

TESTIMONY OF THE HONORABLE R. CLARKE COOPER
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BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
WEDNESDAY, 16 SEPTEMBER 2020

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member McCaul, Members of the House Foreign Affairs
Committee:

The topic of today's hearing is, "Why did the Trump Administration Fire the State
Department Inspector General?" I will provide you with the most comprehensive
and honest answer I have:

I do not know.

With that, I would like to turn to matters of policy. I am glad to finally have the opportunity to apprise you of the status of our efforts to support our security cooperation partners in the Middle East.

Two weeks after I took office in May 2019, Secretary Pompeo certified to you an emergency existed requiring the sale of certain defense articles and services to Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Jordan. In the days following the certification I sat before your Committee and testified that “a combination of factors led the Secretary to determine the situation constituted an emergency and prompted him to make the Certification, including the significant increase in intelligence reporting on threat streams related to Iran; the clear, provocative, and damaging actions taken by Iran’s government; and the need to affirmatively respond to military capability requests from our partners.” As such, any response I provided to Members’ questions during that June 2019 hearing, including to Representative Levin, must be understood in the context of my opening statement and statement for the record, as well as my complete testimony before Congress, all of which are part of the public record.

Events since that time serve only to magnify the challenge Iran poses to the region and demonstrate the Administration is on the right side of history. One can draw a

line from attacks by the Iranian-supported Houthi on Saudi Arabia, to Iranian cruise missiles and drone attacks on key oil facilities, to attacks on U.S. forces and facilities in Iraq by Iran and Iranian-backed militias, to instability in Lebanon and so on. As I wrote to you last month, since the Administration proceeded with the sales subject to emergency certifications as provided for in the law, Iran and the partners and proxies it supports continue to threaten not only U.S. partners, but also have directly targeted U.S. personnel and military forces and facilities in the region.

On that note, I would be delighted to brief the Committee at a classified level on Iran – and am ready to do so as soon as this morning’s closed session - subject to the will of the Chairman.

But let me draw for you another line, from sanctions and emergency certifications dating back over 40 years, to the designation of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps as a Foreign Terrorist Organization this spring, to the certification of emergency arms transfers to our partners, and, ultimately, to the signing of the transformative Abraham Accords, not 24 hours ago and barely a mile from where we sit. With this momentous normalization agreement between two key American security cooperation partners in the Middle East, there is a common thread running

along all of these actions – ours, and our partners’; the need to establish a shared capability to respond to Iranian threats, be they direct or from proxies or partners, conventional or unconventional, economic or military. And while we may disagree on some of the specifics of these responses, I know – I know – that you, Mr. Chairman, and I, see eye-to-eye when it comes to the nature of the threat Iran poses, and the need to ensure the security of our key partners in the region.

Mr. Chairman, the recent Inspector General report into the emergency arms sales did not question these facts. It did not question the nature and existence of an emergency. Indeed, the IG Report explicitly concluded “the Secretary’s emergency certification was executed in accordance with the requirements of the AECA.”

It is also true, however, the IG felt the Department could do more to reduce the risk of civilian casualties that may result from U.S.-provided arms. That is a finding I not only accept, but which I, my Bureau, the Department, and this Administration take to heart, which we were working to address before the IG even put pen to paper, and which we will continue to address.

In April of 2018, President Trump released an updated United States Conventional Arms Transfer (C.A.T.) Policy that, for the first time ever, made it the explicit policy of the United States to “facilitate ally and partner efforts, through United States sales and security cooperation efforts, to reduce the risk of national or coalition operations causing civilian harm.” A year later, in March 2019, the President re-affirmed Executive Order 13732, which directs U.S. government agencies to “engage with foreign partners to share and learn best practices for reducing the likelihood of and responding to civilian casualties, including through appropriate training and assistance.”

Since the CAT Policy was updated, the Departments of State and Defense have been working tirelessly to implement its guidance. We see reducing the risk of civilian harm as an enterprise-wide challenge, and have responded with a systemic program of reforms and innovations, examples of which I would like to briefly describe for the Committee:

- We have created a new methodology to help us assess the risk of civilian harm associated with arms transfers, and have made process improvements to ensure our decision-making is informed by those assessments.

- The Defense Department has developed a new training curriculum for partners and allies on reducing civilian harm, and is developing a tailorable toolkit of advisory materials and services.
- DOD also identified a set of technical solutions to help partners reduce the risks of civilian harm while enhancing combat effectiveness. For example, the Advanced Targeting Development Initiative (ATDI) is a suite of technical solutions and training intended for partners who deploy certain U.S.-origin munitions, including Precision-Guided Munitions (PGMs). The ATDI provides enhanced support to key technical aspects of weapons employment proficiency, such as *Target Coordinate Mensuration*, *Weaponneering*, and, *Collateral Damage Estimation*. These capabilities enable allies and partners to hit their intended targets accurately, achieve the precise damage intended, and do so with the ability to estimate collateral effects in advance and modify their engagements accordingly.
- With these processes, analytics, and toolkits now in hand, we are also increasing our outreach to partners, and engaging them proactively in discussions of how they can reduce the risk of civilian casualties to its lowest possible level. The right time for that conversation – is now.

These are significant, and serious, efforts, and they have been underway for quite some time. And I am encouraged, Mr. Chairman, that both the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates have purchased Advanced Targeting Development. In doing so, they made clear their commitment to reducing the risk of harm to civilians - even as they battle against an adversary who, judging by the frequency and inaccuracy of Houthi drone, rockets, and even ballistic missile attacks, would appear to have no such compunction.

In sum, Mr. Chairman, during my time as Assistant Secretary of State for Political-Military Affairs, the Department and Administration have identified the right threats, and made the right decisions under the right policies to support the right partners.

It is a team of national security professionals I am proud to be a part of, and I look forward to your questions.