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GRANGER OPENING STATEMENT: SUBCOMMITTEE MARKUP FY 2015 STATE AND FOREIGN OPERATIONS APPROPRIATIONS BILL

I would like to welcome all of the Subcommittee Members to the markup of the fiscal year 2015 bill and report for the Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs.

I want to start by thanking Mrs. Lowey for her dedication to this Subcommittee. It is a pleasure to have her as my partner and friend. We have been able to accomplish many great things working together.

I also want to highlight the work of Congressman Wolf, not just as a Member of this Subcommittee, but also the Ranking Member in 2007 and 2008 and the Chairman of the Subcommittee that handled State Operations for six years before that. Frank Wolf has been able to maintain a passion for what he does almost unequalled in this Congress. Frank, you will be missed.

I will begin by pointing out some of the highlights in this year's legislation.

The allocation allows us to produce a balanced bill that addresses many priorities and strengthens oversight of taxpayer dollars. The bill totals \$48 billion, which is \$708 million below the enacted fiscal year 2014 level, and \$277 million less than the President's fiscal year 2015 request.

OCO spending continues to go down, totaling \$6 billion, about a nine percent reduction from last year. The bill excludes funding for 11 accounts and reduces funding in other lower-priority areas, such as assistance to International Financial Institutions.

A top priority for this Subcommittee is funding global health programs. The President proposed cuts to maternal and child health as well as HIV/AIDS. This bill prioritizes these efforts and reinforces this Subcommittee's commitment to eradicating polio, saving the lives of children, and continuing treatment for those living with HIV.

We prioritize funding for programs directly related to our national security, including maintaining the level of funding for embassy security and construction and to keep U.S. diplomats safe while they represent the United States abroad.

We continue our strong commitment for our key allies in the Middle East – Israel and Jordan, and the bill also increases funding for countries in the former Soviet Union and Central and

Eastern Europe by providing resources above the request for countries facing territorial pressures and challenges to their security.

This bill rejects the cuts proposed by the President for security and economic development programs in Mexico, Colombia, Central America, and the Caribbean. With this funding, the bill aims to address the tragic issue we have discussed in the last two full committee mark-ups -- the large number of unaccompanied children flooding our borders. By improving economic opportunities and security in Latin America, we can help solve problems like this before they reach the United States.

Another urgent crisis that the bill prioritizes is human trafficking. We have a moral obligation to do everything we can to put an end to what equates to modern day slavery. The demand for U.S. assistance far exceeds the funding that the United States has previously made available. So this bill includes \$58 million to help meet this need, which is \$10 million above the current fiscal year. This bill includes a special focus on Guatemala, where I believe we can make a significant difference. We also increase funding for the State Department's Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons. The State Department should help other governments use advancements in technology to identify trafficking victims and prevent more children from being lost to the dark world of human trafficking.

The bill continues to address and prioritize efforts to combat wildlife poaching and trafficking, which threatens stability and security throughout much of sub-Saharan Africa and contributes to the revenues of some of the most dangerous criminal organizations. Many Members of the Committee have expressed their support to me on this issue because we do not want to see the world's most unique wildlife become extinct on our watch. Therefore the bill provides additional resources using expertise from across our government to tackle this crisis.

Over the last three years, we have continued to watch the situation in Egypt. We expect the government to continue the relationship with the United States and uphold the peace treaty with Israel. Therefore this bill continues to tie aid to these requirements and updates conditions related to elections and a democratic transition. One issue we hope the new President will address quickly is overturning the June 2013 convictions of many American and international democracy groups who were working in Egypt.

The United States has been very generous with assistance for the Palestinian Authority as part of a good-faith effort to bring about peace and security between Israelis and the Palestinians. The fate of the peace negotiations and future aid from the Congress is now in question because of the actions of President Abbas on June 2nd, when he swore in a new Palestinian unity government based on an agreement with Hamas. Israel cannot be expected to negotiate with a terrorist organization. Funding for the Palestinians is off-the-table until it is clear that the unity government is committed to peace and security.

I continue to be concerned about the situation in Afghanistan.

There are many unknowns, including how the government of Afghanistan will handle security and their ability to fight terrorism, how U.S. personnel will remain safe without the presence of

our troops, and how oversight of assistance will be conducted. At the same time, we want to ensure the gains made from U.S. investments in health, education, and women's empowerment are not lost.

Therefore, this bill continues to reduce the civilian presence and assistance programs, while enhancing requirements on oversight, accountability, and advancing the rights of Afghan women and girls. The bill prohibits assistance to the government of Afghanistan until there is a Bilateral Security Agreement.

In Iraq today we see a real crisis unfolding only a few short years since our troops withdrew. This bill continues security assistance to help address these challenges.

I hope that all Members can support moving this bill forward to Committee. It is a product that reflects many of the priorities facing the subcommittee in today's challenging and unpredictable world.

Finally, I want to express my appreciation for the work of the staff.

From the majority staff, I want to thank the clerk, Anne Marie Chotvacs, and her team -- Craig Higgins, Alice Hogans, Susan Adams, Celia Alvarado, Jamie Guinn and David Bortnick. From my personal office staff, I want to thank Johnnie Kaberle.

From the minority staff, I want to give a special thank you to Steve Marchese. Steve is always willing to work with us, and it is appreciated. We also thank Erin Kolodjeski, Siobhan Hulihan and Marin Stein.

I will now turn to my friend Ranking Member Lowey for her opening statement.

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