

**ARMS CONTROL, INTERNATIONAL SECURITY, AND
U.S. ASSISTANCE TO EUROPE: REVIEW AND
REFORMS FOR THE STATE DEPARTMENT**

HEARING
OF THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON EUROPE
BEFORE THE
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
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ARMS CONTROL, INTERNATIONAL SECURITY, AND U.S. ASSISTANCE TO EUROPE: REVIEW AND REFORMS FOR THE STATE DEPART- MENT

Tuesday, March 11, 2025

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON EUROPE
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
Washington, D.C.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 2 p.m., in room 2200 Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Keith Self (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Mr. SELF. The Subcommittee on Europe will come to order. The purpose of this hearing is to discuss the subcommittee's areas of jurisdiction for State Department reauthorization, which includes the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, the Bureau of Arms Control, Deterrence, and Stability, and the Bureau of International Security and Nonproliferation. I now recognize myself for an opening statement.

OPENING STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN KEITH SELF

I want to begin by welcoming both members and witnesses to the Subcommittee on Europe's first hearing on State Department reauthorization. Under the leadership of Chairman Mast each subcommittee has been assigned different bureaus from across the State Department in order to conduct oversight, explore potential reforms, and to ultimately authorize the bureaus into law.

It has been a while since reauthorization was accomplished and I look forward to working with colleagues on both sides of the aisle as we move through this important process. It is essential that Congress takes up its responsibility to authorize a State Department that is fully able to execute the mission of making the United States a safer, stronger, and more prosperous country.

As this is our first hearing on this subject I am going to provide a brief introduction to the State Department bureaus this subcommittee will be overseeing in the 119th Congress.

The Bureau of Arms Control, Deterrence, and Stability, also known as ADS, is responsible for diplomatic efforts to increase stability, reduce the risk of unintentional escalation, and prevent conflict. This includes promoting the stability and control of emerging military technologies, including AI and quantum computing, and upholding bans on chemical and biological weapons. ADS also leads

negotiations on nuclear arms control and represents the United States' multilateral forums addressing WMD challenges. Originally created as the Bureau of Verification and Compliance in 1999, the bureau's position of assistant secretary of State is authorized in statute and only that one position.

Next, we have the Bureau of International Security and Nonproliferation, or INS—ISN, excuse me, which is the mission of preventing the spread of WMD delivery systems and advanced conventional weapons capability. Additionally, ISN works to protect U.S. critical and emerging technology and promotes the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, science, and technology. The bureau was formed in 2005 by then Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice through an agency reorganization effort that combined the Bureau of Nonproliferation and the Bureau of Arms Control. The Bureau of International Security and Nonproliferation is currently not authorized in statute by Congress.

The Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, or EUR for short, is responsible for developing and implementing U.S. foreign policy in Europe and Eurasia. The bureau promotes U.S. interests in the region on issues such as international security, NATO, cooperation with the European Union and other regional organizations, support for democracy, human rights, civil society, economic prosperity, nonproliferation, and counterterrorism. One of the key missions of the bureau is the planning, coordination, and delivery of assistance to the region. As Members of Congress it is our duty to ensure that every tax dollar spent abroad is achieving U.S. strategic objectives. Like ISN, the Bureau for European and Eurasian Affairs is not authorized in statute.

Finally, I want to note that this subcommittee also has jurisdiction over the Bureau of Cyberspace and Digital Policy as well as the Export Import Bank, but these will not be the subject of today's hearing.

Out of the three bureaus we are discussing today, only one is explicitly authorized; and that only partially, without clear and concise instruction from Congress to a State Department reauthorization. The legislative branch of Government invites the Executive to have broad powers to shape the structures, personnel, and mission of agencies. It is my belief that a stronger State Department requires clear legislative guidance from the Congress.

As the committee moves through this reauthorization process the experience and insights from our witnesses today will help guide us in working to build a more efficient and effective State Department. I look forward to hearing your testimony and recommendations.

The chair now recognizes the ranking member, the gentleman from Massachusetts, Mr. Keating, for any statement he may have.

OPENING STATEMENT OF RANKING MEMBER WILLIAM KEATING

Mr. KEATING. Thank you, Chairman Self, and thank you for our witnesses being here today.

The arms control, the nonproliferation, the U.S. foreign assistance to Europe has been at the heart of U.S.-led world order since the end of the Second World War beginning with President Truman

in 1948. The Marshall Plan brought more than \$13 billion in investments to European economies, provided the U.S. with significant influence in Europe, and solidified the Transatlantic Alliance that we all benefit from today.

Also borne out of the triumph of the Second World War, a modern day arms control and nonproliferation regimen that has enabled the United States and its adversaries such as the then Soviet Union to work together and reduce the risk posed by nuclear weapons. I remember a time where every American feared for their lives during the cold war and literally when I had a neighbor a couple of streets over who built a bomb shelter in his yard. The Bureau of International Security and Nonproliferation as well as the Bureau of Arms Control, Deterrence, and Stability are critical to ensuring Americans never again live with this fear.

But we didn't come here today to discuss history; we came here today to talk about the future, the future of arms control, international security, and foreign assistance to Europe. The Trump Administration said it is pursuing a foreign assistance agenda to make America stronger, safer, and more prosperous. Ostensibly this includes covering the malign influence of Russia and China. Foreign assistance to Europe does that.

In Europe countries like Moldova, Georgia, Kosovo, and Armenia are seeking greater U.S. economic cooperation and assistance and boosting democratic efforts in those areas. In Ukraine the United States has rebuilt Ukraine's energy grid following the Russian attacks allowing Ukraine to repel them on the battlefield. Sadly, some of those efforts cut with the cuts to USAID. Yet, while the Trump Administration claims to be putting America first, it is actually ceding territory and influence literally in Ukraine and figuratively throughout the European Continent to Russia and increasingly to China.

If the Trump Administration was serious about pursuing its stated goals of making America stronger, safer, and more prosperous, restoring all congressionally appropriated foreign assistance funding to our allies in Europe would be the first step in that direction. On arms control and nonproliferation the ISN and ADS bureaus employ subject matter experts with specialized backgrounds who both verify compliance of our arms control efforts and engage with multilateral institutions to ensure the United States is shaping global norms on these topics and not Russia, not China, not Iran, not North Korea.

Yet the Trump Administration has initiated a reduction in force at the State Department which could target the critical work of the ISN and ADS bureaus and the numerous career civil servants whose expertise is not replaceable.

On each of these issues: arms control, nonproliferation, and U.S. assistance to Europe the Trump Administration must do something it has failed to do thus far. It has to show up. To counter Russian and Chinese malign influence the Trump Administration must show up and provide necessary funding for countries like Moldova, Georgia, Ukraine who are striving to maintain and expand their democracies.

If the Trump Administration is serious about arms control and nonproliferation efforts the administration must show up to multi-

lateral institutions and our bilateral partners and engage proactively. Unfortunately, its effort to fire hundreds of civil and foreign service officers with deep expertise in these issues runs counter to these goals. If the Trump Administration wants to pursue such drastic changes in U.S. policy, it must show up to Congress.

While I appreciate our witnesses' presence here today, the lack of administrative engagement with this committee and the ceding of Article 1 power by this committee and this Republican majority not only undermines the role of the legislative branch, but it harms U.S. national security at this critical time in history.

I will end with this: In 1994 the Budapest Agreement Ukraine agreed to give up its nuclear weapons in exchange for a security guarantee from the United States, Russia, and Britain. Russia obviously abandoned that promise long ago. Over the last few weeks Donald Trump has also broken our promise and won't even acknowledge Russia's aggression. Of course agreements mean nothing if not enforced and Trump's actions undercut the credibility of our country.

Moments ago, after this hearing started, Ukraine and President Zelenskyy agreed to a 30-day cease-fire. I hope that cease-fire is backed up with security guarantees as well, or again they will mean nothing.

Now Ukraine has likely come to regret their decision to give up those weapons. President Zelenskyy is now asking allies for strong security guarantees such as those guaranteed by a nuclear umbrella to deter Russia in its horrific aggression and war crimes. Abandoning our allies in Europe will undermine our allies' belief that the United States is a strong dependable ally. This only emboldens China, Russia, North Korea, and Iran.

If we want to remain a global leader in arms control, non-proliferation, and transatlantic relationships, the United States must show up and we must lead. I look forward to your witnesses' testimony and I yield the balance of my time.

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

We are pleased to have a distinguished panel of witnesses before us today on this very important topic. We have Hon. Yleem Poblete, Ph.D., Dr. Poblete, Former Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Arms Control, Verification, and Compliance, U.S. State Department; Mr. Daniel Kochis, Senior Fellow, Hudson Institute; and Ambassador James O'Brien, Former Assistant Secretary, Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, Department of State.

This chair recognizes the importance of the issues before us and is grateful to have your presence here to speak with us. Your full statements will be made part of the record and I will ask each of you to keep your spoken remarks to 5 minutes in order to allow time for our members to have questions.

I now recognize Dr. Poblete for her opening statement.

STATEMENT OF YLEEM POBLETE

Ms. POBLETE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Keating, distinguished members of the committee and thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

I provide specific detailed recommendations, a plethora of them, in my prepared remarks on potential reforms for the arms control and international security family at the Department of State, otherwise known as the T family, but I would like to address some overarching issues.

First, for American leadership to endure and facilitate and contribute to security and peace we must be strong militarily, economically, and diplomatically. This means perhaps doing more with less. It is something that we were required to do when we were—when I was a staffer on this committee and it is something that can and will be done.

That also begins by placing the security and well-being of the American people and our Nation first and aligning all of our efforts toward that goal. But this does not mean America alone. The U.S. under President Trump supports alliances. Alliances denote that there is an alignment of interest. It denotes that there is an equal stake and equal contributions toward the shared goals of the alliance members.

For decades multilateralism has been viewed as an end unto itself without rigorous or careful examination of the mandate, functions, and relevance of multinational organizations in addressing the current political and threat environment. Such a view is integral to any effort to transform our policies and government to advance U.S. security and interests and leave the U.S. well-positioned for current and future challenges.

To Ranking Member Keating's point about the U.S. showing up: The U.S. definitely shows up in more ways than just foreign aid. In my areas of jurisdiction and when I was at the State Department we show up via Aegis Ashore sites in Europe, via U.S. Navy ships with Aegis ballistic capabilities and systems. We show up with Patriot systems in the European theater as well as other support. This all through the U.S.-European phased adaptive approach to the defense of the European theater.

I too firmly believe that the work of the T family where diplomacy, intelligence, and defense converge is an essential tool in the U.S. arsenal of national security instruments of power. It embodies peace through strength including via verification and compliance, strategic dialogs, deterrence, missile defense, policy, and assistance for nonproliferation efforts.

I have shared a few of the observations included in my prepared remarks, some unpleasant, but we are all seeking to improve our capabilities. As Assistant Secretary for Verification and Compliance I had the opportunity to indeed work with some brilliant, dedicated, forward-thinking professionals and faithful public servants and patriots in this space, but also observed others pining for and operating in a distant past or seized by nativism, losing focus of U.S. interests, priorities, and objectives.

The Eurocentrism/Euro dominance stemming from cold war dynamics, arms treaties, and agreements has led to the usurpation of some T family responsibilities including those statutorily required, the utilization by the intelligence community of findings and assessments by international organizations instead of providing U.S. intelligence, manipulation of clearance processes to usurp statutory

roles and authorities of decisionmakers and advance personal agendas.

Examples include scope content determinations relating that the compliance report, specifically with respect to Iran, personnel in the Office of the Legal Advisor reversing previously clear determinations and approved language on such matters as violations of U.N. Security Council resolutions, and assistant secretary-level clearances changed before they reach the secretary's desk.

Some of the recommendations: To succeed in reforming, realigning, streamlining, and optimizing there must be clear guidance and leadership on agenda priorities and scope. This applies to undersecretaries, bureaus' offices up the chain of command to the secretary. And it should also guide the authorization process. We need clear lines of demarcation, transparency and honesty in reporting. Stop over-classification to hide information from the Congress or the American people, particularly when data is in the public domain. Return to unclassified reports with classified TS/SCI Annexes as mandated by statute. No versions of intermediate classification. Dramatically increase the scope of a compliance report in terms of the subject matter covered and information used to inform the judgments and documents.

Optimization: T has to be fully integrated. No marginalization or subordination to regional bureaus. The T should reflect the current landscape in scope and message as potentially the Undersecretary for Global Security and Strategic Domains. This includes outer space, undersea, AI, and cyber.

Eliminate congressional and public affairs offices and personnel within bureaus as all these requests should go through the departments' respective bureaus and offices to ensure maximum coordination and message cohesion.

Bring matters pertaining to the Antarctic Treaty; Arctic Affairs; Artemis Accords, given based on the Outer Space Treaty; Space Traffic Management, already handled by the ADS Bureau, the ESC office of that bureau, to a revamped and renamed ADS Bureau.

Funds and assistance programs should be consolidated into one dedicated office, not an additional office, but one office dedicated to such funding and oversight with—similar to regional bureaus. Other eliminations, consolidations, and reductions including in structure, personnel, and functions are included in my prepared testimony.

In sum, we are being called to do what is right and necessary, not what is easy or popular. I look forward to your questions and to working together to make the Department of State foreign policy and programs more efficient and in the hope of ushering in a new era of American leadership and greatness while advancing security and peace for the U.S., the American people, and worldwide.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

(Prepared statement of Ms. Pobleto follows:)

Prepared Remarks by Hon. Yleem D.S. Poblete, PhD

**U.S. House of Representatives
House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Europe**

“Arms Control, International Security, and U.S. Assistance to Europe: Review and Reforms for the State Department”

Tuesday, March 11, 2025

Mr. Chairman, thank you for this opportunity to testify before the Subcommittee and provide specific recommendations for potential reforms for key bureaus at the U.S. Department of State and our foreign policy system.

Many share the urgency of transforming our policies and government to advance U.S. security and interests, deliver for the American people, and leave the U.S. well-positioned for years to come.

Others consumed with maintaining the status quo and the largesse of the bureaucratic state, appear to have forgotten the fundamental truth that our government derives its “just powers” and authorities from “the consent of the governed” as stated in the Declaration of Independence, and that all who serve the nation are accountable to the American people.

This was my guiding principle during over 20 years of U.S. government service in the Legislative and Executive branches. It also directed my approach to today’s hearing, with my testimony focusing on the Arms Control and International Security (T) family at the Department of State.

Assessment

I firmly believe the work of the T family—where diplomacy, intelligence, and defense converge—is an important tool in the U.S. arsenal of national security instruments of power.

Overarching Questions

Is the T family aligned with an America First approach where their functions advance U.S. national security and maximize the return on U.S. investments, including vis-a-vis programs/funds, overseas missions, and at international organizations under their areas of responsibility? Is there duplication, waste, fraud, or abuse?

Are the T office and current T family of bureaus performing their duties as statutorily prescribed and delivering the highest quality most efficiently?

Does the T family reflect the current threat environment while looking to the future and adapting its structure and programs to identify, deter, and safeguard against emerging threats entirely consistent with statutory requirements and direction?

Given that the T family is at the nexus of several Executive Orders and a National Security Presidential Memorandum, is the T family responsive to, and taking actions following, these Presidential directives?

Context

I was a professional staff member on this Committee during:

- the hearings, debates, negotiations, adoption of the Foreign Affairs Reform and Restructuring Act; the creation of the Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security (T) and bureaus in the T family, specifically the Verification and Compliance Bureau (known as the Arms Control, Verification, and Compliance Bureau when I served as Assistant Secretary and now referred to as the Bureau of Arms Control, Deterrence, and Stability.) Notably, the formal nominations by the President are for Verification and Compliance, per statute; and
- during three separate reorganization efforts under the administrations of President George W. Bush and President Barack Obama.

Conducted oversight of these proposals, the T family, and the Department of State and U.S. assistance writ large throughout, including as Republican Minority and Majority Staff Director, before being nominated by President Trump and confirmed by the Senate to serve at the Department.

Serving in an agency established at the very foundation of our Republic was both an extraordinary privilege and a profoundly fulfilling experience. The role afforded numerous opportunities for meaningful accomplishments and contributions to national security, advancing President Donald Trump's America First agenda.

During my tenure, I was struck not only by the dedication and talent of some but also by the challenges and institutional obstacles that required urgent attention. Here are a few of my general observations:

Observations

- There are brilliant, dedicated, forward thinking professionals and true public servants and patriots– from the scientific experts, such as the nuclear chemist with scores of patents contributing to U.S. security, superiority, deterrence and defense and, some, directly benefiting the American people and humanity; to the military personnel, technical and policy experts who apply their diverse backgrounds and experience to ensuring security, stability and peace via diplomatic means.
- The value of the statutory imprimatur to diplomatic success cannot be overstated. This was crystallized during my bilateral engagements, presentations to the North Atlantic Council and United Nations fora, negotiations, and other efforts on, for example, Russian noncompliance (violations) of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty leading to the U.S. withdrawal. The fact that the post of Assistant Secretary–my authorities and responsibilities–and the Bureau–its mandate, functions, scope, reports– were responsive to needs identified by the Congress and were intertwined with the will of the American people via their representatives, was indispensable to securing allied and partner support and cooperation.
- Similarly, Congressional support and engagement are critical to the dutiful implementation of policy and statutory requirements and any necessary programmatic, fiscal, and management accountability or reforms.
- There were also areas in need of much improvement. Decades after the FARRA Act and creation/inception of the Arms Control and International Security family, there are those pining for a return to the status quo ante and the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency.
- Others have been seized by nativism, losing focus of U.S. interests, priorities, and objectives and, instead, advocating for international organizations and views of foreign interlocutors. This, in turn, influenced policy and funding recommendations and, had it not been corrected, could have had negative consequences.
- The Eurocentrism/Euro dominance stemming from Cold War dynamics, arms treaties, and agreements has led to the usurpation of some T family responsibilities, particularly relating to verification and compliance.

The Committee report accompanying the relevant legislation enacted into law underscores the supremacy of this T bureau over *“policy and resources for verification and compliance regarding not only various treaties, but also executive agreements and commitments, including those falling within the purview of regional bureaus when such agreements or commitments pertain to arms control, nonproliferation, or disarmament.”*

I further observed:

- Ignorance of statutes and contempt for Congress.
- The utilization by the Intelligence Community of findings and assessments by international organizations, instead of providing policymakers and decision makers, such as myself as Assistant Secretary, with U.S. intelligence and assessments to evaluate and consider in making determinations pursuant to statutory authorities and mandates.
- Hiding of intelligence, despite clearances, and of individual IC views, particularly in the Compliance Report.
- State/INR and certain other components of the IC are acting as policymakers, providing biased and politically charged information instead of objective and honest assessments to the decision makers. This places the nation at risk as delays in documenting and appropriately and effectively addressing noncompliance can perpetuate and compound the dangers to U.S. security.
- Manipulation of clearance processes to usurp statutory roles and authorities of decision makers and advance personal or ideological agendas. Examples include scope, content, determinations relating to the Compliance Report; personnel in the Office of the Legal Advisor reversing previously cleared determinations and approved language on such matters as Iranian violations of UNSC Resolutions; Assistant Secretary-level clearances changed before they reached the Secretary's desk.
- Undue influence of and interference from NGOs. There is a revolving door from and to the T family and NGOs; funding decisions based on past/ future employment ties/opportunities; NGO fundraising off of USG association and programs.
- A few documented conflicts of interests and wasteful spending by Bureau personnel. One example involved a member of the team responsible for the Verification Fund. Upon immediate review, I reversed the individual's approval of and funding for dubious projects and removed the individual involved from the Verification Fund team. The individual proceeded to engage in rampant and overt insubordination in executing his other responsibilities, and any attempts at reasoning, accountability, or reassignment were met with threats of administrative or other retaliatory action against me. Rather than support accountability measures in this and other instances, administrative offices and leadership above me empowered and promoted the individual.

Regrettably, some of the same dynamics may still be at play at the Department as Secretary of State Rubio leads the optimization and reorganization process ordered by President Trump.

Recommendations

The origin of my review and recommendations is statute, combined with Congressional intent and views delineated in Committee reports and Member statements accompanying legislative history. Recommendations are focused on delivering tangible results that will have immediate and durable impact. Some apply to both the T family and EUR.

Overarching

To succeed in reforming, realigning, streamlining, downsizing, there must be:

1. Clear guidance and leadership on the agenda, priorities, scope, and metrics to justify: personnel needs, programs, and funding that effectively and verifiably make the U.S. safer and stronger.
2. Clear lines of demarcation.
3. A clear understanding of the role of international organizations, treaties, agreements, and alliances as valuable tools in the U.S. diplomatic arsenal. However, they are not ends in themselves nor should be viewed in isolation from the application of other elements of U.S. power and global leadership.
4. Burden sharing must be a statutory requirement for all State Department bureaus with international organizations in their areas of jurisdiction.
5. End the practice of rewarding mediocrity and insubordination by promoting poor performers and problematic personnel out of existing roles. Authorities are needed to effectively address insubordination and unauthorized engagement with outside actors, including leaks to the media, which undermine U.S. security and policy priorities.

Transparency/Honesty in Reporting

If a review has not already taken place, there should be an immediate halt of all activities pertaining to reports until a T and respective bureau leaders appointed by the President, working with Presidential appointees at the National Security Council and at relevant agencies, have reviewed the intelligence and the draft reports to ensure fulsome, accurate, honest reporting and that the information and determinations meet statutory requirements. If such a review process may delay submission to Congress, notification and justification would be required for Congressional support

Going forward:

1. Stop overclassification to hide information from Congress and the American people.

2. Return to Unclassified reports with classified TS/SCI Annex as mandated by statute.
3. No versions of intermediate classification.
4. Classified versions shall not contain unclassified information that was not included in the unclassified report.
5. T family leadership should be provided access to intelligence pre-distillation and assessments with dissenting views.
6. Reports shall no longer be mere updates from prior years.
7. Dramatically increase the scope of the Compliance Report in terms of the subject matter covered and the information used to inform the judgments in the document. The Compliance Report must be expanded to include treaties and agreements of new global domains and must be consistent in the inclusion of Chapter VII UNSCRs the U.S. supports. While ISN is the lead for the Department of State on 123 Agreements, with the technical assistance and concurrence of DOE/NNSA and in consultation with the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, the Bureau tasked with verification and compliance must be integrated into the process to ensure compliance can be effectively verified. Consideration should also be given to the inclusion of compliance or noncompliance for nuclear cooperation agreements with foreign governments already covered in other sections of the Compliance Report.

Optimization

1. T has to be fully integrated. No more marginalization or subordination to regional bureaus.
2. T should reflect the current landscape, including messaging. Consider changing the name and scope to Undersecretary for Global Security and Strategic Domains.
3. ADS—statutorily Verification and Compliance— should be renamed Security, Verification and Compliance and its jurisdiction expanded as described below.
4. Eliminate Congressional and Public Affairs offices and personnel within bureaus. All these requests should go through the Department’s respective bureaus and offices to ensure maximum coordination and message cohesion. **One Nation. One Message.**
5. Eliminate all fellowships for State Department personnel in Congress until Congressional staff are afforded reciprocal access to the State Department.
6. Eliminate the International Security Advisory Board (ISAB) and make T part of the Defense Science Board, Space Council, and other such entities relevant to the work of the T family.
7. Eliminate the Political Military Affairs Bureau (PM) in T and place functions in regional bureaus. In principle, other policy considerations are to be considered and Congressional holds are to ensure PM activities are balanced against other priorities and equities. In practice, arms sales are viewed primarily as U.S. job creators, justified as necessary to offset the activities of other countries or to retain U.S. comparative advantage, and/or vital

to U.S. defense priorities and needs, including interoperability. Other equities cannot compete and the process is on autopilot.

8. Eliminate or reduce/reform the Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs (OES) and bring matters pertaining to the Antarctic Treaty, Arctic Affairs, Artemis Accords (given based on Outer Space Treaty), Space Traffic Management (already handled by the ESC office in ADS) to a revamped and renamed ADS Bureau.
9. No more Foreign Service Officers in the T family. Their skill set is better suited elsewhere. FSOs can remain eligible to compete for OPCW, CD, IAEA CoM (if available). As the Assistant Secretary overseeing these missions, I was responsible for the selection, after vetting, and presentation to the D Committee, of candidates to serve as Permanent Representatives to the OPCW and CD. Both were, ultimately, FSOs.
10. Afford greater opportunities for promotion to technical/scientific talent and greater flexibility in accessing the same from other agencies and, as practicable, from the private sector.
11. All matters relating to the Biological Weapons Convention portfolio, compliance with the NPT and Safeguards Agreements, among others, should be moved to respective ADS (proposed to be renamed SVC) offices. (There is too much overlap, and the 2014/15 OIG Report recognized that.)
12. Merge SVC (currently ADS) Regional Security Cooperation office and Multilateral and Nuclear Affairs office into Multilateral Security and Cooperation
13. Eliminate ISN's Office of Congressional and Public Affairs, Office of Policy Coordination, and Office of the Biological Policy Staff; consolidate the nuclear offices; and consolidate AORs and functions of other offices for a maximum number of six (6) offices, accompanied by a reduction of personnel to eliminate duplication, for a total comparable to other T bureaus.
14. Funds and assistance programs should be consolidated into one dedicated office—similar to regional bureaus—with an oversight mandate.
15. While maintaining flexibility in adjustments/changes to AORs within bureaus, Congress should consider whether it is necessary to statutorily cap the number of offices to ensure reduction of personnel (FTEs) to reflect such reorganization. Congress should consider changing the Congressional notification process for any future AOR or structural change to require active, rather than passive, approval by the committees of jurisdiction.

These recommendations aim to assist the Members of this Committee in their oversight and authorization responsibilities, as reviews are concluded and reforms are instituted pursuant to the President's directives, guidance from Cabinet Secretaries, the Office of Management and Budget, and Office of Personnel Management.

Conclusion

The T family—the European and Eurasian Affairs bureau, other bureaus and the Department, and foreign policy and programs—can become more efficient and make the U.S. safer, stronger, and more prosperous, ushering in a new era of American leadership and greatness while advancing security and peace.

Mr. SELF. Thank you, Dr. Poblete.

I now recognize Mr. Kochis as his opening—for his opening statement. Thank you.

STATEMENT OF DANIEL KOCHIS

Mr. KOCHIS. Thank you. Good afternoon, Chairman Self, Ranking Member Keating, and distinguished members of the subcommittee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today on this important topic.

My name is Daniel Kochis. I am a senior fellow in the Center on Europe and Eurasia at the Hudson Institute and I am grateful for the opportunity to offer my testimony this afternoon. Please note that the views I express in this testimony are my own and should not be necessarily construed as those representing the Hudson Institute.

The last comprehensive foreign relations authorization bill—reauthorization bill was enacted into law over 20 years ago. At that moment Vladimir Putin had only been in office for 2 years. It would be three more before he gave voice to his belief that the collapse of the Soviet Union was the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the century. The invasion of Georgia and Ukraine, the annexation of Crimea and Moscow's systematic shadow war against the U.S. and its allies waited in the future.

In 2002 Russia was in fact the fourth largest recipient of U.S. foreign aid, receiving nearly one-quarter of U.S. dollars disbursed that Fiscal Year in the Europe and Eurasia region.

The U.S. still reeling from the 9/11 attacks had successfully convinced allies to deploy alongside us to Afghanistan. The push to focus NATO on out-of-area operations was underway, a decision that in retrospect has proven foolish and from which Europe continues to recover.

In 2002 we retained a unipolar moment. The year following the Chinese navy counted 128 vessels, 100 less than the United States. Today China is the world's largest navy with 370 ships and submarines. The world was still 11 years away from the launch of the Belt and Road Initiative, China's plan for massive infrastructure investment in order to link Beijing economically and politically to key global regions including prominently in Eastern Europe.

Today the world is a very different place. As Congress undertakes this reauthorization effort the watchword I believe should be at the forefront of your minds is competition, principally against our great power adversaries: China and Russia. Reorienting State Department resources for the current era of great power competition is a necessary task which will help steer U.S. policy toward accomplishing the most important outcomes. Prying one great power adversary from the other is in my view simply not possible. The shared Sino-Russian goal of insulating their illegitimate regimes and forcibly bring the end to the Western-led global order and by extension decreasing U.S. power and influence has bonded Beijing and Moscow in a way which U.S. diplomacy will be unable to overcome.

Therefore, we simply need to compete. This being a competition the U.S. cannot afford to lose, we must leverage every tool in our arsenal to maximize our advantages. One of those more potent

tools we have is foreign aid. When thinking through this assistance the driving factor should always be the question does this advance U.S. national interests? There are clear examples during the past few years of U.S. foreign aid dollars funding projects which do not advance this interest clearly. These, while glaring, are nonetheless minor components in the overall foreign aid program.

In the 20th Century Nicholas Spykman wrote, "Who controls the rimland, controls—rules Eurasia; who rules Eurasia controls the destinies of the world." Today this rimland, which includes the majority of continental Europe, is hotly contested. It is more important than ever that the U.S. remain active in the region with the State Department focusing its efforts on three key areas: Those where U.S. support is crucial, those where the U.S. has as strong comparative advantage, and finally geographic areas or point of interest where they are on the cusp of magnified significance.

The Balkans, for example, fulfill components of all three of these focus areas. It is once again on the cusp of returning to top geopolitical relevance, U.S. support remains crucial, and there are components of needed support particularly in the energy sphere where the U.S. has significant comparative advantages.

As the committee thinks through the framework of State Department priorities, staffing, and oversight, I would also suggest a greater focus on the Arctic, one—the region which is clearly on the cusp of heightened significance in the decades ahead.

Finally, I would note the imperative to focus our efforts on those nations where our adversaries are targeting their intention, places like Moldova and Ukraine. Residing in the unenviable gray zone these countries find themselves in critical need of our support. Continued U.S. prosperity and security lie in no small part upon ensuring stability in Europe. As such, it is advantageous to remain engaged in this theater.

Foreign aid, if utilized prudently in service of a national interest, can help bolster positive outcomes in the region, block our adversaries from gaining undue influence, and provide an excellent return on investment for U.S. policymakers.

Thank you. With that, I look forward to answering your questions and shedding any light I can on this subject matter at hand this afternoon.

(Prepared statement of Mr. Kochis follows:)

Hudson Institute

Prepared statement by:

Daniel Kochis

Senior Fellow, Center on Europe and Eurasia, Hudson Institute

Before the Committee on Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Europe
United State House of Representatives

March 11, 2025

Arms Control, International Security, and U.S. Assistance to Europe: Review and Reforms for the State Department

Chairman Self, Ranking Member Keating, and distinguished members of the Subcommittee,

My name is Daniel Kochis, I am a Senior Fellow in the Center on Europe and Eurasia at the Hudson Institute. I am grateful for the opportunity to submit this testimony for your consideration. Please note that the views I express in this testimony are my own and should not be construed as necessarily representing those of Hudson Institute.

As observed by the Congressional Research Service, Congress “last passed legislation that authorizes appropriations across a broad range of SFOPS accounts in 2002.”¹ The more than two decades which have passed since that time have resulted in significant global changes. Reorienting State Department resources for the current era of great power competition is a necessary task which will help steer U.S. policy towards accomplishing the most important outcomes. In taking up this effort, the Committee is helping to emphasize that U.S. soft power can and should go hand in hand with efforts to maintain the world’s most lethal military through the Department of Defense.

When thinking through U.S. foreign aid, the driving factor should always be the question: does this advance U.S. national interests? There are clear examples during the past few years of U.S. foreign aid dollars funding projects which do not advance this interest clearly. These however, I believe, are only a small component of overall U.S. foreign aid. It is more important than ever that the U.S. not only remain active in the world, but that we focus our efforts on three key areas: those where U.S. support is crucial, those where the U.S. has a strong comparative advantage, and regions or points of interest which are on the cusp of magnified significance.

The Importance of Europe

Europe is and will remain a foundational partner for the continued prosperity and security of the United States. The U.S. and Europe retain deep cultural, economic, political, and security ties. It was a Dutch Governor on the island of Sint Eustatius in the Caribbean who in returning the salute of vessel of the Continental Navy, first bestowed recognition on the nascent nation as an independent country.² Familial bonds with Europe are

¹ Cory R. Gill, “Foreign Relations Reauthorization: Background and Issues,” Congressional Research Service, IF 10293, Version 15, January 13, 2025, <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF10293> (accessed March 6, 2025).

² USNAVSO/4th Fleet Public Affairs, “USS Milwaukee Celebrates Statia Day, Commemorating American History,” November 22, 2022, <https://www.fourthfleet.navy.mil/Press-Room/News/Article/3226466/uss-milwaukee-celebrates-statia-day-commemorating-american->

likewise durable. The 2020 Census found large numbers of Americans have European ancestry, with the largest contingents being citizens with English ancestry (46.5 million), followed by German (44.9 million), Irish (38.5 million), Italian (16.8 million), Polish (8.5 million), Scottish (8.4 million), and French (7.9 million).³ It should also be noted that nearly one million Americans trace Ukrainian ancestry.⁴ In addition to historic and familial ties, the U.S. and Europe share common values such as democratic governance and respect for the rule of law, many of which have found their best expression in our republic. Today, 81% of Americans believe these shared democratic values are important for strong U.S.-European relations.⁵

The U.S.-European economic partnership is the engine of our mutual prosperity. The \$8.7 trillion transatlantic economy supports a combined sixteen million jobs in Europe and the U.S.⁶ Forty-eight states export more to Europe than to China, with Oregon and Washington the only two exceptions.⁷ Over half of cumulative inward foreign direct investment to the U.S. comes from Europe.⁸ This trade, investment, and intellectual exchange is the foundation upon which our way of life is built.

Europe also remains important strategically. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) for nearly 76 years has served as the bedrock for transatlantic security. A safe and secure transatlantic community allows for the continued flowering of cross-Atlantic trade and shields the U.S. from harm. Europe is the front line for the defense of the U.S. homeland. The lessons learned in the 20th century about the infectiousness of instability in Europe still hold true today. A revanchist Russia which has over the past quarter of a century rebuilt pieces of an ill-gotten empire through violence and coercion is a Russia which is more aggressive, dangerous, and one that represents a fundamental threat to the U.S. and its allies. Russia understands its current war against Ukraine to be merely one component of a larger ideological struggle against the West in general and the U.S. in particular. The Kremlin has acted in accordance with this belief; Russian hybrid attacks have and continue to target the United States homeland.⁹ In Europe, U.S. allies and interests are constantly under siege from Russian aggression in an active shadow war just under the threshold of direct military confrontation.¹⁰

The rise of China has cast a further spotlight on the importance of Europe for the ultimate success of U.S. efforts to pushback against the most nefarious aspects of the regime in Beijing. China and Russia reaffirmed their “no limits partnership” in February, three years after an agreement announcing the alliance was first

history/#~:text=Statia%20Day%20honors%20the%20%E2%80%9Cfirst,ships%20entering%20a%20foreign%20port.

³ United States Census Bureau, “Detailed Races and Ethnicities in the United States and Puerto Rico: 2020 Census,” September 21, 2023, <https://www.census.gov/library/visualizations/interactive/detailed-race-ethnicities-2020-census.html> (accessed March 6, 2025).

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Richard Wike, Moira Fagan, Sneha Gubbala, and Sarah Austin, “Views of trans-Atlantic allies and U.S.-Europe relations,” Pew Research Center, May 8, 2024, <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2024/05/08/views-of-trans-atlantic-allies-and-u-s-europe-relations/>

⁶ Daniel S. Hamilton and Joseph P. Quinlan, *The Transatlantic Economy 2024*, II, <https://www.uschamber.com/international/the-transatlantic-economy-2024> (accessed March 4, 2025).

⁷ Ibid, p. 94.

⁸ Global Business Alliance, “Overview of Foreign Direct Investment in the United States 2023,” <https://globalbusiness.org/foreign-direct-investment-in-the-united-states-2024/> (accessed March 4, 2025).

⁹ U.S. Helsinki Commission Staff, “Spotlight on the Shadow War: Inside Russia’s Attacks on NATO Territory,” Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, Figure 1, December 12, 2024, <https://www.csce.gov/press-releases/new-report-spotlight-on-the-shadow-war-inside-russias-attacks-on-nato-territory/>

¹⁰ Daniel Kochis, “It’s Time to Admit the West Is Already at War with Russia,” *Kyiv Independent*, October 29, 2024, <https://kyivindependent.com/opinion-its-time-to-admit-the-west-is-already-at-war-with-russia/>

signed by Xi Jinping and Vladimir Putin.¹¹ This partnership shows no signs of slowing down. China is the key enabler of Russia's ongoing war against Ukraine, with the two nations etching new linkages, including the build out of new natural gas pipeline connections,¹² and the ramping up of joint exercises including in the Arctic.¹³ At this moment, prying one great power adversary from the other is in my view simply not possible. The shared Sino-Russian goal of insulating their illegitimate regimes and forcibly bringing an end to the Western led global order and by extension decreasing U.S. power and influence has bonded Beijing and Moscow in a way which U.S. diplomacy will be unable to overcome.

It remains in the U.S. national interest to help Europe guard against the existential threat that for many nations on the continent, Russia poses. The U.S. in turn will need European support to successfully deter Chinese aggression in the Indo-Pacific.¹⁴ In recognition of this reality, Chinese diplomatic and economic ingratiation efforts in Europe have sought to promote the narrative of a third way in which Europe sits astride the American and Chinese poles, rather than moving in greater alignment with the U.S. This soft neutrality, were it to come to fruition, would greatly hamper future U.S. strategy to constrain China.

Just as Europe has an interest in taking sides in the ongoing struggle between a future led by the U.S. and its democratic allies and one led by China, so too does the U.S. retain an interest in seeing Russia dealt a strategic defeat in Ukraine, and in applying methods at our disposal to lessen Russia's influence in eastern Europe. One of those methods is the continued appreciation of foreign aid as a tool to advance U.S. policy.

How Aid Can be a Force Multiplier for the U.S.

In 2017, Secretary of State Marco Rubio, then a Senator from Florida stated, "Foreign aid is not charity. We must make sure it is well spent, but it is less than 1% of budget & critical to our national security."¹⁵ Broadly speaking, this sentiment remains true today. Foreign aid in FY 2023 represented 1.17% of the federal budget.¹⁶ If utilized wisely, federal aid can serve as a force multiplier to advance U.S. interests overseas and may in part help offset the decreasing ability and perhaps interest of the U.S. in deploying military assets around the globe in the same quantity as has been the case over the past quarter of a century.

Foreign aid is not the primary locomotive driving the \$36.2 trillion national debt, and in many cases undoubtedly provides an excellent return on investment. That is not to say policymakers and U.S. government officials do not have an ongoing responsibility to be good stewards of taxpayer money. That imperative remains. However, stepping back from Europe in a major way will invariably harm U.S. interests. As the U.S. recedes, the vacuum left behind in many nations most vulnerable to diversion off a western pathway will be

¹¹ Antoni Slodkowski and Laurie Chen, "China's Xi affirms 'no limits' partnership with Putin in call on Ukraine war anniversary," *Reuters*, February 24, 2025, <https://www.reuters.com/world/xi-putin-hold-phone-call-ukraine-war-anniversary-state-media-says-2025-02-24/>

¹² Daisy Xu, Cindy Liang, and Oceana Zhou, "Russia to increase oil, gas exports to China in 2025 to sustain income: Tsinghua," *S&P Global*, December 13, 2024, <https://www.spglobal.com/commodity-insights/en/news-research/latest-news/crude-oil/121324-russia-to-increase-oil-gas-exports-to-china-in-2025-to-sustain-income-tsinghua>

¹³ Sergey Sukhankin, "Sino-Russian Partnership in the Arctic and the Far East Reflect Joint Security Interests (Part One)," *Eurasia Daily Monitor* Volume: 21 Issue: 166, November 14, 2024, <https://jamestown.org/program/sino-russian-partnership-in-the-arctic-and-the-far-east-reflect-joint-security-interests-part-one/> (accessed March 4, 2025).

¹⁴ Daniel Kochis, "Seven Things Pacific Prioritizers Get Wrong about Aid to Ukraine," *Hudson Institute*, October 7, 2024, <https://www.hudson.org/security-alliances/seven-things-pacific-prioritizers-get-wrong-about-aid-ukraine-daniel-kochis> (accessed March 4, 2025).

¹⁵ Marco Rubio, @marcorubio, February 28, 2017, <https://x.com/marcorubio/status/836583503768748033>.

¹⁶ Drew Desilver, "What the data says about U.S. foreign aid," *Pew Research Center*, February 6, 2025, <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2025/02/06/what-the-data-says-about-us-foreign-aid/>

filled by adversaries. China, for example, is systematically competing with the U.S. for influence in Europe. From 2013-2021, China invested \$133 billion in infrastructure projects throughout Europe compared to only \$12 billion from the U.S. over that same span.¹⁷

Balkan Rumbblings

The Balkans are a region which fulfills components of all three focus areas I enumerated: it is once again on the cusp of returning to top geopolitical relevance, U.S. support remains crucial, and with this support, particularly in the energy sphere, the U.S. has significant comparative advantages.

The Balkans continue to remain home to unfinished business. Ethnic, historic, and religious tensions brew just under the surface, occasionally bubbling up in dramatic fashion. The region suffers from high unemployment, lack of connectivity, and the distorting impact of Chinese and Russian influence, investment, and media penetration. History has shown that volatility in the region usually reverberates far beyond immediate geographic boundaries. The continuous tensions between Kosovo and Serbia, which flared again in 2023 and led to the injury of dozens of Kosovo Force soldiers,¹⁸ underscores the ever-present potential for violence and political instability. As more pieces in Europe come off the geopolitical chess board, the Balkans remain a patch of contestation seen by China and Russia as an entry point to undermine Western cohesion and distract and frustrate U.S. efforts to maintain regional stability.

In addition to the geostrategic perils to be avoided, the Balkans also present significant upside. Abundant natural resources, a low cost of doing business, and youthful demographics are advantages which can help drive economic growth and make the region more appealing for inward investment. However, despite significant potential, the energy picture in most Balkan nations remains stubbornly stark. Legacy Russian energy permeation in the region provides Moscow with a useful means of destabilization and influence. Regardless of the ongoing war against Ukraine, the amount of Russian gas flowing through Bulgaria increased 27% from 2024 to 2025.¹⁹ So long as Russian energy companies remain active in the region, Moscow will maintain powerful and consequential leverage. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, Russian gas remains critical for heating in Sarajevo and for running key industrial facilities despite representing a small component of the nation's overall energy mix. While the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina continues its efforts to diversify gas supply via new connections to Croatia,²⁰ Republika Srpska has doubled down on its relations with Gazprom.²¹

¹⁷ United States Government Accountability Office: Report to Congressional Committees, "INTERNATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS China's Investments Significantly Outpace the U.S., and Experts Suggest Potential Improvements to the U.S. Approach," GAO-24-106866, September 2024, <https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-24-106866> (accessed March 4, 2025).

¹⁸ "Dozens Of KFOR Troops, Protesters Injured As Clashes Break Out In Serb-Majority Towns In Northern Kosovo," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, May 29, 2023, <https://www.rferl.org/a/northern-kosovo-ethnic-albanian-mayors-kfor-serbs/32432330.html> (accessed March 5, 2025).

¹⁹ Emiliya Milcheva, "Russian gas transit through Bulgaria hits record high," *Euractiv*, February 14, 2025, <https://www.euractiv.com/section/politics/news/russian-gas-transit-through-bulgaria-hits-record-high/> (accessed March 5, 2025).

²⁰ Lidia Kurasinska, "Bosnia Moves Ahead With New Pipeline To Reduce Dependence On Russian Gas," *Forbes*, January 26, 2025, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/lidiakurasinska/2025/01/26/bosnia-moves-ahead-with-new-pipeline-to-reduce-dependence-on-russian-gas/> (accessed March 5, 2025).

²¹ "Bosnia's Serb Republic plans to increase gas imports from Russia, report says," *Reuters*, February 25, 2024, <https://www.reuters.com/business/energy/bosnias-serb-republic-plans-increase-gas-imports-russia-report-says-2024-02-26/> (accessed March 5, 2025).

For its part, China seeks opportunities to expand its role in the Balkan energy sector and holds an important presence in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Montenegro, Romania, and Serbia across both renewable energy platforms (hydro, solar, wind) and non-renewable energy generation (coal, oil, gas). Despite this, the U.S. has a valuable opportunity to leverage its knowledge and energy abundance to positively impact the Balkans through supporting the build out of energy interconnections and infrastructure.

The Bureau of International Security and Nonproliferation has a central role to play in promoting greater civil nuclear energy cooperation in Europe. This effort dovetails U.S. government plans to expand liquid natural gas exports,²² which will directly help ease Chinese and Russian energy influence in the region.

Independent Media

U.S. aid is also crucial to counter adverse media narratives fueled in large part by Russian information operations. This makes support for independent media in places like Belarus, Bulgaria, Georgia, Moldova, Serbia, the Slovak Republic,²³ and Ukraine a worthwhile investment. In many cases, U.S. funding is a crucial lifeline for journalists and helps to counter Russian and Chinese narratives. In explaining the value of U.S. aid in Moldova, one journalist active there stated: “In Moldova’s case, foreign donor support is vital to balancing the media landscape.”²⁴ She added that “Many television networks and media institutions are funded by Russia so there needs to be a counterbalance.”²⁵

In contrast to the conventional picture of Russia as lumbering and stodgy, the nation’s media and information campaigns are often nimble and widespread. One tactic employed by the Kremlin is leveraging mushroom websites which appear quickly in mass around important events and mirror Western news sources in all but content. Russian mushroom sites have been employed in NATO allies such as Bulgaria. Last year, these sites helped spread lies around the purpose of NATO’s Steadfast Defender 24 exercise.²⁶

Russian media penetration in Europe and Eurasia is antithetical to American interests. Russia pushes false stories through articles, social media posts,²⁷ and payment to TikTok influencers with a key target of eastern European nations.²⁸ In addition to anti-western, anti-NATO themes, Russian media has sought to undermine

²² Department of the Interior, “Secretary Doug Burgum Signs First Round of Secretary’s Orders to Unleash American Energy,” February 3, 2025, <https://www.doi.gov/pressreleases/secretary-doug-burgum-signs-first-round-secretarys-orders-unleash-american-energy> (accessed March 5, 2025).

²³ Russian narratives have found more fertile ground in the Slovak Republic compared to neighboring states in central Europe.

Michal Wenzel, Karina Stasiuk-Krajewska, Veronika Macková, and Kateřina Turková, “The penetration of Russian disinformation related to the war in Ukraine: Evidence from Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovakia,” *International Political Science Review*, Volume 45, Issue 2, pp. 192-208, November 16, 2023, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/01925121231205259>

²⁴ Stephen McGrath and Aurel Obreja, “US aid was long a lifeline for Eastern Europe. Trump cuts are sending shockwaves through the region,” *AP*, January 31, 2025, <https://apnews.com/article/eastern-europe-trump-usaid-freeze-foreign-aid-2d1ee6aa888063731cabd39e257b72b6>

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Tony Wesolowsky, “Mushroom Websites’ Spread A Deluge Of Disinformation In Bulgaria,” *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, April 6, 2024, <https://www.rferl.org/a/bulgaria-disinformation-mushroom-websites/32893788.html> (accessed March 5, 2025).

²⁷ Catherine Belton, “Kremlin runs disinformation campaign to undermine Zelensky, documents show,” *Washington Post*, February 16, 2024, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2024/02/16/russian-disinformation-zelensky-zaluzhnyi/>

²⁸ “‘Troll factory’ spreading Russian pro-war lies online, says UK,” *The Guardian*, April 30, 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/01/troll-factory-spreading-russian-pro-war-lies-online-says-uk>

the integrity of elections in Europe and dissuade nations from continuing upon a Western pathway. With this framing in mind, candidate countries for European Union (EU) membership – Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Türkiye, and Ukraine – will remain priority targets for Russian information campaigns and therefore should also be priorities for U.S. aid to journalists.

The Arctic

As the Committee thinks through the framework of State Department priorities and staffing, I would also suggest a greater focus on the Arctic region, one clearly on the cusp of significance for the remainder of the century. The Defense, Energy, Interior, and State Departments all have important roles to play in U.S. Arctic policy; with the State Department leading diplomatic engagement, which is for now the main pathway for interaction in the region. While the Office of Ocean and Polar Affairs has the lead on the Arctic, six of the eight Arctic nations, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, and the Russian Federation (the others being Canada and the U.S.) are within the purview of the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs. The Arctic has long been viewed by Russia as a key national interest, and as such, Moscow has embarked upon a more than decade-long effort to build out civilian and military infrastructure in the region.²⁹ China for its part has sought to forge a role for itself in the Arctic, pursuing greater access via its partnership with Russia.³⁰

Ukraine

In FY 2022, 2023, and 2024, Ukraine was the largest single recipient of U.S. foreign assistance. In FY 2023, a total of \$16.6 billion in foreign aid was disbursed in support of Ukraine.³¹ The bulk of this aid took the form of economic development assistance (\$14.64 billion) administered by the U.S. Agency for International Development, with smaller components consisting of humanitarian assistance (\$1.12 billion), peace and security assistance (\$312.7 million), as well as lesser amounts in support of democracy, environmental initiatives, education, health, governance, program support, and social services. While U.S. economic assistance to Europe has risen significantly in recent years, it is not much different from that provided to Europe during the tumultuous years following the end of WWII.³²

It is a misnomer that the U.S. has been carrying an outsized burden for supporting Ukraine. Since the start of Russia's full-scale invasion, the U.S. and Europe (the EU and European nations) have provided a roughly equal amount of aid to Ukraine, with Europe allocating a slightly greater amount.³³ Of Europe's assistance to Ukraine, "65% have been provided as grants or in-kind support and 35% in the form of highly concessional loans."³⁴

²⁹ Heritage Defense Team, Index of U.S. Military Strength: Russia, January 24, 2024, <https://www.heritage.org/military-strength/assessing-threats-us-vital-interests/russia> (accessed March 6, 2025).

³⁰ Daniel Kochis, "China is Determined to Push its Way into the Arctic," 1945, August 9, 2023, <https://www.19fortyfive.com/2023/08/china-is-determined-to-push-its-way-into-the-arctic/> (accessed March 6, 2025).

³¹ U.S. Department of State and U.S. Agency for International Development, ForeignAssistance.gov

³² "A Brief History of U.S. Foreign Aid," Council on Foreign Relations, <https://education.cfr.org/learn/reading/brief-history-us-foreign-aid>

³³ Kiel Institute for the World Economy, Ukraine Support Tracker, <https://www.ifw-kiel.de/topics/war-against-ukraine/ukraine-support-tracker/>

³⁴ Administration Team of the EU Delegation to the United States, EU Assistance to Ukraine (in U.S. Dollars), February 25, 2025, https://www.ecas.europa.eu/delegations/united-states-america/eu-assistance-ukraine-us-dollars_en?s=253 (accessed March 6, 2025).

The U.S. retains a national interest in ensuring that Ukraine survives as an independent, sovereign nation, and that Russia and its allies are dealt a strategic defeat. Russia and China are drawing clear lessons from the outcome of the ongoing conflict, with significant implications for the future of global stability. Therefore, aid to Ukraine is an investment in a more secure and stable European theater. A nation whose economy collapses, or which cannot provide basic governmental services, would soon lose the capacity to defend itself.

For a nation with as large a debt as the U.S. has, it is prudent to scrutinize every dollar leaving the federal treasury. And while the sums of foreign aid being disbursed in support of Ukraine are not insignificant, they still represent a fraction of U.S. gross domestic product (GDP). From January 2022-December 2024, U.S. financial support for Ukraine was equivalent to 0.215% of GDP, with humanitarian assistance equivalent to 0.016% of GDP.³⁵

This assistance, alongside that provided by our allies in Europe, North America, and the Indo-Pacific has been a lifeline for the Ukrainian people to resist Putin's naked aggression. We, the United States have an interest in the outcome of this ongoing war against Ukraine, we are not simply neutral observers. A permanent pause on aid to Ukraine would be a historic mistake. As the U.S. Administration works towards a ceasefire and potential negotiated settlement, the role of U.S. assistance for Ukraine will remain keenly relevant.

Without the continued engagement of the U.S. and western allies, an independent Ukraine post-settlement would likely find itself prey to Russian coercion, corruption, economic pressure, and misinformation campaigns. In other words, we could find that a ceasefire today morphs into a passing away of Ukrainian autonomy and sovereignty tomorrow.

It is imperative that any negotiated settlement contains robust security guarantees. On the economic front, these guarantees will afford the people of Ukraine and western investors the confidence to stay and rebuild the country. While it would be natural for the U.S. to consider tapering its aid after any potential ceasefire, it is important this decrease in aid is not a cliff. The U.S. should remain engaged via economic and humanitarian assistance as Ukraine transitions from active warfare to guarded settlement.

I also believe that regardless of the success of the Administration in forging a negotiated settlement in 2025, Russia will continue to pose an existential threat to Europe for the foreseeable future. Russia has long term time horizons and any pause in the fighting will be viewed as an interlude, rather than a conclusion, by the Kremlin leadership. This view is supported by the Danish Defense Intelligence Service which wrote in January, "Depending on how the war in Ukraine evolves, Russia could, within two to five years, rebuild the military capability required to pose a credible military threat to NATO."³⁶

Lieutenant General Charles Costanza, Commander-in-Chief of the V Corps of the U.S. Army in a recent interview echoed this same strand of judgement when he said, "I think there's a view that Russia is going to take three to 10 years to reconstitute, and I think that we need to look at that a little differently. Russian armed forces, ground forces right now, are actually bigger than they were before the war with Ukraine started."³⁷ He

³⁵ Kiel Institute for the World Economy, Ukraine Support Tracker, <https://www.ifw-kiel.de/topics/war-against-ukraine/ukraine-support-tracker/> (accessed March 5, 2025).

³⁶ "INTELLIGENCE OUTLOOK 2024: An intelligence-based assessment of the external conditions for Danish national security and interests, Danish Defense Intelligence Service, January 22, 2025, p. 19, https://www.fe-ddis.dk/en/produkter/Risk_assessment/riskassessment/Intelligenceoutlook2024/ (accessed March 5, 2025).

³⁷ Myroslava Gongadze, "VOA interview: US Army General Costanza discusses Russia's threat to West," *VOA*, October 22, 2024, <https://www.voanews.com/a/voa-interview-us-army-general-costanza-discusses-russia-threat-to-west/7832923.html> (accessed March 6, 2025).

goes on to note, “They may not be as well trained, but they’re bigger. Their industrial base is on a wartime footing. Their mobilization base is on a wartime footing. They know they’re fighting a Western-trained, West-equipped country with Ukraine. They’re learning how to defeat those capabilities and those systems.”

The continued threat which Russia will pose to U.S. European NATO allies highlights the relevance and importance of the State Department’s Foreign Military Financing and International Military Education and Training coordinated by the Office of Security Assistance. Assisting European NATO allies in purchasing U.S. military equipment, providing training, and enhancing interoperability bolster alliance deterrence and serve the national interest.

Conclusion

In a 1981 statement, President Reagan noted the difficulty in sustaining support for foreign aid, saying “Foreign aid suffers from a lack of domestic constituency, in large part because the results of the programs are often not immediately visible and self-evident.”³⁸ Yet foreign aid is important to safeguarding U.S. national interests. It represents a small component of the federal budget but brings outsized positive impacts to the nation. It is prudent to scrutinize aid programs to ensure that expenditures are advancing the national interest, and it is clear there are examples where the answer to that question has been no. However, I have sought to illuminate in my testimony investments which Congress would be well disposed to consider a net benefit for the nation. Future U.S. security lies in no small part upon ensuring stability in Europe. As such, it is not only advantageous to remain engaged in the European security theater, but also an excellent return on investment for U.S. policymakers.

³⁸ “Statement on Signing International Security and Foreign Assistance Legislation,” Ronald Reagan Presidential Library and Museum, December 29, 1981, <https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/archives/speech/statement-signing-international-security-and-foreign-assistance-legislation>

Mr. SELF. Thank you, Mr. Kochis.
I now recognize Ambassador O'Brien for his opening statement.

STATEMENT OF JAMES O'BRIEN

Mr. O'BRIEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, ranking member. I spent half my career in the private sector and half at the State Department. And what I have noticed are a couple things: One is that EUR is the gateway to most global issues. Any caucus or group that addresses a global issue runs through our relationships with our transatlantic partners. The P-3 at the United Nations, NATO itself, all the significant organizations including the informal ones like the G7 and others. So we have to get that right. That is why EUR ends up doing silly measurements, like much more than half the paper that goes to the Secretary of State, because it is that relationship that is the bedrock of all other functions in the State Department.

The second thing is the State Department is always in a State of transition. Every year a third of FSOs change over. Politicals like us kind of come and go every couple of years. Experts get hired. And even the civil service is facing an enormous transition as Baby Boomers hit retirement age. So the impact of that is that it is pretty easy to get your priorities in place in the State Department without a lot of barking like an angry dog about how the workforce is wrong. And I think what it takes is clear leadership, a set of criteria, and an approach that makes sense to the American people and that workers can follow. And I feel, frankly, Mr. Chairman, we don't have that now.

Four points: One of them is—just goes to what is the role of this process? So Secretary Rubio and Mr. Musk seem to have settled their disagreement by agreeing that now 83 percent of AID contracts can get canceled. And as always, the powerful have settled their dispute on the backs of people without voices. So these American farmers waiting on \$2.6 billion of payments by AID. And those have been disrupted. I don't know if they will be paid.

There are tens of millions of people depending on health care and food that was delivered through AID projects and now that they are not getting that they are either going to die or they are going to migrate. This is the most effective border security program we have got and we just took it to zero.

Now the most significant element of this though is that each of these projects came up of course to this committee and three other committees for approval before the money went out the door. And the Secretary of State has now said that this committee was wrong on four out of five dollars in the foreign assistance account. That is a pretty poor batting average. And I think what we need to do is find some way in which the administration can make clear what it intends to spend money on so that this committee can reach agreement and then the President can agree that he will take care to follow the authorization law once it is enacted as opposed to asserting a unilateral prerogative to impound the money.

As you go through that I hope you ask three questions: One of them is how does any restructuring advance the President's objectives? Just to take one example, on arms control every major agreement has been led by the U.S. and much of that expertise sits in

ADS. So if we just start firing people we won't be able to accomplish the kind of reductions the President says he wants in nuclear weapons.

Second major question: Can we get others to spend more money? We talk a lot about burden sharing in the military capacity. There are others. In Ukraine the United States spent—of the AID about 350 million Ukrainian agriculture. This contributed to tens of billions of dollars that Ukraine spent on its own military. It also led, that 350 million, to \$2.2 billion in private sector investment by American companies. AID also spent the money to help Ukraine get this grain out.

If we want access to Ukrainian critical minerals, those things are going to have to transit Poland, for the most part, and maybe Romania, two countries we are kind of alienating right now. So I don't understand how what we are doing allows us to get others to contribute more.

Third major question: Are we mortgaging the future? Our kids are going to get rich or get poor based on developments in artificial intelligence, biomedical sciences, and energy efficiency. The Chinese are trying to write the global standards in those areas. If we stand with our European partners, along with Japan, Korea, and some others, we would be more populous, more wealthy, and more experienced at writing the global standards that our companies will sell into. If we try to do this on our own, sending others off to do it on their own, we fight China at a disadvantage. That is mortgaging the future.

Another area is the defense industry. The supplemental appropriation for Ukraine spent more than \$30 billion in U.S. companies. Now the Europeans are about to spend tens, maybe hundreds of billions, two-thirds of which they would spend with U.S. companies, but they are going to direct it to their own companies. Those are jobs that will not be in your districts even if American companies get European contracts, mortgaging the future.

So I hope you can put those questions—and I hope the administration shows up to provide clear answers because with that it is easy to address the structural issues. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

(Prepared statement of Mr. O'Brien follows:)

Testimony of

James C. O'Brien

Former Assistant Secretary for European and Eurasian Affairs

International Security and US Assistance to Europe: Review and Reform for the State
Department

Subcommittee on Europe, House Foreign Affairs Committee

March 11, 2025

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Keating, thank you for inviting me.

I was Assistant Secretary for European and Eurasian Affairs from October 2023 through January 2025 and was head of the Secretary's sanctions office from April 2022. I have spent approximately half my career in the private sector (starting and selling a couple of businesses) and half at State, where I started for the first time in October 1989. I have worked in the Office of the Legal Adviser, the US Mission to the United Nations, the Secretary's Office, Office of Policy Planning, and as a presidential envoy twice, for the western Balkans and for the safe return of US hostages.

I am now unemployed.

Two introductory notes. I am encouraged that the Committee is considering whether to proceed with an authorization bill. Of course, this effort pays off only if there is a clear understanding that the Executive Branch will take care to execute such a law faithfully once it is enacted, including by spending the funds appropriated in the way authorized by Congress. I look forward to hearing the views of Committee members on how this can be achieved.

Second, this hearing focuses on only EUR and two other bureaus, but this small picture can help us understand some larger issues. I will speak as a user of the other two bureaus' expertise from my time in the Secretary's office, sanctions office, and a regional bureau.

I have managed several start-ups in the Department and have concluded that questions about structure are best addressed by looking at a few simple questions, about goals; leverage; and influence.

WHAT IS THE US TRYING TO DO?

We all want to promote American security, prosperity, and values. Since WW2 we have done this by persuading others that they should want to join in this work and to do this work together. For the first time, our major allies are talking about working without and

even against us. Poland has floated the idea of seeking nuclear weapons, and even Germany is talking about a world not dependent on the US.

The importance of coordination is why Europe, and EUR in the State Department, play a central role globally. Simply put, Europe provides the most consistent and powerful set of partners. With the US and Europe together we have close to three times Russia and China's combined GDP. Europe shares our values along with an irreplaceable 80 year history. Virtually every channel for setting standards and projecting power turns on the US's work with European partners – for example, the P3 in the UN, the Quad, the Quint, 5 of the 8 G7 members, NATO and a host of other organizations. This experience of working together pays off when new challenges arise; for example, it helped the US persuade 155 countries to join in opposing anti-satellite missile launches several years ago, and the dangerous activity has since stopped – to the credit of the arms control officials who worked on them.

This history is filled with deep disagreements on many issues, but the fundamental fabric multiplies US power and offers a place where concerns can be aired.

Now, this Administration has declared an ambitious foreign policy agenda – economic and possible territorial expansion on four continents, peace in Ukraine, a new relationship with Russia, something with China, and an initiative with Iran, among other things – and various statements about how it intends to get there – alone; or with others provided that they make changes in their domestic arrangements (as the VP's Munich speech suggests); or by coercing others; or something else.

We don't know yet how the Administration intends to measure success. The President may be aiming to improve (by his lights) results from the traditional structures – more burden-sharing, fewer demands on the US, more access to resources, and so on – or to replace the structure of cooperation with something else.

The relatively small questions raised today about State Department organization may help us understand the direction of travel. Management at the State Department should explain how the President's ambitions are consistent with indiscriminate cuts and arbitrary targets seen so far, like eliminating AID, closing consulates, and proposing cuts of 20% in personnel along with slashing funding.

A few specific topics might help start the conversation. For example, the President wants elections in Ukraine, but the Administration has eliminated the funding (mainly through the National Endowment for Democracy) that helps to prepare those elections. This includes the best survey and focus group work in Ukraine, something that helps us understand the domestic political constraints operating on the government, something that is central to

the government's approach to peace. Now we are blind except where people do their own research on social media.

Second, the Administration also wants Ukraine to pay more for its defense, but it is jeopardizing the ability of Ukraine to export its main products -- including critical minerals that seem to matter to the Administration -- by cutting assistance for core reforms, restricting the delivery of air defense (critical for ports to keep operating), and backing the election of a pro-Russian candidate in Romania, which has been a crucial export route. What's the plan for Ukraine's minerals to get to market, now and in the future?

Another example: every arms control and non-proliferation arrangement has come about with strong US leadership and support, including both non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and of destabilizing conventional weapons. The President wants novel, large strategic arms control progress. Is there a plan to convert the President's interest in strategic arms control to a working agenda?

Finally, Russia is historically weak across parts of what were the Soviet Union and in eastern and central Europe. Those states clamor for less Russia and more assistance from the US. Here are just two examples:

- In Moldova, US and EU assistance is critical in moving a key state toward the West. Already a Russian enclave that was a haven for gun-running and money-laundering for decades has been weakened. Critical elections this year are subject to enormous interference, including vote-buying and disinformation campaigns. Will the Administration reinstate the assistance that helps Moldovans make a democratic, free choice?
- An agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan, something Turkey will support, could end decades of violence and open up trade routes from central Asian countries who otherwise must choose between Russia and China. US leadership is critical, and a small bit of US funding will be essential (and lucrative). Will the Administration leave the Caucasus and central Asian countries to work between Russia, China, and Iran, or will it seek to weaken those adversaries?

CAN WE GET OTHERS TO JOIN US?

Some things are cheaper if we do them with others. Others -- like stopping illegal migration and the growth of terrorist groups or setting international standards for new technologies -- need others. How does State Department organization help us understand how we will get others on board?

For example, President Trump says that he wants to cut the \$80 billion spent by the US annually on nuclear weapons. A small investment in ISN and ADS (several hundred people, along with a few hundred million dollars in helping other countries control materials essential to producing dangerous weapons) seems like a way to get others to lower the need for us to spend as much. The expertise in the USG for nuclear tasks with Russia, China, and Iran sit in those bureaus. ADS is already 25% under its ceilings and has a young cohort brought in to work on WMD, AI, and advanced conventional weapons. And the expertise can't be incubated outside the USG. Will the Department keep this expertise in place and provide it with appropriate leadership?

NATO is another good example of burden-sharing. NATO fought with the US in Afghanistan, as did more than 40 NATO partners. That's the ultimate test, and those who want to erase their contributions from history should have no place in US policy-making. In 2014, NATO allies agreed to spend 2% of GDP on defense by 2024. By 2017, 4 did; by 2021, 9 did; by July 2024, 23 spent 2%, and Europe as a whole met the 2% threshold, while numbers were going up for the others. Significantly, in 2024 Allies agreed to fund NATO's new regional defense plans, a commitment to raise defense spending above 3% of GDP. Now they might do more, but without US commitment to the alliance they will go their own way.

Another example is sanctions and trade restrictions. We can all agree that it is better for us if Russia, Iran, Venezuela, North Korea, and China are not able to ship valuable and often dangerous goods in a fleet that operates outside regulatory and legal structures. We have finally gotten agreement from key states to restrict the operation of this shadow fleet. Much of the expertise needed to strike those arrangements resides in EUR and ISN (and another bureau, EB). Similarly, the relationships and know-how that can keep dangerous items out of the hands of these rogue states sits with the couple of hundred people in ISN.

Yet another example: any peace agreement in Ukraine will depend on international ceasefires and a long-standing set of practices for transparency, monitoring, and conflict avoidance. This expertise sits largely in the bureaus under discussion today. Even if no Americans are on the front-lines, the support flows through organizations that these bureaus support, and US support in the venues where disagreements will be addressed can be critical.

WILL THE US LOSE INFLUENCE IF WE PULL BACK?

Where we step back, China will step up, and Russia will assert itself where it can. Two examples:

First, the key battle for the prosperity of the next generation will be whether China or the US, with our partners, sets the standards for AI, biomedicine, and energy technologies. These aren't things that even the world's largest economy can compel. They will be agreed among trading partners.

Here simple math helps. China is 1.3 billion people with purchasing power near that of the US population. If we stand alone – 350 million people without close relationships -- China will seek to get much of the globe working to its technical specifications and market practices. In early 2021 Europe was looking to conclude an investment agreement with China, and turned away from it only with strong involvement of the US in building manufacturing and supply chains together. China had already won control of key bodies until from 2022 on the US and our partners wrestled back control.

That is why we need to work with our partners in Europe and our close allies and partners like Japan, South Korea, Australia, Canada, and a few others we will be larger and much more wealthy than China and used to writing rules that the world follows. Key swing states in Asia and across the world do not want to side with China, but if the US pulls up the drawbridge, they will feel that they have no choice.

A second example is the economic impact of military spending. Without a clear US commitment to NATO, European allies will reinvigorate their own industries and make more weapons. This may risk proliferation and threaten US leadership, including on jobs. Europe now spends two-thirds of its defense spending with US firms. That looks to be \$50 – 100 billion over the next years and potentially much more, depending on what is agreed in Brussels this week and Germany over the next several weeks. Some of those funds may go to the European subsidiaries of US firms, but those will not be jobs in your districts.

Already, the UK is paying for Ukrainian air defense missiles, buying French technology and locating the jobs inside the UK. We should not seek a world in which the US profits from war, but we should not ignore the costs of walking away.

CONCLUSION: WOULD RESTRUCTURING HELP WITH ANY OF THE ABOVE THINGS?

Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member Keating, during 20 years of working with scores of companies I saw lots of restructuring efforts. Most often the only people who benefited from restructuring were the management consultants.

Two things matter. First is a clear explanation of the purpose, such as the specific bad habits to be broken or the new objective being elevated. Otherwise restructuring looks like disruption to cause fear, and it is the leadership that looks afraid. Second is a decision about whether to keep expertise in house. If experts are let go, the question is whether it is

not needed or to assert that it can be found elsewhere. The State Department already has a mix of people with deep expertise and those who, like some of us on the panel, develop expertise elsewhere and rotate through. A decision to remove all the home-owned expertise should need strong justification. Those who believe that information should be controlled outside the Department are probably making the decision that private sector control of information or advice is better than control in the name of the taxpayers. This needs examination.

Above all, structure requires leadership, not complaints. Leadership needs clarity about goals and models of how to get the work done.

Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member Keating, thank you. No Administration has all the answers it needs in March of its first year, of course. But it is getting late early. The longer that there is uncertainty the more likely that others will make decisions about America, without America.

Thank you. I am happy to answer any questions.

Mr. SELF. Thank you, Ambassador O'Brien.

I now recognize myself for 5 minutes of questioning.

Dr. Poblete, does the current structure of the T family reflect the current threat environment? Are we looking at the future to adapt to any authority structure and programs that we need to change to address emerging threats?

Ms. POBLETE. Small components of the T family are dedicated to emerging security challenges, but its current construct is primarily focused on nuclear arms control and agreements and structures that no longer exist or are just a modicum of what was needed at the time.

In sum, yes, it does advance U.S. interests. It does align with your America First priorities. But in order to adapt it needs to become leaner and only the best people need to be there. We need to eliminate redundancy. We need to—as I specified in my oral remarks and my prepared remarks, we need to avoid duplication. And that leads to waste of time, energy, and resources. So we need to have clear lines of demarcation.

In our conversation prior to this hearing you asked if it would be possible to merge the International Security and Nonproliferation Bureau, ISN, with ADS, statutorily Verification and Compliance. My first instinct was we are able to—and I provide specifics—we are able to distill both bureaus down to perhaps five or six offices. We are able to consolidate functions that are overlapping among the offices in these bureaus.

But I do caution going back to statutory mandate and the history of the genesis of the Verification and Compliance Bureau and T of the merging of negotiations, assistance, funds with verification and compliance. When I worked on the committee with the former chairman Ross Slatenen, Ranking Member Keating was very supportive of modifying the Atomic Energy Act and the pattern and the method in which we approve one to three agreements, nuclear cooperation agreements. I propose that that is valuable for ISN, but verification and compliance must be integrated into the verification and compliance of nuclear cooperation agreements as well and ensure that there is accountability if there is cheating even on those civilian nuclear cooperation agreements because they inform also all our efforts with respect to deterrence, defense, collaboration, partnerships and the like.

Mr. SELF. Okay. Thank you.

Dr. O'Brien, USAID, what does that stand for?

Mr. O'BRIEN. Agency for International Development.

Mr. SELF. Ah, thought so. Agency for International Development. You gave us two examples of USAID providing money for Americans.

Mr. O'BRIEN. Yes.

Mr. SELF. I think that is one of the things that this committee will try to get to, although USAID is not in our portfolio. But I needed to address that. So, Mr.—

Mr. O'BRIEN. I am sorry, I don't understand this tension, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. SELF. The tension is it is for international development. You—

Mr. O'BRIEN. Right. By Americans. In this case. I mean, people need food. We can buy the food on the market. We can buy it from Americans.

Mr. SELF. No, it is international development. We need to correct the USAID. I think Senator—now Secretary of State Rubio intends to do that.

Now, Mr. Kochis, I have less than a minute. The Balkans are vital to this committee. I think they are a potential flash point. And you mentioned energy and the Russian influence of course in Serbia. Can you elaborate on your view of how we become an energy partner? And you have got 30 seconds.

Mr. KOCHIS. Well, I completely agree. I think not just Russian, but also Chinese investment in energy in the Balkans has expanded quite significantly I think in two ways: One of course is U.S. natural gas, trying to help those nations in that region build-up their interconnections. And I think the other is nuclear. So helping to leverage our expertise in the nuclear sphere I think will improve the energy picture there also some of the air quality issues and the sort of life issues that they have in the region which are impacted by the use of—heavy use of coal.

Mr. SELF. Thank you. I yield.

I now recognize Ranking Member Keating for 5 minutes.

Mr. KEATING. Thank you. You know I think in Ukraine that—myself I understand Putin's rhetoric and I believe—some belief that what he envisions is a reconstitution of the old Soviet Union. But I think his real concern in Ukraine has been right next door to him will be a country rich with young, educated, technologically expert young people that will become entrepreneurs. I think he is worried that the bread basket of the world is right next door, and that economic influence.

I know he is concerned about the potential for Ukraine's own military industrial development itself. And to have that prospering country and a democracy right next door while the Russian economy continues to go in the tank and he has driven it further with his illegal war in Ukraine serves as a contrast that would create a great domestic political problem for himself, let alone cutting out the oligarchs that are a part of his network of self-wealth that many people say makes him the wealthiest person in the world. It is a mafia-like crime syndicate, as has been discussed. So it is that comparison.

Ambassador O'Brien, I traveled with you to Ukraine. When I was there I met with the U.S.-Ukrainian—American-Ukrainian Chamber of Commerce. And I was just struck by the businesses, the U.S. businesses that are there, how they made it through this war, continued and how they wanted to grow beyond this. They realized all the things I just said about Ukraine being the powerhouse really of Europe down the road and how that not only helps our own business interests here at home, but also strengthens our security here at home. So investing in international development is indeed investing in our own priorities here in the United States.

Can you talk a little bit more about how the U.S. interests make America safer, more prosperous? And also this idea that people have; and I understand if this is all they know, that, oh, we are giving money to other countries when we could use the money back

here at home. It is my belief that investing over there is—has a multiplying effect in terms of investing at home. Could you talk about that?

Ms. POBLETE. You answer first and then—

Mr. KEATING. No, no. No, Ambassador, because it is about the—

Mr. O'BRIEN. Okay.

Mr. KEATING [continuing]. because we traveled there and I met with those people.

Mr. O'BRIEN. Yes, I was in Ukraine eight times during the war. I don't have an exact multiply—multiple for how much U.S. assistance comes back to help us, but I know for example that we had a large program to improve the environment for small and medium businesses with a real focus on American companies. They were already beginning to invest substantially in the Ukrainian defense industrial base and they were beginning to invest in EU countries where inputs would come from Ukraine and then be exported elsewhere in the world. Those are direct benefits to our economy.

They also help us again—as Mr. Kochis and I both emphasized, the real struggle ahead is with China which hasn't featured much in the last 5 weeks. And I think we are a lot better off if we have that as our focus and we build our base in just the way you all do when you run. You get your base together. And our base sits with our European partners, Japan, Korea, and some others. With that we are a billion to a billion-and-a-half people.

For Ukraine to inject another 35 million young, well-educated people with enormous resources into our base helps us with the real struggle that is ahead, and that is part of what is at stake here.

Mr. KEATING. I really appreciate the comments of our witnesses, too, highlighting other areas where this would be important, too, like the Balkans, like the Arctic. These are areas where it is critical. And we are in competition with China in those. And it is this investment in Ukraine that is going to strengthen that. Our moving away from that does just the opposite.

So whether it is the Balkans, whether it is up north, whether it is these areas of influence, whether it is—our overall strategy with China has been one of deterrence. That is our strategy. This is weakened as well. So when you look at this front line and you look at that investment, I don't know how you can't help but understand. And it is up to us as representatives of the people to better communicate to people in our districts and across our country that this is indeed the America First policy. I yield back.

Mr. SELF. I now recognize the representative from Ohio, Mr. Davidson, for 5 minutes.

Mr. DAVIDSON. I thank the gentleman and I thank your witnesses. I appreciate you being here today to answer questions.

Mr. O'Brien, you spent some time with the Biden Administration. What does the phrase—are you familiar with the phrase as much as it takes, as long as it takes?

Mr. O'BRIEN. Yes.

Mr. DAVIDSON. So you are familiar with it. What does that phrase mean? As much as it takes. We are clear on that. Just keep cutting the checks. As long as it takes to do what?

Mr. O'BRIEN. Yes.

Mr. DAVIDSON. They never really defined the mission. What is the mission as you see it?

Mr. O'BRIEN. Well, no, I think we did, and I think it goes to some of the difficulties I have with the decisions that [inaudible.]

Mr. DAVIDSON. No, you didn't. And the reality is between—

Mr. O'BRIEN. I don't think you are right there.

Mr. DAVIDSON. Well, let me elaborate since it is my time. Victoria Nuland said that it was regime change in Russia including war crime tribunals for Vladimir Putin?

Mr. O'BRIEN. When did she say that?

Mr. DAVIDSON. I don't have the date. I will be glad to supply it for you.

Mr. O'Brien.

[Inaudible.]

Mr. DAVIDSON. This is my job to question you.

Mr. O'BRIEN. Yes. Okay.

Mr. DAVIDSON. So what was it exactly that you believed that the administration committed to do in Ukraine?

Mr. O'BRIEN. Yes. So one—

Mr. DAVIDSON. Besides spend money.

Mr. O'BRIEN. Okay. Sorry. My turn. What we were working toward during my time as Assistant Secretary was to build a viable cease-fire. Much of that work was spent with the Ukrainians so they were prepared to do that. The Russians were unwilling to make a cease-fire on any terms that would be sustainable.

Mr. DAVIDSON. Okay. So the

[inaudible]—

Mr. O'BRIEN.

[Inaudible.]

Mr. DAVIDSON. You wanted to secure peace. And that is good because then you should be euphoric that President Trump has come in and said the United States is America is very happy to help you secure peace. But—

Mr. O'BRIEN. I agree

[inaudible.]

Mr. DAVIDSON [continuing]. there is not a lot of happiness in the world from the Biden Administration. It is, oh, how dare you not keep cutting the checks. And that generally is the theme within the State Department as they will share just enough information to get Congress to shut up and cut the checks. Right?

Mr. O'BRIEN. I think—

Mr. DAVIDSON. I am not having a discussion with you, please. I don't plan to—

Mr. O'BRIEN. Okay.

Mr. DAVIDSON [continuing]. talk to you again.

Mr. O'BRIEN. That was never my attitude.

Mr. DAVIDSON.

[Inaudible] mic off. I am not talking to you anymore.

Mr. O'BRIEN. Yes.

Ms. DAVIDSON. All right. So this is the reality of what has been going on for a long time. People come to Congress and say just cut the checks. And frankly, what you see out of the European Union,

we couldn't get them to cut the checks for a long time. Some of the smaller countries did contribute. A lot of countries contributed a little more, but your big countries like Germany continued to not meet their obligations under NATO. They gave statements about meeting their obligations, but they didn't meet their obligations to NATO. And now that Donald Trump has said, all right. Fine. You will find out. You are not ready for peace? Go ahead. Suddenly the Europeans have found the resolve to spend money.

I just want to share a quote from Irving Kristol, a godfather of the neo-conservative movement. He said in 1983—well before the end of the cold war he said, quote, “If we have learned anything from the NATO experience of the last 30 years(—that was in 1983—“it is the rediscovery of an old truth: dependency corrupts, and absolute dependency corrupts absolutely.(The culture of entitlement and dependence on American money has corrupted many of our allies and it is nice to see it changing.

When we look at our own approach though we have had a hard time saying what is in it for America? Why should America serve as the de facto European defense force and then continue to be treated with contempt for it? Victoria Nuland had her own problems, but when we look at the acting Ambassador there, we should have some other concerns.

So, Ms. Poblete, you are familiar with some of the challenges from your time in the Leg. Branch. Does it resonate with you that we are kept in the dark in a lot of things just so we cut the checks?

Ms. POBLETE. Absolutely. And unfortunately it became—it was crystallized during my time at the Department of State just to what great lengths some individuals go to to hide information from the Congress.

But to your point, Congressman Davidson, and the discussion of foreign aid, foreign aid needs to have clearly defined goals and objectives. With respect to Ukraine that never really occurred. When Senator Rand Paul sought a GAO report to ascertain how the funding had been used, who were the end users, was it used for the intended purposes that the Congress had appropriated and authorized it for, he was called an agent of Putin.

Mr. DAVIDSON. Yes, that is——

Ms. POBLETE. He was called——

Mr. DAVIDSON [continuing]. the standard attack because if you don't——

Ms. POBLETE. Exactly.

Mr. DAVIDSON [continuing]. just cut the checks, you are an enemy of the State, the deep State maybe. And that is where we look at Bridget Brink. She has actually worked to get rid of the prosecutor that was going to look in Ukraine—into Hunter Biden, who was going to look into things that we should have an interest in, that we should have accountability. Because what is lacking when you are kept in the dark is accountability and that is exactly what the Biden Administration worked to avoid on every front.

Ms. POBLETE. And if I may, sir, if I could share with all the members of this committee——

Mr. SELF. The gentleman's time is up.

I now recognize the representative from Rhode Island, Mr. Amo.

Mr. AMO. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Focusing on some things that matter, let's talk about President Trump and his direction to Elon Musk to use DOGE to take a chain saw to our government. This has resulted in thousands of Federal employees being fired. These sweeping layoffs have been willful and malicious. Adding to the chaos and confusion laid-off workers have had their terminations rescinded once Elon realized the dangerous consequences of his actions. So it is clear that DOGE has no idea how our government works, yet that hasn't stopped them from forging ahead on their rampage. I underscore rampage.

Every agency has been directed to submit a report on plans to further reduce their workforce by this Thursday. Thankfully the State Department hasn't had the mass layoffs of other agencies like USAID, apparently a point of contention between Elon and Secretary Rubio. However, there is a list of about 700 civil servants who could be fired circulating at the agency. And in the last 2 months alone another 700 employees have resigned, nearly as many as typically resign in an entire year. So make no mistake, these proposed layoffs and forced resignations of dedicated public servants threaten our national security.

That brings me to two subjects of today's hearing: The Bureau of International Security and Nonproliferation and the Bureau of Arms Control, Deterrence, and Stability, aka, the experts who work to prevent nuclear war and international arms trafficking. And I hope that everybody agrees that we would be better off by having long-serving, experienced civil servants working at these bureaus. They leverage their institutional knowledge to keep us safe.

Look, after all, we are talking about nuclear arms control agreements, monitoring chemical weapons, protecting critical American innovation, and coordinating global cooperation to prevent terrorists from accessing sensitive technology. This doesn't sound like entry-level work to me. It sounds like it requires a deep understanding of these technologies and our international agreements built on years of experience.

Ambassador O'Brien, briefly can you tell me a bit how firing or forcing the resignation of staff with these bureaus would harm our national security and our ability to prevent bad actors from accessing nuclear weapons and other advanced technologies?

Mr. O'BRIEN. Sure. I think there are a couple of things. So one is the chairman asked about new technologies. So certainly in the ISN Bureau—I worked with them a lot on restricting access of bad actors to new technologies—the set of expertise that is available there on supply chains and the financing of trade in what items that can lead to dangerous weapons is second to none and enables us to keep ourselves secure. And I saw again and again how we were able to restrict Russian, Iranian, and North Korean access to these items because of the expertise in that bureau.

A recent thing that we were just able to sort of push over the line in my last couple of months there was the arrival of this shadow fleet, a group of unregulated tankers that export Venezuelan, Iranian, and Russian oil, competing unfairly with American producers and avoiding sanctions. We were finally able largely because of the expertise of people in that bureau and in the UR to identify the kind of key nodes where those ships intersect with the global

commerce and were able to get the key states that have ability to access them either in ports in straits to shut it done.

More broadly here it brings other countries along. So ISN in particular, but also ADS work with all of the other countries that have an interest in the more sophisticated parts of the supply chains for weapons, but also implementation of any kind of effective cease-fire arrangement. All that expertise sits there.

Now, is it all as up to date as we would want? Again, there is enormous turnover in these places and I think somebody needs to really dig in and see who works there now. ADS hired during the time I was assistant secretary a number of very experienced people in working on issues like AI, crypto, other ways in which bad actors try to come at our security. And I think if somebody takes the time to dig in you may find that you don't need sort of broad structural changes, but you can actually just give clear direction. And that is what we are lacking right now.

Mr. AMO. Yes, thank you, Ambassador. Quickly before my time expires, President Trump isn't just weakening our national security by firing Federal employees. He is detonating our relationships around the world. By freezing foreign assistance we are—our credibility with countries is being jeopardized. I look at countries like Armenia that has been moving closely to strengthening ties with the United States.

So as I wrap up here, the message that we are sending is one that is detrimental to our commitment to countries like Armenia who need us to be committed in this relationship as we move further. I yield back.

Mr. SELF. I now recognize the representative from California, Ms. Kim.

Ms. KIM. Thank you, Chairman Self and Ranking Member Keating for holding today's hearing.

I want to thank the witnesses for joining us today. Good to see you.

Good to see, Dr. Poblete. It has been a while. Increasing stability, preventing conflict, and preserving and advancing effective arm control and disarmament measures are the core of ADS' mission. And we have repeatedly seen Russia reject U.S. proposals for talks concerning an arms control framework after the expiration of START. Additionally, I am deeply concerned about the PRC's accelerated nuclear weapons programs amidst its escalating rhetoric.

So can you talk to us about what ways can ADS be better positioned to work bilaterally and multilaterally to pursue effective nuclear risk reduction dialog?

Ms. POBLETE. Thank you. It is great to see you. The Congressman has left, but if I could start by making a couple of points: No. 1, with respect to DOGE, how many members of this committee would not have loved to have had a tool similar to that uncovering, but the ultimate decisionmakers are the Secretary of State confirmed by the Senate, comes from the Congress. So it is just a tool. It is not conducting a rampage.

President Trump himself has recognized the value of experts in the ISN and ADC Bureau, not specifically but talking about how there are many good people. We want to retain the best of the best. But that does not mean that these two bureaus require over 300

individuals to keep the very best, the most knowledgeable experts to engage in negotiations of arms control, nonproliferation, and disarmament agreements and treaties.

Ms. KIM. So not to be redundant, but is there a certain line of technical or scientific expertise that would be—that would prove beneficial if added to ADS?

Ms. POBLETE. We have the current technical, military, intel, and scientific expertise. Ironically—and that is part of my recommendations. Ironically, these bureaus are overwhelmed by policy experts, by messaging experts. So if we were to reduce the personnel and reduce the scope to those who have the hands-on expertise overseen by policy and expert negotiators, that would go a long way to be more efficient and more successful in our arms control, nonproliferation, and disarmament negotiations.

Ms. KIM. Thank you. And you also mention in your testimony that the—about the Eurocentrism and Euro dominance stemming from cold war dynamics, arms treaties, and agreements has undermined some T family responsibilities relating to verification and compliance. So what can be done to ensure this trend does not continue?

Ms. POBLETE. Again, the T family and the undersecretary needs to be treated equally to her P counterpart, for example. And statute must be the overarching guide, which means according to the congressional Report—not just a statute, but congressional intent made it clear that no regional bureau was to supersede determinations made by the Verification and Compliance Bureau when it came to those functions.

And further, with respect to the reference to sanctions and Treasury, that intelligence is actually gathered primarily by the Department of Treasury. And all bureaus at the Department of State are engaged in those determinations to impose sanctions.

But with respect to the Euro dominance and Eurocentrism, if we want to counter China as we did in the 4th administration and as we want to do again now, yes, a lot goes through Europe just because historically that is the case, but we cannot overly focus on just Europe. To counter China we must empower every regional bureau and every bureau of the Department of State using all elements of U.S. power, not just those going through Europe.

Ms. KIM. Chairman, I have a few more questions, but I am running out of time. Do I have—

Mr. SELF. We will have a second round.

Ms. KIM. Thank you.

Mr. SELF. I now recognize the representative from Nevada, Madam Titus.

Ms. TITUS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Well like some of my colleagues, I am appalled by Trump's actions to freeze all of U.S. foreign policy—foreign aid, rather, abandoning the USAID working professionals around the country and their families, and dismantling the Federal workforce generally.

These steps have led to unnecessary deaths for those people who count on programs that we have been involved with and health care, the financial hardship and uncertainty for our foreign service officers, and diminished U.S. credibility. I have just met with some representatives from Europe earlier today and they are kind of ap-

palled. They don't really know how to react to having someone who has been their friend now not only be a friend, but possibly be an enemy.

I am particularly concerned about the rolling back of democracy programs that existed with USAID. We were there to support countries where there were new democracies that were building and establish democracies that were backsliding. We built vibrant civil service—I mean civil society communities, we backed up the free press, we not only were supporting our own values, but we were backing up China and Russia. And if we are not there, they are going to step in to fill the void.

The Republicans love to do a list of the things that USAID does that they hate, so I would like to do a list of some of the pro-democracy programs that have been eliminated or frozen.

Program to support Belarus Democratic leaders in exile, advancing Belarus democracy. Program funding election monitoring in Kosovo, advancing digital democracy in Serbia, promoting the development of independent professional media in Moldova, fostering more responsive governance in Armenia, boosting civil society engagement in Georgia, supporting political pluralism in Bosnia-Herzegovina. These are the kind of programs that are our soft power that we not only further the values that we have, but it also helps our national security. And if we don't believe that, the minute these were frozen you saw Bruno Rodriguez praising this, Medvedev saying, oh, this is great, applause around the world for us being gone so they could step in. So that is what I would like for us to address.

I would ask you, Mr. O'Brien, looking at the Western Balkans, there have been a lot of programs there that have been terminated, and not just those that were focused on democracy like I mentioned, but some things like promoting energy security, combatting corruption, strengthening critical infrastructure. Could you talk a little bit about how Russia will see it as an advantage if we are not there with those programs?

Mr. O'BRIEN. Yes, it already does. So Russia supplies a critical amount of gas, less and less to Serbia and onto Bosnia and elsewhere. The Serbs have announced they would like to get to zero, but for that to happen they need American natural gas to become available. That will come either through a pipeline that runs from basically Greece through North Macedonia, or it would come through a pipeline that runs through Croatia and across Bosnia.

Now that pipeline is stuck because of corruption which is tied to two local leaders, one of whom actively presents himself as the local affiliate of the administration and is actively trying to get out from under sanctions because of his corruption.

So we are now eliminating the programs that will clear the way for America to become a reliable energy supplier and free these countries from Russian influence. I have trouble seeing that as an America First agenda.

Ms. TITUS. I completely agree. Well how about Moldova, things that are happening in Moldova? Would you address that?

Mr. O'BRIEN. Yes. So, Moldova, like a lot of countries from Central Asia all the way across to the Black Sea—these countries want much less Russia. They see this as their chance to get out from

under. And in Moldova there is a small enclave that Russia used to run guns and money laundering operations out around the world. That has become incredibly weakened as a result of the last few years of sanctions. Russia now—facing elections this fall in Moldova Russia has gone on a massive spree of disinformation which also affects Romania because of the language, vote buying, and efforts to influence the Moldovan elections by using energy, which they used to supply.

So we were building networks to get into Ukraine and also providing the ability for Moldova to generate its own power, but also run power in from Europe. Much of that is gone now. And we are going to leave Moldova at the behest of Russia, which will reinstate its gun-running, thug-running operation again.

Ms. TITUS. Again, not in our best interest. Thank you. I yield back.

Mr. SELF. I now recognize the representative from Delaware, Mr. McBride.

Ms. MCBRIDE. Thank you, Madam Chair. Ranking Member Keating, also wonderful—

Mr. KEATING. Mr. Chairman?

Ms. MCBRIDE. I am sorry—

Mr. KEATING. Could you repeat your introduction again, please?

Mr. SELF. Yes, it is a—we have set the standard on the floor of the House and I am simply—

Mr. KEATING. What is that standard, Mr. Chairman?

Mr. SELF. The standard—

Ms. KEATING. Will you repeat what you just said—

Mr. SELF. I—

Mr. KEATING [continuing]. when you introduced a duly elected representative from the United States of America, please?

Mr. SELF. I will. The Representative from Delaware, Mr. McBride.

Mr. KEATING. Mr. Chairman, you are out of order. Mr. Chairman, have you no decency? I mean I have come to know you a little bit, but this is not decent.

Mr. SELF. We will continue this hearing—

Mr. KEATING. You will not continue it with me unless you introduce a duly elected representative the right way.

Mr. SELF. This hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 3:15 p.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

APPENDIX

MATERIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE HEARING RECORD



Chairman Brian Mast

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

Subcommittee on Europe
Keith Self (R-TX), Chairman

March 5, 2025

Revised

TO: MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

You are respectfully requested to attend an OPEN hearing of the Committee on Foreign Affairs to be held by the Subcommittee on Europe at 2:00 p.m. in Room 2200 of the Rayburn House Office Building. The hearing is available by live webcast on the Committee website at <https://foreignaffairs.house.gov/>.

DATE: Tuesday, March 11, 2025

TIME: 2:00 p.m.

LOCATION: 2200 RHOB

SUBJECT: Arms Control, International Security, and U.S.
Assistance to Europe: Review and Reforms for the State
Department

WITNESSES: The Honorable Yleem Poblete, PhD
Former Assistant Secretary
Bureau of Arms Control, Verification and Compliance
U.S. Department of State

Mr. Daniel Kochis
Senior Fellow
Hudson Institute

*

The Honorable James O'Brien
Former Assistant Secretary
Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs
U.S. Department of State

*NOTE: Witnesses added/changed.

**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 SUBCOMMITTEE HEARING

Day Tuesday Date March 11, 2025 Room 2200 RHOB

Starting Time 14:00 Ending Time 15:15

Recesses ☐ (___ to ___) (___ to ___) (___ to ___) (___ to ___) (___ to ___) (___ to ___)

Presiding Member(s)

Chairman Self

Check all of the following that apply:

Open Session ☒

Executive (closed) Session ☐

Televised ☒

Electronically Recorded (taped) ☒

Stenographic Record ☒

TITLE OF HEARING:

Arms Control, International Security, and U.S. Assistance to Europe: Review and Reforms for the State Department

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Attached

NON-COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

N/A

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.)

Rep. Keating

TIME SCHEDULED TO RECONVENE _____

or

TIME ADJOURNED 15:15

Meg Wagner
Full Committee Hearing Coordinator

Committee on Foreign Affairs
Subcommittee on Europe
119th Congress

ATTENDANCE

Meeting on: Arms Control, International Security, and U.S. Assistance to Europe: Review and Reforms for the State Department
Date: March 11, 2025

[illegible]

Arms Control Policy at the Department of State
Views of Former Undersecretary of State for Arms Control and International Security
Rose Gottemoeller
March 11, 2025

- As reorganization plans are worked at State, the role of the Bureau of Arms Control, Deterrence and Stability (ADS) is naturally under review.
- President Trump has made it clear that nuclear negotiations with Russia and China are a top priority for him. ADS is the locus in the U.S. government for expertise on nuclear negotiations. Applying a general ax to the Bureau would undermine his positive message on the global stage that he seeks progress in this area.
- Beyond nuclear weapons, ADS wields the expertise to handle other top Presidential priorities, such as assuring that chemical weapons in Syria are destroyed and that military AI is in line with our strategic goals and not overly regulated.
- And when the President's goal of stopping the war in Ukraine is achieved, ADS will provide the competence in conventional risk reduction that will strengthen and preserve the peace. The problem with the European-run Minsk process after the 2014 Crimea invasion was that it was weak on conventional risk reduction, leading to constant breakdowns in the cease-fire and its final failure.
- There is no question that streamlining and "removing the deadwood" needs to take place, as elsewhere in the Department of State. The Bureau is already 25 percent below its ceiling thanks to departures since January. More can be done to encourage retirement and attrition.
- With ADS, it will be important to focus on preserving negotiating experience on nuclear, chemical, AI and conventional policy. That means looking to those who have recently led negotiations or been responsible for major current endeavors such as implementing the New START Treaty. It means focusing on those who command risk reduction tools, such as the National Nuclear Risk Reduction Center.
- A special effort should be made to preserve the young talent who has been brought into the Bureau, top-flight experts with current knowledge. They will form the backbone of the delegations conducting the President's nuclear negotiations with Russia and China. They will likewise be at the heart of policy efforts in the chemical, conventional and AI arenas. They will help to ensure that the President's priorities succeed.

House Foreign Affairs Committee - Europe Subcommittee**March 11, 2025****Mr. Daniel Kochis****“Arms Control, International Security, and U.S. Assistance to Europe: Review and Reforms for the State Department”****Rep. Wilson**

There are a lot of numbers being thrown around. It is critical to highlight where appropriated money actually goes. The majority of the funds for assistance have gone to shoring up NATO replenishment and investing in our own stock. At least 70% in total assistance is spent in America or on American forces, this includes nearly all security assistance.

This is because we are giving old systems we were not using to Ukraine and then spending this money to buy new, updated equipment. This is a great investment since it degrades Russian forces while upgrading the U.S. military.

Question 1:

Why did the Biden administration provide aid in small increments, thereby extending the war, instead of all at once immediately in order to win the war quickly?

The tepidness of U.S. support for Ukraine under the Biden Administration has contributed to the current war of attrition which continues to cost Ukrainian lives, has strained societal capacity in Ukraine, and stressed public support for prolonged assistance in the West. The U.S. under President Biden consistently slow walked sending key capabilities such as Abrams Tanks or approving the transfer of U.S. made systems such as F-16s to Ukraine. These delays hurt Ukrainian morale and allowed Russia to adapt in advance. For instance, by the time U.S. supplied tanks finally made their way to the front lines, the lethality of drones had matured to such a degree that they needed to be pulled from the front.¹ The Biden Administration heavily restricted how U.S. supplied systems could be used, akin to asking Ukraine to defend itself with one hand tied behind its back. As an example, while the U.S. first supplied Ukraine with the Army Tactical Missile System (ATACMS) in October 2023,² it did not begin easing restrictions on the use of ATACMS against targets inside Russia until November 2024.³ Russia was free to launch strikes against Ukraine from bases inside Russia knowing they were relatively safe from retaliation. The Biden Administration in its final full year in office continued to throttle the

¹ Tara Copp, “Ukraine pulls US-provided Abrams tanks from the front lines over Russian drone threats,” CNN, April 26, 2024, <https://apnews.com/article/ukraine-russia-war-abrams-tanks-19d71475d427875653a2130063a8fb7a> (accessed March 31, 2025).

² Natasha Bertrand and Oren Liebermann, “US has provided Ukraine long-range ATACMS missiles, sources say,” CNN, October 18, 2023, <https://www.cnn.com/2023/10/17/politics/us-ukraine-long-range-atacm-missiles/index.html> (accessed March 31, 2025).

³ “Biden lifts restriction on Ukraine’s use of U.S.-provided weapons deep inside Russian territory,” CBS News, November 18, 2024, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/biden-ukraine-us-weapons-russia-restriction/> (accessed March 31, 2025).

delivery of weapons to Ukraine.⁴

This policy of giving Ukraine enough to survive but never enough to win was a losing proposition from its inception. It stemmed from two factors, the first, concern over instability in Russia resulting from a loss in their war against Ukraine. The second, overinflated concern over the potential of Putin resorting to the use of nuclear weapons if faced with swift battlefield losses. Both risk narratives, Russian collapse, and nuclear weapons use, were heavily utilized by the Kremlin during the Biden Administration and seemed to gain currency in the White House.

Question 2:

Was there a failure to effectively communicate to the American people what the money would ultimately go toward, realizing that most of it was spent in America.

Yes, the Biden Administration was complacent about maintaining strong public support for aiding Ukraine. They failed to adequately explain that the majority aid remained in American communities, as you note 70% of total aid in fact. A failure to engage with the American public, in particular outside of Washington, DC, to speak to why it is in the U.S. national interest to support Ukraine, what the Administration's plan for victory was, and how aid packages also benefited the U.S., unfortunately has left space for misleading messages to take root. A recent report from the legal firm Dentons notes that of U.S. military aid in particular, "A large share of those funds (roughly 86 percent) is being spent in the US, subsidizing weapons production in at least 31 states and 71 cities."⁵ U.S. assistance to Ukraine is not charity. It remains in the interest of the U.S. to see Russia dealt a strategic defeat in Ukraine, and for Ukraine to remain a sovereign, independent nation. Furthermore, military aid is helping turnover and refresh U.S. stockpiles, infusing local communities with new jobs, and helping defense planners better understand where bottlenecks to increased production are located.

⁴ Daniel Kochis, "Timid Biden stifled US aid to Ukraine — if Trump wants peace, reverse course," New York Post, February 6, 2025, <https://nypost.com/2025/02/06/opinion/trump-must-reverse-timid-bidens-stifling-of-us-ukraine-aid/> (accessed March 31, 2025).

⁵ "US support for Ukraine: A critical lifeline for Ukraine, an opportunity for US business," Dentons, January 6, 2025, <https://www.dentons.com/en/insights/articles/2025/january/6/us-support-for-ukraine-a-critical-lifeline-for-ukraine-an-opportunity-for-us-business> (accessed March 31, 2025).

Rep. Sarah McBride
March 11th - House Foreign Affairs Committee - Europe Subcommittee
The Honorable James O'Brien
"Arms Control, International Security, and U.S. Assistance to Europe: Review and Reforms for the State Department"

Had I been permitted to participate in this hearing, these would have been my remarks:

Thank you, Chairman Self and Ranking Member Keating, and thank you to our witnesses for being here. Today's hearing is to review the State Department's Bureaus under this subcommittee's jurisdiction. We cannot do this in a vacuum.

Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine represents a grave threat to international security- as well as to freedom and democracy. In the global struggle between democracy and authoritarianism, the vital work of the State Department is essential to promoting democratic values, combating the rise in influence of authoritarian regimes, and maintaining global stability.

In that shameful Oval Office meeting with President Zelenskyy, the president and vice president set aflame nearly a century of American leadership and international trust. Statements of praise were immediately issued in Moscow. You could almost see Putin watching that meeting and laughing with glee. Weak leadership that parrots Russian propaganda is not "America First." The self-debasement we see from the administration - their pitiful efforts to suck up to dictators is not a path to peace, it's a permission for further provocation from Russia and their alliance of authoritarianism.

Our commitment to our allies and our values has laid the foundation of trust and strength that has ushered in the longest period of peace between great powers in world history. In less than two months, this administration has shattered the foundation of that trust that has taken 80 years to foster. They've shattered our principles and they've shattered our progress.

Take for example, our efforts to address nuclear proliferation. If countries can't rely on the deterrence that comes with an alliance with America, they will be pushed into either the arms of an enemy or, perhaps, forced to build their own nuclear deterrence. In 1994, Ukraine agreed to relinquish soviet nuclear weapons in its territory in exchange for a security guarantee from the US and Russia. Well, we all know how that turned out with Russia, and now, the US administration appears reluctant to stand by that guarantee.

→ Mr. O'Brien, what impacts will broken promises to our allies have on nuclear proliferation in Europe and globally if allies believe they cannot rely on the security of the U.S. nuclear umbrella?

ANSWER: Ms. McBride, it is a pleasure to get to answer your questions even if only in writing. Since the hearing, Trump Administration policies have isolated the US further. I encourage the Committee to look beyond specific questions of State Department structure to the standing and influence the US will have in the world. People around the world are

paying attention to President Trump, but we should not believe that calls of worry and concern are signs of respect.

Poland and Germany – allies central to any US security umbrella – have responded to the Trump Administration’s policies by talking about developing a nuclear capability independent of the United States. Other states would follow them, both with nuclear capability and other destabilizing technologies. This would create a spiral of instability, especially in areas where regional leaders compete for influence as in the Middle East and South Asia. Someone is going to have clean up that mess. It will be the US, or China.

The US will be less capable and less safe. Our own security umbrella depends on Allies believing that working with our military is in their own interest. I encourage the Congress to seek classified briefings on this question. And someone in the Administration should read up on the history of the US security presence in Greenland.

Finally, the global arms control framework will come under enormous stress as more states seek destabilizing weapons. This will undermine the effectiveness of traditional agreements and lead to sellers who operated outside suppliers’ clubs like the Wassenaar arrangement, which help to limit the spread of dangerous technologies. I encourage the Committee to look at this issue and not only about the State Department’s administrative structure, which was the topic of the March hearing. Whatever the merit of ideas discussed in the hearing, that conversation will seem trivial if the entire international architecture collapses. It’s like dinosaurs arguing over where to get dinner as their environment collapses.

President Trump has said that he would like to reduce the amount that the US spends on nuclear weapons. By raising hostilities with countries that might develop their own he places that goal further and further out of reach. END ANSWER

On day one in office, President Trump issued an executive order mandating a 90-day pause on foreign aid. Subsequently, the administration has cancelled 83% of USAID contracts, cutting off billions of dollars in lifesaving and democracy building programs around the world.

→ Mr. O’Brien, how does U.S. foreign assistance to Europe contribute to NATO’s overall defense capabilities, particularly in light of the security threats Russia poses? How do our contributions to NATO defense capabilities act as a force multiplier in securing U.S. interests in the region?

ANSWER: NATO provides the US with consistent, reliable advice and support from 31 other countries, as well as more than 40 partners. The Trump Administration believes that this is a burden. It is a foolish position.

Of course, Europe should invest more in its own defense. Starting in 2014, European countries committed to spend 2% of GDP on their defense. At that point, 3 did. In January 2021, 9 did. In July 2024, 22 did, and Europe collectively met the 2% benchmark, with nearly

all allies on track to meet the 2% threshold on schedule. Significantly, in July 2024 European Allies committed themselves to fund NATO's defense plans (requiring at least 3.5% of GDP on defense), and much of these funds would have spent with US companies before the Trump Administration's tariffs. A reasonable benchmark for the Trump Administration would be to use this summer's NATO Summit in the Netherlands to agree on practical plans agreed on how quickly that funding can be put in place, to be followed by even higher levels as required by NATO's defense plans.

This will require that the US remain actively engaged in NATO, shaping the plans and weapons requirements for the investments to come. US assistance programs play a vital role in helping states shed old military systems and practices. Our aid helps transfer old systems to other countries; purchase new systems; train Allied and partner militaries away from legacy or competing military doctrines; and inculcate values such as civilian control of military forces. As countries look to spend more on military procurement, US anti-corruption assistance can be vital.

Most troubling, some in the Administration seem to believe that strong military partnerships, including NATO, make it too easy for the US to intervene abroad. I share the concerns of many voters over ill-advised military interventions as in Iraq. That is about wisdom and patience in managing our foreign policy. It makes no sense to break both our legs because we may walk in the wrong direction from time to time. END ANSWER

→ Mr. O'Brien, how does the Trump administration's foreign assistance freeze and unilateral negotiations with Russia undermine our allies' trust in the United States? How does this hurt U.S. interests in the long run?

ANSWER: The Trump Administration's pursuit of a new arrangement with Russia deserves particular scrutiny. It apparently would include commercial deals for energy and minerals. These could enrich the individuals involved but would mean that the US would have an interest in seeing Russian businesses enter lucrative markets, like the European energy and critical minerals market. This would reverse one of the most important strategic developments since 2022, which is Europe's success in reducing reliance on politically-controlled, corrupting Russian energy. In his first term, President Trump opposed this European dependence, but he is now collecting proposals to increase it. We know that President Putin would not allow American control of any strategically important Russian industry, so the leverage gained on Russia would be minimal. And given Russia's track record, I would encourage careful scrutiny of whether individuals believed to be influential in the US and Allied governments would be beneficiaries of these deals.

A few examples hint at the scale of the catastrophe that would be brought by a rash deal with Russia:

In Europe, Russian leaders long have sought a buffer zone in which Russia would have the largest military force. No European (or American) leader can feel confident about where Russia's claims would stop. President Putin has said that, beyond Ukraine, Russia has interests wherever there are ethnic Russian populations (so the Baltics), where Russia for some period

exercised sovereignty (Poland), and where Russia has security interests (essentially Cold War boundaries, including NATO membership in the 1980s). Any of these claims would jeopardize the benefits to the US has received from the growth and security of countries across Europe.

Here is where US assistance plays a key role. Because Russia will need years to rebuild its military after Ukraine's devastation of its capabilities, its threats in Europe will take the form of cyber, disinformation, corruption, and sabotage – all things that US assistance has been helping our partners and Allies address. Many of these US assistance programs are now in question, and the people needed to manage them have been let go. In Ukraine alone, US anti-corruption programs have helped to avoid any material (or any, to my knowledge) diversion of US assistance; the Trump Administration has fired the heads of the units conducting independent reviews and is calling into question the existence of the programs and the continued employment of the people with expertise to manage them.

More broadly, Russia is historically weak in Eurasia, the Caucasus, and the Balkans. US assistance is helping those states build options beyond Russia and China. Our assistance protected reform-minded governments in Armenia, helped Georgians resist pro-Russian forces, and prepared for a trade route from central Asia, freeing those countries from a choice between Russian and China and – if President Trump would speak with Prime Minister Pashinyan and President Aliyev -- reducing the risk of conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia. Our aid also can help countries of the western Balkans' prospects of reform and joining the European Union (a step that would open markets and defense cooperation to the US). More fundamentally, our assistance has helped citizens of the region uncover corruption and call for basic reforms; this is in US interests and the best traditions of the US. The Trump Administration has ended all this.

In the Middle East and Africa, our aid (if provided with appropriate conditions) ought to help drive Russia from its bases in Syria. Lacking that staging ground Russia would be less effective in sub-Saharan Africa (where it supports coups and trades illegitimately in gold and minerals); will be left dependent Libya, where its presence probably would become more expensive and tenuous; and will lost influence in Syria, making it less able to help Iran return there and threaten Lebanon and Israel. More broadly, AID's humanitarian programs and the USG's support for agricultural resilience in sub-Saharan Africa will save millions of lives over the next years.

I assess our assistance programs mainly by how well they advance specific, hard power interests of the US and our partners. Many of our programs do that very well, although as in any private or public sector initiative we can do better. Our assistance programs in addition contribute to the soft power that has made the US the leading power in the world. The main goal of diplomacy is to persuade others than they want to do what we want done, so that we don't even need to ask them. The Trump Administration is destroying every element of that soft power. Our assistance programs, restored and improved, can be part of rebuilding that form of power. END ANSWER

House Foreign Affairs Committee - Europe Subcommittee
March 11, 2025
The Honorable James O'Brien
“Arms Control, International Security, and U.S. Assistance to Europe: Review and
Reforms for the State Department”
Rep. Wilson

There are a lot of numbers being thrown around. It is critical to highlight where appropriated money actually goes. The majority of the funds for assistance have gone to shoring up NATO replenishment and investing in our own stock. At least 70% in total assistance is spent in America or on American forces, this includes nearly all security assistance.

This is because we are giving old systems we were not using to Ukraine and then spending this money to buy new, updated equipment. This is a great investment since it degrades Russian forces while upgrading the U.S. military.

Question 1:

Why did the Biden administration provide aid in small increments, thereby extending the war, instead of all at once immediately in order to win the war quickly?

ANSWER: This is a good question, although I do not accept its premise. I would welcome an effort by the Committee to examine lessons that should be learned from the way that the US and our partners helped Ukraine. A detailed discussion of weapons systems and US advice should take place in a classified setting with military experts participating. In this public setting a few points can be made, using public information because I do not have access to sensitive USG information:

- The Administration provided assistance in accordance with legislated limits and after consultation with Congress. This took time.
- Particular attention should be paid to the time between October 2023 and May 2024, when the US provided virtually no security assistance while the Speaker and presumptive Republican nominee opposed efforts to debate and vote on the Administration's request for additional assistance. Those eight months cost the opportunity to help Ukraine re-arm after its counter-offensive and essentially meant playing catch-up throughout 2024. Nothing was more damaging to the war effort.
- The US has provided Ukraine with around \$71 billion in security assistance, and 30 countries provided approximately an additional \$40 billion in security assistance. Ukraine spent every bit of its public revenue (around \$40-5 billion a year) in its defense.
- US assistance was especially important in long range artillery and air defense systems (more than 70% of the relevant production was US, according to public sources), which became increasingly important as the war continued. We sought to have

Ukrainian production and contributions from others meet other needs so that our funds within legislated limitations could go to what the US could provide. A Czech-led initiative to source legacy artillery munitions, for example, came on line in 2024 and allowed the US to focus on other weaponry.

Within those limitations, decisions were made to help Ukraine be effective on the battlefield as the situation changed, from Russia's initial northern invasion to the Ukrainian counteroffensive in 2023 to the grinding war of 2024, including Russia's air attacks on civilian infrastructure. By the fall of 2024 this meant establishing that Russia could not win the war militarily; increasing economic pressure on Russia; and preparing for a ceasefire with effective security guarantees – which President Zelensky and Ukraine supported by September 2024. This would have allowed Ukraine to recover and prosper, ultimately winning back all its territory.

President Trump instead has chosen to pursue commercial transactions with Russia, to abandon preparation for effective security guarantees, and to start talks by accepting Russian demands for Ukrainian neutrality and dismemberment. He has not taken advantage of global oil markets to do what we did not feel possible in the tight markets of 2022 and 2023 – to reduce Russian oil revenues beyond what the Biden Administration did in our last few weeks. The Administration is negotiating the way that Dan Akroyd bought the Ghostbusters headquarters.

In this setting I can say that every discussion about assistance to Ukraine took into account several factors, including: its likely effectiveness; Ukraine's needs; risks to the US elsewhere (from October 2023 we were actively engaged in protecting Israel and other US partners from terrorist and Iranian attacks); and the need to follow congressional directives strictly. This Committee and three other committees approved each notification to Congress of assistance.

Again, any review of US security assistance from 2022 to the end of the Biden Administration should give special attention to the decision of the Speaker not to move forward with the supplemental requested in the fall of 2023. As a result the US was unable to provide much if any security assistance to Ukraine from mid-October 2023 until May 2024, a period during which Russia established the war it wanted to fight, a grinding, largely unsuccessful attritional conflict in Ukraine's East. It is to the Congress's credit that the bill passed with overwhelming majorities once it was advanced to the floor, but the rationale for the delay has never been explained adequately, especially because it did not appear to change many if any votes in the Congress between the time the bill was proposed after extensive consultations on the Hill and the time it was voted months later. END ANSWER

Question 2:

Was there a failure to effectively communicate to the American people what the money would ultimately go toward, realizing that most of it was spent in America?

ANSWER: Apparently so. We tried to make accurate information available and to reach the American people, but important political leaders kept repeating inaccurate information. Here is my understanding of what was accurate (using public information because I do not have access to USG information):

- By January 2025, the US had provided approximately \$100 billion in assistance to Ukraine, and our partners had provided \$160 billion in direct assistance. Public sources now put those figures at \$128 billion for the US and \$256 billion for European partners, taking into account their greater humanitarian assistance. Ukraine spent every bit of tax revenue on the war, at approximately \$45 billion or so each year. (I do not have access to USG information, so my numbers may not be precise.)
- In the 2024 supplemental, \$30 billion was directly allocated to US companies supporting jobs in as many as 70 US cities. In addition, European funding went 2/3 to US companies. Now, as our European allies prepare to invest billions on defense procurement, it appears that investment with US companies – which again, was 2/3 of its expenditures – is about to decline abruptly or end due to the current Administration's tariff policy. We are throwing away the one international market that we know is about to grow.
- A large percentage of civilian assistance also went to US vendors, including on grain and manufacturing. My understanding is that the Administration seeks to terminate \$800 million in civilian assistance, although for which programs has not to my knowledge been made public.
- US security assistance was often specialized, especially for artillery and air defense. Our aid created conditions for others to contribute more. The EU exported more electricity and rebuilt transport and energy infrastructure, for example, something that would not have made sense without US air defense support.
- Russia has more than \$250 billion of its sovereign assets immobilized in global banks. This could pay for the war, including armaments needed from US and other manufacturers. (For technical reasons, this money probably is easier to use now than earlier in the war, when it was invested globally.) In late 2024, the US, EU, Canada, and Japan arranged a \$50 billion loan to Ukraine using interest from Russian sovereign assets immobilized in our jurisdictions. The Trump Administration reportedly is considering giving the assets back, losing this source of funding, much of which would have gone to US companies supplying needed goods or to support US investment in Ukraine.
- I see assertions that the US has provided much more aid to Ukraine than was appropriated. I do not know the basis of those claims and suggest that the Committee ask an Administration witness to justify them.

I would be happy to attend a town hall in your district with you if your constituents would be interested. END ANSWER

House Foreign Affairs Committee - Europe Subcommittee

March 11, 2025

The Honorable Yleem Poblete, PhD

“Arms Control, International Security, and U.S. Assistance to Europe: Review and Reforms for the State Department”

Rep. Wilson

There are a lot of numbers being thrown around. It is critical to highlight where appropriated money actually goes. The majority of the funds for assistance have gone to shoring up NATO replenishment and investing in our own stock. At least 70% in total assistance is spent in America or on American forces, this includes nearly all security assistance.

This is because we are giving old systems we were not using to Ukraine and then spending this money to buy new, updated equipment. This is a great investment since it degrades Russian forces while upgrading the U.S. military.

Question 1:

Why did the Biden administration provide aid in small increments, thereby extending the war, instead of all at once immediately in order to win the war quickly?

Mr. Wilson, I wholeheartedly agree on the need to rigorously scrutinize every component of the Biden administration's Ukraine policy-- including but not limited to, the process, criteria, recipients, end use of defense articles, services and related exports-- and account for every cent of U.S. taxpayer funding. This is critical to the exercise of the Committee's policy, oversight, and authorization of appropriations functions.

Such an effort can help prevent a repetition of past mistakes and could contribute to efforts led by President Trump to bring peace to Ukraine and deliver on the mandate from the American people to provide for the security, prosperity and wellbeing of our nation.

On your specific question concerning decisions made by the Biden administration, this is best addressed by officials from the former administration.

Question 2:

Was there a failure to effectively communicate to the American people what the money would ultimately go toward, realizing that most of it was spent in America?

The Biden administration failed on multiple fronts. Its Ukraine policy lacked clearly delineated end goals, specific U.S. national security interests involved, explanation/assessment of the potential impact on the U.S. and the American people.

President Biden and his administration officials chose, instead, to use open-ended time references committing the U.S. to supporting Ukraine “as long as it takes” and framed the conflict in ethereal or abstract terms such as a “battle for democracy.”