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DOES THE PRESIDENT'S FY 2016 BUDGET REQUEST ADDRESS THE CRISES IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA?

HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON
THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

OF THE

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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DOES THE PRESIDENT'S FY 2016 BUDGET REQUEST ADDRESS THE CRISES IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA?

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 18, 2015

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
Washington, DC.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 2 o'clock p.m., in room 2172 Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. The subcommittee will come to order. After recognizing myself and Ranking Member Deutch for 5 minutes each for our opening statements, I will then recognize other members seeking recognition for 1 minute.

We will then hear from our witnesses and without objection the witnesses' prepared statements will be made a part of the record and members may have 5 days to insert statements and questions for the record subject to the length limitation in the rules.

And before we begin today, I wanted to take a moment to express our condolences to the people of Tunisia, Poland, Italy, Germany and Spain for today's senseless and cowardly terror attack in Tunis that has left at least 19 people dead.

We all have great hopes for Tunisia as it leads the way on its path toward democracy against all odds and this attack reminds us that we must continue to support it as it strives to make progress.

The Chair now recognizes herself for 5 minutes. First, let me again welcome you both for being here and thank you for your service.

Each year as part of our oversight obligations we hold this hearing to examine the President's budget request for the State Department's Near Eastern Affairs Bureau and USAID's Bureau for the Middle East.

We are all aware of just how difficult the Middle East and North Africa is with all the instability, the sectarian tensions, the violence and the terror. So we know it isn't an easy task to address all of these crises and protect our own national security interest.

What I hope to hear today from our two distinguished guests is the administration's plan to address the most pressing issues in the region and how the budget request is commensurate with what we are aiming to achieve.

In this year's budget, the administration is requesting $7.14 billion in overall non-humanitarian bilateral aid for the Middle East and North Africa countries, an 8.7 percent increase over last year's request.

It is also requesting an additional $873.4 million in bilateral aid for these countries as part of its overseas contingency operations—OCO fund—a 5.7 increase since 2014.

On top of that, there is a request for an additional $1.64 billion for humanitarian aid for the crisis in Iraq and Syria. I am fully aware that this region poses probably the most difficulty for us to address.

But in a time when we don't seem to have a clear and decisive plan to tackle these crises, these increases must be closely scrutinized by us and the administration must justify them.

This is a significant sum of U.S. taxpayer dollars and we can't just sign off on such increases without identifying our policy goals and objectives and this administration has been plagued by indecision and half measures. And time and time again, we hear that the administration was surprised or caught unaware by certain events.

We heard the President say the rise of ISIL was a surprise. Then the administration was surprised when ISIL easily captured Mosul.

More recently, even though President Obama hailed our counterterrorism efforts in Yemen as a model of success in September, the administration acknowledged that it was surprised by the collapse of the U.S.-backed government in Yemen earlier this year.

Yet all of these events were foreseeable. In Syria, the President still has not defined a clear and comprehensive plan for dealing with ISIL, al-Nusra and Assad nor has it been able to put forth a clear and distinct strategy for addressing the humanitarian crisis that has resulted.

Instead of seeking the removal of Assad, now Secretary Kerry has lowered the threshold and is seeking to negotiate with Assad, a man responsible for over 220,000 deaths and who used chemical weapons against his own population.

But this is part of the administration's willingness to negotiate with the world's worst regimes at the expense of our allies and partners. In the meantime, Iran is essentially in control of four capitals in the region—Damascus, Beirut, Sana'a and Baghdad.

Yet, we carry on these misguided P5+1 nuclear talks while continuing to alienate our traditional partners and allies in the region, which is a recipe for disaster.

While in Israel and the Palestinian territories the administration failed to prevent Abu Mazen from agreeing to a unity government with Hamas and failed to prevent Abu Mazen from going to the U.N. Security Council with a resolution that would establish a Palestinian state outside of the Palestinians' obligation to come to a negotiated settlement with Israel.

And though that initiative may have failed, at least for now, we were unable to prevent Abu Mazen from ceding to the Rome Statute and joining the International Criminal Court, the ICC, which has since launched a preliminary investigation against Israel.

In each of the President's requests for economic support funds, ESF, is $150 million, $50 million less than Fiscal Year 2014, and

we were told that this decrease was a result of a policy decision but we were given no specifics.

This is somewhat puzzling since a GAO report that I requested with Mr. Connolly recently made public shows that we still have nearly $½ billion in previously unobligated funds for Egypt. So why are we requesting an additional $150 million and what are we doing with the $½ billion?

There are significant funds from the OCO account that are intended to go to Iraq including $250 million in FMF for the Iraqi security forces. But what about the Kurds who bear the brunt of much of the fighting against ISIL?

The administration has recognized the continued progress that Tunisia has made on its path toward democracy but the tragic and deadly attack and hostage situation in the Bardo Museum in Tunis today serves as a reminder that there is still much work to be done on the democracy and security front.

There are plenty of good programs and good work that this budget request supports and I am pleased to see that it commits continued support to our ally, Morocco, and recognizes the increased assistance to Jordan as part of the new memorandum of understanding as the kingdom continues to be on the front lines of the humanitarian crises and fight against ISIL.

So I do hope that we will hear from our witnesses today on how the administration plans to address these challenges head on and how we can all work together to make the region more secure, more stable while furthering our interest as well.

I will now yield to my friend, the ranking member, Mr. Deutch of Florida.

Mr. DEUTCH. Thank you, Chairman Ros-Lehtinen.

I look forward to these budget hearings each year as it gives members a chance to take a broad look at the region, assessing our priorities and gaps.

Before we start, though, I would like to echo the chairman's comments on the attack today in Tunisia. Our thoughts are, clearly, with the victims and their loved ones and I am afraid this is a stark reminder of exactly why we need to continue to support and keep Tunisia stable.

Secretary Patterson, we welcome you back to this committee. Assistant Administrator Alexander, it is a pleasure to have you join us for the first time and I would like to first acknowledge the truly remarkable work that both the Department of State and USAID provide.

I am particularly—I particularly want to acknowledge the aid workers and the members of our Foreign Service who are out in the field day after day, standing up and representing this great country.

They deserve our recognition and they deserve our thanks, and we hope that you will pass that along to them.

The President's Fiscal Year 2016 budget bilateral request for this region amounts to roughly 13 percent of the international affairs budget.

The region is facing no shortage of complex crises, many of which have grown exponentially over just the past several years. Regional

instability is not just a security threat to this country and our allies.

It also presents humanitarian challenges that could last well past the end of the military conflicts. In the aftermath of the Arab Spring, we face an entirely new landscape.

Orders have in some cases become nearly obsolete and one of the reasons that today's news is so disconcerting is that there have been promising developments in countries like Tunisia where a relatively stable government has emerged.

And if we are to prevent any further destabilization in Tunisia and help set the country back on the path to economic prosperity, the United States has to continue to provide support both politically and economically.

I am pleased to see this year's budget request contains $134 million for Tunisia and I look forward to hearing how these funds will continue to support the country's fragile democracy, particularly with the closing of USAID's Office in Transition Initiatives.

And while we continue to foster great regional security cooperation in North Africa with our larger partners like Morocco, we have been set back significantly by the chaos in Libya.

What seemed like a chance to rebuild a democratic Libya in the aftermath of Gaddafi has unfortunately devolved into a perilous security situation and virtually ineffective if not in some cases a nonexistent government institution.

The United States has a clear interest in seeing stability return to Libya but we cannot be alone in this effort. Regional actors must recognize that a terrorist safe haven in Libya will significantly complicate the international effort to counter violent extremism and prevent the growth of groups like ISIS.

The horrific beheadings of Egyptian Christians in Libya by those claiming allegiance to ISIS should be an extraordinary wake-up call to the international community that Libya needs greater focus and attention, particularly on the United Nations' efforts to reconcile the country's political system.

Egypt, the country perhaps currently most affected by Libya's instability, given its shared very long and porous border, has posed another great challenge to the United States.

Egypt serves as an incredibly important security partner and has faced a growing threat of terrorism in the Sinai that must be confronted.

Egypt has cooperated with Israel on securing its shared borders and has been at the forefront of our efforts to combat Hamas' building of terror tunnels and its vast smuggling network.

I want to see Egypt succeed. I recognize it is a long road to democracy, and while I am still concerned about the perceived severity in which the state has cracked down on civil society, I hope that we can address some of the ways in which we are balancing our vital relationship with Egypt and our concerns about human rights and how the $150 million in economic support funds can be used to support civil society and good governance.

I also support critical funding for security cooperation between Israel and the Palestinian Authority. This cooperation provides an enormous security benefit to Palestinians and to Israelis, and I

hope that those who use the threat of an end to this cooperation recognize the devastating effect that it could have.

I also believe there comes a time when we have to assess whether there is a credible partner to work with and this means that President Abbas must stop his attempts to bypass negations via unilateral means.

Moreover, we must continue to remind the world that Hamas is a terrorist organization and whatever humanitarian aid we provide to those suffering under its rule in Gaza must be carefully tracked to ensure that it is not diverted.

Palestinian Authority must take responsibility for its people and must ensure the greatest transparency and accountability for any U.S. funding if it is to continue.

The bulk of the NEA budget, of course, will go to supporting the crisis in Syria and Iraq. The United States has led a coalition of over 60 nations including five Arab states in the fight against ISIS.

There have been over 3,000 coalition air strikes that have devastated much of ISIS' leadership but there are many of us here who are still unclear as to our long-term strategy for dealing with ISIS in Iraq and Syria and I hope that we continue to see an inclusive governing process in Iraq.

Part of our strategy also addresses the use of religious extremism as an recruitment tool and I would like to know what the United States' role in that process looks like.

But wrap up by reminding everyone that Assad is still Assad. He is still the biggest threat to the people of Syria.

We have to support a political solution that ends his brutality and, Ambassador Patterson, I hope you will clarify for everyone the Secretary's recent comments on Assad's role in that process.

Finally, looming over the region, of course, is Iran's role and influence from its meddling in Yemen and the Gulf States to its support for Hezbollah and Assad in Syria to its influence in Iraq and to its nuclear weapons ambitions and threats against our regional allies.

This regime has made the calculated decision to disrupt the stability of our partners. And regardless of the outcome of the nuclear negotiations, we cannot ignore the myriad of dangerous activities that Iran promotes.

Increased cooperation with our Gulf partners can help counter Iran's actions and in addition we must highlight the regime's repression and human rights abuses and I hope we will do our best to continue to support the Iranian people.

Chairman, I don't think there is any doubt this is the most challenging region to work in but the security of this country and our allies is too important for the United States to disengage.

I support a robust international affairs budget that allows us to respond to complex challenges and advance our interests, and I thank the witnesses for being here today and look forward to their testimony.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you so much, Mr. Deutch.

I will now turn to the other members for an opening statement that they wish to make.

Mr. Clawson of Florida.

Mr. CLAWSON. Thank you for coming today, both of you.

A couple things if you will keep in mind in your comments today that you could help me with as I think about these things and study these things.

From the view of the State Department, it just feels generally speaking like do we do more harm than good in this region, and it feels like we need a regional solution that involves other people but that our interventions have been far from perfect and we spill a lot of blood and treasure in the region and I am unsure of what we get back for that sometimes. And that is kind of a nonpartisan comment and, you know, will we get it right this time.

I have deep respect for USAID and whenever I run into them overseas, Ambassador, I just think they are doing a great job and under very difficult circumstances.

The question there that I have that you could keep in mind as we talk today should we be involved in these sorts of efforts where there is a war going on or where we have hostile regimes?

Because it seems like the aid ends up in the wrong hands. So I don't question the mission. I am always worried about accountability.

But I worry that if we are doing these sorts of activities in Cuba or in the Middle East where we have people hostile to our allies in Israel, are we doing the right thing by focusing our efforts in those sorts of areas.

With that, I yield back.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you so much, Mr. Clawson.

Mr. Cicilline of Rhode Island.

Mr. CICILLINE. Thank you, Madam Chairman and Ranking Member Deutch, for calling this hearing and thank you to our two distinguished witnesses for being here today to discuss the important topic of U.S. priorities in the Middle East for the Fiscal Year 2016.

As we all know, the current situation in the Middle East is incredibly turbulent and constantly changing and the United States must have the funding and the flexibility to respond to existing threats and crises as well as future issues that may come up in the region.

The request of the administration of $7 billion for the region is an almost 9 percent increase over the Fiscal Year 2015 enacted levels, and while this increase certainly seems justified given the vast security and humanitarian needs in the region, I look forward to hearing from our witnesses on the United States—how the United States can ensure that our resources are being used effectively to advance American strategic priorities.

I am particularly interested in asking some questions that relate to the Syrian refugees as well as our efforts to, again, invest in training the Syrian—so-called Syrian opposition.

I know most of that goes through the Department of Defense but I hope the witnesses will address those two issues and I look forward to your testimony, and I yield back.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you so much, Mr. Cicilline.

We are pleased to welcome our two witnesses, a good friend of our subcommittee, Ambassador Anne Patterson, who is Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs. Ambassador Patterson has served as the U.S. Ambassador in El Salvador, in Colombia, Pakistan and Egypt.

She has also been Assistant Secretary of State for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, Deputy Permanent Representative to the U.N. and State Department's Deputy Inspector General. Welcome back.

Then we are also so pleased to welcome Assistant Administrator Paige Alexander of the Bureau of the Middle East at USAID.

Previously, Ms. Alexander has served as Assistant Administrator of the Bureau for Europe and Eurasia as well as an associate director for Project Liberty at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government.

She has also served on the board of the Basic Education Coalition and the Project on Middle East Democracy.

Welcome, ladies, and we will start with you, Madam Ambassador.

STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE ANNE W. PATTERSON, ASSISTANT SECRETARY, BUREAU OF NEAR EASTERN AFFAIRS, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Ambassador PATTERSON. Thank you, Madam Chairman and Ranking Member Deutch, members of the subcommittee. Thank you for inviting us to appear today.

With your permission, I will submit my full testimony for the record.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Without objection.

Ambassador PATTERSON. I will focus on a few of our budget highlights and I look forward to answering your questions.

The Middle East and North Africa is experiencing a difficult period of instability with serious consequences for both our national and regional security.

It has shaken the foundations of these societies, many of whom are our long-term partners where rapidly growing youthful populations are pressing for change.

Although the region's challenges take many—will take many years to resolve, American engagement and leadership is critical to reaching a new equilibrium that will protect our vital interest and spur economic progress.

The President's Fiscal Year 2016 request seeks $7.3 billion in U.S. foreign assistance to the Middle East and North Africa.

This figure is an overall increase of 5 percent, or $351 million, from Fiscal Year 2014 levels and will support U.S. national security interests, enable us to pursue our vital interests and allow us to remain an engaged and productive partner to the region's people and governments.

The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant has become the most pressing threat to U.S. interests and our allies in the region. As the President has clearly stated, we are committed to degrading and ultimately defeating ISIL.

This request includes a total of $1.8 billion to counter ISIL and to support the moderate Syrian opposition and the security and stability of Syria's neighbors. Bashir al-Assad, whose brutality toward the Syrian people catalyzed a civil war, has lost legitimacy in the eyes of Syrians and the international community.

We are requesting $255 million for programs to enhance the moderate Syrian opposition's capacity to provide governance and

essential services to the Syrian people and to establish the conditions to advance a political solution.

We will provide needed nonlethal support to vetted armed units to complement the DoD Train and Equip program. We are also requesting $355 million for Iraq to help the Iraqi security forces respond to the threat ISIL poses and over time establish security through unified national force and provide public services for all its citizens.

We are also seeking funding for our continued engagement in the search for a just and lasting two-state peace agreement in the Middle East and our deep commitment to Israel's security.

We continue to believe that only a two-state solution that results in a secure Israel alongside a sovereign and independent Palestinian state can bring lasting peace and stability to both peoples.

To that end, we are requesting $3.1 billion for Israel as part of our 10-year $30 billion memorandum of understanding.

We are requesting $442 million to support the Palestinian people and remain engaged with the Palestinian Authority in spite of its unconstructive agenda at the International Criminal Court.

The resources enhance security for Israelis, Palestinians and others in the region and help pay many Palestinian Authority debts to Israel.

In Egypt, the Fiscal Year 2016 budget request of $1.5 billion supports our longstanding partnership with Egypt and maintains our commitment to Egypt's security.

This request includes $1.3 billion in FMF, consistent with prior years, and will support sustainment of U.S. weapons systems previously provided to Egypt, maintenance of the Egypt-Israel peace treaty and protection of the Suez Canal.

We are focusing our $150 million economic support programs on fostering private sector-led growth and we will continue to press Egypt to improve its human rights situation while promoting religious tolerance, especially for the Coptic Christian community.

Today's terrorist attacks at the Bardo Museum complex killed at least 19 people, including 17 foreign tourists, according to Prime Minister Essid. We condemn this attack and have expressed our condolences to the Tunisian people, the victims and their family and friends.

This act of violence, while deeply troubling, in no way diminishes the achievements of the Tunisian people in establishing their new democracy or our confidence in Tunisia's future.

This horrific attack underlies the critical need to support Tunisia as addressed in the Fiscal Year 2016 budget. Our Fiscal Year 2016 request of $134 million represents a nearly $77 million increase above our Fiscal Year 2014 allocation and demonstrates our commitments to Tunisia's nascent democracy.

In particular, the $62.5 million in FMF requested will increase Tunisia's counterterrorism capacities by building its intelligence surveillance, border security and reconnaissance capacities and maintaining aging U.S. equipment crucial to the fight against terrorism.

The combined $14 million in INCLE and NADR supports training, the provision of equipment and technical assistance to the Tunisian minister of interior.

Madam Chairman, Ranking Member Deutch, it is important to remember that behind all these budgetary numbers lay programs that provide assistance to millions of people who are seeking jobs and economic opportunities, education for their children and a chance to live in peace.

Since the start of the Syrian crisis, the United States has provided more than $3 billion in humanitarian assistance to assist refugees from Syria, including significant funding for humanitarian activities, helping countries like Lebanon and Jordan cope with the effects of the crisis.

This request will advance the diplomatic and security interests of the United States while enabling us to help the people of the Middle East and North Africa during a time when American leadership in the region remains desperately needed.

Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Ambassador Patterson follows:]

Statement for the Record
Ambassador Anne W. Patterson
Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs

House Foreign Affairs Committee
Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa
March 18, 2015

Chairman Ros-Lehtinen, Ranking Member Deutch, Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for inviting us to appear before you today to discuss the President's Fiscal Year 2016 budget request.

The Middle East and North Africa region is experiencing a difficult period of instability with serious consequences for regional security and our national interests. It has shaken the foundations of these societies, many of whom are our long-term partners, where rapidly growing youthful populations are pressing for change and for better lives. Although the region's challenges will take many years to resolve, we all know that American engagement and leadership will be critical to reaching new equilibrium that will protect our vital interests and spur economic progress.

U.S. Regional Engagement

The United States will remain engaged in the search for a just and lasting peace in the Middle East. It is work that we cannot abandon as an element of our deep commitment and strong support for Israel's security. Secretary Kerry will work hard to resume those discussions after the formation of the new Israeli government. We continue to oppose further Palestinian action at the International Criminal Court. At the same time, because it is critical for both the Palestinians and the Israelis that we take steps to promote stability, we are also requesting resources to support the Palestinian people with programs intended to promote stability and that can also contribute to Israeli security.

There is reason for optimism in the case of Tunisia, which last year adopted a new constitution and held democratic elections that produced an inclusive new government earlier this year. We see evidence of progress in Algeria and in Morocco as these two countries move forward with efforts to address their respective challenges. Each of these countries seeks a strong partnership with the United States.

In Libya, governance and the economy have broken down as armed militias battle for control of the country. Yemen's fragile transition was interrupted by a violent insurgency which has brought the country to the brink of civil war. Although we have suspended operations at our embassies in Tripoli and Sanaa for security reasons, our ambassadors and staff remain vigorously engaged in urgent diplomatic efforts with international partners to resolve these crises.

Bashar al-Asad's brutality toward the Syrian people catalyzed a civil war – now marking its fourth year – that has created a crisis of extraordinary proportions. In addition to our humanitarian efforts, we are working to support the moderate Syrian opposition as they stand up to the regime and to violent extremists. It is our intention to enhance their capacity to provide governance and essential services to the Syrian people as a way of establishing the conditions for a political solution. We will provide needed non-lethal support to screened armed units of the moderate opposition to effectively complement the Defense Department's Train and Equip program.

The so-called Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) has grown out of the Syrian civil war to become the most pressing threat to U.S. interests and the security and interests of our allies in the region, including Jordan and Lebanon. Along with our coalition of over 60 partner countries, we are committed to degrading and ultimately defeating ISIL. We will continue our support to the Iraqi government's efforts to counter ISIL and to establish effective governance throughout a unified nation, and will continue to strike at ISIL in Syria.

Our negotiations continue with Iran in search of a comprehensive understanding to ensure that Iran will not obtain a nuclear weapon. At the same time, we continue our outreach and support to the Iranian people and their desire for greater respect for human rights and the rule of law through programs providing training to Iranian citizens and civil society organizations.

FY 2016 Budget Request

Our FY 2016 budget request seeks the resources necessary to support U.S. national security interests, to pursue our mission critical goals and enable us to remain an engaged and productive partner to the people and governments in the region.

The budget request includes a total of $7.3 billion in U.S. foreign assistance to the Middle East and North Africa. This figure is an increase of five percent – or $351.1 million – from FY 2014 levels, excluding Food for Peace funding.

This includes $1.8 billion in assistance to counter ISIL and to support the moderate Syrian opposition and the security and stability of Syria's neighbors. It reflects our need to address several crises in the region while also supporting programs that will enable us to achieve long-term goals through support for economic and legal reforms, strengthening good governance, and supporting universal rights. Specifically, the request includes $255.0 million for U.S. support to the Syrian opposition, $355.4 million for Iraq, $210.5 million for Lebanon, and $1.0 billion for Jordan. In addition, the request also includes $3.1 billion in funding to maintain our strong commitment to Israel and advances U.S. priorities by supporting economic, democratic, governance, and security reforms across the region.

Countering ISIL

The United States has adopted a comprehensive strategy to degrade and defeat ISIL so that it can no longer threaten the region, the United States, and our allies and partners around the world. To that end, the United States is working with a Coalition of partners from more than 60 countries to degrade ISIL and to deny it resources, safe haven, and freedom of movement in both Iraq and Syria.

The FY 2016 budget request of $355.4 million for support to the Iraqi government's efforts to fight ISIL, including $250.0 million in Foreign Military Financing (FMF) to help the Iraqi Security Forces respond to the threat ISIL poses. These funds will help strengthen Iraq's counterterrorism capabilities, develop logistics capacity building, and improve the professionalization of the Iraqi military. The Iraq request also includes $72.5 million in the Economic Support Fund account to help Iraqis re-establish governance and stability in areas taken back from ISIL, boost democratic institutions and civil society, and support key economic and governance reforms that can lead to growth that reaches all parts of Iraqi society. The programs that these funds support are intended to directly support national reconciliation and reform efforts and to build Iraq's unity while cementing gains against ISIL. An additional $32.9 million is requested out of other security assistance accounts.

U.S. foreign assistance is a vital tool in our overall strategy to combat ISIL in Syria, to help the moderate opposition defend against the Syrian regime, and to promote a political transition. The FY 2016 budget request includes $255.0 million to continue U.S. support to the moderate Syrian opposition. It is in the U.S. interest to support the moderate Syrian opposition as they seek to counter the threat posed by ISIL and other extremists, as well as to enhance the capacity of the

moderate opposition to establish the conditions for a political solution to this conflict. As such, in coordination with the Department of Defense and its Train and Equip program, the FY 2016 foreign assistance request will also provide resources to support the provision of non-lethal assistance to appropriately vetted members of the moderate armed opposition in liberated areas of Syria.

The success of the Syrian armed opposition forces will be determined in the long-term by their integration into civilian structures that we're concurrently working to support. U.S. assistance will support the moderate opposition's efforts to provide governance and essential services to the Syrian population at the local and national level and fill the vacuum that ISIL and other extremists currently exploit.

These requests underscore our commitment to our allies and partners facing threats in the region and enable us to pursue our most critical priorities of enhancing regional security and making sure the United States' national security interests are addressed.

Israel and the Palestinian Authority

Our $3.1 billion FY 2016 request reflects our country's firm commitment to Israel, the leading recipient of U.S. Foreign Military Financing. This request also marks the eighth year of a 10-year, $30.0 billion FMF Memorandum of Understanding between the United States and Israel.

As the subcommittee is well aware, Israelis voted in national elections yesterday. We look forward to working with the next Israeli government on important goals of mutual interest. Assisting Israel achieve a comprehensive peace with its neighbors, which multiple Israeli Prime Ministers have argued is in its national interest, including reaching a negotiated two-state solution with the Palestinians, will continue to remain high on our agenda.

The FY 2016 request of $442.0 million for the West Bank and Gaza will support the Palestinian Authority and its capacity to fulfill its security commitments to Israel, provide support to the Palestinian people, and foster an economic climate in which the private sector can grow and where the rule of law is followed. We are deeply troubled by Palestinian action at the International Criminal Court and continue to oppose further actions that would make it more difficult to bring the parties back to the negotiating table. We have also been conducting a thorough review of our support to the Palestinian Authority. It's important to note that of the nearly $450.0 million in budget support we have provided to the Palestinian

Authority over the past two years, about $425.0 million was used to pay Israeli institutions that are its creditors.

U.S. assistance to the West Bank and Gaza has played a valuable role in promoting stability and prosperity, not just for the Palestinians, but also for Israel. This assistance has helped foster security coordination between Israel and the Palestinian Authority, which has been instrumental in preserving security in the West Bank and Israel, reducing threats to Israelis and Palestinians alike, and in improving health, education, and economic outcomes for Palestinians to further promote stability.

Egypt

The FY 2016 budget request for Egypt of $1.5 billion supports our long-standing partnership with Egypt and maintains our commitment to Egypt's security. This request includes $1.3 billion in FMF, consistent with prior years. We remain concerned and focused on the threat Egypt faces from terrorist groups in the Sinai that claim to be linked with ISIL; with the mounting threat from the spillover of violence from the conflict in Libya; and with domestic opposition groups who are increasingly committing acts of violence within Egypt. FMF continues to support sustainment of U.S. weapons systems previously provided to Egypt, maintenance of the Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty, and protection of the Suez Canal.

Because economic recovery and stability are closely intertwined, we are increasingly focusing our economic support for Egypt on programs to foster private-sector led growth. Specifically, we will encourage macro-economic reforms, improvements to the business climate, inclusive growth, and transparency. We will also seek to increase bilateral trade that creates jobs. Our FY 2016 request includes $150.0 million in Economic Support Fund resources to support these priorities. Six newly signed bilateral agreements will accelerate the implementation of projects. We continue to press Egypt to improve its human rights situation. We will focus democracy programming on strengthening the parliament we expect to be elected this year, combating gender-based violence and trafficking in persons, and promoting religious tolerance, especially for the Coptic Christian minority.

Jordan

Jordan continues to be a critical partner for the United States on major regional priorities, including pursuing Middle East peace, combating the threat posed by ISIL and other extremist groups, and achieving a political solution to the Syrian conflict. In support of this strong partnership, Secretary Kerry and Foreign

Minister Judeh recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding that reflects our intent to increase annual assistance levels to $1.0 billion in FY 2015, 2016, and 2017, pending the availability of funding. These additional funds will help Jordan address the short-term extraordinary needs related to the Syria crisis and dramatically increased energy prices. Our request for $1.0 billion in assistance to Jordan for FY 2016 is consistent with that commitment. The assistance will support Jordan in advancing critical economic and political reforms; strengthen Jordan's ability to deliver essential health, education, and water services; build the capacity of the Jordanian Armed Forces and promote interoperability between our two militaries; and enhance Jordan's capacity to counter terrorism and better safeguard its borders and ports. This assistance will provide essential support for Jordan's ongoing bilateral and Coalition efforts to counter ISIL and other regional threats, as well as to alleviate pressures on Jordanian host communities resulting from the influx of refugees.

Yemen and Libya

Chairman Ros-Lehtinen, Ranking Member Deutch, as you know, within the last year we have unfortunately had to temporarily relocate staff from two of our posts – Tripoli and then most recently, Sana'a. Those decisions were made with the safety of our personnel in mind. In addition to ISIL and other extremist groups, the deteriorating situations in Yemen and Libya continue to pose threats to the region and U.S. homeland.

In Yemen, where al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula is based and operates with impunity, the security situation has deteriorated markedly over the past 12 months and became especially precarious at the beginning of this year. Last month, we temporarily relocated all U.S. personnel from our embassy after gauging that the threat posed by Houthi forces was too great to justify keeping a diplomatic presence in Sana'a. However, despite the security threats and unstable political situation, the need for American diplomacy, development, and humanitarian support for Yemen has not diminished. Our development and humanitarian assistance continues, and we are hopeful that continued efforts by the international community and the UN will succeed in restoring functioning and legitimate government to Yemen, and that we will be able to re-open our Embassy. So that we will be prepared to quickly re-engage and help rebuild Yemeni institutions, our FY 2016 budget request of $114.4 million reflects prior planning assumptions to increase support to Yemen in both FY 2015 and FY 2016. We will work closely with Congress moving forward.

Yemen is the poorest country in the Arab world. Roughly 45 percent of its population is food insecure, nearly 50 percent of Yemenis cannot read or write, and unemployment levels may be as high as 40 percent. These statistics lay the groundwork for a serious lack of governance and a persistent state of instability that directly threaten U.S. interest. For that reason, our FY 2016 request focuses on continued assistance to address the basic needs of the Yemeni people in such areas as health care, education, access to credit, and food security.

In Libya, we remain concerned about ongoing violence, the potential for a greater humanitarian crisis, and the threat this violence poses to regional stability. Libya is at risk of spiraling into civil war, and extremist groups, including ISIL affiliates, are exploiting this chaos. Our FY 2016 $20.0 million request will support high priority security and governance programs. Funds will provide consistent programming to build Libyan government and civil society capacity, particularly at the local level. The current security situation has affected some program implementation, but key programs targeting local level governance and service delivery, building the capacity of civil society and public institutions, and working to support the political transition are continuing, and we are making adjustments as necessary. We continue to support the United Nations Special Representative Bernardino Leon and his process to promote political dialogue and convene a National Unity Government.

Lebanon

U.S. assistance supports Lebanon's viability, independence, and sovereignty. We support a Lebanese government that is capable of responding to the needs of its citizens – maintaining internal stability and meeting its international obligations – and at peace with its neighbors. Lebanon faces challenges from growing regional violence and instability, as well as the economic pressures associated with refugees flows. Lebanon faces ongoing, direct threats against Lebanese territory from extremists in the region, including the ISIL and Al-Nusra Front, as well as terrorist attacks on civilian sites. The FY 2016 budget request for Lebanon is $210.5 million, which represents a significant increase from the FY 2014 level, reflecting our commitment to Lebanon and supporting its ability to address the challenges stemming from the spillover effects from the Syria conflict. It will also support the U.S. critical partnership with the Lebanese Armed Forces and the Internal Security Forces as they counter the ISIL and other extremist threats at and within its borders, as well as continuing support for Lebanon's other long-standing security and economic development challenges.

Morocco

Morocco remains an important and longstanding U.S. ally in the region. The FY 2016 budget request includes $31.6 million in bilateral assistance for Morocco. Ongoing assistance is vital as Morocco confronts security concerns stemming from regional instability and the flow of foreign terrorist fighters to Iraq and Syria, and continues political and economic reforms promised under the 2011 constitution. Economic Support Fund assistance will support programs that will help Morocco achieve sustained economic growth by improving the employability of its large youth demographic; improving educational achievement; and bolstering effective governance and democracy in the country. Foreign Military Financing supports the ability of Morocco – a major non-NATO ally and an anti-ISIL Coalition member – to partner with the United States on mutual regional security concerns such as counter-terrorism, peacekeeping operations, and regional security in North Africa, the Sahel, and the Strait of Gibraltar.

Tunisia

I also want to underscore the importance of Tunisia and how crucial it is as a democratic model for the Arab world. Our FY 2016 request of $134.4 million represents a $76.6 million increase above our FY 2014 allocation and demonstrates our commitment to Tunisia's nascent democracy. This is a significant increase, but we believe it is critical to invest in the success of countries moving in the right direction, to ensure they do not drift backward into instability. This request includes robust Foreign Military Financing to further the strategic relationship with the Tunisian Armed Forces and support its capacity to counter increased threats from indigenous and transnational terrorist elements, improve border security, and combat smuggling. We are also seeking increased funding to support market-oriented reforms that address Tunisia's top constraints to economic growth and improved governance.

Regional Programs

At a time when threats are increasing and vulnerable populations are moving fluidly around the Middle East, regional programs that counter the drivers of violent extremism, foster growth, and protect vulnerable populations and resources are critical to stabilizing regional dynamics. All regional programs are targeted interventions, based on evidence and past experience, and mutually agreed upon by the Department and USAID.

Conclusion

Madam Chairman, Ranking Member Deutch, it is important to remember that behind all of these budgetary numbers lay programs that provide assistance to

millions of people who are seeking jobs and economic opportunities, education for their children, and a chance to live in peace. All too often, these basic pillars of human dignity are scarce in the Middle East and North Africa. But the assistance and funding provided by the United States make a significant difference in people's lives.

Since the start of the Syria crisis, the United States has provided more than $3.0 billion in humanitarian assistance to assist refugees from Syria in need, including significant funding for humanitarian activities helping countries, like Lebanon and Jordan cope with the effects of this crisis. Our humanitarian assistance supports the operations of key multilateral organizations, including the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, the World Food Program, and UN Children's Fund, among other organizations. Some $26 million has supported non-governmental organizations' programs in child protection, alternative education, prevention of gender based violence, shelter rehabilitation, health, mental health, and the provision of basic needs for Syrian refugees living in host communities and vulnerable Jordanians and Lebanese.

The FY 2016 budget request we are presenting will enable us to continue to address crucial diplomatic and security challenges in the Middle East and North Africa during a time when American leadership in the region is required more than ever. In order to protect our allies and friends and advance our own national security interests and values, we must use all the tools at our disposal, including our diplomatic presence, our economic and trade policy, and our military-to-military relations, to address the turmoil in the region. The United States has a great responsibility to do all we can to try to arrest the region's widespread instability. The funds you provide will enable us to help the people of the Middle East and North Africa and advance the interests of the United States.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today, and I welcome your questions.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you, Ambassador.
Ms. Alexander.

STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE PAIGE ALEXANDER, ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR, BUREAU FOR THE MIDDLE EAST, U.S. AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Ms. ALEXANDER. Thank you, Chairman Ros-Lehtinen, Ranking Member Deutch and members of the subcommittee. Thank you for inviting me here today to discuss the Fiscal Year 2016 budget for the United States Agency for International Development and our efforts to respond to the development needs in the Middle East and North Africa.

We face unprecedented challenges in this region. The economic frustrations that lack inclusion that brought people to the streets 4 years ago has not engaged and it remains a daily reality.

Unemployment among the young people is the highest in the world. The region faces substantial water challenges and instability in key countries further complicates our work. The administration's 2016 budget request is focused on addressing these needs, providing assistance that is critical to advance America's strategic, economic and security interests.

USAID is working with local partners in private sector growth and inclusive economic opportunity, education, civil society and responsive government. We are investing in programs that will help individuals in communities build resilient stable societies.

We are constantly innovating and thinking creatively about how to best operate in high-threat environments while leveraging our limited dollars to address development needs. We work not only with governments but also with grass root level folks, changing the lives of individuals and transforming communities.

I just returned from a trip to the region and when I was in Egypt I was able to see how this works together with government and society. I visited a USAID program that helped teachers create innovative classrooms for an early grade reading program.

USAID actually did the first 166 schools as a pilot and the Government of Egypt picked up the other 16,000 schools throughout the country. This is how we work collectively together.

My statement for the record includes more details of USAID priorities and challenges in the regions and I would like to briefly mention some of them here.

The Syrian crisis is the largest and most complex humanitarian emergency of our time. The United States, with the support of Congress, has been the largest single international donor, providing more than $3 billion to date.

In addition to humanitarian assistance, the 16 requests will support programs in Syria intended to help the moderate opposition maintain basic governance and services to provide alternates to the regime and the violent extremist groups.

The emergence of ISIL has had an unprecedented impact on our region. The majority of Syrian refugees have been absorbed into local communities in Jordan and Lebanon, doubling and in some cases tripling the populations of towns that were already hard pressed to provide these essential services.

The United States provides critical support to these host communities by building schools, expanding health facilities and increasing access to water. In Iraq, we anticipate enormous assistance needs in liberated areas from ISIL to help the displaced return home and communities recover.

USAID's plans for Fiscal Year 2016 include highly targeted and focused assistance to help Iraq generate revenue and provide services with limited U.S. taxpayer resources.

In Libya and Yemen, U.S.-funded programs continue to operate with local staff and careful third party monitoring, remote monitoring at this point while our American staff manage the programs from outside those countries due to the security concerns.

We remain committed to the pursuit of a negotiated two-state solution for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. To that end, the Fiscal Year 2016 budget will continue to support peace efforts by funding programs that benefit the Palestinian people including in education, health, humanitarian assistance, private enterprise and infrastructure.

On my recent trip, I was introduced to Muhummad, an olive oil farmer who tripled his yield through farming practices learned with USAID's Olive Without Borders.

This project, with our support, more than 1,500 Israeli and Palestinian olive farmers and distributors came together to share farming methods and promote understanding.

With our help, the Palestinian and Israeli officials also agreed to allow Israelis to purchase Palestinian olive oil for the first time in 10 years, resulting in $20 million in new revenues for the Palestinian farmers.

In Fiscal Year 2016, we intend to do more to support farmers and entrepreneurs like Muhummad because a strong Palestinian economy is good for everyone and U.S. assistance plays a critical role promoting the stability and prosperity, not just for the Palestinians but for Israel.

Egypt continues to be a key strategic partner in the region. In Fiscal Year 2016, the United States will continue to support initiatives that help Egypt and the Egyptian people.

We have intensified our commitment to help the Egyptian economy become more competitive and more inclusive. Our investments will continue it improve the basic quality of basic education and higher education as well as addressed issues such as fundamental freedoms, which are essential to Egypt's long-term political and economic development.

Elsewhere in North Africa, USAID supports Tunisian people as they lay a foundation for a future of economic prosperity and democratic governance.

As the chairwoman said and you all have mentioned, we will continue to support Tunisia in their drive to make this progress even in light of today's events.

In Morocco, we continue to promote economic growth, improve educational opportunities and strengthen the effectiveness of civil society.

The President's request responds to development needs and challenges in the Middle East and North Africa and USAID programs

remain essential components of the U.S. foreign policy interest in security and stability.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today and I look forward to answering your questions.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Alexander follows:]

Statement of Paige Alexander
Assistant Administrator, Bureau for the Middle East
U.S. Agency for International Development
House Foreign Affairs Committee
Middle East and North Africa Subcommittee

"The Middle East and North Africa FY 2016 Budget: Priorities and Challenges"
March 18, 2015

Chairman Ros-Lehtinen, Ranking Member Deutch, and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to discuss the FY 2016 budget for the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and our efforts to respond to the development needs of the Middle East and North Africa. With the Administration's proposed FY 2016 budget, USAID will effectively provide the development assistance that is a critical component of advancing America's strategic, economic and security interests in the Middle East and North Africa.

Today we are facing an unprecedented level of challenges and transition in the Middle East and North Africa. In almost every place where economic frustrations and lack of opportunity originally motivated people to take to the streets, those same economic challenges are still very much a part of daily reality. Most countries where USAID works in the region have long suffered from weak economic fundamentals as barriers to trade and investment stifle private sector growth. Unemployment among young people—who make up as much as 30% of the region's population—is the highest in the world at 24 percent. The region is also facing substantial water challenges and if it continues on the current trajectory, the Middle East will likely face "absolute" water scarcity by 2030. Further compounding the problem, the region has the world's second highest population growth rate and excessive water mismanagement and withdrawal, increasing competition for a scarce resource in a region already rife with tension. And of course, instability in a number of the key countries in the region further complicates our work.

USAID's FY 2016 budget request is focused on addressing these tremendous needs in this critically important region, in line with broader U.S. foreign policy objectives that promote regional security and stability. Throughout the region, USAID is building mechanisms for improvement of and more equitable inclusion in private sector growth, education, civil society development and responsive government. We are investing now in programs that empower individuals and communities on a local level, which will build resilient, stable societies in the future. Our programs represent a long-term investment in the people of the Middle East and North Africa and build on USAID's mission to partner to end extreme poverty and promote resilient, democratic societies while advancing our own security and prosperity.

USAID's approach to development is twofold; we work not only with governments, but also at a grassroots level, changing the lives of individuals and transforming communities. I just returned from a trip to the region where I saw both of these approaches in action. In Egypt, I visited a USAID program that helped teachers create more interactive classrooms and assisted in the rollout of an early grade reading program. This program was started by USAID in 166 pilot schools and then was expanded by the Egyptian Ministry of Education for all 16,000 schools throughout the country. On its own initiative, the school had created a space for teachers from all

over to share what they had learned and house interactive teaching tools that the educators themselves had created. While in Jordan, I learned about a parent group that was brought together during USAID's renovation of their children's school; the group continued to meet even after the project was complete, engaging in decisions about school improvement and other community matters.

Our programs touch the lives of millions of people: the Yemeni woman earning an income and helping her community after a USAID program taught her midwifery skills; the Libyan business owner sharpening her plan for growth so she can hire other workers; the young Jordanian man building career skills in the hospitality industry at a USAID-sponsored academy, contributing to his country's growing tourism sector; and the Egyptian who cast her vote for the first time, using the government I.D. a USAID program helped her obtain.

Each of our country programs and regional interventions begin with a careful assessment of local needs and capacity for reform. Security concerns remain a significant challenge in the region, and the security of our staff and implementing partners is paramount. We are constantly innovating and thinking creatively with our partners about how best to operate in high-threat environments while leveraging our limited dollars to address longer-term development needs and advance U.S. interests.

Syria and the Regional Humanitarian Crisis

The Syrian crisis is the largest and most complex humanitarian emergency of our time. There are more than 12.2 million people in Syria in need of humanitarian assistance— more than half of Syria's pre-war population, and equal to the combined populations of New York City and Los Angeles. One in five people displaced globally is Syrian. The emergence of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) has exacerbated an already protracted crisis in Syria, where the Asad regime has waged an unrelenting campaign of bloodshed against its own people for four years. In Iraq, there are now an estimated nearly 2.5 million internally displaced people, and ISIL remains the primary constraint to accessing those in need. These crises have had an unprecedented impact on Syria and Iraq, their neighbors, and the region. The humanitarian situation grows more dire and complex by the day.

The conflict has radically reshaped the demographics of a region with an already delicate ethnic and religious balance and scarce resources. More than 3.8 million refugees from Syria have poured across the borders of neighboring states to escape fighting. The majority have been absorbed into local communities in Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey, doubling and tripling the populations of towns that were already hard pressed to provide essential services. Today, Lebanon hosts nearly 1.2 million refugees from Syria – more than one quarter of Lebanon's total population.

The influx of over 620,000 Syrian refugees is having a severe impact on neighboring Jordan, where the government's ability to provide essential services has been stretched thin and scarce water resources are being tapped at an alarming rate. This population bulge in Jordan and Lebanon has overwhelmed basic infrastructure, and the U.S. provides critical support to host

communities by constructing additional schools, renovating and expanding health facilities, and increasing access to water.

Syria

The United States is the single largest donor of humanitarian assistance to people affected by the Syrian crisis, providing more than $3 billion to date. The Administration is committed to a comprehensive response to the conflict in Syria – bridging humanitarian, transitional, and development interventions to address the needs of conflict-affected Syrians and host communities both within Syria and regionally.

In addition to providing humanitarian assistance, administering strategically targeted development assistance is essential to broader U.S. goals of minimizing the impact of the Syria crisis. The FY 2016 request will support a broad range of non-lethal assistance programs in Syria, managed by both the Department of State and USAID, intended to bolster the moderate opposition's ability to maintain basic security, governance and services, and to provide alternatives to regime and violent extremist groups. Specifically, USAID will continue to support the restoration of essential services, such as water and electricity and to improve community governance capacity to manage and deliver these essential services. USAID will also continue its leadership role in the Syria Recovery Trust Fund, which addresses critical needs through a multi-donor mechanism.

USAID will continue to provide assistance in support of Syria's democratic development to build relationships across civil society and local and national institutional structures. Democracy and governance programming will build the confidence and skills of women leaders inside Syria to play a more active role in responsive and effective service provision. We will also provide direct assistance to provincial and local councils and civil society organizations in opposition-held areas to help bolster the visibility and legitimacy of these moderate authorities.

Jordan

The FY 2016 request will continue to support Jordan's economic stability and its ambitious economic reform agenda, in addition to alleviating the strains caused by the influx of refugees. USAID will work to improve the business enabling environment, increase private sector competitiveness, create a well-prepared workforce, and help vulnerable groups benefit from economic opportunities. To help Jordan cope with increased energy prices, we will also help public and private institutions maximize the use of renewable energy sources, especially solar power.

United States programs will also improve the Government of Jordan's ability to strengthen the quality of basic, essential services, especially those related to education, health, and water. Programs will improve learning environments through infrastructure improvements, improve the quality of reading and math instruction in grades K-3, train teachers in how to integrate psycho-social support into their classrooms, and provide informal education opportunities to Jordanian and Syrian refugee youth who have dropped out of school. We will expand and renovate hospitals to help the government cope with the increased demand on health services due to the influx of refugees. Programs will also strengthen maternal and child health interventions and support government efforts to promote family planning and reproductive health services.

In one of the most water scarce countries in the world, the FY 2016 request will increase the availability of clean water by boosting the water supply, reducing water loss, and improving conservation. Projects will include policy reforms, improving water conservation through technologies and behavior change, and physical improvements to water and wastewater infrastructure with a particular focus in the north, where the refugee population has the greatest impact on infrastructure.

Lebanon

In Lebanon, FY 2016 funds will provide additional support to Lebanese host communities under strain due to the influx of refugees through programs that bolster Lebanon's ability to provide basic services and governance, like water infrastructure and basic education. The United States will support Lebanese institutions that advance internal and regional stability, combat the influence of extremists, and promote transparency and economic growth.

Our education efforts are training teachers, providing 126 schools with information technology equipment, and supporting extra-curricular and psychosocial activities to mitigate tensions between Syrian refugees and host communities. Activities benefit both Lebanese and refugee students in the public schools.

To support communities struggling to cope with a decline in economic opportunities, USAID's microfinance program has distributed 922 loans to businesses and individuals, including to women and youth, in two of the areas heavily affected by the influx of Syrians. Our programs have further enabled the expansion of and provided reliable access to potable water for a significant portion of the population in Lebanon.

Lebanon's Community Resilience Initiative aims to mitigate sectarian and host community-refugee tensions and counter the influence of violent extremist groups by bringing community groups together to address problems. The program pays special attention to youth empowerment and participation.

Iraq

To date, the U.S. government has provided more than $219 million in humanitarian assistance to meet the growing needs of those displaced by the spread of violence in Iraq since ISIL's takeover of the city of Mosul last June. Working through 23 United Nations (UN) and other international and non-governmental organizations and partners, the U.S. government has delivered relief supplies; addressed emergency health needs; provided water, sanitation, and hygiene support; ensured emergency and transitional shelter; and addressed the massive protection and trauma needs of populations who have fled untold horrors.

We anticipate enormous assistance needs in liberated areas to help the thousands of displaced return home in safety and dignity and to help communities recover. The U.S. government together with our international coalition partners and the UN will support the Government of Iraq (GOI)-led efforts to meet the expected needs. USAID is part of a team led by General Allen that is in Baghdad this week offering technical guidance to the Iraqi government in their own efforts to map out their strategy for stabilization and recovery.

Even before the emergence of ISIL, the U.S. government was committed to addressing the root cause of conflict in Iraq—lack of inclusive governance and respect for human rights. For over a decade, the United States has laid groundwork for the decentralization of power and rule of law promotion in Iraq, and at a local level there have been results, including greater empowerment of women and minorities.

USAID's ongoing Access to Justice (A2J) Program, which established a legal assistance network of 25 civil society and law school clinics across 13 governorates, has helped 18,000 Iraqis file for identity documents and seek legal protections. Three-quarters of these have been women, including many who needed to register their marriages so that they could receive benefits to which they are entitled under Iraqi law.

When entire communities were displaced by ISIL, they often left behind or destroyed identity documents as they fled out of fear of retribution if identified as part of a religious or ethnic minority group. In response, the A2J program pivoted to work with the GOI to help 2,000 IDP heads of households to replace identification documents essential to government and international assistance, greatly easing the burdens of Christians and other minority groups who had fled and restoring their sense of identity and security.

The majority of our current development programs in Iraq will be completed by the end of 2015. However, with the strong endorsement and concurrence of U.S. Ambassador Stu Jones, in FY 2016, USAID plans to continue a narrow portfolio of targeted assistance that supports critical Iraqi needs in the areas of revenue generation and service delivery with a limited amount of resources. We will remain poised to engage more robustly as needed.

Beyond our assistance to those countries directly impacted by the regional conflict in Syria and Iraq, we are also engaged more broadly in the region as it contends with a complex set of challenges.

Libya

Given the unstable security environment and national-level political uncertainty in Libya, USAID's programming continues, albeit at a slower pace and smaller scale. Despite these challenges, the United States remains committed to advancing a peaceful, democratic transition and prosperous future in Libya that is inclusive of all Libyans. USAID's FY 2016 request will enhance ongoing efforts to support the country's transition to a democratic and peaceful nation, improve governance capacity at the national and local level, promote the rule of law, and aid in nurturing a vibrant civil society.

We are impressed by the commitment of our Libyan counterparts to USAID programs, which continue to be implemented by local partners, despite the recent increase in instability. When their office was hit by mortar fire and local staff experienced insurgent fighting in their neighborhoods, staff of USAID's Libya Women Economic Empowerment program continued to work as they could, and where they could, with Libyan businesswomen to take their small businesses to the next level. Throughout the Middle East and North Africa, the United States is

building local connections with individuals, like these Libyans, who despite the turmoil are seeking our help to move their countries toward more resilient, stable futures.

Yemen

With a new country development strategy focused on building the resilience of Yemeni institutions and communities to shocks both natural and man-made, the mission's programming has continually adjusted throughout the past eight months given the dynamic security situation in Yemen. Although our embassy in Sana'a suspended operations, USAID's programs in Yemen remain operational and important activities continue, including early grade reading programs, demand-driven information technology and health workforce development, maternal mortality reduction programs, and agricultural programs using smart water technologies. Our implementing partners are to be commended for finding ways to continue to engage with Yemeni counterparts, especially the many civil society, women and youth leaders eager for peace and continued progress on the National Dialogue reform efforts. Our dedicated local Yemeni staff continues to oversee and monitor the delivery of essential technical assistance and humanitarian relief efforts by our partners on the ground.

The United States also continues to provide life-saving humanitarian assistance –more than $127 million in Fiscal Years 2014 and 2015 —to people in 19 of Yemen's governorates, addressing the most critical needs of food, water, treatment of malnutrition, and agricultural support.

In FY 2016, as the political situation evolves in Yemen, we remain well-positioned to support any positive developments that may emerge from the ongoing political negotiations while continuing to promote civic participation, support moderate elements, and uphold inclusivity. We strongly believe we must continue to demonstrate a commitment to the Yemeni people—a point our U.S. Ambassador notes is critical in our overall engagement with Yemen. Our assistance is one of the few narratives in Yemen countering the message that the USG is only interested in counterterrorism efforts.

West Bank and Gaza

We also remain committed to the pursuit of a negotiated two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. To that end, in FY 2016 the United States will continue to support peace efforts by building the capacity of institutions necessary for a future Palestinian state and by funding programs in democracy and governance; education and youth; health and humanitarian assistance; private enterprise; and water resources and infrastructure.

During my recent trip to the region, I was able to meet with a strawberry farmer, Osama, who received USAID assistance to introduce hanging grow methods in his greenhouses that utilize a computerized irrigation system, allowing him to monitor the nutrients that feed his strawberries and decrease the amount of water he uses, thus preserving a precious resource for both Palestinians and Israelis. Osama spoke with unambiguous pride, saying "The strawberry production in my farm means that I contribute to the national economy." In FY 2016, we intend to continue to support farmers, and entrepreneurs, and tour operators, and "techies" like Osama, because a strong Palestinian economy is good for everyone.

In FY 2016, we will also continue our decades of work to build peace between Israelis and Palestinians, through conflict management and mitigation programs, which have benefitted more than 30,000 Israelis and Palestinians in the last two years alone. For example, we have supported efforts to bring Arab and Jewish youth together to prevent violence in mixed Israeli towns as part of "The Youth Parliaments of the Mixed Towns of Israel" project. These Youth Parliamentarians serve as ambassadors of peace, charged with promoting and deploying non-violent conflict mitigation mechanisms. These skills were tested this summer but, as expected, participants rose to the challenge, holding 11 joint activities. As one graduate testified, "I learned to respect other people and try to understand their opinions, even if I don't agree with every word they say."

We also continue to work with local organizations to promote the rule of law, increase civic engagement, and enhance respect for human rights. For example, USAID continues to partner with Palestinian municipalities to improve municipal services, enhance citizen engagement, and promote good governance practices. During my recent trip, I was able to see this progress first hand in Bethlehem, where we've worked with Mayor Vera Baboun to establish a Citizen Service Center, where citizens can go to get quick and transparent services, and where we've partnered to realize Bethlehem's potential as a world class tourist destination.

Finally, we will also remain committed to addressing the humanitarian needs of Palestinians in Gaza, where this summer's conflict exacted a heavy toll. At the height of the conflict, at the request of the Palestinian people, Israel, and the international community, USAID provided water, food, hygiene and health kits, and shelter materials to hundreds of thousands in Gaza. Since the end of the conflict, the U.S. government has made good on our promise to contribute to reconstruction and rehabilitation efforts, obligating more than 95% of the funds pledged between the start of the conflict and the reconstruction conference in Cairo in October.

In light of the Palestinian Authority's actions at the International Criminal Court—which we strongly opposed—we continue to review our programs and our assistance to the Palestinian Authority to determine how it can best be used moving ahead, in compliance with U.S. law. We look forward to having a substantive dialogue with Congress as we further develop these issues. It remains important to note, however, that U.S. assistance has played and continues to play a critical role in promoting stability and prosperity not just for the Palestinians, but also for Israel. We do this by helping keep young Palestinians off the streets and in youth centers and schools, helping to counter violent extremism in the West Bank.

Our work remains critical to stability in the West Bank and Gaza, Israel, and the region. In FY 2016, we will continue the challenging but critical work of building the institutions of a future Palestinian state that will be a partner in peace, security, and prosperity.

Egypt

Egypt continues to be a key strategic partner in the region and our programs contribute to the overall U.S. assistance goal of a stable and prosperous Egypt. In FY 2016, the United States will continue to support key initiatives that directly help the Egyptian people.

Since 2011, we have intensified our commitment to assist the Egyptian economy to become more competitive and more inclusive so that growth benefits all Egyptians equitably. This is being achieved through targeted assistance to job-creating sectors such as agriculture and tourism; support for micro, small, and medium sized enterprises; continued efforts to strengthen the environment for trade and investment; and ensuring that women are better integrated into the economy. Our agriculture program is a prime example of how we are working to strengthen inclusive economic growth in Egypt. We work with smallholder farms in rural Upper Egypt, where the incidence of extreme poverty is highest, to improve crop yields and expand access to export markets. In the past two years our exports program created almost 7,000 full-time jobs and over 8,000 part-time jobs, increasing rural incomes. More than 29,000 students at USAID-funded Agriculture Technical Schools have completed internships in commercial farm factories since 2008, and more than 6,700 students have found permanent employment in the agriculture sector. Our FY 2016 programs will build on these successes and continue to help farmers develop high value crops and link them to export markets.

USAID assistance also supports Egyptian-led economic reforms—essential for small and medium businesses to start up and grow, and become the engines of much-needed local job creation. For example, we support one-stop shops for business registration and operation that have cut the time to register a business and obtain operating permits by 60 percent.

Our investments in FY 2016 will continue to improve the quality of basic and higher education – a key foundation for any prosperous country. As a long-term investment in Egypt's future, the United States is implementing a Higher Education Initiative to provide access to educational opportunities for high-achieving Egyptian students, with a particular focus on women and the economically disadvantaged, and to partner with the private sector to support strategic university partnerships in key fields that are critical to Egypt's economy, such as technology and business. USAID-supported Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) high schools are already producing results; recently a team of girls from the STEM High School in Cairo won first place at a regional science fair hosted by Intel.

We remain committed to working with civil society and the Government of Egypt in advancing democracy, good governance, and human rights, which are essential to Egypt's long-term political and economic development. Our programs aim to contribute to a stable and prosperous Egypt by helping Egyptians realize their expressed desire for more transparent, participatory, and responsive government institutions.

I want to take a moment to note USAID's incredible success in improving the lives of more than 4.6 million women and girls in Egypt through workforce development programs, and training in areas such as education, health, trade and investment, and governance. Nearly 1.5 million girls improved their reading and comprehension skills through our early grade reading program. Another 707,000 women gained access to clean water and sanitation services, 48,000 women received government IDs allowing them to vote for the first time, 25,000 gained access to loans, and over 9,000 received new or better employment opportunities. USAID's impact on women in the region's most populous Arab country is an example of how we are empowering individuals throughout the region to build more inclusive, prosperous societies. We will continue these

successes in women's empowerment with FY16 funds and we will also concentrate efforts on combatting gender based violence and countering trafficking in persons.

Tunisia

Elsewhere in North Africa, Tunisia demonstrates great potential for a short- to medium-term for a successful transition in the region. Our programs support the Tunisian people as they lay the foundation for a future of economic prosperity and democratic governance, and also support the Government of Tunisia as it seeks to improve governance institutions. Our programs are largely focused on tax and customs reform, strengthening Tunisia's private sector, and creating jobs—especially for youth. Last year, we re-opened our office in Tunis after 20 years—a clear demonstration of our continued support for a democratic Tunisia.

In FY 2016, we will continue to support Tunisia's new government as it pursues an economic governance reform agenda, a critical step towards maintaining public confidence in Tunisian institutions. USAID will also continue to work with both the government and civil society organizations to create and apply a legal framework that allows the country's growing civil society to thrive and play its critical role in democratic development.

We are creating job opportunities for Tunisian youth by training and coaching young Tunisian entrepreneurs as they set up their own businesses, providing financing to small- and medium-sized enterprises to grow their businesses through the Tunisian-American Enterprise Fund, and supporting the Government of Tunisia's economic reform agenda in taxation and customs.

Morocco

For more than 50 years, we have partnered with the Government of Morocco to build a strong bilateral relationship that focuses on promoting economic growth, improving educational opportunities and strengthening the effectiveness of civil society's political engagement. In FY 2016, USAID will continue ongoing activities supporting youth employability, primary grade education and civic participation in governance—the three pillars of USAID's strategy in Morocco, developed in collaboration with the Government of Morocco.

To increase youth employment and support economic growth and job creation, we will promote greater economic inclusion of students and recent graduates aged 15-29 and reduce youth unemployment in Morocco by increasing the ability of educational institutions and market actors to communicate the market demands for human capital. Through this work, USAID will help the country to adopt education and training programs that align with in-demand sectors and industries. We will also work to improve investor and business access to matching equity capital through an innovative program that will contribute to the development of the investment eco-system and encourage increased equity investment in early stage businesses.

We will continue to support the Ministry of Education to develop a national strategy for primary grade education, with an emphasis on reading. Through that work, USAID aims to increase educational attainment at the primary grade level and help the Government of Morocco to improve teacher training and primary grade curriculum.

In FY 2016, we will also continue to support the efforts of political parties to become more responsive to citizens and to better represent their constituencies. In addition, we will take advantage of new constitutional prerogatives for civic participation in the public policy process through an activity that focuses on strengthening civil society organizations, through small grants and technical assistance.

USAID will also continue work to counter violent extremism in Morocco through programs that provide opportunities for at-risk youth to engage economically, educationally, and socially in their communities, as well as to strengthen the relationship between the community and the police who operate in their neighborhoods.

Regional Programming

The FY 2016 budget request also includes regional programs to address critical needs that cut across borders. USAID's Middle East Regional programs respond to transnational challenges and emerging needs, with a focus on increasing private sector investment and enhancing job creation and matching, promoting water security, strengthening local civil society, and advancing gender inclusivity. Work in each of these areas focuses on implementing regional activities that complement bilateral foreign assistance initiatives, exchanging best practices among countries.

Middle East Regional funding will be used for continued support to Civil Society Innovation Centers, as part of a presidential initiative and global effort being financed in conjunction with other donors. In the context of further closing space in the region and around the world, the Centers will supplement and build on U.S. government-funded civil society programming in the region by establishing a permanent mechanism that: provides regional and global perspectives for local civil society; spurs connections with new partners and resources; encourages peer-to-peer learning; enables research; provides civil society with virtual and physical platforms to access tools and technologies that will bolster their work; and amplifies civil society voices around the world.

This region contains 12 of the world's 15 most water-scarce countries. To respond to this threat, the US has launched a Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Water Security Initiative that will provide the opportunity for public and private sectors, civil society, and other organizations to support entrepreneurs, researchers, and consumers with "water-smart" technologies. The Initiative aims to combine the development of new technologies with economic opportunities to improve long-term, sustainable access to water for 20 million people in the region. This program will target the cross-border issues that hinder efficient and equitable management of shared resources, and it builds on efforts currently supported by USAID bilateral missions and the Middle East Regional program's smaller-scale water programming. The MENA Water Security Initiative will also support public education on the role of citizens as responsible stewards of dwindling water supplies, helping to mitigate conflict driven by resource scarcity.

Increasing foreign and domestic investment in the region requires financing mechanisms; a stable, transparent business environment based on sound public financial management; open markets; a more robust formal sector; and sustainable fiscal and economic policies. Regional funding will support private sector development by seeding and incubating investment in early

stage businesses and startups through such innovative mechanisms as the MENA Investment Initiative pilot program.

Conclusion

The President's FY 2016 request responds to development needs and challenges in the Middle East and North Africa. USAID programs remain essential components of the United States' strategic, political and economic response in the region. Amid the challenges and transitions, the United States is empowering individuals through new educational and economic opportunities so they may create new futures in stable, resilient societies.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today, and I look forward to answering your questions.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you very much, both of you, for excellent testimony and I will recognize myself to start the questions.

Assistant Secretary—Ambassador Patterson, as I mentioned earlier in my remarks, Mr. Connolly and I recently received a report from GAO regarding our assistance program in Egypt.

The report found that we have about $460 million in unobligated funds for Egypt from previous years, yet this budget request seeks an additional $150 million for Egypt. What is the status of the nearly $½ billion in unobligated funds?

Is it going to be reprogrammed for something else? Why are we seeking an additional $150 million when we already have this $460 million unused? And my office also learned that the decrease from $200 million in the previous request for Egypt's ESF to $150 million this year reflected the administration's policy decisions.

So what is the rationale or the policy decision behind this seemingly random $50 million cut?

Ambassador PATTERSON. Thank you, Madam Chairman.

We have certainly over the past several years had difficulty disbursing in Egypt because of the huge political turmoil, the issue with NGOs. The—I think the last year I were there there was something like six finance ministers.

So the environment has been very unsettled for a number of years. We have tried—we have just signed six agreements. We are trying to move ahead with our higher education initiative, particularly focusing on economic growth, and we think we can liquidate that pipeline in a speedy manner.

One reason we did drop the request though was because we had a substantial backlog. So we wanted to allocate those resources to another area.

But we are doing everything we can now to liquidate that pipeline and put in place a number of promising new programs, particularly reaching directly to the Egyptian people.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. And will use those unobligated funds for other programs?

Ambassador PATTERSON. Yes. We have signed up a lot of programs I think in the last 3 months, six new major programs including a higher education initiative.

For instance, we have a girl's school that focuses on science and math and—but our main focus is going to be on economic growth and trying to reduce the unemployment and to get the economy growing in Egypt because it is 90 million people in the center of the Arab world.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. And on my question about the $200 million and then $150 million, and it was said it reflected the administration's policy decisions, what policy decisions guided that cut?

Ambassador PATTERSON. The main policy decision was, as you say, we had a lot of unliquidated pipeline. So we decided to reallocate that money or to at least assign that money to other areas.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Okay. Again, staying briefly with GAO report, this one touches on another GAO report that I commissioned on security assistance to Lebanon. But it was referenced in the Egypt report.

In 2013, GAO reported that bureau evaluation plans for security assistance were due in May 2012 yet none of them were completed

at the time and, remarkably, GAO reports that the State evaluation of Lebanon is expected to be the basis for informing future evaluations of security assistance to Egypt and other countries.

Where do we stand with these evaluations? How is it possible that we still have never conducted such reviews?

Ambassador PATTERSON. Yes, Madam Chairman.

The GAO had an entirely valid point about that and we are certainly on the hook to conduct an assessment of Egypt's security programs—security assistance program which is, of course, very sizeable and very complex.

And we have been working with our colleagues in the Bureau of Political Military Affairs to get that going. They are trying to develop a template that they can use worldwide for these security assistance programs. But I hope to report back to you and members of your staff shortly about how this is proceeding.

That said, Madam Chairman, we have worked closely with the Egyptian military to encourage them to modernize their military and to use our assistance to meet more current threats such as counter terrorism and border security. As you noted, they are facing serious problems both in the Sinai and on their western border.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Well, we look forward to receiving the progress report on those evaluations.

Regarding the budget request for Iraq, how much of this request for Iraq—$250 million in OCO FMF—is going to arming and helping the Kurds? Where are we in the process of sending military arms to the Kurds and to Baghdad?

Ambassador PATTERSON. Madam Chairman, we had a—we have had a very extensive program to arm the Kurds and we can provide details to this committee.

DoD had a task force set up to provide small arms, medium-sized arms to the Kurds and to rush those in during the first stages of the campaign against ISIL.

I think at issue here is the heavy weaponry and our analysis, I think, as members of this committee know that it would not be legal to provide those directly to the Kurds and I understand members of the committee are considering legislation to redress that.

We have very close cooperation with the Kurds. We have a joint intelligence center. We have a large consulate up there. We work very, very closely with them on military operations.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. We appreciate that. Keeping with Iraq and Syria and the administration's humanitarian request of $1.6 billion, Congressman Deutch and I have requested a new GAO report that evaluates our humanitarian assistance on the Syrian crisis.

Our concern is to ensure that our assistance is getting to where it is designed to go yet most of it goes to U.N. agencies. What kind of oversight do we have over this considerable amount of U.S. taxpayer money going through the U.N.?

Ambassador PATTERSON. I would—I would go back to my assignment in New York about this. We have worked hard over the years to put in place an inspector general, accountants, auditors, oversight committees.

The fifth committee in New York that is—that has very robust American representation oversees these agencies or the agency directly, and I think if we could provide you more detail you would

be satisfied that there is an oversight program with the U.N. agencies that basically pretty much mirrors ours.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. I look forward to getting more information on our oversight of this humanitarian aid being funneled through the U.N.

On Monday, Secretary Kerry actually stated that Assad should be included in the negotiations to reach a political solution in Syria, which unsurprisingly was immediately dismissed by Assad, and it is absolutely astonishing to think that the administration believes that Assad could or should be part of the negotiations, though it is not surprising considering the President's penchant for opening communications with other rogue regimes like Cuba and Iran.

Do you believe that Assad must go or should he be part of the negotiations? Where are we with Assad this week?

Ambassador PATTERSON. Madam Chairman, let me try and clarify that. Let me state unequivocally that our policy toward Assad had not changed. He must leave. He is a brutal dictator.

He is responsible for the deaths of 250,000 people as well as enormous displacement. What the Secretary meant with his statement and, believe me, the Secretary of State did not mean that he was going to sit down at the same table with Bashar al-Assad—that any negotiation to remove him from the scene, and we all hope for a political negotiation, would have to involve some people close to Assad who could speak for him to get him to move out.

And that is basically what it boils down to. But I assure you our policy vis-à-vis Assad has not changed.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. And, lastly, it is my opinion that Abu Mazen's initiative at the U.N. and the ICC have triggered the law to cut off funding for the PA.

I know we may have a disagreement. There is an ongoing review. But given the recent statements by the lead Palestinian negotiator who said that a victory for Prime Minister Netanyahu would give them no other choice than to continue pressing for action at the ICC, does this change that review?

Will we cut off funding for the PA, close the PLO office in DC and what is the status of that review?

Ambassador PATTERSON. I think my colleagues have told you we are looking at all the assistance to the Palestinian Authority. We know that the situation has changed and there may be a reallocation among accounts.

But you hit the nail on the head. I do think we have a disagreement about this—whether the law has in fact been triggered—and let me assure you that the Secretary and many other American officials but particularly Secretary Kerry are in constant contact with Abu Mazen and senior members of the Palestinian Authority to encourage them to take the right path. It is a, believe me, an ongoing dialogue.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you very much, Ambassador Patterson.

Did not mean to ignore you, Ms. Alexander. We just have so many questions for the Ambassador.

Ranking Member Ted Deutch.

Mr. DEUTCH. Thank you, Madam Chairman. Let me just pick up where you left off on that last point. Ambassador Patterson, I appreciate the statements and the encouragement that President Abbas take the right path but can you tell us when the review might be complete, when we might know with some certainty whether that law has been triggered and if not so that we can make determinations about how best to proceed?

Ambassador PATTERSON. Well, Mr. Deutch, we don't think the law will be triggered until there is a formal investigation underway. But that quite apart—that is quite apart from our internal evaluation of essentially the aid package, and I can't give you a date but I will give you my assurance that I hope it will be done very shortly.

And I will go back and check on that and we will give you a call and try and pin that down because I know that is a interest of great concern for this committee.

Mr. DEUTCH. We would appreciate that. Let me—let me go back to Egypt for a second and, again, just picking up on the exchange that you had with the chairman.

So the Secretary was quoted this week as saying we should expect a decision soon on certification for aid to Egypt, and as I said earlier I support our partnership with Egypt. I think it is very important.

It is critical. But as we look at the relationship and we balance our very real concerns with civil society and human rights with our very important security relationship, could you just continue again where you started and what does that actually look like going forward? How do you anticipate this playing out over the coming weeks and months?

Ambassador PATTERSON. Well, there—frankly, as you well know, we have essentially conflicting objectives in Egypt and it is very important to promote our security relationship and, frankly, Egypt's security relationship with Israel, which has never been better, and is even more important now than in the past because of the upheavals in the Sinai, which threatens both Egypt and Israel.

So the security relationship is paramount. Egypt has to—Egypt's armed forces have to evolve to meet new threats. They have quite legitimate concerns on the Western border now with the growth of ISIL and the uncertainty in Libya.

But I think all of us are concerned, as you are, about the crackdown on civil society and the crackdown on secular activists and the large number of people in Egyptian jails who probably shouldn't be there or at least should be there under some semblance of due process.

So we are just going to have to balance these objectives going forward and we are, frankly, doing the best we can. We pressed—the Secretary was in Egypt last week.

He met with President el-Sisi. I know from previous conversations that human rights and the future of civil society is always high on his agenda.

But he is also very mindful of the role that Egypt plays vis-à-vis Israel and Gaza and now Libya and the threats that they are facing.

Mr. DEUTCH. I just—I agree with you completely and I just want to echo what you have—how you laid that out. It is not an either-or scenario.

There is—we can continue to address—work to address our concerns about civil society while also providing the necessary and critical security support that Egypt desperately needs at this time because of their role—because of their relationship with us, because of their role in the region, because of the role they are playing with Israel. It is not either-or.

It is an important message from you and from the administration. Because that is the case, I think a lot of us would like to see it—see us move forward on both paths quickly. That is my message to you.

And, finally, on Iran, how does the—how does the budget allow the United States to strengthen relationships with our regional partners to counter Iran's dangerous and destabilizing influence in the broader region?

Ambassador PATTERSON. Well, I think a key to that is our relationship with the Gulf countries, frankly, who don't need foreign assistance, and Secretary Kerry has spent a good deal of time reassuring our Gulf partners.

He was just in Riyadh 10 days ago. He is planning to have a meeting of GCC countries early in April, reassuring them of our commitment to their security, not the least of which is the presence of 35,000 troops in the region.

But, certainly, as far as the request goes to improve the capacity of Lebanon's security forces is also paramount because it is a truly national institution that prevents, shall we say, the rise of other armed groups from playing a more prominent role in Lebanon.

And then, of course, the request for Jordan is very important throughout the region.

Mr. DEUTCH. Thank you. I yield back.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you.

Mr. DeSantis of Florida.

Mr. DESANTIS. Thank you. Has—Ambassador Patterson, has the administration spoken with Netanyahu to congratulate him on the Likud Party's victory?

Ambassador PATTERSON. Yes, sir. Secretary Kerry—I saw an email a couple hours ago—called him to congratulate him sometime today.

Mr. DESANTIS. Has the White House, to your knowledge?

Ambassador PATTERSON. I don't know.

Mr. DESANTIS. I appreciate both of your statements and testimony. This—I know the two-state solution has been something that has been discussed in diplomatic circles for decades.

But given the election results, given the security posture that Israel faces right now, do you honestly think it is realistic that you would have a Palestinian state on the horizon, given all the terrorism that we are seeing not only from ISIS but from Shi'ite groups like Hezbollah, to have—the experience in Gaza was when the Israelis pulled out you had Hamas take over.

So why would they want to run the risk right now of having that same history replicate itself on the West Bank?

Ambassador PATTERSON. Well, this has been longstanding U.S. policy to—because it is the only——

Mr. DESANTIS. No, I understand that. But I am saying as right now, given where we are, is that really a realistic——

Ambassador PATTERSON. Yes, I think so because critical to this issue, and Secretary Kerry has spent a huge amount of time on this, will be robust security guarantees for Israel.

And my understanding is that that process and that discussion and that analysis was much more advanced in this round of discussion than in any previous round. Another element——

Mr. DESANTIS. Well, let me just—I appreciate that. Because I think it gets to kind of the broader policy. So as the chairwoman pointed out, you had the Hamas-Fatah unity government and many of us, including me, think that the law called for a suspension of aid as a result.

And the administration rationalized it, said well, they are not—there is no undue influence—these are really just technocrats with Hamas. One, if there is any unity, the money is fungible, so that frees up more money for Hamas.

But whatever. So there was no suspension of aid. Now you have the ICC gamut. Abbas has asked for an investigation. He signed a letter and the administration's position is well, they haven't initiated an investigation so we don't think the law is triggered.

And we know that there have been threats to do other things unilaterally to the international community to try to attain Palestinian statehood.

So I guess my question is, if you are always going to read those things in Abbas' favor and in the Palestinian Authority's favor, aren't you really just emboldening him to push the envelope with his unilateral actions?

If he doesn't think there are going to be consequences, why not try to do what he is doing?

Ambassador PATTERSON. Congressman, I guess—I guess I would say in response to that that it strikes me as important for Israel's security too because at this point, for instance, the Palestinian civil servants are at 60 percent of their salary level.

So if you cut off funding to the Palestinian Authority and you have a considerable degree of disruption and civil unrest on the West Bank, Israel is going to——

Mr. DESANTIS. No, I understand that. But at the same time, with respect to Abbas, I think we have sent him a message that he is going to be able to push the envelope.

Let me ask you about UNWRA. It was very distressing to see all these reports of Hamas rockets in these UNRRA schools where they are firing into the Israeli population.

And we have sent money to UNRRA and you would ask questions—they would say oh, well, you know, we are not working with Hamas. Really? You are not working with Hamas? How did those rockets get in those schools?

What is the administration's position with respect to UNRRA and how those UNRRA schools were used to launch rockets against the Israelis?

Ambassador PATTERSON. We talked, at least I talked as did many others, to the head of UNWRA just 2 days ago and they are doing

and have done an exhaustive investigation of those claims, and we will be happy to provide it to you.

Mr. DESANTIS. What is the conclusion?

Ambassador PATTERSON. The conclusion is a lot of it was false. There were other—there were—yes, there were things stored there but it is important that we get all the facts and provide them to you.

Mr. DESANTIS. Yes, we would definitely like to see that. With respect to Egypt, does the administration consider—I know you said there are competing values at stake, but does the administration consider President al-Sisi to be an ally in the war against terrorism?

Ambassador PATTERSON. Certainly. I mean, he is—I know President el-Sisi very well. Yes.

Mr. DESANTIS. Great.

Ambassador PATTERSON. That is the short answer.

Mr. DESANTIS. Because I appreciate the problems with civil society, and I agree with you on that. But it seems to me the Muslim Brotherhood you had—it was negative in both ways because they would have cracked down on civil society.

They were doing that, and they would not have been a reliable ally in the broader fight against Islamic extremism. And so I think we need to work with the military there, and I appreciate those comments.

My final question is, if you look at over the course of the Obama administration Iran has had a pretty good run of it. They have really expanded their influence throughout the Middle East.

They are in de facto control of Iraq. They have a client now controlling Yemen. Clearly, they have been propping up the Assad regime—very big patrons of Gaza.

Are we concerned—is the State Department concerned about the expansion of Iranian influence throughout the Middle East and, if so, what are you going to do about it?

Ambassador PATTERSON. Well, certainly, we are concerned about the expansion of Iranian influence and we are certainly concerned about what is taking place in Lebanon and Yemen and other countries.

And the broader concern, if I might say, Congressman, is sectarian conflict is at the highest level that any of us recall with years of experience in this region in the Middle East.

The Shi'a-Sunni conflicts are very deep and very extreme. And let me be clear that we are doing everything we can through a variety of means, which we can perhaps talk about in another setting, to arrest some of this confrontation.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you very much, Mr. DeSantis.

Mr. Cicilline.

Mr. CICILLINE. Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you to the witnesses for the excellent presentation.

I just returned with some colleagues from the Middle East and it reminded me that this is a very complicated region of the world and there are no easy solutions and I really appreciate the testimony, Ambassador, that you gave with respect to our competing interests because it seems to me that is the case in virtually every

part of this region and striking the right balance is really an important objective.

I don't think there are competing values, as was just suggested. Actually, hopefully, we have a set of American values that we are promoting and the interests are what are competing in some of these contexts.

I would like to focus for a moment, again, on Egypt because I know that that is a place where their kind of competing interests are really obvious. But I am wondering if you would just speak to whether or not we are seeing—I recognize the security interests are deep and longstanding and continue to be strong.

But are you seeing any progress on the civil society—on the release of the detained individuals, on efforts to free the NGO workers, on implementing laws that really advance democracy, taking steps that are consistent with protecting or advancing the rights of women and religious minorities?

Is there any progress that we are seeing and what is the United States doing to really insist on some progress in these areas?

Ambassador PATTERSON. First of all, let me say that the request contains a lot of money—resources that could support these projects. But let me sort of—I mean, I think what I would say in Egypt we are seeing modest progress.

For instance, on—I think—I think there isn't a serious problem and I think the Coptic Christian community is, frankly, much happier under President al-Sisi than they were under the previous government and I think if they were here they would say that they enjoy—he came to Christmas Mass, which was a first in Egypt's history—I think they would say they are enjoying a higher degree of freedom than they have in years.

On NGO laws, I will admit there is not much progress on that. I would be the first to say that, and we will press and have pressed for a new NGO law that would provide for greater freedoms for both local and foreign NGOs.

And in terms of the electoral progress, they did set a date for elections and the courts have just overturned it. So we will be ready with technical assistance.

They have been very willing to take our technical assistance for elections. We will be willing to provide that as soon as they set another election date. But they need to move on with the democratic process and elect a Parliament.

Mr. CICILLINE. Thank you.

And Ms. Alexander, I want to—I just returned as part of that trip to the Zaatari refugee camp in Jordan right on the Syrian border and the crisis, as you know, facing the Jordanians in particular but the Syrian refugee crisis continues to be really extraordinary, and the United States, I know, has been the lead donor.

But the demand and the needs are enormous. And I am just wondering are we—what are we doing to persuade our partners in the region, particularly the Saudis, the Emiratis, the UAE, to really undertake a greater responsibility?

I mean, the Jordanians—the Hashemite Kingdom—has taken on an incredible responsibility and don't even really complain about it. They just sort of see it as some—their responsibility.

But it is clear to me that we are doing our part, the Jordanians are doing their part but are we doing things to press others in the region to undertake some more of this humanitarian work?

Ms. ALEXANDER. Thank you, Congressman. In fact, we are. I am glad you were able to see the camp and I hope that you were able to see the assistance the U.S. Government has been giving up there.

There is a donors conference in Kuwait at the end of the month and one of the main pitches is to make sure we speak with the Gulf States and other regional players to recognize that this refugee—the refugee flows are so destabilizing to all of the neighbors.

And without being able to provide essential services and the basic humanitarian needs that are there, we are going to face a larger humanitarian crisis than just the refugee flows we are seeing now.

So that is something that we are focused on. USAID has bene out and doing a tin-cup exercise with a lot of these other countries to make sure that they come to the donors conference prepared to recognize the incredible needs that are there.

Mr. CICILLINE. And it is an important moment to recognize the incredible workers from the respective agencies, particularly USAID, who are doing extraordinary work and from the U.N. and the other agencies.

One final question I want to ask about is Section 7008. There is a provision in the appendix to the budget request, which—where the administration is seeking a change in U.S. law, a law that has been in place for about three decades which requires the suspension of U.S. aid in the event of a coup d'etat against a democratically-elected government.

As you know, this section has been applied many times in places like Fiji and Mali and Thailand and Madagascar and provided an incentive for power to return swiftly to the democratically-elected governments.

And so I would like to hear a little bit about what is the justification for proposing this national interest waiver and what kind of signal might that send and should we be concerned about sending to governments that have come to power by military coup and foreign ministries globally, especially in this moment?

Ambassador PATTERSON. I didn't know, sir——

Mr. CICILLINE. Yes. Ambassador Patterson. I am sorry.

Ambassador PATTERSON. I didn't know we were requesting a waiver. I mean, generally speaking we want—we would seek the most flexibility we have in the interpretation of the law, and there was a recent issue in our part of the world in which we had, you know, shall I say, some difficulty in making that determination. But I can't answer that. We will get back to you.

Mr. CICILLINE. Thank you very much.

Thank you, Madam Chairman. I yield back.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you, Mr. Cicilline.

Thank you, ladies, for excellent testimony. We hope that President Obama will be calling Prime Minister Netanyahu very soon.

Thank you very much, and with that the subcommittees are adjourned. Thank you.

[Whereupon, at 3:53 p.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

APPENDIX

Material Submitted for the Record

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

Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa
Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL), Chairman

March 11, 2015

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 by the Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa in Room 2172 of the Rayburn House Office Building (and available live on the Committee website at http://www.ForeignAffairs.house.gov):

DATE: Wednesday, March 18, 2015

TIME: 2:00 p.m.

SUBJECT: Does the President's FY 2016 Budget Request Address the Crises in the Middle East and North Africa?

WITNESSES: The Honorable Anne W. Patterson
Assistant Secretary
Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs
U.S. Department of State

The Honorable Paige Alexander
Assistant Administrator
Bureau for the Middle East
U.S. Agency for International Development

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 SUBCOMMITTEE ON *Middle East and North Africa* HEARING

Day *Wednesday* **Date** *3/18/15* **Room** *2172*

Starting Time *2:00 p.m.* **Ending Time** *3:53 p.m.*

Recesses [*0*] (____ to ____) (____ to ____) (____ to ____) (____ to ____) (____ to ____) (____ to ____)

Presiding Member(s)

Chairman Ros-Lehtinen

Check all of the following that apply:

Open Session [✓]
Executive (closed) Session [✓]
Televised [✓]
Electronically Recorded (taped) [✓]
Stenographic Record [✓]

TITLE OF HEARING:

Does the President's F6 2016 Budget Request Address The Crisis in the MiddleEAst and North Africa?

SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Chairman Ros-Lehtinen, Reps Cicilline, Clawson, DeSantis, and Deutch.

NON-SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: *(Mark with an * if they are not members of full committee.)*

None

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.)*

QFR - Rep. Ros-Lehtinen
QFR - Rep. Connolly
SFR - Rep. Connolly

TIME SCHEDULED TO RECONVENE _____
or
TIME ADJOURNED *3:53 p.m.*

Subcommittee Staff Director

Statement for the Record

Mr. Connolly of Virginia

The amount of conflict that has erupted in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) makes the President's FY2016 Budget Request for the region read like a guidebook to many of the world's most pressing crises, including several bloody civil wars. However, the U.S. is hardly a casual observer in this turbulent region. We have longstanding security commitments that require continued investment, as well as a responsibility to promote stability where humanitarian crises and violent domestic upheavals threaten our regional partners and vulnerable populations.

We shoulder this burden in an effort to project American values and protect our interests and partners abroad. However, it is neither within our interest nor our capability to control the entire world's conflicts, and a strategy based on omnipotence is doomed to fail. One based on multilateral initiative and effective partnerships is far more sustainable and better suited for the kind of protracted conflict we face in this region.

Sunday, March 15, 2015 marked the fourth anniversary of the civil war in Syria. True evil has emanated from this conflict and spilled across Syrian borders. Syrian President Bashar al-Assad has used systematic torture, mass killings, and chemical weapons to torment the Syrian civilian population in flagrant violation of international law. The violent terrorist organization the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) has taken control of vast swaths of Syria and Iraq where it has displayed a brand of butchery that has agitated the world's collective conscience. The human impact of the civil war has been enormous. More than 12 million Syrians, or roughly 53% of the country's population, are in need of humanitarian assistance.

The scale of the conflict demands shared responsibility among international partners and those on the ground in Iraq and Syria. We have relied on an international coalition of over 60 countries to eliminate the threat posed by ISIL. The President is seeking funding for three authorized train and equip (T&E) missions, the global Counter-terrorism Partnerships Fund, the Iraq T&E authority, and the Vetted Syrians T&E authority. The U.S. is arming partners in affected areas like Iraq, where $1.6 billion in Department of Defense funding has been split between Iraqi Security Forces ($1.23 billion), the peshmerga ($354 million), and Sunni tribal fighters ($24 million). It is worth noting that the Chairman and Ranking Member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee have introduced legislation to give arms directly to the peshmerga rather than directing all assistance through Baghdad. I support this legislation and believe this strategy warrants a discussion wherever we have a reliable partner who is not receiving the assistance they require. Our strategy must prioritize effective partnerships.

Our approach to the regional humanitarian crisis must be equally dedicated to shared responsibility. U.S. funding for the Syrian humanitarian response has totaled more than $3

billion since the outbreak of the war. A significant majority of that funding has been directed through two United Nations appeals. Some have called for more assistance to go directly to non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Considering the substantial reliance we have upon NGOs and their dedicated workers in Syria, this may warrant an evaluation in instances where direct funding would result in more effective assistance. However, we must balance the consideration of direct funding with the need to ensure that the Syrian humanitarian response remains a broad multilateral initiative. I have joined with the Chairman and Ranking Member of the MENA Subcommittee to request that the Government Accountability Office (GAO) examine, among other things, how to ensure humanitarian aid reaches its intended recipients in Syria.

Nearly 4 million Syrian men, women, and children have made the decision to seek refuge in foreign countries rather than risk becoming one of the over 200,000 wartime casualties. Refugee movements on this scale are almost always an indication of a prolonged conflict that will not be settled for some time. This presents a long-term threat to security that extends beyond Syrian borders, and that is why much of the President's $1.82 billion request for the response to the Syrian crisis would go to Syria's neighbors, including $1.5 billion for Iraq, Lebanon, and Jordan. The Syrian humanitarian crisis has the potential to profoundly reshape regional demographics and destabilize neighboring countries. There are 1.2 million refugees in Lebanon, a country with a population of just 4.5 million, and in Jordan, Syrian refugees amount to 10 percent of the country's population. Turkey has also taken in 1.6 million men, women, and children, who left their homes in Syria. Many of these refugees will never have the opportunity to return home.

Elsewhere in the region, the U.S. has established relationships that have demonstrated the power of collaboration. The U.S. alliance with Israel, our strongest in the region, is defined by shared values of democracy and military and intelligence cooperation. Israel is also the number one recipient of America's bilateral aid. The President's request for FY2016 is $3.1 billion.

Since the Egypt-Israel peace treaty was signed in 1979, Egypt has received $64 billion from the U.S. making it one of the top recipients of U.S. foreign assistance. The FY2016 request is for $1.5 billion. However, a recent GAO report that I requested with Chairman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen uncovered a degree of paralysis in our foreign assistance operation in Egypt. In October 2013, three months after President Morsi's removal, the Administration announced that it would hold a cash transfer of $260 million in Economic Support Funding. To date, those funds remain unobligated. In its report, GAO recommended that the State Department and USAID develop an alternative plan for the funds. GAO also expressed concern that State has not adequately evaluated the results of billions of dollars in security assistance to Egypt. Identifying and ultimately resolving the dual issues of unspent funds and an incomplete evaluation of U.S. security assistance could help the U.S. accomplish broader goals in Egypt, namely support for democratic governance and countering security threats.

I hope our witnesses can provide further information on how the President's budget intends to strengthen existing relationships in the Middle East and North Africa and use multilateral initiatives to address the region's major conflicts, including those in Libya and Yemen. This must almost certainly include a comprehensive strategy between the U.S. and our international partners to counter the destabilizing influence Iran has had on the region. We cannot be satisfied with a region mired in proxy wars and misery, but rescuing it from this fate is a worthy cause for more than just the United States.

Questions for the Record Submitted by
Representative Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (1)
Assistant Secretary Anne Patterson
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
March 18, 2015

Question 1:

What is the status of $460 million dollars of previous years' unobligated funds to Egypt? What new programs will be funded with these funds? Will any of this be used for a direct cash transfer? Are there any considerations being given to increase funding targeting programs in Egypt to help foster democracy and governance and civil society programs?

Answer:

The $460 million in unobligated funds for Egypt identified in the recent GAO report on Egypt assistance consists of the $200 million FY 2014 ESF and the $260 million originally allocated for a cash transfer. In addition, USAID and State plan to allocate $150 million in FY 2015 ESF for Egypt.

The $200 million in FY 2014 ESF funds will continue to support key initiatives that directly help the Egyptian people. Our investments will improve the quality of basic education and higher education; support small- and medium-sized enterprises and workforce development; develop the labor-intensive tourism and agricultural sectors; and support key civil society priorities in the areas of countering trafficking in persons and combatting gender based violence. In addition, new activities will include adult literacy, support for Egyptian macroeconomic reforms, and linking rural farmers to food processing companies.

Regarding the $260 million in cash transfer funds, USAID and State notified Congress in early March of our intent to reprogram and obligate $69 million in ESF previously set aside for the Egypt cash transfer to support critical priority programs in Iraq ($20 million) and Syria ($49 million). In addition, USAID and State have analyzed economic assistance gaps throughout the world and are finalizing a plan for the remaining $191 million to address some of our most pressing assistance needs.

USAID and State remain committed to promoting essential democracy and governance principles in Egypt. While advancing certain democracy, rights and governance issues is a challenge in the current environment, we are moving forward with support to civil society organizations to combat gender-based violence, promote women's empowerment, counter trafficking in persons, promote religious tolerance, and support rights of people with disabilities. Many international and Egyptian civil society organizations remain committed to working with us. We also work to empower Egyptian civil society actors across our assistance programs, including in education, economic development and health.

The Egyptian government has also specifically requested our assistance in key areas such as election administration reforms, training Egyptian judges, and decentralizing Egypt's government in line with provisions of Egypt's new constitution. To be clear, at the current time, we are proceeding cautiously with only modest investments in government reforms. Future investments will be contingent upon a demonstration of sustained political will by the Egyptian government for reform.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Assistant Secretary Patterson by
Chairman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen(2)
Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
March 18, 2015

Question 2:

In 2013, GAO reported that bureau evaluation plans for security assistance were due in May 2012, yet none of them were at the time completed. GAO reports that the State evaluation of Lebanon is expected to be the basis for informing future evaluations of security assistance to Egypt and other countries. Where do we stand with these evaluations? If Lebanon is too dangerous to complete an assessment of our security assistance, and GAO has found gaps in efforts to document and monitor physical security of some U.S. equipment transferred to Lebanese security forces, are we reassessing our current security assistance program to Lebanon? If not, why not? Where does State stand in its implementation of GAO recommendations from its report, GAO-14-161, published February 26, 2014?

Answer:

The Lebanon study was postponed indefinitely on December 3, 2014, due to the Lebanese Armed Forces' (LAF's) ongoing security operations to combat repeated ISIL and Nusra Front attacks against Lebanon. Undertaking the planned assistance evaluation under these circumstances would have created operational challenges for the LAF, requiring the LAF to pull troops away from the front lines in the fight against ISIL/Nusra extremists. It also would have put our contracted evaluation personnel at risk. Because of the challenges faced with the study, the Department

initiated an alternative plan for security assistance evaluations in the region using an existing contracting vehicle and has issued a task order to develop the necessary evaluation framework, which can be used for security assistance programs globally. Once the contract has been finalized, the Department intends to work to develop the framework and begin conducting evaluations on a set of target countries. The target countries have not yet been identified, but we hope to identify them as we move further through the process.

It is important that our evaluation processes not undermine the LAF's ability to carry out its mission to defeat the ongoing ISIL/Nusra military threat to Lebanon's sovereignty, stability, and security. Additionally, Hizballah continues to assert itself in Lebanon and to involve Lebanon in Syria's civil war, which places additional burdens on the LAF. The evaluation of security assistance that is designed to build up the capabilities of the LAF so that it can effectively provide security over all Lebanese authority remains a priority for the Department. We hope to move forward on this evaluation once the new evaluation framework is in place, and the environment in-country will allow the study to safely proceed.

Regarding State's implementation of the GAO recommendations from its report (GAO-14-161) concerning end-use monitoring of Direct

Commercial Sales (DCS), the Department remains committed to our long-standing practice of maintaining records on Blue Lantern end-use checks on direct commercial sales transactions. The Department is working to standardize and implement procedures for exports authorized by the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) related to end-use monitoring globally (including Lebanon) and consultation with the Directorate of Defense Trade Controls. We expect to implement the procedures over the next year.

Questions for the Record Submitted by
Representative Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (3)
Assistant Secretary Anne Patterson
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
March 18, 2015

Question 3:

Regarding the budget request for Iraq, how much of this request for Iraq – $250 million in OCO-FMF – is going to arming and helping the Kurds? Where are we in the process of sending military arms to the Kurds and to Baghdad?

Answer:

While conditions and priority requirements in Iraq continue to evolve, FY 2016 OCO-FMF assistance is presently projected to: (1) increase the capacity and professionalism of the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) by establishing comprehensive training and education programs for all levels of the Iraqi military; and (2) build enduring logistics capabilities and institutions to sustain U.S. and Iraqi investments, sustain the professionalization of the ISF, which includes the Peshmerga, and strengthen the United States' long-term strategic partnership with Iraq.

We have provided robust support to the Kurds. In coordination with the government of Iraq, we have organized a coalition effort to support the Kurds, that to date has provided nearly 50 million rounds of light and heavy

ammunition; 25,000 hand grenades; 72,000 mortar rounds; 58,000 RPG cartridges; and 18,000 rifles. Thousands more rounds of ammunition and weapons have been identified for donation and are being prepared for delivery. This is in addition to the more than 300 tons of arms and ammunition that the Government of Iraq itself provided and delivered to the Kurds. The GOI also directed 25 of the MRAPs we delivered this past January to go to the Kurdish forces and 1000 AT-4 antitank weapons have also recently been delivered to Kurdish forces.

The United States continues to expeditiously provide arms and munitions to the ISF. The $1.6 billion Iraq Train and Equip Fund (ITEF) is dedicated to immediate force generation and regeneration needs. ITEF has provided the necessary funding and authority for the United States, with robust support from Coalition partners, to providing training and equipment to Iraqi Security Forces (ISF), including Kurdish Peshmerga and Tribal Forces. At four Building Partner Capacity (BPC) sites, over five thousand Iraqi soldiers have already completed training and nearly another five thousand are currently in training. One of these BPC sites is in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region and the Peshmerga are sending top-quality candidates for training.

The Department of State also provided $300 million in FY 2014 FMF to Iraq. This assistance is providing new individual equipment and weapons for 12,000 soldiers, repairs and transport of EDA HMMWVs and MRAPs, and sustainment of critical platforms, such as aircraft and vehicles. FMF will also fund training and equipment for increasing the ISF's counter-IED capability.

Questions for the Record Submitted by
Representative Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (4)
Assistant Secretary Anne Patterson
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
March 18, 2015

Question 4:

Ranking Member Deutch and I have requested a new GAO report that evaluates our humanitarian assistance to the Syrian crisis. Our concern is to ensure that our assistance is getting to where it is designed to go, yet most of it goes through UN agencies. What kind of oversight do we have over this considerable amount of U.S. taxpayer money going through the UN? Please provide a complete account of U.S. assistance for the Syrian humanitarian crisis that has gone through the UN or other multilateral initiatives. Are any of the humanitarian funds being comingled for other purposes, like providing assistance to the Syrian opposition?

Answer:

Thanks to the support of Congress, the U.S. has provided more than $3billion in humanitarian aid to Syria and the region since the start of the Syria crisis. Approximately $2.4 billion of our assistance has been provided through the UN and other international organizations (IOs). (Please refer to the attached chart for a breakdown by organization.) This support allows the UN and other IOs to provide humanitarian protection and lifesaving aid, including food, water, medical care, shelter, and other necessities to millions of civilians suffering both inside Syria and refugees in the region. It also assists overstretched communities hosting refugees in neighboring countries. In general, humanitarian assistance is channeled via UN agencies for several

reasons: their expansive operational capacity, their ability to access specific vulnerable populations that may otherwise not be reached, and their status in negotiating with governments and under international law.

The Department of State's Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM) and USAID's Bureau for Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance (DCHA), through the Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) and the Office of Food for Peace (FFP), fund UN and other IOs, in part, via contributions against humanitarian appeals, which lay out specific activities and how the receiving agencies will use the funds. The U.S. provides humanitarian assistance solely on the basis of need. Agencies responding to humanitarian needs are doing so in accordance with humanitarian principles, including impartiality and neutrality. We require any and all instances of actual or potential aid diversion to be reported immediately, without exception.

DCHA and PRM work closely with UN partners to ensure accountability and to ensure our assistance is reaching the intended beneficiaries. We exercise considerable oversight over our UN-funded programs, and our UN partners have developed a variety of multi-layered monitoring and tracking mechanisms to make sure that our assistance gets to those it is intended to reach. In addition to annual and quarterly reporting on

their operations, we require UN partners provide real-time updates on the progress of their activities and any security concerns. DCHA and PRM staff members, based in the region and in Washington, closely monitor reports in a systematic manner, are in regular and direct communication with the implementing agencies, and immediately follow up on issues of concern.

OFDA Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) staff in Jordan and Turkey; PRM Refugee Coordinators and staff based at U.S. embassies and consulates in Jordan, Iraq, Lebanon, Turkey, and Jerusalem; and Washington-based DCHA and PRM staff oversee U.S. government-funded humanitarian assistance programs implemented by the UN and other IOs. OFDA and FFP grant managers and PRM's Comptroller's office have primary responsibility for the financial management of contributions to IOs.

Refugee Coordinators monitor PRM-funded programs in the field through daily contact with UN and IO staff, visits to refugee program sites, beneficiary meetings, participation in UN-led humanitarian coordination meetings, and triangulation of information with other humanitarian stakeholders, including other international donors and other non-governmental organizations PRM also funds in the region. Washington-based program officers travel to monitor refugee programs in the field, as the security situation allows. In addition to field travel, program officers

conduct continuous desk monitoring by reviewing the implementing agencies' global, program, and financial reports. They analyze and confirm reporting information through our Refugee Coordinators and other U.S. government agencies, meetings with key stakeholders and beneficiaries, and consulting independent or third-party information sources. Program officers also communicate regularly with Refugee Coordinators and implementing organizations to address concerns and provide guidance on program progress. PRM's senior leadership also travels to the region to visit program sites and meet with the senior leadership of international organizations and NGO partners.

To enhance its monitoring of programs inside Syria, PRM maintains, at a minimum, regular monthly communication and quarterly meetings with Syria-based UN and IO implementing agencies. These discussions and meetings focus on planned efforts and actual achievements; information on risks, challenges and trends; and details on how they monitor their programs.

In addition to its immense operational capacity, the U.N. also plays a vital coordination role for the humanitarian community – both on funding and information sharing. DCHA funding for these organizations is allocated to activities outlined in the annual UN Strategic Response Plan for Syria.

DCHA monitors assistance programs in real-time to ensure U.S. government funds are used appropriately and effectively in order to achieve planned humanitarian objectives. DCHA requires these organizations to submit formal narrative reports on their activities on an annual basis and quarterly reporting on financial expenditure of DCHA funds.

In addition to these reporting requirements, DCHA works closely with all of its partners to collect performance and situational data in order to monitor activities and gather enough information from different sources to verify, with reasonable confidence, that assistance is reaching targeted areas and beneficiaries. UN partners are required to provide regular program updates on the progress of their activities and any security concerns, and we require them to report any diversions, seizures, or losses immediately, without exception.

The OFDA DART in Jordan and Turkey meets regularly with partners to discuss programming, issues impeding humanitarian activities, and partners' risk mitigation mechanisms. The DART also meets with the broader humanitarian community, and communicates directly and indirectly with Syrian organizations that provide added layers of ground-truth to partner reporting. In addition, the DART attends donor coordination

meetings, which provide an opportunity to triangulate information about our partners' performance.

DCHA staff in Washington also maintains regular contact with all humanitarian partners, including UN agencies, other IOs, and NGOs, about their assistance activities in Syria. OCHA produces comprehensive, regular reports on international humanitarian activities in Syria, which the DART and DCHA staff in Washington review. DCHA and PRM Front Office principals also engage regularly with UN agencies' Emergency Directors and other senior UN staff in a variety of forums, including Emergency Directors Group meetings, Syria Top Donor Group meetings, and other events.

USG Syria Humanitarian Crisis Response – Funding to UN and Other International Organizations

Organization	Total FY12 - FY15 (millions)
UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)	$ 770
World Food Program (WFP)	$ 1,069
UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA)	$ 184
UN Children's Fund (UNICEF)	$ 235
International Committee for the Red Cross (ICRC)	$ 79
International Organization for Migration (IOM)	$

	23
World Health Organization (WHO)	$ 29
International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC)	$ 7
UN Population Fund (UNFPA)	$ 18
UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)	$ 7
UN Department for Safety and Security (UNDSS)	$ 1
UN Food and Agricultural Organization (UNFAO)	$ 2
UN Development Program (UNDP)	$ 10
TOTAL	$ 2,434

Questions for the Record Submitted by
Representative Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (5)
Assistant Secretary Anne Patterson
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
March 18, 2015

Question 5:

It is my opinion that Abu Mazen's initiatives at the UN and ICC have triggered the law to cut off all funding for the Palestinian Authority. I know there is an ongoing review, but given recent statements by lead Palestinian negotiator Erekat, who has said that a victory for Prime Minister Netanyahu would give them no other choice than to continue pressing for action at the ICC - does this change that review? What is the status of the review?

Answer:

The State Department, in conjunction with the USAID, continues to examine our assistance to the Palestinians to determine how it can best be used moving forward. Although our view is that the legislative restrictions related to Palestinian initiation or active support for an ICC judicially authorized investigation have not been triggered to date, we are deeply troubled by Palestinian action at the ICC and continue to voice our opposition to further actions to both the Palestinians and the international community. The State Department and USAID are discussing the consequences that might result from further Palestinian action. We continue to believe that U.S. assistance to the Palestinian people is an

important tool in promoting regional stability, economic development, and increased security for both Palestinians and Israelis.

Questions for the Record Submitted by
Representative Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (6)
Assistant Secretary Anne Patterson
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
March 18, 2015

Question 6:

As you know, the recent funding bill signed into law in December mandates that funding for Morocco must also include spending on programs in the Western Sahara region of that country. It is our understanding that the State Department, working with USAID, is consulting with the Congress on these issues. The bill language also requests a report to Congress from the State Department that will be due very soon to identify the programs that can have the biggest impact in the region. What is the status of this report, and can we expect to receive it in the next few weeks?

Answer:

The Department of State and USAID reviewed the FY 2015 Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Act (SFOAA), which provides that the United States shall make available Title III funds for the Western Sahara. In accordance with the FY 2015 SFOAA language, which requires the Department to consult with Committees on Appropriations on the use of such funds within 90 days after the enactment of the SFOAA, the Department and USAID consulted with the House Committee on Appropriations and offered to consult with the Senate Committee on Appropriations.

The Department plans to include assistance for the benefit of the

Western Sahara through the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI). MEPI activities could focus on political party development, civil society capacity building, local governance development, and promoting economic opportunities.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Assistant Secretary Patterson by
Congressman Gerry Connolly
Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa
House Committee on Foreign Affairs - March 18, 2015

Question 1:

In a report published on February 11, 2015 (GAO-15-259), the Government Accountability Office found that the State Department has been unable to complete a planned evaluation of security assistance provided to Egypt. According to the report, State has hired a contractor to complete an evaluation of security assistance to Lebanon, and expected to use the resulting framework to inform future security evaluation efforts for security assistance in Egypt. However, the report went on to note that the evaluation of security assistance for Lebanon was formally stopped in November 2014. What is the current status of the review in Lebanon? Does the State Department have an alternative plan for developing a security assistance framework? Would a review in Lebanon conducted with limited field work due to the current security situation provide a valuable framework for an evaluation in Egypt?

Answer:

The Lebanon study was postponed indefinitely on December 3, 2014 due to the Lebanese Armed Forces' (LAF's) ongoing security operations to combat repeated ISIL and Nusra Front attacks against Lebanon. Undertaking the planned assistance evaluation under these circumstances would have created operational challenges for the LAF, requiring the LAF to pull troops away from the front lines in the fight against ISIL/Nusra extremists. It also would have put our contracted evaluation personnel at risk. Because of the challenges faced with the study, the Department initiated an alternative plan for security assistance evaluations in the region using an existing contracting vehicle and has issued a task order to develop the necessary evaluation framework, which can be used for security assistance programs globally. Once the contract has been finalized, the Department intends to work to further develop and test the framework and begin conducting evaluations on a set of target countries in the region. The target countries have not yet been identified, but we hope to identify them as we move further through the process.

Evaluating our security assistance to Lebanon remains a Department priority, though it is important that our evaluation processes not undermine the LAF's ability to carry out its mission to defeat the ongoing ISIL/Nusra military threat to Lebanon's sovereignty, stability, and security. Additionally, Hizballah continues to assert itself in Lebanon and to involve Lebanon in Syria's civil war, which places additional burdens on the LAF. We hope to move forward on this evaluation once the new evaluation framework is in place, and the environment in-country will allow the study to safely proceed. While the Lebanon study was stopped before the evaluation team was able to engage in field work, the work that was completed provided insight into the challenges and potential approaches for future studies.

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