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North Africa, and Global Counterterrorism
“What’s Next for Libya? The Path to Peace”
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Thank you, Chairman Deutch, Ranking Member Wilson, and Members of the Committee for the opportunity to discuss Libya’s path forward. As we mark the one-year anniversary of the Libyan ceasefire agreement and approach the upcoming Libyan presidential and parliamentary elections process, Libya is at a critical turning point.

A decade of civil conflict has deepened Libya’s fragmentation and exacerbated local tensions. The United States has long partnered with Libyan government institutions, the private sector, entrepreneurs, and civil society groups to mitigate drivers of violence, preserve the momentum of peaceful political processes, and improve Libyan lives.

The Biden-Harris Administration stands with the Libyan people as they work to establish lasting peace, security, and prosperity. We share their aspirations for a sovereign, inclusive, stable, and unified country in control of its own affairs.

Vice President Harris, Secretary Blinken, and U.S. Special Envoy and Ambassador to Libya Richard Norland have rallied the international community to support Libyan plans for free and fair elections, which is critical to establishing a pathway to peace. With over 2.8 million Libyans registered to vote, there is an overwhelming desire to hold elections.

Libya’s High National Election Commission is aiming to hold the first round of presidential elections on December 24. We expect the second round of presidential elections to be held simultaneously with parliamentary elections in late February. In addition to the technical support the United States has provided to the commission to promote a free and fair election with broad participation, the United States is also engaging closely with our international partners and Libyan political leaders to make clear that there will be consequences for any actors who undermine the election or incite violence.

While the October 2020 cease fire continues to hold, certain foreign powers continue to exploit the conflict and undermine Libyan sovereignty. The United States and international partners oppose all foreign military intervention in Libya. The UN Security Council passed UNSCR 2570 in April 2021, which calls for the departure of all foreign forces without delay. This includes the departure of Russian mercenary and proxy forces, Turkish forces and their proxies, and all foreign military forces, mercenaries, and foreign fighters including those from Syria, Chad, Niger, and Sudan. Russia’s Wagner Group has been involved in facilitating multiple violations of UN Security Council resolutions and has been connected to human rights abuses in multiple countries. Wagner continues to both destabilize Libya and use it as a platform to expand Russia’s destabilizing influence in Africa.

During October's Libya Stabilization Conference, the Libyan "5+5" Joint Military Commission, which brings together military leaders from the east and west of Libya, announced an action plan for the withdrawal of foreign fighters, mercenaries, and forces. The United States strongly supports and commends the efforts of the Libyan "5+5" Joint Military Commission and encourages the swift implementation of its action plan.

Successful Libyan elections and transition to a new government offer the best opportunity to curtail Russia's expansion into the Sahel and remove Wagner mercenaries from Libya. The United States continues to actively engage with our international partners in support of the withdrawal of all foreign forces. This will give the new Libyan government a chance to reestablish its sovereignty and rebuild a balanced range of security cooperation partnerships that will serve Libyan interests and promote regional stability.

We support the inclusion of Libyan civil society and women leaders in the ongoing political process, including to ensure stronger accountability for crimes committed in the country. We are appalled by reports earlier in the year of mass graves in Tarhouna, and recent allegations of violence and abuse against migrants are similarly shocking. We need to make clear that those who commit human rights violations and abuses, such as unlawful killings, torture, and forced disappearances, must be held accountable. Accountability for all responsible actors is key to strengthening the durability of a political solution, providing the Libyan people a genuine path to national reconciliation and justice.

Our commitment and partnership are demonstrated through long-standing U.S. assistance. Since 2011, the United States has provided approximately \$900 million in foreign assistance for Libya, including nearly \$400 million in U.S. stabilization, economic, and development support, \$160 million in security assistance, and over \$350 million in humanitarian assistance.

Libya also participates in the U.S.-funded International Organization for Migration Africa Regional Migration Program which builds national capacity to manage migration and increase regional cooperation on migration issues.

The challenges that remain are daunting, but it is hard not to be moved by the Libyan determination on display. After everything they have faced, the Libyan people now have the best opportunity in a decade to lay the foundation for a stable democratic society. Now is the time for Libyan political leaders to seek consensus, finalize preparations for national elections, and fulfill their commitment to the Libyan people to hold the vote on time.

Thank you once again for this opportunity to speak to you today and I look forward to your questions.