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February 25, 2015

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**GRANGER OPENING STATEMENT: BUDGET HEARING -
DEPARTMENT OF STATE**

The Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs will come to order.

Mr. Secretary, I want to welcome you back to the subcommittee. There are many serious foreign policy matters and budget issues that Members will want to address during our time with you. We look forward to your testimony today.

At the top of the list is addressing the threat of the Islamic State and terrorists affiliated with ISIL. As Egypt, Jordan, and the Kurds in Iraq are retaliating and defending themselves against the group's heinous acts, security assistance is being delayed by bureaucratic processes across many agencies and poor policy decisions by this Administration. As a result, our most trusted and capable partners in the region are not getting the help they need. Mr. Secretary, there are no excuses for this delay. I know that this delay is not your responsibility alone and I have voiced my concerns directly to the President. Our allies and partners in the Middle East must get the help they need now to combat ISIL – not next week, not next month, and not next year.

In Ukraine, violence continues despite a ceasefire that was reached almost two weeks ago. We want to hear your thoughts on steps being taken to resolve the situation and what assistance is needed to support the people of Ukraine and the region to combat Russian aggression.

In Afghanistan, even with a new government in office and a signed Bilateral Security Agreement, there are continued challenges, and in fact, the security environment remains so unstable that our diplomatic and development personnel are pulling back to Kabul.

In Africa, Boko Haram has not backed down. They are still on the offensive committing unspeakable acts of brutality. And while there has been progress in ending the violence caused by the Lord's Resistance Army, the leader of that group, Joseph Kony, remains at large.

For nearly a year and a half, you have worked with our international partners to put in place an agreement with Iran, and the United States must keep the pressure on as a final deal is negotiated. I am closely watching the elements of an agreement, and I know many of my colleagues share my concerns. The security of the United States and our steadfast ally, Israel, is at stake.

I hope you will address each of these policy issues today.

In addition, we have questions about the budget request for your department's operations and foreign assistance programs. The total funding level requested for the State Department and U.S.A.I.D. is six percent above last year. But even at that level you have sacrificed some of the priorities of the Members of this committee to make room for the Administration's initiatives.

It is difficult for me to justify a new \$500 million program at the United Nations to fight global climate change and additional funds for an embassy in Cuba, when once again many programs that have bipartisan support have been reduced below last year's level, such as democracy assistance and humanitarian programs. Another issue we will continue to address together is ensuring the safety of our nation's diplomats. We need assurance that funding is being used effectively to address the most urgent security needs.

Next, I want to mention an issue that I know is a priority for you -- Middle East Peace. Negotiating a peace deal requires trusted partners, and the recent actions by President Abbas at the International Criminal Court have jeopardized the trust that has been built over the years. We want to hear how you plan to respond to the Palestinians' move to join the I.C.C., and we question why the Administration's budget request includes another \$440 million for the West Bank and Gaza in light of these very troubling actions by the Palestinian leadership.

Finally, I want to mention an issue that is a priority for me -- a foreign policy issue in our own back yard. The Administration's budget request includes \$1 billion for the Central American countries - more than double the amount provided last year. Many Members of this subcommittee understand the need for an increased investment in these countries to stop the flow of illegal immigration into the United States. I have myself visited these countries, and the U.S.-Mexico border, several times and have seen this crisis first-hand. We need your help today to understand how such a large investment would change the situation on our border. Our neighbor, Mexico, is on the front lines of combating these troubling patterns of immigration from Central America. We must do all we can to help Mexico strengthen its borders and turn away those traveling illegally from Central American countries. We must also support and use the capabilities of partners in the region, such as Colombia, to continue to develop and implement a comprehensive security strategy.

In closing, I want to thank you and the thousands of diplomats, development officers, and implementing partners for what you do every day to promote U.S. interests abroad. You have a very difficult job and all of the Members of the subcommittee recognize that, but we also know that the United States must lead in these troubling times. It is our responsibility to hold you to account for managing the funds this committee provides to address these challenges.

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