

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs
May 17, 2022

Testimony of Rep. Tom Malinowski

Chair Lee, Ranking Member Rogers,

I wanted to come today to first and foremost thank you both for your bipartisan support of an America that is present around the world and *shows up*—an America that *leads* global efforts to care for the most vulnerable, hungry, and persecuted. America's support for Ukraine's brave fighters and vulnerable civilians is just one example of our generosity that is backed by this committee.

I also wanted to thank you and your staff for putting up with the many requests and letters from myself and colleagues—and helping us move the needle on dozens of files. In particular, I know how much work has gone into bicameral negotiations on elevating human rights as a factor in US military aid appropriations for the Middle East. I appreciate your committee's willingness to question the status quo and aid policies like these that have been on autopilot for years. US security interests and priorities are constantly shifting, so it's appropriate that our foreign affairs budget reflect the same rapid evolutions.

I am also here to draw your attention to a letter I lead with 20 colleagues requesting a bump to the budget for the State Department offices overseeing arms transfers. Security aid constitutes one of the most visible and defining elements of US relations with many countries around the world. From Colombia, to Niger, to Egypt, the scale of our military aid in many countries has sometimes generated perceptions that the United States serves as a *guarantor* for regimes and associates us with abuses by their security forces. However, as US arms transfers overseas have boomed, the personnel support infrastructure overseeing these transfers has stagnated. By our calculations, the State Department has to sign off on the human rights risks associated with a weapons export license every five minutes. And that's with only a handful of staff.

So I am urging your committee to consider providing an overdue boost to State Department resourcing that would help to make up the difference between what they have budgeted and what we're asking them to do. Congressional oversight of arm sales is so robust precisely because we know these decisions can have tangible impact on the lives of citizens in recipient countries—from contributing to abuses, to empowering repressive regimes, or to fueling corruption. It is for these reasons that State Department personnel must be properly resourced to execute these programs in line with America's values, responsibilities, and interests.

Thanks for looking at that request and thanks again for working so hard to balance what I know are many competing interests and perspectives on US assistance abroad. Best of luck with this year's bill and I will separately look forward to continuing to engage with your committee on bipartisan efforts to fund the fight against COVID-19 overseas. We can't afford the economic disruptions from future variants coming from abroad so we must come together to find a way to fund distribution and vaccination overseas.