

**OPENING STATEMENT TO
HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
ASSISTANT SECRETARY JESSICA LEWIS
MARCH 1, 2022**

I am here to speak with you about the importance and value of security cooperation and security assistance, and the vital role these functions play in our relationships with partners and allies. It is precisely for this reason that security assistance is fundamentally a tool of foreign policy.

As the Assistant Secretary for Political-Military Affairs – “PM” – this mission is at the core of my responsibilities. PM is on the front lines of this effort that links diplomacy and defense to bolster U.S. national security. My team works closely with the Department of Defense, Congress, and the U.S. defense industry to deliver tools and training that supports our foreign policy, strengthens our allies’ and partners’ abilities to provide for their defense, and contributes meaningfully to the stability of the rules-based international order. Day to day, the Bureau of Political-Military Affairs oversees approximately \$7 billion in security sector assistance programs annually – which accounts for roughly 20 percent of the Department of State’s and USAID’s total annual assistance. This assistance includes Foreign Military Financing, an appropriated grant assistance program through which partners are able to procure U.S.-origin defensive capabilities, almost entirely by ‘buying into’ the DOD procurement process; and, International Military Education and Training that enables foreign military personnel to study beside their U.S. counterparts. In addition, the Bureau concurs on behalf of the Secretary of State with multiple Department of Defense security cooperation authorities totaling approximately \$9 billion annually – as required by law. In all of this, we are guided by the goals set down in law, such as those in the opening lines of the Arms Export Control Act: that “an ultimate goal of the United States continues to be a world which is free from the scourge of war and the dangers and burdens of armaments; in which the use of force has been subordinated to the rule of law; and in which international adjustments to a changing world are achieved peacefully.”

At its core, consistent with the Foreign Assistance Act (FAA) and the Arms Export Control Act (AECA), security assistance and arms transfers are tools of foreign policy that must be contextualized not only by partner defensive requirements, but by questions of security sector governance, regional balance, technology transfer, and human rights, among other wide-ranging considerations. And as tools of foreign policy, the authorities for arms transfers and many of the military assistance authorities are rightly vested in the Department of State where our Secretary, under the FAA and AECA, is responsible for the continuous supervision and general direction of economic assistance, military assistance, and military education and training programs as well as for the continuous supervision and general direction of arms sales and transfers.

Security cooperation as a tool of diplomacy

We share the burden of security with our allies and partners and work together to address the challenges around the world. This is true whether it is fighting alongside each other's forces,

countering terrorist and international criminal threats, participating in international peacekeeping operations, or building accountable institutions capable of maintaining security, the rule of law, governance, and justice. U.S. security sector assistance regularly rises to the occasion to meet these challenges and can yield serious benefits.

President Biden has promised that the United States will always lead with diplomacy – not military force. This commitment is shaped by difficult lessons learned, of which we have been reminded in recent months, and I believe that security assistance is always most effective when it delivered as part of a broader strategy that includes diplomacy and development.

Foreign policy and national security priorities

What is the real-world context for security cooperation and assistance? As President Biden’s interim National Security Strategy states, *“our world is at an inflection point. Global dynamics have shifted. New crises demand our attention. And in this moment of accelerating global challenges...one thing is certain: we will only succeed in advancing American interests and upholding our universal values by working in common cause with our closest allies and partners, and by renewing our own enduring sources of national strength.”*

As I testify here before the House Armed Services Committee, the President’s words ring true. We must lead with diplomacy first to strengthen our allies and stand with them, work with like-minded partners, and use our collective strength to advance shared interests and deter common threats, like the current crisis Russia has manufactured in Ukraine. Engaging with our allies and partners on these issues is the only way we can hope to meet the challenges of the 21st Century and outpace our challengers.

Close international security cooperation is needed now more than ever. We are living in a time when no global challenge can be met by any one nation acting alone – not even one as powerful as the United States. That is where the role of the State Department comes in. We relish our job as diplomats to engage around the world to build that enduring cooperation with other nations, because security cooperation is first and foremost a tool of diplomacy.

In order to protect our national security, the United States must lead and sustain a stable and open international system, underwritten by strong democratic alliances, partnerships, multilateral institutions, and rules. This means not only defending the underlying sources of American strength, but also promoting a rules-based international order that prevents adversaries from directly threatening our allies.

The Biden-Harris Administration has said time and again that America’s alliances are our valuable asset, and we must constantly revitalize our ties with our allies and partners. The United States is as committed to fostering partnerships with our traditional, and decades old, allies in Europe and Asia, as well as new alliances in Africa, the Middle East, and Latin America. These partnerships and alliances bring to bear a global network of like-minded states dedicated to advancing the banner of democratic freedoms and differentiates us from our adversaries, who seek to advance their own malign interests by co-opting and cajoling countries who are vulnerable to such advances.

Over the years, commitments like these have created new opportunities for interoperability, new allies to deter aggressive behavior, and new partners to help meet global challenges. Real partnership means bearing burdens together, with everyone doing their part – because no single nation can afford to carry the weight alone.

There is no better example of this than our response to Russia's aggression in Ukraine. While the United States will not send the American military to fight Russia in Ukraine, we have supplied the Ukrainian military with significant lethal and non-lethal training and equipment to bolster its ability to counter Russian aggression. As the President said in his recent remarks "we are ready with diplomacy — to be engaged in diplomacy with Russia and our Allies and partners to improve stability and security in Europe as a whole."

And our support to Ukraine demonstrates the wide array of tools that State and DOD can bring to a partner's security sector. In the first year of this Administration alone, we have delivered over \$650 million to Ukraine's defensive capabilities, including through Foreign Military Financing, the DoD Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative, and other program lines. Through the Multinational Joint Commission (MJC) we work with Ukraine and our Allies to identify military requirements and match funding streams to support needed defense capabilities, ranging from radars to Javelins. Through the Excess Defense Articles program, we have delivered to Ukraine armed Coast Guard Cutters to create an asymmetric maritime capability in the Black Sea. In addition, through programs such as our International Military Education and Training (IMET) authority, we have supported the development of a cadre of professional and Western-looking mid- and senior-level Ukrainian officers, and through a series of exercises, DOD has strengthened the interoperability of our forces and Ukraine's tactical and operational capabilities. Then, as the threat from Russia sharpened in the past months, we have used the Presidential Drawdown Authority to provide urgently needed ammunition and anti-tank missiles, while exercising the Third Party Transfer authority to facilitate the delivery of U.S.-origin military technology from NATO Allies.

This has been enabled through an underlying set of government-to-government agreements that enable technology sharing, information sharing, and the presence of U.S. forces throughout NATO territory.

In short, Mr. Chairman, we have deployed the panoply of capabilities and authorities at our disposal for a partner whose needs are clear and urgent. Not only do we offer our support to reassure our allies and partners in the face of geopolitical threats --our security assistance and cooperation tangibly bolsters regional stability by enhancing the border security, maritime security, counterterrorism, and conventional weapons destruction capabilities of our partners.

These tools, Mr. Chairman, apply not only in times of crisis, but help us shape a world that is less susceptible to such threats. As we turn, as well, to the pacing threat the PRC and its model of autocracy pose to the rules-based order, we can look to security cooperation and security assistance as a key element of our response. For decades, for example, we have worked to strengthen our security cooperation with key allies such as Japan and South Korea while creating new partnerships with countries like Vietnam, and while working hand-in-glove with Taiwan to strengthen that brave island's defense and deterrence – and this Administration intends to deepen and expand that cooperation in the months and years ahead.

In doing so, we must also recognize that Security Assistance is just one piece of the puzzle: it must be accompanied, as appropriate, by other political and economic reforms or assistance if it is to be sustainable. For this reason, I am making Security Sector Governance (SSG) a focus of my tenure in PM.

SSG is the transparent, accountable, and legitimate management and oversight of security policy and practice. Importantly, this means both that security forces are subordinate to legitimate civilian authority, and that civilian leaders do not use security forces for personal or political gain. These standards, Mr. Chairman, are not just key to ensuring that partner forces are capable, reliable, and legitimate, but also reflect core American values that we – unlike our adversaries – advance through our security assistance and cooperation.

It's critical for State and DoD to lead on understanding the governance of the security sector in the countries we engage. It is not enough to build defense institutions in tandem with "train and equip" missions; partners' institutional capacity to absorb and sustain U.S. training and equipment must be the pacesetter. It's also why security cooperation must be integrated into a broader political strategy that advances our foreign policy interests and addresses the underlying drivers of insecurity.

It is in the national security interest of the United States to cooperate with other countries to face the challenges of the 21st Century and outpace every challenger. We must continue to engage in international institutions, or else we risk leaving a void likely to be filled by others who may not share our values and interests.

Conclusion

Thank you, Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Rogers, and distinguished members of the committee for the opportunity to testify before you today on the key topic of security cooperation, as it pertains to our engagement with allies and partners. The Department of State would not be able to achieve the level of security cooperation we have without our key partners: the Department of Defense and the interagency, our foreign partners, and you, the United States Congress. Security cooperation is first and foremost a tool of diplomacy and foreign policy, and that tool is stronger when the American people support it.

Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.