



Chairman Hal Rogers

House Committee on Appropriations

Fiscal Year 2017 Budget Request: U.S. Department of State
February 24, 2016
Opening Statement As Prepared

Thank you, Madame Chair. Mr. Secretary, thank you for being with us today to discuss the Fiscal Year 2017 budget request for the Department of State and foreign operations. I know we on this committee always appreciate the opportunity to discuss the many policy issues around the globe that are confronting you, and the many diplomats and staff under your charge.

The Chairwoman and Ranking Member have rightly noted that the importance of United States leadership in global affairs is at an all-time high. As our nation's chief diplomat, your responsibility to promote American interests abroad, to pursue peace in regions wrought by hundreds of years of historical and cultural strife, to ensure the safety of our citizens living here and abroad – is of paramount importance. I echo their concerns about ISIS and our need for a comprehensive plan to dismantle this merciless terrorist organization. They have senselessly killed thousands of innocent women and children, and they will stop at nothing to infiltrate the United States and our allies. We need to provide the American people with a degree of comfort that the tragic events that transpired in San Bernardino cannot and will not be repeated on our soil, and the State Department needs to play a role in this effort.

On the international level, the President has rightfully solicited the support of other nations in dismantling ISIS. Coordination will be key to defeating this shared foe, and the United States must support our allies in this endeavor. I echo the Chairwoman's sentiment that any assistance to our friends must be delivered with all due haste. I fear that countries like Russia are all too eager to fill any perceived vacuum in American leadership, and I hope you can address this concern today – particularly as Russia continues to pursue aggressive maneuvers against its neighbors. With this in mind, I echo the Chairwoman's support for Ukraine. The United States should support Ukraine during these tough economic times and continue to assist in efforts to protect their sovereignty.

Turning to issues that concern our closest ally in the Middle East, Israel. First, the United States must maintain strong oversight over the nuclear agreement with Iran. Stability in the region, which is tenuous on a good day, depends on holding Iran accountable for its actions. I think most people in this room would agree that taking our soldiers hostage and testing a ballistic missile immediately after the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Agreement went into effect was a bad start. I hope you will provide us with an update today about the Administration's efforts to make sure Iran lives up to its side of the agreement and what tools we have at our disposal if they don't.

Another matter that troubles our friends in Israel is the spike in violence and harmful rhetoric. We know you have close relationships with leaders in the region, and we want to know what you are personally doing to dial back this incitement and restore some measure of peace in this troubled territory.

Finally, Zika. I shared these thoughts with OMB Director Donovan, but they bear repeating here. I am disappointed the Administration didn't take our Committee's recommendation to use unobligated funds for the immediate response to Zika. We will review the Supplemental request carefully, but it is not going to be an easy road ahead.

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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