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BEFORE THE 118TH CONGRESS
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
NOVEMBER 8, 2023

Chairman McCaul, Ranking Member Meeks, distinguished members of the Committee, thank you for inviting me to testify on U.S. defense support for Israel following the October 7 Hamas terrorist attack on Israel. It is my honor to be joined by my colleague from the Department of State, Assistant Secretary Barbara Leaf.

The Department's commitment to Israel's right to defend itself remains unwavering, and we mourn the Israelis, Americans, and citizens of countries around the world who were slaughtered by Hamas in its horrific terror attacks. We also mourn the thousands of Palestinians who have died in this conflict.

The Department's lines of effort in response to the attacks are to: 1) protect American forces and citizens in the region; 2) support Israel's right to defend itself from terrorism, consistent with international humanitarian law; 3) coordinate closely with Israel to help secure the release of every man, woman, and child seized by Hamas, including American citizens; and 4) contain the conflict to Gaza, while deterring state and non-state actors seeking to escalate.

The volume and viciousness of disinformation and misinformation perpetuating false narratives about this conflict is troubling, as is the rise of anti-Semitism globally. The Department of State designated Hamas a Foreign Terrorist Organization in October 1997. Hamas is responsible for the abhorrent nature of the October 7 terrorist attack in Israel. Palestinian civilians are not terrorists, must have immediate access to life-saving humanitarian aid, and deserve to live in peace, security, and dignity in a state of their own. Hamas is using civilians as human shields, blocking the delivery of humanitarian aid, and while having released four hostages, continues to hold about 200 civilians hostage, including 10 American citizens.

Protection of American Forces

While the United States is unwavering in its support for Israel to defend itself against terrorism, Iran-backed militia groups continue to attack U.S. forces in the region. Since October 17, U.S. bases and facilities in Iraq and Syria have been attacked at least 41 times by Iran-backed groups using rockets and Iranian-made one-way attack drones. Thus far, the majority of these attacks have been unsuccessful, in part due to rapid development and fielding of advanced counter-unmanned aerial system defenses; however, on October 18 a U.S. contractor died of a heart attack while taking cover from a rocket attack, and 46 service members have sustained injuries during these unacceptable incidents.

On October 26, at President Biden's direction, U.S. forces conducted precision, self-defense strikes on facilities in eastern Syria used and operated by Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and its affiliates. And we will not hesitate to take further necessary measures to protect our people as necessary. To underscore, in response to a pattern of Iranian and Iran backed attacks against U.S. personnel and facilities in Iraq and Syria and the continuing threat of future such attacks, the United States has taken, and as necessary, will continue to take military action against the IRGC and its affiliates. This includes the use of force against IRGC and IRGC affiliate personnel, and facilities in the U.S. Central Command Area of Responsibility, with the

intention to convince the Iranians to de-escalate threats against the United States, our interests, and our people.

The Department of Defense has also taken extraordinary steps to enhance our force protection posture and ensure that our people on the ground are adequately prepared to address a broad range of threats. These measures include: the rapid deployment of THAAD and Patriot ballistic missile defense systems, additional fighter squadrons to strengthen our deterrence posture, and two carrier strike groups to the region to strengthen our capabilities and ability to respond to a range of contingencies. We are constantly evaluating the threat to U.S. forces and adjusting our posture accordingly.

U.S. Security Assistance to Israel

One of the Department of Defense's top priorities is ensuring Israel has the resources it needs to ensure that an attack like the one Hamas perpetrated on October 7 can never happen again. In close partnership with the Department of State, we are engaged in comprehensive coordination across Departments to provide security assistance to Israel, through existing Foreign Military Sales and Direct Commercial Sales processes. This includes ascertaining which munitions and equipment from U.S. inventory can be quickly made available to meet Israel's most urgent needs. We recognize air defense is a high priority, and we are rapidly supplying Iron Dome interceptor missiles and ensuring Israel has the capabilities needed to sustain Iron Dome defense systems to protect its citizens and cities. We are also speeding the delivery of medical supplies, artillery ammunition, and precision-guided munitions. Materiel to meet priority defense requirements is sent to Israel on a near-daily basis.

It is important to highlight that U.S. assistance to Israel entails a multi-faceted, whole-of-government effort that extends well beyond the Department of Defense, to include partners at the Department of State and Congress. The United States annually provides Israel with \$3.3 billion in Foreign Military Financing administered by the Department of State, and the Missile Defense Agency provides \$500 million for cooperative programs for missile defense. The Department has submitted an urgent supplemental budget request to help fund America's national-security needs, stand by our partners, and invest in our defense industrial base. As part of the supplemental, we are requesting \$10.6 billion to sharpen Israel's qualitative military edge and ensure that it can defend itself. This includes \$5.2 billion to help Israel procure more Iron Dome and other air-defense systems; \$4.4 billion to replace DoD stocks provided to Israel under the Presidential Drawdown Authority (PDA); and \$1 billion to boost our own capacity to produce critical munitions, especially 155-millimeter artillery. The Department of State's Supplemental request, for additional Foreign Military Financing and diplomatic resources to support Israel, is a critical complement to DoD's request and our whole-of-government approach.

Support to American Citizens and Hostage Recovery

The safety of U.S. citizens, servicemembers, and diplomats is a vital concern for the United States Government. We are working with agencies across the U.S. Government to ensure the safe return of American hostages and ensure Americans trapped in Gaza can depart. As the

President and Secretary Austin have noted previously, the Department has sent U.S. military personnel to Israel to provide advice and assistance to Israel in support of this effort. In addition, the United States has been conducting unarmed UAV flights over Gaza to support hostage recovery efforts that began after the October 7 attack by Hamas on Israel.

Posture Adjustments

Current U.S. posture in the Middle East is significant, and DoD has demonstrated its ability to rapidly project additional power into theater. Since October 7, Secretary Austin ordered two Carrier Strike Groups into the region, including the USS Dwight D. Eisenhower Carrier Strike Group which arrived in the Eastern Mediterranean on November 3 and transited the Suez Canal this past weekend. Additionally, an Ohio-class nuclear-powered guided-missile submarine, transited the Suez Canal on November 5. DoD also bolstered air power and air defense and placed over 2,000 personnel and a range of units on a heightened state of readiness, some of which have subsequently been deployed. These deployments demonstrate the United States' continuing and enduring commitment to Israel and our partners in the Middle East, and bolsters DoD's ability to respond quickly to the evolving regional security environment. The Department continues to assess our force posture and remains in close contact with allies and partners.

The Department maintains readiness to unilaterally respond to any crisis or contingency, but our preference is to work alongside partners to deter any adversary seeking to take advantage of the situation. We have already seen Iran and Iran-backed militants try to exploit the war in Gaza to their benefit. Since the conflict's start, the Houthis in Yemen attempted at least three missile and drone attacks on Israel, all of which failed, while Lebanese Hizballah has exchanged cross-border fire with Israel. We will support Israel in its right to defend itself, and we are in active conversations with our partners in the region to continue to deter state and non-state actors, particularly the Iran threat network, from widening the conflict between Israel and Hamas.

Mitigating Civilian Harm

The Administration continues to underscore with Israeli and regional counterparts, both publicly and privately, the importance of obligations related to civilian protection and the risks of conflict to civilians during Israel's operations to restore security. The United States unequivocally stands for the protection of civilian lives during armed conflict consistent with international humanitarian law. Under the law of war, all parties to an armed conflict must comply with the rules for the protection of civilians. The protection of civilians against the harmful effects of hostilities is one of the main purposes of the law of war.

In this crisis, protecting and supporting civilians is difficult for a range of reasons, including the fact that it is happening in a densely populated urban environment. The situation is made worse because Hamas has endangered civilians by embedding itself into civilian populations in Gaza and has relied on the tactic of using civilians as human shields. It is also important to note that

Hamas terrorists have shown absolutely no respect for human life. They slaughtered more than 1,400 people in an appalling terrorist attack, and they use Palestinian civilians and civilian infrastructure as shields. Hamas terrorists put their rockets in civilian areas and have dug tunnels underneath critical civilian infrastructure and protected sites, like schools and hospitals, to run their terrorist operations and hide among civilians. As President Biden, Secretary Blinken, and Secretary Austin have made abundantly clear, we unequivocally condemn the appalling acts of terrorism committed by Hamas against Israel. Even so, we recognize that achieving sustainable victory on the battlefield will require minimizing harm to civilians consistent with international humanitarian law and undercutting Hamas' brutal tactics.

As we have repeatedly stated, efforts to mitigate and respond to civilian harm are both a moral and a strategic imperative. As the Secretary's Civilian Harm Mitigation and Response Action Plan states, "hard-earned tactical and operational successes may ultimately end in strategic failure if care is not taken to protect the civilian environment as much as the situation allows." We stand ready to provide assistance to our Israeli partners as they address these complex challenges.