

U.S. POLICY TOWARD A TURBULENT MIDDLE EAST

HEARING BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES ONE HUNDRED FIFTEENTH CONGRESS SECOND SESSION

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U.S. POLICY TOWARD A TURBULENT MIDDLE EAST

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 18, 2018

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
Washington, DC.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10 o'clock a.m., in room 2172 Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Edward Royce (chairman of the committee) presiding.

Chairman ROYCE. This hearing will come to order.

In announcing military strikes against Syria last week, the President made clear the people of the Middle East must shape their own destiny.

He's right. But that doesn't mean that we don't have vital national interests in the region or a reason to promote stability, tolerance, and respect for human rights.

The U.S. and our allies were justified in taking limited military action against Bashar al-Assad. We took that action in response to his barbaric use of chemical weapons.

Hopefully, the Syrian dictator gets the message. If not, I have no doubt there will be more military strikes. The world has enough security challenges without the breakdown of the 100-year norm against the use of chemical weapons.

That said, military force cannot be the only means of responding to these atrocities. We need a strategy to get a political solution, one that moves beyond Assad to secure a lasting peace.

The previous administration did not have one. That's part of the reason why we're confronting this crisis today. The stakes in Syria are high. This chaos goes far beyond its borders, threatening allies and partners.

And I again commend Ranking Member Engel for his steadfast, years-long commitment to addressing this conflict.

There is no excuse for the Senate's failure to act on the Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act. This bill, passed twice unanimously by the House, would make those supporting Assad's killing machine, and its barrel bombs and gas attacks, pay a real cost.

The committee also recently passed the No Assistance for Assad Act, which prohibits the regime and prohibits its allies from profiting from any reconstruction.

Both these bills would give our diplomats real leverage. If the U.S. isn't engaged in the Middle East, Iran will certainly take advantage.

Tehran is already aggressive and capable, as this committee has highlighted. The regime is using its bolstered position from a windfall of cash from the nuclear deal to help Hezbollah amass missiles along Israel's borders.

They are seeking, obviously, to establish a land bridge across Syria to Israel's doorstep and they are moving fighters and weapons across that land bridge to new bases on Israel's borders.

This is shoring up Assad, yes, and it is also threatening our troops that are fighting ISIS. And remember, Iran is also fueling the humanitarian disaster in Yemen with its support for the Houthis. Our closest partner in the region, Israel, is increasingly threatened by Iranian expansion but so are our other U.S. friends and allies in the region.

The Iran nuclear deal has serious flaws so let me speak to this for a moment. This committee has closely examined them. The administration is rightly working to address Iran's ballistic missiles, to strengthen inspections, and to fix the deal's sunset problem.

The British, the French, and the Germans need to stand with us. Meanwhile, the list of the region's other challenges is long. Our relationship with NATO ally Turkey is strained as never before. Its military offensive against the Kurds in Syria, frankly, has benefitted ISIS.

The Kurdish Syrian Democratic Forces we back now have to divert their operations from the offensives they were taking against ISIS to defensive actions, defending themselves from Turkish military attacks.

Turkey's increasing engagement with Russia and Iran is very concerning.

In Libya, radical jihadists remain strong. Neighboring Egypt is a critical partner in the fight against ISIS and should be supported, but its repression of civil society risks backfiring, and Hamas terrorists are inciting violence in Gaza.

As tempting as it is to say enough and retreat to our shores, smart, focused, and a determined engagement in the Middle East must be our approach. We need to talk strategy with the administration today about the Middle East and we appreciate them being here with the committee.

And I will now turn to the ranking member for his comments.

Mr. ENGEL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for calling this hearing. To our witnesses, welcome to the Foreign Affairs Committee and thank you for your service.

Thank you, Mr. Mitchell, for being here today and it's good to see you again. I appreciate the excellent work you're doing.

Ambassador Satterfield, our first work on Syria reaches back about 15 years or so, so I appreciate your service as well.

Still, I wish we had a permanent Assistant Secretary in place. Nearly 15 months into this administration the White House only sent a nomination to the Senate last week.

Syria has been a larger focus of mine. Many years ago—I think it was more than 15—Ileana Ros-Lehtinen and I introduced the Syria Accountability Act, which was passed into law with bipartisan support.

So we have a huge number of concerns about the Middle East. But today I am going to focus on Syria.

It's a shame that it takes a chemical weapons attack to grab the world's attention when it comes to Syria. After all, the vast majority of Assad's ½ million victims didn't meet their ends in a chemical attack. It often wasn't sarin or chlorine that drove millions more from their homes.

For those who have lost love ones in these 7 years of brutal slaughter, the pain and the grief are no different whether they died in a chemical attack or in a hospital that was leveled to the ground or in a crowded street when a barrel bomb detonated.

Assad's a murderer, a butcher. His brutality is sickening and it goes on every day. Yet, I want to be clear. Assad's most recent use of chemical weapons is an abhorrent crime that demanded immediate consequences.

Late last week, the United States, the United Kingdom, and France acted together to dole out these consequences. The use of the weapons cannot stand and whoever would use them and whoever would support those who do cannot go unpunished.

But I want to be equally clear. If the administration plans ongoing military action, Congress must first authorize it or prevent it. Even under the most generous interpretation of the War Powers Resolution, the 60-day clock started ticking when the President notified Congress of the attack.

Now, if anyone hear feels a sense of *deja vu*, you're not alone. A year ago, we were debating the same issue. Assad uses chemical weapons, the United States fires off some missiles, but the killing still continues.

Why is history repeating itself? Mainly because the administration seems to have no strategy for dealing with the crisis in Syria. That's why regardless of what happens next we need to hear from the administration.

Even if the President intends for last week's air strike to be another one-off response, the White House is still past due in laying out its strategy for Syria to Congress and the American people.

As part of last year's defense authorization bill, we require the White House to come to us with a strategy by February 1st. That deadline has come and gone. I hope you'll tell us today if the strategy will be sent to Capitol Hill without any more delay.

The incoherence is plain to see. Over the last year, the President has publicly disagreed with his top advisors about our path forward in Syria and is off-the-cuff remarks about leaving Syria and reckless rhetoric have at times emboldened Assad.

Just prior to last year's chemical weapons attack, the President said we would have to accept Assad as a fact of life, and shortly before the most recent attack the President suggested a precipitous withdrawal from Syria.

Rather than forming the policy that would help to resolve this crisis, I feel that the President has only made it worse. I am not holding my breath, but I continue to hope that the administration will bring us a plan that will push for an end to violence that will ease a political transition and that will help lay the groundwork for a future for Syria in which Bashar-al Assad has no role whatsoever.

This is certainly no easy task and I'd be the first one to acknowledge that the previous administration should have done more.

But there are still plenty of good ideas to help craft a policy like this. In fact, as the chairman mentioned, I've introduced two bills that I think would move us toward those goals.

The Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act passed the House unanimously last year. It started with bipartisan good work, as usual, from this committee.

This bill would crack down on Assad's enablers, namely Moscow and Tehran, who serve as lifelines to the barbaric regime.

I have to say after the President personally overrode his own administration's plan to sanction Russia for its support of Assad, I think this bill is needed now more than ever.

I hope the Senate will act on it soon. The other bill, as the chairman mentioned, is my No Assistance for Assad Act, which I introduced with Mr. Kinzinger and which this committee voted to advance a few weeks ago.

This bill would restrict reconstruction funding for any area still controlled by Assad. One bill would help end the violence now. The other would make sure that when this crisis has ended no American tax dollars are going to help Assad cling to power.

We cannot overstate the scope of the tragedy in Syria. Assad has the blood of hundreds of thousands of innocent Syrian men, women, and children on his hands.

That this catastrophe has been allowed to go on for so long is a global failure that will leave a black mark on this era of human history. But we cannot throw up our hands in resignation.

If America is to remain a leader on the global stage, we must continue working to end the bloodshed.

I again thank our witnesses. I thank the chairman. I look forward to hearing how the administration intends to tackle this problem and the range of other challenges with which we are challenging in the Middle East.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

Chairman ROYCE. Thank you, Mr. Engel.

So this morning we are pleased to welcome David Satterfield. He's Acting Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs, and Wess Mitchell is Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs.

Mr. Satterfield served in many senior positions within the department including as U.S. Ambassador to Lebanon, as Chief of Mission in Cairo, and Deputy Chief of Mission in Iraq.

Dr. Mitchell, prior to his current position at the State Department, was the co-founder and president and CEO of the Center for European Policy Analysis and we appreciate them being here with us today.

Without objection, gentlemen, your full prepared statements will be made part of the record. Members here will have 5 calendar days to submit any statements or questions to you or any extraneous material for the record.

So if you would, Mr. Satterfield, please summarize your remarks and after the 5 minutes we will go to Mr. Mitchell and then to the questions.

**STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE DAVID M. SATTERFIELD,
ACTING ASSISTANT SECRETARY, BUREAU OF NEAR EAST-
ERN AFFAIRS, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE**

Mr. SATTERFIELD. Thank you very much, Chairman Royce, Ranking Member Engel, members of the committee. I appreciate the opportunity for me, my colleague, Assistant Secretary Mitchell, to testify.

From the Arab Spring in 2011 to the current civil wars in Syria and Yemen, the rise and fall of ISIS' so-called caliphate, no one would argue the many significant challenges the United States and our allies face in the region.

However, I want to say at the beginning in many places the U.S. has made positive strides. We are supporting the growth of a nascent democracy in Tunisia.

Economically, the region continues to support and we aggressively pursue American opportunities for business that generate American jobs.

We have supported billions of dollars of sales to our partners in the Gulf, power generation solutions in Libya, Algeria, and Iraq, major sales of locomotives and other power sources in Egypt, and we have made significant dramatic progress against ISIS.

However, this said, we are not blind to the continuing issues in the region and the U.S. is taking all possible steps to find solutions to this region's enduring challenges.

On April 7th, after weeks of heavy Syrian and Russian bombardment on the people of Douma and adjacent areas, the regime deployed chemical weapons, killing dozens and injuring hundreds of innocent men, women, and children.

On April 13th, the militaries of the United States, France, and the United Kingdom executed strikes on three chemical weapons facilities in Syria.

Russia has failed to live up to its guarantee in regards to the 2013 framework agreement that Syria would cease all use of chemical weapons and fully declare its entire stockpile for verifiable destruction, and Iran acts malignly in Syria and through Syria, pouring resources and forces to support Assad and advance its regional ambitions including in Lebanon.

The targeted military action by the U.S., France, and the U.K. was a measure to deter and prevent Syria's illegal and unacceptable use of chemical weapons.

This sends, we hope, a positive and powerful message to the Syrian regime, Russia, Iran, and the international community that chemical weapons will not be tolerated and there will be real consequences for their use.

While preventing the use of chemical weapons in Syria is our immediate concern, the administration's priority remains the defeat of ISIS. ISIS has lost nearly all of the territory it once controlled in Iraq in Syria. But the fight in Syria still has to be pursued to its conclusion.

More broadly, the United States supports a unified and territorially whole Syria. This objective is served by U.S. support for the U.N.-led Geneva political process established by U.N. Security Council Resolution 2254 in which process the U.S. believes strongly

that representatives of all Syrians including all its Kurdish components should fully participate.

Our strategic partnership with Iraq including the Kurdistan region remains essential to ensuring the goal of a lasting defeat of ISIS and encountering Iran's malign influence in the region.

The Iraqi Government is stabilizing communities including minority communities that suffered greatly from ISIS and now we are beginning private sector-led investment-driven reconstruction.

On May 12th, all Iraqis, including Iraqi Kurds, will participate in parliamentary elections, the country's fourth since 2005.

Iran's malign influence in the region continues to threaten our allies such as Jordan and Israel, and feeds violent conflicts in Syria and Yemen through Iran Revolutionary Guard Corps facilitation and work.

The Houthis have repeatedly used in Yemen Iranian ballistic missile and cruise missile technology to threaten Saudi Arabia, including over 80,000 U.S. citizens in that country.

U.S. military support for the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen serves a clear purpose—to reinforce Saudi and Emirati action on behalf of the Yemeni Government in the face of intensified Houthi threats and to expand the capability of our Gulf partners to push back themselves against Iran's destabilizing actions.

We all agree, as does the Congress, that the humanitarian crisis in Yemen is unacceptable. Last month, the Governments of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates provided \$1 billion to Yemen's humanitarian response appeal, and this complements the U.S. Government pledge of \$87 million and more than \$854 million contributed since beginning of fiscal year 2017.

The Iranian regime is taking advantage, as I said, of regional conflict and instability to expand its influence and threaten its neighbors. We remain focused on neutralizing Iran's influence, particularly its support for terror and militance, cyber warfare, ballistic missiles, and use of proxy forces.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, members of the committee, the Middle East is a complex landscape and the people in the Middle East deserve an end to violence, hunger, and uncertainty.

We are working with our allies inside and outside the region to find solutions.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify and I welcome the opportunity to respond to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Satterfield follows:]

Testimony

Before the House Foreign Affairs Committee

U.S. Policy Toward a Turbulent Middle East

Statement of

David. M. Satterfield

Acting Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern Affairs

April 18, 2018

Chairman Royce, Ranking Member Engel, distinguished Members of the Committee, thank you for inviting me and my colleague, Assistant Secretary Wess Mitchell, to testify. As you know, the Middle East is a critical region and in recent years we have witnessed many changes. From the Arab Spring in 2011, to the current civil wars in Syria and Yemen, the rise and fall of ISIS's so-called "Caliphate," no one would argue the many challenges we face in the region. However, in many places the United States has made positive strides. We have supported the growth of a nascent democracy in Tunisia.

As I mentioned, there are challenges in the region and there are critical underlying needs. We are pressing for effective and democratic governance, vibrant civil societies, respect for the rule of law, protection of religious minorities and human rights. All of these issues form the foundation for long-term peace, stability, and prosperity in this region, which will play a critical role in advancing U.S. national security interests.

Economically, the region continues to be a major destination for key U.S. exports, supporting American jobs. For example, we have supported arrangements for billions of dollars of sales to our partners in the Gulf; power generation solutions in Libya, Algeria, and Iraq; and locomotives in Egypt. And, as this Committee is well-aware, we have made significant progress against ISIS since 2014, when they first emerged, sweeping across Iraq and Syria, inflicting suffering on millions of civilians in the region and beyond. Now, they are barely holding on to only two percent of the territory once under their control.

However, we are not blind to the continuing issues in the region, and the United States is taking the necessary steps, politically, militarily and economically to find solutions, along with our allies, to the region's greatest challenges.

On April 7, after weeks of heavy Syrian regime bombardment on the people of Douma, the last opposition-held enclave in East Ghouta, the regime deployed chemical weapons, killing dozens and injuring hundreds of innocent men, women and children. Unsurprisingly, the Russian and Syrian disinformation campaign began, blaming the opposition, smearing the names of heroic first responders and doctors such as the White Helmets and the Syrian American Medical Society, and even going further by claiming no chemical attack happened.

On April 13, the militaries of the United States, France, and the United Kingdom executed strikes on three chemical weapons facilities involved in the research, production, and storage of chemical weapons in Syria. These strikes were focused on crippling Syria's chemical weapons capabilities and deterring the further use of chemical weapons, consistent with U.S. policy on Syria, and were taken after considerable deliberation and international consultations and coordination.

The United States has tried repeatedly to use diplomatic, economic, and political tools to stop the Assad regime's use of chemical weapons as Assad's supporters turn a blind eye. Russia has failed to live up to its guarantee in regard to the 2013 Framework Agreement that Syria would cease all use of chemical weapons and fully declare its entire stockpile for verifiable destruction. And, Iran acts malignly in Syria - pouring resources and militias to support Assad and advance its regional ambitions. Against this backdrop, the targeted military action by the United States, France, and the United Kingdom against military targets connected to the Syrian chemical weapons program was justified and legitimate as a measure to deter and prevent Syria's illegal and unacceptable use of chemical weapons. This targeted military action sends a powerful message to the Syrian regime, Russia, Iran, and

international community that chemical weapons will never be tolerated and there will be consequences for their use.

While preventing the use of chemical weapons in Syria is our immediate concern, the Administration's priority remains the defeat of ISIS. ISIS's so-called "Caliphate" is crumbling. It has lost nearly all – approximately 98 percent – of the territory, it once controlled in Iraq and Syria. Coalition-backed military operations have liberated over 107,000 square kilometers of territory and millions of people from ISIS's oppressive rule in Iraq and Syria. However, we recognize current challenges, such as in Manbij, Syria, where U.S. forces are located. We have made it very clear to the Turkish government that we will continue to operate there and are working hard with our NATO ally to find a roadmap to a resolution.

Our strategic partnership with Iraq, including the Kurdistan Region, remains essential to ensuring the lasting defeat of ISIS and to countering Iran's malign influence in the region. The Iraqi government is stabilizing communities, including minority communities that suffered greatly from ISIS, and now are beginning private sector-led, investment-driven reconstruction. Divisions in Iraq remain, but are healing. With our encouragement, strong leadership and guidance, after only six months, following the unconstitutional referendum that caused tensions between the Iraqi Government and Kurdistan Regional Government, the two Governments have re-opened airports and resumed salary payments. Sorting out disputed boundaries and revenue sharing will take longer, but the parties are on the right path and the United States will remain engaged. All Iraqis, including the Iraqi Kurds, will participate in parliamentary elections on May 12, the country's fourth since 2005.

Iran's malign influence in the region continues to threaten our allies like Jordan and Israel and exacerbates violent conflicts in Syria and Yemen with IRGC facilitation. The Houthis have repeatedly used Iranian ballistic missile and cruise missile technology and, as we saw as recently as April 11, have launched missiles toward Riyadh's international airport, Aramco facilities, and in the Red Sea shipping lanes. Moreover, the Houthis launch rockets along and into Saudi Arabia's southern border, threatening its population on an almost daily basis; this includes over 80,000 Saudi-based U.S. citizens. In this context, U.S. military support serves a clear purpose: to reinforce Saudi and Emirati action on behalf of the Yemeni government in the face of intensifying Houthi threats and to expand the capability of our Gulf partners to push back against Iran's regionally destabilizing actions.

Long-term stability in Yemen depends on a sustainable political settlement. The new UN Envoy briefed the UN Security Council yesterday on his approach to reviving talks between the parties and we are fully supporting his efforts to end the civil war. This conflict is into a fourth year. We are urging the Saudis and Emiratis to work closely with the UN Envoy as he advances negotiations and a cessation of hostilities.

We all agree the humanitarian crisis in Yemen is unacceptable, and last month, the Governments of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates provided \$1 billion to Yemen's humanitarian response. This complements the U.S. government pledge of \$87 million, more than \$854 million since the beginning of fiscal year 2017, and an additional \$1 billion in contributions from other donors. We also worked with the World Food Program (WFP), the Saudi-led Coalition's Evacuation and Humanitarian Operations Cell, authorities in Dubai, and others to facilitate

delivery of the four U.S.-funded WFP mobile cranes, which arrived in Hudaydah port on January 15. Beyond humanitarian assistance, our economic and development assistance is helping to restore critical health services and access to education, repair community infrastructure, and provide help for the revival of production and commercial activities, the collapse of which is a major factor contributing to the wide-scale humanitarian disaster.

The Iranian regime has taken advantage of regional conflicts and instability to aggressively expand its influence and threaten its neighbors. Supreme Leader Khamenei's primary tool and weapon in remaking Iran into a rogue state has been the IRGC. The IRGC has armed and guided Bashar al Assad, who has butchered his own people in Syria, and has cynically condoned his use of chemical weapons. Their presence in Syria has perpetuated the bloodshed, increased the displacement of innocent people, and propped up the barbaric Assad regime. It's this attitude of reckless hostility and disregard for the laws and norms that underpin the international order that makes Iran so dangerous. Our partners in the international community agree with us that Iran's reckless behavior threatens international peace and security. They agree that Iran is fanning sectarianism and perpetuating regional conflict. They agree that Iran is engaged in corrupt economic practices that exploit the Iranian people and suppress both internal dissent, human rights and Iran's economic prosperity. For all these reasons, we want to work with our partners to constrain this dangerous organization, for the benefit of international peace and security, regional stability, and the Iranian people.

The Administration remains focused on neutralizing Iran's threatening influence, particularly its support for terrorism and militants, cyberwarfare, ballistic missiles, and use of proxy forces in Syria, Iraq, and Yemen. Moreover, Iran's support for

the terrorist group Hizbollah allows it to further destabilize the region and threatens the stability and security of Lebanon.

Chairman Royce, Ranking Member Engel, and Members of the Committee, the Middle East is a complicated landscape, and the people of the Middle East deserve an end to violence, hunger, and uncertainty and we are working with allies inside and outside the region to find the solutions. Thank you for the opportunity to testify, I welcome the opportunity answer your questions.

Chairman ROYCE. Thank you, Ambassador Satterfield.
Dr. Mitchell.

STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE A. WESS MITCHELL, ASSISTANT SECRETARY, BUREAU OF EUROPEAN AND EURASIAN AFFAIRS, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Mr. MITCHELL. Chairman Royce, Ranking Member Engel, distinguished members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you. It's an honor to represent the State Department's Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs in this hearing.

In my comments today, I will focus on the strategic dimension of the conflict in Syria as it relates to the work of our bureau and, specifically, to the part played by the Republic of Turkey and the Russian Federation.

America's goals in Syria have been to defeat ISIS, to see a Syria that is unified and stable emerge from the rubble of this conflict, and to prevent Iran, a power that aids and abets Hezbollah and that seeks the destruction of the state of Israel, from extending its malign influence in the region.

Let us assess Turkey and Russia as they relate to these goals. Turkey is a 66-year member of the NATO Alliance and member of the Defeat ISIS Coalition.

It has suffered more casualties from terrorism than any other ally and hosts 3.5 million Syrian refugees. It supports the coalition through the use of Incirlik Air Base, through its commitment of Turkish military forces against ISIS on the ground in Dabiq and Al-Bab, and through close intelligence cooperation with the United States and other allies.

Turkey is publicly committed to a political resolution in Syria that accords with U.N. Security Council Resolution 2254.

Turkey has a vested strategic interest in checking the spread of Iranian influence and in having a safe and stable border with Syria. Despite these shared interests, Turkey lately has increased its engagement with Russia and Iran.

Ankara has sought to assure us that it sees this cooperation as a necessary stepping stone toward progress in the Geneva process.

But the ease with which Turkey brokered arrangements with the Russian military to facilitate the launch of its Operation Olive Branch in Afrin district, arrangements to which America was not privy, is gravely concerning.

Ankara claims to have agreed to purchase a Russian S-400 missile system, which could potentially lead to sanctions under Section 231 of CAATSA and adversely impact Turkey's participation in the F-35 program.

It is in the American national interest to see Turkey remain strategically and politically aligned with the West. Our policy has been to combine close engagement with clear messaging that the United States will actively defend our interests.

In the context of Syria, we have engaged in high-level inter-agency discussions both to address legitimate Turkish security concerns and to avoid inadvertent collisions between our forces.

These conversations are ongoing. Moving forward, our aim is to enlist Turkey as a more active ally in supporting the Geneva process, the defeat of ISIS, and stabilization in Syria, as well as a long-

term factor in thwarting expansion by Russia and Iran, as outlined in the national security strategy and national defense strategy.

Let us now turn to Russia. It is hard to see how Russia shares any of America's strategic goals in Syria. Moscow professes a wish to defeat ISIS but directs its bombs at fighters and even civilians who oppose the regime, with little regard to ISIS.

It professes to want a stable Syria but subverts the Geneva process with separate tracks like the Astana process where it dictates the agenda, and Moscow facilitates the spread of Iranian influence in Syria and elsewhere in the region.

Moscow's primary aims in Syria are not really about the Syrian people or the stability of the region. Moscow wants to retain its presence in Syria as an entry point through which to influence future events in the Levant and Eastern Mediterranean.

It wants to inflict a globally visible defeat on the United States to create a negative demonstration effect of thwarting our aims here to dishearten our friends abroad and to drive wedges between us and our allies.

Moscow is willing to impose catastrophic human costs to achieve these goals. Russia has supported the Assad regime's indiscriminate attacks and siege tactics on civilian neighborhoods, which have killed, wounded, and starved thousands of innocent civilians.

As we have seen in Aleppo and east Ghouta, the Russian Government not only supports, but goes to great lengths to protect, an Assad regime that uses weaponized chemicals, horrid killers like sarin and chlorine, to slaughter men, women, and children, even toddlers and infants. Let us remember that.

We are pushing Russia to be a constructive participant in the U.N.-led Geneva process and to bring Assad to the negotiating table.

So far, Russia has ignored these calls and has instead chosen to be a spoiler to Geneva. Its reckless intervention in Syria and support for the Assad regime has raised the risk of confrontation with the West.

The failed attack on U.S. forces by Russian mercenaries recently in Syria was one sobering example of this behavior. America has done its part to avoid escalatory spirals.

We have brokered and maintained deconfliction channels to prevent collisions in an increasingly congested and complex battle space. Communication between the coalition and the Russians helps minimize the risk of miscalculation, misunderstanding, or accidental engagement.

We do not seek a confrontation, but our forces will not hesitate to use necessary and proportionate force to defend themselves as they are engaged in operations to defeat ISIS.

Moscow's support for the Syrian regime is intolerable for America and all civilized nations. In the days and weeks ahead, the United States and our allies will degrade and defeat ISIS, support a stable Syria, and limit the spread of Iranian malign influence.

We will work with NATO ally, Turkey, to more fully advance these endeavors and push the Russian Government to desist in supporting a hateful regime that kills civilians and bring a speedy political resolution to this horrible conflict.

Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Mitchell follows:]

**Testimony for Assistant Secretary Wess Mitchell
House Foreign Affairs Committee
Hearing on “U.S. Policy Toward a Turbulent Middle East”
April 18, 2018**

Chairman Royce, Ranking Member Engel, distinguished members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you. It is an honor to represent the State Department’s Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs in this hearing. In my comments today, I will focus on the strategic dimension of the conflict in Syria as it relates to the work of our Bureau, and specifically, to the part played by the Republic of Turkey and the Russian Federation.

America’s goals in Syria have been: to defeat ISIS; to see a Syria that is unified and stable emerge from the conflict; and above all to prevent Iran, that aids and abets Hezbollah and that seeks the destruction of the state of Israel, from extending its malign influence in the region.

Let us assess Turkey and Russia as they relate to these goals.

Turkey is a 66-year member of the NATO Alliance and member of the Defeat-ISIS Coalition. It has suffered more casualties from terrorism in the past several years than any other Ally and graciously hosts 3.5 million Syrian refugees. It performs a crucial role in support of the Coalition through use of Incirlik Air Base and other military facilities, through its commitment of Turkish military forces in 2016 to take the fight to ISIS on the ground in Dabiq and Al-Bab, and through close intelligence cooperation with the United States and other allies. Turkey is publicly committed to a political resolution in Syria that accords with UN Security Council Resolution 2254. Turkey holds influence with key Syrian opposition groups, has invested in stabilization efforts in areas under its control, and can promote cross-border economic linkages that will be critical to any sustainable solution for liberated territory in northern territory. Turkey has a vested strategic interest in checking the spread of Russian and especially Iranian influence and in having a safe and stable border with Syria.

Despite these shared interests, Turkey lately has increased its engagement with Russia and Iran. Ankara has sought to assure us that it sees this cooperation as a necessary stepping-stone towards progress in the Geneva process and as a means of de-escalating the conflict. But the ease with which Turkey brokered arrangements with the Russian military to facilitate the launch of its Operation Olive Branch in Afrin District – arrangements to which America was not privy – is

gravely concerning. Ankara should be mindful of the risks in making strategic concessions to Moscow in order to achieve its tactical objectives in Syria. Ankara claims to have agreed to purchase the Russian S-400 missile system, which could potentially lead to sanctions under section 231 of CAATSA and adversely impact Turkey's participation in the F-35 program.

It is in the American national interest to see Turkey remain strategically and politically aligned with the West, and we believe it is also in Turkey's interests. Our policy has been to combine close engagement with clear messaging that the United States will actively defend its interests. In the context of Syria, we have engaged in high-level interagency discussions, both to address legitimate Turkish security concerns and to avoid inadvertent collisions between our forces.

These conversations are ongoing. Moving forward, our aim is to enlist Turkey as a more active ally in supporting the Geneva process, the defeat of ISIS and lasting stabilization in Syria, as well as a long-term factor in thwarting expansion by Russia and Iran, as outlined in the National Security and National Defense Strategies.

Let us turn to Russia.

It is hard to see how Russia shares any of America's strategic goals in Syria. Moscow professes a wish to defeat ISIS but directs its bombs at fighters and even civilians who oppose the regime. It professes to want a stable Syria but subverts the Geneva process with separate tracks like the Astana process, where it dictates the agenda. And it actively facilitates the spread of Iranian influence in Syria and elsewhere in the region.

Moscow's primary aims in Syria are not really about the Syrian people or the stability of the region. Moscow wants to retain its presence in Syria as an entry point through which to influence future events in the Levant and Eastern Mediterranean. It also wants to inflict a globally visible defeat on the United States: to create a negative "demonstration effect" of thwarting our aims here to dishearten our friends abroad and to drive wedges between us and our allies.

Moscow is willing to accept and impose catastrophic human costs to achieve these goals. Russia has supported the Assad regime's indiscriminate attacks and siege tactics on civilian neighborhoods, which have killed, wounded, and starved thousands of innocent civilians. As we have seen in Aleppo and now in east Ghouta, the Russian government not only supports, but goes great lengths to protect an Assad regime that uses *weaponized chemicals* – horrid killers like sarin

and chlorine – to slaughter innocent men, women and children, including even toddlers and infants. Let us remember that.

It has been clear for years now that the only viable path to a safe and secure Syria is through a political transition. This solution can only be achieved through a UN-led Geneva process to fully implement UNSCR 2254. We are pushing Russia to be a constructive participant in this process and to bring Assad to the negotiating table. So far, Russia has ignored these calls and instead been a spoiler to Geneva. Worse, its reckless intervention in Syria and support for the Assad regime has raised the risk of confrontation with the West. The failed attack on U.S. forces by Russian mercenaries recently in Syria was one sobering example of this behavior; Moscow's aggressive rhetoric in the period leading up to and after the recent U.S.-led strikes is another.

America has done its part to avoid these escalatory spirals. We have brokered and maintain de-confliction channels to avoid collisions in an increasingly congested and complex battlespace. Communication between the Coalition and the Russians ensures the safety of our collective aircrews and assets. These efforts help minimize the risk of miscalculation, misunderstanding, or accidental engagement.

We do not seek a confrontation. But our forces will not hesitate to use necessary and proportionate force to defend themselves as they are engaged in operations to defeat ISIS and degrade al-Qa'ida.

Moscow's support for the Syrian regime is intolerable for America and all civilized nations.

In the days and weeks ahead, the United States and our allies will degrade and defeat ISIS, support a stable Syria, and limit the spread of Iranian malign influence. We will work with NATO Ally Turkey to cooperate with us more fully in these endeavors – and push the Russian government to desist in supporting a hateful regime that kills innocent civilians, and to bring a speedy, political resolution to this horrible conflict.

Thank you and I look forward to your questions.

Chairman ROYCE. Thank you, Dr. Mitchell.

You know, our delegations have met in many of the capitals across the Middle East with government that raised this same concern about the crescent that Iran is pushing now through Syria, through Iraq, up to Lebanon.

And this question we get a lot—is this going to allow Iran to threaten Jordan, to threaten Israel? Will it mean the end of an independent Lebanon? What will it mean to the other partners, allies in the region? What's the strategy?

What's the strategy, especially in Syria? And also in Iraq, I guess, but what is to be done to prevent the consolidation of that land bridge, as I said in my opening statement, from which we see the transfer now of these heavy weapons, of these missiles, of fighters coming right up to the Israeli border, right up, Lebanon now is called into question in terms of their ability to be an independent state.

So I want to ask you about that strategy, and given that Hezbollah is Iran's primary terrorist proxy, why have we not seen more designations of Hezbollah front companies, particularly in the construction sector, which I think would set them back?

Ambassador.

Mr. SATTERFIELD. Mr. Chairman, we certainly agree that Iran today is a real and imminent threat to our allies in the region, including Israel and Jordan.

With respect to the strategy to deal with that threat, the first priority for the administration was the elimination of the challenge posed to all the states in the region and to any effort to constrain Iranian expansion and aggression posed by ISIS and its so-called caliphate.

Now, that goal in Iraq has been accomplished and the campaign there is focused on what we might call counterterrorism efforts rather than an outright military campaign.

In Syria, as I noted in my opening remarks, the challenge does remain. While ISIS' caliphate has been dramatically reduced in terms of geographic scope and numbers, there is a remnant element up against the Iraqi border in the eastern Euphrates Valley that still has to be confronted and destroyed as we are confident it can and will be.

But the challenge posed by Iran, the challenges posed by the connection that you note, from Iran, Iraq, Syria, to Lebanon has to be dealt with.

We have been working assiduously in strengthening Iraqi forces in their ability to control the border with Syria. We have been working as well in northeast Syria where our forces are present in ensuring that trade of illicit nature across that border is constrained.

But there needs to be continued approach by all of the countries in the region with the United States to what is a common threat not just to the U.S. and our interests, not just to Jordan and Israel alone, but to the Gulf as well by Iran's hegemonistic ambitions and proliferation and we are working on mobilizing.

Chairman ROYCE. Well, it seems to me—if I could just return to the dialogue that I think we all need to have on this—there has to be a strategy with respect to Syria about how we are going to

deploy additional sanctions, diplomacy in terms of an effort to get a political solution, how we are going to perhaps put in safe zones and then expand those zones to protect those on the ground who are allies right now fighting ISIS that, obviously, will be targets of Assad.

There needs to be a comprehensive strategy here laid out by the administration for Congress in terms of the options to pursue because of the urgency and also because of the fact that some of the initiatives we've taken here.

We need Engel's Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act, as I said, which has unanimous support in the House. It would impose real costs on Assad and his backers for these war crimes and those backers—those backers are Iran and Russia.

The administration has said on multiple occasions that Russia and Iran are complicit in Assad's chemical weapons attacks. So I would just ask another question here: Does the administration support imposing costs on the Russians and the Iranians for their role in the Assad regime's war crimes against its own people?

Mr. SATTERFIELD. Mr. Chairman, the administration has taken steps with respect to both Iran, Iranian-supported proxy forces, notably, Hezbollah, and with respect to Russia for engagement vicariously in the kind of proliferation, criminal behaviors, and actions both in Syrian and outside Syria that you reference, and we will continue to act aggressively to use the authorities available to us to that end.

Chairman ROYCE. One area that I think is—if I could just close here—I hope that the Senate, with a lot of pressure from the administration and us, will move quickly on the Caesar Syrian Civilian Protection Act in order to put this into law, and I think that that will help protect Syrian civilians but also help lay out a strategy.

Thank you, and I go to Mr. Engel.

Mr. ENGEL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I concur with all your remarks and your questions.

I want to just say that when Secretary Tillerson outlined the administration's intentions in Syria in his speech at the Hoover Institution, as the chairman mentioned, he laid out a whole list of goals, and I just hope that those goals remain goals that we are trying to move forward with.

The problem is while ISIS is, obviously, the worst of the worst, the way I looked at Syria and still do is that our goal should not have been only the defeat of ISIS. That should have been one of our goals but should not have been the only goal.

I really think that the defeat of Assad was a parallel goal and should have had the priority that it had and, unfortunately, I think under both the two administrations it really hasn't been.

Assad is just a butcher and a murderer and it just breaks my heart that we didn't offer support to the Syrian people when they needed it the most.

The Wall Street Journal reported this week that the administration was looking to set up an Arab force to take the place of U.S. troops in Syria.

So let me ask either of you some questions. Who would contribute fighters to this force? How would the transition take place?

Who would train the fighters? Would the United States continue to have some holding force? To what extent is this feasible, considering how thin the region is?

Spread in Yemen, would Egypt send fighters to Syrian areas not controlled by Assad? Would the United State continue to provide air cover? How effective would these fighters be, considering we haven't seen these forces be effective in Yemen or the Sinai?

Those are just some questions about this. Can either one of you tell me about this Arab force and how much have we thought this out?

Mr. SATTERFIELD. Ranking Member Engel, the President has made clear he wishes to see the U.S. continue and complete the campaign against ISIS in northeast Syria.

The President has also made clear he believes that regional and local forces need to take on this struggle as they themselves are directly exposed to the consequences of the resurgence of ISIS.

Therefore, we are reaching out to partners across the region to see what form of contribution, and not just financial, they may make to sustaining this fight beyond the destruction of ISIS.

Mr. ENGEL. You see, while I agree with everything you have said, Ambassador, to me, ISIS is one prong of something—an important prong, but one prong of what we should be doing, and I really think to rid Syria of the butcher Assad ought to be as important as the—as our ISIS concerns.

Mr. SATTERFIELD. I strongly agree with you that a Syria in which Assad remains as leader—this regime—is not a Syria which we would predict to be meaningfully secure or stable or not a source of generation threat and violent extremism under whatever name in the future and it's why we have strongly supported a political process led by the U.N.

Unfortunately, that political process has been blocked and the parties responsible for blocking it are quite clear it's the Syrian regime itself and the Russians who, through their absence of pressure on the regime in Damascus, contributes to enables this freezing of a Geneva process which virtually the entire international community supports.

Mr. ENGEL. And through their veto in the United Nations.

Mr. SATTERFIELD. Exactly, sir.

Mr. ENGEL. Is the State Department satisfied with the current communication channels in place with Russia to deconflict issues in Syria?

Since Russia became militarily engaged in Syria, they've relied extensively on resupply by air. These flights, both military and chartered civil flights, cross the airspace of many of our partners including Georgia and Iraq.

What discussions has the U.S. had with our partners about closing their respective air space to such Russian flights?

Mr. SATTERFIELD. Ranking Member, our discussions in the deconfliction channel, which is quite robust with Russia, have focused on deconfliction of forces on the ground, in the air in Syria, but not on the broader areas that you touch on.

Mr. ENGEL. Okay. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman ROYCE. Thank you.

We got to Ileana Ros-Lehtinen of Florida.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you so much, Chairman Royce. Welcome to our panelists.

I am hoping to get some clarification from the State Department on the current status of the PLO office. As we know, it is unlawful for the PLO to maintain an office in the United States.

But for decades, the executive branch has had waiver authority to allow the office in DC to remain open. This waiver must be renewed every 6 months, and last November the administration allowed the waiver to lapse.

The administration then had 90 days to issue a secondary waiver to allow the PLO office to remain open. That deadline passed in February and no waiver of any kind has been issued since.

Interestingly, however, the administration issued its PLO commitments compliance report just last week, stating, as it always does, that the PLO has not lived up to its commitments.

We sanctioned it by downgrading the status of the PLO office, then immediately waived that sanction in the interests of so-called national security, which is used so often.

So my questions are under what authority is the PLO office currently remaining open? Why has it not been closed in accordance with the law? And I expect to hear that State believes this 90-day period for the secondary waiver starts the clock and is not the deadline.

In other words, this waiver exists in perpetuity. The administration will never have to issue that secondary waiver and the PLO office will never have to close despite the underlying law—is that your interpretation?

Mr. SATTERFIELD. I would be happy and I think it would be quite useful to provide to you a detailed written response on the different aspects of the question. But I can give you a broad overall summary.

In consultation with the Department of Justice, which has the direct authority in interpreting the consequences of the failure to waive originally, we have allowed the office to remain not open in a formal status as has been downgraded, but to remain able to communicate in support of peace negotiations.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Are there such peace negotiations underway?

Mr. SATTERFIELD. We believe the continued purposes of the office meet that requirement. But, again, I would like to provide you with a detailed response to the different aspects of the questions you asked.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Well, I look forward to conversing later with you and receiving that correspondence.

Mr. SATTERFIELD. Happy to.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Because I am really interested about the authority under which it remains open. It seems to me that it's very unlawful.

But moving to Lebanon, there are elections in just a few weeks in which Iran and Hezbollah will manage to maintain their position, probably strengthen it, and Secretary Tillerson has said that we have to recognize the reality that Hezbollah is part of the political process in Lebanon.

Could you unpack that for us, explain State's position and interaction with Hezbollah? Do we have the same position in regards to Hezbollah and the Lebanese Armed Forces?

Thank you. Thank you to both.

Mr. SATTERFIELD. We regard Hezbollah as a terrorist organization. We both designate members of Hezbollah and those associated with Hezbollah's support as well as entities that are involved with Hezbollah.

That hasn't changed. That remains and is vigorously pursued. With respect to the Lebanese elections, we certainly support a free and fair election in Lebanon.

With respect to the outcome you will understand I don't want to prejudice by my comments those outcomes. But I would say, broadly speaking, we do not see the likelihood of a dramatic change in the political constellation—the balance that marks Lebanese electoral politics or the National Assembly today.

With regard to the Lebanese Armed Forces and Hezbollah, I do want to be clear. The United States has provided exceptional support for the Lebanese Armed Forces in recent years and not just financial support.

It's not simply a dollars and sense issue. We have personnel working closely with and in the Lebanese Armed Forces. This gives us an insight and a view into how those forces function that we've never had in the past and I can say here on the record we do not believe that the Lebanese Armed Forces are anything other than a legitimate institution of the Lebanese state, and I would note that in strengthening that legitimate institution you effectively counter the illegitimate security structures, militias, principally Hezbollah, which pose a challenge to the state and its authority.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you very much for a thorough answer, Mr. Ambassador, and I echo the chairman's desire to see more designation and sanctioning of Hezbollah affiliates.

Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman ROYCE. And we go now to Brad Sherman of California.

Mr. SHERMAN. Take a breather. I've got about 3 minutes where I will preview questions for the record. You can answer those later, then I will have some questions for you to respond to orally.

First, when are you going to fill all the important positions at the State Department? As the ranking member pointed out, that's critical.

As to Qatar, they have diplomatic contacts with Hamas and the Taliban. So do we. They have media that some people accuse of being pro-terrorist. So do we. So does Israel.

The real question here is does Qatar currently give money to terrorist organizations or allow its citizens to do so.

Saudi Arabia wants a nuclear program, wants a nuclear cooperation agreement with the United States. Just because Saudi Arabia is anti-Iran does not mean they've embraced the values of Jeffersonian democracy.

I don't think a nuclear weapon in Saudi Arabia brings us closer to peace. I met the Crown Prince. Many are impressed by the Crown Prince. But many were impressed by the Shah of Iran in 1979 and by 1980 all the weapons he had acquired were in the hands of the Islamic Republic.

So my question is, what are we doing to prevent Saudi Arabia from engaging in enrichment or reprocessing of fissile material?

Japan benefits from the U.S. defense umbrella. It seeks a veto over the terms of any deal we make with North Korea. Is Japan contributing sufficiently to the enormous financial costs that we face in the Middle East?

Next, Turkey—should it continue to enjoy the faster review period for arms exports that we give to other NATO countries, given that it is, at best, the least pro-American NATO member?

Syria—we have three objectives there: Defeat ISIS and enforce the chemical warfare convention—those are two objectives that we seem to have a reasonable strategy for.

Our third objective is to help the Syrian people live in safety, peace, and with good governance. Congress has proposed a strategy here. We had bills passed through this committee. But does the administration have a strategy or is this something we simply can't achieve at a cost the American people will accept?

Second as to Syria, assuming Assad is in power even 2 or 3 years from now, why shouldn't we allow the Kurds to have sovereignty? Why should we insist that they continue to live in a country driven by war, Assad, Russia, Iran, Hezbollah?

Iran—here I will actually have a question—the argument is that we should renounce the JCPOA because, well, Obama negotiated and it was bad then so it should cease to exist now.

The question is really what is the legal effect of voiding the JCPOA. Well, the legal effect on Iran is that they're now entitled to start enriching.

The legal effect on Russia is they are the custodian of the many bombs worth of fissile material that Iran turned over when they got their money at the beginning of the JCPOA and Putin could say, well, if the deal is void I am returning the fissile material to Iran.

And third—and this is thought to be the good part—if the JCPOA fails to exist, then the United States and its allies are free to start new sanctions on Iran.

So the question is, is that good part of renunciation illusory. John Kerry sat exactly where you're sitting now, Ambassador, and told this committee that even after the JCPOA we can adopt harsh sanctions on Iran, anything, as long as it's proportionate to Iran's wrongdoing outside the nuclear arena.

Well, Iran helps Hezbollah, Hamas, and the Houthis, and those are just the terrorist organizations that start with the letter H.

So the question is does voiding the JCPOA or taking an action that Putin and Tehran could claim is voiding the JCPOA just play into their hands, giving them legal rights—and should we instead just sanction them proportionate to their nonnuclear evil?

Mr. SATTERFIELD. Mr. Sherman, excellent questions for the record and we'll respond to you in detail on all of those.

With respect to your last question, it is the intent of the administration at this moment to fix the JCPOA. Those diplomatic efforts are underway quite actively with our key European partners. We hope they produce a successful result. That's our focus at the moment, nothing else.

Chairman ROYCE. The gentleman's time is expired.

We go to Mr. Chris Smith of New Jersey.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, for convening this very important hearing and welcome to Ambassador Satterfield and Dr. Mitchell. Thank you for your extraordinary service and leadership.

I would also like to just note that Nick Rahall, former Member of Congress from West Virginia, a very distinguished member, is here with us and it's great to see him again.

Let me just ask a few questions—at least five. I have many more but I won't allow more than that.

On Monday, American Pastor Andrew Brunson endured a 12-hour-long hearing on the groundless terrorism charges he faced with our Ambassador-at-Large for religious freedom. Sam Brownback in attendance as well as Senator Thom Tillis.

At the end of the hearing, he was remanded in custody until his next court date in May. Is it the opinion of the department that somehow diplomacy will effectuate his release or is it time, when taken together with all the other religious repression that Erdogan is practising and other Turkish leaders have done previous, to look at Turkey as a CPC (country of particular concern) pursuant to the IRFA legislation?

Second, in 2004, I authored a law to establish a special envoy to combat anti-Semitism. Nita Lowey and I just wrote an op-ed that has been carried by a number of publications appealing to the administration and the incoming Secretary of State. We could not get to first base, unfortunately, with Secretary Tillerson.

I met with him. We just could not get him to say, let's do it—let's pick. It is congressionally mandated so I do hope that very critical position will be filled and filled quickly.

Third, and just like my good friend Eliot Engel and the frustration of the Senate not taking up a bill, H.R. 390, the Iraq and Syria Genocide Emergency Humanitarian Relief and Accountability Act, which I worked on for 4 years, held 10 congressional hearings—the Christians were not getting help from the previous administration, despite promises to look at it.

I went over there and met with a number of the Christians. I know that the Vice President has been—as well as the head of USAID, Mark Green, looking at this. Those people need help.

If it wasn't for the Knights of Columbus and others providing upwards of \$60 million of private aid, we would have had dead children and very sick adults and elderly in—who—you know, the Christians who escaped ISIS.

So, please, that legislation needs to pass. It also has an accountability piece so that we can bring charges with facts against those who have committed these crimes.

Fourth, on UNRRA, I just looked at some recent very, very, compelling testimony about the anti-Semitism and the anti-Americanism that's contained in the textbooks.

We are going to do a hearing on my subcommittee on this shortly joint with Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, who has been very, very focused on that as well. It's not getting better. It's, arguably, getting worse.

And finally, the cash payments that were made to Iran—the Iranian deal, in my opinion, was egregiously flawed on a number of fronts anytime, anywhere, all the other reasons.

But where is that money going? How has it been spent and how much? Are we, through that sanctions relief, providing assistance to the troops that are being deployed to Syria?

Hezbollah is getting money, we know, from Iran. Is that part of the sanctions relief money? If you could answer those questions I would be deeply appreciative.

Mr. MITCHELL. Congressman, thank you for those questions, and you have raised some very important issues. Let me quickly deal with two of the issues that you have raised.

First of all, Pastor Brunson—this is a matter of considerable focus and concern for the State Department and from my bureau, from me personally.

I visited with Pastor Brunson's wife, Noreen, in Ankara not long ago. We are in close and continuing touch with Pastor Brunson, with his family members, and with the Turkish Government.

There was a hearing on Monday. Senator Tillis was there and so was Ambassador Brownback. I would just say this: The Turks claim to have a very high standard of justice. The indictment suggests otherwise. The claims in the indictment were laughable. This is clearly an innocent man.

We are watching to see if the Turks adhere to their stated standards of justice. If that does not happen, we are considering options for consequences.

We are in close coordination, in touch with the Senate and the House in talking through some of those possible measures. But I want to underscore that we take it very seriously.

Secondly, on Holocaust issues, anti-Semitism is a growing problem throughout many parts of Europe. The Office of Holocaust Issues is housed in our bureau—European Affairs.

I established for our team, when I came into my job, that this would be a very high priority for us. I don't have anything—any comments to make at this time about the role that you have mentioned.

I will simply say that that matter is under consideration.

Mr. SATTERFIELD. With respect to assistance to the Christian and other minority communities in the Nineveh Plains, this is indeed, as you noted, an object of special focus for the administration.

The Vice President has led on this effort and we continue to engage. As you know, I believe, we have provided extraordinary assistance beyond that previously or generally allocated for the communities of Iraq specifically for the purpose of assisting these communities and we see this as a very positive direction.

On UNRRA, again, the President has made very clear that we are examining quite closely every dollar of taxpayer money that has been or may be expended for the purposes of support of UNRRA, and at present, the administration does not have plans for any additional funding.

We will review that issue based upon that careful consideration of where the moneys are going, what other support exists for UNRRA amongst regional parties, international parties, and the purposes for which it goes.

Finally, on the JCPOA and the specific question you posed on money, I would like to be able to respond to your question in a different format, not here in an open session.

But we can get you responses to your question.

Mr. SMITH. I appreciate that. Thank you.

Chairman ROYCE. We go now to Mr. Greg Meeks of New York.

Mr. MEEKS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Ambassador, let me just follow up on that dealing with the JCPOA, real quick, in your last response to Mr. Sherman.

I, as the ranking member, I've talked to a lot of the E3. I've talked to folks about our allies in the military, in Israel, et cetera.

They've all come back and said to me that the JCPOA, for the limited purpose of which it was agreed upon, is working—that—and so they have extreme concerns about us moving out.

They say for the limited purpose of preventing Iran from having a nuclear weapon, given the terms of the agreement, they're much better off. They know more about the Iranian nuclear program than they've ever known before, et cetera.

So you said that—what needs to be fixed as far as what that purpose is? Can you tell us that?

Mr. SATTERFIELD. There are three critical deficiencies we identify both in the JCPOA, more importantly, in the frame around the JCPOA.

One is the absence of sanctions addressed to Iran's ICBM—that is, long-range and their continental range ballistic missile program.

The second is the matter of inspection authority for IAEA in certain types of institutions in Iran, which are not, in our view, adequately laid out, empowered within the JCPOA text.

And finally, the so-called sunset clauses—that is the sunset of restrictions on critical elements of the enrichment program and enrichment cycle where we wish to see essentially through a frame or follow-on agreement to the JCPOA and elimination of those sunsets.

Now, we are engaged in detailed discussions with the E3—with our critical European partners. Those discussions are ongoing, literally, today and we very much hope they come to a positive resolution.

Mr. MEEKS. And if they don't?

Mr. SATTERFIELD. We will address that situation at the level of the President. But we are focused now on achieving the success.

Mr. MITCHELL. And can I add a point on that, sir, if I may?

You mentioned our allies, and I can speak a little bit to that. I think there is a recognition in Europe and among our allies that the problem of Iran is growing in scale, specifically the ballistic missile problem, the problem of Iran's malign influence across the region. Even in the period since JCPOA was brokered, the scale on which Iran is exerting its influence across the region has increased considerably. I think there's also a recognition that this is a set of problems for which Europe should take increased responsibility.

That's a message that I hear on a regular basis in our bureau's interaction with officials from major U.S. allies in Europe.

Mr. MEEKS. Are we ready to walk away from our allies and we are also talking about part of that agreement is China and Russia, and given what's going on with them right now so that we are virtually dividing the signatories of the JCPOA.

And so you say we'll take it up at that time but this was a multi-lateral agreement that, from what I am getting, everyone says Iran

has not violated and, at the same time, we are in about the process of negotiating an agreement with North Korea about our word and whether we stand by it or not.

Mr. SATTERFIELD. Mr. Meeks, I can only reiterate, the administration is focused on success here. We are focused on obtaining support from our critical allies to cure what we regard as significant failures both in the agreement and things that were not negotiated at the time of the agreement but now pose a real threat.

And as Assistant Secretary Mitchell said, the dialogue with our European allies has been a positive one and we hope it is one that leads to a comprehensive resolution.

Mr. MEEKS. I don't know about the policies but the President has said something else other than what you have said that he's willing to pull out.

The message we've gotten from the President is that we are willing to leave our allies and change what the agreement was because I think that's what the concerns of our allies are that we are fundamentally changing what the agreement was. And so we'll see how it goes and where we'll end up. But I think it's a very dangerous situation.

Chairman ROYCE. We go now to Mr. Dana Rohrabacher of California.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Secretary Mitchell, last month in Kosovo, six Turkish nationals were kidnapped and sent back against their will to Turkey, where they are imprisoned. They were members of the Gulen movement, and it's somewhat of a scandal in Kosovo.

We have in Turkey now is a government that's willing not only to oppress its own people which, as we know, has been—they've been arrested by the thousands but now is projecting itself into Europe and conducting itself in instances like I just described.

Quite frankly, the tone of your testimony today was certainly not someone that seemed to be alarmed about the misdirection of Turkey, and are we going to be giving them those F-35s?

Do you believe that we should continue treating Turkey as it evolves into this radical Islamic government and continue to treat them as if they were our allies of 10, 15, 20 years ago?

Mr. MITCHELL. Thank you for those questions, sir. Let me start with the issue of Kosovo and just say that we followed that development very closely.

It was a very concerning development and we have been in touch closely with officials in Kosovo on this matter and underscored the importance of the rule of law as it relates to matters of extradition. So—

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Have we been in touch with the Turkish on this?

Mr. MITCHELL. We are in ongoing conversations with the Turkish authorities about a number of matters. With respect to Gulen, that is primarily—

Mr. ROHRABACHER. No, no, no, on a number of matters—on the Gulen kidnapping of these people in Kosovo, are we now confronting the Turks on this?

Mr. MITCHELL. We have raised it in our diplomatic conversations. It's primarily a matter for the Department of Justice.

But let me take on the broader question that you raised about Turkey because I think it's absolutely essential for today's discussion and I do want to be clear.

We are concerned about the track that Turkey is on both with regard to democracy and rule of law and the period since the attempted coup, and in a broader geopolitical sense. The coordination with Russia and Iran is very concerning. I would also say that the track that Erdogan has repeatedly articulated publicly, of closer engagement with the Russians on S-400, we take this seriously and have prioritized that in our diplomatic conversations with the Turks.

We have been very clear that if a transaction occurs there will be consequences under CAATSA, that we will abide by the law as articulated in Section 231.

We've also been very clear with regard to the consequences for potential participation in the F-35 program and, more broadly, our military industrial cooperation with Turkey.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Well, I would hope that we also are paying attention to the fact that Turkey is involved with radical Islamic organizations now. I don't know how deeply. We don't know how extensive that is but we do know that it's turned that corner and heading in that direction.

Secretary Satterfield, what is our purpose in Syria? Will we accept anything less than—would we accept a compromise that would keep Assad in power at least in part of Syria or is our goal and our purpose only to totally eliminate the Assad government?

Mr. SATTERFIELD. Mr. Rohrabacher, our purpose of our forces in Syria, as Secretary Mattis, Chairman Dunford have stated repeatedly, is to defeat ISIS.

The purpose of our diplomacy of our international engagement with respect to Syria is to support a political process which, at its end, has a revised constitution, elections conducted under the auspices of the United Nations, and our belief is that those elections, if freely and fairly conducted amongst all Syrians including the emigre Syrian communities, would not produce the survival of the Assad regime.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Okay. Well, let me just note, what you described wasn't just Syria but probably three-quarters of the countries of the Middle East, and if we made those demands, why is it that Syria—we have to make those demands against Syria and not against all these other countries in the Middle East?

Mr. SATTERFIELD. Because, sir, of the extraordinary depredations of this regime in this country against its citizens, because of the extraordinary and historically unprecedented in modern times outflow—

Mr. ROHRABACHER. You don't think the rest of the countries in the Middle East have similar track records? You're trying to tell me that—well, we heard the same thing, of course, about Saddam Hussein. We heard the same thing about Qaddafi and we end up creating total chaos—total chaos in that part of the world.

Mr. SATTERFIELD. No regime in modern history in the Middle East, including Saddam Hussein's—

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Yes.

Mr. SATTERFIELD [continuing]. Has killed as many of its own citizens, has produced external and internal displacement of its own citizens on the scale of the Assad regime. No. It's unique, sadly.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Well, let me just say, Mr. Ambassador, you read history differently than I do. That is an area that is filled with dictators. It's filled with authoritarian regimes, filled with our allies that if the people rose up against them as they're rising up against Assad—he's a bad guy, he's a dictator, he's everything you said—but he's not that different from these other regimes. Once they are challenged—once they were challenged don't tell me the Qatar Government wouldn't mow down all of their guest workers if there was an uprising in Qatar, and vice versa, with these other regimes.

I am very disturbed by the fact that we are sliding into a war and not having an out that will not lead us to major military commitments to that region. That would be a disaster and I think it's based on the analysis that you just said, that Assad is somewhat different than everybody else. I don't think so.

Thank you very much, Mr. Assistant Secretary.

Chairman ROYCE. We go now to Albio Sires of New Jersey.

Mr. SIRES. Thank you, Chairman, for holding this hearing and thank you for being here.

One of the concerns that I have is the buildup of the Iranians as they're getting closer and closer to Israel. I mean, they now have 7,000 fighters. Israel lost a plane recently.

This encroachment—how are we going to respond to this? It just seems to be getting bigger and bigger, and my concern is one day they're just going to try to push even closer.

Mr. SATTERFIELD. There is no question that the aggressive Iranian projection of its influence, forces associated with Iran, Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps directly, and aggressive proliferation of advanced systems into Syria and through Syria into Lebanon pose a real and, as I said, imminent threat to Israel.

Israel, of course, is taking its own actions to address this challenge but, more importantly or as importantly, the U.S. and Israel are deeply lashed up, and I mean that in every sense of the word, in terms of our own cooperation and coordination in trying to better address, more effectively address this challenge.

Mr. SIRES. And it seems like Putin wants the Israelis not to do any other strikes against this Syrian backed-group. To me, Putin has just, again, injected himself in the middle of this again.

Mr. SATTERFIELD. I won't comment on that assertion. Israel acts on its own based on its own calculus regarding risk and benefit. But I will say this.

We've made very clear in our dialogue with Russia, and we've had an extensive dialogue with Russia on the issue of Syria and broader questions including that of Iran and Iran's activities for some time.

We've made the basic question to Moscow, how do you see it as in Moscow's interest to entwine yourself with this regime, with this Iran, and these Iranian activities.

We see nothing good in the future for Russia out of this and that's a question, unfortunately, which has not been adequately responded to.

Mr. SIRES. Thank you.

Going to Egypt, I note that the North Koreans have their Embassy there and I think, through the Embassy, they do a lot of arms sales in this part of the world.

I was wondering what kind of pressure are we asserting to make the North Koreans stop there or have the Egyptians stop this effort.

Mr. SATTERFIELD. Former Secretary Tillerson exercised authority granted him by the Congress to suspend or withhold, rather, \$195 million from FMF provided to Egypt and that suspension continues.

There are several conditions, which we have discussed with the Egyptian Government at the most senior levels for consideration of release of those funds.

One of those conditions is a downgrading and, in some cases, more than a downgrading of the Egyptian diplomatic presence in Pyongyang, the North Korean diplomatic presence in Cairo, and the general character of that relationship.

It is absolutely part of a very material discussion with the Egyptians.

Mr. SIRES. Thank you.

And one concern that I have also in Egypt—my time is running out—but I have written a number of letters regarding the situation with Coptic Christians in Egypt, in terms of making sure that they're able to express their religion, making sure that they're safe.

I was wondering what kind of pressure are we putting in Egypt now that el-Sisi supposedly got 97 percent of the vote to help with this situation.

Mr. SATTERFIELD. We have had a dialogue with all elements of the Egyptian Government, including President el-Sisi directly, who received significant support from the Coptic community in his reelection with respect to the need for full exercise of Coptic Christian rights in Egypt.

This is, I don't have to tell anyone on this committee, a sensitive issue in Egypt but is one we continue to pursue.

Mr. SIRES. I am more concerned about the security of the Coptic Christians in this country.

Mr. SATTERFIELD. That is an issue which President el-Sisi himself has repeatedly and publicly expressed as his concern and he has, indeed, taken steps to address that particular issue—the threat by radical Islamist movements against the Copts.

Mr. SIRES. Thank you.

Thank you, Chairman.

Chairman ROYCE. Thank you very much.

We go to Joe Wilson of South Carolina.

Mr. WILSON. Thank you very much, Chairman Ed Royce and Ranking Member Eliot Engel, for having this important hearing on turbulence in the Middle East.

And first, Dr. Mitchell, I want to thank you for your efforts for Pastor Brunson. We appreciate Congressman Chris Smith for raising the issue and then I was very pleased to see your personal interest as significant and all that can be done to address that issue with our NATO ally, Turkey.

And as we address the topic of turbulence in the Middle East—and thank both of you for being here—a concern I’ve always had, how do we identify friendly or democratic allies in Syria.

We have 2,000 troops in Syria. Who are we advising to correctly support regime change of the barbaric dictator, Assad?

Mr. SATTERFIELD. The purpose of our military deployment of those 2,000 troops in northeast Syria is to conclude the campaign to defeat ISIS.

In that campaign, we have associated ourselves with the Syrian democratic forces, a Kurdish and Arabic group in the north and northeast who have fought alongside us in this campaign.

We have made very clear the issue of regime change is not a purpose of our military deployment. It is the defeat of ISIS. The purpose of the international political process in Syria is to see the Syrian people, all of them, able to make a choice in a free and fair manner to choose the kind of regime, the kind of governance they want, and we have said repeatedly we do not believe that choice would, in the end, produce a continuation of Assad or his regime.

Mr. WILSON. Well, I want to thank you. That’s about the best description we’ve had over the years of being here and discussing Syria. So thank you very much.

And for both of you, the Revolutionary Guard is one of the main elements in spreading Iran’s malign influence in the Middle East, such as in Lebanon and in Syria.

What specific steps does the administration take to diminish the Iranian influence across the Middle East? What is the strategy to prevent Iran from filling the vacuums created by instability in the region, particularly as ISIS is being defeated and withdrawing?

And how active are the Revolutionary Guards outside of the Middle East, where are they active? And then another point about Iranian-backed militias, why are they not being identified as terrorist organizations?

Mr. SATTERFIELD. The administration has aggressively pursued the sources of IRGC support from a financial standpoint and material standpoint, has designated members of the Revolutionary Guard Corps for their involvement in terrorist activities.

That step by this administration was quite unprecedented, as the IRGC is an entity of a government, a state.

It is extremely unusual to sanction it. We have done for their involvement in terrorist acts. They are a multifaceted multipresent organization not just in Syria and Lebanon but in Yemen as well.

They conduct subversive activities, directly or indirectly, in the Persian Gulf. We are dealing with all of these challenges.

Now, how do we do that? Of course, there are sanctions to get at the heart, the arteries of support. But more broadly speaking, by strengthening legitimate institutions of legitimate states, you push back against a vacuum which Iran takes advantage of.

By trying—and Yemen is a particular case here—to bring an end to the conflict in Yemen you try to heal or close over the cracks, the fissures that Iran quite adroitly exploits to its advantage.

Iran will look like the thief going down a corridor in the night for any opportunity to go through a partly opened door, an unlocked door, a fully open door.

We want to close that as much as possible. So it's a broad approach to a broad and multifaceted problem.

Mr. WILSON. And I appreciate too that you are recognizing that the IRGC (Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps) is separate from the Iranian military and so, indeed, acting independently but achieving, sadly, such turmoil.

Additionally, the administration has not yet reinforced sanctions on any entities where sanctions were lifted on the Iranian nuclear deal.

What steps is the State Department taking to address Iran's illicit activities including support for terrorism, arms trafficking, human rights abuses, and ballistic missile development?

Mr. SATTERFIELD. I think the key area or the key sector that your question strikes to is in the aviation industry and the administration is actively considering what steps would be appropriate.

This is not an easy issue because of the extensive involvement of many corporate entities in broad support for aviation entities in Iran. We are looking at this very carefully. We have reached no decisions.

Mr. WILSON. Well, we appreciate your service, each of you. Thank you very much.

Chairman ROYCE. Mr. Ted Deutch of Florida.

Mr. DEUTCH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thanks to you and Ranking Member Engel for ensuring this committee has the opportunity to engage with the administration in the timely manner on recent events in the Middle East.

I would like to echo my colleagues in voicing our concern with continued vacancies in key leadership positions at the department. I hope that Director Pompeo moves quickly to fill those roles.

Ambassador Satterfield, we know and we firmly believe that you are more than capable of performing the job as Assistant Secretary.

This is in no way a criticism of your abilities. But we are 15 months into this administration and there is still no confirmed Assistant Secretary for the Middle East.

I would also like to associate myself with the ranking member's comments on the international affairs budget. We are deeply grateful to our civil and Foreign Service personnel to commit themselves to doing work that is sometimes dangerous, that keeps them away from their families, and that doesn't get a whole lot of credit from the American people.

But diplomacy and foreign aid is immeasurably critical to our national security. Military might is not something that can be exercised in the absence of diplomacy. The two must work hand in hand.

Before I ask my questions, I would also implore both of you to make the return of Americans held in Iran, particularly my constituent, Robert Levinson—the longest held American hostage—a serious priority.

Even if the President potentially disengages from Iran, we cannot allow whatever decision is made on the nuclear file to impact our efforts to bring Bob home to his family.

I would ask for the commitment of both of you to make that a priority and to engage as much as possible with the Levinson family.

And finally, before turning to my questions, I would just like to respond to my colleague who suggested that Assad is doing what any leader in the region would do.

The answer to that is no. We must be horrified and furious about the butcher who drops barrel bombs on schools and hospitals, who uses chemical weapons against civilians.

The slaughter of over ½ million people shocks our conscience in Syria as it would and must shock our conscience in any other country in the region or in any place on this planet.

Now, I have many concerns about the administration's lack of cohesive and coherent foreign policy in the region. I am confused, to say the least, that the administration seems to be actively pursuing Middle East peace, bolstering our relations with Israel, acknowledging the reality that yes, Jerusalem is indeed the capital of Israel while at the same time seemingly leaving Israel the fend for itself by taking real kinetic action when it comes to the Iranian presence in Syria.

The administration has been reluctant to confront Russia in a range of areas but particularly for its enabling of Assad and its turning a blind eye to Iran and Hezbollah's actions in Syria.

And just when it seems like the administration might actually take meaningful steps to sanction Russia for its actions in Syria, the President pulls back only after Ambassador Haley had made the announcement.

And to put the blame on her for being confused about the policy decision only furthers the disjointed mixed message foreign policy this administration has been sending to our allies from day one.

I believe Ambassador Haley when she clearly stated, "I don't get confused."

So I would ask you, Ambassador Satterfield, as the President is talking tough on Iran with respect to the JCPOA, he doesn't appear to be acting tough on Iran in Syria. What's the strategy to actually counter Russian and Iran's very real and dangerous enabling of Assad, Iran's establishment of bases in Syria and support for Hezbollah that threaten to seriously destabilize and threaten our allies and the region?

And specifically—I will try to make this as clear as possible—is the United States relying on Russia to influence Iran—let's start with that question.

Mr. SATTERFIELD. First, let me affirm, our efforts in support of all of the Americans who have been detained, held hostage, missing in Iran, will continue.

We take these concerns very seriously. We are in touch with all the families including the Levinsons, and we'll do all that we can to deal with this very difficult and very painful issue.

Mr. DEUTCH. Thank you very much.

Mr. SATTERFIELD. With respect to Iran in Syria, we certainly identify the threat and the challenge, not just Israel but to the region as a whole, and we have identified those concerns not only in our exceptional dialogue with Israel and the Israel security—

Mr. DEUTCH. Ambassador Satterfield, I apologize. I don't wish to be rude. But I just had a few questions.

So the first one is does the United States rely on Russia to influence Iran in the region?

Mr. SATTERFIELD. We have certainly made clear to Moscow that we see no reason, no logic in Moscow enabling either by action or inaction what Iran is doing in Syria or elsewhere in the region.

We see it as a threat to Russia over time, yes.

Mr. DEUTCH. And if Russia is unwilling or unable to provide assurances that the Syrian regime or its associated forces like Hezbollah or other Iranian-backed proxy forces will cease violence in these areas, what's the next option for the United States policy in Syria? What do we do then?

Mr. SATTERFIELD. With respect to Russia, I will defer to my colleague. But we have a variety of means at our disposal which are under constant and active consideration to try to bring about the kinds of mitigation of harm, mitigation of risk that we are all seeking on Syria.

Those decisions lie, in many cases, with the President himself.

Mr. MITCHELL. I would only—thank you for the question, sir.

I think that's a critical issue. I would only add to that that in addition to the humanitarian dimension important to the strikes, I think a secondary effect was to demonstrate for all parties, including the Russian Federation, the seriousness of the United States in this conflict.

I would add that there are measures under consideration including measures that stem from CAATSA. Those are under ongoing consideration and we will take additional steps against the Russian Federation as needed.

Mr. DEUTCH. Well, with all due respect, why should we believe that when there—it was announced that we were going to impose sanctions only to have the President or those close to the President essentially throw the U.N. Ambassador under the bus, saying that she didn't know what she was doing?

Why should we believe you when you come here and say that we are serious about the possibility of imposing sanctions?

Mr. MITCHELL. Well, the reason you should believe me, sir, is that since January of last year this administration has implemented sanctions against 189 individuals and entities in Russia including 136 under Ukraine authorities and 24 under CAATSA authorities.

So for your—the main part of your question, I would say, we have credibility with regard to toughness on Russia.

Mr. DEUTCH. Was our credibility threatened at all by the interaction over the past few days—

[Simultaneous speaking.]

Chairman ROYCE. If I could make the point—we are over by a couple of minutes and—yes. So let's go to Mr. Scott Perry of Pennsylvania.

Mr. PERRY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, gentlemen.

I just want to respond a little bit to my friend and colleague, who I respect, regarding the administration's dealing with Russia.

The last administration obliterated decades of foreign policy that was bipartisan that generally in large part kept Russia out of the Middle East and out of meddling there, and this administration has been left to pick up the pieces.

And with regard to leaving Israel, left alone to be the only one providing kinetic activity in Syria, I remind the gentleman that the

last administration provided none except for harsh rhetoric while this administration has had rounds impacting on the ground in Syria.

And with that said, I think I want to turn to Dr. Mitchell here. Iran provides Hezbollah with approximately \$800,000 annually, trains thousands of their fighters in camps in Iran.

Hezbollah possess approximately 150,000 missiles. Hezbollah provides construction facilities near Israel to produce more of these munitions.

In that context, Hezbollah is—the former Secretary of State described Hezbollah as part of the political process in Lebanon and we are not—I think we'd be foolish to disregard that.

But I just wonder if there's any concern from State that this tends to legitimize a violent theological extremist group whose stated goal is to destroy Israel.

Mr. SATTERFIELD. In no way do we intend to delegitimize Hezbollah. In no way do we distinguish between Hezbollah's terrorist activities, it's so-called military wing from its so-called political wing.

That's a distinction many in the world make. It is one we reject completely and have done historically. It's the same.

Mr. PERRY. I want to make sure that there is no—that there's a bright line there and—

Mr. SATTERFIELD. There is.

Mr. PERRY [continuing]. And I appreciate that.

Let me ask you this, and maybe this for you, Dr. Mitchell, if that—I am sorry if I got that wrong.

The EU seems to resist designated Hezbollah in its entirety as a terrorist organization. Even though they are, obviously, wreaking havoc in Syria and in Europe as well, what are we doing to persuade the EU to designate, to make this designation? I think it's important. What are we doing?

Mr. MITCHELL. Well, thank you for that question.

We engage with our European partners on a regular basis on this matter.

I would say it's fair to say, from the U.S. perspective, we have a lot of frustration with the Europeans on this particular question of Hezbollah.

I've been part of conversations where we've talked to the French, the Germans, the British, and others. Those are ongoing conversations; I think it's part of a broader mosaic.

Mr. PERRY. What is their aversion? What could their aversion be?

Mr. MITCHELL. Well, I would refer you to the capitals of those countries for the specifics of their concerns. I think—

Mr. PERRY. Do you have any inclination? I understand I can go ask them, but we are paying you to find these things out for us. Do you know what—like, do they see them as not terrorist, not subversive, not—

Mr. MITCHELL. I am going to resist the temptation, sir, to speak on behalf of those governments.

I would just say from our perspective we make it clear all the way up to the level of the President not only on Hezbollah but on the broader Iran problem that there can't only be an American so-

lution to this, long term—that we have to have greater European participation, whether it’s plugging the gaps—

Mr. PERRY. So other than the kind rhetoric and hoping they’ll come to the table on this, is there anything the United States is doing from the diplomatic standpoint to kind of urge them out, so to speak?

Is there—I get the carrot. Where’s the stick? Is there a stick?

Mr. SATTERFIELD. This government has been in contact continuously with our European partners in Paris and elsewhere. I participated in a number of these talks.

We have a more extensive focused dialogue on the issue of Iran and Hezbollah, the IRGC, than at any point in memory and I have been part of this discussion for the last quarter century.

Mr. PERRY. I appreciate it and I am sure you do.

Mr. SATTERFIELD. Now, what have we done? Despite continued resistance at a political level for making the same bright line co-identification of political and military parts of Hezbollah that the EU maintains, we have achieved much more in the way of actual designation and sanctioning by critical European partners than we have done in the course of the last many years.

Is it enough? No. Is it progress? Yes, it is.

Mr. PERRY. Well, I will just tell you that at least from this point on the dais here there’s not enough progress fast enough. I know we are impatient. I know it’s hard.

But you must have success in this regard. We cannot—and please know that this is a point of concern and when you come back we are going to continue to—

Mr. SATTERFIELD. We agree.

Mr. PERRY. Let me ask one more question with the chairman’s indulgence regarding the train and equip fund.

It’s my understanding that in 2015 for Iraq \$1.5 billion, 2016 \$715 million. I ask this question in the context of I feel like the American taxpayer is now left in the position to train and equip the IRGC and the Quds Force operating individually as units and individuals that have infiltrated the Iraqi army.

Local municipal elections are looming and I am wondering what the number is that we are currently spending on train and equip funding in Iraq and what’s going to be done about that?

Or do you disagree that we are not training and equipping IRGC elements and individuals that are operating in uniform in Iraq?

Mr. SATTERFIELD. Congressman I strongly disagree with the premise that our support for the Iraqi armed forces is support for the IRGC or the Shi’a PMF—the Popular Mobilization Forces—some of which are affiliated with Iran.

We have supported a legitimate institution of the Iraqi state that has performed exceptionally well in the fight against ISIS and in the reclaiming and holding of Iraqi territory.

Now, the issue of whether there are individuals who are present within the Iraqi security forces whose allegiance may lie to the PMF, undoubtedly there are.

But there is a confabulation between that reality and saying we are facilitating the IRGC or the PMF. Absolutely not. It’s not—

Mr. PERRY. So I don't want to be hyper critical and I am concerned not only for our national security but for the taxpayers and the fidelity and the future of Iraq.

Are you willing to say that there are no IRGC forces using any United States-provided military equipment in Iraq right now?

Mr. SATTERFIELD. I will review the record. But to my knowledge, there is no provision of U.S. military equipment or funding to the IRGC.

Mr. PERRY. I know it's not the IRGC—

Chairman ROYCE. Here's a strategy. How about having the Ambassador—Ambassador, if you will review the record and get back to General Scott Perry on the issue.

Mr. PERRY. Thank you, sir. Happy to—thank you, Chairman.

Chairman ROYCE. Thank you.

Now we go to David Cicilline of Rhode Island.

Mr. CICILLINE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Like many of my colleagues, I am extremely concerned about the implications of Turkish incursions into Syria, particularly Afrin. I requested a classified member-level briefing from your offices on the situation on February 6th. That was 10 weeks ago.

And the briefing still has not happened it's been cancelled again. I know there's a briefing after this hearing on the entire region. But I want to start by saying how disappointed I am that it's taken 10 weeks and I still don't have a hearing.

So I would like a commitment from both of you that you will schedule a classified briefing for members on the situation in Afrin in the very near future.

That's a yes? Thank you.

Could you speak to how the Turkish incursion has affected the U.S. coalition's fight against ISIS? Obviously, Turkey and the U.S. coalition have different priorities in Syria and how is the U.S. supporting our partners on the ground, which include both the Kurdish YPG and our NATO ally, Turkey.

Because I am hearing a lot of concern from the Kurdish community that they feel that the U.S. has abandoned them after they played such an important role in the fight against ISIS.

Mr. MITCHELL. Thank you, sir, for that question and I can assure you we will follow up on that request, and I apologize on behalf of our bureau that that hasn't happened yet.

It's a crucial matter. I will take the olive branch part of your question and defer to my colleague on the Kurdish question.

I will just keep it simple and say that Operation Olive Branch has very much complicated the defeat ISIS campaign by creating a demand signal that draws fighters from the Euphrates Valley toward Afrin.

Our focus has been to call on the Turks to show restraint and address the humanitarian crises. I have led the U.S. delegation in most of those recent conversations but also to create a sequenced approach to some of the areas that the Turkish Government has concerns about and to try where possible to balance the Turkish and Kurdish equities on this.

David can say a word about the Kurdish element.

Mr. SATTERFIELD. The situation in north and northeast Syria has recently stabilized. We have seen no further movement of Turkish forces beyond Afrin.

Our dialogue with the Syrian Democratic Forces, the SDF, is deep, extraordinary and at senior levels and that dialogue is continuing at a senior level, literally as we meet here today.

We believe that it is possible to continue the fight against ISIS with the support and help of the SDF. That, of course, requires not just their commitment to us but our commitment to continue to work with them.

We understand that very well.

Mr. CICILLINE. Thank you. Thank you, and I look forward to the classified briefing.

Ambassador Satterfield, are you aware of any evidence that Iran has violated the terms of the JCPOA?

Mr. SATTERFIELD. It is the assessment of the IAEA that Iran remains in essential compliance with the provisions of the—

Mr. CICILLINE. Okay. Thank you. You talked about the ongoing discussions with our European partners.

Is there a plan for that moment when the sanctions waiver is required to be addressed by the President that if that doesn't happen is there a plan in place if—in other words, is the President willing to sign the waiver so that this process can play out or is it the May deadline and is there a contingency?

Mr. SATTERFIELD. The administration is prepared for a number of options depending on the circumstances, including the outcome of discussions with the E3, and whatever decision the President may at the time take. Yes, sir.

Mr. CICILLINE. Okay. So if the negotiations are not complete, there's no assurance that the President is going to issue the waiver and that could be the end of the agreement?

Mr. SATTERFIELD. Under no circumstances would I prejudge or circumscribe the President's options.

Mr. CICILLINE. Okay. Okay.

And I am just turning for a moment now to Egypt. In your view, does Egypt's new NGO law violate the Brown back amendment by giving the Egyptian Government veto power over U.S.-funded democracy programs?

Our ability to operate many assistance programs in Egypt has been severely limited since the change in government in 2011 with this new law in place.

What kind of economic development or democracy program is even possible for the United States assistance to support in Egypt and do you believe that the repeal of this NGO law should be a prerequisite for the United States providing continued economic aid to Egypt?

Mr. SATTERFIELD. Congressman, there are provisions of that law which, if executed, would indeed violate U.S. statute, no question about that.

With respect to our demands of the Government of Egypt, they've been very clear. Our strong recommendation and one of the basis for Secretary Tillerson's withholding of the \$195 million was exactly the issue of a pledge to not implement these offending provisions of that law.

Mr. CICILLINE. Great. And my final question for both of you really, do you think that it is inconsistent—or I am sorry, do you think that it is consistent policy that we say that we must intervene militarily in Syria, as we've said to the world, because of our grave concerns of the humanitarian situation for Syrians facing chemical attacks by their own government, and at the same time to severely restrict refugees from the region that we have only allowed 11 Syrian refugees into the United States in 2018?

Do you see that as a consistent position and doesn't it present a challenge to the world to take us seriously?

Mr. SATTERFIELD. The issue of the administration's position with respect with national security in relation to refugee admission is one that we are happy to take back for response to you.

Mr. CICILLINE. So you agree it's inexplicable and difficult to defend?

Mr. SATTERFIELD. No. I am simply saying this falls outside my area of responsibility.

Mr. CICILLINE. Yes. I mean, you would say not consistent to say we are so worried about the children and women in Syria that we have to intervene militarily but, by the way, the administration has severely restricted the admission of those very same women and children to the United States and in fact only 11 Syrian refugees have come to the United States this year.

Mr. SATTERFIELD. Congressman, I understand your question. Our focus—

Mr. CICILLINE. I look forward to the answer.

Mr. SATTERFIELD. Our focus in Syria is CW use and ISIS.

Chairman ROYCE. We go to Ann Wagner of Missouri.

Mrs. WAGNER. I thank you, Mr. Chairman, for organizing this hearing and I thank you to our witnesses for their service.

The violent Assad regime in Syria continues to perpetuate crimes against humanity, aided and abetted by a revisionist Iran.

Amid regional instability, Hezbollah, Hamas, al-Qaeda, the Islamic State, and other terrorist groups operate with impunity.

The United States must continue to exercise leadership in holding bad actors accountable for committing human rights abuses and for their terrorist activities.

Dr. Mitchell, you have been outspoken in your support for NATO. Would you advocate for a similar arrangement in the Middle East?

Mr. MITCHELL. Thank you for the question, ma'am.

I consider it beyond the remit of my duties to speculate much on security arrangements among allies in the Middle East on the model of NATO.

I will say that there are a number of states in the region who are threatened by Iran in particular and I think we have both an opportunity and responsibility in U.S. diplomacy to strengthen our security arrangements with those states.

Mrs. WAGNER. You have argued for deterrence by denial rather than deterrence by punishment. As I understand it, this means shoring up defensive forces to discourage adversaries rather than relying on threats.

I agree that we may need to tweak our strategic calculus. Bad actors like Syria and Iran have unquestionably undermined the United States' traditional modes of deterrence.

Can you explain what deterrence by denial would look like in the Middle East?

Mr. MITCHELL. Ma'am, I am so flattered that you have read my past work. I will point out that this was written in a previous life, before I was in this job, and was written with regards to the Baltic States specifically.

I will say, broadly, from the position that I hold now that I think a strong American deterrence in many parts of the world is really the essential fabric of stability.

I think strengthening that deterrence in Europe and in NATO and in northeastern Europe has a particular set of requirements at present.

I think it's a very different situation in the Middle East and I would defer to Ambassador Satterfield on the specifics of deterrence there.

Mrs. WAGNER. Ambassador.

Mr. SATTERFIELD. We are looking at what more can be done by individual states and in a collective sense by parties in the Middle East including those parties who have considerable military resources and capabilities of their own.

The President has made very clear that while we are shouldering the responsibility for the destruction of the remnants of the so-called caliphate of ISIS that in the period beyond the maintenance of that destruction needs to fall squarely on the shoulders of those in the region and we are exploring right now very actively whether and how a construct can be made, what we've turned in past years a regional security architecture that has a real ability to step in and take on responsibilities which we do not believe the U.S. should have to have indefinitely.

Mrs. WAGNER. Well, I appreciate that, and to that point, I know that the Ambassador to the United States relies on regional partners to counter Iran's malign influence.

Traditionally, the United States has worked closely with members of the Gulf Cooperation Council, or GCC. However, GCC member states—Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates—have cut ties with Qatar, which they maintain secretly supports Iran.

The United States postponed a planned summit with Gulf leaders until September, I believe, of 2018. Do U.S. officials anticipate a resolution to the Qatar diplomatic crisis before the summit?

Are we doing anything as the United States to try and deal with this rift?

Mr. SATTERFIELD. The President of the United States and every official in government has been focused on the issue of closing this rift since it occurred.

The President has directly engaged with the heads of state and government of all of the countries involved on both sides of this divide, and his message has been exceedingly clear from the beginning and it has been reiterated in his recent personal and phone contacts with that leadership, which is it is high time this get resolved.

We face a common challenge from Iran. We face a common challenge from other foes in the region and beyond. This rift serves

their interests, not ours. It needs to be mended and we hope very much that the states act on this.

Mrs. WAGNER. I thank the witnesses for the testimony, and yes, Dr. Mitchell, I do my homework.

And I thank the chairman again for his timeliness of putting this hearing together. I thank the witnesses for their tremendous service, and I yield back.

Chairman ROYCE. We go to Lois Frankel of Florida.

Ms. FRANKEL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to the witnesses for your service.

And I know we'll all probably agree that the Syrian civil war has been one of the greatest humanitarian crises of our time. Over 500 million dead at the hands of Assad, millions fleeing their homes trying to escape to other countries with great impact to those countries.

And I think it's fair to say that there's been a lot of dereliction on, I would say, on the world, maybe because—not knowing really what to do.

So you can point fingers in a lot of different places. But since we are here now, I am going to talk about this administration because I think Mr. Trump has sort of a whackadoo behavior, how he goes about all these things.

So the President acts—I don't whether it's impulsively or emotionally or correctly but he—I think all of us, when we see the chemical warfare on Assad on human beings it's horrendous.

And so I am not critical of the President feeling this is horrendous action, but what I don't understand is this President only allowed 11 Syrian refugees into this country last year compared to 15,000 in 2016.

So my question is, where is the humanity in that? Then he can't decide where he's pulling—he's staying in Syria, out Syria. One week he's pulling out of Syria and then the next week we have these air strikes.

So I think this inconsistency is not very helpful. One night of air strikes is, as I think many of my colleagues have said, is not a substitute for a comprehensive strategy, which should include robust political and diplomatic engagement.

And one of my questions I also have is was the State Department consulted at all and involved in this decision on the air strikes.

I am the mother of a United States war veteran who went to two wars. I came to this Congress purposely because I wanted to weigh in on decisions of war and peace.

And so I can tell you that, in my humble opinion, I think the President should have come to this Congress for a military authorization before these air strikes, because it's not like it was a surprise.

The President tweeted this out days before. So, I mean, it wasn't exactly that he surprised anybody with these air strikes, and I think it's a dangerous precedent that he is setting.

So just, if I come back on the question number one is was the State Department consulted on these attacks? Why are we not allowing refugees?

Are we going to allow some more refugees and, if you know, could you tell me what the cost of these air strikes were?

Mr. SATTERFIELD. Yes. The State Department was involved throughout the deliberative process that led to this decision, as we were in all prior considerations of use of military force in Syria.

Ms. FRANKEL. May I ask you something? Was there any recommendation from the State Department or any member of the administration that you know that the President come to Congress for an authorization before the strikes?

Mr. SATTERFIELD. I can comment on the authorities that were used, not on the deliberative process, and it was Article 2 of the Constitution that the President relied upon.

With respect to the refugee question, which you and your colleague have raised, that's outside my area of authority but we will provide you with a response from the State Department on that.

Ms. FRANKEL. Do you know the cost of the air strikes, by any chance?

Mr. SATTERFIELD. That question has been posed to the Department of Defense. We will refer that question to OSD, the Office of the Secretary.

Ms. FRANKEL. Dr. Mitchell, did you want to respond to any of those questions?

Mr. MITCHELL. I would only add that I appreciate the questions and we are happy to take a closer look and get back to you in written form.

Ms. FRANKEL. And one more quick question. Why did the President change his mind on these sanctions against Russia?

Mr. MITCHELL. There has been, and continues to be, a discussion about future steps with regards to sanctions on Russia. That's an ongoing process, and I would refer you to the White House for any more recent developments.

Ms. FRANKEL. Okay. Well, I guess we are not going to get an answer on that.

Well, anyway, thank you very much for being here. I yield back.

Chairman ROYCE. Thank you.

We go to Adam Kinzinger of Illinois.

Mr. KINZINGER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you both for being here. It's very appreciated.

You guys have a lot of tough work to do and you have done a lot of great work. I've always said when it comes to state-related issues, you never know what you are able to mitigate, the conflicts you were able to stop that never happened, and it's hard to put a price on that. So we appreciate all the hard work.

Obviously, Syria has been a failed policy since the last administration. In fact, the failure to follow through on the 2013 red line had massive implications not just in the Middle East but all over the world.

I think there's no doubt about it. You look at the foreign policy challenges we had before 2013 and the foreign policies we have post-2013 and there's a direct correlation to when bad actors felt like they could challenge the United States of America.

And, frankly, we said a lot of good words for a long time but followed through with no action.

Now, it's nice to see a President that's willing to follow through with action. I think the strikes in Syria were correct.

The American people, according to a poll today by two-to-one agreed that they were the correct thing to do, and I also don't think the President needed to come to Congress for every military move does require—there's not 535 Commanders in Chief. There's one.

Our job is to declare if a state of war exists and then to put the funding in to do that to follow through on that war.

The President has a lot of authority as envisioned and written by the Constitution.

But having served in the Air Force and still continuing to serve, Syria's been one of my big concerns as I've gotten to Congress. What I worry about is a lack of long-term strategy in Syria.

I think holding strong that chemical weapons have no place is a really good thing to do. But I think on the broader level the question is what is going to be the future of Syria.

And I think when we talk about the destruction of ISIS in the Middle East I don't think these two exist in a vacuum. I think part of the reason ISIS has been able to grow and thrive is because of the existence of a terrible dictator that basically creates an environment where somebody feels the only option they have to turn to is to a terrorist group because nobody else is coming to help them and the Assad family has been the biggest enemy of all time and you find yourself in that process radicalized.

And so when we fight this generational war on terror, we have to keep in mind that it's the seven and the 8-year-olds that are in these refugee camps right now that are either going to be the people that reject Islam or reject ISIS within Islam or they are going to be the people that, frankly, propagate ISIS or ISIS 2 or al-Qaeda 3 or whatever that next generation is.

So you cannot look at Syria and the challenges in Syria in a vacuum in isolation of the fight against ISIS. I think they are together.

But Ambassador Satterfield, last month the administration ordered the State Department to freeze \$200 million in stabilization funds that would enable those displaced by the conflict to return to their homes, which is exactly what I think is the opposite of what needs to happen to create a better environment.

Early recovery efforts and the restoration of basic services and security are critical elements to establishing inclusive local governance outside of Assad's control.

What are the specific accounts that have been frozen—economic support fund or nonproliferation, antiterrorism, or any related programs.

Mr. SATTERFIELD. Representative, we can get back to you with the specifics in response for that last part of your question.

What I will say in general over the funding that was suspended, we are reviewing now carefully with the White House, within the government, how best to move forward with respect to expenditure of taxpayer moneys in Syria.

Mr. KINZINGER. If you could get back to me with the first part, that would be great.

And what evidence have you seen of partner nations making assurances that no stabilization or reconstruction assistance will benefit the Assad regime?

Mr. SATTERFIELD. In September of last year at the United Nations, then Secretary Tillerson chaired a meeting of the so-called like-minded countries on Syria, a broad representative group of Arab and non-Arab countries, all of whom supported one fundamental principle—there should be no reconstruction assistance provided to the Assad regime or areas controlled by the Assad regime, minus significant progress on the U.N.-led Geneva political process. That progress has not taken place.

Mr. KINZINGER. Right. And let me ask about Iraq specifically.

I am a veteran of that war. A lot of American blood, treasure, toil went into bringing a free Iraq. I believe, as President Obama said, we did leave behind a free and fair Iraq and, unfortunately, we left them behind and now we have the challenges we have as we are back there again.

One of my concerns is we have an election in a few weeks in Iraq. Can you talk about what you have seen, either of you, in terms of Iranian influence and how to push back against that?

Because as somebody that was part of, frankly, fighting Iranian influence in Iraq it's extremely concerning.

Mr. SATTERFIELD. We can better address that question in another setting. Suffice it to say we believe there is a vigorous and truly democratic political debate in process underway in Iraq. But the specifics of your question in another closed setting can be best addressed.

Mr. KINZINGER. Understood.

Do you have anything to add, Dr. Mitchell, to any of that?

Mr. MITCHELL. No. Unfortunately, I agree with much of what you have said but most of what you have asked falls under Near East Bureau and not EUR.

Mr. KINZINGER. Okay. You get away with that one, and I appreciate it.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back. Thank you all for being here.

Chairman ROYCE. Thank you.

Norma Torres of California.

Mrs. TORRES. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Ambassador, I too want to associate myself with some of the comments that my colleagues on this side have stated, regarding that we need specific actions that you plan to take and specific outcomes that you expect to see as in regards to the forces in Syria. I would really hope that you can follow up.

Like many of my colleagues, I am very concerned. Iran is provoking Israel into conflict in Syria. Iran is intent on building a permanent presence inside Syria.

And it's shocking that the Trump administration has failed to articulate that strategy to deal with Iran's growing presence in Syria.

While the most recent missile attacks on Syria and the area where they have the chemical weapons has been applauded by many, I am very concerned at our lack of care for the children that have been injured.

And I understand that you have stated already that it's not within your jurisdiction to deal with refugees. But I am curious to know if you have given an opinion to that cause since to date this year it is my understanding that we've only received or allowed 11 Syrian refugees to this country.

Mr. SATTERFIELD. Ms. Torres, the best resolution to the suffering of the Syrian people, whether we are speaking about those who have been displaced internally and externally or—

Mrs. TORRES. I am sorry. I am talking about the injured children that need medical assistance and have been orphaned.

Mr. SATTERFIELD. Or with respect to individual cases of suffering and hardship is to end this war, to end the brutality of the Assad regime.

That requires a political process, and while we may like to believe that the U.S. simply saying something or deploying U.S. soldiers will fix it, the issue is far more complex than that. It requires a comprehensive international approach and that is what we have been very active in trying to generate.

But we have been frustrated. We have been frustrated by Russian efforts, which have blocked every move to place Assad and his regime before their responsibilities—every effort to move them to Geneva, and we continue to engage.

We continue to hope that through our engagement, through messages both positive and negative, Moscow recognizes it ought to be in their interest to move this forward.

I know the images are extraordinarily painful they are. We are trying to address them. But at the end, they are best addressed through changing the character of Syria itself, allowing these people to move forward with lives in peace, security, and stability.

Mrs. TORRES. So what is our strategy as it relates to Russia? The White House, from day to day, from tweet to tweet, you know, they seem to have a different opinion.

I am concerned as to what does that do for your long-term planning strategy.

Mr. MITCHELL. Russia's behavior internationally is very concerning. I agree with the premise of your question.

I would say that this administration takes that seriously in all of its forms, in multiple regions.

Our strategy, broadly, has consisted of two planks. The first is cost and position, so to raise the cost of an aggressive foreign policy until the Russian Government decides that the cost benefit analysis does not support further aggression. And we've done that through a variety of tools, from the executive branch, tools that were provided to us by Congress.

And the second plank has been to keep channels of dialogue open where possible. The Russians very often do not want to use those channels.

We have diplomatic and military channels on Syria, on Ukraine, in a number of fields related to strategic stability.

So the strategy has been to increase the pressure and point the way to a door for dialogue. At the end of the day, the responsibility rests with the Russian Government for whether or not they choose to embrace those opportunities for dialogue.

They have not embraced those opportunities and so we will continue to impose costs until they do.

Mrs. TORRES. So how have we increased the pressure on Russia lately?

Mr. MITCHELL. Well, in the period since January of last year, this administration has brought forth sanctions against 189 individuals and entities in Russia. We presided over—

Mrs. TORRES. My time has expired. It's my understanding, though, that most recently the President has removed some of those sanctions. So I am going to have to—

Mr. MITCHELL. I am sorry. What's the question?

Mrs. TORRES. I am going to have to yield back. My time has expired.

Chairman ROYCE. I thank the gentlelady for yielding back.

We go to Lee Zeldin of New York.

Mr. ZELDIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Ambassador Satterfield, it's been asked of you, but just to—I don't want to make any bad assumptions so I will just ask again. Has Iran violated the letter of the JCPOA?

Mr. SATTERFIELD. The IAEA has not found significant violations—

Mr. ZELDIN. I am not asking the IAEA. I am asking you.

Mr. SATTERFIELD. That is what we rely upon. The IAEA has not found significant violations.

Mr. ZELDIN. So is it—is it the State Department's position that Iran has not violated the letter of the JCPOA?

Mr. SATTERFIELD. That is the judgement of the IAEA, upon—

Mr. ZELDIN. I am not asking the IAEA. I am asking you, sir.

Mr. SATTERFIELD. I've responded, sir.

Mr. ZELDIN. Okay. Does Annex 1, paragraph 61 of the JCPOA state, "Iran will only engage in production of centrifuges to meet the enrichment R&D requirements?" Are you familiar with that?

Mr. SATTERFIELD. I would have to respond in formal fashion to that.

Mr. ZELDIN. Okay. Well, formally, that is what that Annex 1 Paragraph 61 states. Is it true that Iran has acquired more than the necessary amount of IR-8 centrifuge rotor assemblies for R&D purposes with 16 times more capacity than the IR-1 to enrich uranium?

Mr. SATTERFIELD. Again, I would have to respond in a formal written—

Mr. ZELDIN. You could respond right now, sir.

Mr. SATTERFIELD. I would have to consult. I am not a technical expert.

Mr. ZELDIN. I thought you were the Acting Secretary for—

Mr. SATTERFIELD. I am, sir. But those questions are highly technical and they demand a very technical and specific response, which we will provide.

Mr. ZELDIN. As part of the JCPOA, an enrichment, research, and development plan was submitted to the IAEA that permitted, roughly, 10 IR-6 centrifuges.

Are you aware that Iran has assembled 13 to 15 IR-6 centrifuges which should have been limited or destroyed under this plan?

Mr. SATTERFIELD. Representative, all questions of this character can be responded to in the appropriate level of classification in writing.

Mr. ZELDIN. Well, but you're stating that Iran has not violated the letter of the deal. So what I am going to do right now is go

through all the different ways Iran is violating the letter of the deal.

Is it your position that you're not going to respond with regards to any of the ways that Iran has violated the letter of the deal?

Mr. SATTERFIELD. These technical questions will require a sufficiently classified written response.

Mr. ZELDIN. Under Annex 1 paragraph 76 of the JCPOA, the IAEA can request access to military locations such as Parchin to verify compliance. Is that right?

Mr. SATTERFIELD. Representative, my response is the same to all questions at this time.

Mr. ZELDIN. It's a technical question. Is your position you can't tell me whether or not the JCPOA grants access to Iran's military sites for inspection for verification?

Mr. SATTERFIELD. It does, sir.

Mr. ZELDIN. It does state that?

Mr. SATTERFIELD. That is part of the JCPOA.

Mr. ZELDIN. Correct. Okay. So you're able to answer that.

Now, has it not been crystal clear that it's Iran's position both before, during, and after the JCPOA was finalized that they will not grant any access to their military sites?

Mr. SATTERFIELD. I will respond to that question in writing.

Mr. ZELDIN. You can't respond to that now?

Mr. SATTERFIELD. No, I cannot.

Mr. ZELDIN. I mean, Rohani hasn't had a problem saying this over video. I don't know why that requires a classification. I mean, it is well known open-sourced information Rohani has made crystal clear that we do not have access to their military sites.

Mr. SATTERFIELD. There is much well-known open-sourced material that is also not correct or is nuanced. I will provide a detailed response from appropriate U.S. Government agencies to all of these questions.

Mr. ZELDIN. Has Iran acquired more heavy water than you're allowed under the JCPOA?

Mr. SATTERFIELD. Same response, sir.

Mr. ZELDIN. What's the response?

Mr. SATTERFIELD. We will provide a detailed response in an appropriate fashion.

Mr. ZELDIN. See, here's the problem. You have no problem coming before Congress and others will come before Congress saying in no uncertain terms Iran has not violated the letter of the JCPOA.

But then when you're asked questions about all the different ways Iran has violated the letter of the JCPOA, you have to respond in writing or it's a technical question that someone else's expertise—you don't have the expertise to engage in any answers with regards to ways that Iran is violating the letter of the JCPOA.

Yet, you do have the expertise to come to Congress and say they are not violating the letter of the JCPOA and you do have the expertise to come before Congress and explain the justification for your position.

Yet, when asked about all the different ways—Iran collecting more IR-6 rotor assemblies than they are allowed to, assembling more IR-8 rotor assemblies than they are allowed to—the cen-

trifuges, to deny access to their military sites, to collect more heavy water than they are permitted to.

And that list goes on. When we went to Parchin and we found nuclear particles that we wanted to follow up on, Iran's new position was, you can't visit Parchin. So we were not able to inspect with regards to those particles that were discovered.

So if you do not have the technical capabilities to answer any questions with regard to all the known specifics of how Iran is violating the letter of the deal, then we should not have one witness after another coming before this committee and others making the flat-out statement that Iran is not violating the letter of the JCPOA because that has consequences.

Mr. SATTERFIELD. For the sake of the record, Congressman, my comment was the IAEA has in its most recent reporting not found significant violations of the provision.

Mr. ZELDIN. And until the IAEA comes before this committee—and if they do come before the committee I will be happy to ask the same exact questions—but you're here representing the United States State Department and I am asking you about different specific questions.

Mr. SATTERFIELD. And I've answered we will provide you detailed answers to all of those questions.

Mr. ZELDIN. I yield back.

Chairman ROYCE. We go now to Brad Schneider of Illinois.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Thank you, and I want to thank the chairman and the ranking member for having this hearing. I want to thank the witnesses for your service to our country and your patience today and staying to the end.

Tonight in Israel, in fact, with the time change, as we are speaking this moment, Israelis are celebrating Independence Day, marking the 70th anniversary of the birth of the state.

Seventy years ago when Israel declared its independence, the United States was the first nation in the entire world to recognize the new state.

But there were five armies from five nations—Arab states—who immediately attacked—Arab states of Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq.

Today, Israel has peace treaties with Egypt and Jordan. Today, Iran controls, effectively, Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq.

Yesterday, the Israeli Government released a map locating five Iranian airbases in Syria—two in the south near Damascus, one in the north—one in the east, one in the northwest, and one in the center of the country, T-4.

In February, T-4 was the base from which Iran launched a drone to attack Israel. Israel responded by destroying some of the base and lost a jet and then had to go in and take out much of the Syrian air defenses.

Over the past weekend, or April 8th, rather, Israel again struck at T-4, taking out Iranian weapons, and it was announced yesterday that they believe that Iran was installing advanced sophisticated air defense systems.

Some of my concern—just quoting a couple of article headlines—Business Insider yesterday noted that Israeli intelligence report-

edly said Trump's Syria strike failed, didn't take out much of anything. That's a quote from the headline.

Times of Israel on April 14th said Israel fears Trump may see job as done in Syria—leave Israel alone to face Iran.

So my question for you today, as we sit here—and I've asked this question of others every chance I get—what specifically is the United States strategy in ensuring that Iran does not get a permanent presence in Syria to threaten our allies, Israel, and others. What are we doing—what more can we be doing?

Mr. SATTERFIELD. We, certainly, are concerned with the threat which Iran presents in Syria and through Syria to Lebanon, to Israel, and to our other allies and partners in the region and beyond.

Our strategy in working with Israel, with Jordan, with the Gulf States, with all the countries of the region and the broader international community is to deny to Iran the ability to proliferate in the fashion that it does into and through Syria.

It's our work with the Iraqi armed forces and the Iraqi Government on the border. It is our work in the northeast with our own forces and our work, more broadly, with the international community to deny the resources and support which Iran and the Revolutionary Guard Corps depend upon for this very threatening activity.

But I have to challenge the assertion in the opening part of your remarks that Iraq and Lebanon are controlled by Iran. They are not. They are both independent states.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. It's hard to say that Lebanon is independent when it includes in its government Hezbollah, and Hezbollah has 150,000 rockets increasingly more accurate, increasingly more powerful delivered by Iran.

Iran is developing indigenous weapons manufacturing capability not just in Lebanon but in Syria. Iran has five permanent air bases in Syria.

It's hard to say that, A, what we are doing is working if Iran is increasing its malign influence in the region and I am having a hard time understanding what specifically we are doing to push back against Iran's progress.

Mr. SATTERFIELD. We are working on Iran's proliferation, the sources of that proliferation, its ability to conduct the physical movements of materiel throughout the region and not just in Syria or in Lebanon.

And in all of this we are partnered very closely with the Government of Israel as we are with other governments.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. But when the President of the United States said couple weeks ago within 6 months U.S. troops are going to be out of Iran, we are washing our hands, what signal does that send to all of our allies in the region?

And as I noted in some of the headlines, Israel is increasingly concerned that they are going to be left alone to push back against Iran's malign influence on its borders.

Mr. SATTERFIELD. The President has made clear, Secretary Mattis, and Chairman Dunford have made clear the primary purpose of our military presence in Syria is the defeat of ISIS and the caliphate.

We look to other diplomatic, economic, and cooperative measures with Israel, with other states in the region to achieve these broader goals.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. I am running out of time. A quick question. I request a quick response.

The strike on the three Syrian chemical weapon sites—were they a part of a greater strategy or merely a punitive strike for Syria's chemical weapons?

Mr. SATTERFIELD. The President has made clear—the Department of Defense and other spokesmen for the U.S. Government have made clear they were aimed at both responding to and deterring the use of chemical weapons both in Syria and more broadly.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. But is that a part of our broader strategy in the region and—

Mr. SATTERFIELD. It's an international strategy, sir.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. And I believe that we have to do all that we can. We have a moral responsibility to do all that we can to make sure that not just Syria but the world understands chemical weapons.

Mr. SATTERFIELD. It's a global—it's a global—

Mr. SCHNEIDER. But that's distinct from the strategy of pushing back against Iran's malign influence in the region.

Mr. SATTERFIELD. It is a separate issue entirely.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. And so that's why I have my concern.

I am over time. I thank the chairman for the indulgence. I do want to associate myself with the remarks of the chairman and the ranking member, in particular with respect to the Caesar Syrian Protection Act, Russian sanction, filling the positions that we have at the State Department.

It is unacceptable 15 months into this administration how many open positions remain, and in particular the importance of a robust investment of resources, energy, and money, and focus into diplomacy and development.

Without those two, our defense requirements only grow. Thank you very much. I yield back.

Chairman ROYCE. Thank you, Mr. Schneider.

We now go to John Curtis of Utah.

Mr. CURTIS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My appreciation to these two witnesses for their endurance, for staff, and for yourself and ranking member. I have just a few brief questions. Thank you.

There was an article at Reuters last week that Russia was supporting Assad through civilian aircraft. The House passed the Caesar bill and which would impose sanctions for this type of action.

So my question is, realizing the bill has not made it through the Senate, are sanctions being considered for this, and could you speak to the importance of getting this bill through the Senate and how helpful that would be to the administration?

Mr. SATTERFIELD. With respect to any assistance being provided to Iran or the Assad regime, we are quite keen to use all existing authorities to address any states, any entities that may be involved and that certainly includes Russia.

With respect to the Caesar bill, we would have to get back with a considered position on this, particularly with respect to the question you just posed.

Mr. CURTIS. Thank you.

Let me ask you for a moment to consider a different audience. Consider my constituents back home who will hopefully be watching this and are struggling to understand war powers and perhaps if you could just take a minute and explain the difference between Article 2 and the AUMF and what was applied here in a way that they might be able to digest that.

Mr. SATTERFIELD. I will try to take that on. Volumes have been written on this topic—

Mr. CURTIS. Right.

Mr. SATTERFIELD [continuing]. Over the course of the last 200 years.

The Article 2 authority granted to the President by the Constitution as Commander in Chief is quite broad. There are requirements which follow upon use of that authority. That is, the White House must report use of forces to the Congress within a specified time limit.

But the authority itself is constitutional and it is quite sweeping, and AUMF and in the case of Syria, Iraq—we typically deal with to extent AUMF—one from 2001, one from 2002—our focus on substance. They deal with certain specified entities or types, categories of threat. They are sometimes limited in time. These two were not, but they could be.

So an AUMF is specific to purpose, often to the time they remain valid. The Article 2 authorities are not constrained by either of those considerations.

Mr. CURTIS. By way of clarification, I want to make clear that the strikes were based on Article 2. Is that correct?

Mr. SATTERFIELD. That's correct, sir.

Mr. CURTIS. Right. Help me and my constituents understand at what point we go past Article 2. We talked about if this happens again we'll be back with some type of—I don't want to say retaliation but some type of action, and how do we know where that fine line is?

Mr. SATTERFIELD. I am going to give you with some diffidence a non-lawyer's response to your question for the constituents back home, which is every President, every administration, in every instance where there is contemplation of the use of military force or forces must consider what the appropriate authority, Article 2—in extent, AUMF—soliciting from the Congress an explicit and new authorization should best be used, depending upon the circumstances, and it is very much circumstance condition-dependent.

Mr. CURTIS. And I am sure I don't need to define this, but let me, just for my own sake, say that there's, obviously, some urgency in Congress to be involved, balancing, very carefully with this concept of 535 generals, right, and appreciating any involvement in this—as we pass the line, right, in understanding that Congress is anxious to be supportive but also to be involved.

Mr. SATTERFIELD. Well understood.

Mr. CURTIS. Let me also ask some questions about our allies.

I was pleased to hear that we were joined by two of our allies—the United Kingdom and France. I was pleased that others spoke up to support that but kind of the question in my mind why they weren't there to be a part of the strikes.

Can you help me understand that process and how they are in or out?

Mr. MITCHELL. Thank you for that question.

We have had ongoing consultations, certainly, with European allies and with Turkey for a very long time on Syria, broadly.

There were consultations in the lead-up to the strikes, particularly with France and Britain; and the French and British, for geopolitical and historical reasons and reasons of national interest, chose to support us.

There are certain constraints in the German system on legal constraints, political constraints, on the ability to participate directly in a strike.

I was in Berlin in the lead-up to the strikes and I know that there were a lot of consultations internally. The Germans came out in their own system with the highest level of and most fulsome level of support they could provide.

The Italians were supportive. Turkey was supportive. But I will just say that from our perspective at State Department, we were pleased with the level of engagement and material—not only support but in the case of France and Great Britain, this was leadership in showing the way toward both the need for the strikes and then taking action and engaging with us when we worked through that.

Mr. CURTIS. I apologize. I am out of time.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield.

Chairman ROYCE. Thank you.

We go now to Adriano Espaillat from New York.

Mr. ESPAILLAT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I wanted to come in like Mariana Rivera and perhaps close the gate, right.

Yes, it remains an essential axiom of U.S. interests to have Iran not obtain a nuclear weapon, and though the President continues to suggest terminating the Iran nuclear deal it is necessary to maintain it and strengthen it so that we can prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon so that we can further build upon diplomatic efforts to combat Iran's nuclear program and aggressive actions.

Iran's malicious actions are not just confined to nuclear weapons. It supports the Houthis rebels in Yemen and poses a threat to the stability of that region and the continuation of this war has led to one of the largest humanitarian crises in the world.

The U.S. has continued to aid Saudi Arabia in this conflict despite the heavy civilian casualties contributed by all sides in the conflict.

I wanted to ask the first question regarding the JCPOA and the issues with the sunset provision. I know that the ballistic missile program and the human rights abuse issues are critical.

But what do you see—do you see this agreement surviving past May 2018, Ambassador? Where do you see the JCPOA? Do you see it surviving or do you feel that the sunset provision is sort of like a line in the sand that will derail the entire agreement?

Mr. SATTERFIELD. The President has made very clear there are critical areas of the JCPOA and areas surrounding the JCPOA—missile and ballistic missile technology—that require addressing.

We are working actively to succeed in that addressing of those defects. We hope very much that we achieve a success, but with respect to what happens on or around May 12th, that is a decision for the President which will be shaped by what in fact is the outcome of the discussions underway now.

Mr. ESPAILLAT. And where do you see our allies? Do they feel confident that in fact perhaps attacking the ballistic issue and the human rights issue without the—having a concrete agreement on the sunset—is that enough for them? Are they with us all the way on this or it's just—are they half stepping us?

Mr. SATTERFIELD. We are mid-stream, sir, in our conversations with the European allies about this, and the sense that I have from our engagements, at least with the European allies, is that there is a greater awareness of the extent of the Iranian challenge than there was in the past and there's a greater political willingness in the U.K., France, and Germany to take actions to address the shortcomings of JCPOA.

Mr. ESPAILLAT. Okay. On the second issue of Yemen, Ambassador, the Obama administration reduced the number of U.S. servicemen there, helping the coalition due to the concerns that I stipulated earlier—the humanitarian crisis that this coalition and others have helped create.

Has this assessment changed under the current administration and if so what is the justification for such change?

Mr. SATTERFIELD. The administration is quite concerned with different aspects of the Yemen crisis. First is humanitarian. This is an extraordinarily large humanitarian disaster—one of the greatest man-made disasters in modern history.

And while the coalition campaign is not the exclusive cause or sustainer of the crisis, the Houthis themselves bear very significant responsibility.

The fact is we are associated with the Saudi-led campaign, not with the Houthis. We have engaged at the highest levels of the government, including the President repeatedly, to impress upon the governments involved in this campaign, led by Saudi Arabia that there might be every possible action taken first to maintain free and full access for humanitarian and commercial goods including fuel into Yemen, secondly, that the campaign directed with the purpose of bringing the Houthis to the negotiating table is not, in our view, a campaign that can succeed.

Saudi Arabia has legitimate self-defense needs and requirements which do require military action. We work with them to help shape and support those actions in a way that mitigates or diminishes civilian casualties.

But the campaign to force a political resolution is not one that we believe has a military calculus to it. It's political. It should lie in enabling the United Nations to move forward. We have the new representative of the United Nations for Yemen in Washington today, and we hope very much that his efforts can achieve success.

Mr. ESPAILLAT. And so why is the administration so far away from reaching the 45,000-person cap on refugees? If we have this issue of—not just in Yemen but across the region with so many refugees, why have we not carried our own load, as some of the European countries have done?

Mr. SATTERFIELD. That is an issue which involves various departments of the U.S. Government beyond the Department of State and broader security and policy concerns, Congressman.

Mr. ESPAILLAT. Thank you. Thank you, Ambassador.

Thank you, Chairman.

Chairman ROYCE. Thank you.

And I want to remind committee members of the classified briefing we are holding on these issues immediately following the hearing and I invite them to join us in the SCIF.

And with that, I want to thank the witnesses for appearing before our committee today. We very much appreciate your work on these critical issues and we look forward to greater consultation between the committee and the department in the weeks ahead on these issues.

And we stand adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 12:33 p.m., the committee was adjourned.]

A P P E N D I X



MATERIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

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

Edward R. Royce (R-CA), Chairman

April 18, 2018

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 in Room 2172 of the Rayburn House Office Building (and available live on the Committee website at <http://www.ForeignAffairs.house.gov>):

DATE: Wednesday, April 18, 2018

TIME: 10:00 a.m.

SUBJECT: U.S. Policy Toward a Turbulent Middle East

WITNESSES: The Honorable David M. Satterfield
Acting Assistant Secretary
Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs
U.S. Department of State

The Honorable A. Wess Mitchell
Assistant Secretary
Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs
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 FULL COMMITTEE HEARING

Day Wednesday Date 04/18/2018 Room 2172

Starting Time 10:00AM Ending Time 12:32PM

Recesses 0 (to) (to)

Presiding Member(s)

Chairman Edward R. Royce

Check all of the following that apply:

Open Session

Executive (closed) Session

Televised

Electronically Recorded (taped)

Stenographic Record

TITLE OF HEARING:

U.S. Policy Toward a Turbulent Middle East

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

See attached.

NON-COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

N/A

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.)

Statements for the Record: Representative Dan Donovan

Questions for the Record: Ranking Member Eliot Engel and Representatives Brad Sherman and Ted Lieu

TIME SCHEDULED TO RECONVENE _____

or

TIME ADJOURNED 12:32PM



Full Committee Hearing Coordinator

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

FULL COMMITTEE HEARING

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	Tom Suozzi, NY
X	Adriano Espaillat, NY
X	Ted Lieu, CA

Statement for the Record
Submitted by Representative Dan Donovan

The five minutes we are allotted for statements cannot begin to scratch the surface of turbulence in the Middle East. There are almost too many depraved, repugnant bad actors to name, from ISIS to Assad. Iran however, is the scourge of the Middle East, wreaking havoc and leaving a path of malevolence in its wake.

As a result of the Obama Administration, Iran received a windfall not just from the bad Iran Nuclear deal, but also from a settlement claim involving weapons that were sold to the Shah by the US but never delivered to Iran when the Shah fell. Under the settlement, the United States sent Iran the \$400 million balance plus \$1.3 billion in accrued interest, for a total of \$1.7 billion. The JCPOA lifted sanctions which in turn allowed Iran to finally access money in overseas accounts, with the top line aggregate approximating \$120 billion.

The Obama Administration naively believed that Iran would use this boon on its dire domestic needs. It was wishful thinking then. How Iran has spent its jackpot in the past few years demonstrates just how gullible President Obama was on this issue. While keeping in mind that Iran's current youth unemployment rate is at about 29%, let's review just a sampling of Iran's spending habits on foreign soil:

- According to a senior Iranian cleric cited in a 2014 Washington Post article, Iran provided over \$1 billion in military aid alone to Iraq.
- Iran funds Assad- who has brutally decimated his own population via chemical weapons and barrel bombs. Staffan de Mistura, the U.N. special envoy for Syria, estimated in July 2015 that Iran gives Assad anywhere between \$6 and \$35 billion a year.
- Israeli government minister Yuval Steinitz told the Times of Israel that Iran's expenditures on Hezbollah alone total to \$1 billion per year

And that's merely the beginning of what's been reported in various media outlets.

What do Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon hold in common for Iran? Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon together represent a geographic triumvirate for Iran that gives Iran a clear, direct path to Israel. It's no secret that Iran wants nothing more than to destroy Israel.

Just this month, Iran launched unmanned aerial vehicle from Syria at the T4 airbase near Homs into Israeli airspace. While the Israelis shot down this drone, IDF spokesman Ronen Manelis stated that analysis indicated that the Iranian drone was carrying explosives, and Israel retaliated with a strike on the T4 airbase that targets Iran's drone program. And yesterday, Israel released an IDF map demonstrating not one, but five Iranian bases in Syria.

Iran's expansion into Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon represents a dangerous, turbulent development that the US must counter. We cannot allow this expansion to continue, and we must stand with our ally Israel to counter Iran at every turn. The Iranian regime has only fanned the flames of violence in the Middle East to serve its own hateful, tumultuous agenda. The Trump Administration has been a great supporter and friend to Israel, and I am looking forward to hearing how the Administration plans to counter the Iranians regime's plot to build a bridge to Israel.



Questions for the Record from Ranking Member Eliot Engel

U.S. Policy Toward a Turbulent Middle East

For the Honorable David M. Satterfield

April 18, 2018

Question:

Should the United States continue to have a role in providing reconstruction assistance to communities liberated from ISIS inside Syria? Can military gains against ISIS be sustained without stabilizing those liberated areas?

Answer:

The United States is not providing reconstruction assistance in Syria, including in communities liberated from ISIS. The United States continues to advocate for UN-led diplomatic efforts consistent with UN Security Council Resolution 2254, while denying the benefits of reconstruction assistance and economic normalization to the Assad regime until it commits fully to the UN-led transition process.

The United States is working with Coalition partners to support immediate stabilization and early recovery efforts in areas liberated from ISIS control, including Explosive Remnants of War (ERW) removal, the restoration of essential services and building local capacity to support longer-term sustainability. The Administration has repeatedly emphasized that we are committed to completing the fight against ISIS and rooting out its remaining havens. The President has also made clear that, as we move forward, the Administration will continue to engage the international community and our partners in the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS to take a greater role in stabilizing liberated areas of Syria.

Question:

I understand that the UN Development Program (UNDP) has begun doing some work in Assad-controlled areas in Syria, including the city of Homs, that goes beyond humanitarian assistance. What can you tell us about this work by UNDP and other multilateral agencies? What leverage does the US Government have to ensure that US funds are being funneled to the Assad regime?

Answer:

The United States has been clear that we will not support stabilization assistance or international reconstruction assistance to any area under control by the Assad regime. We ask our allies to do the same, and require our implementing partners to follow this policy. The United States provides need-based humanitarian assistance in Syria through the United Nations and direct funding to humanitarian organizations. This funding does not go to nor does it support the Assad regime.

Question:

I understand that funding is on hold, pending an interagency review, for the International, Impartial, and Independent Mechanism (IIIM) to Assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of

Persons Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes under International Law Committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011. In notifying these funds to Congress, the State Department specifically stated that the U.S. contribution enables the U.S. to leverage other countries to contribute on a voluntary basis, including the Netherlands, Germany, Finland, Switzerland, and Qatar. At a time when the IIIM is necessary to advance accountability, especially after the regime used chemical weapons against the Syrian people earlier this month, why is funding for the IIIM on hold?

Answer:

The Administration maintains its strong support for holding the Assad regime accountable for its atrocities, including through mechanisms like the IIIM. In line with the President's request to review all foreign assistance, the Administration continually evaluates appropriate assistance levels and how best assistance might be utilized. The State Department will continue to support an array of efforts to hold the Assad regime accountable.

Question:

The de-escalation zones in Syria were negotiated by Jordan, Russia and the United States. As we saw earlier this year, Iran is provoking Israel into conflict in Syria and is intent on building a permanent presence inside that country, including in the de-escalation zones in the Southwest of Syria. To what extent can Russia reliably guarantee Iran and Syria's adherence to ceasefire zones? Is the United States relying on Russia to influence Iran? If Russia is unwilling or unable to provide assurances that the Syrian regime or its associated forces, such as Hezbollah or other Iranian-backed proxy forces, will cease violence in these areas, what is the next option for U.S. policy in Syria? What motivation does Russia have to keep Iran in check?

Answer:

On November 6, the U.S., Russia, and Jordan signed the Memorandum of Principles (MOP) regarding the ceasefire in southwest Syria, which builds on and strengthens the existing ceasefire signed in July. Part of the MOP enshrines the commitment of the United States, Russia, and Jordan that non-Syrian foreign forces leave the southwest ceasefire area. This requirement is meant to not only diminish the influence of Iran and its proxies in Syria, but also to protect the borders of our allies, Jordan and Israel.

However, we remain realistic regarding Russia's ability, and even willingness, to stop Syrian regime forces or associated forces, such as Hizballah or other Iranian-backed proxy forces, from violating the ceasefire in the southwest. The Administration remains focused on neutralizing Iran's threatening influence in Syria. Iran is subject to a variety of U.S. sanctions, including a broad U.S. embargo on trade with Iran, as well as numerous targeted authorities directed at its state sponsorship of terrorism, ballistic missile program, and human rights abuses.

Question:

Administration officials have spoken about how the Syrian Democratic Forces, our local partners in Eastern Syria, have begun to incorporate non-Kurdish parties into their rank and file. Can you provide specific examples of this? Can you evaluate our assistance partnership with the Syrian Kurds? Has the SDF leadership structure changed in the last year to help incorporate non-Kurds? Does the SDF continue to require fighters to undergo Kurdish indoctrination?

Answer:

The Syrian Democratic Forces has become a multi-ethnic and multi-sectarian organization, and that is one of the reasons why we are working with them. The SDF is comprised of Kurds, Arabs, Turkmen, Christians, Assyrians and others, all dedicated to the defeat of ISIS and securing liberated areas.

The U.S.-led Coalition has conducted the D-ISIS campaign in Syria by, with, and through the Syrian Democratic Forces. A key tenet of the D-ISIS campaign is that local forces should play a prominent role in D-ISIS operations. We have specifically focused on increasing the Arab element of the SDF and this effort has achieved some success. For example, during the battle for Raqqa, 80 per cent of the assaulting SDF force was Arab. As the SDF has advanced in Syria, it has steadily incorporated Arab and other local forces committed to the D-ISIS fight without prejudice to ethnicity, religion, or ideology. The U.S. military's presence on the ground and training of Arab components of the SDF has also allowed us to continue to shape training, and, by extension, the inclusive and cohesive structure of the SDF. The SDF now numbers approximately 60,000 fighters, half of whom are Arab.

More than 1,400 SDF fighters have laid down their lives in Syria to liberate millions of Syrians from the ISIS scourge. These sacrifices have also helped deny ISIS the opportunity to plan and carry out attacks throughout the world. We could not have achieved what we have in the D-ISIS fight without the SDF.

The United States has and will continue to meet with a wide variety of actors in Syria that make up its diverse communities and who partner with us in our Defeat ISIS campaign and on stabilization efforts in liberated areas.

Question:

Turkey and the U.S.-led Coalition clearly have different priorities in Syria. What is this Administration doing to strive for a productive relationship with Turkey, despite having varying goals? How are we working with our European allies to achieve common ground with Turkey?

Answer:

We are committed to working with Turkey as a NATO Ally and a partner to defeat ISIS and other terrorist groups. We share with Turkey key goals in Syria: a whole, stable Syria and a political

resolution to the Syrian conflict in line with UN Security Council Resolution 2254, without a role for Assad. High level bilateral talks on Syria with Turkish counterparts remain ongoing. In support of Turkey's national security concerns and the common struggle against terrorism, we have encouraged the Europeans to target the financial networks of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), a U.S.-designated Foreign Terrorist Organization, and provide other counter-PKK assistance to Turkey when possible.

Question:

Hanin Ghadar, a Lebanese Shia journalist, was sentenced to six months in prison after she was found guilty in absentia of "defaming the Lebanese army, harming its reputation and accusing it of distinguishing between Lebanese citizens." Last week, her sentence was thrown out and her case referred to a civilian court. But, the damage in Lebanon is done. What is the United States doing to convey to the Lebanese authorities that U.S. support for the Lebanese military is at risk if the military goes after journalists or civil society?

Answer:

The Department of State shares your concerns about this incident and the recent trend of Lebanese politicians taking advantage of colonial-era defamation laws in order to target political speech by journalists, bloggers, and entertainers. These cases are inconsistent with Lebanon's long history of upholding relatively free expression, which is guaranteed by its constitution. Ambassador Richard and other members of the U.S. country team in Lebanon forcefully raised our serious concerns about Ms. Ghaddar's case with senior Lebanese leaders, including Prime Minister Hariri, Lebanese Armed Forces Commander Joseph Awn, Head Military Prosecutor Peter Germanos, and President of the Military Court General Hussein Abdallah. To underscore our concern, we withdrew an invitation in February to Military Court President Abdallah, who was scheduled to participate in a leadership-training program at the National Defense University in Washington, DC. We believe this action helped underscore to the Lebanese government and military the extent of our displeasure with Ms. Ghaddar's case. The Military Court ultimately determined in April this case was outside its purview. We will continue to raise our concerns about this case and others and ensure that your team is briefed on the latest developments.

Question:

Recently, the Israeli government announced that an agreement had been reached between Israel and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to resettle, over the course of five years, at least half of the African asylum seekers in Israel, deporting them to Western countries. However, within a few hours the agreement was suspended, then cancelled, and now these asylum seekers are in limbo. What is the status of the agreement? Does the United States have a position on how the Government of Israel should treat African asylum seekers? Does the United States have a position on the agreement between UNHCR and the Israeli government? Will the United States commit to resettle some African refugees if Israel agrees to the UNHCR agreement?

Answer:

The United States has long been a world leader in advocating for humanitarian assistance and protection for refugees and displaced populations. The Department of State seeks to promote protection, ease suffering, and resolve the plight of refugees and displaced populations around the world.

According to a public statement by Prime Minister Netanyahu on April 3, the Government of Israel cancelled an agreement with UNHCR that had established a Framework for Cooperation between Israel and UNHCR to promote durable solutions for approximately 39,000 Eritreans and Sudanese migrants currently living in Israel. The United States resettled 175 refugees from Israel in FY 2017, primarily Eritreans.

Question:

Many of us remain concerned about Iranian influence in Iraq, especially as Prime Minister Abadi stands for election. Can you provide us some insight into your contingency planning should the Iraqi elections result in a partner at Iraq's helm that the United States finds unacceptable?

Answer:

We share your concern. We are under no illusions about Iran's destabilizing activities in the region and remain committed to reducing Iran's malign influence in Iraq.

Nearly all Iraqi political leaders recognize that their country's strategic partnership with the United States provides much that Iran simply cannot match: world-class security assistance, global leadership in marshalling international aid and investment, and a partner, which reinforces Iraq's sovereignty, rather than undercuts it. Leveraging these comparative advantages while helping tie Iraq more closely to its Arab neighbors and to international financial institutions counterbalances Iran and diminishes its negative influence.

The United States has worked closely with each democratically elected Iraqi leader since 2005. Our priority is supporting free and fair elections and encouraging high voter turnout, which we believe will produce a moderate government more interested in serving the Iraqi people than in sectarian identity politics. The Department has allocated \$7.1 million in assistance to promote voting opportunities for internally displaced persons and provide training for 3,000 civil society monitors. We are confident that, both at the voting booth and during government formation, Iraqis will weigh the benefits of close relations with the United States.

Question:

The Administration announced last year that it would only permit 45,000 refugees to enter the country in fiscal year 2018. It now appears that the U.S. will not come anywhere close to meeting that number – 20,000 is the current projection. It seems to me that this policy, aside from its failure to offer much hope for those humans suffering from war and persecution, also negatively impacts our relations with allies, such as Germany, Turkey, or Jordan who are doing much more to help

Middle Eastern refugees than the U.S. Our severely shortsighted refugee policy also puts us in league with other undesirable countries, such as China, which admits very few refugees.

- How many Middle Eastern refugees are moving to Europe now? Do you expect that number to change in the future?
- Why is the Administration so far away from reaching the 45,000-person cap on refugees this year?
- Germany has accepted well over a million refugees since 2015 and is willing to accept up to 200,000 this year. How many serious security incidents have occurred in Germany attributed to those refugees?

Answer:

From 2014-2017, Europe witnessed the largest number of refugees and asylum seekers crossing its borders since World War II. About one quarter of the four million asylum claims made in this period came from those displaced by the war in Syria, with significant numbers also coming from Afghanistan and Iraq. The flow of arrivals has largely subsided. In the first quarter of 2018, some 16,640 individuals arrived irregularly to Europe by sea, compared to nearly 31,000 arrivals in the same period of 2017. Most of these individuals are likely to seek asylum. For March, the primary Middle Eastern nationalities among arrivals by sea were from Syria, Iraq, and Tunisia. We expect arrivals this year to remain lower than or consistent with 2017. In the long-term, however, any new displacement in the Middle East could again lead to significant movements of asylum seekers into Europe.

The United States continues to resettle vulnerable people who are fleeing persecution and conflict while upholding the safety and security of the American people. Additional vetting procedures announced in October 2017 and January 2018 are enabling departments and agencies to more thoroughly review applicants to identify threats to public safety and national security. As a result, the processing time for each case is slower as departments and agencies implement these additional vetting procedures.

Germany's crime statistics are compiled by the Federal Police Office for data on the prior year. This year's report, covering crimes committed in 2017, is expected to be released in late May. In 2017, there was one serious incident involving a Palestinian who had been denied asylum. He allegedly killed one and injured five others with a machete in a grocery store. The defendant was known to the police, and assessed to be mentally unstable rather than a security risk. In 2016, 280,000 asylum seekers entered Germany. That same year there were three serious incidents related to asylum seekers. Based on Federal Police statistics from 2016, crime perpetrated by non-citizen residents more broadly, including asylum seekers and refugees, increased by 42 percent from 2015 to 2016; is primarily committed by young men under 30; is most likely to be committed against fellow non-citizen residents; and encompasses a range of violent and economic crimes.



Questions for the Record from Representative Brad Sherman
U.S. Policy Toward a Turbulent Middle East
For the Honorable David M. Satterfield
April 18, 2018

Question:

Does Qatar currently give money to terrorist organizations, or allow its citizens to do so?

Answer:

Qatar, a key U.S. counterterrorism partner, has made numerous public commitments to deprive terrorist organizations of funds, and is making significant efforts to implement those commitments. However, Qatar, along with all countries in the region, has more work to do to combat terrorism finance. Qatar is implementing an MOU on counterterrorism cooperation the U.S. and Qatar signed in July 2017, and has taken important steps, including increasing the sharing of information on terrorist financiers, conducting a review of its charitable and money services business sectors to identify terrorist financing risks, and taking steps toward developing a domestic designations regime in line with international standards. We will continue to engage to ensure terrorist organizations cannot use Qatar or its citizens as sources of funding or support.

Question:

Saudi Arabia is discussing a civilian nuclear cooperation agreement with the United States, i.e. the Section 123 Agreement required by the Atomic Energy Act, but it has not accepted enrichment and reprocessing restrictions in the agreement. Will the Administration press for such restrictions in any 123 Agreement with Saudi Arabia, and what is the Administration doing to prevent Saudi Arabia from engaging in enrichment or reprocessing of fissile material?

Answer:

All 123 agreements include, at a minimum, the legal requirements listed in Section 123 of the Atomic Energy Act, as amended, which include restrictions on enrichment and reprocessing of U.S.-obligated material as well as certain requirements for materials security. Even on their own, these requirements represent the strongest nonproliferation, safety, and security standards required by any nuclear supplier in the world.

Beyond these legal requirements, the United States has a policy of seeking to limit the spread of enrichment and reprocessing technologies around the world. The United States pursues the strongest nonproliferation standards that are achievable in all 123 agreement negotiations, including negotiations with Saudi Arabia.

Question:

Is Japan contributing sufficiently to the enormous financial costs that we face in conflicts in the Middle East? What is Japan's contribution compared to that of other states?

Answer:

Japan remains a significant financial contributor to regional stability, humanitarian relief, and reconstruction efforts in the Middle East in support of our foreign policy goals. In 2015, Prime Minister

Abe announced a multi-year commitment for Japan to dedicate an additional \$2.2 billion in assistance toward the Middle East, including assistance for displaced persons and Iraqi reconstruction. In addition, Japan has provided over \$1.1 billion in assistance related to the Syrian conflict. On May 1, Prime Minister Abe pledged an additional \$15 million to Jordan to strengthen the country's waste-processing capacity to account for the influx of Syrian refugees. In February, Japan announced a \$100 million aid package for Iraqi humanitarian assistance and in April announced a new \$330 million loan for irrigation projects. Japan has provided \$7.4 billion in grant and loan assistance to Iraq since 2003. In 2016, Japan offered a \$500 million loan for Iraqi budgetary assistance, of which approximately half has been disbursed to date.

Japan is also a reliable contributor to Middle East peace. Foreign Minister Taro Kono recently pledged an additional \$26 million to support the resumption of Israeli-Palestinian peace talks. Japan remains a steadfast donor to UNICEF, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), and the Palestinian Authority via the World Bank's trust fund mechanism. In 2017, Japan contributed \$43.4 million to UNRWA, ranking seventh out of 57 member state donors.

Question:

Should Turkey continue to enjoy the same arms export terms (such as a shorter Congressional notification period) that we give to other NATO countries, given that it is, at best, the least pro-American NATO member?

Answer:

Despite strains in our bilateral relationship, Turkey remains an important NATO ally and critical partner in the Coalition to Defeat ISIS. Turkey's standing in the region, and shared borders with Iran, Iraq, and Syria make it strategically important for addressing a number of security challenges including terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and regional stability. While we continue to review all arms transfers consistent with the President's Conventional Arms Transfer Policy, we have conveyed to Turkey that its actions in other arenas can affect our consideration of its requested arms transfers. For example, a decision to continue with the acquisition of Russian S-400 missile defense systems, which are not NATO interoperable, could have severe impacts on our bilateral defense relationship.

Question:

In Syria, beyond defeating ISIS and countering the chemical weapon threat, our objective is to help the Syrian people live in safety, peace, and with good governance. Congress has proposed a strategy here on this objective and we have had bills passed through this committee. Does the administration have a strategy on this objective? Or is this an objective that we simply can't achieve at a cost the American people will accept?

Answer:

The Syrian people should be able to live in a stable country without the immense amount of human suffering they have had to endure since the conflict began in 2011. As this Administration has said before, there is no military solution to the conflict, and we remain committed to the UN-led Geneva process pursuant to UN Security Council Resolution 2254. We are engaged with the United Nations and other parties, including Russia, to encourage all possible efforts to advance the political track as called for in UNSCR 2254. This resolution demands that all parties immediately cease any attacks against civilian targets, urges all Member States to support efforts to achieve a ceasefire and facilitate unhindered

humanitarian access, and requests the United Nations convene the parties to engage in formal negotiations that lead to a political resolution to the conflict.

Question:

In Syria, assuming Assad is in power two or three years from now, why shouldn't we allow the Kurds in Syria to have sovereignty? Why should we insist that they continue to live in a country ruled by Assad backed by Russia, Iran, and Hezbollah?

Answer:

The United States believes that the future of Syria is for the Syrian people to decide, and we are working towards a political solution that supports free and fair elections. The United States is committed to the territorial integrity of Syria and believes it is a stabilizing factor for the Syrian people and the region. The United States is working with allies and partners both to find a political solution to the conflict in Syria through the UN-led Geneva process and to diminish malign Iranian influence throughout the region, including the presence of Hezbollah in Syria.

Question:

What is the legal effect of voiding the JCPOA nuclear agreement with Iran? By voiding the agreement, Iran would be entitled to start enriching uranium, and Russia could return to Iran the fissile material that Iran turned over to them under the JCPOA. Also, the United States and its allies would be free to have new sanctions on Iran if the JCPOA does not exist. John Kerry told this committee that even with the JCPOA, we can impose harsh sanctions on Iran, as long as this is proportionate to Iran's wrongdoing outside the JCPOA's nuclear arena, such as for Iran's ties with Hezbollah, Hamas, and the Houthis. So the question is, do we gain more in terms of our national security interests if we retain the JCPOA and subject Iran to JCPOA enrichment restrictions but still sanction them for their nonnuclear activities of concern—that we are entitled to do under the JCPOA—or do we gain more if we void the JCPOA?

Answer:

The Administration's objective is to fix the JCPOA, and there is an active policy discussion around this issue that is continuing. The President has been clear that if we are unable to secure commitments from our European allies to fix the JCPOA, then he will terminate U.S. participation in the deal.

Beyond the nuclear issue, this Administration has aggressively targeted Iranian individuals and entities using sanctions to push back against Iran's malign behavior. Since the Trump Administration took office in 2017, the Departments of State and Treasury have combined efforts to target more than 110 persons and entities for their human rights abuses, support to terrorism, and other issues under various sanctions authorities.



Questions for the Record from Representative Ted Lieu
U.S. Policy Toward a Turbulent Middle East
For the Honorable David M. Satterfield
April 18, 2018

Libya:

Question:

Regarding Libya, competition between two warring coalitions continues to undermine the restoration of stability, hampering Libyan humanitarian relief and counter-terrorism efforts. Does the U.S. fully support the UN-led negotiations for a political settlement between these two parties? What active steps is the Department taking, including on the ground in North Africa and in Europe, to ensure the UN-led political process moves forward?

Answer:

The United States strongly supports a UN-facilitated, Libyan-led political process as the means to achieving stability and security in Libya. UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) for Libya Ghassan Salamé is focused on bringing key Libyan actors together to prepare for credible and secure elections.

Our desired end-state in Libya is a stable, unified government capable of providing security and prosperity to the Libyan people and partnering with the international community to defeat ISIS and other terrorists. As such, the State Department continues to actively engage a broad range of Libyan voices, including the Government of National Accord (GNA), to promote dialogue and national political reconciliation. We are also closely coordinating with SRSG Salamé and our international partners, through bilateral and multilateral engagements. In our engagement with Libyans and international actors, we continually reinforce that any attempts to impose a military solution or bypass the political process will only further destabilize Libya.

Question:

Please assess the involvement of Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, and Saudi Arabia in Libya. Has the political and military policies of these three U.S. partners undermined or supported the UN negotiations process in Libya?

Answer:

The United States strongly supports UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) Ghassan Salamé as he works to advance political reconciliation and help Libyans prepare for credible and secure elections. In our engagement with Libyans and international partners, we continually reinforce that any attempts to impose a military solution or bypass the political process will only further destabilize Libya. Increasing international alignment on Libya has been a core goal of our diplomatic efforts. Egypt, the UAE, and Saudi Arabia have a common interest with the United States in denying the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and other terrorists safe haven in Libya, which requires a stable, unified Libyan government that can ultimately stand on its own against terrorism and provide greater security and prosperity for the Libyan people. Accordingly, we continue to work with all three partners to ensure that our engagement in Libya is coordinated and productive with U.S. and other international efforts.

The United States maintains an active dialogue with Egypt, the UAE, and Saudi Arabia on Libya primarily through the expanded “P3+3” grouping, a diplomatic structure that regularly brings together senior U.S., UK, French, Italian, Egyptian, Emirati, Saudi, Algerian, and Tunisian officials to coordinate our efforts. We are aware of the UAE’s concern about violent extremism across the region. We regularly engage the UAE on this subject, and working to ensure that all of our efforts in the region supportive of UN political mediation and aligned toward the same goals. Egypt hosted a series of recent meetings to promote the unity of Libyan security institutions, which has been a helpful contribution to international efforts. Saudi Arabia supports the UN-facilitated process on Libya and a Libyan political solution.

Question:

Have any nations violated the UN arms embargo on Libya? If so, please identify the violators and describe the extent of these violations.

Answer:

The Security Council’s Libya Sanctions Committee Panel of Experts (POE) regularly investigates and reports on non-compliance with the UN two-way arms embargo on Libya. The UN two-way arms embargo on Libya remains an important tool for managing the risks of destabilizing and uncontrolled arms flows both into and out of Libya. Member States are obligated to obtain an exemption from the Sanctions Committee for lethal military equipment sales or transfers to Libya, with some exceptions.

It has been widely reported that several states – most prominently Egypt and UAE – may be supplying arms to non-state actors in Libya. Libya’s neighbors and other countries in region have a critical role to play in urging Libyan contacts to exercise military restraint and engage constructively with the UN-facilitated process. We engage regularly with regional actors to align our approach toward bolstering UN-led mediation efforts and urging all Libyan parties to exercise military restraint and support a negotiated political solution.

Question:

How has the Department engaged with specific partner nations to address political-military interference in the Libyan political reconciliation process and violations of the arms embargo on Libya?

Answer:

Attempts to bypass the Libyan-led, UN-facilitated, political process or impose a military solution will only further destabilize Libya and undermine the United States’ objective of promoting a stable, unified Libya able to stand on its own against terrorism. In public and private engagements, we emphasize to our partners that it is critical that key countries urge their Libyan contacts to exercise military restraint and engage constructively with the UN-facilitated political process. Ensuring a coordinated international approach to Libya is critical to stabilizing the country, and it has been a core goal of our diplomatic efforts.

The UN arms embargo for Libya is an important tool for restricting the destabilizing flow of arms both into and out of Libya. The UN arms embargo allows for the Government of National Accord (GNA) to seek UN Sanctions Committee approval for lethal military equipment it needs to secure the country and to combat terrorism. The United States is prepared to consider any such request put forward by the GNA.

Egypt:

Question:

Reports indicate that the human rights situation in Egypt has dramatically deteriorated under President Sisi. Peaceful activists face aggressive repression, thousands of political prisoners are behind bars, and well-sourced allegations of torture and “disappearances” continue to accumulate. How has the State Department engaged with Egyptian authorities to relay U.S. concerns about the deteriorating human rights situation for Egyptian citizens?

Answer:

The Trump Administration remains deeply committed to our strategic relationship with Egypt. This does not diminish the serious concerns we continue to have about the human rights situation, including restrictions on freedoms of peaceful assembly, association, and expression and allegations of abuses by security forces. We frequently raise our concerns about these issues with senior Egyptian government officials, and stress the fundamental importance of the respect for human rights and the need for a robust civil society for Egyptian stability and prosperity.

Question:

The Leahy vetting laws are a tool to prevent the U.S. from training individuals associated with military units accused of human rights violations and to provide public visibility of U.S. human rights concerns. The Leahy vetting laws require continual updating of the INVEST system when and if allegations come to light of gross human rights violations (GHRV). However, it appears that certain abuses by Egyptian units are not being inputted into the system as required by internal regulations. How many new cases of GHRV by Egyptian forces have been inputted into INVEST in the past three years? Has the Egyptian military unit involved in the widely-reported extrajudicial killings in the Sinai been included in the INVEST reporting system as required by internal regulations?

Answer:

In 2015, two Egyptian GHRV cases were entered into INVEST; in 2016, no Egyptian GHRV cases were entered; in 2017, 20 Egyptian cases were entered; and, so far in 2018, two additional Egyptian cases have been entered. Some of these cases pertain to actions perpetrated in the Sinai. Further information on specific Egyptian military unit involvement can be provided in a closed setting.

Question:

What steps does the Department take to investigate well-sourced reports of GHRV and ensure the information is reflected in the Department’s reporting systems?

Answer:

The Department determines the credibility of derogatory information by considering: the reliability of the reporting source; the means by which the reporting source acquired the information, for example, through direct experience or from witness testimony; the reporting source’s political agenda or biases; corroborating reports; the subject security unit’s historical patterns of abuse; and the derogatory information’s degree of detail, especially how that detail links the alleged perpetrator to the victim.

Leahy vetters at posts and in Washington record the outcome of each Leahy vetting case in the INVEST system.

Question:

Is the current human rights crisis in Egypt fostering the expansion of violent extremist groups and pushing otherwise peaceful activists toward violent resistance against the government?

Answer:

Egypt's continued repression of non-violent opposition, restrictions on peaceful dissent, and closing space for civil society are of continued concern to the U.S. The Administration has consistently stated that when we interact with a country that is engaged in human rights violations, actions that are inconsistent with our core values, we have an obligation to bring those concerns to light.

The Trump Administration remains deeply committed to helping Egypt defeat the very real terrorism threats that they continue to face. The Administration will continue to urge Cairo to undertake a more effective counterterrorism strategy that recognizes the fundamental importance of the respect for human rights and the need for a robust civil society for Egyptian stability while simultaneously addressing the threats facing them.

Question:

End-use monitoring is a statutory requirement of U.S. weapons sales and provision. It ensures that U.S.-funded or U.S.-made equipment and materiel are used for legitimate purposes. As the second largest recipient of US-funded military equipment, and as a long-standing ally and friend in the Middle East, I would expect cordial cooperation and understanding from Egyptian military authorities for this legal requirement. In the past three years, has the Egyptian government provided consistent access for U.S. diplomats and security cooperation officials to conduct end-use monitoring on U.S.-funded and U.S.-provided military equipment and materiel? Please characterize the cooperation U.S. authorities have received from their Egyptian counterparts to conduct end-use monitoring.

Answer:

We continue to comply with U.S. law governing end-use monitoring of U.S. equipment used in Egypt. The Department of State, through its Blue Lantern program and in coordination with the Department of Defense, continues to monitor the end-use of equipment obtained through direct commercial sales. In November 2016, State Department officials visited Egypt to improve understanding of the Blue Lantern program. This visit helped educate Egyptian authorities about the purpose of the program, and how working together on end-use monitoring serves the interest of both governments. In February 2016, the Department of Defense conducted a Golden Sentry (end-use monitoring program for items sold via the foreign military sales process) compliance assessment visit and Egypt received a satisfactory rating, the highest rating possible. With regard to monitoring Sinai operations, the Departments of State and Defense continue to engage at high levels to press for U.S. official access. However, procedures for the three types of end-use monitoring included in the Blue Lantern program do not require on-site visits to operational areas by U.S. personnel.

Syria:**Question:**

It is deeply concerning that the Administration has failed to provide a comprehensive Syria strategy to Congress by February 1, 2018, as required by Section 1221 of the Fiscal Year 2018 National Defense Authorization Act. What is the status of the Administration's Strategy in Syria and what has the Department's involvement been to date?

Answer:

The Administration is deeply concerned about the situation in Syria. Our priority in Syria remains the enduring defeat of ISIS. Separately, the Administration is also working to counter Iranian malign influence, prevent the use of chemical weapons, ensure the safety of Syria's neighbors, including Israel, and ultimately resolve the Syrian conflict and humanitarian crisis through the de-escalation of violence and a political solution in line with UN Security Council Resolution 2254. We remain committed to supporting a diplomatic resolution to the Syrian conflict, one which can bring about a more representative and peaceful Syria, free of terrorism.

Yemen:**Question:**

In January, you told Congress that, "We have now full access to commercial and humanitarian goods through Hodeidah and Saleef ports." Yet in an early April report, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs noted that the number of vessels berthing at Hudaydah and Saleef is just half of what it was before the Saudi-led blockade. Furthermore, in March of this year, food imports were 57 percent of the monthly national requirement, and fuel imports were one-third of the requirement for Yemenis. Some of this shortage appears to be due to ongoing coalition practices. International humanitarian organizations and commercial shippers continue to report that access to Hudaydah and Saleef ports is partial, and that they are repeatedly delayed by secondary inspections conducted by the Saudi-led coalition navy on top of the already rigorous UN Verification and Inspection Mechanism (or UNVIM). These secondary inspections can delay berth by as much as 10 days, contributing to market uncertainty and dramatically increasing the prices of basic staple goods; the process has become so onerous that some importers have stopped delivering to Hudaydah and Saleef altogether. Mr. Satterfield, would you say, in April 2018, that we have "full access to commercial and humanitarian goods through Hudaydah and Saleef ports?"

Answer:

Hudaydah and Saleef ports remain open to humanitarian aid, as well as commercial shipments of food and fuel; however, imports remain below pre-November levels and UN reports indicate that commercial imports decreased through Red Sea ports in April. The United States has expressed concerns about the vessel clearance delays at the ports, which has been a contributing factor to the low level of imports. We continue to urge parties to allow unimpeded access through all points of entry in Yemen. The United States has raised the issue of access at Hudaydah and Saleef ports with the highest levels of Saudi and Emirati leadership, including when Secretary Pompeo met with UAE Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan on May 14. We have encouraged the Saudi-led Coalition's Evacuation and Humanitarian Operations Cell to continue to work closely with the UN Verification and Inspection Mechanism (UNVIM) to strengthen coordination and communication. The United States is also supporting an expanded monitoring and inspections proposal for UNVIM that more rigorously addresses the Coalition's security concerns while also ensuring an efficient, timely clearance process for commercial shippers.

Question:

In its most recent report on the conflict, the UN Security Council Panel of Experts on Yemen stated that the use of large commercial vessels to smuggle weapons into Red Sea ports was "unlikely," given the UNVIM process. Does the US government view the potential for weapons smuggling into Hudaydah and Saleef as severe enough to justify the coalition's secondary inspections, which are clearly exacerbating the humanitarian crisis?

Answer:

The United States has expressed concerns about the delays that have prevented or delayed humanitarian assistance and commercial goods from reaching the Yemeni people. We continue to urge parties to allow unimpeded access for humanitarian aid and commercial goods – including food, fuel, and medicine – to reach Yemen through all points of entry. We have encouraged the Saudi-led Coalition’s Evacuation and Humanitarian Operations Cell to continue to work closely with the UN Verification and Inspection Mechanism (UNVIM) to strengthen coordination and communication. The United States is also supporting an expanded monitoring and inspections proposal for UNVIM that more rigorously addresses the Coalition’s security concerns while also ensuring an efficient, timely clearance process for commercial shippers.

Question:

Given the strength of the UNVIM process, does the Department view the secondary inspections that the Saudi-led coalition conducts on commercial vessels to be duplicative?

Answer:

The United States continues to urge that all parties allow unimpeded access for humanitarian aid and commercial goods – including food, fuel, and medicine – to reach Yemen through all points of entry. We have encouraged the Saudi-led Coalition’s Evacuation and Humanitarian Operations Cell to continue to work closely with the UN Verification and Inspection Mechanism (UNVIM) to strengthen coordination and communication. The United States is supporting an expanded monitoring and inspections proposal for UNVIM that more rigorously addresses the Coalition’s security concerns while also ensuring an efficient, timely clearance process for commercial shippers.

Question:

What actions has the administration taken to bring the Saudi-led coalition in line with international humanitarian law?

Answer:

We take all credible reports of civilian casualties seriously and are proactively engaging with the Coalition to reduce the likelihood of harm to civilians and civilian infrastructure. We continue to press Saudi-led Coalition partners at the highest levels to mitigate the conflict’s impact on civilians. We have conducted courses for the Royal Saudi Air Force (RSAF) that specifically include training on law of armed conflict (LOAC) and air-to-ground targeting processes. The Saudi Ministry of Defense has committed to fund training for the RSAF from U.S. forces on minimizing civilian casualties, included as part of a \$750 million, multi-year FMS training case. We continue to urge the Coalition, and all parties to the conflict, to allow full access for humanitarian relief and commercial goods to address Yemen’s humanitarian crisis.

Question:

Article 14 of Additional Protocol II of the Geneva conventions prohibits starvation of civilians as a method of combat, including in this prohibition the attack, destruction, removal, or rendering useless of “objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population, such as foodstuffs, agricultural areas for the production of foodstuffs, crops, livestock, drinking water installations and supplies and irrigation networks.” A nonpartisan civil society organization called the Yemen Data Project has documented that coalition air raids have, over the course of the conflict, targeted 456 farms, 110 water and electricity sites,

and 63 food storage sites. Additionally, the journalist Iona Craig has reported that, as of late last year, coalition air raids had damaged or destroyed over 250 fishing vessels and killed 152 fishermen during the conflict. The United States is providing direct logistical support for the Saudi-led coalition's air operations, primarily through mid-air refueling of coalition planes and targeting assistance offered to coalition missions. Are U.S. personnel at risk of complicity in violations of Article 14 of Additional Protocol II? Is there a risk that U.S. personnel could be prosecuted for IHL violations?

Answer:

The humanitarian crisis in Yemen is dire and unacceptable. However, the Saudi-led Coalition is taking incremental, but positive steps to address it. Last month, the Saudis and Emiratis provided nearly \$1 billion to Yemen's humanitarian response. The key ports of Saleef and Hudaydah are currently open and operating. We continue to work with Saudi Arabia on its Yemen Comprehensive Humanitarian Operations plan, launched on January 22, to ensure that the plan is as comprehensive as possible and responds to the immediate needs of Yemenis throughout the country.