



Chairman Hal Rogers

House Committee on Appropriations

**Fiscal Year 2016 Budget Hearing – Department of State
February 25, 2015
Opening Statement As Prepared**

Thank you, Madame Chair. Mr. Secretary, thank you for being with us to discuss the Fiscal Year 2016 budget request for the Department of State and foreign operations, as well as the many policy issues the Department is engaged in around the world.

As the Chairwoman and Ranking Member have highlighted, you are serving as the nation's chief diplomat during a truly tumultuous period. Undeniably, the threats posed by ISIL demand our immediate attention. We've seen this group of terrorists senselessly kill innocent civilians and our partners and allies in the fight against ISIL, and they are stepping up threats to Western targets. ISIL's brutality seemingly has no limits.

The President has asked other countries to play a prominent role in dismantling ISIL, and the United States must support our friends and allies in this endeavor. I echo the Chairwoman's concerns that security assistance for Egypt, Jordan and the Kurds in Iraq must be delivered with all due haste. When our allies and partners are beating back a shared foe, they should be able to count on our country to come to their aid. I fear that countries like Russia are all too eager to fill any perceived vacuum in US leadership, and I hope you can address this concern today.

Speaking of support for our friends in the Middle East, I look forward to hearing from you about the peace process and its impact on Israel. You have personally poured metaphorical blood, sweat and tears into this critically important effort – working hard to create a conceptual framework for talks between Israel and the Palestinians. Unfortunately, the Palestinians have largely walked away from these talks – preferring instead to pursue unilateral actions at the United Nations and to join the International Criminal Court. We look forward to hearing what the next steps might be to get peace talks back on track.

As Israel's closest ally, the United States must remain strong as nuclear talks with Iran near their conclusion. Stability in the region, which is tenuous on a good day, depends on a resolution wherein Iran is not taking any steps toward a nuclear weapons capability. The press reports that some troubling concessions may be made to Iran, despite the fact that Iran defiantly refuses to answer IAEA's longstanding questions about suspected work on nuclear weapons designs. I look forward to your thoughts about the progress of these negotiations, your level of confidence that Iran will comply with the terms of any agreement that may ultimately be reached, and what actions the US will take to enforce the terms of any deal. Certainly, we all hope diplomacy yields results – but any deal must have teeth to be effective: economic pressure and a credible military option should be fundamental tenets of an agreement.

Finally, Mr. Secretary, I regret that we do not agree on the Administration's climate change policies around the world. The President's politically driven anti-coal, environmental policies have wreaked havoc domestically, sending tens of thousands of hard-working Americans to the unemployment lines and casting into question our country's long-term energy security. Coal exports are the one bright spot for the thousands of mining families who are facing disastrous economic conditions in my district – and yet Administration officials will not promote coal as part of its Power Africa Initiative. However, this anti-coal posture by the US will not preclude emerging African governments from making use of this reliable, ubiquitous and affordable natural resource. These emerging countries ripe for investment will instead turn to the Chinese for financing and technology to build the same coal-fired power plants. With China's terrible environmental record, the projects they will fund will be dirtier than if American companies were involved. At the end of the day, these policies are anti-American jobs, and they will not have the intended environmental benefits.

I also have heard that the Administration is encouraging members of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) to impose stringent conditions on the public financing of overseas coal-fired power plants. As Coal Capture and Sequestration (CCS) technology is not yet commercially available, these conditions would result in a de facto ban on OECD public financing of coal plants in much of the world. For example, this plan could preclude funding for highly efficient coal plant investments in Pakistan. Given US national security interests and Pakistan's role in the fight against terrorism, the US should be encouraging affordable and reliable electricity that can bolster economic growth and job creation in that country – in turn, reducing instability. In addition, the Administration's policies have recently denied Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC) support to an important energy sector project in Ukraine. I hope you can explain how these policies are in the long-term interests of our country and our allies and partners.

Mr. Secretary, thank you for being with us today. This Committee takes seriously our role in overseeing the budget and policies of the State Department, and I appreciate your continued engagement with us. I yield back.

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