

**U.S. SECURITY ASSISTANCE
IN THE MIDDLE EAST**

HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON NEAR EAST,
SOUTH ASIA, CENTRAL ASIA,
AND COUNTERTERRORISM

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS
UNITED STATES SENATE

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U.S. SECURITY ASSISTANCE IN THE MIDDLE EAST

TUESDAY, AUGUST 10, 2021

U.S. SENATE,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON NEAR EAST, SOUTH ASIA,
CENTRAL ASIA, AND COUNTERTERRORISM,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS,
Washington, DC.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:03 a.m. in room SD-419, Hon. Christopher Murphy, chairman of the subcommittee, presiding.

Present: Senators Murphy [presiding], Shaheen, Van Hollen, and Young.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. CHRISTOPHER MURPHY, U.S. SENATOR FROM CONNECTICUT

Senator MURPHY. Good morning, everyone. I am pleased to bring this subcommittee together today for a hearing on a very important and timely topic, U.S. security assistance in the Middle East.

We have votes at around 11 o'clock today. I imagine the first vote will be held open for a while and so we will continue this hearing through the beginning of votes. Other colleagues, I believe, will be joining us.

Over the last 75 years, the majority of U.S. arms sales worldwide have gone to the Middle East, totaling more than \$379 billion in sales. That is a lot of weapons into a very combustible part of the world.

Arms sales and other forms of security assistance are an important foreign policy tool for the United States to use to exercise its influence abroad, and as with any foreign policy tool, it is important to continually reevaluate whether that tool is actually achieving its desired policy goals.

When the Cold War began as a means to counteract Soviet expansion, we got into the business of supporting authoritarian regimes all over the world. In the Middle East, we often relied on arms sales to cement these relationships.

We also needed access to Middle East oil and this drove our security policy there as well. We wanted oil from the region, many of those nations wanted our weapons.

It is not the 1970's any longer. The Soviets and the Arab nationalists are gone. Back then, the United States imported 29 percent of its oil from the Gulf. Today, that number is 12 percent and declining.

Yet, even as the foundations of our interests have changed in the Middle East, our security assistance continues to flow unabated into a region that is increasingly unstable, and the post-9/11 global war on terror has dramatically expanded security assistance programs around the world, including the Middle East, with relatively little debate or oversight.

Now, there are plenty of good reasons, as I said, to have robust security partnerships in the Middle East, including supporting our ally Israel and countering legitimate threats from Iran, its proxies, and nonstate actors.

There is always enormous pressure from both our partners in the region and the defense industrial complex in Washington to do more without any corresponding pressure to examine whether these sales are actually advancing our interests or actually making Americans safer.

So today, I would like to more closely examine some basic assumptions with our witnesses. The first assumption is this: Security assistance makes U.S. partners better able to protect U.S. interests in the Middle East.

Has it? We have invested more than \$50 billion in Egypt's army over the past 40 years. They did provide support to us in the Gulf War in 1991. But recently, that army has been focused more on internal repression than on regional security.

Saudi Arabia and the UAE are capable of projecting military power beyond their border in a way that they were not decades ago. They often do so in ways that are contrary to U.S. interests, as we have seen in Yemen and Libya.

The second assumption: If we do not sell them weapons they will turn to China or Russia. Well, the U.S. is the partner of choice not only because so much of our equipment is just far superior to anything the Chinese or the Russians can sell but also for long-term training, maintenance, and security cooperation that comes with those sales.

It is time to ask whether the threat that less arms from the U.S. will cause our partners to simply abandon us and turn to Russia or China, whether that threat is real or whether it is just a red herring.

Finally, the third assumption: Close military relationships with these countries bring them into "the club." It helps professionalize them, incentivizes these nations to become more respectful of international norms like civilian control of the military and respect for human rights.

As we know, by and large, this has not happened. Bahrain is more repressive than it was 10 years ago. The Saudi regime's crackdown on political speech is getting worse, not better. Egypt has 60,000 political prisoners in its jails.

Now, I am not arguing for a bright line. I never have. I do not think the U.S. should pull out of our security relationships in the region. It can be a really effective tool.

Our aid to the Lebanese Armed Forces has been vital in its significant political and economic turmoil in that country.

The UAE Special Forces are valuable counterterrorism partners. Aid to Jordan helped secure the country's borders with Syria and Iraq when the ISIS caliphate was at its peak.

Some of the resources that we provide to the region today are, I would argue, mismatched to our national security interests and, hopefully, that is what we will talk about today.

I would also make the argument that the weight we put on security interests and security assistance crowds out our ability to offer other, often much more effective aid.

As I said, I support continued funding for the Lebanese army. Honestly, that country is suffering from an economic and political crisis right now, not a security crisis. The bulk of the things that we have to offer Lebanon are more weapons.

So, again, the purpose of the hearing today is to have an honest conversation and a realistic assessment of today's security threats in the Middle East and how we need to update our security assistance posture to best meet those threats.

With that, let me turn to the ranking member for his opening remarks.

**STATEMENT OF HON. TODD YOUNG,
U.S. SENATOR FROM INDIANA**

Senator YOUNG. Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman, for holding this subcommittee hearing.

First off, I want to thank members of our teams for working together to help get this hearing scheduled. We have had to battle a moving Senate calendar, and I appreciate your team's commitment to getting this nailed down.

I want to thank you for this opportunity to discuss the importance of our security partnerships in the Middle East outside of a time of crisis.

Too often, this committee only does the hard work of examining the parameters of our security assistance when things go wrong or during moments of congressional executive disagreement.

The chairman and I worked together when there have been efforts to circumvent congressional prerogatives in pursuit of an arms sale agenda that was perhaps too permissive.

Now I am concerned that the pendulum may be swinging too far in the other direction where assistance may be too restrictive just as the United States is withdrawing our true presence from the region.

As in most exercises of foreign policy, it is crucial that the porridge be the right temperature. So this hearing, as I think about it, really comes down to a question of under what conditions the U.S. security assistance enhances regional and U.S. security, and to what extent and at what cost.

The Senate Foreign Relations Committee must remain committed to the idea that the United States is engaging in a new great power competition with strategic rivals like China and Russia.

Acknowledging that fact and taking appropriate steps to calibrate accordingly is essential. This process requires a reevaluation of our global commitments and presence, especially in the Middle East.

The historic Abraham Accords provide an opportunity for such reflect and action. As the United States reduces its own presence,

our role in the region must change from the leader to an active supporter.

For this strategy to be successful, we will have to rely upon the governments of the partners and allies we have, not the ones we necessarily wish we had.

In the last year, we have seen our partners and allies make peace and normalize relations with our ally, Israel, and those in Egypt were critical at helping stop the violent rocket attacks from Hamas into Israel.

At the same time, we have seen Iran and its proxies, such as Hamas, Hezbollah, the Houthis, and others, rain unguided rockets down on urban centers and attack civilian ships in international waters with sophisticated drones.

This complex security environment is one which the United States can and must continue to shape for the sake of global energy and economic markets, for the sake of our enduring counterterrorism mission, and for the sake of regional stability, while denying the Middle East as an area of Russian and Chinese influence.

All of this is to say that this committee will not be serving the national security interests of the American people if we act as a roadblock to security assistance and arms sales to the Middle East.

Security assistance is a highly imperfect tool and it carries its own degree of risk. Removing it from the table or conditioning it in a way that creates insurmountable barriers or creating false choices between defensive and offensive systems undermines our ability to exert our influence in the region and provides excuses to those who will seek new sources of security assistance, sources like Russia, China, Turkey, or Iran, which do not possess our values or possess our ability and willingness to influence how arms are used.

In today's hearing and going forward, we cannot put all of our regional partners and allies into the same box. We may have a strategic and diplomatic requirement to be ambiguous about some of our relations with allies around the world, but we must be crystal clear with our support for others, such as Israel.

So in today's hearing, I am looking forward to a proactive dialogue and I hope to hear our witnesses expand upon the Biden administration's policies on the urgent requirements of Israel, how the Administration's recent conventional arms transfer policy will affect assistance to the Middle East, how the Administration intends to shape the use and provision of emerging and advanced technologies to the region, how the Departments of State and Defense can best work together to ensure America's foreign policy is being conducted holistically and in accordance with all our interests in mind, and the level of importance the Administration is placing on support for our partners and allies during this critical moment of rebalancing United States presence away from the Middle East.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator MURPHY. Thank you, Senator Young.

It is now my privilege to welcome to the subcommittee both Ms. Mira Resnick, the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Regional Affairs in the Bureau of Political Military Affairs at the State Department.

Ms. Resnick previously served as the Senior Professional Staff Member covering the Middle East and North Africa for the House

Foreign Affairs Committee, and also worked at the State Department's Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs.

We also have testifying today Ms. Dana Stroul, the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for the Middle East. Previously, she was a Fellow at the Washington Institute and Senior Professional Staff Member on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

I do not know which order you want to do this in but the floor is yours, to be followed by questions.

STATEMENT OF MIRA RESNICK, DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR REGIONAL AFFAIRS, BUREAU OF POLITICAL-MILITARY AFFAIRS, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON, DC

Ms. RESNICK. Good morning, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Young, and distinguished members of the subcommittee. It is an honor to appear before you and with DASD Stroul to discuss U.S. security assistance to the Middle East. I ask that my full statement be placed in the record.

Let me start by saying, as Secretary Blinken has repeatedly said, that the State Department is fully committed to partnering with Congress on these issues and we welcome the opportunity to engage.

At a time when strategic competition with the People's Republic of China is our foremost foreign policy challenge and in an era with so many of the problems we face are global in scope, our engagement in the Middle East is all the more important.

Increasingly complex global challenges demand strong partnerships because we cannot act alone, because we face global problems whose consequences shape security at a regional level and because America's leadership matters.

Our security assistance and arms transfers to the Middle East, as to any part of the world, are a function of our foreign policy, which is why Congress has placed these authorities with the Department of State.

Through security cooperation, we seek to disrupt al-Qaeda and related terrorist networks and prevent an ISIS resurgence, address humanitarian crises, and redouble our efforts to resolve the complex armed conflicts that threaten regional stability, including deterring Iranian aggression and supporting our partners and allies' territorial defense.

The United States continues to maintain our ironclad commitment to Israel's security, helping to maintain its qualitative military edge in the region consistent with U.S. legal requirements and policy.

Nearby in Jordan, our foreign military financing helps increase cooperation on border and maritime security, cybersecurity and counterterrorism, allowing Jordan to contribute to U.S. operations that advance regional security.

We are recalibrating our relationship with Saudi Arabia, aligning it with the Administration's approach to security assistance. The President has made clear that our interests cannot be separated from our values.

At the same time, we remain committed to helping the kingdom defend itself from continuing cross-border attacks from the Houthis in Yemen supported by Iran.

From day one this Administration has worked to end the conflict in Yemen, and the first step we took toward doing so was to suspend two munitions sales that the previous Administration had notified to Congress. Those sales remain suspended under a policy of ending U.S. support to offensive operations of the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen.

The Biden/Harris administration is also committed to security cooperation with the UAE, including through the transfers of some of our most important technology.

While the projected delivery dates on these sales would be several years into the future, we anticipate a robust and sustained dialogue with the UAE to ensure that any defense transfers meet our mutual strategic objectives to build a stronger, interoperable, and more capable security partnership that will protect the security of our technology and that will comport with our values.

Just as our assistance can contribute to the national stability of partners, it can also, if not properly managed, imperil human security.

A key part of arms transfer decisions is our efforts to ensure that U.S.-origin equipment is not used to perpetuate human rights violations and to minimize the risk of civilian casualties by our partners.

As part of the arms transfer decision analysis, we closely scrutinize the human rights track record of recipients and consider whether supplemental civilian harm mitigation measures should be required as a component of an arms sale or whether the transfer should take place at all.

When U.S.-origin assistance or equipment is used contrary to these goals or when potential violations occur, we will evaluate the full range of consequences.

For example, I believe decisions about our support to Egypt's security must be informed, framed, and bound by our values.

We have deep concerns regarding human rights violations in Egypt and we will continue to raise these concerns with Egyptian officials at the senior most levels as we work with Egypt to improve their ability to advance shared security interests, including counterterrorism and border and maritime security.

Let me stress that the fundamental importance of human rights are and will remain an essential element of any arms transfer decision to Egypt, to the Middle East, and globally.

Let me end with this. Partners are aware that security assistance and sales from the United States come with high expectations, that the U.S. review process takes time.

Why is that? It is because we press and hold accountable our allies and partners to reduce civilian casualties, to adhere to the laws of armed conflict, to respect human rights, to enhance their security sector governance processes, to understand when there is no military solution to a conflict, to prevent military technologies from falling into the hands of bad actors.

These are not strings attached, Mr. Chairman. These are the values we believe are inseparable from our national security and that

have underpinned our own stability and prosperity, and which we believe will strengthen our partnerships to build peace and security in the region over the long term.

America is unique in that respect. No other nation's assistance is designed as intentionally to address the root causes of challenges facing the region. We also realize that these values help make us safer and make our partners safer.

We see these roots in our values as a benefit, not a hindrance, for our foreign policy and for our security assistance.

Thank you, and I look forward to taking your questions.

[Prepared statement of Ms. Resnick follows:]

Prepared Statement of Ms. Mira Resnick

Good morning Chairman Murphy, Ranking Member Young, and distinguished members of the Subcommittee. It's an honor to appear before you with DASD Stroul to discuss U.S. Security Assistance to the Middle East. Let me make it clear at the start, as Secretary Blinken has repeatedly said, that the State Department is fully committed to partnering with Congress on these issues, and we welcome the opportunity to engage today.

At a time when our strategic competition with the People's Republic of China is our foremost foreign policy challenge, and in an era when so many of the problems we face—problems like climate change and the COVID pandemic—are global in scope, our engagement in the Middle East is all the more important. Increasingly complex global challenges demand strong partnerships because we cannot act alone. Because we face global problems whose consequences shape security at a regional level. And because America's leadership matters.

SECURITY ASSISTANCE AS A TOOL OF DIPLOMACY

The Department of State leads America's foreign policy through diplomacy, advocacy, and assistance, by advancing the interests of the American people, their safety and prosperity. Our goal is to find diplomatic solutions to conflict, and we have started by reinvigorating and reinvesting in our alliances and partnerships around the world. President Biden has pledged to lead with diplomacy, because it's the best way to deal with today's challenges, and security cooperation and security assistance are among the many different tools we can use to advance diplomacy. Security cooperation improves partner countries' interoperability with U.S. forces and enhances their ability to meet their own legitimate defense needs, thereby contributing to regional security.

By equipping and empowering our partners to address shared security concerns, we can help share the burden of addressing today's crises, while promoting resilience, innovation, and shared prosperity for the future.

Our security assistance and arms transfers to the Middle East, as to any part of the world are a function of our foreign policy, which is why Congress has placed these authorities with the Department of State. In applying the security cooperation toolkit, the State Department's Bureau of Political-Military Affairs seeks to build the capacity of allies and partners to contribute to regional stability and security and advance human rights and democracy, which in turn contributes to American security—and which also carry vital humanitarian implications in the region.

STRENGTHENING AND STANDING BEHIND OUR ALLIES, WORKING WITH LIKE-MINDED PARTNERS, AND POOLING OUR COLLECTIVE STRENGTH TO ADVANCE SHARED INTERESTS AND DETER COMMON THREATS

In the Middle East, we are working to disrupt international terrorist networks, deter Iranian aggression, and support our partners' and allies' territorial defense.

The United States continues to maintain our ironclad commitment to Israel's security, helping to maintain its qualitative military edge in the region consistent with U.S. legal requirements and long-standing policy. At the same time, we will continue efforts to advance relations between Israel and its neighbors, and we underscore our strong commitment to a negotiated two-state solution as the best path to reach a just and lasting resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Jordan's stability and security are priorities for the United States, and we have provided Jordan with assistance for more than 50 years. We have supported the Jordan Border Security Program, an integrated border security surveillance, detection, and interdiction system since 2009. All of these funds support provision of equip-

ment and other assistance Jordan urgently needed to respond to transnational threats along its border and participate in Global Coalition operations. Jordan is the third largest global recipient of Foreign Military Financing (FMF), and these funds support provision of equipment and other assistance Jordan urgently needs to rapidly respond to transnational threats along its border and participate in Global Coalition operations against al-Qa'ida, ISIS, and their regional and global affiliates. The provided FMF helps Jordan increase cooperation on border and maritime security, cybersecurity, and counterterrorism. The financing has allowed Jordan to also contribute to U.S. operations, and this interoperability with our forces is critical to our national security and ensures that we don't risk the lives of U.S. men and women.

We are recalibrating our relationship with Saudi Arabia, as the President has directed, to make clear that our interests cannot be separated from our values, and we also remain committed to helping the Kingdom defend itself from continuing cross-border attacks from the Houthis in Yemen, supported by Iran. Alongside our important work with Saudi Arabia on regional security and counterterrorism, the President has been clear that the U.S.-Saudi strategic partnership must reflect the values and interests the United States brings to that partnership, and we are prioritizing human rights in our bilateral engagements. When this Administration came to office, we found some of our partners in the region entrenched in a years-long war in Yemen. From day one, this Administration has worked to end the conflict in Yemen, and the first step we took towards doing so was to suspend two munitions sales that the previous Administration had notified to Congress. Those sales remain suspended under a policy of ending U.S. support to offensive operations of the Saudi-led Coalition in Yemen. At the same time, this Administration recognizes that Saudi Arabia faces significant threats to its territory, and we are committed to working together to help Riyadh strengthen its defenses. More broadly, the Secretary appointed a special envoy to focus U.S. diplomatic energies on bringing the war to a close, through aligned efforts with the U.N. envoy and regional states, including the Saudi Government. Thus the Administration's efforts on Yemen include but also extend above and beyond ending weapons sales for use in offensive operations.

AS WE SHARPEN OUR FOCUS ON OUR STRATEGIC COMPETITION WITH PRC AND RUSSIA,
WE WILL NEED PARTNERS IN THE MIDDLE EAST TO WORK WITH US TO ENSURE STABILITY IN THE REGION

When the United States looks at the region today, we see substantial opportunities to advance our objectives. Our presence and relationships with Middle East partners help prevent efforts by Russia and China to extend their influence into the region. The PRC, in particular, has rapidly become more assertive. It is the only competitor potentially capable of combining its economic, diplomatic, military, and technological power to mount a sustained challenge to a stable and open international system. Russia remains determined to enhance its global influence and play a disruptive role on the world stage. Both Beijing and Moscow have invested heavily in efforts meant to check U.S. strengths and prevent us from defending our interests and allies around the world. Regional actors like Iran continue to pursue game-changing capabilities and technologies, even as they threaten U.S. allies and partners and challenge regional stability. We need to focus on shoring up America's core strengths—our people, our economy, our national defense, and our democracy—to meet the strategic competition with China and Russia that is going to shape our future.

We will work with our regional partners to deter Iranian aggression and threats to sovereignty and territorial integrity; disrupt al-Qaeda and related terrorist networks and prevent an ISIS resurgence; address humanitarian crises; and redouble our efforts to resolve the complex armed conflicts that threaten regional stability. But we do not believe that military force is the answer to the region's challenges; the use of military force should be a last resort. Diplomacy, development, and economic statecraft should be the leading instruments of American foreign policy.

I want to reiterate that we are committed to advancing the security of our partners across the Middle East. Security cooperation—including security agreements, Foreign Military Sales (FMS), exercises, training, and exchanges—are integral components to the overall U.S. regional strategy that improve interoperability with the U.S. partner nations' forces to meet their legitimate external defense needs and deter regional threats. However, I also want to assure that we constantly closely scrutinize every part of our security cooperation relationships, and will also not hesitate to adjust or recalibrate them to better serve our national security interests.

ADDRESSING THE CRISES OF TODAY WHILE PROMOTING RESILIENCE, INNOVATION,
COMPETITIVENESS, AND TRULY SHARED PROSPERITY FOR THE FUTURE

We also see, in the Middle East, a region transforming—petrostates becoming diversified economies, boycotts becoming partnerships. One such example is the United Arab Emirates.

The UAE makes significant contributions to promote regional security and de-escalation across the Middle East and is an outstanding counterterrorism partner to the United States.

The Biden-Harris administration is committed to security cooperation with the UAE, including through transfers of some of our most important technology. While the projected delivery dates on these sales would be several years in the future, we anticipate a robust and sustained dialogue with the UAE to ensure that any defense transfers meet our mutual strategic objectives to build a stronger, interoperable, and more capable security partnership, that will protect the security of our technology and that will comport with our values.

As you know, in recent years, the UAE has come under intense scrutiny about their compliance with end use requirements, to include deployments that impact areas of conflict, and alleged unauthorized retransfers. The Department continues to work closely with the UAE, to include seeking additional reassurances to establishing effective joint procedures of operation and oversight to address these concerns. The UAE has demonstrated its willingness to open dialogue and cooperation with the USG and we continue to assess that they can be a reliable partner. And, again, we stress the importance of interoperability and burden sharing so that our men and women in uniform do not have to carry the risk of every load. And, again, we stress the importance of interoperability and burden sharing so that our military forces always have the advantage of operating as part of a coalition.

HUMAN RIGHTS/RULE OF LAW AS A NATIONAL SECURITY PRIORITY

Just as our assistance can contribute to the national stability of partners, it can also, if not properly managed, imperil human security. A key part of arms transfer decisions is our efforts to ensure U.S. origin equipment is not used to perpetrate human rights violations and to minimize the risk of civilian casualties by our partners. As part of the arms transfer decision analysis, we closely scrutinize the human rights track record of recipients and consider whether supplemental civilian harm mitigation measures, such as training, advising, or other supporting capabilities, should be required as a component of an arms sale, or whether the transfer should take place at all. We insist that our partners take steps to comply with international law, including the laws of armed conflict. When U.S. origin assistance or equipment is used contrary to these goals or when potential violations occur, we will evaluate the full range of consequences. Our aim is to de-escalate regional tensions and create space for people throughout the Middle East to realize their aspirations while still providing critical defensive capabilities. Region-wide, we are continuously examining and prioritizing how we can ensure our security cooperation relationships are consistent with our values, including a reinvigorated focus on civilian harm mitigation efforts. The United States consistently urges our partners to comply with their obligations under international law, to implement measures to reduce the risk of harm to civilians, to take appropriate measures when such casualties occur, and to draw lessons from operations to reduce the risk of harm to civilians. The Department also remains committed to the principles of the Leahy Law, as a tool to promote accountability in foreign security forces and to ensure that security assistance goals are in-line with our values.

For example, I believe decisions about our support to Egypt's security must be informed, framed, and bounded by our values. We have deep concerns regarding human rights violations in Egypt, and we will continue to raise these concerns with Egyptian officials at the senior-most levels. This is a key element of strengthening our strategic partnership with Egypt. We will continue to work with Egypt to improve their ability to advance shared security interests, including counterterrorism, and border and maritime security. At the same time this Administration consistently raises concerns about policies challenging democratic governance, the need to protect a robust and independent civil society, and the fundamental importance of human rights which are, and will remain, an essential element of any arms transfer decision to Egypt, and I would note that Egypt has taken steps to work on practical ways to conduct military operations that mitigate the risk of civilian harm.

IT IS THE GOAL OF THIS ADMINISTRATION TO CREATE POLICIES INFORMED BY AMERICAN INTERESTS, INCLUDING HUMAN RIGHTS

And finally, on that last cause I identified: promotion of an open international order that reflects our values and advances our interests. Partners are aware that security assistance and sales from the United States come with high expectations—and that the U.S. review process takes time. Why? It is because we press and hold accountable our allies and partners to reduce civilian casualties. To adhere to the laws of armed conflict. To respect human rights. To enhance their security sector governance processes. To understand when there is no military solution to a conflict. To prevent military technologies from falling into the hands of bad actors. To build transnational connections that enhance peace. These are not “strings attached,” Mr. Chairman, these are the values we believe are inseparable from our national security and that have underpinned our own stability and prosperity, and which we believe will strengthen our partnerships to build peace and security in the region over the long-term. And yes, we are unique in that respect—no other nation’s assistance is designed as intentionally to address the root causes of challenges facing the region. But we also realize that these values also help make us safer and make our partners safer. We see those roots in our values as a benefit, not a hindrance, for our foreign policy and for our security assistance.

Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.

STATEMENT OF DANA STROUL, DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR THE MIDDLE EAST, OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE, WASHINGTON, DC

Ms. STROUL. Chairman Murphy, Ranking Member Young, and members of the committee, it is an honor to testify before you today alongside DAS Resnick to discuss the Department of Defense, or DoD, role in U.S. security cooperation in the Middle East.

The committee has my full opening statement submitted for the record. So in my 5 minutes, I would like to emphasize some key points regarding DoD’s role in security cooperation.

First, strategy drives programming and resource allocation. The interim national security strategy released earlier this year set out the broad parameters for how the United States will engage abroad to protect Americans at home.

In particular, it calls for doubling down on building partnerships throughout the world, because our strength is multiplied when we combine efforts to address common challenges, share costs, and widen the circle of cooperation. DoD’s security cooperation activities are nested within this guidance.

Second, the State Department is in the lead. Diplomacy is in the lead. DoD programs fall within a whole-of-government approach to the region. We utilize security cooperation authorities and programs to expand the capabilities of willing partners, respond to urgent security needs, and invest in the institutional growth of partner forces to share the responsibility for regional security.

Over time, our goal is to partner with self-reliant, capable, and accountable partner forces who will work alongside the United States to achieve mutual objectives based on shared threats and shared interests.

This is a long-term proposition. Security cooperation programs are also designed to ensure that the U.S. maintains access to key areas and facilities to support the defense of our partners, respond to potential contingencies, and to protect U.S. personnel.

Third, security cooperation encompasses more than military sales and funding. For DoD, security cooperation activities include exer-

cises, education and training, operational planning, institutional capacity development efforts such as security sector reform, strategic planning and doctrine development, human resource management, defense budgeting, training and advising, as well as the transfer of defense articles and services.

Within each of these categories there are opportunities and requirements for the department to demonstrate and impart U.S. values such as support for a rules-based international order, respect for the rule of law, and civilian control of the military and commitment to fundamental freedoms and human rights.

Fourth, security cooperation activities reinforce broader U.S. objectives.

Examples: Normalization. As Israel moves into the U.S. Central Command, or USCENTCOM, area of responsibility, we can use military exercises and U.S.-convened professional education programs to provide opportunities to facilitate normalization and build upon it by encouraging relationship building between Israel and Arab militaries.

Cooperation to counter the threat of attack by unmanned aerial vehicles, or UAVs, drones. Given the shared regional threat of the Iran-supported UAV network across the region, we can use security cooperation programs to advance shared regional defense.

Burden sharing. While the U.S. seeks to remain the security partner of choice in the Middle East, improved integrated regional security among partners is key as the United States right-sizes its posture in the region.

Strategic competition. In the Middle East, building the capacity of partners is critical to reducing their vulnerabilities to aggression and coercion, and improving their ability to defend their sovereignty, their interests, and a free and open international order.

A critical tool in countering U.S. competitors like China and Russia is to provide superior training and equipment to meet partners' needs.

My fifth and final point, congressional consultation and oversight is critical. Thank you for congressional bipartisan support for security cooperation authorities, programs, and funding for the Middle East, and in exercising robust and necessary oversight and monitoring to ensure that security cooperation resources remain aligned with U.S. objectives and continue to be in the interest of the American people.

I look forward to your questions. Thank you again.

[Prepared statement of Ms. Stroul follows:]

Prepared Statement of Ms. Dana Stroul

Thank you Chairman Murphy, Ranking Member Young, and Members of the Committee. It is an honor to testify before you today, alongside my State Department colleague, to discuss the Department of Defense (DoD) role in U.S. security cooperation in the Middle East.

The interim National Security Strategy (NSS) released earlier this year set out the broad parameters for how the United States will engage abroad to protect Americans at home. In particular, it calls for “doubling down on building partnerships throughout the world, because our strength is multiplied when we combine efforts to address common challenges, share costs, and widen the circle of cooperation.”

In the Middle East, the interim NSS calls for working with U.S. partners to deter Iranian aggressive actions and threats to sovereignty and territorial integrity, disrupt al-Qaeda and related terrorist networks and prevent an ISIS resurgence, address humanitarian crises, and for a redoubling of efforts to resolve complex armed

conflicts that threaten regional stability. Finally, the NSS specifically makes clear that military force is not the solution for the region's perpetual instability and lack of security.

Consistent with the interim NSS, the Department of Defense is working to ensure that the full suite of security cooperation authorities, programs, and resources provided by Congress are implemented as part of a whole-of-government approach in which the State Department is in the lead for U.S. policy in the Middle East. Security cooperation programs and activities are a critical pillar in the Administration's focus on partnership, based on the acknowledgement that the U.S. cannot achieve its objectives unilaterally. DoD programs reinforce diplomacy, and the U.S. emphasis on dialogue and political processes—coordinated with partners—to wind down conflicts. DoD utilizes security cooperation authorities and programs to expand the capabilities of willing U.S. security partners, respond to urgent security needs, and invest in the institutional growth of partner forces to share the responsibility for reinforcing regional security.

Over time, the U.S. goal is to partner with self-reliant, capable, and accountable partner forces who work alongside the United States to achieve mutual objectives, based on a shared view of the threats to regional stability and security. U.S. support through security cooperation to partners is also designed to ensure that the U.S. maintains access to key areas and facilities, both to support the defense of our partners and also to respond to potential contingencies.

For the Department, security cooperation includes several categories of activities, to include: transfer of defense articles and services; military exercises; military education and training; and institutional capacity development efforts such as security sector reform. Within each of these categories, there are opportunities and requirements for the Department to demonstrate and impart core U.S. values such as support for a rules-based international order, respect for the rule of law and civilian control of the military, and commitment to fundamental freedoms.

The Department conducts assessment, monitoring, and evaluation (AM&E) of its security cooperation initiatives to inform decisions about security cooperation strategy, policy, programs, and resources. The Department is building its capacity and processes to design, develop, and implement AM&E to track progress through the development of front-end assessments and performance monitoring of security cooperation initiatives. In addition, the Department conducts independent strategic evaluations to analyze the efficiency and effectiveness of SC programming.

Global U.S. security assistance, including in the Middle East, is subject to the Leahy law vetting procedures. Screening for compliance with human rights standards is integral to the Department's review and prioritization of International Security Cooperation Program (ISCP) funding recipients. In addition, DoD offers courses via the Institute for Security Governance (ISG) to build institutional capacity such as Defense Governance, Civil-Military Relations, and Civilian Harm Mitigation. Additionally, courses are offered by the Defense Institute of International Legal Studies (DIILS) include Military Justice, Defense Support of Civilian Authorities, and Human Right and Law of Armed Conflict.

In the Middle East, security cooperation activities and programs provide critical opportunities for the United States to advance long-term objectives for the region. As Israel moves into U.S. Central Command, military exercises and U.S.-convened professional education programs provide opportunities for the United States to expand on last year's normalization agreements by encouraging relationship-building between the Israeli and Arab militaries. Given the shared regional threat of Iran-supported unmanned aerial systems across the region, U.S. security cooperation programs can be used to encourage shared regional defense initiatives. While the U.S. seeks to remain the security partner of choice in the Middle East, improved integrated regional security among partners is key as the United States right-sizes its posture in the region and seeks to counter the influence and appeal of strategic competitors.

Security cooperation programs are a key element of competition with Russia and China. In the Middle East, building the capacity of U.S. is critical to reducing their vulnerabilities to aggression and coercion—and improving their ability to defend their sovereignty, their interests, and the free and open international order. One critical tool in countering U.S. competitors is to provide security cooperation and assistance, such as superior training and equipment, which meets partners' security needs. As the U.S. works alongside partners to address violent extremism, maritime threats, and more, we nurture strong relationships that serve as an effective counter to China and Russia. This includes professional military education, coordinated with the Department of State, which helps develop these relationships with young military leaders in the United States and the Middle East.

In the Middle East, many security cooperation programs are focused on maritime and border security, air and missile defense, counterterrorism, and institutional capacity building. In the Levant, the primary border security and terrorist threats emanate from Syria and Iraq. The robust partnership between the United States and the Kingdom of Jordan is an example of what sustained security cooperation can achieve with a reliable partner. Jordan is today an important counter-terrorism partner and key contributor to the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS, in large part due to efforts by the United States to build Jordan's defense capabilities and to promote interoperability with the United States over many years.

In the Gulf region, DoD supports the Department of State's efforts to secure a peaceful settlement to the war in Yemen. Additionally, the Department of Defense utilizes security cooperation authorities to bolster Saudi Arabia's air defenses in the face of ongoing cross-border attacks from Yemen. U.S. security cooperation is designed to support the defense of Saudi Arabian territory through the provision of training, equipment, and early warning intelligence. In Oman, State and DoD's security cooperation collaboration is bolstering Oman's border security, maritime security, and counterterrorism capabilities. In Bahrain, U.S. security assistance programs are assisting Bahrain to increase its maritime security capabilities.

In Iraq, U.S. security assistance strengthens Iraq's counter-terrorism capabilities and bolsters Iraqi forces as they work to maintain a secure, stable, and sovereign Iraq. Programs focus on professionalization of Iraqi forces, border security, and increasing interoperability with the United States and NATO.

Cooperation with Congress is critical in authorizing security cooperation programs, and in maintaining effective oversight. Thank you for Congressional bipartisan leadership in supporting the U.S. security partnerships in the Middle East region, and in exercising robust and necessary oversight and monitoring to ensure that how we use security cooperation resources remains aligned with U.S. objectives and continues to be in the interest of the American people. I look forward to working with Congress as the Department takes up the continued and important cause of strengthening U.S. partner forces to mitigate threats to U.S., Coalition, and regional interests in the region.

Senator MURPHY. Thank you both for your testimony. I am going to turn to Senator Shaheen for the opening round of questions.

Senator SHAHEEN. Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to both of our witnesses for being here today.

There are those who argue that with the threat from great power competition that we ought to be reducing our interests in the Middle East and Afghanistan. There are those that argue that one reason to withdraw troops from Afghanistan was so we could better focus on the threat from China and Russia and the future great power competition and refocus on Asia.

You addressed this a little bit in your opening statement, Ms. Resnick, but can you make the case for why it is important for us to continue to be engaged in the Middle East and that security cooperation is one of the important aspects of that?

Ms. RESNICK. Thank you for your question, Senator.

As I said in my opening statement, we are clear eyed about what strategic competition means and we understand that China is the pacing threat, but China is looking to undercut our security relationships throughout the world, and we are only as strong as the strength of our partners and alliances.

We are facing global challenges, including COVID, including climate change, including risks of terrorism, and we need partners to be able to confront those challenges.

The U.S. remains the partner of choice in the region, and with our partners we are looking to reinforce the rules-based international order. China does not provide them that kind of security.

So we will continue to look to build partnerships and alliances in the Middle East to make sure that we can respond to these global challenges with our partners and allies.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you.

Ms. Stroul, one of the places where we have seen the proxy war playing out is in Syria. I very much appreciated your leadership as co-chair of the Syria Study Group. As someone who worked on that legislation, I was really hopeful that the recommendations that the group came up with could make a difference in Syria.

Can you talk about what, if any, of those recommendations have been implemented by the Biden administration and what you see, going forward, to address Syria?

Ms. STROUL. Thank you for that question, Senator.

First of all, one of the key recommendations of the Syria Study Group was that we should retain our U.S. military presence in northeast Syria both because ISIS is not defeated, because we made commitments to the Syrian Democratic Forces, that they continue to fight ISIS but cannot do that without our support, training, and advice, and because there are tens of thousands of ISIS detainees still under SDF custody as well as families of ISIS fighters at the Al-Hol IDP camp.

We provide, through security cooperation authorities and funding, support and training so that there is a humane and humanitarian approach to the families and children while we facilitate relocation to the countries of origin of those foreign fighters, and facilitate long-term solutions to the Syrian and Iraqi detainees.

First of all, for retaining U.S. military presence, the Biden administration is committed to retaining U.S. military presence in northeast Syria. It is also committing to addressing the humanitarian crisis. That is another priority that the Syria Study Group sought to shine light on is the humanitarian crisis.

With the Biden administration, we have not only increased our humanitarian aid to not just northeast Syria but the rest of Syrian civilians in need, and we have restored stabilization assistance.

So areas that were liberated from ISIS had the opportunity to rebuild and are no longer vulnerable to ISIS influence.

Senator SHAHEEN. Ms. Stroul, I would encourage you to engage with the Syrian diaspora in this country, which have very definite ideas about what might be helpful in Syria and still have a lot of connections and relatives there.

Also, has there been a detainee coordinator appointed yet? It is one of the things that we prescribed in the NDAA several years ago, as you know, and to my knowledge, it was never done under the previous Administration.

Ms. STROUL. It is a critical question. With respect to the coordinator for the detainee issue, right now the lead for that is the Counterterrorism Bureau in the State Department, and this reflects back on what both DAS Resnick and I talked about, which is a whole-of-government approach. When it comes to either security assistance or security cooperation, DoD does not operate in a vacuum nor does the State Department.

In terms of engagement with the Syrian diaspora community, she and I both are in constant contact with our colleagues in the NEA Bureau across the State Department, others within the Department of Defense as well as the National Security Council.

I am confident that that engagement is taking place, but I will take that recommendation back.

When it comes to the detainee coordinator, right now we have not only flagged your interest in this and the fact that there is pending legislation, right now the lead for that is in the Counterterrorism Bureau and they are actively involved in the diplomacy of getting countries of origin to take back both their fighters and the families, and DoD facilitates that when requested to do so.

Senator SHAHEEN. Well, the legislation is not actually pending. It has been passed. So I would hope that that coordinator gets appointed to help with that issue, which is a very real issue now.

Mr. Chairman, can I ask one more question?

The chairman mentioned in his opening comments the Lebanese Armed Forces and the situation in Lebanon, which is, sadly, close to a failed state at this point.

One of the things that we know we need to do is continue to support the Lebanese Armed Forces. I was very distressed recently to hear from someone in the Middle East that, in fact, they are having trouble getting food in the LAF that they need, given the current crisis.

So can you talk about why it is important for us to continue to support them, even though I would agree with the chairman that security may not be their number-one challenge at this point but, certainly making sure that the institution of the LAF remains strong is really critical for the future of the country?

Ms. RESNICK. Thank you, Senator, for the question and for your leadership on this issue. The LAF is one of our most capable partners in the Middle East. Our support for the LAF supports our broader policy on pushing back on ISIS and promoting stability.

Lebanon has faced multiple crises in the last year, as we all have, but it is particularly acute in Lebanon between COVID, political paralysis, economic collapse, societal distress, of course, the port explosion which exacerbated everything.

The LAF is really the sole legitimate defender of Lebanese sovereignty, the sole legitimate defender of the Lebanese people, and they serve as an institutional counterweight to Hezbollah, which continues to put Israelis and Lebanese at risk with their irresponsible rocket attacks, which we condemn wholeheartedly.

Hezbollah continues to jeopardize Lebanese stability and sovereignty. Without the LAF, Hezbollah fills the void and that is exactly the opposite of what we would like to see in Lebanon.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you both very much. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the additional time.

Senator MURPHY. Thank you.

Senator Young.

Senator YOUNG. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

So as the United States reduces its troop presence in the Middle East and we re-posture, focusing more on the Indo-Pacific, it is really important that we continue, Ms. Resnick, to evaluate the security dynamics on a regular basis. I know you agree with that. This, in turn, will inform how we provide security assistance to partners in the region.

Can you speak to how the interagency evaluates our partners' security requirements? The methodology and then how those conclusions are then operationalized?

Ms. RESNICK. Thank you for your question, Senator.

We are always looking to make sure that we can provide advanced capabilities for our partners to be able to defend themselves, to be able to enhance regional stability, and at the same time, we are looking to make sure that our partners will protect civilians and advance human rights.

We look at everything on a case-by-case basis. We will cooperate with allies and partners where our priorities align and we will not shy away from defending U.S. interests and American values where they do not.

We continue to consult with Congress closely on transfers and on security cooperation. We—again, we welcome your input as the Secretary—

Senator YOUNG. So—

Ms. RESNICK. —as Secretary Blinken has said, at the takeoff and not at the landing.

Senator YOUNG. Sure. So, respectfully, it is not particularly formulaic, right? There is multiple factors that have to be looked at and multiple dynamics and so forth.

Based on your current analysis, are there any current security needs of our Gulf partners that are not being met and that need to be addressed?

Ms. RESNICK. Thank you for that question.

I am happy to speak to that more in a different environment. We are constantly surveying the landscape there and making sure that our partners do have what they need, and we want to make sure that they are able to defend themselves.

Senator YOUNG. I will accept that invitation to discuss that in a different environment if, indeed, that conversation will actually result in some rich material, and I think my colleagues can identify with that.

So, Ms. Resnick, can you speak to whether the department has all the authorities it requires to increase IMET to partners and allies and how this will benefit the professionalism and reduce civilian risks during time of conflict?

Ms. RESNICK. Yes. We do implement the IMET program and we are always looking to make sure that our partners can learn from our military, be able to take the lessons back to their home countries and implement them.

To my knowledge, we have all of the authorities we need, although I will take that back. I do understand that there has been a special congressional interest in making sure that women are trained through our IMET program, and we continue to implement that as a priority of the State Department as well.

Senator YOUNG. I see I have, roughly, 90 seconds left.

Ms. Stroul, you touched on both the UAE and Yemen, and I will be asking questions about it. I will just begin with UAE.

Of course, last year, there was a sale of the F-35 fighters after some discussion up here on the Hill and within the Administration.

This was the first of its kind in the Middle East to any partner other than Israel, and I thought it was an encouraging step forward with respect to having future interoperability capabilities and trying to ensure that some of our partners did not look elsewhere for their armaments.

It also brings up the point that our advanced technologies have to be provided in some manner that ensures there is security around those technologies.

So what steps does the department take to ensure that these advanced technologies and cutting-edge platforms remain secure when they are in their hands of our trusted partners?

Ms. STROUL. Thank you for that critical question, Senator.

With respect to the UAE, the agreement to sell the F-35 system is an opportunity to enhance the interoperability with the Emirati military for one of our most capable military partners in the region.

With the agreement to sell the F-35 platform comes the expectation that the UAE Government will protect the sensitive defense technology.

There are both security requirements within the paperwork that we complete between the two governments when we agreed to the transfer. There are ongoing dialogues throughout any year with the Emirati military where we will discuss issues and it is also part of the broader relationship.

So one thing that I would like to highlight here, since we were talking about strategic competition before, this is not unique to the UAE, with any partner globally but specifically in the Middle East, because it is a theater for competition, great power competition and strategic competition.

What we discuss with our partners is we understand that there will be an economic or trade relationship with China just like the United States has.

There are certain categories of activities or engagement that our partners may be considering with China that if they do will pose a risk to U.S. defense technology, other kinds of technology, and, ultimately, force protection. Force protection is the highest priority of the entire U.S. Government.

So we have an ongoing consultation. It is not specific to the F-35, but that is certainly part of it. If I may take the opportunity just to speak about IMET, it is incredible when I traveled throughout the region to meet officers in any partner government who remember fondly their years at our war college, at our different training institutes.

We can always use more IMET. DAS Resnick is not going to ask for it. I think this is one of the most critical things we can do because we can demonstrate not just in words but through programs what is civilian control of the military, rule of law, doctrine development, human resource management, maintenance sustainment.

We teach these skills and we build relationships that last over the long term because these partner militaries and officers are engaging with our officers. They go to dinner at our officers' houses. The families form relationships. It is absolutely critical as a tool not only for strategic competition but, ultimately, for regional security.

Senator YOUNG. Thank you.

Senator MURPHY. Thank you, Senator Young.

I will take my first round of questioning now.

So if you believe that we are in and entering an era of great power competition, it is also an era in which the future of the world is going to depend on the outcome of the contest between Amer-

ican-style democracy and Russian and Chinese-modeled autocracy, and so the world is going to be watching when it comes to the way in which we talk about democracy and human rights, and whether we are actually willing to back up that talk with action.

So I appreciate, Ms. Resnick, your opening remarks with respect to Egypt. This is a country that is receiving significant U.S. aid, \$1.3 billion a year, and in the midst of a dizzying crackdown on political dissent.

Mohamed Soltan was a U.S. citizen who was locked up in an Egyptian jail for years. They would throw sick prisoners into his cell, dying sick prisoners, let them die there and let the corpse sit and rot inside his solitary confinement cell as a means to try to break him.

That is the kind of behavior that we empower when we continue to send \$1.3 billion to that regime. Not to say that there are not legitimate reasons why we should align ourselves from a security perspective with Egypt.

Is not there a risk at some point that if there is no consequence for a country like Egypt to continuing this crackdown on political dissent and speech that it compromises our ability to lead the world when it comes to the advancement of democracy and human rights?

I heard what you said in your opening remarks, but what do you have to say about the worry that, ultimately, our talk on human rights does not match up to our actions?

Ms. RESNICK. Thank you for this very important question, Senator.

We share your concerns about Egypt, about civil society crackdown, about restrictions on expression, on the treatment of American citizens, on the risk of civilian harm during military operations, on recent allegations about what happened in the Sinai.

We have raised these issues at the highest level and we continue to do so. We want them to understand. We want Egyptian officials to understand that this is a priority for the United States.

The President himself has underscored the importance of a constructive dialogue on human rights with the Government of Egypt and we will continue to pursue this even as we pursue shared security goals on maritime security, on border security, on counterterrorism.

We understand that Egypt remains an important security partner as evidenced by their leadership in achieving the ceasefire in Gaza. Their leadership and their partnership remains critical today.

We will continue to raise human rights at the highest levels to make sure that the Egyptian Government understands that this is a priority.

Senator MURPHY. My opening comments were designed to sort of provoke this conversation about whether our assumptions about the reasons for our aid are matched to current realities.

Either one of you can take this question, but let me ask that question relative to Egypt. Is our aid necessary today in order to continue to prompt Egypt to achieve a detente with Israel, or is it now in their own security interests—do they get something out of

that relationship on its own, independent of our security assistance?

Are they going to cut off our access to the canal if we withdraw a portion of our security assistance? Is not there a case to be made that some of the things we used to purchase with aid to Egypt, Egypt will do without that aid or without the exact amount of aid that we provide today? Have not circumstances changed since we began this \$1.3 billion relationship in 1987?

Ms. STROUL. I will take the question first, give DAS Resnick a break.

So the bottom line for President Biden is that he values the relationship with Egypt. He believes they are an important security partner. He discussed in his phone call with President Sisi in May the U.S. intent for constructive dialogue on human rights.

We also believe and support that Egypt has legitimate security concerns and believe that security assistance to Egypt is a critical tool in supporting those needs whether it is border security, maritime security.

We did see early in the Administration when the *Ever Given* was stuck in the Suez international maritime traffic, both commercial and military, was stuck. Egypt matters, both for Suez transit, for U.S. military overflight, cooperation with Egypt for Red Sea security, maritime security.

The current view of the Administration is that Egypt is playing a constructive role when it comes to border security, Libya, GERD, obviously, the conflict in Gaza, et cetera.

In terms of the FMF, it remains an important tool for U.S. to work with Egypt in making sure that they have U.S.-origin defense articles oriented towards what we assess to be shared security threats, whether it is counterterrorism, maritime security, or border security.

I would note here that Egypt is interested in continuing this relationship with us. They recently agreed to upgrade their Apache helicopter fleet by using blended financing—not just U.S. security assistance—but also Egyptian national funds.

This is an indicator for us, and they believe this as well, after extensive negotiations between the two governments that they are interested in putting their resources to bear, not just U.S. forces, as they upgrade their U.S. defense articles.

Senator MURPHY. The question I am simply asking is for us to assess the cost of altering our relationship versus the cost of continuing it unmodified.

The cost of continuing it unmodified is to send a signal of endorsement to this behavior. My question is we should really get our heads wrapped around what the cost of altering the relationship is.

My case is that there would not be a significant alteration because the things that you just laid out are in Egypt's security interest separate and aside from the exact nature of our security relationship.

I am interested in continuing this dialogue.

One last question before I turn to Senator Van Hollen and that is on the issue of end-use monitoring. I know this is something the Administration cares deeply about.

We, obviously, had some disturbing revelations during the last 4 years about the way in which the UAE was transferring some of our equipment to Salafist-aligned militias in Yemen.

Admittedly, it is difficult to track how every single weapon is going to be ultimately used, but are there ways in which we can have a tougher and stricter end-use monitoring program that allows us to have more visibility than we do today on the ways that our equipment and weapons are used? Is there a better way to do this?

Ms. RESNICK. Thanks for your question. We take the issues of end-use monitoring very, very seriously. We take all credible allegations of any authorized transfer or end-uses of U.S.-origin equipment very seriously.

We investigate them consistent with applicable law. When there is a violation, we have several different options that we can pursue to address misuse or end-use concerns. We want to make sure that every transfer advances our foreign policy.

The way that we look at each transfer, we are looking at history of misuse. We are looking at history of end-use abuse. So we do understand that these issues are complicated, but we are always looking to do better.

Senator MURPHY. Great.

Senator Van Hollen.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank both of you for your testimony and for your service.

I agree with the comments that have been made by my colleagues regarding the importance of security assistance to U.S. interests, national security interests, as well as that of our partners.

In fact, back in the 1980s, I served a short stint, sort of an extended internship, at the Pentagon in what was then called the Defense Security Assistance Agency and my job was to write the justifications that came to Congress for various security assistance programs.

So I understand the importance. I also, from that experience, realized that when I started for the next fiscal year justification, I just took the previous year justification and made some edits.

So part of the lesson there, though, is something the chairman's bringing up, which is we get in these ruts. It is very easy just to continue in the same course that you are already on, and we do need to step back and reevaluate lots of these issues.

You would both agree, I believe, that it is not in our security interest when a recipient of U.S. weapons or other form of security assistance uses them as a tool of repression or to crack down on human rights. Would you both agree with that?

Ms. RESNICK. Yes.

Ms. STROUL. Yes.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Okay. So to pick up on Senator Murphy's question on end-use and taking credible allegations of violations of end-use requirements seriously, can each of you give us a recent example of pursuing a credible report of the violation of what we thought was an end-use requirement?

Ms. RESNICK. So I think that there are two ways to look at this. There is a violation of end-use, meaning when the intended recipi-

ent is not the one who is doing it, and Senator Murphy mentioned one of those cases.

Then there is the misuse of U.S.-origin equipment, and you will understand that that is the consideration that we used when we decided to suspend the two munitions sales to Saudi Arabia. We did a risk assessment and that is what we are implementing now.

We are implementing risk assessments for each of these transfers on a case-by-case basis and our risk assessment told us that those munitions could more likely than not to be used to result in civilian harm and so that is why we suspended those two munitions sales.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Thank you.

Now, there is also the Leahy law, and that is a different set of requirements. Let me ask you this. When you get credible reports of violation of the Leahy laws, do you also investigate those?

Ms. RESNICK. Yes, we do that with our partners at the embassies. We also do that with the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. The Defense Department oversees sometimes different sets of programs, but you also pursue credible reports of violations of Leahy law?

Ms. STROUL. Absolutely. When I see them, whether it comes from outside communities, press, social media, or reports that come directly to me, I make a point of asking my staff to work with the different implementing agencies and in the field to investigate, raise it directly, and then I raise it myself.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Okay. Have either of you received credible reports of violation of Leahy laws since you have been in your positions?

Ms. RESNICK. We have several different threads that we are looking into. I do not think that we have made any determinations at this point. When we do or if we do, then we would come to Congress.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. So if you find there has been a violation of the Leahy law, you would inform the Congress. Is that right?

Ms. RESNICK. Yes, sir.

Ms. STROUL. Yes, sir.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Can you also provide the Congress with the results of your investigations into violations of the Leahy law, even if you do not make a determination?

As you can imagine, there are going to be cases where different people could reach different conclusions. Would you have any objection with sharing your investigation in the credible reports of the Leahy law with the Congress?

Ms. RESNICK. We always make sure to engage with Congress on these issues.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Okay.

I would just ask in closing, Mr. Chairman, if you could provide us with any investigations of Leahy law violations that you have pursued within the last year—since January. Would that be okay?

Ms. RESNICK. Yes, sir.

[EDITOR'S NOTE.—Ms. Resnick's and Ms. Stroul's response to Senator Van Hollen's request contained classified information and was redacted from this hearing record.]

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Senator MURPHY. Great.

Senator Young.

Senator YOUNG. Thank you, Chairman. I am going to go a bit off script. I know we are discussing foreign arms sales right now, but I would like to discuss the arms that are finding their way from Iran into the Houthis' hands in Yemen. Of course, we have a real interest, our partners and allies have an interest in ensuring that key weapons and technology do not continue to flow there in a manner that further destabilizes the country and perpetuates the civil war.

It has been reported that the recent attack on the *Mercer Street* tanker in the Gulf of Oman originated from Yemen with Iranian-produced drones.

Can you confirm those public reports?

Ms. STROUL. Thank you very much for that question, Senator.

Yes, I can confirm the reports and a few comments, if you would allow me to.

First of all, last Friday, U.S. Central Command released its assessment based on the exploitation of the wreckage and what we were able to recover from the *Mercer Street*, and what U.S. Central Command did in cooperation with the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Joint Staff, and NAVCENT is look at the different components that we recovered, compare them to other known Iranian-supported UAVs that we have exploited, and were able to match and see similarities, which is why CENTCOM was able to conclude and put out its press release that yes, this was an Iran-backed, one-way drone attack on the *Mercer Street*.

Secondly, in addition to that DoD investigation, there was also a multilateral G-7 statement where we worked diplomacy first to work with the members of the G-7 to put out a statement condemning Iran for the one-way attack UAV on the *Mercer Street*.

Senator YOUNG. Okay. That is incredibly helpful and answered some of my next question, which is whether you can shed some light on how you determine, by working with partners in the region, how you might interdict the trafficking of arms out of Iran into the hands of the Houthis or other militant groups?

Ms. STROUL. Absolutely. You have seen the Administration do some of this. A good example is a few months ago there was the interdiction of the *Monterey Ship*, which also was carrying a lot of weapons, which we assessed were Iranian supplied, for the Houthis.

Let me take a step back. What we see across the region is Iranian arming, training, and funding of terrorist groups, nonstate actors, and militias across the region, all of which aim to undermine the governments and the partners that we want to work with, terrorize civilians, and prevent them from achieving stability.

In the Yemen context, we have seen more attacks from the Houthis launched at Saudi Arabia in the first half of this year than we have for several prior years.

Iran is increasing the lethality and complexity of both the equipment and the knowledge it transfers to the Houthis so that they can attack Saudi territory, Saudi civilians, and there is also a very

sizable U.S. population in Saudi Arabia that is under risk because of the Iran-backed Houthi attacks.

U.S. forces are experiencing the Iran-backed UAV network and the force protection issues we are experiencing in Iraq, and even Israel has publicly spoken about the drones from Iran that it has downed in defense of its own territory.

This is a regional wide threat. All of our partners are concerned about it, and this is actually where security cooperation programs can be very effective.

Senator YOUNG. Thank you. I look forward to continued vigilance on that front and I get the sense that that is a real point of emphasis. So that is great.

During the recent attacks from Hamas, Israel used the Iron Dome rocket defense system to defend itself and save countless lives from indiscriminate rocket fire.

President Biden has committed to resupplying Israel with the Iron Dome interceptors that were expended over the course of that fighting.

Despite the legitimate security needs, more than a dozen Democratic members of Congress sought to block such a resupply and even introduced a resolution in both chambers to do so, to block this resupply. This resupply is crucial.

So, Ms. Stroul, what is the status of the Administration's efforts to fulfill the President's commitment and assist Israel's resupply of the Iron Dome?

Ms. STROUL. Thank you so much for that question.

President Biden was clear in his statement of support for replenishing the Iron Dome defense system. Secretary Austin also, in testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee, affirmed his support for replenishing and expanding the Iron Dome defense system.

We agree with your assessment that it was notably effective in responding to the attacks from Gaza.

Senator YOUNG. I am sorry. My time is over. What is the status of it?

Ms. STROUL. We have unequivocally stated our support for emergency or for supplemental appropriations in support of replenishing and expanding the system. We have consulted extensively with Congress and provided information, paperwork, to you all to support how you choose to proceed in funding the request.

Senator YOUNG. So you need a supplemental emergency appropriations? That is the only route to achieve that objective?

Ms. STROUL. The——

Senator YOUNG. Is that accurate?

Ms. STROUL. Yes, the missile defense funding that we provide to Israel, \$500 million a year in an MOU. What Israel assesses it needs is beyond that \$500 million a year.

We support their request for supplemental appropriations and have provided information to Congress in support of that request.

Senator YOUNG. Thank you.

Senator MURPHY. Thank you, Senator Young.

Just continuing on that line of inquiry, Ms. Stroul, I have heard some people sort of question whether, going forward, the Iron Dome, as it is currently constituted, will provide significant enough

security against rocket attacks emanating from Hamas. Understanding it is still an incredibly effective system, are we also in dialogue with the Israelis as to enhancements or as to other protective measures that we can engage in with them to protect them from future attacks?

Ms. STROUL. Thank you for that question.

Yes, we are. We are in constant and consistent dialogue with the Israelis on a variety of issues related to their security needs, including the Iron Dome defense system.

Their assessment and our assessment is that it was exceptionally effective in protecting Israeli civilians during Operation Guardian of the Walls.

They are seeking this supplemental funding because they support and believe that it saves lives. We also have a variety of other missile defense programs as well as other programs to support Israel's security needs.

Senator MURPHY. Let me turn to the question of China because I do want to make sure we right-size China's ambitions in the region.

There is no doubt China has an intent to grow their security partnerships in the region, but I also think that they benefit from a world in which the United States has the primary security obligation for a region that right now is much more essential to the delivery of oil to China than to the United States.

So I would love for one of you to talk a little bit more about what China's real interests in the region are, whether they are actually willing to sort of take over from the United States as the primary security guarantor for especially Gulf nations that export oil to the world, or whether they are sort of looking to use their security assistance as a means to grow political partnerships with countries that are well, frankly, hoping to maintain a U.S. security umbrella under which they live and benefit.

Ms. RESNICK. Thank you for that question.

It truly is the question of the day. China has shown no interest in, nor a capability, to contribute to regional security and stability, and we asked our partners to consider that.

We know that China and our Middle Eastern partners will have a commercial relationship. We have a commercial relationship with China.

Secretary Blinken has said our relationship with China will be competitive when it should be, collaborative when it can be, and adversarial when it must be.

The common denominator here is that we need to engage China from a position of strength, and security cooperation will undoubtedly play a role there in our response to strategic competition in the Middle East, but also beyond the Middle East globally.

It requires us to work with allies and partners, not denigrate them, because our combined weight is much harder for China to ignore.

So as DAS Stroul mentioned, there are certain categories of cooperation with the PRC that we cannot live with and we have made that clear.

Senator MURPHY. Well, towards that end, according to *The Wall Street Journal*, some Defense officials say they believe China hopes to build a base in the Middle East, perhaps in the UAE.

On a scale of 1 to 10, how problematic would it be if China were to establish a base in a country like the United Arab Emirates that is about to get some of our most sensitive defense equipment?

Ms. STROUL. Thank you for that question.

The current assessment is that China has a global strategy of pursuing military installations all over, including in the Middle East.

It seeks to build installations, and the Middle East is one example, so that, ultimately, it can serve its own interests, not provide or enhance regional stability and security.

So in any country with which we have a deep partnership we talk about the risks to U.S. defense technology, to U.S. forces, of a Chinese military installation.

I will just add, in terms of whether or not China seeks to take over for the U.S. as the security guarantor of choice, what we actually view in a demonstrated pattern of how China engages with countries across the world and we warn and discuss with our partners in the Middle East, that, ultimately, Chinese engagement in certain categories will violate their sovereignty, which they prioritize.

Then I would note, when we were talking before about the Iran-supported UAV network or the *Mercer Street*, China was silent both at the Security Council and in signing on to any statement.

This is not a country, Beijing, that is going to support our partners and their legitimate security and defense concerns and needs and we remind them of that.

Senator MURPHY. I hope our partners noticed that silence.

Final two questions. First, on the Missile Technology Control Regime, this is a voluntary agreement but one that we perceive to be very important to our global security interests.

Prior to the Trump administration, we had interpreted that agreement as preventing us from selling certain armed drone technology to countries sort of outside our very closest partners.

Thus far, the Biden administration has not reversed the Trump administration's reinterpretation of that treaty and, as you said at the outset, are pursuing the sale of Reaper drones to the United Arab Emirates.

Do you expect other members of the MTCR to issue their own reinterpretations and are we concerned about the proliferation of advanced armed drones to the Middle East?

It sort of feels like we have just sort of given up on this one, we have just said there is so many countries selling so many advanced drones that we might as well just be in the business as well.

I am not convinced that that is the right argument here. We still are a moral pacesetter around the world. So a minute or two on sort of how you perceive the health of MTCR today and what you perceive to be the ways in which we can still try to lead a global conversation about the danger of the proliferation of armed drones.

I think we have, frankly, lost a lot of our moral authority through the reinterpretation of that regime.

Ms. RESNICK. Thank you for that question, Senator.

The Biden/Harris administration conducted a review of our UAS export policy, determined that we would maintain the decision to invoke national discretion on the implementation of our commitment to the MTCR, but that does not mean that the United States will automatically approve a UAS export. We will still conduct a case-by-case review.

The nonproliferation factors that are identified in MTCR guidelines will continue to play a really important role, will consider the transfer's effect on U.S. national security interests, including human rights and other foreign policy objectives, as well as the recipient countries' capability and their willingness to effectively responsibly use this technology and, of course, to safeguard U.S.-origin technology.

Senator MURPHY. Finally, just a question on the sort of merits of escalatory versus de-escalatory policy. This town loves military escalation. Makes a lot of people rich here. De-escalation is not as lucrative.

I, over the years of meeting with the Iranian foreign ministry—I am one of the few here that does take everything they say with a giant shaker of salt, but I think there is some truth to one of the things they consistently say, which is that our missiles are primarily pointed at the Saudis, and every time you sell them more, every time you give them and the Emiratis more equipment and more lethality, more capability, we invest more in our own.

What is our sort of overall thinking about—if our interest is in, ultimately, getting the Iranians to give up their ballistic missile program, how do we defend a continued buildup of arms on the other side of that contest for regional hegemony? What is our sort of current thinking on the benefits of arms escalation versus arms de-escalation?

Ms. RESNICK. Thank you for that question. It gives us an opportunity to reflect, as does the entire hearing, on some of the bigger picture issues.

Security cooperation plays a really important role in our Middle East partnerships, but it is not the only answer. So I would stress that our arms transfers and our security cooperation are not going to be the answer, the magic bullet to—as you said, to Saudi insecurity.

They are not going to be the answer to instability in the region. That will come through diplomacy and through a political solution to the region's, unfortunately, many military conflicts.

As I said in my opening statement, we rely on our partners to understand when there is no military solution to a conflict, and we will continue to stress that to them.

That is why you saw in the first days of the Biden/Harris administration that the President made sure to reinvigorate our diplomacy with Yemen, to appoint a special envoy, Tim Lenderking, to be able to reinvest in our diplomatic efforts.

Senator MURPHY. Okay.

Senator YOUNG. Ms. Resnick, I am going to follow up, with the chairman's indulgence, on his line of questioning.

So it seems as though what we are seeking to do is to establish or reestablish deterrence, and that should be the objective. I am

being normative here. You tell me if the Biden/Harris administration disagrees.

So we want to reestablish deterrence. We do not currently have that. We have these Iranian proxies throughout the Middle East.

We have the enrichment of uranium. We have the bombing of tankers in the Gulf of Oman through functionaries that have provided weaponry to these proxies.

So all manner of development of sophisticated missiles. So we need to reestablish deterrence and foreign arms sales can be one tool that assists in that overall endeavor.

We are not seeking overmatch. That could, indeed, be provocative and I think catalyze the Iranians to seek deterrence on their own part.

What say you about my line of analysis?

Ms. RESNICK. Of course, and that is why I opened with my answer saying that security cooperation plays a critical role. It is not the only answer to our relationships in the Middle East.

Ms. STROUL. If I may, Senator, I would respond also that the U.S. military does have conventional overmatch vis-à-vis Iran, which is why you see Iran investing in other kinds of capabilities, not its conventional military capabilities.

This is why we have seen or we can—why you see Iran investing in support for regional terrorism networks, one-way attack UAVs, and its ballistic missile program because it views those as its way to threaten the United States and our partners because of that convention.

Senator YOUNG. So the United States has overmatch?

Ms. STROUL. Conventional overmatch.

Senator YOUNG. Conventional overmatch. Is it our objective for our partners in the region to have conventional overmatch vis-à-vis Iran?

Ms. STROUL. Our objective for partners in the region is to ensure that they have the capabilities and resources to defend themselves while we invest in diplomacy and political processes to wind down conflicts, because there is no military solution to the conflicts of the region nor to Iranian aggression.

Senator YOUNG. That sounds like deterrence in parallel with diplomatic efforts.

Ms. STROUL. When the Biden administration came into office, it inherited an aggressive Iranian strategy throughout the region in reaction to a maximum pressure campaign that did not bring Iran back to the negotiating table nor did it tamp down or deter Iranian aggression.

Our forces are experiencing that Iranian aggression every day—

Senator YOUNG. Yes.

Ms. STROUL. —through Iran-backed militias in Iraq. Saudis are experiencing it every day from Iran-backed Houthis, as are other partners who are concerned both about the air defense threat and the proliferation of armed UAVs which are going to nonstate actors across the Middle East.

What we are seeking to do while we invest in diplomacy and political processes is respond to our partners' legitimate defense needs.

Much of that derives from Iranian fingerprints of terror, training, arming, and funding of groups all over the region, as well as guidance and direction to them to attack U.S. forces and U.S. partners to sow division and tensions between the U.S. and its partners while we are working to reassure partners that we will have their back in confronting Iranian aggression.

Senator YOUNG. Very good. Thank you.

If I could, I have got one final line of inquiry and it pertains to the expiration last October of the U.N. conventional arms embargo against Iran against the strenuous objections and extensive efforts of the Trump administration.

Two primary sources of arms, Russia and China, succeeded in ensuring that the regime in Tehran had access to some of the most sophisticated weapons, and I just am looking—I think, Ms. Resnick, perhaps you can speak to how Iran has capitalized on both the import and export dynamics of the embargo, which is lapsing, especially as it concerns Russia and China.

Ms. STROUL. If I may, Senator.

What we have seen is China sign a 20-year strategic partnership agreement with Iran. We have seen the Russians work to negotiate arms transfer agreements with Iran as well.

It is yet another reason why our partners need to be reminded that the U.S. is the security partner of choice who will responsibly work with them to respond to their legitimate defensive needs, and turning toward China or Russia will not support their security or stability, especially when both of those governments are looking to embolden and enhance Tehran's conventional military capabilities.

Senator YOUNG. Has the winding down of the embargo, helped facilitate some of this transfer of arms from Russia and China into Iran?

Ms. STROUL. We have certainly seen reinvigorated interest by Beijing and Moscow after the end of the embargo and working on deals for weapons transfers and sales to Tehran.

We, of course, have other tools at our disposal in the U.S. Government, whether it is sanctions, our alliances and partnerships, our transatlantic partnerships, and our security partnerships in the Middle East, which can reinforce our security and attempt to push back on those weapons sales.

Certainly, it puts us in a position we are going to have to double down on both our diplomacy, our security partnerships, and explore other tools to make sure that Tehran does not gain conventional military capabilities, especially when it is outside of the JCPOA, making advances on its nuclear program and ramping up its regional aggression.

Senator YOUNG. So it sounds like it has really aggravated the situation. Would I be right to infer that this receipt of conventional arms from Russia and China in Iran has aggravated the situation with respect to the vast network of Iranian proxies as they continue to provide conventional arms to these Iranian proxies?

Ms. STROUL. Let me respond by saying I certainly do not see any actions, whether diplomacy or otherwise, from Moscow or Beijing to impress upon Iran that continuing to support militias and terrorist organizations across the region is not in their interest, that it somehow undermines Russian or Chinese security.

These are not governments that are pushing Iran to take steps that would restore regional security and stability, wind down conflicts, or move towards political processes.

Senator YOUNG. There is no doubt in my mind that there are Houthis or members of Hezbollah carrying around Russian and Chinese conventional armaments that they have received from the Iranians as that embargo has been wound down. So, thank you.

Ms. STROUL. It is another reason why we need to remind our partners that these are not governments in Beijing or Moscow that are actually working to do things that are in their security interests.

Senator MURPHY. Thank you. One final question that occurs to me just to sort of cap off the dialogue we were having and that Senator Young continued on the effect of escalation and de-escalation on deterrence.

The JCPOA did not nor was intended to solve all of our outstanding issues with Iran, but as a mechanism to discuss and promote the ways that you can affect Iranian behavior other than through the sale of arms to their competitors, during the time the JCPOA was in effect we did not see the level of attacks on U.S. forces in Iraq from Iranian proxies as we have since the JCPOA expired.

Is that correct?

Ms. STROUL. That is correct.

Senator MURPHY. So the question for this committee is whether that is coincidental or whether having an ability to have a diplomatic conversation with an enemy actually does affect their behavior vis-à-vis our security interests in the region.

I want to thank you both for your testimony today. We appreciate your recommendations and your insight. I look forward to continuing this conversation.

For any members of the committee wishing to submit questions for the record, the hearing is going to remain open until the close of business on Friday, which happens to be Friday the 13th.

And with that, this hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 11:19 a.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

ADDITIONAL MATERIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

RESPONSES OF MIRA RESNICK TO QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Question. The vast bulk of State Department security assistance goes to the Middle East, but you noted that, “our strategic competition with the People’s Republic of China is our foremost foreign policy challenge.” Should State be devoting more FMF and IMET to the Indo-Pacific?

Answer. The FY 2021 State and Foreign Operations Appropriations Act directed more than 94 percent of FMF and IMET funds—the vast majority to the Middle East—leaving only \$291.7 million in discretionary FMF. When accounting for significant FMF constraints due to Congressional earmarks, particularly in the Middle East, the Indo-Pacific typically receives nearly half of the annual global discretionary FMF. Separately, the FY 2022 IMET request is sufficient to meet our professional military education goals in the Indo-Pacific, but the Department can always adjust in the year of appropriation should needs merit further increases.

Question. The Department of Defense has been increasingly assertive in advocating for new authorities and resources for security cooperation. Is the State De-

partment concerned that, if new restrictions and prohibitions become unduly onerous, this trend will accelerate?

Answer. The Department of State must ensure that all security sector assistance (SSA) strategically advances U.S. diplomatic priorities and defense relationships within the parameters set by law. DoD has used the perceived inflexibility of State's security assistance programs to help justify expanded SSA authorities and resources with Congress in recent years. To preserve the value of SSA as a tool of foreign policy, and the primacy of State and its oversight committees over Title 22 SSA, it is critical that State and Congress continue to work together to maximize the effectiveness of these programs.

Question. Is FMF to Egypt still relevant to the maintenance of the Camp David Accords?

Answer. U.S. FMF provides Egypt with technical capabilities, training, and defense systems that help enable it to fulfill its treaty obligations to Israel. FMF increases regional stability and interoperability by facilitating security cooperation between Israel and Egypt, particularly in countering terrorism in the Sinai. FMF also helps improve Egypt's ability to support and protect the operations of the Multinational Forces and Observers, which is charged with verifying compliance with the treaty.

Question. Do we need more IMET for the Middle East? Why or why not?

Answer. The International Military Education and Training (IMET) account is one of the most impactful programs the Department has to promote professionalism, enhance interoperability, build invaluable relationships, and share technical and operational expertise with U.S. military partners. The Department evaluates IMET requirements annually for Middle Eastern partners to determine the appropriate level of IMET in the out years and considers each country's ability to absorb and execute these funds. State takes a country-based approach to determine whether to increase or decrease funding. In addition, select partners in the Middle East use Foreign Military Financing funds to supplement training received through IMET-funded courses.

Question. Does the Administration support conditioning FMF to Israel?

Answer. The Biden-Harris administration does not support conditioning assistance to Israel. As President Biden and Secretary Blinken have said, the Administration's commitment to Israel's security is unshakeable. Secretary Blinken has emphasized that the Administration will make sure that Israel has the means to defend itself, especially in the context of the recent escalation that included rocket attacks impacting Israeli civilians. At the same time, Secretary Blinken has underscored our expectation that Israel should do everything it possibly can to mitigate the risk of civilian casualties.

Question. Please provide an update on the status of the sale of F-35 aircraft and related items to UAE.

Answer. The Administration is moving forward with implementing proposed defense sales to the UAE for F-35 aircraft, MQ-9 Unmanned Aerial Systems, and munitions. We continue consultations with Emirati partners to ensure that we have clear, mutual understandings with respect to Emirati end use and security obligations and actions before, during, and after delivery.

Question. Please provide a more detailed description of the risk assessment process you highlighted regarding Saudi munitions.

Answer. Consistent with the President's direction to end support for offensive operations in Yemen, we assessed the risk of potential types of transfers to Saudi Arabia, and we determined that the risk to civilians associated with some types of transfers—including the two suspended transfers of munitions to Saudi Arabia—was high. We continue support for other types of transfers to Saudi Arabia, including where capabilities contribute to Saudi Arabia's ability to defend itself. We would welcome the opportunity to provide more information at a classified level.

Question. Please characterize China and Russia's ambitions regarding U.S. security partners in the region. What role does U.S. security assistance and arms sales play in countering these ambitions?

Answer. Both the PRC and Russia seek to expand their security partnerships in and around the Middle East. Their methods vary: the PRC uses its economic footprint to open the door to a security presence, while Russia uses its security partnerships to further its influence, including economic ventures, in the Middle East and Africa. U.S. arms sales and security cooperation programs—including professional

military education, training, provision of defense articles and services, and institutional capacity-building—constitute key foreign policy tools by which we advance our bilateral security relationships throughout the region and are essential elements in limiting our global competitors’ influence in the Middle East.

Question. Adversaries are sure to try to exploit the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan as another demonstration of American decline and unreliability. What is the Department doing to counter such narratives, and to re-assure allies? Has the Department heard allies and partners express such concerns in the wake of the withdrawal?

Answer. We are clear with our allies and partners that we remain staunchly committed to their security and stability. Our ambassadors have been working assiduously to reinforce this message. We are closely coordinating with our international partners on the ground and around the globe regarding events in Afghanistan.

Question. What is the status of Chinese efforts to establish a military base or bases in the Middle East?

Answer. We assess the PRC Government seeks to establish a sustained military presence in the Persian Gulf and Mediterranean. The Administration is working closely with our partners to ensure they understand why a permanent PRC presence in the region is not in their interest. Any such facilities pose a risk to the security and sovereignty of the host nation; as with most assistance from the PRC, there are significant risks attached.

Question. China has launched a strategic partnership with Iran. How do U.S. partners view that development, and why do some of them continue to engage China even as it supports Iran?

Answer. In March 2021, the PRC and Iran signed a 25-year strategic cooperation agreement, called a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership agreement, building on a Joint Statement on Comprehensive Strategic Partnership issued in 2016. The PRC also has Comprehensive Strategic Partnership agreements with a number of other countries in the region, including U.S. partners such as Saudi Arabia and the UAE. These U.S. partners have their own economic and strategic interests that drive engagement with the PRC. These interests remain despite the PRC’s recently concluded agreement with Iran. We will continue to encourage our partners to be clear-eyed about relations with the PRC.

Question. Please provide an update of the reported Su-35 sale to Egypt.

Answer. We continue to caution Egyptian officials at the highest levels that taking delivery of these aircraft or any other major new Russian defense equipment would risk triggering sanctions under Section 231 of the Countering America’s Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA). We have also warned the Government of Egypt that such a procurement could risk security assistance and security cooperation with the United States.

RESPONSES OF DANA STROUL TO QUESTIONS
SUBMITTED BY SENATOR TODD YOUNG

EGYPT

Question. During your testimony, you noted that President Biden “values the relationship with Egypt” and Egypt has “legitimate security concerns.” You also provided general details on the mutually-beneficial security relationship between the United States and Egypt. Those included: “Suez transit, for U.S. military overflight, cooperation with Egypt for Red Sea security, maritime security . . . a constructive war role when it comes to border security, Libya, GERD, obviously the conflict in Gaza, et cetera.”

Will you provide additional details—as specifically as you can in an unclassified format—about the security relationship between our two countries and how United States national security benefits from that relationship?

Answer. Egypt is a strategic partner and maintains a strong defense relationship with the U.S. on regional counterterrorism and maritime and border security efforts. Egypt also provides access, overflight and Suez Canal transit for U.S. forces. Egypt was the first Arab country to sign a peace treaty with Israel in 1979, and more recently helped secure the May ceasefire between Israel and Hamas. Egypt also plays a positive role facilitating trilateral cooperation with Jordan and Iraq on economic and security issues. The Biden administration seeks to work closely with Egypt to address a range of regional challenges—to include defeating ISIS-Sinai Province

(ISIS–SP), addressing human rights and civilian casualty issues, securing the Suez Canal, finding a resolution to the conflict in Libya and related border security threats, and resolving tensions over the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD).

RESPONSES OF MIRA RESNICK TO QUESTIONS
SUBMITTED BY SENATOR CORY BOOKER

Question. Security Assistance to the West Bank/Gaza: The President’s budget and the State Department Congressional Budget Justification proposed a cut for security assistance to the West Bank/Gaza from \$75 million in FY21 to just \$33 million in FY22. Why were such cuts proposed?

Answer. From 2007 to 2019, International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement (INCLE) assistance was provided to support robust security and criminal justice assistance focusing on large-scale training, equipment, and construction projects that were appropriate for the needs at that time. Moving forward, INCLE-funded programming will seek to build on previous successes and start a new, targeted security assistance and criminal justice program that focuses on reforming and strengthening key institutions such as the Palestinian Authority (PA) Ministry of Interior, supporting key PA security forces at the operational and strategic levels, and undertaking targeted program interventions in the corrections and justice sectors with the goal of bringing them up to international standards over time. The new program will not focus heavily on train and equip-type programs or construction projects. Furthermore, INL has approximately \$85 million in de-obligated prior-year funds from the West Bank that will be used to support the new program.

Question. What will the consequences be of an inadequately funded PASF?

Answer. We will ensure that we request adequate funding to sustain the capabilities of the Palestinian Authority security forces and improve their ability to provide security and rule of law in the West Bank. Our assistance is designed to reinforce the development of a more capable and professional PA security and justice sector that Palestinians can trust and will be the bulwark that continues to help maintain security and order in the West Bank. Our funding requests consider that we largely accomplished our former objectives to stand up the security forces with extensive equipment, basic training, and infrastructure support they needed to take on security challenges more effectively. Our mission now is to advance these gains by focusing on less expensive capacity-building, sustainment projects. In addition, we will put more emphasis on the police, justice, and corrections sectors to help provide more responsive and impartial justice to the Palestinian people and bolster their respect for the rule of law.

Question. One of the main reasons we give massive amounts of security assistance is to enable U.S. partners to be more capable. Yet Egypt’s army provides little to no added advantage to our military campaigns in the region, despite a \$50 billion investment since 1978; Egypt hasn’t been deterred from buying weapons from Russia and China; Egypt keeps its peace treaty with Israel because doing so bolsters their own national security; and under Egyptian President al-Sisi, we have seen well-documented and systemic human rights abuses.

And yet Egypt is the second largest recipient of American Foreign Military Financing (FMF) worldwide at \$1.3 billion annually—third in security aid overall.

The Administration has until September 30 to waive Congress’ existing human rights restriction of \$300 million in security aid to Egypt. Considering rampant, only worsening violations—from torture to unlawful arrest and indefinite imprisonment of journalists, activists, human rights defenders, and LGBTQ+ Egyptians—Is the Biden administration reviewing whether it is justifiable to waive the human rights restrictions on this security assistance?

Answer. The Secretary has yet to make a decision regarding the national security waiver for \$300 million in FY 2020 Foreign Military Financing for Egypt. When a decision is made, the Department will ensure Congress is informed as to the reasoning for that decision. The Administration shares Congress’ concerns about human rights in Egypt and has raised these concerns, and will continue to do so, at the highest levels. As I noted during this hearing, America’s interests cannot be separated from her values.

Question. What message do you believe it sends to both human rights advocates and the Sisi regime when the U.S. continues to waive these restrictions?

Answer. I cannot speculate as to what decision Secretary Blinken will make. The Department shares Congress’ concerns and will continue to press the Government of Egypt on its human rights record and practices. The Department has elevated

the importance of human rights in the U.S.-Egypt bilateral relationship, and is using a variety of tools, both public and private, to engage with the Egyptian Government on improving respect for human rights. The President and the Secretary have been clear that human rights will be integral to U.S. foreign policy, to include our relationship with Egypt.

Question. Do you believe it emboldens the Sisi regime to continue its crackdown on journalists and members of civil society?

Answer. While I cannot prejudge what the Secretary's decision will be, the President and the Secretary have been clear that human rights is integral to U.S. foreign policy, to include our relationship with Egypt. This Administration has conveyed to Egypt that our relationship will be stronger if it respects human rights. We have pressed, and will continue to press, the Egyptian Government at the most senior levels to take meaningful steps to address democratic governance and human rights issues. We have also raised at the highest levels our deep concerns about the prosecution and harassment of civil society activists and journalists. The Department has elevated the role of human rights in the U.S.-Egypt bilateral relationship; and is using a variety of tools, both public and private, to engage with the Egyptian government on improving its human rights practices.

RESPONSES OF DANA STROUL TO QUESTIONS
SUBMITTED BY SENATOR CORY BOOKER

Question. Regional Cooperation: The normalization agreements between Israel and some of its Gulf neighbors, such as the United Arab Emirates, have created greater cooperation in a number of areas—one of which is regional security and containing Iranian ambitions in the region.

To what extent does U.S. security assistance and coordination allow our regional partners to better coordinate with each other and remove some of the regional security burden that would otherwise fall more directly on American shoulders?

Answer. U.S. security cooperation improves partner capabilities through interoperable equipment, shared experiences in bilateral and multilateral training, and education programs. Further, these activities strengthen our partners' capabilities and build lasting relationships. Security cooperation contributes to regional security by offering opportunities to advance U.S. objectives, such as normalization. Normalization of relations between Israel, the UAE, and Bahrain last year opened the door to expanded security cooperation to address shared threats, from air and missile defense to counter-Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS). By facilitating deeper security cooperation with Israel and her neighbors in the region, the U.S. can share the burden of promoting regional stability and security, as well as push back on Iran's destabilizing activities.

Question. UAE involvement in Libya: Last year, Senators Shaheen, Sanders and I wrote to then-Secretary Pompeo about the crisis in Libya and flagrant violations of the United Nations Arms Embargo. The United Nations repeatedly identified foreign financial and materiel support to rival Libyan factions as the most significant factor prolonging the conflict and limiting prospects for peace.

Even after the imposition of an arms embargo and the passage of a U.N. Security Council resolution calling for a ceasefire and enforcement of the arms embargo Russia, Turkey, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) continued to violate the arms embargo with impunity.

Not only did the UAE reportedly dispatch more than 150 flights to bolster forces in areas under Haftar's control, it also reportedly provided more than 1,000 Sudanese mercenaries to Haftar's forces, and carried out a drone strike targeting civilians. This pernicious disregard for the arms embargo has killed and endangered civilians, destroyed vital civilian infrastructure, violated international humanitarian law, and obstructed peace negotiations.

And yet, the UAE's role in having perpetuated the conflict and needless humanitarian did not preclude the sale of the F-35s to the UAE.

What effect does a U.N. arms embargo have if the U.S. doesn't hold its violators accountable for its actions?

Answer. As part of our diplomatic leadership to support Libya's political transition, we are speaking privately with foreign partners to underscore that any countries sending mercenaries and weapons, or facilitating these military activities, should recommit to the arms embargo and respect Libyan calls for a peaceful political transition.

As part of its counterterrorism cooperation with Libyan authorities, the United States has lent its expertise to remove from the battlefield sophisticated weapons systems proliferated by malign actors in violation of the arms embargo and used to harm Libyan civilians.

Question. Has the UAE's violations of the U.N. Arms Embargo on Libya played any role in the discussion of future assistance to the UAE?

Answer. The Executive Branch takes into account all relevant information when making arms transfer decisions, including history of use of U.S. origin equipment. The United States insists on responsible use of U.S.-origin defense equipment by our allies and partners and considers appropriate responses if violations to the export agreements under which such articles are furnished occur. We have an established interagency process for working through the details of individual arms sales cases and investigating any credible allegations of misuse of U.S. origin equipment as we consider such arms sales.

RESPONSES OF DANA STROUL TO QUESTIONS
SUBMITTED BY SENATOR MIKE ROUNDS

Question. Ms. Stroul and Ms. Resnick: During the hearing, both of you noted the importance of the U.S.-Egyptian strategic relationship. My Question for the Record concerns the U.S.-Egypt Bright Star combined training exercise that will take place in September after a 3-year hiatus.

1. What is your assessment of the inherent military value of this exercise?
2. Does the Bright Star exercise foster the U.S.-Egypt defense relationship and the U.S.-Egypt strategic relationship to include shared regional interests and if yes, how so?
3. Egypt has, by far, the largest Arab military in the world, and our biennial Bright Star exercise is one key tool in fostering U.S. interoperability with an important regional partner. How can both sides enhance this relationship to expand Bright Star beyond its current size and scope?

Answer. BRIGHT STAR 21 promotes readiness to respond to regional threats. It is a tangible manifestation of our mil-to-mil relationship. This exercise enables the United States and Egypt to train together and deepen operational relationships based on shared skill sets. Deepening cooperation through exercises enables the other important aspects of our defense relationship (International Military Education and Training (IMET), Foreign Military Sales (FMS), and professionalization of their military). It also builds trust and enhances participating partner capabilities as militaries train together in order to both deter adversaries and prepare to counter future threats collectively. The Department of Defense is continually revisiting how to make all of its exercises, to include BRIGHT STAR, more relevant to the changing regional security environment.