

# CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE U.S.-SAUDI RELATIONSHIP

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## HEARING BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA OF THE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES ONE HUNDRED FIFTEENTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

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## CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE U.S.-SAUDI RELATIONSHIP

TUESDAY, JUNE 13, 2017

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA,  
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS,  
*Washington, DC.*

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:04 a.m., in room 2172, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. The subcommittee will come it order. After recognizing myself and Ranking Member Deutch for 5 minutes each for our opening statements, I will then recognize other members seeking recognition for 1 minute. We will then hear from our witnesses.

Thank you, ladies and gentlemen.

And, without objection, the witnesses' prepared statements will be made a part of the record and members may have 5 days to insert statements and questions for the record subject to the length limitation in the rules.

The Chair now recognizes herself for 5 minutes. This hearing has become especially timely. In recent days, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Egypt, and Bahrain have taken serious diplomatic actions against the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) nation of Qatar. This move surely raised a lot of eyebrows, but it shouldn't come as a surprise. Many of us on this subcommittee have been calling attention to Qatar's history of financing terror, including its support for Hamas and its unwillingness to enforce existing sanctions against individuals within its borders.

In fact, nearly 3 years ago, this subcommittee held a hearing on Qatar's support for Hamas and other extremist groups. We raised many of the same issues that Saudi Arabia, UAE, Egypt, and Bahrain also have raised. Shortly after the hearing, I sent a letter along with Ranking Member Deutch and Ted Poe and Brad Sherman and signed by 20 other colleagues of the Foreign Affairs Committee to the Treasury Department in 2014 urging more action against Qatar and Turkey for their roles in terror financing.

And, with no objection, I would like to include this letter into the record.

Qatar has long been a permissive terrorist financing environment, and if nothing else, this Saudi-led response will at least get the conversation started. This is the same Qatar which was entrusted to monitor the Taliban Five, even though we knew it con-

tinued to fund ISIS, Hamas, the Taliban, the Muslim Brotherhood, and countless other extremist groups. This is a conversation that we need to be having. We cannot continue to allow Qatar to get away with all that it does against our interests, just because we worry about the consequences of our U.S. base station there. Of course, it is an important consideration, but let's not make it the only consideration, much like we shouldn't be overlooking Turkey's support for terror groups like Hamas because Turkey is a NATO ally that houses also a large U.S. military base, or Turkey's negative impact throughout the region working against our interests, which includes the unhelpful measure its Parliament approved recently to send troops to Qatar, a move that will surely upset our partners in the region. And while it is true that Saudi Arabia has presented us with similar problems in the past, the Kingdom has prioritized its security cooperation efforts with the U.S. to fight extremism.

During the previous administration, there seemed to have been a concerted effort to realign not just our traditional alliance with Saudi Arabia, but to elevate Iran, a U.S.-designated state sponsor of terror. We are all too familiar with the quote attributed to President Obama in an article last year where he insisted that Saudi and Iran should "share the same neighborhood and institute some sort of cold peace." And I ask: Share the neighborhood with the foremost state sponsor of terror; how is that a good plan for regional stability? Because while Saudi Arabia is a key partner in our effort to fight ISIS and violent extremism, Iran has worked at every turn to undermine the stability of the region and foment terror.

From its support of the Houthis in Yemen to its support of Hezbollah, a group which the Arab League, led by Saudi Arabia, designated as a foreign terrorist organization last year, and its support for Assad in Syria, Iran is working against almost every objective we share with Saudi Arabia. It is no secret that, in the lead up to, during, and after the Iran nuclear deal, the JCPOA, our relations with Saudi Arabia and the rest of the GCC were strained and we were viewed with mistrust as having abandoned our allies for Iran.

I hope that the President's recent trip shows that we perhaps have turned that corner. That is not to say we should turn a blind eye to the Kingdom's shortcomings, particularly its troublesome human rights record. On women's rights more, much more needs to be done, my goodness, to ensure a more inclusive society. Instead of arresting opposition dissidents, the Kingdom must allow for the free exchange of ideas and a free space for all Saudi citizens to express their thoughts. Instead of jailing human rights defenders and activists, and those calling for reform, the Kingdom must welcome their calls and listen to ideas in order to implement real reforms.

The Saudis allege that their Vision 2030 plan will do just that. With the Vision 2030 plan, Saudi Arabia has shown that it recognizes that it can no longer rely on its old model of governance. We all know there is a large youth population in Saudi Arabia, and if we see the Vision 2030 start to take shape and strengthen the via-

bility of Kingdom's future, we have a better chance of steering them away from extremism.

I look forward to hearing from our panel, who between them have a wealth of knowledge and experience with the intricacies of the U.S.-Saudi alliance on how we can advance our own national security interests and objectives in the region together with the Saudis.

I now turn to the ranking member, Mr. Deutch of Florida.

Mr. DEUTCH. Thank you, Madam Chairman.

Thanks to our truly esteemed panel for being here today and thanks to every one of you for your service.

We are greatly appreciative of the work of our American diplomats. And I hope that we continue to rely on the experienced diplomats and recognize the importance of diplomacy. I know we have an opportunity to show that as we move into the budget season.

Our relationship with Saudi Arabia is no doubt vital to the Middle East. We should be clear from the outset that we are allies and we share common goals. But we should be honest in assessing where those goals and interests diverge.

The President's trip to Saudi Arabia was welcomed. Few could argue that this President needs to do outreach to the Arab world. The visit provided a clear message to Iran that the United States stands united with our Gulf allies against its dangerous and destabilizing behavior in the region. The affirmation of cooperation on counterterrorism and a commitment to increasing regional interoperability and bolstering the defenses of our allies were important signals to send.

But the President's decision to focus solely on security issues was a mistake. While Saudi Arabia has made slow progress on human rights, failing to acknowledge abuses occurring in the Kingdom gave the impression to the world that the United States is willing to forsake human rights, justice, and equality when the messaging is inconvenient.

It is true that reform has begun, albeit slowly, and we should praise and encourage those reforms, particularly when it comes to women's rights. Raising human rights is not about lecturing another country, it affects all aspects of our relationship. Foreign businesses are skittish to enter a country where they fear corruption or lack of transparency.

This kind of investment and diversification is critical to the Saudi's Vision 2030, which we should be actively supporting. Jobs for youth and the middle class are key to economic stability, which, as we have seen across the region, in turn helps stem the tide of extremism.

Moreover, the administration's visits seem to empower the Saudis and others to move ahead with a very public split from Qatar. Qatar's behavior has been problematic and we have long struggled to rein in its affinity for harboring terrorists. We should push back against Al Jazeera's biased coverage and promotion of groups that destabilize its neighbors. Qatar's relations with Iran are clearly troubling for a region in which Iran seeks to sow instability. However, I am concerned that this crisis could have negative impacts on our interests, particularly the operation of the U.S.-led coalition fighting in Syria.

Today gives us an opportunity to unpack some of these issues, like what leverage we have with respect to Qatar's support of terrorism and the importance of unity in the GCC to U.S. strategic objectives. We should be viewing our relationship with Saudi Arabia through the prism of our own interests. How mutually beneficial is our relationship? Where do our priorities align?

The Saudis have been preoccupied with their campaign in Yemen, which they rightfully see as a direct threat to their national security. The U.S. is right to support the defense of Saudis' borders, instability inside the Kingdom will threaten the region, and we share the concern that Iran is using the Houthis as a proxy. But in terms of our own national security, it has long been AQAP operating in Yemen that has been thought to be the most dangerous branch of al-Qaeda.

The conflict in Yemen has also taken the Saudis' and others' attention away from the fight against ISIS, arguably our greatest threat at this time. Ambassadors, I know you have been intimately involved in trying to resolve the Yemen conflict over the past 5 years. If no political solution is on the horizon, how can we best support the Saudis while ensuring that the laws of armed conflict are obeyed? Without being a formal member of the coalition, what leverage do we really have? And I have been deeply troubled by the reports of civilian casualties throughout this campaign.

The decision to move forward with the sale of precision-guided missiles has raised a host of issues surrounding the Saudis' capabilities to use these weapons in a way that minimizes collateral damage. I am not sure that Congress has been convinced that these weapons can be used appropriately. Our colleagues Mr. Lieu and Mr. Yoho have been leading the effort here to get an accurate assessment of the progress that the Saudi Royal Air Force has made in its adherence to a no-strike list and, frankly, have yet to receive adequate answers from the administration.

Furthermore, I have real concerns that the sale of offensive weapons, like the PGMs and the announced \$110 billion arms deal, do not provide the Saudis with the real defensive capabilities they need to protect and defend their borders or increase counterterrorism operations.

Frankly, we don't know yet enough about the proposed sale or how it will affect Israel's qualitative military edge. Following the signing of the JCPOA in 2015, the Obama administration launched an effort to bolster defense in the Gulf. The U.S. GCC strategic partnership aimed to strengthen missile and cyber defense along with a host of other technical support from the U.S. Where are we on those deliverables that could help our allies defend themselves against real threats?

Finally, being an ally does not mean being given a blank check. We must ensure that we are supporting our allies and making decisions that are in our best interest first and foremost. There is no shortage of issues to discuss today. We have certainly assembled an all-star team of experts, and I look forward to a very productive discussion.

I yield back.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you so much, Mr. Deutch, for that thoughtful opening statement.



Now we will turn to our other members for their opening statements, starting with Mr. Chabot of Ohio.

Mr. CHABOT. Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

The U.S.-Saudi Arabia relationship has been noticeably strained in recent years. The degree of discord between the previous administration, the Obama administration, and Saudi leadership, was only exacerbated by a number of things: Oil prices, the growing threats of terrorism in the region, differences over the Iranian nuclear program, which I intend to believe that the Saudis were right and the Obama administration was wrong on that one. And although we may not see eye to eye on everything with our Saudi partners, there is no question that having their support in the fight against terror in the region is very, very important.

I am encouraged by President Trump's trip to Saudi Arabia. I believe it could be a great opportunity to strengthen the U.S.-Saudi relationship while recognizing the Saudis' shortcomings in a number of areas, for example funding mosques across the globe, some of which have tolerated, if not promoted, radical fundamentalist ideology, and that has been a real problem. As well as the suppression of women in their own society; it is just intolerable and continues to be. Even though there have been some improvements, they are few and far between.

So there is a whole range of issues that we need to focus on. I apologize, I have several hearings happening at the same time, I won't be able to stay for the whole hearing. But thank you for holding this important hearing.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you so much, Mr. Chabot.

Mr. Connolly is recognized.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Thank you, Madam Chairman.

And welcome to our panel.

I don't know that I agree with my friend from Ohio, though he and I often agree. I don't know that I am as heartened by the Trump visit to Saudi Arabia as he is, because I am worried about what was not discussed, including basic human rights, including the rights of women, including the suppression of the LGBT rights, including the right to assemble, including the right to have political opposition.

Saudi Arabia has been an anchor and a counterweight to Iran that has served our interests and I think have served for some stability in that region, but that doesn't change history. The Saudis, at the same time, while condemning Qatari support for terrorism, have financed extreme Wahhabism all over the Muslim world. It has actually destabilized society in some cases and certainly been a source radicalism throughout. Fifteen of the 19 hijackers in 2001 were Saudis. Osama bin Laden, the master mind of that attack, was a Saudi. We have to look at this relationship clear-eyed. We have interests; they have interests. But it is anything but a perfect or stable relationship.

I yield back.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you, Mr. Connolly.

Mr. Schneider is recognized.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Thank you, Madam Chairman.

And as have my colleagues, I want to thank the panel, a truly extraordinary panel on a very important issue as we look at this region and the important relationship with Saudi Arabia.

The recent announcement of the new strategic partnership for the 21st century obviously draws much attention. And as was previously stated, as we look to have this conversation today, I hope it will touch on the impact it is going to have in the region, in particular with respect to preserving Israel's qualitative military edge in a dangerous region, but also, as you have talked about in your written testimony, the importance of U.S. interests, our strategy. What are our priorities and goals? And what is the best strategy to address those? I think you have to look at those in the broad context of the region, not just, as was mentioned, with what is going on with Qatar, but Iran and JCPOA, Yemen, Syria, but also the generational challenges within Saudi Arabia and the region, in particular with respect to Vision 2030.

So, again, I thank the witnesses.

I thank the chairman and ranking member for calling this hearing.

And I yield back.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you, Mr. Schneider.

Mr. Rohrabacher of California.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Thank you very much.

And thank you to the witnesses.

I am going to be paying close attention to what you have to say. Over these last 30 years, there has been nothing more perplexing than our relations with countries like Saudi Arabia and like Qatar, realizing that, for example, as my colleague just said, of the hijackers, 15 of the 19 hijackers on 9/11 were Saudis. And I happen to believe that Saudis financed 9/11 as well. And so we need your advice as to how we should deal with a situation like that. What is just not the problem, but what is our policy going to be to take Saudi Arabia away from supporting terrorists and Qatar away from supporting terrorists? What do we do to achieve that goal? That should be our main goal. So thank you very much. I will be paying attention to your advice.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you so much, Mr. Rohrabacher.

We are so pleased to be joined by the chairman of our full committee, but, first, we will go to Mr. Cicilline for his statement, thank you.

Mr. CICILLINE. Thank you, Chairman Ros-Lehtinen and Ranking Member Deutch, for calling this hearing on Saudi Arabia.

And thank you to our witnesses for being here today. I look forward to hearing your testimony.

Saudi Arabia has captured our attention in many ways recently so this hearing comes at an opportune time. The President chose to make his first foreign trip to Saudi Arabia. And although the administration has not established a clear policy toward Saudi Arabia, what they didn't say sent its own message.

Neither the President nor any senior administration officials held Saudi leaders accountable for their enduring reckless disregard for human rights, nor does it seem there was any discussion about the quickly deteriorating humanitarian situation in Yemen where

Saudi Arabia is engaged in an extended campaign with U.S. support against Houthi rebels.

Saudi Arabia's recent decision, along with other members of the GCC, to cut ties to Qatar, the site of the Al Udeid Air Base, which houses the biggest concentration of U.S. military personnel in the Middle East, is troubling. And the Trump administration's handling of this serious situation has been ham-fisted and confounding.

The relationship with Saudi Arabia, a partner with whom we sometimes are at odds, is extremely important and equally complex. I look forward to hearing from our witnesses today, to hear their perspectives on this administration's engagement thus far and their recommendations for how we move forward.

And thank you, and I yield back.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you, Mr. Cicilline.

And we have been joined, as I said, with the presence of the full committee chairman, Mr. Royce of California, and he is recognized for as much time as he would like.

Chairman ROYCE. Thank you, Madam Chair.

And I do thank you for holding this important hearing. And let me just make an observation at the outset here, and that is Qatar's relationship with Hamas remains very concerning. Senior leaders of Hamas and the military wing of the Muslim Brotherhood, which is an Islamist group, designated as terrorists by Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and the United Arab Emirates, all reside in Qatar today. And earlier this month, and I think this is what is most concerning for all of us here, more Hamas tunnels were found underneath two U.N. Relief Works Agency's schools in Gaza. So Hamas is still using civilians and children to hide its activities and that, to me, does not sound like a legitimate resistance movement.

And it is deeply concerning that, in the face of mounting international pressure, Qatar has doubled down on its relationship with Hamas. Just a day ago, Qatar's Foreign Minister called Hamas a legitimate resistance movement. And that is one of the reasons why I have joined with Ranking Member Engel and Representative Brian Mast and Representative Josh Gottheimer and several other members of this committee in introducing the Palestinian International Terrorism Support Prevention Act. This bill will impose sanctions on foreign persons and agencies and, yes, on governments that assist Hamas or assist Palestinian Islamic Jihad or the affiliates of these two groups. And, specifically, this legislation will sanction anyone that provides Hamas with diplomatic or financial support or who shelters their operatives. This practice needs to end now. There is no such thing as a good terrorist group.

And I thank the chairman emeritus for yielding to me and I yield back.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you so much for those welcome remarks.

And I hope that we can move that legislation along. Thank you, Mr. Royce.

Ms. Frankel of Florida.

Ms. FRANKEL. Thank you very much and thank you to my colleagues from Florida, the chair and ranking member.

I thank you all for being here. I look forward to your testimony.

I just want to state a concern that I have that maybe you will be able to address, I wish there was someone from the State Department here because I would ask them directly, and that is the coordination or maybe the lack of coordination between the President of the United States, Donald J. Trump, and the State Department in regards to the relationship between Saudi Arabia and their alliance and Qatar. We know that Saudi Arabia just announced with the coalition the cutting of ties to Qatar, and then it seemed like the President, our President, said that was a great thing. Then you have the Secretary of State basically trying to calm the waters, and so I am a little confused, I don't really know what the United States' position is.

So I would be interested to know if any of you know what the United States' position is. I think today, just today, our Ambassador to Qatar resigned because I don't know if she knows what the position of the United States is supposed to be. So I would be interested in knowing if you know what it is. And I would also like to know what you think it should be.

And I yield back.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you so much, Ms. Frankel.

And I would like it note that we have been trying to get the State Department for years to come in front of our subcommittee to talk about Saudi Arabia, but that has not been successful.

We have been calling the wrong folks, Mr. Connolly? Okay. Thank you.

I am so pleased to introduce our witnesses. We have a star-studded panel today. First, we are delighted to welcome Ambassador Joseph Westphal, who served as U.S. Ambassador to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia from March 2014 to January 2017. Dr. Westphal currently works as a senior global fellow at the Joseph H. Lauder Institute of Management and International Studies and as a senior fellow at the Center for Leadership and Change Management, both at the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania. Prior to his appointment, Ambassador Westphal was the Under Secretary of the Army, and its Chief Management Officer from 2009 to 2014 [speaking foreign language], he is a wonderful friend and it is great to have him here.

Next, we would like to welcome back another great friend, Ambassador Feierstein, who was the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near East Affairs and served as U.S. Ambassador for Yemen from 2010 to 2013. Over the course of his career, the Ambassador has served in Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Jerusalem, Pakistan, Oman, Tunisia. Yikes, all over the place. Mr. Feierstein helped develop and implement State Department policies and programs to counter violent extremism.

Welcome back, friend.

In addition, we would like to welcome for the first time Ms. Karen Elliot House.

Thank you, ma'am.

She is currently a senior fellow at the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs at Harvard's Kennedy School of Management. She authored "On Saudi Arabia: Its People, Past, Religion, Fault Lines—and Future." So I think she is a good expert on this. She is also a chairman of the board of the RAND Corporation and

serves on multiple nonprofit boards, including The Trilateral Commission.

We look forward to your testimony, Ms. House, thank you so much.

And we would like to welcome Mr. Tom Malinowski—thank you—who served as an Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor until this year. Prior to this position, he worked as Washington director for Human Rights Watch, a wonderful organization. Mr. Malinowski served as Senior Director for Foreign Policy Speechwriting at the National Security Council.

And we welcome you. We look forward to your testimony.

So, Mr. Ambassador, we will begin with you, Mr. Westphal.

**STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE JOSEPH W. WESTPHAL, SENIOR GLOBAL FELLOW, THE JOSEPH H. LAUDER INSTITUTE OF MANAGEMENT AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES, UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA (FORMER UNITED STATES AMBASSADOR TO THE KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA)**

Ambassador WESTPHAL. Good morning, Madam Chair, Ranking Member Deutch, distinguished members of the committee. I am delighted to be here. I am delighted to be with you, Madam Chair, and thank you for your introduction.

I am just going to summarize a few points rather than read a statement. If you think about it, since the Iranian revolution, and that is nearly four decades ago, we have been spending a significant amount of our resources, our focus, and attention in the Middle East region. And there is no end in sight for that. Not only is it financial resources, but it is human resources—its stability, its security, a lot of issues.

All of you touched on a number of issues that are critically important for us to be engaged in a more aggressive fashion. Especially if we are going to be able to devote more attention to other critical issues around the world than just what is happening in the Middle East.

Funding for terrorist organizations has been something that we have been working on and I would urge this committee, Madam Chair and Ranking Member Deutch, to consider perhaps bringing in the Treasury Department, because we have been working with them very extensively—Ambassador Feierstein can speak to this as well—on trying to get these Gulf countries and Middle East countries to pass laws and enforce these laws that prevent the movement of money to terrorist organizations. Saudi Arabia, for example—and I think Treasury will verify this—has the strongest laws of any country in the Gulf region. Mostly because of our efforts and our drive to push that over the last 10 years. We have met with a lot of success recently.

Qatar has not been a success. Kuwait has been an issue as well, and there are other countries where this needs to be applied more aggressively.

As some of you pointed out, our relationships can't be just about fighting terrorism. They also have to be about a number of other things that affect our security and stability in the region.

The fact of the matter is that this discord between the Saudis, Emirates, and Qatar is long-standing. These are tribal countries.

They have had issues in the past. They just emerged again. And it is in our interest. I believe that what Secretary Tillerson said in his brief remarks is the right way to go. I think we have to be more engaged in trying to resolve these issues by getting these countries to have a dialogue, but also, as you said, Madam Chair, to agree to end the funding of terrorist organizations.

The Saudis, for example, imposed a situation where they have done due diligence on charities. They have a list of charities that one can donate to, that are approved by the government. And only those charities can you provide money and resources to as a Saudi. And if you provide to any other charity, you are subject to punishment by law. So they are trying very aggressively to do this. Is it foolproof? I cannot tell you that, I don't know. But I think they are making some efforts to stop the flow of money, at least through formal banking channels. And, again, I would urge you to consider talking to Treasury about that.

The war in Yemen, another issue you brought up, continues to be a real problem for a lot of reasons, not just the human resources issue and humanitarian issues. We come very, very close to some settlement of the Yemen conflict. And, again, Ambassador Feierstein is far more knowledgeable than anybody here on this issue, having served there. But there were times when we came very close in the recent past to perhaps coming with an agreement, working with the Government of Oman and especially with the U.N. Special Envoy, who has done a phenomenal job of trying to bring everybody together, and as we got close, then things would break open. So I think we need to continue that effort working with all of the countries. The relationship between Oman and Saudi is not a great relationship and that needs—we need to empower these countries to work together to resolve these issues. As some of you stated, they need to work at it. So I think that that is an area where we need to do.

On the PGM issue, which is going to come up today in the Senate and undoubtedly come to the House for your vote on it, and it will be an important issue. We labored with this issue of how to provide munitions, offensive munitions, to a country when at the same time we are trying to get them to reduce their military operations and come up with some kind of an agreement with the Houthis and perhaps Ali Abdullah Saleh's forces there and some resolution without dividing the country.

So I think, again, our efforts there ought to be to push hard: If you are going to receive the assistance from us, these PGMs from us, then we insist that we are going to need to work harder to train your forces on how to use them. So we are not going to just deliver munitions and that is the end of it. We need to be more engaged in helping them. And, again, the State Department was doing—DRL was doing a lot in trying to train them on how to look at civilian casualties and assess their operations. So there is a lot more we can do than just sell them a weapons system without any constraints. We can put a lot of constraints.

I will stop here and say there is a lot more to discuss. We need to talk about the transformation plan. It is important for both human resources issues as well as military and security issues. There are a lot of things that we ought to be doing more aggres-

sively to partner up with Saudi Arabia, and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Ambassador Westphal follows:]

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House Committee on Foreign Affairs, Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa  
Tuesday, June 13, 2017

Chairman, Ileana Ross-Lehtinen, Ranking Member Theodore Deutch, Distinguished Members of  
the Subcommittee on Middle East and North Africa

Thank you for the opportunity to join my distinguished colleagues at this hearing on the  
“Challenges and Opportunities for the U.S. – Saudi Relationship.”

The National interest of the United States and its security interests extend to every corner of  
the globe. Our country’s economic, military, trade, security and commercial relationships are  
vast and deep as we are the world’s most significant economy and military power. Yet in the  
last two decades, a significant amount of our resources has been focused and expended in the  
Middle East in a disproportionate amount to the rest of the world. In addition, the Israeli –  
Palestinian conflict that dates back to the 1940’s and the Iranian Revolution continue to have  
significant impact in a region facing growing instability, terrorism and political conflict.

President Trump chose to make Saudi Arabia his first stop in his first international trip. The  
effort to bring unity to the fight against terrorism lasted only a short while as Saudi Arabia, the  
United Arab Emirates and several other countries broke relations with Qatar over its support  
for Hamas, the Muslim Brotherhood and other terrorist organizations. Once again, the Middle  
East and in particular the Gulf region is in turmoil and President Trump has put the United  
States in the middle of the crisis.

Saudi Arabia has been playing a key role in bringing greater unity and advancing dialogue  
among Arab and Muslim countries. The recent events concerning Qatar are very troubling since  
we have been very supportive of these efforts for greater unity and stability in the Gulf. For



these and many other reasons, we must work to reduce these tensions and work to encourage greater dialogue and negotiation rather than a break in relations and punitive measures that ultimately will not resolve the issues among Arab countries.

### **U.S. – Saudi Relationship**

In my view, the country that plays the most important role in the Muslim world and is a key player in the future growth and development of the region, is Saudi Arabia. It's size, economy, population demographics and military strength make Saudi Arabia a dominant force in the region. Also, Saudi Arabia is the world's largest exporter of oil and possesses about 16% of the world's proven petroleum reserves. Saudi Arabia is also a key player in the battle against terrorism. We should not ignore Saudi Arabia's past role in spreading conservative Islamic fundamentalism. However, this is not the Saudi Arabia of today. Saudi Arabia has been committed to stopping violent extremism and has been one of our strongest partners in this ongoing struggle. For example, working with our Departments of the Treasury, Justice, Homeland Security and our intelligence community they have made significant progress stopping the flow of funds to aid terrorist organizations. Under the leadership of Crown Prince and Minister of Interior, Muhammed bin Nayef, a very close and mutually beneficial relationship has been developed with us using all the tools available to fight terrorism.

There are other reasons I believe this relationship is important.

First, Saudi Arabia is the birthplace of Islam. It is the home of Islam's holiest shrines, the two Holy Mosques in Mecca and Medina. There are 1.6 billion Muslims in the world today with 3.3 million in the US. This compares with about 2.2 billion Christians. The King of Saudi Arabia is the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques giving the Saud family and the Kingdom tremendous influence in the Muslim world

Second, Saudi Arabia has a population of 28 million. The largest population in the Arabian Gulf. Egypt and Iraq are the only other Arab countries with bigger populations. It is important to note that about 60% to 65% of the population are under the age of 35 and they are among the biggest users of social media in the world. The future development of Saudi Arabia is dependent on the future opportunities of its youth. King Salman's National Transformation Plan and the vision behind it (Vision 2030) are aimed directly at meeting this challenge. It's architect and leader is the Deputy Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman who has challenged the established order and cultural constraints for this important priority.

Third, Saudi Arabia is an important entity in the future growth and development in the Arab world. If the most conservative Muslim country in the world, a country and its citizens that have been continually criticized for fostering a strict and conservative form of Islam, Wahhabism, denying women their rights, violating human rights, etc., can advance a social and economic transformation that supports reform and modernization, it will be a positive example to the Arab world.

Saudi Arabia is a young country, founded in 1932. In our more than 240 years as a nation, we have continually worked to transform our nation, from slavery and civil war, from corruption and discrimination, from significant economic depressions and recessions, from wars on poverty, segregation to terrorism. Today with technological advancements outpacing our rules of engagement and challenges to the environment, education and even to the character of our nation and its place in the world, we continually adapt and change. Saudi Arabia must also meet these challenges if it is to grow and develop stable and enduring.

Saudi Arabia is an indispensable partner for the United States and we must do what we can to support its transformation. We can be a great resource through public and private organizations in advising reforms of their educational system and their administration of Justice under Sharia Law. In my view, these two areas should be our top priority.

We can shape a positive bilateral relationship despite the many challenges in the region posed by the war in Syria, the actions of Iran and Russia, the war in Yemen and the historical rivalries in the Arab world. We should continue to engage in these complex and difficult problems. We have the capacity and capability to strengthen our partnership with Saudi Arabia and through that relationship, help shape a better future in the region.

I continue to place great faith in the power of youth to transform society. But that power must be nurtured, protected and educated. President Obama spoke to this in his speech in Cairo in June of 2009.

**“There need not be contradiction between development and tradition. Countries like Japan and South Korea grew their economies while maintaining distinct cultures. The same is true for the astonishing progress within Muslim-majority countries from Kuala Lumpur to Dubai. In ancient times and in our times, Muslim communities have been at the forefront of innovation and education. This is important because no development strategy can be based only upon what comes out of the ground, nor can it be sustained while young people are out of work. Many Gulf States have enjoyed great wealth as a consequence of oil, and some are beginning to focus it on broader development. But all of us must recognize that education and innovation will be the currency of the 21st century, and in too many Muslim communities there remains underinvestment in these areas.”**

I believe that the strength of our engagement will depend on how well Saudi Arabia can invest in education and innovation along with good governance and the expansion of opportunity for women and youth. But there are reasons to worry about our ability to make a difference as Simeon Kerr recently showed in his article in the Financial Times on May 3, 2017, [Arab youth turns to Russia as US influence wanes](#). He writes about an opinion survey of Arab youth where 3500 18-24-year-olds from 16 countries were interviewed this last March. He writes that **“Russia has replaced the US as young Arabs most valued international ally...that unemployment was regarded as the biggest obstacle facing young Arabs, along with Isis... and the threat from terrorism. Reflecting the generational divide, more than 80 per cent of**

**respondents agreed overwhelmingly that governments need to do more to address the needs of young people.”**

In my view, without a Saudi Arabia that is stable, investing in education and teacher development, encouraging its governmental, business and commercial sectors through strong and enhanced participation by women, modernizing its administrative and judicial processes and opening opportunities for youth through innovation, the Middle East will see more dark days ahead. King Salman has outlined a Vision that speaks to all of this.

We must be engaged but we must also understand the complexity and differences that exist in this region. Domestic policies dealing with immigration, legal actions on behalf of victims of 9/11, human rights concerns, energy policy, etc., give rise to divisions and tensions between us. The significant on-going clash with its arch enemy, Iran, will continue to make progress difficult. What happens in Syria and how Iraq is able to negotiate the Sunni – Shia divisions will also have significant consequences in the future as will the fight to defeat ISIS and other terrorist groups. As for the United States, we will continue to spend a disproportionate share of resources in this region for the foreseeable future. Thus, we should look to make that investment on what will produce real change.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you so much.  
And, Ambassador Feierstein, we will go with you. Thank you, sir.

**STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE GERALD M. FEIERSTEIN, DIRECTOR FOR GULF AFFAIRS, MIDDLE EAST INSTITUTE (FORMER PRINCIPAL DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR BUREAU OF NEAR EASTERN AFFAIRS, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE)**

Ambassador FEIERSTEIN. Thank you chairman Ros-Lehtinen, Ranking Member Deutch, members of the committee. Thank you for this opportunity to testify about an issue of considerable importance related to U.S. foreign policy and national security interests, not only in the Middle East but globally.

Since the end of the Second World War, the U.S.-Saudi relationship has been a principal pillar of regional security and stability. It has joined the U.S. in resisting expansionism, advocated moderate solutions to the Israeli-Palestinian dispute, and cooperated in the fight against violent extremism and terrorism.

Likewise, Saudi Arabia's role in ensuring price and production stability in the oil market has contributed to overall economic growth and stability around the world for decades.

In recent years, our relationship has frayed over differences from the Arab Spring to human rights, Iran to Syria. Even Yemen, despite a fundamental agreement on the nature of the conflict and the legitimacy of Saudi intervention, became a source of bilateral friction.

Seeing the arrival of the Trump administration as an opportunity to repair the damaged relationship, the Saudis made clear their support for the three core regional policy objectives identified by the administration. The fight against violent extremism, a united front challenging Iran, and helping on achieving progress in resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

In Riyadh, the two sides announced billions of dollars in new economic cooperation, including bilateral investments designed to advance each side's domestic political goals.

For its part, the Trump administration made clear that it would roll back some of the restrictions placed on defense cooperation by the Obama administration and restore arms sales as well as intelligence and logistics cooperation with the Saudi military.

It is premature to assess the significance of the new era of cooperation, however. Despite the positive indications, subsequent developments, including the current intra-GCC tensions with Qatar, have reinforced the view that much of progress advertised in Riyadh remains nascent and tenuous.

Among the most well-received elements in Trump's speech to the assembled Arab and Islamic leaders on May 21st was his promise that his administration would refrain from lectures on human rights and civil liberties. Many of the leaders had viewed the Obama administrations emphasis on these issues as overweening and overly sanctimonious. But the proper way to restore the balance in our approach is not to adopt a values-free foreign policy. The U.S. is locked in a battle of ideas with those who believe that there is a model of development that permits rapid economic progress while retaining authoritarian political systems. The U.S.

needs to push back on that notion and make clear that the values we advocate are central to our conception of the appropriate relationship between the government and its citizens because they reflect a system of political behavior, time tested, that produces stable, durable, and just societies.

Saudi Arabia represents a particularly difficult challenge for the U.S. on human rights issues. Its society is built around fundamentally different conceptions of social relationships and civil rights. We have made little progress over the years in convincing them that our approach will help them build a stronger society, and there is little evidence to suggest that the majority of Saudis agree with us, rather than their government, on these issues.

Vision 2030, however, presages not only a dramatic replacement of the public sector by the private sector as the main engine of economic development, it also signals a fundamental shift in the traditional relationship between the government and its citizens. That can become a driver for a revamped approach to civil liberties and human rights. Thus, economic reality, rather than political or social reform, may become the main instrument for a new, more open Saudi society.

In conclusion, as the U.S. seeks to restore stability and security in the Middle East, defeat violent extremism, and roll back Iranian expansionism, Saudi Arabia will remain a vital partner. But Saudi Arabia itself is at a crossroads and the country will necessarily devote its energy primarily to addressing internal challenges in the coming years. Through quiet diplomacy, the U.S. can contribute to the kind of economic and social initiatives that will enable political reforms, leaving Saudi Arabia a more open, democratic society.

Thank you for your attention, and I look forward to responding to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Ambassador Feierstein follows:]

**Challenges and Opportunities for the U.S.-Saudi Relationship**

Prepared Testimony of Amb. (ret'd) Gerald M. Feierstein  
Senior Fellow and Director of Gulf Affairs, Middle East Institute

House Committee on Foreign Affairs  
Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa

June 13, 2017

Chairman Ros-Lehtinen, Ranking Member Deutch, members of the Committee, thank you for this opportunity to testify about an issue of considerable importance related to U.S. foreign policy and national security interests not only in the Middle East, but globally.

Introduction

Since the end of the Second World War, the U.S.-Saudi relationship has been a principal pillar of regional security, stability, and economic progress in the Middle East. Within that context, Saudi Arabia has:

- partnered with the U.S. in resisting destabilizing and expansionist projects, whether by the former Soviet Union, Saddam Hussein's Iraq, or the current regime in Iran;
- articulated moderate proposals to solve the Israeli-Palestinian dispute and promote Arab-Israeli normalization, most notably the Arab Peace Initiative advocated by the late King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz; and
- cooperated with the U.S. in the fight against terrorism and violent extremism whether from al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) or the Islamic State.

Similarly, as the world's largest exporter of oil, Saudi Arabia makes a critical contribution to the global economy. As an architect of the world's energy

infrastructure, Saudi Arabia's role in ensuring price and production stability in the oil market has contributed to overall global economic growth and prosperity for decades.

Today, Saudi Arabia is confronting new challenges. Forces of destabilization, whether from violent extremist groups that pose a threat to Saudi Arabia, the region, and the world, or from Iran, which pursues its own hegemonic ambitions, threaten the status quo and undermine governments and societies. Domestically, Saudi Arabia is dealing with the complexities of growth and shifting economic and social realities.

Thus the fundamental basis for the U.S.-Saudi relationship has not changed. At a time when the Middle East is challenged by twin forces of upheaval and instability — violent, predominantly Sunni, extremism, and Iranian expansionism — the relationship with Saudi Arabia remains at the heart of U.S. foreign policy and national security objectives. Achieving those goals depends on promoting a stable future in the Middle East and fostering an evolving region that can play a positive role in the larger international framework politically, socially, and economically.

#### Cooperation in Defense and Security Is at the Heart of the Relationship

To advance our shared goals and objectives in the region, the U.S. has been Saudi Arabia's principal defense and security partner for over sixty years and has helped Saudi Arabia develop a modern and technologically advanced military capability. That capability has been instrumental in preserving peace in the region, preventing the spread of the Iranian revolution and the spillover of the Iran-Iraq War on to the Arabian Peninsula in the 1980s, and turning back Saddam Hussein's aggression from the 1990s until the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003. Today, that cooperation has continued in the fight against violent extremism and Iranian aggressive behavior. But these new unconventional challenges also complicate the relationship and have given rise to skepticism on both sides about its durability.

Saudi attitudes toward violent extremist organizations have been a subject of considerable debate within the U.S. and the west, with a number of observers alleging that Saudi Arabia's religious views and social conservatism provided the ideological foundations of violent extremist groups from al-Qaeda to the Islamic State and that Saudi citizens have both participated in and financed the rise of these groups. There is clearly some ambivalence among many Saudis about jihadist



groups, and some have certainly been recruited by these groups, but allegations of widespread Saudi support for extremist groups appear generally overblown.

In fact, Saudi Arabia has inarguably been a principal target of jihadist groups, who have made clear that one of their central objectives is the destruction of the Al Saud ruling family and the imposition of an Islamic “caliphate” on Saudi territory. A valued partner of the U.S. and leader of Saudi Arabia’s security services, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Naif, has personally been the target of several assassination plots by jihadist elements over the past several years.

In response, Saudi security and intelligence forces have worked closely with their U.S. counterparts to defeat these groups. Saudi intelligence services have provided critical intelligence crucial to international efforts to eliminate the global threat from al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), and defeat its external plotting, including the so-called cassette tape plot in 2010 intended to bring down a U.S. commercial airliner. The Saudis have also played a role in the international coalition to defeat and destroy the Islamic State in Syria and Iraq, flying air missions against ISIL targets until the requirement to confront Iranian-supported Houthi elements in Yemen over-stretched Saudi capabilities.

Iran’s growing military support for the Houthis in 2014, including threats to the security of the Saudi-Yemeni border, highlighted the risks to Saudi and Gulf security and stability from the deteriorating political situation in Sana’a. Alarmed by the rapid deterioration of conditions there, and faced with a virtual coup d’etat by the pro-Iranian Houthis, the U.S. and the Saudis agreed that an international intervention in Yemen would be justified to achieve four objectives:

- restoring the legitimate government of Yemen to complete the implementation of the GCC Initiative and the conclusions of the National Dialogue Conference;
- preventing a Houthi/Saleh takeover of the government by force;
- securing the Saudi-Yemeni border; and
- defeating Iran’s efforts to establish a foothold on the Arabian Peninsula threatening Saudi and Gulf security.

Despite initial optimism that military pressure on the Houthis and their ally, former President Ali Abdullah Saleh, would quickly stabilize the situation and allow for a resumption of the political process, this has not been the case. Instead,

over two years into the conflict, the military effort is stalemated, the political process is frozen, and the Saudis find themselves trapped in an increasingly costly conflict with no clear exit strategy and suffering significant damage to their international standing and reputation. Beyond the cost in lives and treasure, the Saudis' inability to achieve a positive outcome has handed Iran a cheap victory and has strained Saudi relations with its key western partners, the U.S. and the UK. In particular, frustration over the extended air campaign in Yemen has triggered allegations that the Saudi effort was reckless, caused needless suffering among the Yemeni population, and inflicted high numbers of civilian casualties. This led the Obama Administration to withdraw critical materiel, intelligence, and logistics support from the Saudis, undermining Saudi confidence in the reliability of the U.S. defense and security commitment.

The promise of the Trump Administration to reverse Obama's restrictions on arms sales, as well as to restore intelligence and logistics support, has unsurprisingly been well-received in Riyadh and interpreted as a signal that the core elements of the bilateral relationship would be revitalized. One component of the proposed sale would be the precision guided munitions that were withheld by the Obama Administration in late 2016 following the mistaken targeting of a funeral in Sana'a that killed dozens of civilians. Other components are largely defensive in nature. The sale of the Terminal High Altitude Air Defense system (THAAD) is consistent with long-standing U.S. encouragement of our friends in the region to improve their defense against Iran's ballistic missile program. Light combat aircraft will contribute to Saudi Arabia's ability to defend its land borders as littoral combat ships will enhance defense of the Saudi coast. But in moving forward on these sales, the Administration needs to proceed cautiously and avoid over-burdening the Saudis with expensive armaments at a time that the Saudi budget is already under stress from low oil revenues and rising economic and social requirements.

#### Evolution of the U.S.-Saudi Relationship from Obama to Trump

In welcoming the Trump Administration's new course on defense cooperation, the Saudis are replicating a similar hopeful moment eight years earlier. The Saudis, like most of the Arab states, saw the arrival of the Obama Administration in 2009 as the antidote to their unhappiness over Bush Administration policies. In particular, frustration over the mismanaged U.S. invasion and occupation of Iraq as well as aggressive statements promoting radical

reform in the region by figures in or associated with the Bush Administration were a source of friction between the U.S. and our friends and partners. President Obama's pledge to end the occupation of Iraq and reshape our relations in the region were perceived positively.

Disenchantment with the direction of U.S. policy soon re-emerged, however. Washington's reaction to popular uprisings in Egypt and other states in the region disconcerted the Saudis and their Gulf partners. In particular, they perceived that Administration pressure on its long-standing friend, Hosni Mubarak, to step down might presage a similar reaction if popular opposition should take hold in their countries. Dithering and delay in the Administration over Syria policy, crystallized by the failure to follow through on President Obama's "red line" threat to respond to chemical weapons use, reinforced Saudi concerns that U.S. leadership on issues critical to them had grown unsteady. Finally, U.S. determination to reach an agreement with Iran on its nuclear program through the P5+1 process followed by efforts to expand the scope of U.S.-Iranian engagement raised doubts in the minds of the Saudis that the Administration might be pursuing a broader rapprochement with Iran at their expense.

These policy issues were further complicated by communications miscues. The Administration's interest in a "pivot to Asia" and promotion of U.S. "energy independence" were interpreted by the Saudis and others as a signal of declining U.S. commitment to its historic role preserving regional security. Obama's comments to the Atlantic magazine advising that Saudi Arabia should learn to "share" the region with Iran and asserting that the challenges Saudi Arabia faced were largely domestic and self-inflicted were viewed as an expression of Presidential contempt and hostility.

The Saudis were therefore prepared to overlook Donald Trump's aggressive anti-Muslim and anti-Saudi comments on the campaign trail and welcome the arrival of his Administration as an opportunity to, once again, repair the damage inflicted by his predecessor and restore the close, historic relationship. Their optimism was quickly rewarded as the Administration pledged to renew support for the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen, move ahead on arms sales delayed by the Obama Administration, and embraced the U.S.-Saudi partnership confronting Iran. Successful visits by Secretary of Defense Mattis and Secretary of State Tillerson to Saudi Arabia and a return visit by Deputy Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman to

Washington cemented in place the elements of a revitalized U.S.-Saudi relationship.

The stage was set, then, for a successful visit to Saudi Arabia by President Trump. The Saudis were prepared to respond positively to the three elements of cooperation sought by the Trump Administration: cooperation on the fight against violent extremism, a united front challenging Iran, and the reiteration of Saudi and broader Gulf willingness to respond positively, at least, to progress on resolving the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Moreover, the Saudis organized a triumphal first engagement for the President abroad. Expanded meetings with the leadership of the Gulf Cooperation Council and the Arab and Islamic world previewed a rising albeit still inchoate regional consensus on measures to address the two core challenges of Iran and violent extremism. With further announcements of significant new economic initiatives, arms sales, and promised bilateral investments, the President's initial stop in Saudi Arabia proved to be the highlight of a nine-day foray into international political and economic engagement.

But subsequent developments have reinforced that much of the progress that was advertised in the Riyadh visit remains very tenuous. Trump Administration claims that the Saudis had committed to hundreds of billions of dollars in new economic initiatives, including over \$100 billion in arms sales, were greeted skeptically. Many of the alleged agreements may never be realized. Despite some indications that the Saudis were prepared to take additional steps toward normalization with Israel, the visit resulted only in a reiteration of their traditional position that they would formalize ties with Tel Aviv only after it makes substantial progress in resolving its central dispute with the Palestinians.

Most damaging, however, has been a flare-up in long-standing Saudi and Emirati hostility towards the Government of Qatar. The allegations that Qatar supports extremism and maintains friendly relations with Iran, which may have been encouraged or even precipitated by the Trump visit, threaten to explode the new-found regional consensus and even to destroy the Gulf Cooperation Council, a critical regional force for stability. Essential U.S. foreign policy and security interests are at risk if the intra-GCC dispute is not resolved quickly and peacefully.

In sum, while the Trump Administration's approach to addressing regional issues has been warmly received by our friends and partners, and they remain optimistic that the new Administration will restore the close ties that linked them to the U.S. historically, the specific, operational elements of that renewed relationship

remain nascent and blurry. It remains to be seen whether the dawning of this restored relationship is real or false.

#### Human Rights and American Values

When he spoke to the assembled leadership of the Arab and Islamic countries, May 21, Donald Trump's promise that the U.S. would refrain from "lecturing" them on issues related to human rights and civil liberties was particularly warmly received. Among the issues that had caused the greatest friction in the Obama years, the Administration's inclination to criticize government's on their human rights records, particularly its readiness to "take them to the woodshed" in public, was especially problematic. Popular uprisings in the Arab Spring pressured the Administration to speak out more forcefully in support of political liberalization and the need to address the sources of public discontent. But the regional leadership perceived that the Administration's encouragement of open political debate and more open societies morphed into punitive and sanctimonious finger-wagging, failing to take into account the very real security challenges that the governments believed they confronted.

But the proper counter-balance to an overweening and overly sanctimonious emphasis on adopting U.S. or western values of human rights and civil liberties is not to advocate a values free foreign policy. The U.S is locked in a battle of ideas with those who believe that there is a "Chinese model" of development that permits rapid economic progress while retaining traditional, authoritarian political systems. If we dispute that notion, which remains highly attractive to many governments around the world, it is important that the U.S. finds a way to articulate our own views that economic progress and political liberalization are inseparable. The values that our Founding Fathers advocated — freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom of assembly — are central to our conception of the appropriate relationship between the government and its citizens not because they are American but because they reflect a universally embraced system of political behavior validated over time that produces stable, durable, and just societies.

Saudi Arabia represents a particularly difficult challenge for the U.S. on issues related to human rights and civil liberties. Saudi society is built around fundamentally different conceptions of social relationships and individual rights. And there is no evidence that the majority of Saudis disagree with their government's position on these issues. As a result, efforts on the part of the U.S.

government to challenge the Saudi approach are generally rejected and often resented. This is not a reason to stop advancing our views. If the Administration prefers to pursue these discussions “in private,” this is not necessarily a bad decision. But whether in private or in public, the U.S. does need to persist in expressing its views on these issues. Ultimately, it is a matter of faith in the U.S. that more open, democratic, and tolerant societies make for better partners.

#### Evolving Saudi Economic and Social Reforms Offer a New Opening

Declining oil revenues and the growing complexity of the Saudi economy and society are driving ambitious programs for reform under the rubric Vision 2030. The reforms encompass a dramatic shift in the roles of the public and private sectors as the engines of economic development. Vision 2030 advocates significant reductions in the public sector’s historic domination of the country’s economy, including reduced public sector employment and subsidies, while emphasizing the need for young Saudi men and women to move into the private sector for their economic future. The project includes, as well, proposals for economic diversification to move Saudi Arabia away from its dependence on the energy sector as the main engine of economic prosperity. These fundamental changes in the fabric of Saudi Arabia’s economy offer opportunities for U.S. business to develop new areas of cooperation with its Saudi counterparts.

At the same time, Vision 2030 presages a fundamental shift in the historic relationship between the government and its citizens that can become the driver for a revamped approach to civil liberties and human rights. For example, gender equality is a wedge social issue that poses difficulties for the Saudi government to confront directly. But as an economic issue, it is clear that Saudi women, who are better educated than their male counterparts and eager to join the work force, have to be integrated into the economy and that Saudi society cannot move forward if fifty percent of the population is absent from its development. Thus, economic reality rather than political or social reform may become the main instrument for a new, more open Saudi society.

#### Conclusion

As the U.S. seeks to restore stability and security in the Middle East, defeat violent extremism, and roll back Iranian expansionism, Saudi Arabia remains a vital partner. By definition, much of the emphasis in the bilateral relationship will focus on cooperation in pursuit of security and stability in the Gulf and the Arabian Peninsula. Moving forward, the U.S. should continue to re-build its defense

relationship with Saudi Arabia, including helping the Saudis resolve the ongoing conflict in Yemen. It will be important, however, not to define that relationship purely in terms of arms sales. The lessons of the Yemen conflict demonstrate that more needs to be done to assist the Saudi armed forces to build a truly capable modern military force fully prepared to take on all facets of the country's defense, especially protection of its people and its territory.

But Saudi Arabia itself is at a crossroads. Economically, socially, and politically, the country will be focused on internal developments in the coming years. Much is riding on the success of the Vision 2030 project, which is nothing less than an evolutionary transformation of the country. The U.S. must play a positive role in supporting that transition. The Saudis clearly look to the U.S. private sector, in particular, as an important partner in support of the country's economic diversification.

Undoubtedly, the retreat of the government from its central position astride Saudi society will also mean a revamping of Saudi citizens' expectations about their relationship with their government. Societal reform will bring them new opportunities to ensure that their voice is heard on issues of public policy. This is potentially a critically important development. Through quiet diplomacy, the U.S. can contribute to the kind of political and social reforms that will make Saudi Arabia a more open, democratic society.

Finally, the debate over the reform process will necessarily generate friction and divisions within the leadership ranks of Saudi government and society as different groups press their own visions of how best to achieve the successful implementation of reform. It will be tempting for U.S. policy-makers to become a party to these debates. But the U.S.-Saudi relationship has prospered for decades precisely because the U.S. has avoided becoming enmeshed in these sensitive internal matters and it is absolutely essential that the Administration refrains again from trying to steer the Saudis toward support for any single individual or faction. At the end of the day, the U.S. is seen as a valued partner across the full spectrum of Saudi leadership and the success of our partnership depends on retaining that image of neutrality.

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Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you so much, Mr. Ambassador.  
Ms. House.

**STATEMENT OF MS. KAREN ELLIOTT HOUSE, SENIOR FELLOW,  
BELFER CENTER FOR SCIENCE AND INTERNATIONAL AF-  
FAIRS, JOHN F. KENNEDY SCHOOL OF GOVERNMENT, HAR-  
VARD UNIVERSITY**

Ms. HOUSE. Thank you. Like Ambassador Westphal, I am going to simply make some points.

As has been said by some of you and the witnesses, there are enormous uncertainties in the Middle East now about the stability of borders, about the outmoded economic systems and can they provide jobs, as the chairwoman said, for this bulge of young people.

Those power vacuums are being exploited by both Iran and Saudi Arabia, who are in competition for influence in the region. And the fact that the U.S. had little strategy or engagement in the region over the past at least half dozen years other than promoting the security of a nuclear deal with Iran has left the whole region like an unruly schoolyard: With no teacher on duty, the biggest bully is the winner.

And I think it is important that we all understand right now Iran is the winning this competition. And it is not in the interest of the U.S. for Saudi Arabia to be destabilized or feel unsupported. So President Trump's visit to the region has clearly signaled that the U.S. is back in the game and back on the side of Saudi Arabia.

The Saudis and everyone else, as the Ambassador said, it is too early to say that this is a lasting change with lasting impact, because it will take more than a high-profile visit to actually rebuild the trust that was so badly destroyed over the last half dozen years and the consequences of that.

The decision by the President to back the Saudis and their colleagues against Qatar does signal that he is willing to engage—that he means what he says about reducing extremism in the region. And as has already been said, the support of the Muslim Brotherhood, Hezbollah, Hamas, all by Iran and Qatar, has to be a source of concern and something that the U.S. seeks to counter.

A year ago, the Saudis were fundamentally in a crouched position, feeling unsupported. At least now they are upright with the sense that the U.S. is behind them and beginning to at least shadowbox with Iran and Qatar and their adversaries.

I want to spend my last minute and a half focused on the domestic Vision 2030, because I have just come back from 3 weeks there, and I think it is also important that we understand things are changing in Saudi Arabia, not as fast as we might wish, but the opportunities offered to women, the fact that the government has banned the religious police from arresting people for being unveiled or gender mixing has produced a quite—in my view—remarkable relaxation, even in Riyadh, one of the most conservative places. Black abayas are obviously meant to mask a woman's figure. You now see young women not only abandoning black, but fitting them at the waist, making the figure very revealed, or walking around with them completely open, showing their tight T-shirts and Levis. I don't mean to make too much out of just a dress code change, but it is significant in a country where, unlike here, where individ-



ualism is prized; there, being part of the group and not stepping outside is what is prized. And the fact that people are courageous enough to begin to do these things I think we shouldn't diminish.

So I believe that Vision 2030 and supporting economic reform, which I believe they now must do, because oil prices aren't likely to recover, is one way the U.S. can begin to expand human rights in the Kingdom.

And I agree with what has already been said, that we should make clear that it is important for people to have the right to free speech, but Saudis are taking it more and more on Twitter and the internet so that there is something of a virtual opposition. And yes, the government still arrests people who get too critical. And we should make clear that we don't agree with that. But this is an opportunity for the U.S. to both help stabilize and change Saudi Arabia by supporting Vision 2030 and helping them deal with change internally and when they have all these external problems. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ms. House follows:]

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“Challenges and Opportunities for the U.S. Saudi Relationship”  
House Committee on Foreign Affairs  
Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa

10 a.m. Tuesday, June 13, 2017

**Introduction:**

The Middle East has never lacked for confusion and conflict but rarely if ever have its divisions run deeper or in more directions than today. Enormous uncertainties about the future of state borders, of outmoded rentier economies and of America's commitment to regional stability all are encouraging state and non-state actors to exploit power vacuums and raising the risks of even greater regional instability. Never in my 39 years of reporting in Saudi Arabia has the Kingdom faced such a daunting array of challenges.

**Instability in Saudi Arabia benefits only Iran.**

Saudi Arabia is on the front lines of all these challenges. Never in my 39 years of reporting in Saudi Arabia has the Kingdom faced such a daunting array of challenges. Abroad, Saudi Arabia is surrounded by Iran-inspired chaos in Iraq, Syria and Yemen, and its Al Saud rulers targeted for extinction by both Iran and ISIS terrorists.

At home, the Al Saud face divisions within the ruling family and the herculean task of transforming a nation of 20 million citizens addicted for generations to government handouts into a populace willing and capable of earning its livelihood in private sector jobs. The risk that conservative Saudis balk, precipitating social instability in the Gulf's most strategic nation, must be a concern of the U.S. The regime launched its reform plan—Vision 2030—precisely because it fears the prolonged fall in oil revenues will lead to sharp declines in livelihoods of Saudis who with nothing left to lose, could destabilize this nearly three-century old monarchy. Pick your poison. Instability in Saudi Arabia is in no one's interest other than perhaps Iran's.

**The Importance of Trump's Helping Hand to Riyadh**

The good news for Saudi Arabia—and the world—is that Donald Trump has signaled with his visit to Saudi last month (the first president ever to favor Riyadh with his inaugural foreign trip) that the U.S. is reversing eight years of favoring Iran at the price of greater regional instability and frayed relations with Saudi Arabia. The President's visit also gave Saudi Arabia a rare opportunity to present itself to its own citizens and beyond as the leader of the Sunni Arab world with 50 Muslim leaders attending the Saudi-American summit. Appearances matter and to the Saudis this one mattered a lot. Trump's message of support to Saudi so visibly delivered was quickly backed up this week when he endorsed the diplomatic and economic boycott by Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states imposed on Qatar for its coziness with Iran and its financial and moral support of terrorist groups in the region.

### **Restoring Trust Will Require Action, Not Just Words**

It is still too early to say that trust in the U.S. has been restored. Eight years of President Obama's willingness to sacrifice Mideast allies' interests and the lives of thousands of Syrians in pursuit of a nuclear deal with Iran that he vainly saw as his legacy, won't quickly be forgotten nor its damages soon repaired—if ever. So, it is imperative that the U.S. take concrete action to support allies in the region with deeds, not just words, against adversaries like Iran and ISIS to change their calculus that the Mideast is now an unruly schoolyard with no teacher on duty so power goes to the most ruthless bullies.

Taking action in the region is both difficult and dangerous. But the Saudis clearly want more U.S. help in their stalemated efforts to defeat Iran-backed Houthi rebels in Yemen. It appears the Trump administration is willing to provide expanded support but it is hard to imagine a direct U.S. military role in Yemen, a sparsely populated, mountainous nation unheard of by most Americans. Similarly, the Saudis view their primary enemy in Syria as Bashar Assad whereas the U.S. seems to lean more toward viewing ISIS as the primary enemy there. However, where the U.S. and the Saudis are on the same page is in viewing Iran as the most dangerous force in the region. That marks the most significant departure from the Obama administration which dismissively and publicly told the Saudis to “learn to share the neighborhood with Iran.”

### **The U.S. and Saudi Confront a Common Adversary: Iran**

While there are many fault lines running through the region, surely including a Sunni-Shia one, the most important divide is rivalry for regional leadership between two nation states—Iran and Saudi Arabia. In this struggle for regional leadership Iran sadly continues to win through effective support for its proxies in Syria, Iraq, and Yemen. It thus is incumbent upon the U.S. to strengthen the Saudis in any way we can, not just selling them more weapons, but teaching them how to be a more effective fighting force; not just imposing mild sanctions on Iran but imposing the severest ones possible; and by encouraging Saudi Arabia and Israel to deepen their quiet contacts with more intelligence sharing and other cooperation. Riyadh is not a threat to Israel. Moreover, the U.S. should fully support the domestic economic and social reform efforts of Deputy Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. The key point here is that the U.S. and Saudi have a common adversary in Iran.

Buoyed by President Trump's visit, the Saudi government actively is seeking to secure concrete U.S. actions in support of its anti-Iran policies. Exhibit One is Qatar.

Long tired of Qatar's friendship with Iran and its refusal to support fully Saudi priorities in the region, the Kingdom seized the Trump embrace to organize a diplomatic and economic embargo of the tiny sheikdom, dependent on a land border with Saudi for 40% of its foodstuffs. During Trump's visit, Riyadh cleverly laid the groundwork for securing U.S. support of this move by assuring Washington the Kingdom is prepared to welcome back America's major Mideast airbase moved to Qatar from Saudi in 2003 to reduce security risks to Americans living in the Kingdom from Saudis opposed to the U.S. war in Iraq. Not surprisingly the departments of defense and state, eager to avoid the disruption and expense of leaving Qatar, are advocating dialogue to repair the rupture. Qatar likely will eventually escape the embargo but only after paying some price that the Saudis and others, including Egypt, can say amounts to a reduction in Qatar's support for Iran and disruptive regional forces like the Muslim Brotherhood.

### **Saudi Arabia is Changing**

Saudi Arabia's enemies in the U.S. portray the Kingdom as a supporter of terror and a violator of human rights. Undeniably, Saudi Arabia represses political critics. And its human rights record is one the U.S. should oppose and quietly press to change, especially in allowing some greater freedom of expression. But we should not be fooled that Iran is any better simply because it holds elections in which the candidates allowed to stand must be approved by the Guardian Council, essentially a creature of the ruling Ayatollah Khamenei. Political prisoners abound in both Saudi and Iran. And executions are more prevalent in Iran than in Saudi. Amnesty International says Iran, second only to China in the number of citizens it executes annually, put to death 977 people in 2015 while Saudi executed 158. Even though Iran's population is nearly three times that of Saudi, the Kingdom is still trailing Tehran in this grim statistic. (Drugs are said to be the leading reason for execution in both nations.)

Americans should understand Saudi Arabia is changing—slowly but very visibly. The government not only has promised in its new Vision 2030 reform program a more moderate Islam, but actually taken bold steps to loosen social restrictions it allowed conservative Wahhabi clerics to impose on Saudis for the past several decades. Specifically, the so-called religious police, long free to roam streets enforcing veiling of women and gender segregation, have been banned from arresting people. Entertainment events like music concerts, wrestling or dance performances, once banned by religious leaders as a frivolous distraction from devotion to Allah, now are promoted by government and enjoyed by a growing number of citizens. Sports, too, are now encouraged, not banned, for Saudi women. Music pervades most restaurants, increasingly patronized by growing numbers of young women who are entering the work force and have their own money to spend. More women let their headscarves loosen to reveal their hair, and the long black abayas used to hide a woman's body are increasingly being replaced by colorful ones often fitted at the waist to highlight the figure. While none of this may sound significant to Americans accustomed to near total social

freedom, these are significant steps bringing this restricted society closer to normal human interactions.

As significant, the government also has at long last begun a concerted effort to confront extremist ideology. President Trump toured the new Global Center for Combating Extremist Ideology while in Riyadh. This state of the art center seeks to track extremist groups and defeat their ideology with moderate Islamic messages. The effort will be shared among the 40-nation coalition of Islamic nations Saudi Arabia organized two years ago to present a coordinated front both militarily and ideologically against extremism. Some 16 years after the World Trade Center bombing, in which 15 or the 19 hijackers were Saudi, Riyadh seems truly to understand extremists like ISIS are as great a threat to the Al Saud as to the West. Much remains to be done to diminish the appeal of jihadism to young Muslim men—and some women. But the kingdom's pledge to punish individual Saudis who finance terrorists and its efforts to coordinate a more moderate and tolerant Islam at home and among its Islamic partners, are steps in the right direction. Revamping education in the Kingdom to remove from the classroom both texts and teachers who preach hatred of Jews, Christians and Shia Muslims would be another important step. Some retraining of Saudi teachers is underway in Canada and elsewhere, but as of yet this is a tiny handful of the Kingdom's tens of thousands of teachers.

#### **U.S. Should Support Saudi Vision 2030 Reforms**

Supporting the Kingdom's sweeping reform plan is one way to encourage a more moderate Saudi Arabia, something surely in U.S. interest. It is true that previous promises to wean the Kingdom's economy from oil dependence came to nothing. But, this time, prolonged oil prices seem unlikely to allow the Kingdom to slip back into comfortable lethargy. If, as promised, the economy is privatized Saudi companies to compete globally and survive will need to be nimble and efficient. This suggests the elimination of religious constraints like closing shops for 45 minutes multiple times a day for prayer. It also suggests the creation of an educated Saudi work force suitable for employment, not one where 70% of students study soft subjects like Islam or Arab history and aren't qualified for the world of work.

In conclusion, Saudi faces a plethora of problems: sustained lower oil prices threatening the Saudi economy and social contract; increased regional turmoil and an expansionist Iran; a generational change in the ruling family replete with princely power rivalries, just to name a few. But the good news is that President Trump has begun to repair U.S.-Saudi relations so deeply frayed by eight years of the administration of Barack Obama. Now begins the hard work for both Washington--and Riyadh--to translate expressions of friendship--and promises of domestic reform--into concrete actions to enhance economic change inside Saudi Arabia and reduce threats of even

greater instability in the region that unchecked could engulf the Mideast's most strategic Arab nation.

Thank you for this opportunity. I look forward to responding to questions on these or any other issues the subcommittee wishes to pursue.

-the end-

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Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you so much Ms. House. Mr. Malinowski.

Mr. MALINOWSKI. Thank you, Madam Chairman.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Can you pull that microphone a little closer?

Mr. MALINOWSKI. Is that good?

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Maybe hold the gizmo.

**STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE TOM MALINOWSKI (FORMER ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR DEMOCRACY, HUMAN RIGHTS AND LABOR, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE)**

Mr. MALINOWSKI. Thank you for having me today.

I fully agree that it is important for us to try to have a good relationship with Saudi Arabia. We have a lot of interests in common. We have done a lot to try to deepen our partnership with the Saudis over the last several years. And it is perfectly reasonable for a new administration to try to improve the relationship further.

At the same time, I think we have to be honest that Saudi Arabia's agenda in the Middle East is not identical to our own. Where there is overlap, we should try to cooperate, and where there is not, we should be guided by our interests and values.

How we engage with Saudi Arabia is also symbolically important around the world. My responsibilities at the State Department were global, and I think I may want to begin with this point because it is something that I saw in my engagement with countries all over the world. I think all of us agree, judging from the various statements, that defending human rights and democratic freedoms in the world is part of who we are as a country and very much in our interest. Doing this in Saudi Arabia is obviously very, very challenging, but as someone who led our Government's efforts to promote our values around the world, let me stress this is as strongly as I can: We cannot have a credible global human rights policy unless we also apply it somehow to Saudi Arabia.

In almost every authoritarian country I dealt with as Assistant Secretary, people would ask me, "Do you criticize your Saudi allies the way you criticize us?" assuming the answer would be no. Fortunately the answer was yes. Although we may not do it as loudly in Saudi Arabia as we do in some places, we have pressed the Saudis on dissidents, on women's and migrants' rights, on religious freedom, on the war in Yemen. I would not have had a leg to stand on with Russia or China or Iran or Cuba if I couldn't have said that.

And that is why President Trump's very clear public message in Riyadh that we will no longer press the Gulf States on these issues was so harmful. We can't have a credible global human rights policy if we say to the whole world that we are giving the Saudis a pass.

And I think Secretary Tillerson's subsequent very appropriate criticism of the Iranian elections was deeply undermined by his refusal to say anything at the same time about Saudi Arabia. That is a gift to everybody who wants to portray American advocacy for human rights as just a weapon that we use to beat up our enemies rather than a principled policy that we try to apply to everybody.

And I think the problem was compounded by the clear contrast between how the administration is engaged with Saudi Arabia and



its treatment of our allies in Europe and elsewhere. It is one thing to go to Saudi Arabia with the legitimate aim of improving our relationship. I think it was, frankly, dispiriting and even disgraceful for the President to say in Riyadh that we will not lecture countries in that part of the world and then to deliver what was clearly a lecture in Brussels to democratic allies that have fought and bled with us all over the world and that share our values about what they allegedly owe to the United States. I think some corrective from the Congress is needed here.

In the meantime, our approach to Saudi Arabia should be based on realistic assessment of where our aims do and do not coincide. With the current crisis over Qatar, for example, there is absolutely a legitimate concern, as you mentioned Madam Chair, about that country's funding to terrorist groups. But I think it would be a mistake to assume that this is the principal reason why Saudi Arabia acted against Qatar given Saudi Arabia's own extremely complicated, to say the least, relationship with violent extremism. Our interest lies in seeing this dispute resolved peacefully and with concerns about terrorist financing addressed by all sides rather than trying to take sides.

With respect to Iran, the United States and Saudi Arabia share a paramount interest in opposing that country's malign influence in the region, but this is about countering the policies of the current regime in Iran. It is not in our interest to be seen more broadly as supporting Saudi Arabia and opposing Iran per se in some kind of zero-sum struggle for dominance in the Middle East. Absolutely, it is not in our interest to be viewed as aligned with Sunnis in an existential struggle with Shia Muslims or to encourage the formation of an alliance which is defined in sectarian religious terms. We have many Shia friends in the region: In Iraq, we are fighting ISIS; in Bahrain; in Lebanon. Why would we signal to them that we are somehow engaged on one side of a religious war?

Finally, with respect to Yemen, the United States and Saudi Arabia clearly have a common interest there in combatting Iranian influence, in denying safe haven to al-Qaeda, protecting sea lanes. We do not have an interest in giving the Saudis a blank check to make bad decisions for which the United States will then share responsibility. We provided very generous support to the Saudi-led coalition. We tried to help them improve their performance, including the effort that Ambassador Westphal mentioned that my bureau led on civilian casualties. But the intervention there clearly hasn't achieved its aims. The Saudis have continued to strike targets that exacerbate the humanitarian situation, suggesting they have sometimes made a conscious effort not to follow our advice.

There is, as you know, a looming famine in Yemen. This is not an abstraction. Over 3 million people are now suffering acute malnutrition. There are 100,000 cases of cholera. Saudi strikes on roads, bridges, and ports have kept aid from those in need. We are involved in this.

Now, if we think unconditionally supporting our ally is worth that human cost, then we should honestly say so and accept our share of responsibility for that cost. I personally believe it is not and that we should therefore temper—not withdraw, but temper our support to the Saudis to encourage an outcome more in keeping

with our interests. I think that is what the vote in the Senate is about today.

On all these issues, offering partnership where our interests align and honesty where they do not, in my view, is the best way to build long-term trust and a better relationship with Saudi Arabia.

Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Malinowski follows:]

**Testimony of Tom Malinowski**  
**Former Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor**  
**“Challenges and Opportunities for the U.S. Saudi Relationship”**  
**House Committee on Foreign Affairs**  
**Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa**  
**June 13, 2017**

Chairman Ros-Lehtinen, Ranking Member Deutch, members of the committee:  
Thank you for holding this hearing and for inviting me to testify.

I believe that we need to maintain a correct relationship with Saudi Arabia. We have many interests in common with the Saudi kingdom and its GCC allies: from countering destabilizing actions by Iran, to fighting terrorism, to maintaining the security of energy routes, to stopping the carnage in Syria. Over the last eight years, we have intensified our military and economic partnership with the Saudis to promote these shared interests -- on anti-terrorism through the counter-ISIS coalition, on ballistic missile defense, military preparedness and training, cyber security, climate change and humanitarian assistance. As I'm sure you know, most of the proposed military sales announced during President Trump's visit were negotiated during the Obama administration.

At the same time, Saudi Arabia has pursued a number of policies over the years that are harmful to the interests and ideals America advances in the world. Because it is a close security and economic partner, we may speak about our disagreements in more diplomatic terms than if it were an adversary. But we need to be honest with ourselves about these problems, recognizing that Saudi Arabia's agenda in the Middle East is not identical to our own. Where there is overlap, we should cooperate; where there is not, we must be guided by our interests and values.

How we engage with Saudi Arabia also has great symbolic significance -- it says a great deal, to people all over the world, about what America stands for and whom we stand with. I'm not a Saudi specialist. But as someone whose responsibilities in the US government extended to the whole world, I don't think we can talk about our current approach Saudi Arabia without connecting it to America's broader strategic aims and to the rather extraordinary changes the Trump administration is making to those aims. With your permission, that's where I'd like to start. I will then discuss a few immediate challenges we face in our relationship with the Kingdom.

First, I trust we will agree that the United States has an interest in promoting human rights and democratic freedoms around the world. One would have to be blind to believe that autocratic governance in the Middle East and elsewhere has produced anything resembling stability. On the contrary, when dictatorships deny their citizens the ability to advance legitimate aims by peaceful means, the result is precisely the conflict and terrorism we are confronting in the region. Defending

basic human rights is thus critical to our security. Keeping moral aims at the heart of our foreign policy also aligns us with billions of people in other countries who share those aims. It is the glue that holds our most enduring alliances together.

I am realistic about Saudi Arabia. It is not going to become a democracy any time soon. Its economic and political reforms, if they happen, will be driven mostly by domestic needs and demands (and I hope that Mohammed Bin Salman's Vision 2030 initiative will prove a successful example of internally driven reform). Reasonable people can disagree about the best way for us to encourage these changes from the outside.

But as someone who has led our government's efforts to promote our values around the world, let me stress this as strongly as I can: we cannot have a credible global human rights policy unless we also apply it to Saudi Arabia. I was challenged about our Saudi policy by just about every country I dealt with as Assistant Secretary of State. "Do you criticize your Saudi allies the way you criticize us?" – they would ask me, assuming that the answer was no. Fortunately, I could say that while we've never been perfectly consistent, while we may not speak as loudly in Saudi Arabia as we do in some other countries, we have pressed the Saudis on everything from the detention and torture of dissidents, to women's and migrant rights, to religious freedom, to their conduct in Yemen. I would not have had a leg to stand on with Russia or China or Cuba or Iran if I couldn't have said that. Sadly, we no longer can.

President Trump's message to the Saudis and other Gulf states that we will no longer press them on these issues was heard around the world and means we cannot have a credible global human rights policy. Secretary Tillerson's subsequent criticism of the Iranian elections while standing in Saudi Arabia and refusing to comment on the Kingdom's own total suppression of democratic rights and freedoms badly undermines our efforts to hold Iran accountable for its horrific human rights abuses. It was a gift to Iran and to all who want to portray American advocacy for human rights as weapon we use to beat up our enemies, rather than a principled policy we apply to everyone. To divorce American foreign policy from its moral aims in this way makes us look like just another cynical great power out for ourselves rather than a leader working for the common good. It irresponsibly and unnecessarily cedes America's biggest comparative advantage in the world.

The problem is compounded by the contrast between how the administration has engaged with Saudi Arabia and other Middle East autocracies and its treatment of our democratic allies in Europe and elsewhere. It is one thing to go to Saudi Arabia with the legitimate aim of improving our relationship with the Kingdom, and to speak diplomatically about its shortcomings. But it was dispiriting and disgraceful for the President to declare in Riyadh that we will not "lecture" our Gulf partners, and then to deliver a contemptuous lecture in Brussels, to allies that elect their leaders, respect women's rights, fund our global priorities, and fight and bleed with us to protect our security, about what they allegedly owe the United States. After all,

German, British and French troops are sharing our sacrifices in Afghanistan, where Saudi money still supports extremists and extremism.

Working with Saudi Arabia to pursue common aims makes sense. But we are witnessing something that goes far beyond a reset with Riyadh – it is a foreign policy rebalance away from democracies that share our values towards autocracies that flatter our president. This is not in our interest. I hope that the Congress will apply a corrective.

In the meantime, our approach to Saudi Arabia should be based on a realistic assessment of where our aims and interests do and do not coincide.

With respect to the current crisis over Qatar, for example, there is a legitimate concern about funding emanating from that country to terrorist groups. But it would be a mistake to think that this is the principal reason why Saudi Arabia acted against Qatar. Both countries support the same armed Islamist groups in Syria; both embrace the same ultraconservative school of Islam. Saudi funding for the spread of the most narrow-minded interpretations of that school, which has done incalculable harm from the Balkans to Africa to Southeast Asia, remains a problem, even if Saudi leaders have recognized the need to address it.

We need to be brutally honest about this: while all our partners in the Persian Gulf are with us against ISIS and al Qaeda, none treat this fight as their highest priority. Their quarrel with Qatar is as much about their determination to squash the dying embers of the Arab Spring, which they accuse Qatar of fueling through its sponsorship of Islamist political parties and hosting of al Jazeera, about differing approaches to Iran, and, frankly, about more childish rivalries over leadership of the GCC and the region. Our interest lies in seeing this dispute resolved peacefully as soon as possible, with legitimate concerns about terrorist financing addressed by all sides, rather than encouraging a split among our partners.

With respect to Iran, the United States and Saudi Arabia share an interest and must stand united in enforcing compliance with the nuclear agreement, and opposing Tehran's malign influence in the region. But this is about countering the policies of current the government of Iran. It is not in our interest to be seen as supporting Saudi Arabia and opposing Iran per se in a zero sum fight for dominance of the Middle East. It is absolutely not in our interest to be viewed as aligned with Sunnis in an existential struggle with Shia Muslims, or to encourage the formation of an alliance that is defined in sectarian religious terms. We have many Shia friends in the region, from Iraqis courageously fighting ISIS, to Bahrainis advocating democracy while resisting Iranian interference. A sectarian alliance would betray them, and benefit the extremists on both sides who profit from division.

There also many ordinary people in Iran who are positively inclined towards the US. They like Americans. They admire our democratic values. They don't like being oppressed by a clerical dictatorship. They understand why we are at odds with

their leaders on specific issues like nuclear weapons. But they are also Iranians who love their country, and Shia Muslims who cherish their faith. If they think we are aligning with Saudi Arabia against their country and their faith, they will back their government to the hilt, instead of working to change their country from within.

Finally, with respect to Yemen: The United States and Saudi Arabia have a common interest in combating Iranian influence, denying safe haven to terrorists, and protecting sea lanes. We do not have an interest in giving the Saudis a blank check to make bad decisions, for which the United States will then share responsibility.

We have provided significant support to the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen, and continue to do so, both in terms of weapons we sell and the generous military and intelligence support package we give. But their intervention has not achieved the intended strategic benefits – the Houthis have not been pushed back, and Iran has taken advantage of the situation to deepen its involvement. At the same time, the Saudis have used US-provided weapons in ways that have caused excessive and avoidable harm to civilians, and exacerbated a terrible humanitarian crisis. My bureau at the State Department took part in an intensive effort to improve the Saudis' performance, and while I think we made some very modest progress, it was not good enough. Among other things, the Saudis continued to hit targets on a humanitarian no-strike list, suggesting that they were making a conscious decision not to take our advice. As a result, the Obama administration decided to suspend sales of munitions that made us directly complicit in Saudi air strikes, while stepping up provision of other systems.

The precision guided munitions we were selling represented a small fraction of our military support to Saudi Arabia. While precision weapons are often helpful in avoiding civilian casualties, this was not the case in Yemen – precision does not protect civilians when one is deliberately aiming at the wrong targets. As we consider this issue, we must also remember that there is a famine in Yemen. This is not an abstraction. Over 3 million people are suffering acute malnutrition, largely because of the conflict. Saudi air strikes on bridges, roads and ports have kept humanitarian aid from those in need. If we believe that unconditionally supporting Saudi Arabia is worth that human cost, then we should honestly say so, and accept our share of responsibility for that cost. I personally believe it is not worth it and that we should therefore temper – not withdraw, but temper – our support to the Saudis to encourage an outcome more in keeping with our interests. We should prioritize defensive sales (i.e. border security items and missile defense) to reassure and defend our partners against Iranian threats, while working for a resolution of the conflict in Yemen on acceptable terms.

On all these issues, offering partnership where our interests align, and honesty where they do not, is the best way to build trust and a better relationship with Saudi Arabia. As we've seen in the last few weeks, an uncritical embrace of the Saudi agenda emboldens Riyadh to take actions that run counter to our aims, and, ironically, undermine trust.

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Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you very much.

Thank you to all of our panelists. And for the panel, I will start the questions.

The JCPOA and the previous administration's willingness to elevate the Iranian regime's profile came at the expense of our traditional alliances with the Saudis and the rest of the GCC, and that eroded our credibility. Iran is probably the greatest threat to Saudi Arabia and is certainly one of the greatest threats to regional stability and U.S. national security interests. Iran's proxy war in Syria, Iraq, and Yemen, and the presence of Hezbollah in Lebanon have the entire region on edge.

The new administration is intent on reversing the policy of seeing Iran and Saudi Arabia share the neighborhood with supposedly similar beliefs, and we know that that cannot happen.

What can Congress do with our Saudi partners to address our mutual concerns with the Houthis, Iran's support for Assad and Hezbollah, and its desire to spread its ideology throughout the region?

Ambassador WESTPHAL. Well, Madam Chair, in my 3 years there, I spent quite a bit of time talking to the Saudi leadership, from the King, the Crown Prince, the Deputy Crown Prince, about the role of Congress. And I think you have touched on something that I think has been—I am not going to say absent—but something that needs to be really pushed harder, which is your role as the most important branch of government in these matters. So, for example, delegations that travel there, I have been telling the Saudis that it is important for them to hear what you are saying because you represent the interests of the American people. And you speak for the American people in ways that even Presidents can't do because you all represent different constituents.

As such, I think try to get them to strengthen their relationships to have a better relationship with their GCC partners to include countries like Oman, for example, which they see as a link to Iran, to try to understand how they can carry on a GCC dialogue on these issues, much like you do in Congress when you have big differences between parties or ideologies here; you carry on the dialogue. I think that that is important to do. And I think Congress can play a role, not in directing foreign policy, but in shaping it in the future, given all your interests that you represent.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you.

Anyone else?

Thank you, Ambassador.

Ambassador FEIERSTEIN. Thank you, very much, Madam Chairman.

What I would say is that, in the region, you have two elements that are the drivers of instability and the weakening of societies and governments. You have violent extremism on one side, and then you have Iran on the other side. And both of them are fundamentally responsible for destabilizing the region.

In my own view, the Iranians and the violent extremist organizations pursue the same tactics and achieve success in the same way, and that is that they take advantage of the weakness of governments and societies in order to exert their influence through money, through military assistance and training. Certainly, my ex-

perience in Yemen was precisely that, that Iran was able to establish a foothold, to establish a relationship with the Houthis, primarily because the Government of Yemen was weak and was unable to provide for the needs and the demands of their own citizens.

And so, in my view, the way to push back on Iranian expansionism is the same way that we push back on violent extremism, and that is that we need to help these societies build up their institutional capacity in order to take on their responsibilities and to provide governance, to provide law and order, and to address the needs of their entire population. So I would hope that the Congress, as it is looking at the budget, as it is looking at the requirements moving forward, would continue the long-standing U.S. position of helping these societies build their states, build their governments, build their institutions, and that is what was ultimately what is going to allow us to achieve success in these fights.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you.

I know you would have remarks, but my time is up.

I am pleased to yield to Mr. Deutch for his time. Thank you.

Mr. DEUTCH. Thank you. More than one of you mentioned the issue of Saudi financing of terrorism. There was a New York Times piece last year that referred to the Saudis as both the arsonists and the firefighters when it comes to the spread of extremism.

Secretary Malinowski, you describe the Saudi funding of Wahhabism around the world as having done incalculable damage, even if Saudis leaders have recognized the problem. When Saudi and others are demanding that Qatar change its behavior on terror financing, how do we reconcile these two positions? Is it appropriate to equate what the Saudis do with what the Qataris do? Is one worse than the other? How do we sort that out?

Mr. MALINOWSKI. I think—I never think it is helpful to kind of do a ranking; you know, who is worse than who? Is Iran worse than Saudi Arabia on human rights or vice versa? Are the Qataris or the Saudis worst in terms of the arsonist part of that equation?

But I think it is important here to stress that there are a lot of complicated things going on in this dispute between Saudi Arabia and Qatar. And a principled objection to Qatari financing of groups like the ones that you mention I don't think is really at the very top of the list. And I think if we were to lead with what I think is our core interest here, which is to reduce and eliminate funding for violent extremist groups and the broader phenomenon of tens of billions of dollars emanating primarily from Saudi Arabia to change the character of how Islam is practiced in many parts of the world—if we were to lead with that, we would have a lot to say to every country in the region, including Saudi Arabia. And I hope that this Qatar crisis, rather than inducing us to simplistically take sides with the Saudis and the UAE, forces a deeper examination of those problems.

Mr. DEUTCH. Well, Ambassador Westphal, I imagine, during your tenure, this issue arose frequently. And so what is the correlation between the acknowledgment that you received from the leadership that this is a problem and steps that were actually taken to address that?



Ambassador WESTPHAL. Well, first of all, President Obama made four visits to Saudi Arabia, and in three of those that I sat in, he brought up the issue very directly. Now, he brought it up in terms of the large disparity between the crime and the punishment issue.

And then, on the funding, Secretary Kerry and others, and myself—

Mr. DEUTCH. Mr. Westphal, I am sorry. I don't question that it was brought up by visits from Secretary Kerry and the President. But what was the response from the Saudis, and to what extent did they acknowledge and to what extent did they address it?

Ambassador WESTPHAL. They acknowledged the issue, and they addressed it by actually passing a lot of laws. And, again, like I said earlier, working with us in multiple meetings through Treasury and our other agencies to try to stop the flow of resources. So they have made some significant progress in my view.

Mr. DEUTCH. Okay. And just moving on in the remaining time I have. I would like to be supportive of the U.S.-Saudi alliance. It is critical. But I also believe that it is important for us to ensure that the steps we take to strengthen our allies don't ultimately run counter to our own interests, as I said earlier. And as Congress contemplates this arms sale, starting with PGMs, help us understand the implications of selling these weapons without having adequate assessment of how the Saudi Air Force can and will use them versus the implications of not selling them and the impression that that would give to Iran. Ms. House or Ambassador Feierstein?

Ms. HOUSE. On the weapons sales, I would just like to repeat what somebody already said. It is not the selling them weapons that actually does any good in my view. We need to be working with them to make them a much more efficient and effective military, not largely an employment operation, their defense department. I think they understand that and would be willing to cooperate.

Mr. DEUTCH. Ambassador Feierstein on the PGMs?

Ambassador FEIERSTEIN. I believe that we should move forward on the PGM sale. I think that it is important to help the Saudis improve their capability. One of the things that happened over the course of the conflict in Yemen is that we actually withdrew some of the advice and assistance that we were providing to the Saudis in their air operations center. I think we should restore that. It was an important element of how we could help them improve. But the PGMs themselves, if used appropriately, will actually result in reduced civilian casualties and reduced collateral damage. And for that reason, I think we should go forward with it.

Mr. MALINOWSKI. Could I just pick up on that? We, I think, do have a small disagreement on this point. PGMs, in principle, can be very helpful in reducing civilian casualties. But that has not been the case in Yemen because the problem there has not been an absence of precision. The problem there has been that the Saudis have been hitting the wrong targets. If you are hitting a bridge or a medical facility or a port facility that you shouldn't be hitting, having a very precise weapon is not going to help, and that was the reason why we ultimately made the decision to withhold those sales.

I am absolutely in favor of selling defensive weapons systems and a whole host of other things that the Saudis can use to protect their border. But these in particular make us complicit in the strikes that are creating the humanitarian crisis. And I think, if that is a priority for us to reduce, then I think we do need to temper it.

Mr. DEUTCH. Thank you very much.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you, Mr. Deutch.

Mr. DONOVAN of New York.

Mr. DONOVAN. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Ambassador Westphal, you had testified before about the Saudis' attempt to curtail terrorist funding by designating specific charities and restricting others. Just last year, our Nation gave Iran \$1.7 billion. That was designated as \$400 million for sales that we had never paid them for in previous decades. And the additional \$1.3 billion was the interest on the \$400 million that they gained in our financial services community for us retaining that money. There are no restrictions, obviously, on the use of that money. And I think we all suspect how they used that \$1.3 billion in interest from American banks.

As we look toward our allies, our friends in the Middle East, the people that we are negotiating with, when we look at ourselves, do you think that there are some restrictions that the United States could put into place that could curtail what may end up being our supporting or giving money to some organizations who may use that money then to harm ourselves?

Ambassador WESTPHAL. Yes. I think that as I was leaving the country—

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Put the microphone on.

Ambassador WESTPHAL. I am sorry.

As I was leaving the country and had a conversation with King Salman and the other leadership, we talked about the fact that sanctions against Iran need to be continued and strengthened. Particularly, I think, their biggest problem with the agreement with Iran was that in addition to the nuclear program, we did not negotiate their activities in the region, in Iraq, in Syria, and in Yemen. They did not understand why President Obama and the administration did not push harder on those issues as part of the agreement. And so we talked about the fact that maybe, in this new administration, there could be a more aggressive effort to do that.

Mr. DONOVAN. And to the rest of the panel—apparently my time is up already, it started at 1 minute.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. It's alright. We just messed up the time. Go ahead.

Mr. DONOVAN . Thank you, ma'am.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Not for Mark Meadows. Not for New Yorkers. You talk fast.

Mr. DONOVAN. Thank you very much.

For the remaining members of our panel, each of you spoke about the difference in our values that we treasure and hold in human rights, freedoms of religion, freedoms from persecution, civil rights, women's rights. How do we deal with countries that don't embrace our same values? And at the same time, I guess—because we think they are self-governing countries and maybe we should

respect their decisions their countries make, it is hard for us to respect what other nations do to women and people who are persecuted because of their religious beliefs. So I am just curious if you guys have an idea of how we balance those two competing interests?

Ambassador WESTPHAL. I have two things that I think are absolutely critically important. The first is primary/secondary education. The Saudis understand that their system is in dire need of help, particularly on teacher development and education and the curriculum. So, recently, the Minister of Education declared that religion would be only taught for a very short period of time during school hours. But the curriculum revision needs help. And I offered them that we could help in many different ways. They put out a proposal for teacher development to bring teachers to the United States to mentor their teachers here and got no takers on the proposal. They are going to put another one out.

So education, primary education, is where all this Wahhabism and all this intense religious teaching took its roots. And if you change that system and you improve education at the lowest levels—not higher education but lower, primary/secondary.

And the second is their judicial system. They also said to me: We have got old judges. We have got an old system under sharia law that needs modification, needs reform. We need to help train judges, train prosecutors, train defense attorneys. To do that, you will get a better human rights record. You will get a better record for business. If you are a businessman and you want to do business in Saudi Arabia, you want to make sure your interests are protected and your lawyers can fight for you. Right now, that is not always the case. So we need to help them in those two areas in my view.

Ms. HOUSE. And I just reinforce the education point. It is one of the opportunities for America. I am shocked to hear that nobody responded. The Canadians are helping retrain teachers. When I was doing my book, the Saudis were promising to change the textbooks. But as the man in charge of that told me, when you shut the door and the teacher is in charge, at some level, it doesn't matter what the textbook says. So there is a big need for both what the Ambassador said, starting at a young age to teach something other than hatred of Jews, Christians, Shias.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you, Ms. House.

These New Yorkers. You know, give them a finger, they take your whole hand. You are out of time.

Mr. Connolly of Virginia.

Mr. CONNOLLY. I thank the chair and welcome the panel.

And I am going to ask some rapid-fire questions and ask you to be as concise as you can because I want to fit a lot in.

Mr. Ambassador, in listening to Ms. House, I hear this dystopian wreckage of a relationship over the last 6 years, and thank God Donald Trump arrives in Riyadh to try to restore some semblance of order in the relationship.

You sat, personally, in meetings with the President of the United States and the Saudi King. Is that correct?

Ambassador WESTPHAL. Yes.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Three times? Four. Three.

Ambassador WESTPHAL. [Nonverbal response.]

Mr. CONNOLLY. Plus the secretary of state separately.

Ambassador WESTPHAL. [Nonverbal response.]

Mr. CONNOLLY. Yeah.

Could it be that some of the trouble in the relationship was the Saudis were hearing things they did not want to hear? Because if I heard your direct testimony, the President personally brought up human rights issues and other issues that matter in terms of U.S. values. Is that correct?

Ambassador WESTPHAL. That is correct.

Mr. CONNOLLY. And they don't like hearing that? It was not well received?

Ambassador WESTPHAL. You know, the answer—

Mr. CONNOLLY. Go quick. Because I am going to run out of time. That is all. Go ahead.

Ambassador WESTPHAL. The answer is, yes, they didn't want to hear it. But, yes, they did take actions. And, yes, we did follow up.

Mr. CONNOLLY. So it was efficacious even if it wasn't always welcome.

Secondly, I think—and I don't mean to put words in Ms. House's mouth. But I assume she was inferring that one of the big problems was JCPOA, that the Saudis, on principle, did not want to see the United States, let alone the Group of 5, engage with the Iranians on anything. Would the Saudis have preferred the kinetic option, as the military refers to it, rather than a negotiated agreement to try to roll back the nuclear development program?

Ambassador WESTPHAL. No. And they clearly said to me, very directly, all of the leaders said: We don't oppose the nuclear agreement. We oppose the fact that nothing else was tied to it.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Got it. But when we negotiated with the Soviets, we didn't apply that standard. When John Kennedy signed the first nuclear test ban agreement with Nikita Khrushchev, he didn't make it an all-comprehensive agreement, because that wouldn't have worked. We didn't try to circumscribe Soviet behavior all over the world. We didn't have a list of objectionable behaviors that, oh, by the way, needs to be included in a nuclear test ban agreement. We built relationships one agreement at a time, because that is the way it works. Fair enough?

Ambassador WESTPHAL. [Nonverbal response.]

Mr. CONNOLLY. Thank you. Was that a yes, for the record?

Ambassador WESTPHAL. That is a yes.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Thank you.

Mr. Malinowski, Ambassador Feierstein said that the Saudis see our human rights advocacy—and other advocacies for press freedoms and so forth—as “overweening and self-righteous” sometimes. Gee, we don't want to be seen as overweening or self-righteous, do we? I mean, shouldn't we abandon all of those efforts so that we clear that up and we are no longer seen as self-righteous or overweening?

Mr. MALINOWSKI. It would be so much easier, wouldn't it?

Mr. CONNOLLY. Wouldn't it? That is the argument I hear from Duterte in the Philippines, from President Xi of China, from Kim Jong-un in North Korea: Stay out of our business. Who are you to

judge? Why do you bring up these ancillary issues that only cloud the relationship?

And I think it is a fair—in terms of the dialectic of American foreign policy, it is a fair question. Always has been, by the way, going back to the founding of the Republic. But the idea that we would abandon our advocacy of our own values, even if it makes other people uncomfortable, is, to me, a very troubling development in our own foreign policy. And I wonder, since you had that portfolio, whether you want to comment on that?

Mr. MALINOWSKI. Sure. And I would note I think Ambassador Feierstein and I agree on this 100 percent.

Mr. CONNOLLY. And I don't mean to say—you weren't advocating. You were describing. I hope I got that right.

Mr. MALINOWSKI. Look, in the business of promoting human rights and democratic values, you cannot be effective and agreeable at the same time. That is almost a truism. Because if we are being effective, then an authoritarian regime that doesn't want to change is going to be upset about that.

We are actually fairly soft with the Saudis. They are a close ally. We don't yell and scream at them the way we yell and scream at some countries. And sometimes we are criticized for not saying enough, as you well know.

But we have raised these issues. We did in the Bush administration. We did the in the Obama administration. We were sometimes effective.

I think they care about their international reputation. A very interesting example of this is the case of the blogger Raif Badawi, who is still, unfortunately, in prison in Saudi Arabia, but who was sentenced to 1,000 lashes because he tried to set up a human rights group in the country.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Is that because of sharia law?

Mr. MALINOWSKI. It is because he set up—

Mr. CONNOLLY. Is there sharia law in Saudi Arabia?

Mr. MALINOWSKI. Yes. Yes.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Sharia law, that so many of my friends on the other side of the aisle campaigned in the United States against—we don't want to see that here—but it is in our solid ally Saudi Arabia's code. Is that correct?

Mr. MALINOWSKI. Well, yes. And, of course, there are many different interpretations of sharia law. And as Ambassador Westphal rightly pointed out, there is a huge problem in just the absence of clarity about law and what the judiciary is supposed to do.

But in that case, he was sentenced to 1,000 lashes. Outrageously, they subjected him to 50. But I think in part because this is an outcry around the world, this is embarrassing for Saudi Arabia. That sentence has not fully been carried out, and I am still hopeful there may be a way—and I hope that the Trump administration will continue our efforts in this—to try to get that brave young man out of prison.

Mr. CONNOLLY. My time is up, and I thank you all for your testimony.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you, very much, Mr. Connolly.

Mr. Rohrabacher of California.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Thank you very much.

Just to remind everyone that, when John Kennedy made that great agreement with the Russians, yes, it got a lot of people optimistic, but it was followed by—some of the worst parts of the Cold War happened immediately after that. The Soviets did not take that as a sign of peace. They took it as a sign of weakness and doubled their support for revolutionary units all over the world. And I would suggest that the mullah regime in Iran with their now \$1.7 billion in cash from the Americans probably don't think of us as being anything but patsies and weak for doing such a thing.

Let me ask about Saudi Arabia. Specifically, do any of our witnesses know if there are still officials in power in Saudi Arabia who were in authority at the time when 3,000 Americans were slaughtered on 9/11? Do we still have any Saudis still in positions of authority that were there when that happened?

Ambassador WESTPHAL. Yes. Well, the King was the Governor of Riyadh. So he was an authority.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Uh-huh. He was part of the clique that ran the country then, right?

Ambassador WESTPHAL. Well, yeah. He is—

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Okay. So the King—and that is true all the way through, right? We have the same clique running Saudi Arabia that slaughtered 3,000 Americans. And that shouldn't be—

Ms. HOUSE. Well, the most important young leader right now, Mohammed bin Salman, is only 30. So he was alive, but he was not ruling then.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Let's hope that he doesn't learn from his elders.

The fact is, is that most people who I have talked to believe that the clique that runs Saudi Arabia knew what Osama bin Laden was planning, and they did nothing to stop it. At the worst, they did nothing to stop it. Some of them actually probably participated in helping.

So is today that clique in Saudi Arabia helping to finance the Taliban and finance Pakistan, of course, who is financing the Taliban in Afghanistan? Is any of that money from Saudi Arabia going to Pakistan and then, thus, on to the Taliban?

Ambassador WESTPHAL. They have made every effort to stop that funding completely. Taliban—

Mr. ROHRABACHER. So they don't give money—Saudi Arabia does not give money now to Pakistan?

Ambassador WESTPHAL. No.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. They cut Pakistan off?

Ambassador FEIERSTEIN. No. No. No. Saudi Arabia, as does the United States, of course, provides money to the Government of Pakistan.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. That is correct. Over some of our objections, I might add.

Ambassador FEIERSTEIN. But we do.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. So the Saudis are still financing Pakistan, who is the main sponsor of the Taliban and other terrorist groups in that region. And the Saudis are financing it. Some of the officials who were part of the clique before 9/11 are still there. And how about, are the Saudis still using their wealth—to go with some of the questions that have been asked—to promote these madrasas?

Or has there been any real reform of the message—of the horrible message—that has been given to young people throughout the Islamic world by these madrasas, which is filled with hate for the West and Israel but the West as well?

Ambassador WESTPHAL. I will mention one, Congressman, a very recent one. Any imam who leaves Saudi Arabia to go to a conference or to go preach in a mosque anywhere else in the world has to have the permission of the government. And to get that permission, they do due diligence on what he is going to say, who he is going to speak to, what his own views are. And if an imam goes without permission, as was the case at least in one example I know, they are arrested and—

Mr. ROHRABACHER. And they are arrested at—now we are then trusting the group that is running Saudi Arabia to make sure that those people who are leaving are ideologically correct and philosophically going to promote a better world. Does the rest of our panel believe that that is the case? I find it very difficult to believe that the establishment in Saudi Arabia is censoring these folks in their madrasas—unless you can tell me. I guess you mentioned that you think they are.

What about you? Do you think they are?

Mr. MALINOWSKI. I think they have made some efforts. But, no, I would not say it is nearly what it needs to be.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. And I will have to say—

Ms. HOUSE. Can I just add on that point—

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Sure. Go ahead.

Ms. HOUSE [continuing]. The Saudis understand that their reputation here has taken a hit over the last at least 20 years. And the fact that—somebody asked earlier, what can Congress do? The fact that Congress plays a bigger role and the Kingdom leadership is beginning to understand that dealing with America is not as simple as just having a meeting with the President. So they do understand that Congress has a bigger role, as Ambassador Westphal said, representing the American public. And it is having an impact on—not a cure, but a beginning impact—on things like what you are discussing.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. We are going to watch this very closely. I don't think that we can cross our fingers and try to pretend that bad things aren't happening and then they will just go away if we show we are friends. And I think there has been a lot of that irrational optimism that has gone into our relations with the Saudis over the years.

Thank you very much.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Irrational exuberance as our former Fed Reserve head said.

Ms. Frankel of Florida.

Ms. FRANKEL. Thank you, Madam Chair.

And thank you to the witnesses. This has been a very interesting conversation here.

Mr. Malinowski, you, in your testimony or in some answer, you said something about what was the real motive of the Saudis to cut off the ties from Qatar. What do you think was the real motive?

Mr. MALINOWSKI. I think there were multiple and very complicated motives. And my first point was that the public talking

point, that it is just legitimate anger over Qatari funding for extremist groups around the world, was probably not the first and most important reason.

I think Saudi Arabia's most intense preoccupation over the last few years has been to combat what we can loosely refer to as the Arab Spring, the challenges in multiple countries in the region to established authoritarian regimes. Coming from everything, from liberal young kids who want to see democracy to the Muslim Brotherhood on the other side. And one of their beefs with Qatar is that they view Qatar as having encouraged some of that, funded some of that, promoted it through Al Jazeera, which has, you know, a lot of stuff on it that I don't like, but also is a freewheeling space for freedom of speech where people can criticize their governments and corruption and so forth. And this has led to a rivalry between the two States that has played out in the way that we have seen.

There are a lot of other issues involved, as well, where I don't think it is in the interests of the United States to take sides with one country or the other. It is in our interests to try to resolve this peacefully as quickly as possible.

Ms. FRANKEL. Well, if I understand what you just said, you think their primary motive actually sounds like the opposite of what they publicly said was their motive. I mean, does anyone else want to make a comment on—

Ms. HOUSE. The Saudis believe that Qatar seeks to overthrow their regime, just like they believe the Iranians do, and that all of this terrorist financing is part of destabilizing their country. So it is very personal.

Ms. FRANKEL. Excuse me. That is not what I heard. What I heard Mr. Malinowski say is that—

Ms. HOUSE. He wasn't willing to be as politically incorrect as—

Ms. FRANKEL. No, listen. But what I heard him say—that is why I wanted to just make sure—is that they were trying to promote an Arab Spring-type situation, which would be—I interpret that as something different than promoting terrorism.

Mr. MALINOWSKI. Let me put it this way.

Ms. FRANKEL. All right.

Mr. MALINOWSKI. ISIL wants to overturn the existing political order in the Middle East. The United States, to the extent we believe in free elections and human rights, we want to overturn the existing political order in the Middle East. So does the Muslim Brotherhood in its own way. So do liberal human rights activists. So do a lot of people who are profoundly different from one another.

The problem, I think, with Saudi policy sometimes is that they conflate all of these things as if they are part of one threat whereas we, the United States, do not conflate all these things. We think it would be a good thing if dictatorships in the region evolve toward a more democratic form of government. We are at war with ISIL. And we want to make sure that our allies are with us primarily in that fight. We don't want to mix it up with all of these other things that are, frankly, less legitimate and appropriate from our point of view.

Ms. FRANKEL. All right.

Someone else made a comment about the United States, I think, needs to do more than just sell arms to Saudi Arabia. There was



a comment that we should support Vision 2030. Could you tell me what some ideas would be for that?

Ambassador FEIERSTEIN. There are two components to Vision 2030. One is the economic side. And, of course, there is a great deal of interest on the part of the Saudis to see more U.S. investment, to see more engagement by the U.S. private sector in helping—economic diversification is a big part of the Vision 2030. And so the United States and American private sector could potentially be a major partner in helping to implement those parts of the Vision 2030. But Vision 2030, of course, goes beyond that and also includes a major fundamental reshaping of what has always been understood as a social contract in Saudi Arabia between government and the citizens, the idea being that government would provide cradle-to-grave services. They would provide free health, free education, housing, jobs as the major employer. And so they are fundamentally reshaping that, and they are moving away from that and now talking about the role of the private sector as the major employer. They are reducing subsidies. They are doing a lot of other things that make them less of that cradle-to-grave social support, social safety net, that they used to be. And, therefore, that is also changing the way the people relate to the government. If you are not going to provide the services, the understanding before was that the people would stay out of government, they would stay out of public policy, in exchange for all of these services. If you are not going to provide the services, then there is an assumption that the people will have a greater say in the public policy and some of the basic decisions that the government is going to make.

And so we can help foster that. We can help through some of our programs. We can help build up the capacity on the part of people to understand how to engage, what are the roles of nongovernmental organizations in civil society, and other things that would allow them to be a stronger voice, a stronger advocate for political liberalization, hopefully.

Ambassador WESTPHAL. Can I add one point to this that I think is even more significant beyond the economic piece? And that is the social/cultural reforms that the transformation is putting forth. So the latest version of this is that women, who must have a guardian approve all of their legal actions, their education, their travel, their visa, everything, now there is a new law that was just passed a few weeks ago that allows women now to not use a guardian, to be free. Not in every single case, but—yeah. It was just approved. No? That is what I heard.

Ms. HOUSE. The King asked for a review of all the ministries to list their restrictions where they had asked a woman to have a guardian. But he has not yet removed. You still have to have a guardian to get out of prison. You have to have a guardian to get married, which most women say is totally un-Islamic. So there is a review. But there is not yet a change.

The hope is, by women, that the fact of asking for the review means the change will come. And there are people who believe that after Ramadan ends at the end of June, there is a chance women will be allowed to drive. You know, there is a hope of a lot of social change. And there is already—as I was trying to say, there is some social change. I probably didn't do a good job describing it. But they

understand that they can't expect people to manage their own lives in this new private economy—

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you.

Ms. HOUSE [continuing]. With the government controlling everything.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Wild times in the Kingdom.

Thank you, Ms. Frankel.

Mr. Meadows, who is my occasional Member of Congress when I go with my family for a week in North Carolina, and now you are threatening to take that away, you and the Freedom Caucus. Come on.

Mr. MEADOWS. Well, based on past history, I think your August recess is probably safe.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. All right. Look forward to being in North Carolina.

Mr. Meadows.

Mr. MEADOWS. Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank each of you for your testimony.

So let me make sure I have got this right. Ms. House, you are supportive of the \$110 billion arms deal to the Saudis. Is that correct?

Ms. HOUSE. Yes. I mean, I am not an arms expert. But, yes, selling weapons so long as—

Mr. MEADOWS. You and I don't need an interpreter. We use three or four syllables for every word, don't we? Thank you.

All right. Mr. Malinowski, you are opposed to it. Is that correct?

Mr. MALINOWSKI. I am opposed to the PGMs. First of all—

Mr. MEADOWS. And you are opposed to that for what reason?

Mr. MALINOWSKI. I am opposed to it because it is an offensive weapon that is being used right now in ways that we have advised, repeatedly, the Saudis not to use, to strike targets that are exacerbating—

Mr. MEADOWS. So, apparently, for humanitarian purpose—let me make sure I understand this. Because, right now, they have knocked out bridges and so forth in Yemen and that is why you are opposed to them. Is that correct?

Mr. MALINOWSKI. We have given them lists of targets that they should not strike. And they have continued to strike those targets, at least up until the point where I was an Assistant Secretary of State. I think, Congressman—

Mr. MEADOWS. So, if that is the case, would you not agree that the strategic ability of those arms has nothing to do with whether they hit a bridge or not?

Mr. MALINOWSKI. I think that—

Mr. MEADOWS. Because you are making a circular reasoning. You are saying you don't want them to be strategically able to do it, but they are going to do it regardless. So what does that have to do with the arms sales?

Mr. MALINOWSKI. I think it makes the United States complicit in something that we have tried to stop.

Mr. MEADOWS. So it would be better if we sold them nonstrategic arms where they could bomb everything and eventually get the bridge?

Mr. MALINOWSKI. Absolutely not. I think we should sell them defensive arms that are——

Mr. MEADOWS. Because Mr. Feierstein said that it actually helped, from a humanitarian standpoint——

Mr. MALINOWSKI. It does not.

Mr. MEADOWS [continuing]. Make sure that their strategic target actually gets hit the first time instead of the second or third time.

Mr. MALINOWSKI. Well, we don't want it to be hit. That is the point.

Mr. MEADOWS. But my whole point is, it doesn't matter; if they are going to hit it regardless, I mean, whether it is a strategic weapon or not, they are still going to take out the bridge.

Mr. MALINOWSKI. Well, perhaps, we should then sell these weapons to the Russians in Syria, because, after all——

Mr. MEADOWS. All right. Well, let's go there. Because what you are suggesting—let's go there. So you are suggesting that we should stay out of it. Is that correct?

Mr. MALINOWSKI. Absolutely not——

Mr. MEADOWS. We should take a neutral position as it relates to Qatar versus Saudi. I think that was your sworn testimony. Is that correct?

Mr. MALINOWSKI. Qatar versus Saudi, yes. I think we should do what Secretary Tillerson is trying to do, which is to try to resolve this——

Mr. MEADOWS. So they are exactly the same as they relate to their support for terrorism?

Mr. MALINOWSKI. No. They are not exactly the same.

Mr. MEADOWS. So then why should we take a neutral position?

Mr. MALINOWSKI. Because we have an interest—first of all, we have a very strong alliance relationship with both countries.

Mr. MEADOWS. I agree. Actually, I have got to go, because I have got to meet the Qatari Ambassador here in just a couple of seconds. So let me ask you this: How do we send, according to your testimony, a very clear signal on what we should or should not tolerate when we take a neutral position?

Mr. MALINOWSKI. I think we can send a very strong signal to both countries about what we do and do not tolerate, as I think we have been doing.

Mr. MEADOWS. But your whole testimony has said that we need to make sure that we are clear. And when we take a neutral position, that does not clarify our position from a diplomatic standpoint. So how do we take a clear position from a neutral point of view?

Mr. MALINOWSKI. We should not be neutral with respect to behavior by either country that we disprove of, but that does not mean that we necessarily should be supporting a blockade or potentially acts of war by one country against another; that would not be in our interest to support.

Mr. MEADOWS. All right. So how do we send a clear message? What would be the message I should take to the Ambassador here in just a couple of minutes? What should be the message that I take it from a non-neutral point of view? Because I am not neutral in this. You know, I think we have to be very clear that, when

there is an enemy, we expect our allies to support our position. Wouldn't you agree with that?

Mr. MALINOWSKI. I absolutely do. And I think——

Mr. MEADOWS. I thought you would. That was a softball. So what should I tell them?

Mr. MALINOWSKI. I think if you have got a concern, and I assume you do, about Qatari——

Mr. MEADOWS. I am assuming that you don't.

Mr. MALINOWSKI. I do.

Mr. MEADOWS. Okay. So we share a concern.

Mr. MALINOWSKI. I don't approve of anyone who supports Hamas.

Mr. MEADOWS. All right. So, if we are doing that, what should be the message?

Mr. MALINOWSKI. The message should be: Cut it out. Now, that doesn't mean that we support a blockade by Saudi Arabia against a country that is hosting our troops in the middle of a war against ISIS when Saudi Arabia also has some of those problems, which I hope you will raise with the Saudi Ambassador when you meet him.

Mr. MEADOWS. Well, I have. And I will be glad to do that. This is one of the reasons why I am in Congress. So let's look at that. If we are saying, "cut it out," how do we enforce that?

Mr. MALINOWSKI. I——

Mr. MEADOWS. Is it just a phone call and all of a sudden a Member from North Carolina says, "cut it out," and they are going to do that?

Mr. MALINOWSKI. I think it is pretty clear, given the stakes involved in this crisis, that it is extremely important to both Qatar and Saudi Arabia and the UAE and other countries in the region to have the support of the United States. And I think we should be very stingy——

Mr. MEADOWS. So we should threaten that they won't have the support?

Mr. MALINOWSKI. We should be very stingy in offering that support to both Qatar and to Saudi Arabia and focus on being supportive of the efforts of Secretary Tillerson. I have been critical of him on other things. But I think he is doing the right thing here.

Mr. MEADOWS. But how do we distinguish—you know, you are saying be neutral. If one is doing a better job than the other, then we can't be neutral, Mr. Malinowski.

Mr. MALINOWSKI. You have to be a mediator. And that is what this situation calls for. It is a mediation between two sides on the opposite side of a dispute. If you go into that and you say, "I am on their side 100 percent," you can't be a mediator.

Mr. MEADOWS. I don't think anybody sees us in that form.

I yield back, Madam Chair.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. What a great hearing. Thank you, Mr. Meadows.

Mr. Schneider.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Thank you, Madam Chairman.

Again, I want to thank the witnesses for your testimony, for being here, and for your work and the conversation we are having on, clearly, not a simple issue.

Ambassador Feierstein, you say in your testimony that Saudi Arabia—I am going to quote you—are replicating a similar hopeful moment from 8 years earlier and—call it a reset. Where do you see them making a mistake, if you do, in this hopefulness that they sought from 8 years ago?

Ambassador FEIERSTEIN. Well, I think that, 8 years ago, in 2009, the Saudis as well as many of the other states in the region, were very frustrated with the Bush administration, frustrated with the mismanagement of the Iraq invasion and occupation, as well as some of the assertions by either members of the Bush administration or those associated with them concerning a very aggressive policy of regime change, of structural political change in the region that might be imposed through force.

So, when President Obama came into power, there was a sense that he was going to change the approach. He made a very well-received speech at Cairo University in 2009 where he talked about a new kind of relationship between the United States and the region, where he had pledged to withdraw forces from Iraq. And so they saw that as an antidote, if you will, to the things that they disliked about the Bush administration.

As we went along, some of the issues that we have discussed over the course of this hearing began to change their perception of the Obama administration. And so the unhappiness about the way Obama was addressing things—whether we are talking about the Arab Spring, throwing Hosni Mubarak under the bus, if you will, a perception that was widely held in the region, unhappy about what we were doing in Syria, unhappy, as I think Ambassador Westphal outlined, not so much about the JCPOA but about what they saw as the failed commitment of the Obama administration to address these other issues. That was really what the problem was. It was that the Obama administration had basically said: If you support us on the JCPOA, if you go along with this, we will pledge that we will continue to take a very strong position on Iran's other activities, its expansionism, its support for terrorism, its support for a number of other things. And then they believed that the Obama administration didn't do that.

So now we have a new administration in Washington which is promising to basically return or to repair some of the things that they hated about Obama. So we are going back to a very strong defense and security cooperation relationship. We are supporting them on Yemen. We are not going to press them on human rights. Those things make them hopeful.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Just because I have only limited time, I understand—if I can turn to you, Mr. Malinowski, you talk about—in this reset, I suspect that some of the frustration the Saudis had with previous administrations is that we came with expectations, that we came with certain priorities and values that reflected our interests. And you have raised the concern that we are witnessing something different this time, again, from your written testimony, and a policy rebalance that may not necessarily serve our national interests and may leave us with challenges. I was hoping you could expand on that a little bit.

Mr. MALINOWSKI. Well, I was trying to put this in a more global context.

I think how we should engage with Saudi Arabia is a difficult question that we have debated within certain limits for many years. It is a close ally. We have to be engaged with them on a lot of different issues. We have concerns about some of their conduct domestically and internationally. We have to balance these things.

Ambassador Feierstein and I, we had dozens of conversations about this. When we served, we usually agreed. Sometimes we had a different emphasis. That is very normal. What I find very striking about the direction that the Trump administration has gone in is that it seems that the President at least has simply a far greater comfort level dealing with authoritarian, family-run regimes in the Middle East than he does with our closest democratic allies in the world that have fought and bled with us, that share our values, that contribute everything they possibly can to our common security. And I think that contrast is creating questions around the world that—you know, people are wondering, what do we stand for, and who do we stand with, and has that fundamentally changed?

Mr. SCHNEIDER. I agree with you. And I have the concern of, if we don't stand by our principles and values, then people can't look to our Nation and have a clear sense of who we are and what we are trying to achieve domestically and internationally. That sends very dangerous signals to the rest of the world. So I thank you for that.

I know I am out of time. So I appreciate the extended time. I will just add—and for, perhaps, written consideration—that the arms sales you all have talked about before and the threat it poses to our closest ally, most strategic ally in the region, Israel, I think it is imperative for the administration to make very clear that we will ensure and protect Israel's qualitative military edge, not just in the context of selling these weapons to Saudi Arabia, but, God forbid, any of these weapons were to get into the hands of nonstate actors.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Excellent point.

Thank you, Mr. Schneider.

Mr. Cicilline.

Mr. CICILLINE. Thank you, Madam Chairman.

Thank you, again, to our witnesses.

My first question, Ambassador Feierstein, is, what do you think is Saudi Arabia's endgame in Yemen? It doesn't seem as if they have been able to militarily prevail or been successful in bringing about a diplomatic solution. What do you think is the endgame?

Ambassador FEIERSTEIN. Well, I think that is actually the big problem, is that there is no clear endgame. I think that the Saudis, like we, in 2015, thought that we would be able to very quickly restore stability, have the Hadi government go back to power in Sana'a, and continue the political transition there. It hasn't worked out that way.

Like Ambassador Westphal, I believe that the Saudis have been looking for a political way out of this conflict for at least the last year or year-plus. They entered into a dialogue with the Houthis to try to bring the Houthis away from the Iranian relationship and to support the political dialogue. I think we were all very hopeful last summer that there was going to be a political agreement in Kuwait in the negotiations led by the U.N. That failed, and we have been trying to get back to that point ever since.

I still believe that the Saudis would be very interested in and would welcome a political way forward. But what we need to focus on is how we can get back to that U.N. negotiation and hopefully have a different outcome this time.

Mr. CICILLINE. Thank you.

Mr. Malinowski, you looked like you wanted to add something.

Mr. MALINOWSKI. No.

Mr. CICILLINE. So I think we are all familiar with the horrific human rights record of Saudi Arabia: Under sharia law, beheading protesters and condemning young people to death for crimes they committed as children, flogging bloggers for perceived insults.

And, Mr. Malinowski, I would ask you whether you have seen any evidence of any improvement in their human rights record, and what is the impact of the President agreeing to an arms sale without attempting to use that desire from the Saudis as a way to leverage or at least to raise some expectation that they improve their behavior with respect to universal human rights?

Mr. MALINOWSKI. I agree with my colleagues here that there have been some modest signs of potential improvement. I am qualifying that very carefully. You have less of the religious police out on the streets abusing people. There is this potential move on the guardianship system that Ms. House described.

But, fundamentally, these problems do persist. And although I think 95 percent, 98 percent, of the dynamic that may lead to change is going to come from within Saudi Arabia, I do think there is a role for Saudi Arabia's friends in raising these issues and debating them publicly to create, you know, in the minds of those in Saudi Arabia who care about the Kingdom's reputation the sense that they have to keep moving in this direction. And I think it has been efficacious on specific cases. No question about that.

In terms of the arms sale, I have never said that we should hold up arms sales to Saudi Arabia because of their general human rights record. I am a pragmatist about this. But I do think where a specific weapons system is being used in the commission of human rights abuses, then I think we have a different kind of obligation and have to have a different kind of debate.

Mr. CICILLINE. Thank you.

A significant portion of global terrorist funding emanates from Saudi Arabia, and I know that, in the past, the United States' officials have been frustrated at the limited capacity of Saudi authorities to clamp down on those funding streams. And I wonder whether in anyone's judgment the situation has improved over the last few years. Has the United States been supportive of Saudi efforts to rein in terrorist financing? What more can we do? What more can they do? But it appears to remain a serious problem.

Ambassador, looks like you have some thoughts.

Ambassador FEIERSTEIN. Can I just say, I was the number two in our bureau of counterterrorism in 2006 and 2007 when we were very focused at that time on the issue of counterterror finance. We had strong concerns about the records of all of the states in the Gulf about their ability, their willingness to actually intercede effectively and aggressively to try to cut off the flow of financing to some of these violent extremist organizations. I would have to say that, in my own view, while we have not had success in any par-

ticular, you know, complete way, all of them are better today than they were 10 years ago. All of them have taken steps. I do believe, actually, that the President's approach in Riyadh, when he was speaking to the assembled Arab and Islamic leaders, was the right approach, which is the need to build up a broad-based coalition, build a consensus that all of the States need to do a better job, need to take on this issue aggressively. I think that that is the right way to go forward.

Unfortunately, where we are right now is that that effort to build the coalition is being blown apart by this conflict that we have right now with Qatar. And, therefore, I agree absolutely with Assistant Secretary Malinowski and with my other colleagues that what we need to do is help resolve that issue peacefully and get back to that coalition and consensus-building effort that we were engaged in just a few weeks ago.

Mr. CICILLINE. Thank you.

I yield back.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you, Mr. Cicilline.

And now we turn to the Twitter ninja of the House par excellence, my friend, Mr. Lieu, of California.

Mr. LIEU. Thank you, Madam Chairwoman.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. That Twitter game is strong.

Mr. LIEU. Thank you.

I don't think any of us here objects to the United States assisting our ally Saudi Arabia. But what many Members of Congress do object to on a bipartisan and bicameral basis is that the Saudi Arabia-led military coalition has committed multiple war crimes in Yemen, and the U.S. is aiding and abetting in those war crimes. In addition to refueling some of these Saudi jets that strike civilians, we have also sold them weapons that have struck civilians. And this freaked people out so much that the State Department lawyers actually started looking at, can our military personnel and other personnel be liable for war crimes under international law for this assistance?

So my first question to you, Secretary Malinowski, is did the State Department attorneys finish that review or come to a conclusion, do you know, before you left?

Mr. MALINOWSKI. I would say, before I left, they raised these concerns and made them known to policymakers. I don't know whether work has continued on that effort.

Mr. LIEU. The reason that the Obama administration stopped the sale of precision-guided munitions was because the Saudi-led military coalition was using these munitions to target civilians. It is not as if they were trying to hit a tank and they accidentally hit a hospital. They very precisely hit hospitals. They very precisely hit schools. They very precisely hit a wedding party with lots of civilians. They very precisely hit a large funeral twice with munitions. So the problem is we are now enabling the Saudi Arabia coalition to precisely kill civilians. And that is what was such a huge problem.

And now that the Trump administration wants to reverse, Ted Yoho and I, and other bipartisan Members of Congress, wrote a very simple letter to the State Department and Department of Defense basically asking, hey, you just tell us, has the conduct of the



Royal Saudi Air Force changed so that they are no longer precisely hitting civilians with weapons the United States sells them? That letter is dated April 6. So we got a response on April 26 from the Secretary of Defense, response on May 2 from the Secretary of State. They basically were nonresponsive letters.

So, Madam Chairwoman, I would like to enter these letters in the record.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Without objection.

Mr. LIEU. I want to ask the panel, have you seen changes in the operative conduct of their Saudi-led military coalition so that they are not striking civilians anymore? Or do they continue to do the same thing?

Ambassador FEIERSTEIN. Mr. Lieu, you and I had an opportunity to have a conversation about these issues several times when I was still with the State Department. And I have to say that I disagree with the premise of your question. I don't believe that the Saudis did precisely hit civilians or specifically targeted civilians.

Mr. LIEU. That is wrong. In the funeral case, the Saudi Arabian military acknowledged they hit that funeral. They assumed there might be some rebels there, but they intended to strike that funeral. They intended to hit it, and they did.

Ambassador FEIERSTEIN. Mr. Lieu, if you recall exactly what the explanation was, they did acknowledge that they hit the funeral. And I have to say that friends of mine were killed in that funeral home. So I feel very strongly about it.

Mr. LIEU. Right. And they weren't trying to hit a tank. They were trying to hit that funeral, and they did.

Ambassador FEIERSTEIN. But they acknowledged, sir, that they were basing that on the basis of wrong intelligence. They acknowledged that they hit it, but that it was a mistake that was based on poor intelligence that they had received, that that was actually a military—

Mr. LIEU. Right. And the weapons enabled that to happen. Look, if it is one funeral, I get it. Maybe if it is two funerals, I get it. When it is 70-some air strikes documented by multiple organizations, then it is a pattern of either gross incompetence or direct targeting of civilians. So I am just asking, has that conduct changed?

Ambassador FEIERSTEIN. I would have to say, again, that the issue was not that they were targeting. And I think—

Mr. LIEU. In that case, they were targeting their funeral. They were targeting the funeral. Is that correct?

Ambassador FEIERSTEIN. They acknowledge that they hit the funeral based on wrong intelligence.

Mr. LIEU. So they were targeting the funeral, and they hit it.

Ambassador FEIERSTEIN. But they did not realize it was a funeral. They did not target—

Mr. LIEU. They hit a Doctors Without Borders hospital, right?

Ambassador FEIERSTEIN [continuing]. They understood it was a military target.

Mr. LIEU. They hit a Doctors Without Borders hospital. They intended to hit that hospital, correct?

Ambassador FEIERSTEIN. And I think if you go back and look at the bipartisan investigations that have been done on many of those instances—

Mr. LIEU. They weren't bipartisan. They were done by the Saudi Arabian military itself.

Ambassador FEIERSTEIN [continuing]. You would see that, in fact, the situation was not the way it was portrayed in the press.

Mr. LIEU. What was the bipartisan investigation you are talking about?

Ambassador FEIERSTEIN [continuing]. And that there is——

Mr. LIEU. What is the bipartisan investigation you are talking about?

Ambassador FEIERSTEIN. There is a group of people who have undertaken investigations, at the behest of the Saudis, who are not Saudi and who take a look at these things and have come back and issued reports. And those reports are available publicly. And you can see that, in some of these instances, what was considered to be a strike on a Medecins Sans Frontieres hospital or other kinds of targets, that, in fact, there were legitimate military targets that were colocated or very nearby and that they were not targeting these facilities, but, in fact, there was collateral damage from hits on legitimate targets. So this is a very complicated——

Mr. LIEU. All right. So my time is up. So I just want to make sure that you are really saying this. You are saying the strike on a Doctors Without Borders hospital was a legitimate strike?

Ambassador FEIERSTEIN. I think that it was not a strike on a Doctors Without Borders hospital. It was a strike on a——

Mr. LIEU. They pretty much demolished it.

Ambassador FEIERSTEIN [continuing]. Colocated facility.

Mr. LIEU. I yield.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you, Mr. Lieu.

And I think Mr. Deutch wanted to make a statement.

Mr. DEUTCH. I did. I was just hoping, Madam Chairman, you might introduce the newest members of our subcommittee who are here with us today.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. I am so pleased to be joined by two of our eldest granddaughters: Morgan, who will 8 on July 15th, and Caroline, who just turned 5 last week, so she said she is going to be 6.

And, with that, thank you, Mr. Deutch.

With that, our subcommittee will now be adjourned.

Excellent panelists. Excellent questions.

Thank you to the audience.

[Whereupon, at 11:58 p.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

# A P P E N D I X

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MATERIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

**SUBCOMMITTEE HEARING NOTICE  
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS  
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6128**

**Subcommittee on Middle East and North Africa  
Heena Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL), Chairman**

June 6, 2017

**TO: MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

You are respectfully requested to attend an OPEN hearing of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, to be held by the Subcommittee on Middle East and North Africa in Room 2172 of the Rayburn House Office Building (and available live on the Committee website at <http://www.ForeignAffairs.house.gov>):

**DATE:** Tuesday, June 13, 2017

**TIME:** 10:00 a.m.

**SUBJECT:** Challenges and Opportunities for the U.S.-Saudi Relationship

**WITNESSES:** The Honorable Joseph W. Westphal  
Senior Global Fellow  
The Joseph H. Lauder Institute of Management and International Studies  
University of Pennsylvania  
*(Former United States Ambassador to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia)*

The Honorable Gerald M. Feierstein  
Director for Gulf Affairs  
Middle East Institute  
*(Former Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, U.S. Department of State)*

Ms. Karen Elliott House  
Senior Fellow  
Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs  
John F. Kennedy School of Government  
Harvard University

The Honorable Tom Malinowski  
*(Former Assistant Secretary for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, U.S. Department of State)*

**By Direction of the Chairman**

The Committee on Foreign Affairs seeks to make its facilities accessible to persons with disabilities. If you are in need of special accommodations, please call 202-225-5021 at least four business days in advance of the event, whenever practicable. Questions with regard to special accommodations in general (including availability of Committee materials in alternative formats and assistive listening devices) may be directed to the Committee.

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

MINUTES OF SUBCOMMITTEE ON Middle East and North Africa HEARING

Day Tuesday Date 06.13.17 Room 2172

Starting Time 10:04 a.m. Ending Time 11:58 a.m.

Recesses  ( \_\_\_ to \_\_\_ ) ( \_\_\_ to \_\_\_ ) ( \_\_\_ to \_\_\_ ) ( \_\_\_ to \_\_\_ ) ( \_\_\_ to \_\_\_ ) ( \_\_\_ to \_\_\_ )

Presiding Member(s)

*Chairman Ros-Lehtinen*

Check all of the following that apply:

Open Session       Electronicall      y Recorded (taped)   
Executive (closed) Session       Stenographic Record   
Televised

TITLE OF HEARING:

*Challenges and Opportunities for the U.S.-Saudi Relationship*

SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

*GOP- Reps. Steve Chabot, Mark Meadows, Paul Cook, Lee Zeldin, Daniel Donovan, Brian Mast  
Dem- Ranking Member Ted Deutch, Reps. Gerald Connolly, David Cicilline, Lois Frankel, Tulsi Gabbard, Brad Schneider, Thomas Suozzi, Ted Lieu*

NON-SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: (Mark with an \* if they are not members of full committee.)

*Chairman Ed Royce, Rep. Dana Rohrabacher*

HEARING WITNESSES: Same as meeting notice attached? Yes  No   
(If "no", please list below and include title, agency, department, or organization.)

STATEMENTS FOR THE RECORD: (List any statements submitted for the record.)

*Rep. Connolly's Statement  
Letter Submitted by Chairman Ros-Lehtinen  
Letters Submitted by Rep. Ted Lieu*

TIME SCHEDULED TO RECONVENE \_\_\_\_\_

or  
TIME ADJOURNED 11:58 a.m.

*Antoinette Panabes*  
Subcommittee Staff Associate

**Statement for the Record**  
*Submitted by Mr. Connolly of Virginia*

The United States has maintained diplomatic relations with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia since 1940, despite a series of challenges. Security cooperation and U.S. concern for the continued global availability of Saudi energy resources have long underpinned the U.S.-Saudi relationship. Nonetheless, in the past America has criticized the kingdom for its human rights record – suppression of free speech, denial of basic rights for women, and violence against the LGBT community. After King Salman bin Abdul-Aziz Al Saud ascended to the throne in January 2015, I joined a bipartisan group of 67 members of Congress in a letter urging him to advocate for human rights and democratic reforms in his country.

Relations deteriorated somewhat during the Obama Administration, as U.S. and Saudi leaders differed over the appropriate course of action with respect to Iran, Syria, Iraq, and Yemen. Last fall, Saudi officials took particular issue with the passage of the Justice Against Sponsors of Terrorism Act (P.L. 114-222), which narrows the scope of foreign sovereign immunity and exposes the Saudi government to lawsuits in U.S. courts. President Trump has vowed to strengthen relations with Saudi Arabia, and visited Riyadh before any other city on his first foreign trip. However, his Administration has failed to outline a strategy to protect U.S. interests in several regional conflicts where they may diverge with Saudi policies.

The United States has supplied arms sales, training, and service support to Saudi Arabia's armed forces for decades. During the Obama Administration, the United States sold Saudi Arabia \$112 billion in weapons. President Obama also requested a nominal \$10,000 of International Military Education and Training (IMET) assistance annually for Saudi Arabia. As a result of this funding, the Saudis have been eligible for discounted training through the Foreign Military Sales program. President Trump's FY 2018 budget maintains that minor assistance.

In March 2015, Saudi Arabia intervened in the Yemeni civil war to support the government of transitional President Abed Rabbo Mansour al Hadi against Shia Houthi rebels and forces loyal to former President Ali Abdullah Saleh. Following a Saudi airstrike on a funeral hall that killed more than 140 people in October 2016, the Obama Administration initiated a review of security assistance to Saudi Arabia. According to the Guardian, more than a third of the Saudi-led coalition's airstrikes have hit civilian sites and more than 10,000 civilians have perished in the conflict. U.N. officials have warned of a dire humanitarian situation in Yemen, including 17 million people who are food insecure. With major overland routes and airports severely damaged and access constraints to those in urgent need of food assistance, millions of Yemenis are at risk of famine. Despite these desperate circumstances, President Trump has resumed arms sales to Saudi Arabia and proposed cutting U.S. aid to Yemen by 83 percent in his FY 2018 foreign assistance budget.

During his visit to Riyadh in May 2017, President Trump announced the conclusion of an arms deal with the Saudi government worth more than \$110 billion. At a closer glance, however, the vast majority of

the component sales in that “deal” were proposed and either notified to or consulted with Congress under the Obama Administration. No new contracts have been identified that were not already proposed before President Trump came into office. There is also real concern that Saudi Arabia’s budgetary pressures may impede the government’s ability to afford such a deal.

Saudi Arabia has played a leading role in the escalating diplomatic dispute between Qatar and many of its Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) neighbors. Last week, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, and Egypt cut off diplomatic and economic relations with Qatar, citing Doha’s close ties with Iran and support for terrorism. Rather than brokering a deal with our varied GCC partners, President Trump has exacerbated the situation by choosing sides. Trump has stoked regional rivalries and inflamed conflict in an already volatile part of the world. Criticism of Qatar is valid. They should be doing more to combat terrorism. However, uninformed missives that do not take into account the location and well-being of 11,000 U.S. service members are reckless and disturbing.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses regarding how the United States can navigate our policy differences with Riyadh and seize opportunities to promote U.S. interests in our relationship with Saudi Arabia.

MATERIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD BY THE HONORABLE ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN,  
A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF FLORIDA, AND CHAIRMAN,  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

**Congress of the United States**  
Washington, DC 20515

December 9, 2014

The Honorable David S. Cohen  
Under Secretary for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence  
Department of the Treasury  
1500 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20220

Dear Under Secretary Cohen:

We would like to take this opportunity to recognize and commend the efforts of the Department of Treasury to hamper the ability of Hamas – a U.S. designated Foreign Terrorist Organization – to raise and move money, as well as its efforts to sanction entities controlled by Hamas, and designate senior Hamas officials on the Specially Designated Nationals List (SDN). On September 9, 2014, the Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa and the Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade convened a joint subcommittee hearing entitled “Hamas’ Benefactors: A Network of Terror”. While we recognize that Treasury’s designations have taken a toll on the operations of this terrorist organization, we believe that more can be done, and we urge Treasury to take all necessary measures to sanction individuals or entities that are directly or indirectly financing or materially supporting Hamas.

As you know, Hamas traditionally relied on Iran for much of its financial and political support. However, others in the region have stepped up to provide support for Hamas. Qatar’s \$400 million donation for Gaza reconstruction in 2012 bolstered Hamas’ credibility in Gaza and may have directly supported Hamas-backed entities. Qatar also allows Hamas’ top leader, politburo chief Khalid Mishaal, to operate out of its territory knowingly and with impunity. It was even widely reported in the press that Qatar threatened to deport Mishaal if Hamas had accepted an Egypt-backed ceasefire agreement to end this summer’s conflict in Gaza.

We are concerned about the ties between Qatar and Hamas, and we commend you on your speech before the Center for a New American Security, where you stated that, “Qatar, a longtime U.S. ally, has for many years openly financed Hamas,” and that press reports indicate that the Qatari government is also “supporting extremist groups operating in Syria,” further adding to the instability of the region. As you noted in your speech, there are private fundraising networks in Qatar that solicit donations for terrorists. Qatar, in your words, is “a permissive terrorist financing environment.”

We are also concerned about Turkey’s continued support for Hamas. Turkey serves as the headquarters for Saleh al-Aroui, who is believed to head Hamas’ terrorist operations in the West Bank. In August, the media reported that he was behind an allegedly thwarted plot to topple, undermine, or replace the Palestinian Authority government in the West Bank. Also in August, al-Aroui stated that Hamas was behind the kidnapping and murder of three Israeli teens this June.

In addition to Hamas figures that knowingly and openly operate in Turkey, numerous charities, front companies and possibly even banks provide some form of support from Turkey for the terror group. One organization that has been reported to have had direct contact with Hamas is the Humanitarian Relief Foundation (IHH) charity that planned the flotilla incident of 2010. We are aware that Treasury has expressed concerns about IHH’s terrorism connections in the past.



Any entity or nation that continues to back this U.S. designated Foreign Terrorist Organization and provide it material and financial support should be sanctioned. Therefore, as Members of the Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa and the Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade, we are requesting that Treasury use every tool available to designate all individuals, institutions, entities, charities, front companies, banks, and government officials who clearly violate U.S. laws by assisting Hamas and its proxies. We also request specific public updates on Treasury's discussions with the Qatari government on previously designated, Qatar-based terrorist financiers that the Qataris have yet to act upon.

Thank you for your immediate attention in this matter.

Sincerely,

ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa

TED DEUTCH  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa

TED POE  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade

BRAD SHERMAN  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade

STEVE CHABOT  
Member of Congress

JOSEPH P. KENNEDY III  
Member of Congress

RON DESANTIS  
Member of Congress

GRACE MENG  
Member of Congress

RANDY K. WEBER  
Member of Congress


BRIAN HIGGINS  
Member of Congress

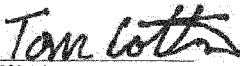
SCOTT PERRY  
Member of Congress

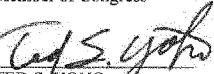
LOIS FRANKEL  
Member of Congress


PAUL COOK  
Member of Congress


ALAN S. LOWENTHAL  
Member of Congress


  
JOE WILSON  
Member of Congress


  
TOM COTTON  
Member of Congress

  
TED S. YOHO  
Member of Congress

  
DOUG COLLINS  
Member of Congress


  
CURT CLAWSON  
Member of Congress

  
MARK MEADOWS  
Member of Congress

  
JUAN VARGAS  
Member of Congress

  
BRADY S. SCHNEIDER  
Member of Congress

  
ALAN GRAYSON  
Member of Congress

  
DAVID N. CICILLINE  
Member of Congress

CC: The Honorable Wendy R. Sherman  
Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20520

MATERIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD BY THE HONORABLE TED LIEU, A  
REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

**Congress of the United States**  
Washington, DC 20515

May 25, 2017

The Honorable Ed Royce  
Chairman  
House Committee on Foreign Affairs  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Royce:

We write to urge the Committee take prompt action to perform its oversight role of the proposed arms sale with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

On May 22, the Committee received three related notifications, pursuant to Section 36 of the Arms Export Control Act, for the sale of precision-guided munitions (PGM) kits to Saudi Arabia. The notifications come following numerous attempts by Members of Congress, including members of this Committee, to obtain information from the Administration related to the Royal Saudi Air Force's (RSAF) ability to properly employ these very weapons systems in the ongoing conflict in Yemen. Without this information, it is impossible for the Committee to perform its oversight role in evaluating whether the proposed sale is consistent with both U.S. values and national security interests. We therefore urge the Committee to call a hearing with the Administration, in a closed session if necessary, to obtain critical information pertinent to this PGM sale prior to the 30-day statutory window closing on June 20.

As you know, the Obama Administration made the decision in December 2016 to halt a planned sale of PGMs due to concerns over widespread civilian casualties in Yemen and significant deficiencies in RSAF's targeting capabilities. This decision was the result of an internal review launched after the United Nations and a number of human rights organizations documented a series of RSAF airstrikes on civilian targets, including hospitals, markets, schools, and a large funeral. In March 2017, the Department of State reversed this policy without providing any justification for what had changed in its assessment.

In response to this reported policy change, 31 Members of Congress, including members of this Committee, wrote on April 6 to Secretary of Defense James Mattis and Secretary of State Rex Tillerson requesting specific information related to the RSAF's capabilities, from the RSAF's record of avoiding U.S.-provided no-strike lists to data on targeting process changes. In their letter responses, neither the Department of Defense nor the Department of State chose to provide the requested information. All three communications are attached to this letter.

It is essential for Congress to seek answers to these basic questions before allowing the sale to move forward.

As we wrote to Secretary Mattis and Secretary Tillerson, "It is in our national security interest – as well as that of our Saudi partners – to ensure that the RSAF has the ability to avoid civilian casualties before the U.S. sells them any additional air-to-ground munitions." The possession of precision-guided weapons should not be conflated with possessing dynamic targeting capabilities; the ability to strike an enemy and avoid civilian casualties requires extensive training, stringent targeting approval processes, and clear rules of engagement. At a bare minimum, our Committee has a responsibility to ensure that those capabilities are in place before allowing this sale to proceed.

Additionally, it is pertinent for our Committee to press the Administration to articulate its strategy for Yemen and explain the role that this proposed arms sale would play. Last month, Secretary Mattis stated, "In Yemen, our goal is to push this conflict into U.N.-brokered negotiations to make sure it is ended as soon as possible." Yet in noticing this sale, the Administration failed to outline how additional PGMs will contribute to their own stated goal.

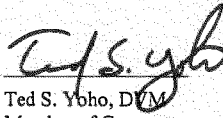
After two years of conflict, Yemen faces one of the most urgent humanitarian crises in the world, with 7 million people facing severe hunger and 18.8 million in need of aid. Reports indicate that Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) has thrived during the war and that Yemeni civilians hold the U.S. responsible for the carnage. It is incumbent on our Committee to exercise its oversight powers to ask tough questions of the Administration and shape U.S. foreign policy.

We stand ready to assist the Committee in pursuing these answers. Thank you for your consideration of this critical matter.

Sincerely,



Ted W. Lieu  
Member of Congress



Ted S. Yoho, D/M  
Member of Congress

CC:

The Honorable Eliot Engel, Ranking Member, House Committee on Foreign Affairs

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

April 6, 2017

The Honorable James Mattis  
 Secretary of Defense  
 1000 Defense Pentagon  
 Washington, DC 20301-1000

The Honorable Rex W. Tillerson  
 Secretary of State  
 U.S. Department of State  
 Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Mattis and Secretary Tillerson,

We write to request information related to the operational conduct of the Royal Saudi Air Force (RSAF) in Yemen.

As you know, the previous Administration made the decision in December 2016 to halt a planned sale of precision-guided munitions (PGM) to Saudi Arabia due to concerns over widespread civilian casualties and significant deficiencies in RSAF's targeting capabilities.<sup>1</sup> This decision was the result of an internal review launched after the United Nations and a number of human rights organizations documented a series of RSAF airstrikes on civilian targets, including hospitals, markets, schools, a wedding and a large funeral. According to recent reports, however, the State Department has now reversed course and removed the suspension on these PGM sales.<sup>2</sup>

In light of this reported policy change, and with the possibility of an arms sale that Congress will have the opportunity to review in the near future, we believe it is necessary to assess the RSAF's current operational conduct. The possession alone of PGMs does not indicate sophisticated targeting capabilities. It is in our national security interest – as well as that of our Saudi partners – to ensure that the RSAF has the ability to avoid civilian casualties before the U.S. sells them any additional air-to-ground munitions.

We therefore request that the Department of Defense report to Congress on the following within 15 days of receipt of this letter.

1. Is the Royal Saudi Air Force abiding by U.S.-provided "no-strike" lists? As part of this assessment, we request details of:
  - a. Any violations of the lists from the delivery of the lists until now.

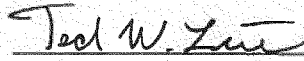
<sup>1</sup>Phil Stewart and Warren Strobel, "U.S. to halt some arms sales to Saudi, citing civilian deaths in Yemen Campaign," *Reuters*, December 13, 2016 <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-saudi-arabia-yemen-exclusive-jdUSKBN1421UK>

<sup>2</sup>Missy Ryan and Anne Gearan, "Trump administration looks to resume Saudi arms sale criticized as endangering civilians in Yemen," *Washington Post*, March 8, 2017 [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/trump-administration-looks-to-resume-saudi-arms-sale-criticized-as-endangering-civilians-in-yemen/2017/03/08/a259090a-040e-11e7-b1e9-a05d3e21f7cf\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.f9a9d6d45b3e](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/trump-administration-looks-to-resume-saudi-arms-sale-criticized-as-endangering-civilians-in-yemen/2017/03/08/a259090a-040e-11e7-b1e9-a05d3e21f7cf_story.html?utm_term=.f9a9d6d45b3e)

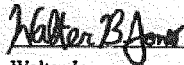
- b. Any Department of Defense actions taken in response to Royal Saudi Air Force violations of the U.S. provided no-strike lists or other confirmed airstrikes on civilian targets.
  - c. Details on the no-strike lists, including the number and types of targets, the dates of delivery of each distinct list to the Saudi Arabia-led Coalition, and the frequency with which the overall list is updated.
2. Please assess the ability of the Royal Saudi Air Force to effectively employ precision-guided munitions in a way that takes full advantage of the weapon's capabilities to ensure the minimum collateral damage.
  3. What progress has the Royal Saudi Air Force made in improving its targeting capabilities from the beginning of the conflict until now? Please provide requisite data to justify the assessment.
  4. What U.S. military personnel are currently working with the Coalition Command, and what are their specific roles?

Thank you for your attention to this important issue.

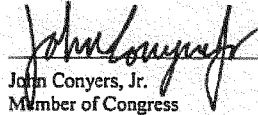
Sincerely,



Ted W. Lieu  
Member of Congress



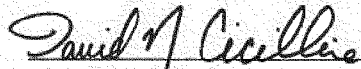
Walter Jones  
Member of Congress



John Conyers, Jr.  
Member of Congress



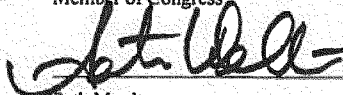
Ted S. Yoho, IV  
Member of Congress



David N. Cicilline  
Member of Congress



Ro Khanna  
Member of Congress



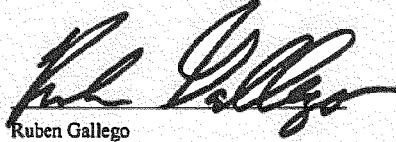
Seth Moulton  
Member of Congress



Adam B. Schiff  
Member of Congress



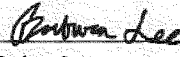
Mark Pocan  
Member of Congress



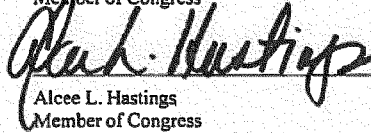
Ruben Gallego  
Member of Congress



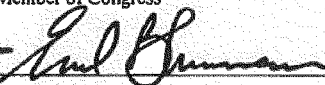
Judy Chu  
Member of Congress



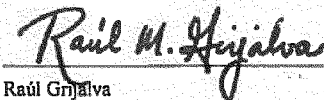
Barbara Lee  
Member of Congress



Alcee L. Hastings  
Member of Congress



Earl Blumenauer  
Member of Congress



Raúl Grijalva  
Member of Congress



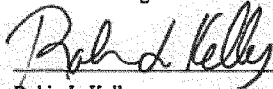
Jared Polis  
Member of Congress



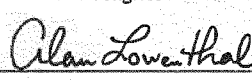
Bobby L. Rush  
Member of Congress



Karen Bass  
Member of Congress



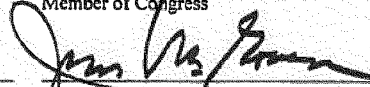
Robin L. Kelly  
Member of Congress



Alan Lowenthal  
Member of Congress



William R. Keating  
Member of Congress



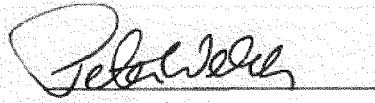

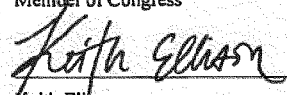

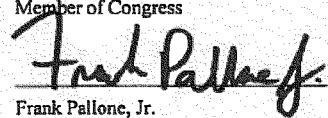
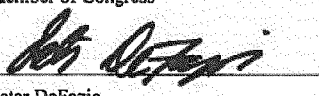
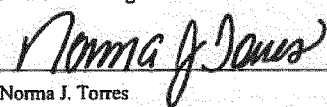
James P. McGovern  
Member of Congress



Eleanor Holmes Norton  
Member of Congress



Pramila Jayapal  
Member of Congress

 Peter Welch Member of Congress	 Rick Nolan Member of Congress
 Keith Ellison Member of Congress	 Jan Schakowsky Member of Congress
 Frank Pallone, Jr. Member of Congress	 Peter DeFazio Member of Congress
 Norma J. Torres Member of Congress	

cc:

Amb. Tina Kaidanow, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, U.S. Department of State

Lt. Gen. H.R. McMaster, National Security Advisor to the President of the United States





OFFICE OF THE UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
2000 DEFENSE PENTAGON  
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-2000

POLICY

APR 26 2017

The Honorable Ted W. Lieu  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Lieu:

Thank you for your letter of April 6, 2017, to Secretary of Defense Mattis and Secretary of State Tillerson regarding civilian casualties caused by the Royal Saudi Air Force's (RSAF) air campaign in Yemen. The Secretary asked that I respond on his behalf.

The Department shares your concern about harm to civilians and damaged civilian infrastructure in Yemen, which have been caused by all sides in the conflict. As for civilian casualties caused by the RSAF's air campaign, we routinely emphasize our concerns privately in our discussions with Saudi officials at all levels, as well as in public statements. We assess that the RSAF is not deliberately targeting civilians, is attempting to comply with the law of armed conflict, and has taken steps to reduce civilian casualties.

U.S. civilian and military experts regularly engage with Saudi military personnel to ensure their awareness of obligations under the law of armed conflict and of civilian casualty mitigation measures. We have ongoing consultations to help Saudi Arabia leverage these mitigation measures to reduce the risk of civilian casualties resulting from their operations. Additionally, we continue our sustained diplomatic engagement to facilitate an end to the conflict through a political solution mediated by the United Nations. Ultimately, this is the best way to end civilian casualties in Yemen.

Regarding the sale of Precision Guided Munitions to Saudi Arabia, the U.S. Government continues to review the level of support provided to the Saudi-led coalition to ensure it remains consistent with U.S. values and foreign policy goals. We will consult with Congress on the release of these and other weapons systems as appropriate.

Thank you again for your letter.

Sincerely,

Theresa Whelan  
Performing the Duties of Under Secretary of  
Defense for Policy





United States Department of State

Washington, D.C. 20520

MAY 02 2017

The Honorable  
Ted W. Lieu  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Lieu:

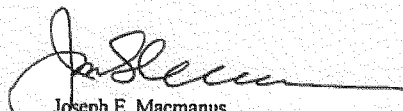
Thank you for your letter of April 6 to Secretary Tillerson and Secretary Mattis regarding the operational conduct of the Royal Saudi Air Force (RSAF) in Yemen.

The U.S. government shares your deep concern with operations that have resulted in civilian casualties and damage to civilian infrastructure in Yemen. Even as the United States supports the Saudi-led coalition's efforts to restore the legitimate government of Yemen and Saudi Arabia's legitimate need to defend its territory from attacks, we continue to underscore the importance of civilian harm mitigation measures in our high-level discussions with Saudi Arabia. U.S. civilian and military experts have consulted with Saudi military personnel to ensure their awareness of obligations under the Law of Armed Conflict (LOAC) and the need to undertake measures to minimize civilian casualties.

Our efforts to reduce the risk of civilian casualties are conducted in parallel with our sustained diplomatic engagement to facilitate an end to the conflict in Yemen through a political solution, mediated by the United Nations. Ultimately, a peaceful resolution to the conflict is the best way to ensure Yemeni civilians are protected.

Consistent with U.S. foreign policy goals and values, the Administration continues to review the appropriate level of support to the Saudi-led coalition, including sales of precision guided munitions. The Administration has not yet taken a decision to notify Congress on that requested purchase.

Sincerely,



Joseph E. Macmanus  
Bureau of Legislative Affairs