

**Opening Statement of the Honorable Ed Royce (R-CA), Chairman  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
Hearing on “Advancing U.S. Interests Abroad: The FY 2015 Foreign Affairs Budget”  
March 13, 2014**

(As Prepared for Delivery)

We are again privileged to hear from Secretary of State John Kerry. Last year, Secretary Kerry spoke before our Committee following a trip to Asia – dealing with issues related to North Korean regional aggression.

Today, Russian regional aggression is at the forefront. I am pleased that the House spoke decisively this week, condemning Russian actions in clear and unmistakable terms. The U.S. has a strong interest in a democratic and prosperous Ukraine. To that end, the House last week passed important legislation to bolster the troubled Ukrainian economy. The Senate should move on this legislation today, and leave IMF debates to later.

While the Committee is interested to hear about events in Ukraine, the purpose of this hearing is to question the Department’s budget request for fiscal year 2015. Needless to say, resources are tight and must be aligned with clear goals and objectives. This Committee is responsible for oversight of how Department resources are spent and we expect the Department to think strategically – not reactively. There is no margin for waste and abuse. I am pleased that the Inspector General position was finally filled on a permanent basis after a five year vacancy. Mr. Secretary, thank you for hearing the Committee and acting.

Last year, Secretary Kerry testified that the U.S. “is the guardian of global security.” Today, U.S. guardianship is frayed. Committee members are very concerned that Iran negotiations will leave Tehran alarmingly close to a nuclear weapon. Syria, according to the United Nations, is the worst humanitarian crisis since Rwanda. Libya is failing and forgotten. In Egypt, we haven’t pushed an economic reform agenda based on individual property rights that is desperately needed. For Asia, a senior Pentagon official asserted the other week that, because of budget constraints, America’s high-profile pivot to Asia “is being looked at again, because candidly it can’t happen.” Mr. Secretary, as always, the Committee stands ready to work with you on these and other critical issues.

The Department must do a better job of holding foreign assistance recipients accountable – ensuring that they are meeting benchmarks for reform and development, especially in countries like Afghanistan, where so much has been invested. Our assistance is not an entitlement; it is a sign of our willingness to help others help themselves.

Nor should foreign assistance dominate our relationships with partners and allies. This Committee’s Electrify Africa legislation is an example of using assistance to improve the local investment environment while creating jobs – all at a cost savings to the American taxpayer.

Our efforts abroad must be aided by robust broadcasting to help advance our national interests. The current media climate is crowded with state media, like RT from Russia and CCTV from China, as well as non-state media like Hezbollah's television station. These are our competitors on the ideological battlefield, and as former Secretary Clinton told this Committee, right now we are losing. Reforming the Broadcasting Board of Governors is no longer an option. It is a requirement – I am pleased to be working on legislation with my colleagues to do just that.

Mr. Secretary, our nation faces many challenges and the difficulty of prioritizing is compounded by our fiscal crunch. Through it all though, I look forward to working together to ensure that America maintains the leadership role we both support.