

## Opening Statement – Chairman Ed Royce

*Advancing U.S. Interests in a Troubled World: The FY2016 Foreign Affairs Budget*

February 25, 2015

This hearing will come to order. Today we hear from Secretary of State John Kerry. The Secretary is just off yet another overseas trip, dealing with issues we'll discuss today. Mr. Secretary, your dedication is clear to all.

Secretary Kerry comes to present his Department's budget request. Needless to say, given Washington's chronic budget deficit, wasteful spending is intolerable. Even good programs may be unsupportable at levels we'd want. But we must also appreciate the many serious challenges we as a nation, and the Department in particular, faces worldwide.

These challenges seem to grow by the day. Iran and North Korea are pursuing nuclear weapons; Russia is gobbling up neighboring Ukraine; beheadings, crucifixions and immolation by ISIS; cartoonists and Jewish shoppers targeted and killed on Paris streets. Indeed, some days it feels as if the world is coming off its axis.

Regarding Iran, all of us want to see you get to a meaningful, lasting agreement. But the Committee, as you know, has real concerns with the direction of these talks. I'm hearing less about *dismantlement*, and more about the *permanence* of Iran's nuclear program.

That's particularly disturbing when you consider that international inspectors report that Iran has still not revealed its past bomb work. This should be treated as a fundamental test of Tehran's intention to uphold any agreement. Iran is *failing* this test. Also, it is still illicitly procuring nuclear technology, and was caught testing a new generation of supersonic centrifuges. To be frank, as this Committee reads about us being on the brink of a "historic agreement," you have a challenge in terms of congressional buy-in. Meanwhile, Iran and its proxies are wrecking havoc throughout the region.

In Eastern Europe, Russia's military aggression is matched only by its propaganda. Russia is spending more than \$500 million annually to mislead audiences, sow divisions, and push conspiracy. Yet the agency charged with leading our response, the Broadcasting Board of Governors ("BBG"), is – as your predecessor testified to us - *dysfunctional*. Last Congress, the House passed legislation authored by Ranking Member Engel and me to fix the BBG. We hope to have the Administration's *active* backing as we again push this reform.

And in the Middle East, ISIS is on the march. The Administration was tragically slow to react to ISIS' rise, missing the chance to devastate them with airstrikes. Today, the Kurds are still severely outgunned; our training of the Syrian opposition isn't off the ground; and Arab allies complain they don't have the weapons needed.

And while the Administration is focused on the fight against ISIS in Iraq today, it's still unclear what its plans are for Syria tomorrow. As the Committee considers the President's request for a military authorization against ISIS, members need to hear a better articulation of the Administration's strategy, and see a strong commitment from the Commander-in-Chief.

As terrorism from Islamist terrorist groups spread, the Committee knows that that puts more of our diplomats at risk. In the past half year, the Department has had to evacuate staff from two U.S. Embassies, Libya and Yemen.

On this note, the Committee stands ready to assist the Department on embassy security. We passed a State Department Authorization and Embassy Security bill last Congress and look forward to working with you to get our next bill signed into law. And as the Department works to finalize its second Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review know that we are ready to assist the Department to be more effective and efficient to meet the demands of 21<sup>st</sup> century diplomacy. We have policy differences, but these should never compromise the day-to-day operation of your Department, and certainly not the safety of its personnel.

Mr. Secretary, our nation faces great challenges. Through it all though, we must work together to ensure that America maintains its positive and essential role in the world. That is *our* challenge.

I will now turn to Ranking Member Engel for his statement.