



**FY20 Appropriations State and Foreign Operations Subcommittee Hearing with
Secretary of State Pompeo
March 27, 2019
Opening Statement of Chairwoman Nita M. Lowey**

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

Secretary Pompeo, while it has taken some time for you to come before the subcommittee, I thank you for joining us. It is important that this subcommittee, with direct jurisdiction over your Department's funding, hears from you on the Fiscal Year 2020 budget.

Before I address the President's inadequate 2020 budget request, I need to respond to the Mexico City announcement you made yesterday. Your additional expansion of the Global Gag Rule compromises our ability to support comprehensive, life-saving care to those most in need. International NGOs should not be forced to choose between accepting lifesaving assistance from the United States or providing legal, comprehensive care with their own funds.

This policy expansion could dramatically impede the effectiveness of our foreign assistance and life-saving programs. Not to mention, this type of coercion runs contrary to the basic tenets of freedom that our country was founded upon.

Now I also want to address your recent comment that President Trump has ensured that the State Department has the resources it needs. Frankly, I find this hard to fathom when his first two budgets proposed cuts to diplomacy and development by more than 30%, and the current request proposes a cut of 21%. The State Department has never had to operate under the draconian levels proposed by the President, as they have never been approved by the House, even in the Republican majority.

This Committee consistently provides bipartisan support to maintain United States global leadership, and I am astonished that three years into his Administration, the President still does not appreciate the merits of sustained investment in diplomacy and development.

Mr. Secretary, I have seen firsthand how U.S. foreign assistance alleviates suffering and promotes stability. Our efforts save lives, promote goodwill and partnership, and support American interests and national security. If the President's budget were enacted, it would undermine U.S. leadership and stymie worldwide efforts to counter violent extremism, terrorism and disinformation.

As you know, there is tremendous turmoil around the globe, including:

- Increased attacks on democratic principles such as: freedom of the press, the rule of law, and the right to free and fair elections;
- Millions of refugees and internally displaced persons throughout the world;
- The chaotic situation in Venezuela;
- The continuing reign of terror of the murderous dictator Bashar al-Assad in Syria;
- A rapidly expanding global population which further exacerbates conditions that contribute to hunger and poverty which can lead to conflict and migration;
- Spread of infectious and neglected tropical diseases, some of which are becoming drug resistant; and
- Lastly, ongoing threats posed by North Korea, Russia, Iran, and China that undermine the security and prosperity of the United States and our allies.

Mr. Secretary, not one of these dangers is positively addressed by shortchanging the federal agencies tasked with executing U.S. foreign policy.

Additionally, I am concerned about the long-term damage this Administration is inflicting on State and USAID through policies that reduce response time, result in inadequate staffing levels and low staff morale, and prevent partnerships with some of the most capable and experienced implementers. There is no better example than the Kemp-Kasten determination against UNFPA which undermines our effectiveness, making it harder to reach people who need us most. I am also very troubled that President Trump seems to view foreign assistance as a “reward” to our friends and its withdrawal a “punishment” to our enemies.

Moreover, the Administration’s approach to multilateral engagement at the United Nations, the World Bank, and elsewhere has been reactionary and shortsighted at best. These self-inflicted constraints compromise the quality of our efforts, make it harder to maintain American leadership in the world, create risks to our national security, and are a disservice to the American taxpayer. Our national security is strongest when development, diplomacy, and defense are all well-funded and equally prioritized.

As Chairwoman, I intend to work with my colleagues to reject the insufficient request and maintain responsible investments in foreign aid.

Before we move to your testimony, let me turn to Mr. Rogers, the Ranking Member, for his opening statement.