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**Senate Foreign Relations Committee**  
**Subcommittee on Near Eastern and South and Central Asian Affairs**

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Chairman Kaine, Ranking Member Risch, Members of the Subcommittee, it is an honor to appear before you to provide background on U.S. engagement and policy in North Africa. As you know, this is an area of strategic importance to the Obama Administration.

I am also pleased to appear before you today with USAID Deputy Assistant Administrator Alina Romanowski and Deputy Assistant Secretary for Defense Amanda Dory. I have had the pleasure of working closely with both Ms. Romanowski and Ms. Dory for some time to further our foreign policy objectives in the region and to protect our national security interests. We welcome the opportunity to speak to you today and look forward to answering any questions you may have regarding North Africa and our policy.

Mr. Chairman, as you know, North Africa – known in Arabic as the Maghreb – is a region of tremendous potential. The birthplace of the Arab Awakening, it is currently undergoing a difficult but critical transformation. Tunisia continues efforts to achieve the democratic promise of its 2011 revolution, even as it faces significant security and economic challenges. Libya continues to undertake a democratic transition following a successful revolution, yet confronts numerous challenges on the political, security, and economic fronts. Libya struggles with the daily threat of violence posed by a lack of security and political consensus, yet our continued engagement there is absolutely essential. Morocco and Algeria have undertaken more gradual reform processes. They remain key regional sources of stability and have assumed increasingly important roles in our global effort to combat terrorism and extremism. At the same time, the strained relationship between Algeria and Morocco also limits regional cooperation and development, which is essential if any regional bodies are to evolve into credible forces for regional stability – in the Maghreb and the Sahel.

## Morocco

We continue to enjoy a very strong bilateral relationship with Morocco, focused on promoting regional stability, supporting democratic reform efforts, countering violent extremism, and strengthening trade and cultural ties. Morocco – a major non-NATO ally since 2004 – is one of our closest counterterrorism partners in the region, and an active member of the Global Counterterrorism Forum. During its current term on the U.N. Security Council, Morocco is playing an important role in international efforts to end the Syrian civil war. We also enjoy a strong economic relationship; a bilateral free trade agreement that entered into force in 2006 has increased bilateral trade by 244 percent.

We look forward to strengthening this bilateral relationship during this week's visit of King Mohammed the VI to Washington. This is an opportunity for the United States to reaffirm our close strategic partnership with Morocco and to discuss the best means of promoting security and prosperity in the region. In particular, we look forward to deepening our consultations on regional issues, and will stress our shared priorities in Mali, Syria, the Maghreb, and the Sahel. We look forward to continuing our conversations at the next session of the U.S.-Morocco Strategic Dialogue. Unfortunately, Secretary Kerry had to postpone the Dialogue in order to attend urgent negotiations in Geneva in mid-November, but we look forward to rescheduling the Strategic Dialogue soon.

Under King Mohammed VI, the Moroccan political system has gradually liberalized; the King founded the Arab world's first truth and reconciliation commission – to investigate abuses that occurred during his father's reign – and expanded women's rights. A new constitution was adopted in 2011, and Morocco's first Islamist-led government won nationwide democratic elections, but much progress remains to be made on implementing the guarantees and institutions including increasing engagement of its citizens, under the new constitution. We have a robust dialogue with the Moroccan government on human rights and ways in which we can support the ongoing process of political reform.

We will continue to support Morocco as it undertakes these important reform efforts. Our bilateral assistance – roughly \$31 million in FY 2013 – focuses on promoting economic, political, and social reforms; deepening our security partnership by supporting modern military and law enforcement agencies; promoting export control and antiterrorism as well as countering violent extremism efforts; developing a professional criminal justice system; and encouraging broad-based economic growth that provides expanded opportunities for women and

youth. Our flagship assistance program has been Morocco's \$698 million Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) compact, which closed in September and focused on agriculture, fisheries, and artisans.

With regards to the Western Sahara, we support the United Nations-led process designed to bring about a peaceful, sustainable, and mutually-acceptable solution to the Western Sahara question. We also support the work of the UN Secretary-General's Personal Envoy for the Western Sahara and urge the parties to work toward a resolution.

## Algeria

Algeria and the United States have built a strong bilateral relationship, characterized by our shared interests to combat terrorism and facilitate greater stability in the region. We are also focused on developing a more robust trade and economic partnership and supporting the development of civil society groups. Unfortunately, Secretary Kerry had to postpone the U.S.-Algeria Strategic Dialogue in order to attend urgent negotiations in Geneva earlier this month, and we look forward to rescheduling it soon.

Algeria has made steady and consistent progress on human rights and political transparency over the past 20 years. We are encouraging the government to create space for a more vibrant civil society and inclusive democratic process through supporting small civil society initiatives, such as funding training for local election monitors. We also aim to increase educational exchanges with young Algerians, including promoting English language learning.

The wealth from Algeria's significant hydrocarbon reserves has empowered the state at the expense of overall economic development, dampening employment and the development of human capital. We continue to encourage Algeria to make market oriented changes that expand job opportunities and increase its attractiveness to foreign direct investment. With that in mind, we are working to strengthen our trade relationship with Algeria, and are seeking to reactivate the 2001 Trade and Investment Framework Agreement. General Electric recently signed a \$2.7 billion deal to provide gas turbines to Algeria, an example of the benefits of our efforts to promote U.S. business in Algeria. This deal alone will help create 4,000 American jobs.

We have encouraged Algeria to continue to expand its regional leadership role to help stabilize neighboring states, which struggle to address terrorist threats, loose

weapons, and porous borders. Algeria's experience fighting an Islamist insurgency during the 1990s resulted in a well-equipped and battle-hardened military that constitutes the strongest counterterrorism force in the region. We will continue to encourage Algeria to use this expertise to train and partner with less experienced militaries and law enforcement units in the region to help ensure greater stability in the Sahel and Maghreb. Algeria has purchased U.S. equipment via Direct Commercial Sales, but has not overcome its significant reservations about the Foreign Military Sales program. We also support countering violent extremist efforts seeking to provide positive alternatives for at risk youth.

## Libya

Since the 2011 revolution, Libya has faced significant political and security challenges. Yet our continued engagement there is absolutely essential. It is in our national security interest to ensure Libya becomes a stable and democratic partner capable of addressing regional security challenges and advancing our shared interests. A successful democratic transition will result in a strategic partner with significant energy reserves and the ability to exert a positive and stabilizing influence in a critical region.

Mr. Chairman, let me assure you that, despite its challenges, Libya is making progress. In the first credible, transparent, and largely peaceful elections in a generation, Libyans elected a General National Congress (GNC) in July 2012, and the government continues to take steps towards establishing a constitution. More recently, the Prime Minister's staff, and the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) have taken steps to move a national dialogue process forward to help resolve political differences. The Libyan government and GNC have taken steps to pass a transitional justice law, which will help guide national justice and reconciliation efforts. The Justice Minister has also taken to heart recommendations for prison reform. The United States has signed memoranda of understanding with the Libyan government to increase cooperation on education reform, cultural preservation, and chemical weapons destruction. In addition, 681 candidates for the constitutional drafting committee registered in October and November 2013. NATO recently agreed to respond positively to Prime Minister Zeidan's request for support in security sector capacity building.

Yet while the government enjoys democratic legitimacy, it lacks the ability to project its authority across the country or fulfill many core government functions. Faced with competing factions and the daily threat of violence, the Libyan government and political actors have been unable to address the country's

overlapping challenges. A political agreement is necessary to advance the National Dialogue and enable the constitution-drafting process to unfold, empowering the government to improve governance and establish security in the interim. The government must also work to demonstrate that Libya's vast natural resources will be used to benefit the entire Libyan population, and use those resources to promote economic growth. We stand ready to support future elections in Libya, as well as constitutional drafting and national dialogue efforts necessary for security and governance to take root.

After 42 years of dictatorship, Libya suffers from instability and poor governance due to weak institutions, wide, porous borders, huge stockpiles of loose conventional weapons, and the presence of militias, some of whom have extremist ties. Without capable police and national security forces that work with communities, security and justice sector institutions struggle to fulfill their mandate, and rule of law is undermined, enabling criminality, illicit trade, and frustration to grow. The government has struggled to wrest power and influence from militias, which continue to wield local and regional power; the absence of political consensus on the way forward hampers these efforts. In a direct challenge to the weak central government, various actors—including federalist, militia, and ethnic groups—have blocked production and exports at many of Libya's onshore facilities.

Our assistance efforts are focused on providing support in order to build the capacity of Libyan institutions to face these challenges and to ensure a peaceful transition to democracy. Since Libya is a wealthy nation, we view our assistance in these areas as seed money intended to jump-start and unlock Libyan investment in programs that ultimately the government must own. To improve the government's ability to establish stability throughout the country, we responded positively to a request this spring from Prime Minister Zeidan that we help to train a General Purpose Force (GPF) to be the core of a new Libyan Army. At the UK-hosted G-8 Summit in June, we pledged to train a 5,000-8,000 member GPF, prompting the UK and Italy to pledge to train 2,000 members each. The GPF assistance will be paid for by the Libyan government through a Foreign Military Sales case which will need to be congressionally notified.

Border security is also a critical U.S. and international concern in Libya. Libya's uncontrolled borders permit the flow not only of destabilizing Qadhafi-era conventional weapons, but also violent extremists throughout North Africa, the Middle East, and the Sahel. The flow of these foreign fighters has increased since

the fall of Qadhafi and was highlighted by the January 2013 attack in Amenas, Algeria. We are in the process of beginning to implement a Global Security Contingency Fund (GSCF) border security program to provide technical expertise, training, and limited equipment to build Libya's inter-ministerial border security capacity to address security along its southern land border. This program includes training and equipment programming for Libya's neighbors – Chad, Niger, and Algeria – to improve border security cooperation with Libya. In addition, we have a GSCF training and equipment program to build special operations forces capacity.

Libya's European partners also provide significant amounts of security and justice sector assistance to Libya. We ensure that our assistance complements their efforts and responds to the security needs identified by the Libyan government. Given constraints on Libyan capacity to accept international assistance, a difficult security environment, and persistent instability, implementing pledged assistance is challenging, and often takes more time than expected. If we continue to help Libya build its capacity, however, these challenges can lessen.

We have made commitments to support Libya's security sector with the knowledge that enhanced security is only part of the solution. We also welcome the opportunity, with our international partners, to help the Libyan government build its governance capacity. We support the Libyan government and civil society groups in their work to construct the foundations of a new democratic society in Libya through capacity building programs for nascent civil society organizations, political parties, the GNC, selected local councils, and media institutions, and work with partners to engage women and youth as active participants in the democratic transition.

## Tunisia

Tunisia remains one of the Middle East and North Africa's best hopes for a successful transition to democracy. Efforts continue to finalize a new constitution and set a date for democratic elections for president and parliament. Tunisia's constituent assembly—tasked with drafting the constitution—completed a fourth draft in June. This draft incorporates human rights norms, including equality between women and men, and respect for rule of law.

As with all transitions, of course, there are also challenges. This year, there have been two assassinations of opposition politicians: one in February and one in July.

Following the July assassination, there were widespread, peaceful demonstrations calling for the dissolution of the government. Civil society mediators have since been facilitating negotiations between the government and the opposition, with the goal of implementing a political transition roadmap. We are encouraging Tunisian leaders across the political spectrum to continue their efforts to finalize a constitution that respects the human rights of all Tunisians and to set a date for credible and transparent elections so the Tunisian people can determine their country's future.

As we saw with the unfortunate killings of politicians and most recently the attempted suicide attacks in tourist areas, violent extremists continue to seek to derail the country's efforts to transition to democracy peacefully and successfully. Over the past year, the Tunisian government has taken a more aggressive stance against extremism, by raiding weapons caches and undertaking an operation to root out terrorists in the country's western region. In late August, the Government of Tunisia designated Ansar al Sharia-Tunisia (AAS-T) a terrorist organization, and the security forces have since banned the group's activities and made several high level arrests.

This approach is not without its challenges. The Tunisian military and security forces require additional training and equipment to counter the newly-evolving terrorist threat. Improving and deepening our security cooperation is of top importance in our bilateral relationship. We have bolstered our assistance to help Tunisia reform its criminal justice sector to improve its ability to protect Tunisians and foreigners alike, as well as confront domestic and regional security challenges. For example, in September 2013, our two countries signed a letter of agreement to expand programming to reform and improve the capacity of the police and corrections officials. The other challenge is ensure that this aggressive, security based approach is balanced with proven methods to prevent recruitment into violent extremist organizations. We are working with Tunisia to explore ways to provide at-risk groups with alternatives and preventing further marginalization or disconnection of these groups.

We also continue to provide foreign assistance via a number of mechanisms to support Tunisia's transition from dictatorship to a prosperous democratic country. On the economic front, we are helping Tunisia expand economic growth and opportunity to all citizens, and encouraging it to undertake market-oriented and institutional reforms. Our focus with existing programs has been to spur job creation and provide entrepreneurship training as well as to enhance access to

finance for small and medium enterprises. At the same time, we continue to fund programs that support Tunisia's democratic political processes and plan to support international and domestic elections observation missions.

### Protecting our Interests

Chairman Kaine, Ranking Member Risch, and Members of the Subcommittee, I want to thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. Certainly, we are aware that our budgets are facing increasing pressure, but this region remains vital to protecting our national interests, as we look to maintain relationships with key allies and to nudge nascent democracies through difficult transitions, with the hope of promoting stability and countering extremist threats in the Middle East and Africa. With careful, targeted assistance, and smart diplomatic engagement, we are successfully advancing our key strategic interests.

Thank you again for your time and attention. I look forward to answering your questions.