion starting with Kenya, and President Ruto is here right now.

But if we don't have that funding we won't be able to support the program. And as I mentioned earlier, this is not America policing the world because we don't have Americans on the ground doing this. We have others who've stepped up to do it.

But we need to give them the support that they need to do this mission.

Mrs. CHERFILUS-McCORMICK. Well, talk a little about—I think—talking about President Ruto I spoke to him today and he spoke about Kenya's commitment to helping Haiti and making sure that the Kenyan forces and other forces have everything they need, which brings me to my next observation.

When I speak to the leaders of other countries who have pledged their troops, who have pledged their dollars, they're questioning our commitment to Haiti, who is our ally, which is another concern that I have is that no one on the Republican side talked about our commitment and responsibility to Haiti, which is in our backyard and who is actually our ally also and how we're making—I mean, their actions by holding back funds is actually putting us in a position of weakness and we see this playing out.

Have you heard concerns from other countries about the ambivalence of the Republicans releasing the funds?

Secretary BLINKEN. Well, I don't think they talk about it in terms of parties but they are concerned with our ability to come forward with the funds that we committed to this effort because we have a good number of countries who have come forward to make their own pledges, about \$100 million—close to \$100 million—and if they see that we're not moving forward with ours they may pull back on theirs.

Mrs. CHERFILUS-McCORMICK. And has it been clear what they're asking for before they released the funding? Because—

Secretary BLINKEN. Yes. They'd like to make sure that the funds that we committed including the funds that are currently with Congress actually go forward.

Mrs. CHERFILUS-McCORMICK. No, has the funds that—has the funds that the Republicans are withholding—have they made clear what they're looking for before they actually release the funds?

Secretary BLINKEN. Well, I don't want to speak for anyone else. That wouldn't be appropriate. But we have had many, many, many briefings, discussions, conversations, going over the plans.

Mrs. CHERFILUS-McCORMICK. So, to my understanding, we had—

Secretary BLINKEN. And, of course, it's totally appropriate for Congress to want to make sure that it sees and understands the plans and what the program is and we have brought forward that information.

Mrs. CHERFILUS-McCORMICK. So, to my understanding, we have had over 80 briefings on the situation in Haiti and what's going to happen with the MSS—

Secretary BLINKEN. That sounds right.

Mrs. CHERFILUS-McCORMICK [continuing]. Goals and we have outlined the safeguards and what's going on in Haiti. Is that correct?

Secretary BLINKEN. That sounds right.

Mrs. CHERFILUS-McCORMICK. So do you feel like 80 briefings is sufficient for you to be confident to actually release the funding?

Secretary BLINKEN. I would hope so.

Mrs. CHERFILUS-McCORMICK. So would you infer that the real reason they're holding back the funding is because of the political games that they're playing?

Secretary BLINKEN. I don't want to infer and, again, I think it's important that—

Mrs. CHERFILUS-McCORMICK. But a reasonable person could infer that?

Secretary BLINKEN [continuing]. Again, we move forward with this. Look, I understand—

Mrs. CHERFILUS-McCORMICK. So what is the timing? So if they're holding back funding how much time do you think we have before the funds have to be released?

Secretary BLINKEN. The timing is now. The mission is ready to go forward. The Kenyans are ready to proceed. So the timing is now. We really need to move forward on this in the coming weeks.

Mrs. CHERFILUS-McCORMICK. And so before I run out of time, could you articulate the position—the administration's position on Hope Health and how it could help Haiti especially in this economic downturn?

Secretary BLINKEN. Yes. I think this is a vital program in terms of giving an appropriate trade preference to the apparel sector in Haiti, which is the leading sector.

We have already seen employment in that sector because of the downturn and the crisis that Haiti has faced go from about 50,000 to 30,000 people. This is a huge opportunity to give young people an opportunity.

Mrs. CHERFILUS-McCORMICK. And with my last 5 seconds, could you please—I'm sorry, for my last 3 seconds could you please articulate how soon do you need the money to be released to actually save Haitian lives?

Secretary BLINKEN. Really, in the coming days or weeks.

Mrs. CHERFILUS-McCORMICK. Thank you.

Secretary BLINKEN. Thank you.

Mrs. WAGNER. The gentlelady's time has expired.

Mr. Secretary, I'm going to recognize one more Member of Congress before we recess very briefly for a quick—we might be able to get two in and then we're going to recess briefly for a few very short votes.

My hope is to get everyone back here at 5:20. You know, we have got about maybe 15 or more members that are really—have waited a year to talk to you, sir. I'm hoping that you can accommodate those that are willing to come back.

Secretary BLINKEN. Look, I want to do everything I can do to accommodate people but as I told the chairman coming in I have a hard stop at 5:30. So whatever we can do between now and 5:30—

Mrs. WAGNER. Well—

Secretary BLINKEN. I know you have commitments to vote. I, unfortunately, have commitments.

Mrs. WAGNER. We'll get moving now and then if we could come up with some kind of accommodation for those that aren't able to ask questions we'll figure that out.

Secretary BLINKEN. Yes. Of course.

Mrs. WAGNER. The chair now recognizes the gentleman from New Jersey, Mr. Kean, for 5 minutes.

Mr. KEAN. Thank you, Madam Chair. Mr. Secretary, thank you for taking the time to be with us today.

Mr. Secretary, during your recent visit to Ukraine you said, quote, "We have not encouraged or enabled strikes outside of Ukraine. But, ultimately, Ukraine has to make decisions for itself about how it's going to conduct this war," end quote.

When I met with President Zelensky here in the capital last year and in Ukraine earlier this year a couple weeks back on a bipartisan trip that I led to Kyiv in both instances and throughout this course of this entire war President Zelensky had been pushing for more long-range ATACMS, for the REPO Act, and that every single time the Biden administration in these instances and many others delayed and did not support those endeavors.

I agree with you that Ukraine has a sovereign right to conduct this war as they see fit. However, they will not be able to do so if they are worried that this administration will publicly rebuke them afterwards as you did when Ukraine struck Russian oil refineries earlier this year.

They must know that America truly supports their need to fight this war as they see fit. Will this administration explicitly allow Ukraine to strike targets in Russian territory and Russian air space?

Secretary BLINKEN. Congressman, as you may know, I was just there about 10 days ago, spent a lot of time with President Zelensky, other leaders, and I'm determined to make sure that they have what they need to effectively defend themselves and we're in an ongoing conversation about them in terms of what that requires at any given time.

We have to date not endorsed or enabled strikes outside of Ukrainian territory. We're always open to conversations with them to see what they need and the decisions that they make what we can do to support them.

Throughout this 2 years—more than 2 years now—we have worked to get them what they need when they need it to be as effective as possible in repelling the Russians.

Mr. KEAN. Respectfully, this administration has with frequency delayed the weapons that President Zelensky has needed in a timely fashion to actually accomplish the mission of defeating Putin's invasion—illegal invasion of Ukraine.

I urge you to reverse his dangerous policy. Russia has fought this war with gloves off since day one and we cannot continue to tie Ukraine's hands.

Has the administration indicated to Israel any limitations on its use of U.S.-origin weapons against Hezbollah as it has with Hamas in Rafah?

Secretary BLINKEN. Against Hezbollah? No.

Mr. KEAN. Well, the administration has made it clear that they do not want Israel to decisively win its war against Hamas.

Secretary BLINKEN. Well, we do. We do. I think we very much do.

Mr. KEAN. Hamas started because they do not want Israel to undertake a significant operation in Rafah.

Secretary BLINKEN. The question is whether that will be effective and whether that will be enduring. We believe we have a better way to deal with the problem we both agree has to be dealt with and that is Hamas.

Mr. KEAN. What is your—if I may.

Secretary BLINKEN. Please.

Mr. KEAN. What is the administration's current policy regarding the acceptable end State that is the evil that is Hamas at the end of this war if you do not support a Rafah operation?

Secretary BLINKEN. We do not want to see Hamas governing Gaza. We do not want to see Hamas representing an ongoing threat to Israel, the ability to repeat what happened on October 7th, and we're united in that goal. The question is how best—how most effectively to achieve it in a way that's enduring.

Mr. KEAN. By delaying Israel the weaponry necessary to defeat the evil threat that is Hamas you are hurting the situation, not helping it.

I yield back. Thank you.

Mrs. WAGNER. The gentleman yields back. The chair now recognizes the gentleman from Arizona, Mr. Stanton, for 5 minutes.

Mr. STANTON. Thank you, Madam Chair.

In about 2 weeks the people of Mexico will head to the polls to elect a new president. The outcome will have wide-ranging impacts in my home State of Arizona and the entire United States.

Arizona, America, and Mexico's fates are intertwined not just as geographic neighbors but as strategic partners in tackling increased global migration, illicit fentanyl trafficking, and water scarcity on both sides of the border.

There are incredible opportunities before us. Mexico recently overtook China to become America's largest trading partner. As President Biden and congressional leaders work to bring advanced manufacturing back to the U.S. nearshoring supply chain components in Mexico and Latin America becomes all the more critical, particularly for national security.

Secretary Blinken, I have a few questions about the outcome of the Mexican elections and how they might impact the U.S.-Mexico relationship. I'd ask you to keep your answers brief for timeliness.

First, a record number of migrants crossing the U.S.-Mexico border has severely strained Arizona's State and local resources. We have to reestablish operational control of the southern border and Mexico needs to do a lot more to manage U.S.-bound migration.

Mr. Secretary, how does the department intend to work with the new Mexican government to limit migrants transiting through the country?

Secretary BLINKEN. We're already working intensely with the current government. That will continue under the next government whatever it is.

We have seen a decrease in migrant encounters from Mexico since December, going down from about 11,000 or 12,000 to 4,000 or 5,000. We will—I want to do even more and, by the way, I think the bill that—currently before Congress would be an important step in that direction.

Mr. STANTON. We hope that bill gets a hearing on our side of the Capitol.

Illicit fentanyl is devastating American communities, almost all of it produced by Mexican drug cartels with precursor chemicals imported from China, a fact the current president of Mexico has repeatedly refused to acknowledge.

Tough diplomacy brought China back to the negotiating table last year on this critical issue. How will the department work with the incoming Mexican administration to halt the import of Chinese precursor chemicals?

Secretary BLINKEN. Again, we have been working intensely with the current Mexican government on that. We have seen increased collaboration in terms of trying to bust up the criminal cartels, the enterprises on the Mexican side of the border. We have seen enhancements to the border itself in terms of screening technology to try to catch the fentanyl before it gets across the border.

We have a whole of government approach for not only engaging the Mexican law enforcement authorities but the regulatory authorities and others to make sure that their own companies are not engaged in the illicit diversion of these chemical precursors and I have to say I think the cooperation has increased significantly.

And, of course, we want to do even more and that will continue—that needs to continue irrespective of the new government.

Mr. STANTON. A secure global semiconductor supply chain is essential to the success of domestic investments made under the CHIPS Act. I've introduced H.R. 8414, the bipartisan Semiconductor Supply Chain Security and Diversification Act, to promote investment in a regional semiconductor ecosystem in Latin America.

There are ample opportunities for the United States and other foreign companies to nearshore operations in Mexico particularly in the semiconductor supply chain.

However, I've heard from CEOs of major corporations concerned about the threat of violence and extortion for Mexican drug cartels which President Lopez Obrador has not adequately confronted.

How will the State Department encourage the new Mexican administration to counter the drug cartels, violent crime, and reassure American businesses evaluating the viability of Mexico as a nearshoring destination?

Secretary BLINKEN. We have made exactly that argument to the current government, which is there's a tremendous opportunity exactly as you've described to nearshore, to have Mexico be a critical part of the supply chain.

But the business environment itself including the regulatory environment and making sure that the private sector can do what it needs to do is critical and, yes, the security environment is critical as well.

Mr. STANTON. Finally, water security is critical to the desert southwest and Mexico has been a key partner on the Colorado

River. While Mexico's recent commitment to additional water conservation is helpful we simply cannot solve this crisis without a long-term solution that ensures cuts are shared among all basin users including our friends in Mexico.

Mr. Secretary, what steps is the U.S. taking to make sure Mexico will share in the pain and conserve the water necessary to protect the system in the long term?

Secretary BLINKEN. Yes, I fully agree with you on that and we have been very much engaged on that. They're not meeting their water delivery commitments to the United States under the 1944 treaty that we have as you know well and have been very engaged on.

Delivering right now the amount of water at the 3-year mark of their 5-year commitment is way below where it needs to be and it's unlikely they can meet what they need to do by the end of the 5-years.

We have engaged intensely on this including recently with President Lopez Obrador, with the foreign minister. I saw her just a couple of weeks ago on this, the officials—the State officials and Tamaulipas and Chihuahua and we want to see this get done. It's imperative that it happen.

They also, I think, have told us that their own elections may be what's an impediment to getting this done. The elections are June the 2d so let's see where we are after June the 2d.

Mr. STANTON. Thank you very much, Mr. Secretary. I yield back.

Mr. LAWLER [presiding]. The gentleman's time has expired. I now recognize myself for 5 minutes.

Mr. Secretary, do you agree with Senator Schumer's call for regime change in Israel?

Secretary BLINKEN. No. Well, let me say this. I don't—I'm not sure what call you're referring to but if there's a regime change—

Mr. LAWLER. Senator Schumer stood on the Senate floor—I'm sure you saw the speech—and demanded regime change in Israel.

Secretary BLINKEN. That's not for—

Mr. LAWLER. Do you agree with Senator Schumer?

Secretary BLINKEN. It's not for us to decide who Israel's government is.

Mr. LAWLER. So yes or no, do you agree?

Secretary BLINKEN. I didn't—that's not what I heard him say. But, regardless, it's not for us to decide who Israel's government is.

Mr. LAWLER. Do you agree with Nancy Pelosi that Prime Minister Netanyahu should resign?

Secretary BLINKEN. Again, it's not for us to say. These are decisions for the Israelis to make.

Mr. LAWLER. Do you agree with the Hamas ministry of health's death toll?

Secretary BLINKEN. The precise figures we can't validate. The general number of dead, wounded, injured, we know it's—the toll is terrible and the Israelis acknowledged that themselves.

Mr. LAWLER. So we don't have an actual count?

Secretary BLINKEN. A precise number, no. It's almost impossible to get a precise number in the midst of a war. We have—

Mr. LAWLER. So on the decisions that the administration has made with respect to providing Israel lethal aid what are you using as a metrics to make the determination?

Secretary BLINKEN. Well, we have our—we have our evaluations. We have our assessments that are not simply what the Hamas ministry is putting out but our own intelligence information from a variety of sources—resources, media——

Mr. LAWLER. So do you reject—do you reject the Hamas Ministry of Health's numbers?

Secretary BLINKEN. In terms of the precision of the numbers I can't validate those numbers. But, generally speaking, the rough number of total——

Mr. LAWLER. Is the position of the State Department that they're not accurate?

Secretary BLINKEN. Again, are they accurate to the person? Of course, we can't validate that. It's impossible to do that.

Mr. LAWLER. The United Nations recently revised down the death toll by almost 50 percent. Do you believe that to be accurate?

Secretary BLINKEN. Again, those—with absolute precision we can't say. But, listen, if it's 14,000 children or 7,000 children it's still 7,000 children too many.

Mr. LAWLER. Do you blame Israel or Hamas for that?

Secretary BLINKEN. I blame—Hamas has created this—the cross-fire that so many of these people are caught up in.

Mr. LAWLER. Okay. You agree they use their own innocent civilians as human shields, correct?

Secretary BLINKEN. I do, but I also believe that Israel must maximize every possible effort to protect civilians and try to——

Mr. LAWLER. Well, didn't the State Department put out a report saying that they are?

Secretary BLINKEN. We put out a report that went through this in some detail both in terms of the use of weapons and also humanitarian——

Mr. LAWLER. And what did your report find? Is Israel using maximum care or no?

Secretary BLINKEN. Our report found that based on the totality of damage that's been done it's reasonable to assess that in some instances Israel has acted in ways that are not in accordance with international humanitarian law.

Those instances are under review and investigation by us but also, critically, by Israel and that's the important point as well. It has the ability to self-police and we have to hold ourselves, whether it's Israel, the United States, or any other democracy, to the highest possible standards in war, even one—a war that was brought to them by a vicious terrorist group and one that engages in practices like hiding behind civilians.

Even there they and we have an obligation to do everything possible to make sure that to the best of our ability civilians are not harmed.

Mr. LAWLER. And do you think that they are doing that to the best of their abilities?

Secretary BLINKEN. I think that there's a gap between the intent that's stated to do that and some of the results that we have seen and we want to make sure that that gap is closed.

Mr. LAWLER. So do you believe Israel is committing a genocide?

Secretary BLINKEN. No.

Mr. LAWLER. Why did the State Department mourn the death of President Raisi?

Secretary BLINKEN. We have offered official condolences in the past when the countries lose their leaders. That doesn't change in any way the fact that Mr. Raisi horrifically repressed his own people as a judge and then as a president of the country. It doesn't change any of our policy toward Iran.

Mr. LAWLER. Do you agree—you agree Iran is the greatest State sponsor of terror, correct?

Secretary BLINKEN. If it's not No. 1 it's certainly near—very near the top of the list.

Mr. LAWLER. Okay. And do you agree that they fund Hamas about, roughly, 93 percent of their budget?

Secretary BLINKEN. Hamas has been significantly funded by Iran. Of course, Hamas has also been funded by other sources. But Iran, yes, is a significant funder.

Mr. LAWLER. Do you believe that Iran and its proxies Hamas want to wipe Israel off the face of the earth?

Secretary BLINKEN. I do.

Mr. LAWLER. You agree that's their stated goal?

Secretary BLINKEN. That's their stated goal. You're right.

Mr. LAWLER. Okay. So you know that's their stated goal. No. 1, why would we recognize the death of the Butcher of Tehran and, No. 2, why are you withholding weapons and making it harder for Israel to defend itself knowing full well as you just testified that Iran and Hamas want to wipe Israel off the face of the earth?

Secretary BLINKEN. Yes, and we have done everything that we can do to make sure that Israel has the means to deal effectively with Hamas including making sure October 7th never happens again. The question is what is the best way to get an enduring resolution to the problem of Hamas. We have different views on—

Mr. LAWLER. Well, the best way to do it is for Hamas to surrender and release the hostages, is it not?

Secretary BLINKEN. Yes. Absolutely.

Mr. LAWLER. Okay. So this administration has been an abject disaster when it comes to Iran. Since Joe Biden took office Iranian petroleum sales are up \$88 billion. It's why I fought to get my bill, the SHIP Act and the Iran-China Energy Sanctions Act passed.

Are you prepared to enact these into law as part of the administration and what steps have been taken since this bill was passed weeks ago to start enacting the SHIP Act?

Secretary BLINKEN. We have found and deemed as blocked more than 50 ships. We'll continue to identify others. We are working to deflag ships so that they can't move and get services from port to port to get at the fleet that is conducting the illicit trade in oil and petrochemical products.

Mr. LAWLER. And you agree China is the biggest purchaser of Iranian petroleum?

Secretary BLINKEN. China is certainly, again, either at the top of the list or near it, yes.

Mr. LAWLER. Thank you. My time has expired.

I now recognize Madeleine Dean for 5 minutes.

Ms. DEAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Secretary Blinken, for being here today, for your years of faithful service, for your testimony, for your budget request that I support.

I wanted to just start with Ukraine. So much of the focus has been on what's the needs of today—what does Ukraine need today—and I was just there in February with other members. But I want to clear up something by way of a simple comparison and contrast. There's been a lot of criticism today about Israel and the pause by the administration on the single shipment 1,800-, 2,000-pound dumb bombs.

Did that pause—does that pause put Israel at any risk of not being able to defend itself? Of being short of the military equipment it requires?

Secretary BLINKEN. No, it does not.

Ms. DEAN. Not at all?

Secretary BLINKEN. No.

Ms. DEAN. Israel has what it needs?

Secretary BLINKEN. Yes.

Ms. DEAN. By contrast, as I said, I went to Ukraine in February. Right after we passed the supplemental I could see in President Zelensky's eyes, in the generals' and military members' eyes that look of we're off the edge of desperation. Did the majority's 6-month waiting to get the supplemental across did that jeopardize Ukraine's ability to defend itself?

Secretary BLINKEN. Well, I think the—whatever the reason the 6-month delay in getting the supplemental did have real consequences on the battlefield in terms of creating an environment in which Russia could do more damage to Ukraine.

Now, happily, the supplemental is there. It was approved on an overwhelming bipartisan basis. That's a very good thing, and we're working every single day to move that assistance out to the Ukrainians who need it.

Ms. DEAN. Absolutely, and I thank you for your leadership. I thank the Chairman McCaul for his leadership in pushing the supplemental across.

I'd like to look to the future, and you from day one and the administration from day one has said, for example, in Ukraine what does the future look like and rebuilding.

President Zelensky in our meeting thanked us for the REPO Act, for the freezing of Russian assets with a future of using those assets for rebuilding. We met with the American Chamber. They see the extraordinary need and opportunity.

You said in your remarks in Kyiv just last week, I think it was, quote, "There is one more crucial step we can take, making Russia pay for Ukraine's recovery and reconstruction. What Putin destroyed Russia should and must pay to rebuild. It's what international law demands. It's what the Ukrainian people deserve. Our Congress has given us the power to seize Russian assets in the United States. We intend to use it," end quote.

Secretary BLINKEN. Yes.

Ms. DEAN. What steps has the State Department taken toward making Russia pay for reconstruction in Ukraine? What plans does State have to use those authorities granted to it? How are you working with partner nations to unlock more money? And Zelensky

talked—the president spoke directly about this that we are a model in use of the REPO Act but we have \$5 billion or \$6 billion whereas Europe sitting on hundreds of billions. Can you tell us—

Secretary BLINKEN. That's exactly right.

First of all, I applaud the REPO Act and appreciate the leadership in getting that done. Second, we have been using that and using our diplomacy to rally other countries, particularly the countries where these assets are located. They're the ones who ultimately have to agree to this to enable their use.

Now we have had, I think, one initial important step forward just a couple of days ago. The European Union has now agreed that the interest generated by the sovereign assets in Europe can be used and given to Ukraine to support and to rebuild.

But what we'd like to see happen now is to find a way to in one way or another in effect use the principal and one of the things that we're looking at, and I hope that by the G-7 meeting that the President will attend we can get—make progress on that, is to in effect use the principal as collateral for a loan, a bond, that would generate significant moneys now for Ukraine to help it get started on the rebuild.

Ms. DEAN. I certainly hope so also. The principal must be used. Russia must pay for the rebuilding of Ukraine.

And I know my colleague Ms. Manning asked you about the hostages and I wear this—it was given to me by a hostage family. We all have met with many of the hostage families. I think of them every single day. I can't understand how the world has not come around and said, Hamas, you must release all of the hostages living and dead.

What's the clearest statement of where we stand with the hostage negotiations now?

Secretary BLINKEN. Like you I am determined every single day to get them back home, to get them with their families. And I know the families. I've met with them many times here in the United States and Israel as has President Biden and we have come close, I think, to reaching agreements that would get a cease-fire and the hostages released and, hopefully, start a process that moves to a more enduring peace and security for Israel, for the Palestinians.

But in the most recent go around on this Hamas did not say yes to what I thought was a very generous and appropriate proposal coming from Israel. So we continue to be at it. CIA Director Bill Burns, myself, other White House officials, working on this, working with Qatar and Egypt, we continue to have officials who are talking about this and we will continue to make the hardest possible run at it.

But in this moment, unfortunately, we do not have the agreement that we should.

Ms. DEAN. I thank you for your work. Godspeed and bring home the hostages. Thank you.

Secretary BLINKEN. Thank you.

Mr. DAVIDSON [presiding]. I thank the gentleman.

I now recognize myself for 5 minutes.

Mr. Secretary, I just want to pick up where Mr. Waltz left off. I couldn't have said that better. So I'm going to focus on different parts of the world.

America is less free, less safe, more burdened by debt under, frankly, your leadership and this administration's. That's really, unfortunately, the macro trend since the end of the cold war.

We really haven't managed it well and part of the reason is China has really responded to the end of the cold war just fine. They have really focused on China's national security and they've managed to be at peace.

The United States has focused everywhere else in the world but China. I think a lot of my other colleagues have addressed Pacific concerns but I want us to focus right here in our own hemisphere.

Do you still believe that the Monroe Doctrine has any relevance for the direction of security in our own hemisphere?

Secretary BLINKEN. I'll have to come back to you on that in terms of refreshing my memory on the details of the Monroe Doctrine. What I can tell you is two things. One, in terms of China we're in a much stronger position than we were 2 years—

Mr. DAVIDSON. Let me focus not on China—like I said, on our own hemisphere. So let me just—here's the Cliff Notes. Should we pay more attention to our own hemisphere than to other parts of the world?

Secretary BLINKEN. We're paying intense—

Mr. DAVIDSON. Does the border with the United States and Mexico matter?

Secretary BLINKEN. It does and I hope to—

Mr. DAVIDSON. Does the border with Guatemala and Mexico matter?

Secretary BLINKEN [continuing]. The bill before Congress now will be voted on because that would improve—

Mr. DAVIDSON. Does China's expansion into South America matter to the United States?

Secretary BLINKEN. It does, and we're intensely focused—

Mr. DAVIDSON. Because we used to care. We used to care when other countries came in to this sphere more than we cared where they went over in their own parts of the world.

Secretary BLINKEN. We have been more focused on this hemisphere than any previous administration I can think of including, by the way, the administrations I participated in.

Mr. DAVIDSON. Look, I will commend you on using fishing rights off of Ecuador to push China out of that region. I can say, hey, there's been a win. Maybe not much more than that.

But we haven't done much to counter China's influence all over this hemisphere, and notably with the cartel is there any illicit finance going into Mexico?

Secretary BLINKEN. Oh, certainly. Illicit finance going into Mexico, yes.

Mr. DAVIDSON. What are we doing about it?

Secretary BLINKEN. We're engaged with the Mexicans virtually every single day—

Mr. DAVIDSON. Have we sanctioned any financial institution?

Secretary BLINKEN. We have sanctioned people and we have also—beyond sanctioning people we have worked to give Mexico the assets, the authorities, the capacities they need to help take down these cartels, to disrupt the financing.

Mr. DAVIDSON. How is that turning out? Are we taking down the cartels?

Secretary BLINKEN. Actually, we have seen significant progress over the last 3 years, yes, in taking down cartels and disrupting drug supplies, seizing more fentanyl over the last couple of years than ever before.

Mr. DAVIDSON. Okay. So here's the thing. The cartels—the cartels under the Trump administration were trafficking humans across the border and The New York Times say that they—the Trump administration they were making around \$500 million a year.

One and a half years in, so that's at the midway point from here back, the Biden administration they said that the cartels were making over \$13 billion a year smuggling people across the border.

Is that helping rein in the cartels by what you're doing to stop the cartels? Why wouldn't you reverse the remain in Mexico policy?

Secretary BLINKEN. Well, again, I would commend to the Congress the bill that is before it that I think—

Mr. DAVIDSON. No. No. No. That doesn't reverse the policy. That just funds more illegals everywhere in the country and it actually puts a cap on the future administration for getting them out.

Let me turn to the influence that is going on in Guatemala. You were recently there and just before your visit members of the Guatemalan Congress were threatened by our embassy there that they would lose their U.S. visas and their kids who are studying here would lose their visas to study in America if they didn't support removal of Guatemala's attorney general.

Do you think the United States should be manipulating members of a foreign Congress in this manner?

Secretary BLINKEN. It's not a question of manipulating members of a foreign Congress. It's the fact that in the recent election in Guatemala there was a very strong attempt made to prevent the democratically—elected president of Guatemala from taking office.

There was an attempt to disrupt the inauguration of that president, and if we stand for democracy anywhere we have to stand for it everywhere including in Guatemala.

Mr. DAVIDSON. So is the State Department's opposition to the attorney general at all related to her recent investigations to determine if the Biden administration is complicit in the trafficking of children into the United States? Nothing to do with that? Correlation, not causation?

Secretary BLINKEN. That is absurd.

Mr. DAVIDSON. Good to hear. One question about NATO. NATO is front and center for the war in Ukraine. Back when CIA Director Burns said this in February 2008, quote, "Ukrainian entry into NATO is the brightest of all red lines for the Russian elite, not just Putin.

In my more than two and a half years of conversations with key Russian players, from knuckle draggers in the dark recesses of the Kremlin to Putin's sharpest liberal critics, I have yet to find anyone who views Ukraine and NATO as anything other than a direct challenge to Russia's interest. Today's Russia will respond."

Do you believe Mr. Burns' assessment was accurate?

Secretary BLINKEN. What year was that? I'm sorry.

Mr. DAVIDSON. 2008.

Secretary BLINKEN. It may have been at the time. I think we have seen—everything we have seen since from Russia and from Mr. Putin certainly argues in the other direction.

Mr. DAVIDSON. No, it says that it's really important to them. They literally invaded. I mean, if you look—you left Afghanistan on August 31st, 2021.

On September 1st you entered into a strategic partnership with Ukraine to support their membership in NATO and then you continued to—you continued to escalate and Vladimir Putin invaded there.

That doesn't excuse his invasion but it's clearly a red line. I wish I had more time. I yield my time back and I now recognize the gentleman, Mr. Costa, for 5 minutes.

Mr. COSTA. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and I don't want to retread ground that we have already covered, although I do find it somewhat hypocritical to be Monday morning quarterbacking our situation in Ukraine when in fact a majority of our colleagues on the other side delayed for 5 months that assistance that Ukraine could have used at the time that would have, I think, prevented the current offensive that we see Russia taking place.

Since you just came back from Ukraine I'd like you to highlight in the next 6 months—I mean, I think we have done, to be fair, micromanaging in the West Wing that was unnecessary.

I mean, we pushed a lot of things whether they be ATACMS, whether they be the F-16s, only to see the administration finally agree but months later. We can't continue that.

What are your assessment on what we're going to be able to do in the next 6 months in terms of the ATACMS, in terms of F-16 pilots, the most recent request today by President Zelensky to move this in an expeditious way as possible?

Secretary BLINKEN. Well, thank you and, look, all along we have been working to make sure that the Ukrainians have what they need when they need it and can use it effectively, and as I've mentioned before the challenge with any given weapon system is making sure not only that they get the weapon but that they have people trained and know how to use it, that they have the ability to maintain it.

Mr. COSTA. These Ukrainians are the MacGyvers of the—let's be clear about that.

Secretary BLINKEN. They are. They are, but we want to make sure that they have the ability to do that including the training is also very critical. But the ATACMS are there and they are having an effect and will continue as we go along.

Mr. COSTA. And in terms of the self-defense with Kharkiv right now, I mean, it is nonsense to believe that they're attacking from Russian soil and that we can't prevent that in terms of a defensive means to protect these people. Putin is a war criminal.

He's bombing hospitals and kidnapping children and schools. We have got to allow the Ukrainians to defend themselves.

Secretary BLINKEN. And, again, Ukraine is going to make the decisions it needs to make to defend itself. I want to make sure that they have everything they need to do that.

Mr. COSTA. And the self-defense protection for cities like Kharkiv and Odessa there are batteries of Iron Domes out there that they could—that have been identified. Are we doing everything we can to provide them with that support?

Secretary BLINKEN. I have been looking under every couch, every cushion, to help find Patriot systems, other air defense systems, to get to the Ukrainians and we continue to do that every day. We need more air defenses. There's no question about that.

Mr. COSTA. Well, I want to continue to work with you on that effort.

Let me move to another part of the neighborhood, Armenia. What Azerbaijan has done is unconscionable with the natives of Nagorno-Karabakh.

We have increased humanitarian assistance from \$15 million to \$65 million but I think that Armenia has requested an additional \$200 million in assistance and the congressional Armenian Caucus has sent you a letter to that effect. Where are we on that?

Secretary BLINKEN. So we're looking at a series of requests from Armenia to see what we can do to strengthen even more our support and cooperation with Armenia. I met with Prime Minister Pashinyan just a few weeks ago in Brussels with the head of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, precisely to look at what more we and the EU can do to support Armenia and we'll be moving forward, I think, on a number of—in a number of different areas.

Prime Minister Pashinyan has done an extraordinary job leading his country in very, very difficult times. We want to make sure that we're getting people the support they need including those who have left Nagorno-Karabakh.

Mr. COSTA. But I don't think we have used our leverage with Azerbaijan. I mean, this defense agreement that we have with them—when they have violated so many of their agreements with Armenia I think it's reprehensible what Azerbaijan has done.

Secretary BLINKEN. I think the best thing that can happen is they have made progress—Armenia and Azerbaijan—on a peace agreement and if that agreement can be reached I think that's the thing that stands both Armenia, Azerbaijan, and the whole region in the best stead. So we would want to support—

Mr. COSTA. Mr. Secretary, you and I are, I guess, different on this. I don't trust Azerbaijan.

Secretary BLINKEN. Well, always—as someone once said, trust but verify.

Mr. COSTA. Well, I agree.

Let me just close. I think that in terms of America's challenges that we face in the world this is a seminal moment that we're living in in world history. Has been for the last several years, and the decisions that we make today historians will look back 20 years from now. Hopefully, we'll make more good decisions than poor decisions.

What are your priorities in terms of the decisions we're making in the next 6 months to make sure that we make more good ones than poor ones during this seminal moment with the challenges of Russia and China and this difficult world we're living in?

Secretary BLINKEN. We want to make sure, and our budget reflects this, that we can continue what's been very successful in terms of dealing with the challenges posed by China and that is making the necessary investments in ourselves, aligning even more closely with our allies and partners because the combined weight that we bring to dealing with challenges posed by China when we're together is much greater than any one of us doing alone.

We have had real success with that. We need to continue doing that. We need to continue the support for Ukraine so that it can deal effectively with the aggression coming from Russia as well as help set Ukraine up for success—long-term success.

Mr. COSTA. To win.

Secretary BLINKEN. To win, and win also means having a successful country, one that is militarily, economically, and democratically strong and that can resist further aggression.

Mr. COSTA. And, I might add, we need to work together in a bipartisan fashion.

Secretary BLINKEN. We would welcome that as always.

Mr. COSTA. Thank you.

Secretary BLINKEN. Thank you.

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

I thank the Secretary for valuable testimony and members for their questions. Members of the committee, particularly those who couldn't stay here, may have some additional questions for the Secretary. We 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 5:27 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

May 15, 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 2:00 p.m. in room 2172 of the Rayburn House Office Building. The hearing is available by live webcast on the Committee website at <https://foreignaffairs.house.gov/>.

DATE: Wednesday, May 22, 2024

TIME: 2:00 p.m.

LOCATION: 2172 RHOB

SUBJECT: The State of American Diplomacy in 2024: Global Instability, Budget Challenges, and Great Power Competition

WITNESSES: The Honorable Antony Blinken
Secretary of State
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 May 22, 2024 Room 2172 RHOB

Starting Time 13:57 Ending Time 17:27

Recesses 2 (to) (to) (to) (to) (to) (to)

Presiding Member(s)

Chairman McCaul, Rep. Wagner, Rep. Green, Rep. Lawler, Rep. Davidson

Check all of the following that apply:

Open Session ☒

Executive (closed) Session ☐

Televised ☒

Electronically Recorded (taped) ☒

Stenographic Record ☒

TITLE OF HEARING:

THE STATE OF AMERICAN DIPLOMACY IN 2024: GLOBAL INSTABILITY, BUDGET CHALLENGES, AND GREAT POWER COMPETITION

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Attached

NON-COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

None

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 17:27

or

TIME ADJOURNED _____

Mag Wagner
Full Committee Hearing Coordinator

Committee on Foreign Affairs

118th Congress

ATTENDANCE

Date: MAY 22, 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. Buck	X		Mr. Lieu	X	
Mr. Burchett	X		Ms. Wild	X	
Mr. Green	X		Mr. Phillips	X	
Mr. Barr	X		Mr. Allred	X	
Mr. Jackson	X		Mr. Kim	X	
Mrs. Kim	X		Ms. Jacobs	X	
Mrs. Salazar	X		Ms. Manning	X	
Mr. Huizenga	X		Mrs. Cherfilus-McCormick	X	
Mrs. Radewagen		X	Mr. Stanton	X	
Mr. Hill		X	Ms. Dean	X	
Mr. Davidson	X		Mr. Moskowitz	X	
Mr. Baird	X		Mr. Jackson	X	
Mr. Waltz	X		Mrs. Kamlager-Dove	X	
Mr. Kean	X		Mr. Costa	X	
Mr. Lawler	X		Mr. Crow	X	
Mr. Mills	X		Mr. Amo	X	
Mr. McCormick	X		Mr. Schneider	X	
Mr. Moran	X				
Mr. James	X				
Mr. Self	X				

May 22, 2024

President Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Re: Threats to the International Criminal Court

Dear President Biden:

We write as organizations with a steadfast commitment to justice for grave international crimes and therefore to the success of the International Criminal Court (ICC). We urge your administration to oppose the threats and calls for punitive actions against the Court that several U.S. lawmakers have recently made. Acting on these calls would do grave harm to the interests of all victims globally and to the U.S. government's ability to champion human rights and the cause of justice, which are stated priorities of your administration.

Accountability is important for its own sake and protects against the commission of future atrocity crimes. Acting where it has jurisdiction and within its mandate as a court of last resort, the ICC works together with national authorities to ensure perpetrators of such crimes are held to account and that victims and affected communities find some measure of justice. While the United States is not an ICC member country, Republican and Democratic administrations have supported the Court in specific cases, and the U.S. has assisted arrest operations to bring justice to victims in central Africa. Your own administration has recognized the Court's essential role to address serious crimes in Ukraine and Darfur.

We are alarmed by threats that U.S. lawmakers have aimed at the Court in recent weeks including the letter sent on April 24 by Senators, threatening to sanction the ICC prosecutor's "employees and associates," if steps were taken to pursue arrest warrants against Israeli officials. On May 20, the ICC prosecutor requested warrants for leaders of Hamas and Israeli officials stemming from his ongoing Palestine investigation; ICC judges will assess the request to determine whether to issue warrants.

The previous administration's sanctions against the prosecutor's predecessor were an affront to justice and threatened to undermine the ICC's effective functioning. A U.S. federal district judge held that the sanctions threatened the First Amendment rights of U.S. citizens working to support justice before the ICC. Regrettably, those sanctions aligned the United States with authoritarian tactics of threatening judges and independent judicial institutions.

The ability of the ICC to provide justice for victims requires full respect for its independence. A selective approach to judicial decisions undermines the credibility, and ultimately, the force of the law as a shield against human rights violations and abuses. Your administration appeared to recognize this in repealing the Trump-era sanctions, noting that U.S. concerns "would be better addressed through engagement with all stakeholders in the ICC process." We urge you to ensure

that any disagreement about the Court's process is pursued through proper judicial channels under the Court's treaty.

We welcomed press statements by your administration in recent weeks indicating that it does not support "threats or intimidation" of ICC officials. U.S. allies have condemned the threat of sanctions and expressed support for the Court, as have 45 United Nations experts on human rights in a joint statement. We urge you to oppose any legislative efforts to undermine the ICC, and to make clear that regardless of its views on specific ICC investigations, the United States continues to support independent international justice mechanisms.

Sincerely,

Action Corps (US)
 Adehsur
 The Advocates for Human Rights (US)
 The African Centre for Justice and Peace Studies (Sudan)
 African Francophone Coalitions for the ICC
 Alliance for Peacebuilding
 American Association for the International Commission of Jurists
 American Friends Service Committee
 Amnesty International USA
 Aotearoa Lawyers for Peace (New Zealand)
 Arab Canadian Lawyers Association (Canada)
 Asociación Nacional de Centros de Investigación, promoción social y desarrollo (Peru)
 Asociación Pro Derechos Humanos (Peru)
 Association of Reintegration of Crimea (Ukraine and France)
 Atrocities Watch Africa
 Australian Centre for International Justice (Australia)
 ayus Network of Buddhists Volunteers on International Cooperation (Japan)
 Barah Aamen (Egypt)
 Basel Peace Office (Switzerland)
 BDS Tokyo (Japan)
 Brooklyn For Peace (US)
 Caminos de la Memoria (Peru)
 Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East (Canada)
 Center for Civilians in Conflict
 Center for Constitutional Rights (US)
 Center for Egyptian Women's Legal Assistance (Egypt)
 Center for International Policy
 Centro de Desarrollo Étnico (Peru)
 Centro de Investigación de Crímenes Atroces (Mexico)
 Centro de Investigación y Promoción de los Derechos Humanos (Honduras)
 Centro de Prevención Tratamiento y Rehabilitación de las Víctimas de la Tortura y sus Familiares (Honduras)
 Centro Investigación Capacitación Asesoría y Promoción (Peru)
 Chernobyl Hibakusha Support, Kansai (Japan)

Citizens for Global Solutions (US)
 Colectivo por los Derechos de las Personas Adultas Mayores (Peru)
 Comisión de Derechos Humanos de El Salvador (El Salvador)
 Comisión de Justicia Social (Peru)
 Corporación Humanas Centro Regional de Derechos Humanos y Justicia de Género (Colombia)
 Darfur Women Action Group
 Demand Progress Education Fund (US)
 Derechos Humanos y Medio Ambiente (Peru)
 Dominican Leadership Conference (US)
 Due Process of Law Foundation (US)
 Egyptian Commission for Rights and Freedoms (Egypt)
 Egyptian Human Rights Forum (France)
 Egyptians Without Borders Foundation (Egypt)
 Eleanor Lives! (US)
 Ensaaf (US)
 Fundación EcuMénica Para el Desarrollo y la Paz (Peru)
 Ganoubia Hora (Egypt)
 Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect
 Global Justice Center
 Grupo de Iniciativa Nacional por los Derechos del Niño
 Historians for Peace and Democracy (US)
 Human Rights Center, UC Berkeley (US)
 Human Rights First (US)
 Human Rights Now (Japan)
 Human Rights Watch
 iACT
 Institute for Genocide and Mass Atrocity Prevention
 Institute for the Study of Genocide
 Instituto de Defensa Legal (Peru)
 Instituto de Democracia y Derechos Humanos de la Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú
 International Criminal Court Alliance (US)
 International Federation for Human Rights
 J Street (US)
 Japan Campaign to Ban Landmines (Japan)
 Japan International Volunteer Center
 Just Foreign Policy (US)
 KYOTO AALA (Japan)
 Laboratorio de Paz (Venezuela)
 Law and Democracy Support Foundation (Germany)
 Lawyers Alert (Nigeria)
 Legal Pact for the Future
 Media Initiative for Human Rights (Ukraine)
 Middle East Democracy Center
 Minnesota Peace Project (US)
 Movement Medicine Japan
 Movimiento Jatarishun (Peru)

MPower Change Action Fund
 National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd United States
 Network Against Japan Arms Trade
 Network for Peace in Syria (Japan)
 Never Again Coalition (US)
 No Business With Genocide (US)
 No Peace Without Justice
 Parliamentarians for Global Action
 Passionists International (US)
 Pax Christi (US)
 Paz y Esperanza (Peru)
 Peace Action (US)
 Peace Direct (US)
 Piece of Syria (Japan)
 Plataforma de Comercio Justo y Consumo Ético Perú (Peru)
 Plataforma por la Democracia (Peru)
 Presbyterian Church (USA)
 Programa Venezolano de Educación Acción en Derechos Humanos (Venezuela)
 Red para la Infancia y la Familia – Peru
 REDRESS Trust
 The Regional Coalition for Women Human Rights Defenders in Southwest Asia and North Africa
 Réseau Equitas Côte d'Ivoire
 Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights
 The Sentry
 Sinai Foundation for Human Rights (Egypt)
 Sisters of Mercy of the Americas – Justice Team
 StoptheDrugWar.org (US)
 Sudan Human Rights Network
 The United Church of Christ (US)
 Ukrainian Legal Aid Foundation (Ukraine)
 US Campaign for Palestinian Rights
 Veterans For Peace (US)
 Win Without War (US)
 WITNESS
 Women for Weapons Trade Transparency
 Women's Active Museum on War and Peace (Japan)
 Women's Initiatives for Gender Justice
 World Federalist Movement – Institute for Global Policy
 World Service Authority
 World Without Genocide (US)
 YMCA of Japan
 Zarga Organization for Rural Development (Sudan)

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary Antony Blinken by
Representative Andy Barr #1
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
May 22, 2024**

Question:

Since 2021, Iran has generated roughly \$80 billion in revenue from its illicit oil sales, due in part to the Administration's relaxed sanctions regime against the Iranian government. The Administration's posture has enabled Iranian oil exports to hit a five-year high. Do you admit now that sanctions relief on Iran was a colossal mistake?

Answer:

The Biden Administration has not lifted a single sanction on Iran.

Rather, we continue to increase sanctions pressure. The Administration has designated over 200 entities and individuals for their role in the production, sale, and shipment of hundreds of millions of dollars' worth of Iranian petrochemicals and petroleum products. We have also identified as blocked property over 50 vessels involved in this trade. Our sanctions have imposed heavy operational and economic costs on Iran, and we assess that Iran only receives a fraction of the market price for the oil it is able to sell.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary Antony Blinken by
Representative Andy Barr #2
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
May 22, 2024**

Question:

Since relaxing sanctions on Iran—have the mullahs: Attacked American troops using proxies in the region? Yes or No? Attacked our ally Israel? Yes or No. Stopped developing nuclear weapons capabilities? Yes or no? What did sanctions relief get us?

Answer:

The Biden Administration has not lifted a single sanction on Iran – all sanctions authorities that were in place during the previous administration remain, and we continue to enforce them. Over the last three years, the United States has sanctioned over 700 individuals and entities connected to the full range of Iran’s problematic and dangerous behaviors, including UAV and missile proliferation, terrorist financing, and support for proxy terrorist groups. These sanctions have increased pressure on Iran, including by complicating its ability to fund the militant groups it backs in the region.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary Antony Blinken by
Representative Andy Barr #3
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
May 22, 2024**

Question:

China: In November 2023 at the Biden-Xi meeting at APEC an agreement was struck to delist China's Institute of Forensic Science—which has been tied to Uyghur human rights abuses—from Commerce's Entity list in exchange for cooperation from the Chinese on stopping fentanyl and precursor production. Attorney General Barr recently testified that the PRC has not taken "any material steps" to reduce the production of fentanyl precursors. Secretary Blinken—did you weigh in with Commerce to delist China's Institute of Forensic Science from the Entity List? Was this a bad deal? Does the Administration endorse up front sanctions' relief for questionable returns?

Answer:

Our direct diplomacy led to the People's Republic of China (PRC) issuing a public notice on the enforcement of laws and regulations regarding precursor chemicals and pill press equipment in November 2023. PRC law enforcement acted against synthetic drug and chemical precursor suppliers and submitted information to an international law enforcement database for the first time in nearly three years. We continue to press for additional

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PRC public law enforcement action, scheduling of key chemicals, and the disruption of illicit finance networks.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary Antony Blinken by
Representative Andy Barr #4
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
May 22, 2024**

Question:

China: There is reporting that the State Department has actively intervened with other agencies to delay implementation of sanctions and export controls. Secretary Blinken—Have you or anyone at the State Department encouraged another agency to delay implementation of a sanction or export control? Yes or no? What reason would State give to delay a regulatory action by another agency?

Answer:

As a general matter, we do not disclose the details of internal deliberations and discussions between officials. The Biden-Harris Administration has shown that it takes these issues extremely seriously. We do not pull our punches with the People's Republic of China. Our competitive actions are designed to have maximum effect.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary Antony Blinken by
Representative Andy Barr #5
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
May 22, 2024**

Question:

China: Have you or any other official from State ever speculated that an action would lead to conflict with the PRC or the cancelation or postponement of a senior-level meeting? Has sanctions relief changed any measurable behavior by the Chinese?

Answer:

We are steadfast in our pursuit of U.S. interest and values. We have continued to take actions to compete vigorously and strengthen our alliances and partnerships, regardless of the timing of senior-level meetings with the People's Republic of China. The People's Republic of China officials continually express their concerns about the United States' listings and sanctions of the People's Republic of China entities. We are undaunted by this and have continued to do what is needed to protect our national security and those of our allies and partners – and we will continue to do so.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary Antony Blinken by
Representative Andy Barr #6
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
May 22, 2024**

Question:

Russia: Revenue from oil and gas sales are financing Russia's war in Ukraine. Due to oil price cap scheme, Russia earns around \$15 billion through sales of petroleum products each month. The U.S. imposed sanctions against Russian banks, including the Russian central bank, yet we still permit transactions involving Russian energy through Office of Foreign Asset Control (OFAC) General License 8. On April 29th the Administration extended this General License for a ninth time. Secretary Blinken—Did you or anyone from the State Department weigh in with Treasury about this license being renewed?

Answer:

The State Department consults closely with the Treasury Department regarding the oil price cap and a range of licensing matters in the Russia sanctions program. As a general matter, we do not disclose the details of internal deliberations and discussions between officials.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary Antony Blinken by
Representative Andy Barr #7
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
May 22, 2024**

Question:

Russia: Does allowing Russia to continue receiving energy payments end the war faster or more allow it to prolong?

Answer:

Our policy reduces revenue available to the Kremlin to maintain Russia's war effort while limiting the impacts on global energy markets, which is critical to sustaining the international coalition that supports Ukraine and opposes Russia's war of aggression.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary Antony Blinken by
Representative Andy Barr #8
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
May 22, 2024**

Question:

Russia: How has this sanctions relief helped cut off Russia's war machine?

Answer:

The Oil Price Cap policy has resulted in significant lost oil revenue and increased transport costs for Russia. Estimates suggest Russian oil is selling at a \$9-20 per barrel discount because of the Oil Price Cap policy.

In the gas sector, Gazprom, Russia's major state-owned natural gas corporation, reported its first annual net loss since 1999, with nearly 7 billion USD in losses for 2023. This all has significant implications for a country that, in 2021, relied on oil and natural gas revenues for 45 percent of its federal budget.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary Antony Blinken by
Representative Andy Barr #9
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
May 22, 2024**

Question:

Gaza City/Rafah: Secretary Blinken—What is the difference in Israel's operations in Gaza City and Rafah other than the American Domestic political situation and President Biden's reelection campaign?

Answer:

As a general matter, we have been clear that Israel's operations must be consistent with international humanitarian law, and that Israel must take every precaution possible to protect civilians. This is especially true in Rafah, where civilians are highly concentrated – in far closer quarters than at the start of Israel's operations in Gaza.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary Antony Blinken by
Representative Andy Barr #10
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
May 22, 2024**

Question:

Gaza City/Rafah: Why did the Administration support Israel's necessary work to clear terrorists from Gaza City but now has placed holds on arms for the same operations in Rafah?

Answer:

The Administration's commitment to Israel's security is unwavering, and the Department will continue to do what is necessary to support Israel to defend itself in the face of threats. To date, we have paused only one shipment of munitions to Israel consisting of 1,818 2,000-lb bombs. No other deliveries of weapons, munitions, equipment, or other services are paused at this time. We have been clear that Israel must take every precaution possible to protect civilians. That is the case no matter what weapons are involved, or where the operation occurs.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary Antony Blinken by
Representative Andy Barr #11
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
May 22, 2024**

Question:

Taiwan Fellowship Act: Secretary Blinken—Can you please provide an update on the State Department’s implementation of the Taiwan Fellowship Act? Congress has not received an update on the Act since the funds were authorized and appropriated in the 117th Congress.

Answer:

Implementing the Taiwan Fellowship Act (TFA) is a priority for the Department of State, and we are committed to launching the program as soon as possible. We are pursuing a Memorandum of Understanding through the American Institute in Taiwan and Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office concerning TFA implementation details. Once such details are finalized, we will initiate an open, competitive bidding process to select the most appropriate implementing partner.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary Antony Blinken by
Representative French Hill #1
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
May 22, 2024**

Question:

I want to begin by commending you for your May 14th statement in Kyiv to work with our G7 allies to ensure that all Russian sovereign assets worldwide are seized. Seizure of all such assets will maximize the amount of funds used as Russia's initial payment to Ukraine for damages inflicted by Putin's illegal aggression under international law in 2014 and again in 2022. It has now been one month since Congress passed overwhelmingly, and President Biden signed the REPO Act into law. Can you outline what specific steps the President and you have taken to start the implementation of the REPO Act as envisioned by Congress to make Putin pay for Ukraine's reconstruction and recovery ahead of American taxpayers?

Answer:

The United States has coordinated with the G7, the European Union, and other partners and allies regarding the disposition of immobilized Russian sovereign assets. At the G7 Apulia Summit in June 2024, the United States and other G7 partners confirmed that, consistent with all applicable laws and our respective legal systems, Russia's sovereign assets in our jurisdictions will remain immobilized until Russia ends its aggression and pays for the damage it has caused to Ukraine.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary Antony Blinken by
Representative French Hill #2
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
May 22, 2024**

Question:

Regardless of whether the President officially seizes all available Russian sovereign assets to help Ukraine, Section 104(a) of the REPO Act mandates that all financial institutions as directed by the President report to the U.S. Treasury Department on all such assets they hold, including those in correspondent accounts and foreign branches. There are estimates inside the U.S. Government that this amount could be as much as \$50 billion, which does not include the \$5 billion in Russian central bank reserves held at the Federal Reserve, which are commonly reported in the press. Can you bring us up to speed on where that reporting stands? What instructions were given by the President, and what form did they take? Will he issue an Executive Order that will be made public?

Answer:

On July 22, the President delegated to the Secretary of the Treasury the functions and authorities vested in the President by sections 104(a)(1) and 104(a)(2)(A) of the REPO Act. We defer to the Department of Treasury regarding section 104(a).

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary Antony Blinken by
Representative French Hill #3
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
May 22, 2024**

Question:

I understand that Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) may already have confidentially asked for information from U.S. financial institutions, but that information request was not made public as most similar Treasury sanctions efforts are. Why not make the information request public? Please elaborate on how the reporting is progressing.

Answer:

We defer to the Department of Treasury on this question.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary Antony Blinken by
Representative French Hill #4
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
May 22, 2024**

Question:

Mr. Secretary, Section 104(d) of the REPO Act requires the President to create a Ukraine Support Fund for all the seized Russian sovereign assets to later transfer to Ukraine, either through a new international mechanism, which has yet to be established, or bilaterally. What is the status of this fund, has the President established it yet, and can you provide us with more details about how exactly it will work and where will it be housed and managed? If the President has not yet established the Ukraine Support Fund, why not?

Answer:

The United States has not seized, transferred, or confiscated any Russian sovereign assets subject to the jurisdiction of the United States and has not yet created a Ukraine Support Fund. The United States Government is currently reviewing authorities under existing mechanisms, as well as consulting with allies and partners.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary Antony Blinken by
Representative French Hill #5
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
May 22, 2024**

Question:

Sec. 105 of the REPO Act requires the President to coordinate with our G7 and other allies to develop an international mechanism and a “Ukraine Compensation Fund” to complement the existing register of damages that has been created in Ukraine and Europe. Please update the committee on where those negotiations stand.

Answer:

Since late 2023, the United States has coordinated with the G7, the European Union, and other partners and allies regarding the disposition of immobilized Russian sovereign assets. In a separate effort to pursue accountability for Russia, the United States was proud to become a founding Associate Member of the Register of Damage Caused by the Aggression of Russia in Ukraine, hosted at the Council of Europe, when it was established in May 2023, and to support the Register as it begins to accept claims.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary Antony Blinken by
Representative French Hill #6
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
May 22, 2024**

Question:

Since the Administration seems unwilling at this time to actually seize the Russia sovereign assets as contemplated by Congress and authorized by the REPO Act... Please tell the committee more about the G7 \$50 billion collateralized loan idea, which will be based solely on interest earnings from the immobilized Russian sovereign assets. How will the loan, which I understand will be offered to Ukraine as a grant through the World Bank Trust Fund for Ukraine, work operationally? How can you legally seize the interest on the Russian sovereign assets without also simultaneously seizing the underlying assets as principal and collateral? When will we see details in advance of the Leaders Summit on June 13-15? Will you commit to briefing this committee in advance?

Answer:

At the G7 Apulia Summit in June 2024, the G7 announced it will launch “Extraordinary Revenue Acceleration (ERA) Loans for Ukraine,” in order to make available approximately \$50 billion in additional funding to Ukraine by the end of 2024. The G7 intends to provide financing that will be serviced and repaid by future flows of extraordinary revenues stemming from the immobilization of Russian Sovereign Assets held in the EU. We are working

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with our G-7 and EU partners on the parameters of the ERA loans and will continue to keep Congress informed as the initiative develops.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary Antony Blinken by
Representative French Hill #7
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
May 22, 2024**

Question:

According to the Levinson Act, there are 11 criteria that can be used to determine if an American is wrongfully detained abroad. In the Levinson Act, the Secretary of State is charged to review the cases and determine whether U.S. nationals are wrongfully held. Can you briefly walk me through the process for how that works? How do cases get flagged for the Office of the Special Presidential Envoy for Hostage Affairs (SPEHA) to review? Does the SPEHA office make recommendations or just provide you the underlying facts of an individual's case? Who ultimately makes the determination? When you decide to not designate an American as wrongfully detained, how do you communicate that to the family?

Answer:

While I ultimately make the determination, the process is a whole of Department effort from initial review of a detention to a determination. These steps include, but are not limited to, collecting and reviewing information from various sources and checking with Department of State offices and interagency partners to ensure whole of government information sharing. We are in frequent contact with families throughout

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the entire process, emphasizing that we continue to evaluate cases. Our assessment can change as new facts emerge.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary Antony Blinken by
Representative French Hill #8
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
May 22, 2024**

Question:

I understand you more than likely cannot discuss individual cases in this open setting, but there have been inconsistencies in the way your administration makes these determinations. In May 2022, Brittney Griner was given a wrongful determination less than 3 months after her arrest in Russia for drug trafficking in February 2022, and she was eventually freed. Yet other cases, such as that of Marc Foley, a schoolteacher who was arrested in Russia on similar drug smuggling charges, have yet to receive this important designation and still languish in a state of limbo. Moreover, while the vast majority of Americans are wrongfully held in adversarial countries, some are held by friends or at least those with which we have close diplomatic ties.

We are three years into this administration, during which we have paid ransom to get Americans out of Iran and executed a prisoner exchange with Venezuela. Despite these successful efforts to return Americans home to their loved ones, there has been little progress made to return any of the wrongfully held Americans from China, despite consistent and frequent dialogues with the CCP – including your meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping last month. Is there a reluctance to designate Americans held in friendly countries?

Answer:

Each and every detention of a U.S. national overseas – irrespective of country – is reviewed for indicators of wrongfulness. The Department

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consistently raises wrongful detention cases with the PRC, calling for their immediate release through all appropriate diplomatic channels.

I am committed to transparency, and we share as much information about the wrongful detention process as we can. If any member has inquiries about the status of a specific pending case, we are glad to provide updates or briefings with all information we are able to convey.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary Antony Blinken by
Representative French Hill #9
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
May 22, 2024**

Question:

Majd Kamalmaz Question: In February 2017, Majd Kamalmaz was detained by Syrian police while visiting the country for the funeral of his father-in-law. According to the New York Times on Saturday May 18, earlier this month, “eight national security officials told [the Kamalmaz family] that highly credible, classified information indicated [Majd] had died in captivity [after being] held in one of the world’s most notorious prison systems.” Despite telling the family, the Administration has yet to publicly mention Majd or his passing at the hands of the Assad regime. Further, you or anyone else from the administration has yet to officially give Majd or the Kamalmaz family the determination that he was wrongfully detained. I would only like YES or NO answers: First, do you have any comment on this case?

Has the State Department publicly declared that Majd Kamalmaz is no longer alive?

Is the State Department prepared to declare today that Majd Kamalmaz has passed?

Is the State Department prepared to declare that he was wrongfully detained in Syria?

Does the State Department plan to initiate an investigation into Majd’s arrest?

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Answer:

The Department publicly confirmed the death of Majd Kamalmaz on June 11, in partnership with the Kamalmaz family who joined us for a flag raising ceremony in his honor that same day. The Department continues to call on the Assad regime to account for its actions regarding Kamalmaz and all those who are missing or unjustly detained in Syria. I would refer you to the Federal Bureau of Investigation regarding any law enforcement action related to his disappearance and death.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary Antony Blinken by
Representative French Hill #10
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
May 22, 2024**

Question:

Wrongfully Detained Designations: It is my view that the release of wrongfully held Americans should be the first topic discussed in diplomatic engagements with foreign governments.

Mr. Secretary, I implore you to take a stronger stance and to use America's leverage to bring these Americans home.

If we continue to pay ransoms with pallets of cash or the release of billions of dollars to bad actors, then I fear the frequency at which we are seeing Americans arrested abroad will only continue or worsen.

Answer:

We raise each wrongful detention case at the most senior levels and will continue to do so until every one of them is reunited with their family. We have not seen an uptick in wrongful detentions but are committed to deterring states from engaging in this practice by raising the cost through our sanctions authorities, including the Levinson Act, visa restrictions, and other tools. We are also engaging with civil society and the private sector to

bolster prevention efforts. We work with like-minded governments to raise the price through collective action, recognizing we cannot succeed alone.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary Antony Blinken by
Representative Nathaniel Moran #1
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
May 22, 2024**

Question:

The need for allies and partners has never been greater. Yet, the Biden administration's foreign policy has been weak and reactionary. The Biden administration has instituted a ban on U.S. LNG export permits to non-Free Trade Agreement (FTA) countries, which includes European Union member states. Do you agree that U.S. energy exports contribute positively to our national security interests and to the security of our allies in Europe?

Answer:

The Department of Energy (DOE) announced on January 26 a temporary pause on the review of pending non-Free Trade Agreement LNG export applications to update the economic and environmental analyses that inform DOE's decisions. DOE's temporary pause has no impact on currently authorized projects. The United States is the number one exporter of LNG worldwide, with U.S. LNG exports expected to double by 2030. The United States is well-positioned to continue supporting the energy security needs of our allies, including those in Europe, for years to come.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary Antony Blinken by
Representative Nathaniel Moran #2
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
May 22, 2024**

Question:

Do you agree that it is contrary to the national security interests of the U.S. for European countries to be dependent on Russia for LNG?

Answer:

Europe's energy security is in the U.S. national interest. The United States has long maintained Russia is not a reliable energy supplier, as proven time and again by its weaponization of energy. We promote diversification of energy suppliers, routes, and fuel types to achieve energy security and eliminate the opportunity for malign actors like Russia to use energy as a tool of coercion. The EU has made dramatic progress in reducing dependence on Russian gas. Russian LNG made up just six percent of EU natural gas imports in 2023; by contrast, U.S. LNG made up 18 percent.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary Antony Blinken by
Representative Nathaniel Moran #3
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
May 22, 2024**

Question:

Does the ban increase or decrease the probability that European nations will turn to Russia for its LNG needs?

Answer:

The temporary pause to update the Department of Energy's (DOE) analyses does not affect Europe's ability to meet its short-term energy demand. We are proud that U.S. LNG providers have been able to support our European allies as the largest supplier of LNG to Europe. With export capacity projected to double by 2030, the United States is unwavering in its commitment to support Europe. The pace at which already authorized projects are progressing will ensure that the United States will continue to meet expected European demand, now and through the end of the decade.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary Antony Blinken by
Representative Nathaniel Moran #4
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
May 22, 2024**

Question:

Have any foreign leaders that you have met with expressed concerns surrounding this administration's ban on issuing new permits for LNG facilities? If so, what is the State Department doing to address those concerns?

Answer:

The Department of State continues to engage with international partners and allies on all aspects of foreign policy, including to convey that the United States is committed to the national security of our allies, tackling the climate crisis, and supporting the energy security of our partners. We have communicated that this temporary pause, intended to update economic and environmental analyses for the Department of Energy's (DOE) decisions on applications, will not affect our ability to supply and support our global allies and partners in the near term.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary Antony Blinken by
Representative Nathaniel Moran #5
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
May 22, 2024**

Question:

A recent U.S. official recently confirmed that the United States is working with United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) to deliver aid from the recently built U.S. pier in Gaza. Is the State Department currently paying funds – either directly or indirectly – to UNRWA in connection with any aid distribution efforts in Gaza? What is the extent of the involvement of UNRWA of U.S. aid distribution? To what extent is the U.S. still dependent on UNRWA in the middle east?

Answer:

The Department has not made any contribution, grant, or other payment to UNRWA since January 2024, and we will continue to comply with all relevant statutory restrictions on U.S. funding to UNRWA. We remain in contact with UNRWA and its donors on planning and operations in Gaza and the region. The United States continues to provide lifesaving humanitarian assistance through other UN partners and international organizations.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary Antony Blinken by
Representative Nathaniel Moran #6
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
May 22, 2024**

Question:

Last fall, the House passed H.Res. 683, sponsored by Congresswoman Monica de la Cruz of Texas, regarding the 1944 Water Treaty between the U.S. and Mexico. It is my understanding that you met with parties of the Texas delegation last month where you shared that you would be having meetings with top Mexican officials directly on this matter. Has the State Department met with Representatives from Mexico to discuss their obligations concerning the 1944 Water Treaty? If so, what were the outcomes of the meeting? What is the plan of action to secure water deliveries from Mexico under this treaty?

Answer:

I have personally raised this issue with Mexico's Foreign Secretary, asking Mexico to deliver water to the United States and sign the Rio Grande agreement. Ambassador Salazar continues to urge Mexico to take these steps in meetings with senior officials from the Government of Mexico. Congress has been an effective partner in urging Mexico to sign a Rio Grande agreement and make immediate water deliveries. I consulted with the Texas congressional delegation and will continue working in partnership with Congress to resolve this issue.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary Antony Blinken by
Representative Keith Self #1
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
May 22, 2024**

Question:

After the October 7th massacre where Hamas took over 240 hostages, including Americans, why did you advise Israel not to retaliate? If so, what is your rationale?

Answer:

After the brutal attacks by Hamas on October 7th, President Biden and I immediately communicated the United States' support for Israel's right to defend itself, rescue hostages, and protect its citizens; we continue to do so, both publicly and privately.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary Antony Blinken by
Representative Keith Self #2
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
May 22, 2024**

Question:

It has been widely reported that the Biden Administration is withholding intelligence from our strongest non-NATO ally Israel, what is your justification for this decision?

Answer:

The Administration's commitment to Israel's security is unwavering, and the Department will continue to do what is necessary to support Israel to defend itself in the face of threats, including by regularly sharing intelligence.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary Antony Blinken by
Representative Keith Self #3
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
May 22, 2024**

Question:

Mr. Secretary, you are the Chief Diplomat for the United States, why did you make the statement that “there is no direct evidence that Iran was involved” days after the horrific attacks on October 7th? Iran clearly has been providing weapons to Hamas and other proxies in the region. When you make a statement, it means something to both America and the rest of the world, but you clearly made a statement without knowing the facts.

Answer:

The Biden Administration consistently calls out Iran for its support to armed groups engaged in terrorist plots and destabilizing activities. The day after Hamas’s horrific October 7 terrorist attack, I made clear that Hamas would not be Hamas without years of support from Iran. I noted we were looking at Iran’s potential role in the attack and that we had no evidence of direct Iranian involvement. Since October 7, we have continued to deter, confront, and disrupt Iran’s support for terrorism and destabilizing activities, including its support for Hamas, in coordination with our allies and partners.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary Antony Blinken by
Representative Keith Self #4
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
May 22, 2024**

Question:

The Biden administration is impeding Israel's efforts to take Rafah and defeat the remaining Hamas terrorists. At the same time, Iran continues subsidizing its terrorist proxies in the region while funding its nuclear program by selling oil to America's adversaries. Do you think Iran obtaining nuclear capabilities is a good idea? Do you acknowledge that the facts I just presented enable Iran's nuclear program rather than deterring it?

Answer:

We remain focused on addressing Iran's destabilizing activities, in particular its support to terrorist proxies in the Middle East. Iran's nuclear program also remains a grave concern and priority focus. As the President has made clear, the United States will ensure that Iran will never have a nuclear weapon. We continue to use a variety of tools—including multilateral pressure, sanctions, and diplomacy—in pursuit of that goal.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary Antony Blinken by
Representative Keith Self #5
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
May 22, 2024**

Question:

If you set up the strategic environment where Iran's program by covert action (cheating the JCPOA) reaches the point where Israel decides it is in their best interest to take out Iran's nuclear facility, would the Biden Administration support Israel?

Answer:

The Biden Administration has made clear that we remain committed to utilizing all levers of U.S. power to ensure that Iran never has a nuclear weapon. We see diplomacy as the most effective means by which to sustainably do so, but all options remain available. While I cannot specifically speak to a hypothetical scenario of Israel deciding to attack Iran's nuclear facilities, I can speak to our ironclad commitment to Israel's defense. Our continued contributions to Israel's defense against Iran are a clear manifestation of that commitment.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary Antony Blinken by
Representative Keith Self #6
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
May 22, 2024**

Question:

How long can the administration withhold offensive weapons to Israel before the Qualitative Military Edge of Israel, which by law, the administration is required to maintain, is challenged?

Answer:

Our commitment to Israel's security is unwavering. We will continue to provide the means necessary for Israel to defend itself in accordance with international law. To date, we have paused only one shipment of munitions to Israel consisting of 1,818 2,000-lb bombs. No other deliveries of weapons, munitions, equipment, or other services are paused at this time. Since October 7, the Administration has surged billions of dollars of security assistance to Israel, passed a historic supplemental appropriation, and led an unprecedented coalition to defend against Iranian attacks.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary Antony Blinken by
Representative Keith Self #7
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
May 22, 2024**

Question:

Why is the Biden Administration impeding Israel's efforts to take Rafah and defeat the remaining Hamas terrorists? The key to ending Hamas' reign of terror in Gaza is to wipe out their remaining battalions, yet every time Israel makes headway in this operation your Administration expresses direct opposition.

Answer:

We have made clear that we continue to support Israel's goal of dismantling Hamas and have proposed alternative methods of defeating Hamas that do not involve a major ground operation in Rafah. We do not support a full-scale Rafah operation without a credible plan to protect civilians. There are better, more durable ways to dismantle Hamas.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary Antony Blinken by
Representative Keith Self #8
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
May 22, 2024**

Question:

Are you familiar with the recent video showing Hamas terrorists and UNRWA working together in Gaza? Why under any circumstances should the United States trust UNRWA when we know that they cannot be trusted?

Answer:

I take very seriously any evidence of UNRWA staff collaborating with Hamas terrorists just as I take very seriously the accusations that UNRWA staff were involved in the Hamas attacks of October 7. I look forward to the results of the investigation by the UN's Office of Internal Oversight Services into these allegations and any other allegations of Hamas terrorists working with UNRWA. If proven, I fully expect UNRWA to take appropriate action to terminate or prevent hiring of anyone with ties to Hamas terrorists and support full accountability for anyone implicated in the October 7 attacks.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary Antony Blinken by
Representative Keith Self #9
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
May 22, 2024**

Question:

How does President Biden's decision to withhold weapons from Israel – that congress approved to help them win the war – help Israel rescue the hostages?

Answer:

To date, we have paused only one shipment of munitions to Israel consisting of 1,818 2,000-lb bombs for concerns regarding their end-use in dense urban settings. No other deliveries of weapons, munitions, equipment, or other services are paused. The President has made clear we will provide the means necessary for Israel to defend itself in accordance with international law. We are focused on forging an agreement for the release of hostages, an immediate ceasefire, and, ultimately, an end to the war that ensures Israel's security and brings relief to the people of Gaza.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary Antony Blinken by
Representative Keith Self #10
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
May 22, 2024**

Question 10:

Is reducing Palestinian civilian casualties a priority for President Biden and his Administration? Then why did President Biden decide to withhold precision guided weapons that would help minimize casualties?

Answer:

Since the beginning of the conflict, we have made clear to Israel that how it conducts its operations matters. Israel has both a moral and a strategic imperative to protect civilians in Gaza caught in the crossfire of this conflict. To date, the Administration has paused only one shipment of munitions to Israel consisting of 1,818 2,000-lb bombs per our concerns regarding their end-use in dense urban settings as we have seen in other parts of Gaza. No other deliveries of weapons, equipment, or other services are paused at this time, including precision-guidance kits for munitions.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary Antony Blinken by
Representative Keith Self #11
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
May 22, 2024**

Question:

The Hamas charter of 1988 calling for the killing of Jews and destruction of Israel? Do you side with Israel's efforts to defeat Hamas? Why is the Biden administration giving Israel what they need to survive the war, but not giving them weapons they need to end this war? Why is your boss attempting to dictate how Israel should fight this war? (President Johnson approved bombing targets)

Answer:

We stand by Israel's right and obligation to defend its citizens and to secure an enduring defeat of Hamas. The President has made clear that our commitment to Israel's security is unwavering, and we will continue to provide the means necessary for Israel's defense. To date, the Administration has paused only one shipment of munitions, consisting of 1,818 2,000-pound bombs. We continue to discuss this shipment with the Government of Israel. No other deliveries of weapons, munitions, equipment, or other services are paused, and security assistance continues.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary Antony Blinken by
Representative Keith Self #12
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
May 22, 2024**

Question:

The president created a moral equivalence between Palestinian terrorists murdering Israeli civilians and the government of Israel trying to defend them. Why does this Administration continue to condemn the actions of Israel instead of focusing on Hamas?

Answer:

There is no moral equivalence between the horrific actions of Hamas and Israel's legitimate right to self-defense. Any suggestion of equivalence between Hamas terrorists and the democratically elected government of Israel is shameful.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary Antony Blinken by
Representative Keith Self #13
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
May 22, 2024**

Question:

The damage that Biden is inflicting on the U.S.–Israel partnership, is too important to ignore. Why would Israel wait for the United States to approve an operation such as Rafah when the longer they wait, the more time Hamas has to prepare?

Answer:

We have made clear that we continue to support Israel's goal of dismantling Hamas and have proposed alternative methods of defeating Hamas that do not involve a major ground operation in Rafah. We do not support a full-scale Rafah operation without a credible plan to protect civilians. There are better, more durable ways to dismantle Hamas.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary Antony Blinken by
Representative Keith Self #14
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
May 22, 2024**

Question:

As soon as the Iranian attack was over, America's political leadership in the White House was quick to start lecturing Israel once again. Why should Israel listen to anything this Administration says when President Biden has failed to hold Iran and its proxies accountable?

Answer:

The Administration's commitment to Israel's security is unwavering, and the Department will continue to do what is necessary to support Israel to defend itself in the face of threats. We also continue to work closely with our international partners and emphasize swift review, enforcement, and/or expansion of sanctions to further degrade Iran's military industries support to regional proxies and partners.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary Antony Blinken by
Representative Keith Self #15
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
May 22, 2024**

Question:

Secretary Blinken, I think we can all agree that Iran can't be trusted. Why hasn't the Biden administration ripped up the Iran deal when we know that they are continuing to produce weapons of mass destruction?

Answer:

As the President has made clear, the United States will ensure one way or another that Iran will never have a nuclear weapon. We will continue to keep all options on the table in pursuit of that goal. We continue to assess that Iran is not currently undertaking the key activities that would be necessary to produce a testable nuclear device.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary Antony Blinken by
Representative Gregory Meeks #1
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
May 22, 2024**

Question:

This month was the 15th anniversary of the end of the Sri Lankan civil war. More than a decade after the end of the conflict, many of the commitments made by the government regarding devolution, transitional justice, and reconciliation that are essential to addressing the root causes of the conflict remain unfulfilled. What actions is the Administration prioritizing with the Sri Lankan government to fulfil these commitments? What do you see as the principal reasons this process has stalled, and how is the Department working with the Government of Sri Lanka to make progress on these issues?

Answer:

We continue to support credible justice processes for Sri Lankan victims and survivors and encourage the government to protect civil society, journalists, and activists. The United States has utilized its authority under Section 7031(c) of the Department's annual appropriations bill to publicly designate and impose visa restrictions on foreign government officials who have been found to have been directly or indirectly involved in gross violations of human rights. This designation impacts current and former foreign officials as well as their immediate family members.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary Antony Blinken by
Representative Gregory Meeks #2
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
May 22, 2024**

Question:

In February, in remarks at the Raisina Dialogue, Deputy noted that the U.S.-India relationship should ideally be grounded in values and not be a transactional one. At the same time, the United States and India have a shared goal in addressing a more aggressive China. Could you enumerate how, outside of the Quad, the U.S. partnership with India has strengthened deterrence against China in the Indo-Pacific region?

Answer:

Our defense partnership with India, supported by Congress' designation of India as a Major Defense Partner, has deepened operational coordination, information sharing, and defense industrial cooperation. This yields benefits for peace and security in the Indo-Pacific and even globally. The Indian military is using U.S.-origin platforms, including P-8Is and MH-60 helicopters, to defend its border and support maritime security. India has also utilized U.S. equipment to counter-piracy and protect shipping lanes in the Indian Ocean Region.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary Antony Blinken by
Representative Gregory Meeks #3
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
May 22, 2024**

Question:

The Department of State recently submitted a report on the Modernization and Enhancement Strategy for American Spaces and American Corners, pursuant to Section 6606 of the FY23 Department of State Authorization Act. In this report, the Department outlined how the six pillars aligning programming in American Spaces include skills-building programs in STEM and entrepreneurship, tailored to local needs. One urgent local need in South Asia is to increase women's participation in the economy. The World Bank notes that female labor force participation was only 23.6% in 2019 and remains about half that of emerging and developing economies. The World Bank further estimated that South Asia's could be boosted by as much as one percentage point annually if female labor participation was raised to the average of emerging and developing countries. Consistent with section (3) of the Sec. 6606 report requirement, "providing opportunities for United States businesses and nongovernmental organizations to better utilize American Spaces", please elaborate on how American Spaces support existing public-private partnerships advancing women's economic empowerment, including the U.S.-India Alliance for Women's Economic Empowerment, U.S.-Pakistan Women's Council and Alliance for Women's Economic Resilience to better reach women and girls from India, Pakistan and Afghanistan? The Department's report also noted the importance of strategically locating American spaces. How does programming for spaces and the choice of their location intend to foster women's access to American Centers and programming relevant to their participation in the economies of their countries? More broadly, how does the Department leverage its commercial engagement to advance women's economic security globally?

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Answer:

Programming at American Spaces develops women leaders, supports women from marginalized communities, enhances STEAM education for girls, promotes entrepreneurship, improves English language skills, and enables women and girls to build careers. Spaces are strategically located to encourage participation of women and girls, such as in Rawalpindi, where the American Space engages students at Fatima Jinnah Women University, a women's-only public university in Pakistan.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary Antony Blinken by
Representative Gerald Connolly #1
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
May 22, 2024**

Question:

With a leader who has embraced Putin, embodied authoritarianism, increased relations with Iran, and is building the bridge for the Xi Jinping to drive through the front doors of NATO and the EU, how is the Administration ensuring there are real costs for Hungary's behavior?

Answer:

Hungary is a country where independent democratic institutions are under enormous pressure. The United States is concerned about Hungary's deepening and expanding relationships with Russia and the PRC, Hungary's democratic backsliding, corruption, threats to rule of law, and a decrease in media freedom. We stand behind the EU's efforts to address rule of law concerns. We continue to be clear with the Hungarian government and people about our desire for a relationship that is more productive and better aligned with transatlantic values.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary Antony Blinken by
Representative Gerald Connolly #2
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
May 22, 2024**

Question:

Hungary is the only country holding up the U.S. proposal to create a Center for Democratic Resilience within NATO Headquarters. Will you commit to raising this with your counterparts in Hungary to ensure that NATO continues to propound our democratic values enshrined in the founding charter of NATO?

Answer:

All NATO Allies are bound together by shared values: individual liberty, human rights, democracy, and the rule of law. This was reaffirmed just last month at the historic 75th Anniversary Summit in Washington, D.C. and is enshrined in the Washington Declaration. In that same document, all Allies committed to strengthening resilience and to address growing strategic threats, including against our Democratic systems. We will continue to engage with all Allies, including Hungary, on the best path forward to achieve these goals.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary Antony Blinken by
Representative Gerald Connolly #3
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
May 22, 2024**

Question:

I am incredibly concerned by developments in the Republic of Georgia, a democratic partner of the United States that has received EU candidate status, to introduce and advance legislation that mimics Putin's same anti-democratic instrument. How will the State Department support the Georgian people in their path to Euro-Atlantic inclusion and urge leaders to heed their calls for a flourishing and unimpeded civil society, independent judiciary, and a government that respects the rule of law and holds those who engage in corruption accountable?

Answer:

The United States remains committed to supporting the people of Georgia in their pursuit of a democratic future and their Euro-Atlantic aspirations. The Department is working closely with our partners, especially the EU, to push the Georgian government to reverse course, repeal the Foreign Influence Law, and implement the nine EU recommendations, which include judicial reform, strengthening the institutional independence and impartiality of the anti-corruption bureau, and improving human rights protections in collaboration with Georgian civil society.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary Antony Blinken by
Representative Gerald Connolly #4
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
May 22, 2024**

Question:

I introduced legislation co-led by my colleague from South Carolina Joe Wilson to stymie activity related to an agreement between North Korea and Russia to provide material support for Russia's illegal and unprovoked war in Ukraine. The bill passed this committee unanimously by a vote of 40-0. I want to thank the State Department for taking such swift action to sanction entities involved in Kim Jong Un's material support for Russia's illegal war in Ukraine, but more must be done. What more can the administration do to thwart North Korean arms from being used in Putin's bloody war against the Ukrainian people?

Answer:

I am committed to continuing our efforts to impose sanctions under U.S. law against entities and individuals that facilitated Russia-DPRK military cooperation. We will continue to collaborate with partners and allies to impose additional sanctions and expose the DPRK's export of upwards of 50 ballistic missiles and over 15,000 containers of other munitions to Russia for use against Ukraine in violation of UNSC resolutions. We highlighted Russia's and the DPRK's sanctions violations in public UNSC meetings. We will continue to work to disrupt the proliferation of missile technology.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary Antony Blinken by
Representative Gerald Connolly #5
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
May 22, 2024**

Question:

Senator Kaine asked during your appearance at the Senate Foreign Relations Committee about the Northern Virginia Emergency Response System, a non-profit partnership of Northern Virginia local governments, hospitals, and the Commonwealth of Virginia that was called upon by the State Department to provide vital support services – with no advance coordination – for Americans and Afghan evacuees fleeing Afghanistan. Will you ensure those entities who fielded requests from the State Department during the Afghanistan withdrawal are appropriately compensated by the State Department?

Answer:

The safe relocation and resettlement of our Afghan partners and allies remains among my and the President's highest priorities. Enduring Welcome, the successor to Operation Allies Welcome, is a testament to our commitment to honor that promise.

The State Department will continue to work transparently with our state and local partners on this matter.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary Antony Blinken by
Representative Bill Keating #1
House Committee on Appropriations
May 22, 2024**

Question:

Secretary Blinken, during my trip to Kyiv in April, President Zelenskyy made clear to me the urgent need for additional air defense batteries including Patriot systems as well as long-range precision missiles in Ukraine to defeat Russia's aggression. As we know, there are countries across the world, including in the Ukraine Defense Contact Group, who have additional stocks and could immediately provide these weapons to Ukraine. To that end, on May 22, I sent a letter to President Biden requesting he further press allies and partners to provide these needed defense articles. How can we encourage Ukraine's allies and partners, particularly those in the Ukraine Defense Contact Group, to provide or give up further air defense batteries and long-range missile capabilities for Ukraine's immediate use in its war against Russia's aggression?

Answer:

Since February 2022, our allies and partners have provided more than \$48 billion in security assistance to Ukraine. At the Washington NATO Summit we announced, along with our partners, continued provisions for air defense batteries as well as new air defense interceptors. We will continue to coordinate with allies and partners in the Ukraine Defense Contact Group

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and the Integrated Air and Missile Defense Capability Coalition on efforts to provide Ukraine with necessary defense capabilities.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary Antony Blinken by
Representative Bill Keating #2
House Committee on Appropriations
May 22, 2024**

Question:

On May 1st, the U.S. Government determined that Russia used the chemical weapon chloropicrin against Ukrainian soldiers in violation of the Chemical Weapons Convention. Can you provide greater clarity on Russia's use of these weapons and how Russia's use of these weapons further associates the Kremlin with regimes in Iran, China, and North Korea?

Answer:

Russia has been using the chemical weapon chloropicrin against Ukrainian forces in violation of the Chemical Weapons Convention. The use of such chemicals further cements Russia's status, alongside North Korea and Syria, as a pariah state that has used chemical weapons against its own nationals and against Ukraine in violation of international law and human rights in the 21st century. We would be happy to provide a briefing in an appropriate setting to provide greater clarity on Russia's use of chloropicrin in Ukraine.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary Antony Blinken by
Representative Bill Keating #3
House Committee on Appropriations
May 22, 2024**

Question:

One of my top priorities this appropriations cycle is the provision of \$20 million in funding for democracy programs in Central Europe, a region confronting a rise in democratic backsliding. Can you speak about the importance of promoting civil society and NGOs in Central Europe and how this work combats the rise of disinformation and democratic backsliding we have seen in the region?

Answer:

I share your concern that democracies in the region are confronting serious challenges from within and outside their borders. Strong civil societies underpin vibrant democratic states. In fiscal year (FY) 2021, FY 2022, and FY 2023 appropriations acts, Congress included a \$20 million earmark to strengthen democracy and civil society in Central Europe. This funding has supported regional programs to address anti-democratic trends, for example by strengthening civil society, independent media, rule of law, the rights of marginalized populations, and combating antisemitism.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary Antony Blinken by
Representative Joaquin Castro #1
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
May 22, 2024**

Question:

Under the American Service-Members Protection Act (22 USC 7427), “The President is authorized to use all means necessary and appropriate to bring about the release of any person described in subsection (b) who is being detained or imprisoned by, on behalf of, or at the request of the International Criminal Court.” The statute covers certain US persons, allied persons, and individuals detained or imprisoned for official actions taken while the individual was a covered United States person or a covered allied person, and in the case of a covered allied person, upon the request of such government. Does the State Department interpret this statute on its own as authorizing the use of military force by the United States to “bring about the release” of described persons?

Answer:

As the President and I have stated, U.S. concerns about the ICC are better addressed through engagement with all stakeholders, including the Netherlands as host country to the ICC. Should matters of legitimate controversy develop, we would expect to resolve them in a constructive manner, as befitting relations between close partners and NATO Allies.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary Antony Blinken by
Representative Joaquin Castro #2
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
May 22, 2024**

Question:

Secretary Blinken – I would like you to clarify the position of the State Department on the ICC's jurisdiction over personnel of non-States Parties to the Rome Statute, the treaty that established the ICC. Russia is not a state party to the Rome Statute. The Biden administration has supported the ICC's arrest warrant for Russian President Vladimir Putin for war crimes in Ukraine. Do you believe the ICC can have jurisdiction over Putin and other citizens of non-member states? And under what conditions?

Answer:

The extent to which the ICC has jurisdiction over personnel of non-States Parties to the Rome Statute is a fact-specific analysis. For example, unlike Ukraine, the Palestinians do not qualify as a sovereign state and therefore, are not qualified to obtain membership as a state in, participate as a state in, or delegate jurisdiction to the ICC.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary Antony Blinken by
Representative Joaquin Castro #3
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
May 22, 2024**

Question:

Article 94 of the United Nations Charter commits all state parties to the UN Charter to “comply with the decision of the International Court of Justice in any case to which it is a party.” Does the Department consider decisions by the International Court of Justice to be legally binding?

Answer:

The United States recognizes that the International Court of Justice plays a vital role in the peaceful settlement of disputes. Pursuant to Article 59 of the Statute of the International Court of Justice to which the United States is a party, decisions of the Court have no binding force except between the parties and in respect of that particular case.

Additionally, consistent with Article 65 of the Court’s statute, the Court may issue advisory opinions, but these are not binding.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary Antony Blinken by
Representative Joaquin Castro #4
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
May 22, 2024**

Question:

Article 41 of the Statute of the International Court of Justice empowers the International Court of Justice to indicate provisional measures to preserve the rights of the parties before it. In its *LaGrand (Germany v. United States of America)* judgment, the International Court of Justice held that provisional measures orders are legally binding. Does the Department consider provisional measures by the International Court of Justice to be legally binding?

Answer:

Article 59 of the Statute of the International Court of Justice to which the United States is a party, provides that decisions of the Court have no binding force except between the parties and in respect of that particular case. Article 41 empowers the Court through its orders to indicate, if it considers that circumstances so require, any provisional measures. The Court's practice is to assess compliance with provisional measures during later phases of a case.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary Antony Blinken by
Representative Joaquin Castro #5
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
May 22, 2024**

Question:

In what way is the ICC Prosecutor's application for arrest warrants against Israeli leaders creating an equivalence between Hamas and Israeli leaders?

Answer:

By filing for arrest warrants applications against senior Israeli officials together and Hamas terrorists at the same time, the ICC Prosecutor implies an equivalence between the two. Israel is a democracy that has demonstrated the capacity to examine the conduct of its own personnel. Hamas is a brutal terrorist organization that carried out the worst massacre of Jews since the Holocaust and is still holding dozens of innocent people hostage, including Americans.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary Antony Blinken by
Representative Joaquin Castro #6
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
May 22, 2024**

Question:

As of May 22, 2024, is the Netzah Battalion deemed ineligible for U.S. security assistance for gross violations of human rights? If so, what is the status of remediation of the battalion? If not, are they – as of May 22, 2024 - under investigation for gross violations of human rights under the Leahy laws?

Answer:

The State Department has established and implements a careful and deliberate process to implement the Leahy law. As of May 22, 2024, the Department has been engaged with the Government of Israel regarding this unit to obtain additional information, including with respect to the underlying incident and with respect to whether the Government of Israel is taking effective steps to bring to justice any members of the unit responsible for Gross Violations of Human Rights.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary Antony Blinken by
Representative Joaquin Castro #7
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
May 22, 2024**

Question:

Please detail the dollar value and proportion of Foreign Military Financing provided to Israel since FY21 that has been used to procure defense articles or services from Israel through offshore procurement.

Answer:

Consistent with the ten-year Memorandum of Understanding between the United States and Israel, \$2.76 billion (20.9%) of Israel FMF from base FY 2021-2024 appropriations has been used for offshore procurement in Israel.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary Antony Blinken by
Representative Joaquin Castro #8
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
May 22, 2024**

Question:

The Department's report to Congress under National Security Memorandum 20 stated that it is "reasonable to assess that defense articles covered under NSM-20 have been used by Israeli security forces since October 7 in instances inconsistent with its IHL obligations..." To what specific instances was the report referring?

Answer:

Given the nature of the conflict in Gaza, with Hamas seeking to hide behind civilian populations and infrastructure, as well as the lack of USG personnel on the ground in Gaza, it is difficult to assess or reach conclusive findings on individual incidents, including which specific instances involved U.S.-provided defense articles.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary Antony Blinken by
Representative Joaquin Castro #9
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
May 22, 2024**

Question:

Have you sought formal advice from the State Department's Legal Advisor as to whether Israel's actions in Gaza have violated international law, or whether Section 620I of the Foreign Assistance Act has been triggered? If so, what has that advice been?

Answer:

The Department of State Office of the Legal Adviser advises the Department on legal issues under domestic and international law relating to foreign assistance, including military assistance, as well as arms transfers to foreign partners, including Israel. This includes consideration of assistance restrictions and legal issues connected to implementation of the Foreign Assistance Act and relevant U.S. policies, including National Security Memorandum 20 (NSM-20) and the Conventional Arms Transfer (CAT) policy.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary Antony Blinken by
Representative Joaquin Castro #10
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
May 22, 2024**

Question:

You have stated that Israeli settlement expansion in the West Bank is inconsistent with international law. To what provision of international law are you referring?

Answer:

We have no intention of litigating the particulars of each and every settlement-related activity, as it is clear that that Israel's program of government support for settlements is unhelpful to the cause of peace. This Administration has reaffirmed the fundamental conclusion that the Israeli government's settlement program is inconsistent with international law. The two-State solution is the only path to provide for Israel's security and realize Palestinian statehood. It is urgent that the parties return to the negotiations that are necessary to achieve comprehensive peace.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary Antony Blinken by
Representative Joaquin Castro #11
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
May 22, 2024**

Question:

The State Department has said that it trusts Israel to investigate potential violations by Israeli security forces and to appropriately punish offenders. Please list all jail sentences imposed by Israel in connection with the killing by Israeli security forces of the following U.S. citizens: Rachel Corrie, Omar Assad, Tawfiq Ajaq and Shireen Abu Akleh.

Answer:

The Department is not aware of any jail sentences imposed by Israel in connection with these cases. We have engaged in extensive dialogue with Israel on these cases and other reports to raise our concerns and seek additional information about Israeli investigations related to these and other cases, to inform Department considerations.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary Antony Blinken by
Representative Joaquin Castro #12
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
May 22, 2024**

Question:

On May 24, 2024, the International Court of Justice indicated provisional measures in Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in the Gaza Strip (South Africa v. Israel). These provisional measures included an order for Israel to "[i]mmediately halt its military offensive, and any other action in the Rafah Governorate, which may inflict on the Palestinian group in Gaza conditions of life that could bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part." Does the administration interpret the provisional measures indicated on May 24, 2024, to require Israel to refrain from conducting any offensive operations -- as opposed to defensive operations to repel a specific attack or imminent threat of attack -- in Rafah Governorate?

Answer:

Much of the Court's order echoes calls by the international community, including the United States, for Israel to comply with international humanitarian law and take every feasible step to prevent civilian harm and ensure delivery of humanitarian assistance. While we stand by Israel's right and obligation to defend its citizens and secure an enduring defeat of Hamas, with respect to Rafah, the United States has been

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consistent: we do not support a full-scale operation without a credible plan to protect civilians. There are more durable ways to dismantle Hamas.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary Antony Blinken by
Representative Joaquin Castro #13
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
May 22, 2024**

Question:

On May 26, 2024, Israel launched airstrikes against a camp of internally displaced Gazans in Rafah Governorate. In the days following, Israel moved tanks into Rafah Governorate. Does the administration assess that these actions violate the provisional measures indicated by the International Court of Justice on May 24, 2024? If the administration has not yet undertaken an analysis of the legality of Israel's military offensive in Rafah Governorate, or if such an analysis is still ongoing, what resources does the administration need to complete this particular analysis and similar future analyses in a timely fashion?

Answer:

We do not support a full-scale Rafah operation without a credible plan to protect civilians, consistent with international humanitarian law. There are more durable ways to dismantle Hamas. The Court's practice is to assess compliance with provisional measures during subsequent phases of the case. Israel has had to confront an extraordinary military challenge: Hamas has embedded itself within and underneath the civilian population to use civilians as human shields. Israel has an inherent right to defend itself but must do so consistent with international humanitarian law obligations.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary Antony Blinken by
Representative Joaquin Castro #14
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
May 22, 2024**

Question:

In Mid-April 2024, the United States worked with a number of other countries to intercept Iranian missiles, rockets, and drones that targeted the State of Israel. Why wasn't this operation notified to Congress pursuant to the War Powers Resolution?

Answer:

At the President's direction, U.S. forces present in the region took steps to support the defense of Israel against the unprecedented attack launched by Iran and its partners and proxies on April 13. U.S. forces were not directly attacked, and all actions taken were against missiles and uncrewed systems targeting Israel. The Executive Branch did not assess that the actions constituted an introduction of U.S. forces into hostilities for purposes of the War Powers Resolution.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary Antony Blinken by
Representative Joaquin Castro #15
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
May 22, 2024**

Question:

Did the interception by U.S. armed forces of these drones and missiles—including by crewed U.S. warplanes—constitute an introduction of U.S. armed forces into hostilities under the War Powers Resolution? If not, why not?

Answer:

At the President's direction, U.S. forces present in the region took steps to support the defense of Israel against the unprecedented attack launched by Iran and its partners and proxies on April 13. U.S. forces were not directly attacked, and all actions taken were against missiles and uncrewed systems targeting Israel. The Executive Branch did not assess that the actions constituted an introduction of U.S. forces into hostilities for purposes of the War Powers Resolution.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary Antony Blinken by
Representative Joaquin Castro #16
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
May 22, 2024**

Question:

Were these operations conducted pursuant to any specific authorization for the use of military force? If these operations were conducted pursuant to any other authorities, has the Department notified the Congress, as required?

Answer:

These operations were not conducted pursuant to a specific statutory authorization. The President exercised his authority under Article II of the U.S. Constitution to support the defense of Israel and protect U.S. citizens. The Department along with the Department of Defense will continue to keep Congress informed of operations consistent with the law.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary Antony Blinken by
Representative Joaquin Castro #17
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
May 22, 2024**

Question:

Have U.S. armed forces been introduced into hostilities or a situation of imminent hostilities under the War Powers Resolution in connection with the Gaza pier?

Answer:

No. U.S. Central Command's Gaza pier-related activities in support of U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)-led humanitarian assistance efforts did not implicate the War Powers Resolution. No U.S. forces involved with the pier were on the ground in Gaza, and there was neither the intent nor the anticipation that any U.S. forces helping to maintain the pier outside of Gaza would be introduced into hostilities or into a situation where imminent involvement in hostilities was clearly indicated by the circumstances.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary Antony Blinken by
Representative Joaquin Castro #18
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
May 22, 2024**

Question:

Per the 2023 Merit Service Protection Board (MSPB) report, we understand that the State Department ranks the worst for sexual harassment out of all U.S. government agencies. How are you addressing this issue and how is this costly problem affecting national security and the retention problem at the State Department?

Answer:

The Anti-Harassment Program (AHP) investigates sexual harassment (SH) and coordinates with management to ensure the conduct ceases, victims feel safe, and bad actors are held accountable, so all can focus on the mission and the Department can retain talent. AHP is collaborating with the Foreign Service Institute to train managers to immediately and meaningfully address SH. Supervisors and certain management officials must report SH to AHP. The Department encourages any employee who has experienced or is aware of SH to report it to AHP. This applies to discriminatory harassment as well.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary Antony Blinken by
Representative Joaquin Castro #19
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
May 22, 2024**

Question:

I understand that the number of harassment complaints at State has more than quintupled in the last few years, but the number of investigators on harassment has not grown and that State currently has a case backlog of over 1,000 complaints. What is State doing to initiate and close complaints in a more timely fashion? What is your follow-up process with victims regarding the outcome of their complaint and the investigation?

Answer:

The Anti-Harassment Program (AHP) has 384 pending investigations.

In 2024, AHP secured additional contractor support and requested more full-time positions. AHP is reducing its caseload by: collaborating with management and the Bureau of Global Talent Management to ensure supervisors immediately and directly address credible allegations of misconduct; developing a collateral duty investigator program; referring appropriate matters to management; and developing a conflict resolution program. AHP provides victims case closure information as appropriate, in line with privacy laws.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary Antony Blinken by
Representative Dina Titus #1
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
May 22, 2024**

Question:

I recently introduced the Azerbaijan Sanctions Review Act which identifies forty-four Azerbaijani officials responsible for gross human rights violations against Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh and Azerbaijani citizens who aspire for a democratic society. My bill calls on the Administration to conduct a review of these officials to determine if they are subject to sanctions under the Global Magnitsky Act based on their complicity in war crimes, including torture of prisoners of war, execution of captives, the destruction of cultural heritage, arbitrary detentions, and ethnic cleansing. Is the State Department currently considering sanctions on Azerbaijani officials for their role in various violations of international law?

Answer 1:

The Department is reviewing all relevant reports regarding the events that took place before, during, and after Azerbaijan's September 19-20, 2023, military operation in Nagorno-Karabakh. We do not rule out the use of any of the tools at our disposal to achieve our foreign policy goals. However, we do not preview such actions in advance.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary Antony Blinken by
Representative Dina Titus #2
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
May 22, 2024**

Question:

On several occasions, U.S. officials expressed support for the right of Nagorno-Karabakh's Armenians to return to their homes under safe and secure conditions. What has the U.S. done to materially support the right of return and to ensure the safety, security, and dignity of Armenians who wish to return to their homes given the risk of violence under Azerbaijan's rule?

Answer:

The United States supports the voluntary, safe, dignified, and sustainable return for the Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians who wish to do so. Since September 2023, the United States has provided more than \$8.6 million in humanitarian aid for individuals displaced from Nagorno-Karabakh. In April 2024, Administrator Samantha Power announced that USAID was working with Congress to provide an additional \$33 million to Armenia that will assist displaced persons from Nagorno-Karabakh, improve Armenia's food and energy security, and promote regional integration.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary Antony Blinken by
Representative Dina Titus #3
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
May 22, 2024**

Question:

In the decades since the Civil Rights Act's passage, Congress and Presidential Administrations have taken actions to strengthen our commitment to civil rights protections at home and abroad, including efforts to ensure those protections are reflected within our foreign assistance. That is why, in March, I led more than 60 of my colleagues in a letter to you in support of State's two proposed rules for non-discrimination in foreign assistance. Can you speak about why non-discrimination in our foreign assistance is a worthwhile policy to pursue and how the State Department is ensuring that all individuals, including those from marginalized communities, are able to access programs?

Answer:

It is the Administration's core belief that nondiscrimination is foundational to national and global security, and central to safeguarding and advancing universal values, human rights, and fundamental freedoms. Equitable inclusion is a cornerstone of our foreign assistance and critical to programmatic success through increased participation of marginalized, underserved, and underrepresented communities. The Department's

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proposed rules for nondiscrimination will ensure protections for U.S. foreign assistance recipients, enabling access to critical programs and services.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary Antony Blinken by
Representative Sydney Kamlager-Dove #1
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
May 22, 2024**

Question:

President Lopez Obrador has accelerated the militarization of Mexico's government in response to very real threats of organized crime and insecurity. But as the armed forces take responsibility for a growing number of civilian functions, this raises concerns about preserving Mexico's democratic institutions and the government's accountability to the people. How is the U.S. planning to engage the next Mexican administration about the risks of militarization as a governing approach, and how are we providing viable alternatives that protect democracy, human rights, and access to justice?

Answer:

Protecting human rights and mitigating civilian harm is a core part of our work with the Mexican military, including through Leahy vetting prior to providing applicable assistance to security forces and units. With the next administration, we will continue our current practice of encouraging increased accountability and transparency for infrastructure projects with military oversight. We will continue to work with Mexico to build transparent, accountable, and effective public security institutions through both INL and USAID funding and programs.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary Antony Blinken by
Representative Sydney Kamlager-Dove #2
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
May 22, 2024**

Question:

I'm pleased that the Kenyan President is in Washington this week to meet with President Biden and discuss ways to deepen our critical strategic relationship. It is still appalling to me that Speaker Johnson would refuse a bipartisan request to invite the President to address the joint sessions of Congress. And I have to say I'm disappointed that President Biden did not travel to the continent this year as he promised. We cannot let Africa return to the backburner of U.S. foreign policy, where it too often is. Following recent military coups in Sahel countries and the exit of U.S. troops from Niger, is the United States looking to deepen its cooperation with Kenya as an important security partner on the continent?

Answer:

President Biden's designation of Kenya as sub-Saharan Africa's first Major Non-NATO Ally demonstrates our close, strategic relationship. During the state visit, we signed a Memorandum of Understanding to expand Manda Bay Airfield, a long-term investment in Kenya's defense capabilities. Our partnership with Kenya's military and civilian law enforcement is central to countering al-Shabaab in East Africa. This summer, for the first time, we

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have Kenyan candidates at the U.S. Military, Naval, and Air Force Academies, showing our commitment to the professionalization of their military.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary Antony Blinken by
Representative Sydney Kamlager-Dove #3
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
May 22, 2024**

Question:

I commend the State Department for leading the charge to coordinate an international response to the security, governance, and economic crisis in Haiti, and we have seen some important signs of progress in the last few months. The new Transitional Presidential Council provides an important first step toward a political track that must accompany a security solution. How is the United States working to ensure that the council is seen as a legitimate power broker by the Haitian people, by using fair and transparent processes to appoint a new prime minister and ministry heads?

Answer:

In May, the TPC announced the selection of Garry Conille as interim prime minister, and selection of cabinet members began. The Administration remains committed to supporting efforts toward transitional governance in Haiti, including through the Global Fragility Act. We emphasized to transition leaders the importance of transparent communication with the Haitian people on their processes. We also emphasize that solving the political crisis in Haiti requires holding free and fair elections.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary Antony Blinken by
Representative Sydney Kamlager-Dove #4
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
May 22, 2024**

Question:

As conflicts rage around the world, including in Ukraine, Gaza, Sudan, and Haiti, what are we seeing in terms of the meaningful participation of women in peace negotiations and how is the United States working to increase women's representation in conflict resolution efforts?

Answer:

While research shows that peace agreements are more likely to last if women are involved, their meaningful participation continues to be the exception rather than the norm. The Department continues to advocate for the full inclusion of women in not only current and future peace negotiation processes, but ongoing political and security decision-making spaces, in line with the U.S. Strategy and NAP on WPS and WPS Act of 2017. This includes working to improve representation and consultation of women in US lead negotiation processes, such as through women's advisory boards.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary Antony Blinken by
Representative Sydney Kamlager-Dove #5
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
May 22, 2024**

Question:

The clean energy transition is an existential priority in the fight against climate change. It also has the potential to create new strategic vulnerabilities given the PRC's dominance of EV battery production. Concerningly, the PRC is growing its presence mining lithium in Nigeria and cobalt in the Democratic Republic of Congo. How is the United States working to counter PRC efforts to monopolize lithium and cobalt mining on the African continent and provide U.S. alternatives that promote better governance, human rights, labor, and environmental standards?

Answer:

Executive Order 14017 of 2021 led to an assessment of our critical mineral supply chains showing our over-reliance on non-diversified foreign sources threatened our security. Complementing efforts to improve domestic production, the State Department promotes international supply chain diversification, such as the Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment and the Minerals Security Partnership, to support a level playing-field for U.S. firms, adhering to high environmental, social, governance, and labor standards with like-minded partners.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary Antony Blinken by
Representative Jason Crow #1
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
May 22, 2024**

Question:

In your testimony to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, you indicated that you would be open to working with Congress on an appropriate response to the ICC's announcement that they are pursuing applications for arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Israeli Minister of Defense Yoav Gallant. White House spokespersons Karine Jean-Pierre and John Kirby have since said that the Administration does not view sanctions on the ICC as the appropriate path forward. Can you please share what possible impact such sanctions could have on U.S. passport holders?

Answer:

The Administration opposes any effort to sanction the ICC, its staff, its judges, or those who support or work with it. Sanctions would impede our ability to defend Israel and U.S. citizens, including servicemembers; undermine accountability efforts for Ukraine and Darfur; and alienate us from allies. Sanctions could have sweeping consequences, particularly to the extent they would limit engagement of U.S. persons with and/or require sanctions against witnesses; top ICC funders like the UK, France, Germany, and Japan; ICC staff; and NGOs. No waiver will mitigate these risks.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary Antony Blinken by
Representative Jason Crow #2
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
May 22, 2024**

Question:

Secretary Blinken, in recent remarks you said that the United States would “adapt and adjust” its stance on whether the Ukrainians could strike military targets in Russia with American-made weapons based on changing battlefield conditions. Recent reporting indicates that the administration quietly gave Ukraine permission to strike inside Russia near the area of Kharkiv only, but that the policy prohibiting long-range strikes inside Russia has not changed. Will the State Department support efforts to adjust that policy, in light of the Russian build-up of forces along Ukraine’s border in preparation for a potential ground offensive? And will the State Department encourage European nations to demonstrate the same flexibility in the use of the weapons they provide to Ukraine?

Answer:

U.S. assistance to Ukraine is aimed at enabling Ukraine’s forces to defend themselves against attacks from across the border and, more broadly, ensuring the strategic failure of Russia’s attempt to change international borders unilaterally by force. We will continue to encourage our allies and partners to support Ukraine’s self-defense against Russia. This includes adapting policy guidance to meet changing conditions.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary Antony Blinken by
Representative Jason Crow #3
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
May 22, 2024**

Question:

As you noted in your opening statement to the Committee, the Global Engagement Center works to counter propaganda and disinformation from malign actors, including Iran, the PRC, Russia, and Hamas. How are our adversaries using disinformation tactics to amplify their current efforts in other arenas, such as Russia's war in Ukraine or Iran's support for proxies like Hamas and Hezbollah? What does the United States stand to lose in terms of our ability to counter disinformation and propaganda if GEC's mandate is not extended before it expires this year?

Answer:

The Global Engagement Center (GEC), which focuses internationally, is singularly dedicated to directing and coordinating U.S. efforts to counter foreign propaganda and disinformation abroad. If the GEC's statutory mandate were to lapse, the PRC and Russia would likely seize upon the opportunity to try to convince U.S. allies and partners that the United States lacks a firm commitment to counter foreign propaganda and disinformation and to extend their global influence.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary Antony Blinken by
Representative Jason Crow #4
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
May 22, 2024**

Question:

The United States paused support to UNRWA following allegations that roughly a dozen employees may have been involved in the horrific October 7th terrorist attack on Israel. In the intervening months as investigations into these allegations have continued, a number of countries have resumed aid to the organization. The U.S. Congress also passed an appropriations bill this year that prevents the resumption of U.S. aid to UNRWA before March 2025. How will the Administration use the outcome of the aforementioned investigations to inform what steps are necessary to resume aid to UNRWA?

Answer:

The Department supports the UN investigations. As I have said, it is important these allegations are thoroughly investigated, that there is clear accountability, and, as necessary, that UNRWA, the UN, and member states put in place additional measures so that this does not happen again. We commend the UN's fast launch of the investigation as well as Secretary-General Guterres' pledge to take decisive actions to respond, should the allegations prove accurate.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary Antony Blinken by
Representative Jason Crow #5
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
May 22, 2024**

Question:

What assurances by UNRWA regarding neutrality do you anticipate will be required before the U.S. will consider resuming funding to UNRWA?

Answer:

We will continue to comply with all relevant statutory restrictions on U.S. funding to UNRWA. We support the important recommendations of former French Foreign Minister Colonna's independent review of UNRWA neutrality mechanisms and procedures. The report makes numerous recommendations, some of which can be implemented immediately, while many will require significant time and additional funding to implement. We welcome the UNRWA Commissioner-General's commitment to implementing these recommendations and will monitor implementation.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary Antony Blinken by
Representative Jason Crow #6
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
May 22, 2024**

Question:

How will the U.S. work with the UN and other partners to strengthen or reform UNRWA in the long-term?

Answer:

The United States has long advocated for reforms to enhance UNRWA's neutrality and improve its sustainability. We are complying with statutory restrictions on U.S. funding to UNRWA. At the same time, we remain politically engaged to push for UNRWA reforms, including implementation of the Colonna Report's recommendations. Many recommendations will require time and funding to implement and will involve stakeholders committing to carrying out innovative, collaborative compromises and solutions to strengthen and reform the organization.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary Antony Blinken by
Representative Jason Crow #7
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
May 22, 2024**

Question:

In 2023, the Administration notified Congress that the Ethiopian government is no longer engaging in a “pattern of gross violations of human rights” and this determination allowed for the resumption of U.S. financial assistance to Ethiopia. In the intervening time frame, conflict has continued across several regions of the country, including the Amhara region. Is it still the Administration’s position that the Ethiopian government is no longer engaging in a “pattern of gross violations of human rights”?

Answer:

The Department of State remains concerned about ongoing violence in Ethiopia, especially in the Amhara and Oromia regions. We continue to message to the Government of Ethiopia and the armed groups that grievances must be addressed through peaceful dialogue, civilians must be protected, and human rights violations and abuses are unacceptable.

While we have not concluded that the Government of Ethiopia is currently engaged in a pattern of gross violations of human rights, we are continuously monitoring to assess whether a determination is warranted.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary Antony Blinken by
Representative Jason Crow #8
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
May 22, 2024**

Question:

At an international conference in Paris, French President Emmanuel Macron recently announced that world donors have pledged more than \$2.1 billion in humanitarian aid for Sudan. The aid is intended to go toward food, water, medicines, and other urgent needs, but no timeline was presented. Is the State Department coordinating with the French and other international donors to ensure that this newly pledged humanitarian aid is delivered swiftly?

Answer:

My colleagues at USAID and my team at the State Department are engaging with donors at high levels to encourage disbursement of the \$2.17 billion committed in Paris. As of May 21, the United States has provided more than \$1 billion for the Sudan emergency response since the beginning of FY 2023. In senior and working level engagements, the U.S. government continues to press other donors to do and give more.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary Antony Blinken by
Representative Jason Crow #9
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
May 22, 2024**

Question:

The conflict in Sudan has triggered widespread violence and instability in Sudan. This violence is being fueled in part by weapons from foreign nations, in violation of U.N. sanctions. The United Arab Emirates' (UAE) reported actions, including the provision of material support, arms, and supplies, to the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) is particularly alarming. You formally announced last year that members of the RSF and allied militias have committed crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing, and possible war crimes in Sudan. In light of these concerns, is the State Department working to prevent continued UAE support to the RSF?

Answer:

I have directly engaged Emirati officials and others on the need to cease material and financial support to the belligerents, and to channel leverage toward bringing the parties to the negotiating table. The UAE is working with Special Envoy Perriello to encourage the belligerents to agree to participate in ceasefire negotiations. The Department is also funding research programs to monitor arms flows and is working to renew all measures under the UN's Sudan sanctions regime, including the Darfur arms embargo and Panel of Experts.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary Antony Blinken by
Representative Jason Crow #10
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
May 22, 2024**

Question:

The Kenyan-led Multinational Security Support (MSS) mission, authorized by the United Nations Security Council in October 2023, is expected to be deployed to Haiti soon. The authorizing resolution states the MSS mission will provide operational, static, and training support to the Haitian National Police. What are the established rules of engagement (ROE) for the MSS force? Is the U.S. considering contingency plans for what will be required if the security situation on the ground in Haiti has not improved after the MSS mandate expires? Are there plans to eventually transition to a U.N. peacekeeping mission?

Answer:

The MSS currently has 400 personnel from Kenya on the ground.

Since its deployment in June, the MSS has worked to establish interoperability and conducted training and joint patrols with the Haitian National Police (HNP). The MSS Commander issued the Directive on the Use of Force, which outlines when personnel are authorized to use lethal or non-lethal force in support of the HNP. The upcoming mandate renewal process in October will provide an opportunity to review the mission's progress and determine the path forward.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary Antony Blinken by
Representative Gabe Amo #1
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
May 22, 2024**

Question:

Armenia is a prime example of democratic resilience, even as it is surrounded by aggressive authoritarian regimes, and has taken massive strides to evolve into a strong and lasting democracy, which the State Department has a duty to support. Given the ongoing threats to Armenia's democracy posed by external forces — including Azerbaijan and Russia — how does the State Department plan to leverage the United States' financial commitment to reflect a stronger bilateral relationship with Armenia?

Answer:

Assistant Secretary O'Brien led a delegation to Yerevan on June 11 to participate in the United States-Armenia Strategic Dialogue Capstone, where he discussed how we intend to expand our cooperation with Armenia on energy diversification, food security, trade diversification, business development, regional connectivity, defense and security, and support for displaced persons. The United States, in close cooperation with Congress, plans to provide over \$77 million in FY2023 assistance to Armenia. This figure is up from around \$41 million two years ago.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary Antony Blinken by
Representative Gabe Amo #2
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
May 22, 2024**

Question:

The Biden Administration's Strategy Towards Sub-Saharan Africa rightfully expressed concern that China sees Africa as important to advancing their interests and weakening U.S. relations around the globe. Please detail the steps the administration is taking to combat the China's pressure and influence campaign in Africa. How does the administration plan to bolster U.S. presence on the African continent to address the concerns raised in President Biden's strategy?

Answer:

In line with the Biden Administration's Strategy Towards Sub-Saharan Africa, our approach to bolstering U.S. engagement with our African partners is to offer a better value proposition that is in line with the interests and values of the United States and African countries and that supports their ability to make decisions free from coercion. We seek to offer a credible alternative to the PRC development model, while promoting transparency and good governance.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary Antony Blinken by
Representative Gabe Amo #3
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
May 22, 2024**

Question:

We must have an immediate, lasting ceasefire to end the devastation in Gaza and ensure security for both Israelis and Palestinians. How are you and other U.S. leaders elevating the humanitarian imperatives as ceasefire negotiations continue?

Answer:

The United States continues to stress that the most effective way to address the urgent humanitarian challenges in Gaza is to reach an immediate and enduring ceasefire. At the same time, we remain intensely focused on getting more humanitarian assistance into Gaza now and, once it enters Gaza, having aid reach the people who need it most. The United States and partners consistently emphasize this in our engagements with the Government of Israel and others.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary Antony Blinken by
Representative Gabe Amo #4
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
May 22, 2024**

Question:

Israeli Defense Minister Gallant determined that by not creating a feasible “day after” alternative to Gaza, Prime Minister Netanyahu is advancing a future of long-term Israeli occupation and civil control of the Gaza Strip - which he said would be a “negative and dangerous option for the State of Israel — strategically, militarily, and from a security standpoint.” Has the Israeli government presented a feasible plan for the “day after” governance of Gaza to the Biden Administration? If not, please describe what the Administration doing to raise with the Israeli government the need to present such a plan.

Answer:

We continue to have discussions with Israeli officials to drive toward a coherent plan for the “day after.” Key regional partners – including Israel, the Palestinian Authority, UAE – have put forward ideas for Gaza post-conflict governance and security arrangements and we are engaging on these with an open mind, sharing our perspective, and seeking areas of consensus.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary Antony Blinken by
Representative Gabe Amo #5
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
May 22, 2024**

Question:

What would be the impact on America's national security interests if Israel does not implement a sustainable day-after plan for Gaza?

Answer:

A sustainable day-after plan for Gaza would set the necessary conditions for durable peace and security and ensure Gaza cannot be used as a platform for terrorism in the future. We continue to engage with partners – including Israel, the Palestinian Authority, key Arab stakeholders, and the G7 – in a serious manner to develop proposals to shape Gaza’s future that align with U.S. national security interests and strengthen regional security. We are committed to building enduring peace and security for and between Israelis and Palestinians.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary Antony Blinken by
Representative Gabe Amo #6
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
May 22, 2024**

Question:

The United States and our partners for several months now have been responding to Houthi attacks and working to degrade the group's capabilities. Unfortunately, Houthi attacks continue, and the group is clearly not deterred. Please discuss the effectiveness of the U.S. and partner strikes on the Houthis. What do we need to do to finally stop these attacks and allow commercial shipping in the area to return to normal operations?

Answer:

I defer to DoD to comment on the effectiveness of U.S. and partner strikes to degrade and disrupt Houthi capabilities. The United States has been clear that we and our partners will continue to take necessary action to protect navigational rights and freedoms and commercial shipping from Houthi attacks in this critical international waterway and to safeguard vital economic and humanitarian assistance to countries in the region. We remain focused on securing a ceasefire in Gaza. The Houthis have publicly stated they will continue attacks until a ceasefire in Gaza is reached.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary Antony Blinken by
Representative Jim Costa #1
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
May 22, 2024**

Question:

On attempts to deliver more humanitarian aid to Gaza, there are some serious challenges. Of the aid being delivered via the temporary pier built by the United States, we've seen reports that on some days a majority is being stolen or looted. On May 18, Palestinians intercepted 11 trucks and only 5 trucks made it to the World Food Program warehouse in Gaza. Distribution of aid from the pier was paused. What is the United States doing to address these challenges posed by stealing and looting, either by desperate Palestinian civilians or an organized effort by Hamas?

Answer:

It is crucial that sufficient aid reaches civilians in need. The United States is in frequent contact with Israeli and UN officials to monitor convoy movements and assistance distribution, take active steps to mitigate and address reports of interference, and coordinate inflows of assistance, including involving other countries. We continue to stress to all parties that humanitarian assistance cannot and must not be interfered with on its way to reaching those who desperately need it in Gaza, delivery of which is complicated by the breakdown of rule of law in Gaza.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary Antony Blinken by
Representative Jim Costa #2
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
May 22, 2024**

Question:

How is the United States working to better ensure aid in Gaza reaches its intended recipients?

Answer:

Nearly everyone in Gaza depends on humanitarian assistance to survive. The United States is working with UN and NGO partners with a proven history of delivering assistance in challenging contexts to increase assistance to Palestinians. The United States advocates for sufficient assistance to reach all those in need. The single most effective way to address the urgent humanitarian challenges is to reach an immediate and enduring ceasefire.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary Antony Blinken by
Representative Jim Costa #3
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
May 22, 2024**

Question:

India is currently holding a general election—the largest democratic exercise in the world. Democracy is an important underpinning of our partnership. At the same time, many of us are concerned about the human rights situation in India, including a greater restriction on freedom of the press, widespread internet shutdowns, and allegations of Indian government involvement in a murder for hire plot on U.S. soil. On the murder-for-hire plot of an American citizen, what is the U.S. doing to advance full accountability for the appropriate officials responsible? Are you considering sanctions, similar to those placed against Russians following the murder of Alexei Navalny?

Answer:

I have urged the Indian government to conduct its investigation into the murder for hire plot expeditiously and ensure those found responsible are held to account. I and other senior officials at the Department of State and in the interagency continue to stress to the Indian government that we expect accountability and assurances that such activities will never happen again.

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