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U.S. Policy toward Libya
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Good morning Chairman Risch, Ranking Member Menendez, and members of the committee. It is a pleasure to be here today with the Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs to discuss the future of U.S. policy toward Libya.

Russia is a determined and resourceful competitor to the United States. The Kremlin seeks to use military power and proxy actors to impose its will on nations seeking to assert their independence and sovereignty. Ukraine is the most egregious example, where in 2014, Russia invaded and occupied Crimea and then used mercenaries and its own army to foment a conflict in the Donbas. Russia invaded Georgia in 2008 and continues to interfere in the affairs of its near neighbors such as Moldova.

In 2015, Russia expanded its reach to Syria, where its military and political support of the Assad regime, including shielding the regime from accountability for its use of chemical weapons,

has fueled a conflict that has cost the lives of hundreds of thousands of innocent civilians and forced millions to flee Syria.

Libya now risks becoming the next venue for Russia's malign efforts to exploit international conflicts for its own narrow political and economic gain. As Undersecretary for Political Affairs David Hale testified before this committee last December, our diplomats are seized with countering Russian adventurism in Africa, where Russia's actions exacerbate instability and undermine U.S. interests. In Libya, as Undersecretary Hale pointed out, we have called out Russia's destabilizing policies, including its use of proxy actors, like the Wagner Group which is under U.S.-sanction. Secretary Pompeo made clear during last month's Berlin Conference that all participants, including Russia, must abide by the UN arms embargo on Libya.

In recent months, Russia's surge of mercenaries supporting the attack by the Libyan National Army (LNA) on Tripoli has led to a significant escalation of the conflict and a worsening of the humanitarian situation there. Wagner is often misleadingly referred to as a Russian private military company, but it is an

instrument of the Russian government, which the Kremlin uses as a low-cost, low-risk instrument to advance its goals. Russian military support has emboldened Haftar to continue his destabilizing offensive.

External support to the Libyan parties, including Russia's military support of Haftar, is the primary factor allowing the conflict to drag on and metastasize into a broader proxy war. Russia's direct involvement in the conflict exacerbates instability as Moscow seeks access to military facilities and resources in Libya, with ramifications for southern Europe. Moscow may seek to use an enhanced presence in Libya as a platform to expand its malign influence in Africa and across the Mediterranean.

By bringing the GNA and LNA to Moscow in January, the Kremlin showed it seeks to create parallel diplomatic tracks that would sideline the UN and advance narrow Russian interests. However, the reduction in violence that came into effect on January 12 has begun to fray. For the UN to succeed in converting the current shaky truce into an enduring ceasefire, external parties must uphold the commitment they made January

19 in Berlin to freeze deployments of personnel and equipment. So far, the external actors involved in Libya have not followed through on this commitment.

Since 2011, the UN Support Mission in Libya has had an international mandate to promote conflict resolution and to support a political solution – efforts that Moscow increasingly undermines. The United States, on the other hand, supports these international efforts, particularly by focusing on economic and security dialogues among Libyan technocrats to achieve tangible, practical solutions. By engaging with Libyans from across the political spectrum and conflict divide, the United States has demonstrated itself to be an honest broker, rather than a self-serving manipulator.

The administration is engaged in a range of actions to blunt Moscow's efforts to exert malign influence in Libya. It is not too late for Moscow to change course and genuinely support a political settlement. We will continue to call out Russian interference in Libya. The Kremlin is mistaken if it thinks using mercenaries provides it deniability for its reckless policies. This is also demonstrated through the sanctions we have imposed on

the Wagner Group, and its owner, Putin crony Yevgeniy Prigozhin. In keeping with the Administration's approach to burden sharing, we are actively pressing our European allies to also sanction Wagner and Prigozhin. Russia needs to understand it cannot act with impunity to destabilize Libya.

