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6 THE STATE DEPARTMENT'S FOREIGN POLICY

7 PRIORITIES AND THE FY23 BUDGET REQUEST

8 Thursday, April 28, 2022

9 House of Representatives,

10 Committee on Foreign Affairs,

11 Washington, D.C.

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15 The committee met, pursuant to call, at 1:04 p.m., in room  
16 2172, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Gregory Meeks [chairman  
17 of the committee] presiding.

18 Chairman Meeks. [Presiding.] The Committee on Foreign  
19 Affairs will come to order.

20 And without objection, the chair is authorized to declare  
21 a recess of the committee at any point.

22 And all members will have five days to submit statements,  
23 extraneous material, and questions for the record, subject to  
24 the length limitations that are within the rules.

25 To insert something into the record, please have your staff  
26 email the previously mentioned address or contact full committee  
27 staff.

28 As a reminder to members, please keep your video function  
29 on at all times, even if you are not recognized by the chair.

30 And members are responsible for muting and unmuting  
31 themselves. Consistent with House rules, staff will only mute  
32 members, as appropriate, when they are not under recognition,  
33 to eliminate background noise.

34 And I see that we now have a quorum, and I now recognize  
35 myself for opening remarks.

36 Let me start by thanking Secretary Blinken for appearing  
37 before the committee today to represent the administration's  
38 fiscal year 2023 budget request and priorities for U.S. foreign  
39 policy.

40 This budget request makes clear the administration is  
41 putting diplomacy and development first, leveraging the United

42 States' unparalleled soft power, network of alliances, and  
43 unmatched influence at international organizations and  
44 institutions to protect the American people and advance the United  
45 States national interests.

46 And, Mr. Secretary, since your last appearance before this  
47 committee, we have seen, unfortunately, Russia launch an  
48 unjustifiable and renewed full-scale war of choice against  
49 Ukraine. And I want to take the opportunity to commend you and  
50 President Biden and the administration for leading the global  
51 effort to support Ukraine as it repels this act of Russian  
52 aggression. The Biden-Harris administration, through its  
53 handling of the Ukraine crisis, has demonstrated what can be  
54 achieved when the United States leadership is marshaled to push  
55 back against brazen aggression and attacks on sovereignty,  
56 democracy, and human rights.

57 And while Russia and Ukraine are, understandably, on the  
58 top of everyone's mind, we also cannot take our eyes off other  
59 threats and challenges that we must face in partnership with other  
60 allies and the global community, whether they be the expansionists  
61 of China; preventing a nuclear-armed Iran; drought and political  
62 instability in the Horn of Africa; the ongoing effects of  
63 COVID-19, or the existential threat of climate change, and armed  
64 conflict around the world.

65 Indeed, Russia's war on Ukraine has only intensified some

66 of these challenges. In Africa, the home of the largest  
67 concentration of internally-displaced and refugee populations  
68 on the planet, these vulnerable populations are bearing the brunt  
69 of rising food insecurity, which has been exacerbated by Putin's  
70 war in Ukraine and threatens hunger around the world.

71 We should celebrate where we are seeing successes; for  
72 example, in Yemen, a fragile truce brokered with the assistance  
73 of the U.N. and the United States Special Envoy, which offers  
74 a vital opportunity for warring parties to commit to a lasting  
75 ceasefire.

76 But many daunting challenges remain. Following our  
77 withdrawal from Afghanistan, the end of that war raises important  
78 questions about how we move forward after a 20-year conflict and  
79 how to best help the Afghan people, especially the women and girls  
80 of the country, and address a humanitarian crisis.

81 And it is vital that the United States also remain focused  
82 on our regional neighbors in Central and South America and the  
83 Caribbean. And over the past several years, we have seen a  
84 deterioration of democracy globally, including in several Western  
85 countries in the Western Hemisphere, which have also been marked  
86 by weakened democratic institutions, politicized judicial  
87 systems, corruption scandals, and blatant lack of respect for  
88 the rule of law.

89 Despite these challenges, there are some reasons, also,

90       though, to celebrate and be hopeful. I never like to be just  
91       negative. We have to also point out some of the hopeful things.

92       Barbados became a republic and swore in its first President since  
93       it became independent 55 years ago. We are also seeing positive  
94       changes with recently inaugurated Presidents in both Honduras  
95       and Chile, ushering in new perspectives on fighting corruption  
96       and strengthening democracy.

97               And for the first time since 1994, the United States is  
98       hosting the Summit of the Americas, this time in Los Angeles,  
99       with a focus on a sustainable, resilient, and equitable future,  
100      and recommitment to upholding democracy in the region.

101             Of course, we cannot meet global challenges without  
102      providing our diplomatic and development professionals the tools  
103      that they need to succeed. So, I welcome the administration's  
104      recent steps to build a more agile, diverse, and equitable  
105      workforce. I would be remiss if I didn't implore the Department  
106      to do more, particularly to address inequities at the mid and  
107      senior ranks, and address notable disparities in career  
108      progressions.

109             The Department's establishment of paid internship positions  
110      is an important development, key to opening the door for  
111      historically excluded groups. And I hope the Department will  
112      take further steps to convert its internships entirely to a paid  
113      status.

114 I also appreciate the steps the Department has taken to  
115 support more expeditionary diplomacy and face-to-face engagement  
116 in support of America's interests around the world, as well as  
117 to modernize visa and passport processes that further facilitate  
118 such engagement.

119 In addition, I am encouraged to see the Department prioritize  
120 meetings its obligations at the U.N., where the United States  
121 remains the largest contributor to global peacekeeping operations  
122 and other important multilateral efforts.

123 So, Secretary Blinken, let me again thank you. Thank you  
124 for being here. Thank you for being the face to American  
125 diplomacy and working around the world. There are so many things  
126 that are happening at this time in our history, but I do believe  
127 that, in the end, the camera of history will record us as taking  
128 us into a better place, once we get out of this tough place that  
129 we are in right now, primarily led by Putin's vicious and  
130 unilateral war against democracy that I think, really, not just  
131 in Ukraine, but around the world.

132 And I look forward to hearing your testimony and answers  
133 to what I know will be very thoughtful questions from our members.

134 And I now yield to Mr. McCaul for his opening remarks.

135 Mr. McCaul. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

136 And thank you, Mr. Secretary, for being here today. I also  
137 want to thank you for meeting with us when we were in Poland

138 recently. We have a very good discussion. In fact, I have been  
139 there twice in the last month.

140 But I will say our delegation, bipartisan, came back resolved  
141 more than ever that we need to help Ukraine win this war. And  
142 it was very bipartisan.

143 And I also want to thank you, sir, and the State Department  
144 for your efforts to bring Trevor Reed home to his family. I have  
145 met with his parents many times. I want to thank the Special  
146 Presidential Envoy for Hostage Affairs, Roger Carstens, and U.S.  
147 Ambassador John Sullivan, a good friend of mine, who were really  
148 critical to bringing him home, securing his freedom. His parents  
149 are very grateful, sir. And we thank you and your team for that.

150 We are currently witnessing the largest invasion in Europe  
151 since World War II, my father's war. And as you know, the  
152 brutality is shocking. We just passed a war crimes bill, the  
153 chairman and I, on the Floor, bipartisan, calling these out for  
154 what they are and holding Mr. Putin accountable as a war criminal.

155 But the images of corpses littering the streets after Bucha,  
156 hands tied behind their backs, bullets in their heads; reports  
157 of mobile crematoriums being brought in to cover up the mounting  
158 body counts and cover up the evidence; the pregnant woman covered  
159 in blood being carried out of a recently-bombed maternity  
160 hospital, for God's sakes. Tragically, both she and her baby,  
161 as you know, did not survive. But these are Putin's war crimes,

162 and he must be held accountable. He fancies himself as reclaiming  
163 the glory of the Russian Empire. Yet, his legacy will be that  
164 of a war criminal.

165 And yet, in the face of these horrors, President Zelensky,  
166 I think, and the people of Ukraine, have really inspired the world  
167 with their bravery and their determination. And I appreciate  
168 the fact, sir, that you when to Kyiv with the Secretary of Defense  
169 to meet with him. I think that was very, very important, and  
170 I would love to hear more about that visit.

171 But, you know, they are standing in front of these tanks,  
172 risking their lives to fight for their freedom, and against all  
173 odds, they are holding off the invading force. We were told in  
174 four days this would be over. We are now into the third month.

175 Mr. Putin has underestimated the Ukrainian people, I think to  
176 his own peril.

177 And that is why it is critical, as you know, to get Ukraine  
178 the weapons they need to completely defeat Putin's invasion now.

179 I appreciate the efforts made to get these desperately needed  
180 weapons into the hands of Ukrainians, once the war started. I  
181 wish more of these weapons had gone in before the invasion and  
182 not after. I know there was concern about provocation, provoking  
183 Putin. The President, in my view, sat on critical weapons  
184 packages in the spring of 2021 and again in November of 2021 --  
185 all the while Russia amassed its massive troops on the border.



186           And as the battle for the Donbass heats up, the United States  
187           and her allies are only just now training Ukrainians on vital  
188           heavy weapons, including MLRS artillery, air defenses, armed  
189           drones, and tanks.

190           As President Zelensky put it, he said, you know, "It's unfair  
191           that Ukraine is still forced to ask for what its partners have  
192           been storing somewhere for years. If they have the weapons that  
193           Ukraine needs here, we need them now. If they have the ammunition  
194           that we need here and now, it is their moral duty, first of all,  
195           to help protect freedom." And then, he said this would help save  
196           the lives of thousands of Ukrainians.

197           As I have often said, the world is watching. This is an  
198           historic time. And history will judge us by how we respond and  
199           whether we learn from our mistakes.

200           I will say the narrative has gone from it will be over in  
201           four days to we need to help Ukraine defend themselves, to I was  
202           very pleased to hear you and Secretary Austin say, "Ukraine can  
203           win." And I think the narrative has changed with the American  
204           people as well, as they see the horrific images coming out of  
205           these atrocities. And I know, with Mariupol, once the dust  
206           settles, we are going to hear -- I think we have just scratched  
207           the surface, unfortunately.

208           This unprovoked aggression on Ukraine has opened the world's  
209           eyes to the threat, though, of other malign actors, primarily

210 China, and to our partner Taiwan. At the Winter Olympics, as  
211 you know, Putin and the Chinese Communist Party General, Secretary  
212 Xi, announced their unholy alliance, "no limits," they call it,  
213 compact against the United States and NATO.

214 I think it was not a question of if, but when, and I think  
215 Putin made the calculation, based on what he saw, that this was  
216 the time. And we are very worried that President Xi may make  
217 the same calculation. I hope with Putin's miscalculation,  
218 however, and his lack of success, if you will, he will change  
219 that paradigm.

220 But they just reached a secret military agreement between  
221 the Solomon Islands, China did, which took us all by surprise.

222 These are the very islands that my father's generation fought  
223 and died for to liberate during World War II. And now, it is  
224 under the thumb of the CCP.

225 It is clear that they are preparing for some sort of conflict,  
226 whether it is by military or otherwise. And I think the United  
227 States must act now to prevent such an invasion. We must also  
228 make sure our Defense Industrial Base is embracing innovation  
229 to make weapons more quickly using 21st century technology.

230 In short, our arsenal of democracy needs rejuvenation. And  
231 that may be for a longer discussion, sir, that we could have.

232 But the slow pace of these weapons that the chairman and I sign  
233 off on, not going out, raises concerns.

234           Turning to Afghanistan, Republicans and Democrats alike  
235           expressed alarm over the administration's failure to prepare for  
236           the fallout of the withdrawal. We were promised that this would  
237           be planned for all contingencies. But, in the end, 13 soldiers  
238           died during the evacuation; hundreds of American citizens and  
239           tens of thousands of Afghan partners were left behind. I will  
240           be releasing an interim report very soon outlining what our  
241           investigation has discovered so far. And I look forward to  
242           discussing that report with you, sir.

243           But, at the end of the day, we are in this together. And  
244           it is in the interest of the free world to defeat the evils of  
245           Mr. Putin and all of our foreign nation adversary countries.

246           And with that, I yield back.

247           Chairman Meeks. It is now my honor to introduce the  
248           Honorable Antony J. Blinken, who currently serves as the Nation's  
249           71st Secretary of State.

250           There are a lot of questions that want to be asked. So,  
251           in the interest of time, I will skip your biography, Mr. Secretary.

252           I think everyone knows it well, you know, on this committee,  
253           and we have introduced you in the past.

254           So, basically, you will have 5 minutes to deliver your  
255           opening remarks, and I will gently tap my gavel at the appropriate  
256           time. I may be a little more liberal with you because I think  
257           it is significant and important to hear from you and the reports

258 back, as we deal with the government's budgetary concerns, with  
259 the requests, with reference to the State authorization and the  
260 State Department.

261 You are now recognized for 5 minutes.

262 STATEMENT OF THE HON. ANTONY BLINKEN, SECRETARY OF STATE, U.S.  
263 DEPARTMENT OF STATE

264

265 Secretary Blinken. Chairman Meeks, Ranking Member McCaul,  
266 thank you. Thank you for having me here today to speak about  
267 the administration's proposed budget for the State Department.

268 But thank you more broadly --

269 Mr. McCaul. Secretary, could you pull the mic a little  
270 closer maybe?

271 Secretary Blinken. Yes. Sorry. Is that better? Try  
272 that.

273 But thank you as well for your partnership and, also, for  
274 your leadership. That CODEL that both of you led in Poland at  
275 a critical moment made a big difference, and it has been gratifying  
276 to be able to work with both of you and other Members on this  
277 urgent issue, but also on many others. And I deeply appreciate  
278 it.

279 And I did recently get back from Kyiv with Secretary Austin,  
280 where we wanted to show, as well as deliver on, America's  
281 commitment to the government and to the people of Ukraine.

282 This brutal war of aggression against Ukraine has  
283 underscored to me the power and the purpose of American diplomacy.

284 Our diplomacy is rallying allies and partners around the world  
285 to join us in supporting Ukraine with security, economic,

286 humanitarian assistance to impose massive costs on Russia for  
287 its aggression; to strengthen our collective security and  
288 defense, and to address the war's mounting global consequences,  
289 including the refugee and food crises that have flowed from it.

290 We have to continue to drive this diplomacy forward; also,  
291 to seize the strategic opportunities and address some of the risks  
292 that are presented by Russia's overreach, as countries reconsider  
293 their policies, their priorities, their relationships.

294 The budget request before you predates the crisis, but fully  
295 funding and the new emergency resources the President requested  
296 earlier today is critical to ensuring that Russia's war in Ukraine  
297 is a strategic failure for the Kremlin and serves as a powerful  
298 lesson to those who might consider following its path.

299 The supplemental resources Congress provided in March have  
300 made a decisive difference on the battlefield, helping Ukrainians  
301 defend their country and win the battle for Kyiv. Your support  
302 also helped meet the mounting costs caused by the Kremlin's brutal  
303 invasion in Ukraine itself, across Europe, around the world, while  
304 bolstering the security of our allies and partners. This  
305 assistance was provided with broad bipartisan support and it has  
306 sent a clear signal of the United States' commitment to the  
307 Ukrainian government and to its people.

308 We ask the Congress do the same with the emergency request  
309 that is before you as of today, which seeks \$20.5 billion for

310 security assistance, \$8.5 billion for economic assistance, and  
311 \$3 billion for humanitarian aid, including to address the growing  
312 global food security crisis, which is a direct result of Russia's  
313 aggression. Approximately \$14 billion of this request would be  
314 directed to the State Department and to USAID.

315 Let me just underscore, we can't take our progress so far  
316 for granted. Ukraine's enduring independence and sovereignty  
317 depends in no small part on ensuring that the country's brave  
318 defenders have what they need to keep up the fight and meet the  
319 urgent needs of their people.

320 But, Mr. Chairman, to your point, as we focus on this urgent  
321 crisis, the State Department continues to carry out missions that  
322 are front and center to our diplomacy -- like responsibly managing  
323 great power competition with China; facilitating a halt to  
324 fighting in Yemen and Ethiopia; pushing back against the rising  
325 tide of authoritarianism and the threat that it poses to democracy  
326 and human rights.

327 We also have evolving challenges that require us to develop  
328 new capabilities -- like the emergence and re-emergence of  
329 infectious disease, and accelerating climate crisis; a digital  
330 revolution that holds enormous promise, but also real peril.

331 Last fall, I had a chance to set out a modernization agenda  
332 for the Department and for U.S. diplomacy to enable us to even  
333 more effectively respond to many of these complex demands. And

334 in no small part, thanks to the fiscal year 2022 budget approved  
335 by Congress, we have been able to make real progress on this  
336 agenda, though much remains to be done.

337 To give you just a few quick examples:

338 We strengthened our capacity to shape the ongoing  
339 technological revolution, so that it actually protects our  
340 interests; it boosts American competitiveness; it upholds our  
341 values.

342 With bipartisan congressional support and encouragement,  
343 we just launched a new Bureau for Cyberspace and Digital Policy  
344 with 60 team members at the start, and I am grateful for the support  
345 and the advice that we got along the way.

346 We are also making headway on ensuring that our diplomats  
347 reflect America's remarkable diversity. This is a tremendous  
348 source of strength for our diplomacy. The Department's  
349 first-ever Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer has spearheaded  
350 an effort to analyze and address the obstacles that have been  
351 preventing underrepresented groups from joining, but also  
352 advancing at the State Department.

353 We expanded the Pickering and Rangel fellowship programs,  
354 and, Mr. Chairman, as you said, paid internships at State, again  
355 with strong congressional input and support.

356 My first 15 months on this job have only strengthened my  
357 conviction that these and other reforms aren't just worthwhile,



358 they are essential to delivering for the American people.

359 Ensuring we can deliver on this agenda will require sustained  
360 funding, some new authorities, and most importantly, partnership  
361 from Congress. That is why I am grateful to have worked with  
362 Congress to reestablish a formal dialog on the State Department  
363 authorization.

364 Last month, we sent congressional staff the first package  
365 of legislative authorities required to meet the challenges we  
366 face and we expect to send more in the coming weeks, and to working  
367 with you on State authorization.

368 If we want to deepen our capability in areas like climate  
369 and multilateral diplomacy, if we want to expand on Secretary  
370 Powell's vision of a Foreign Service training float, if we want  
371 to strengthen global health security and the capacity to prevent,  
372 to detect, and respond to future outbreaks, we will need some  
373 additional resources.

374 If we want to be able to swiftly stand up new missions, to  
375 deploy our diplomats when and where they are needed, and make  
376 these decisions based on risk management, not risk aversion, we  
377 will need to reform the Secure Embassy Construction and  
378 Counterterrorism Act.

379 There are other things that I would point to that we need  
380 to do, but we look forward to working with you on that.

381 So, in the issue of time, let me stop there, and, of course,

382 we can address these and many other issues throughout the course  
383 of the testimony.

384 Thank you. Very good to be with everyone.

385 [The statement of Secretary Blinken follows:]

386

387 \*\*\*\*\* COMMITTEE INSERT \*\*\*\*\*

388 Chairman Meeks. Thank you for your testimony, Mr.  
389 Secretary.

390 And I am now going to begin to recognize members for 5 minutes  
391 each. Pursuant to the House rules, all time yielded is for the  
392 purposes of questioning our witness.

393 I will recognize members by alternating between Democrats  
394 and Republicans. And if you miss your turn, please let our staff  
395 know, and we will come back to you.

396 If you seek recognition, you must unmute your microphone  
397 and address the chair verbally, and identify yourself, so that  
398 we know who is speaking.

399 One of the other things that may come up are votes. And  
400 we are going to try to continue the hearing. So, members will  
401 be aware, we are going to try to send some members to go vote  
402 and come back, so that we will be able to make sure we are  
403 maximizing the time that we have with the Secretary. He has a  
404 hard stop at 4:30. And so, we are going to try to get as many  
405 questions in as we can.

406 Many of you are aware that, when I became chair of the  
407 committee, that I made a commitment to elevate the voice and the  
408 role of not only our senior members and our subcommittee chairs,  
409 but also rank-and-file members, including and especially our  
410 junior members, who bring valuable experience and perspectives  
411 to this committee.

412           And as such, for budget hearings with the Secretary, I have  
413 committed that whenever we hold such hearings, that all members  
414 who were not able to ask questions previously, due to time  
415 constraints, that I would resume the next hearing where the  
416 previous one had ended.

417           And as such, I believe that Ranking Member McCaul will also  
418 give members who did not have an opportunity on the Republican  
419 side, those who did have an opportunity to ask questions the last  
420 time, to ask questions first also.

421           And that will be, of course, after Mr. McCaul and I ask our  
422 questions.

423           [Laughter.]

424           So, let me start by recognizing myself for 5 minutes for  
425 the purposes of asking questions.

426           And just so that the members will know, the first ones on  
427 the members' side to ask questions on the Democratic side will  
428 be Mr. Malinowski, and on the Republican side, Mr. Jackson.

429           Mr. Secretary, there are so many things that we could ask.

430           I am going to try to focus my questions just on, since this is  
431 a budget hearing, on trying to focus on what is happening  
432 internally within the State.

433           And you know what has been really important to me, looking  
434 at it last year. Fortunately, this committee passed the very  
435 first State authorization bill to be signed into law since 2002,

436 which included many important measures to promote diversity and  
437 inclusion at State, including the establishment of an appeals  
438 process for security clearance restrictions and mandatory  
439 training for hiring managers on implicit bias.

440           So, the budget. How will the budget request enable State  
441 to carry out those new authorities and integrate them with other  
442 DEI activities?

443           Secretary Blinken. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

444           And let me underscore something that you said, but also that  
445 you have been leading on, which is, as I said, our determination  
446 to make sure that we are building a Department that actually  
447 reflects the people that it represents. And we have taken steps  
448 over the last 15 months that I think put us dramatically in a  
449 new place, and better place, to actually make good on that  
450 commitment:

451           The creation and appointment of a Chief Diversity and  
452 Inclusion Officer, and office that goes with it, reporting  
453 directly to me on the seventh floor of the State Department; senior  
454 officials in every bureau responsible for tracking and making  
455 sure that we are following through on this agenda.

456           A five-year strategic plan that was just put forward on  
457 diversity, inclusion, access -- a plan that reflects input from  
458 more than 700 Foreign Service Officers and civil servants, as  
459 well as, of course, many experts.

460           Work that we're doing, innovative work, to actually get data  
461           disaggregated, so we have a complete picture of where we are and  
462           where we are not.

463           Programs, for example, as well to make good on one of the  
464           challenges we have, not only getting people through the doors  
465           of C Street to join the Department, but to keep them there, once  
466           they are there. And we have had issues with that. We have seen,  
467           disproportionately, Foreign Service Officers and civil servants  
468           from underrepresented groups in the Department leave. We want  
469           to understand why and we want to make the changes necessary.  
470           So, we have an entire program now for retention, including exit  
471           interviews, so we actually understand what is motivating people  
472           to leave, and if there is a concern that we can address, we address  
473           it.

474           The paid internships that you referenced, these are critical  
475           to making sure that, socioeconomically, we have people who start  
476           out and open their eyes and minds to the perspective of having  
477           a career in foreign policy at the State Department. If they are  
478           at the Department, they have the ability to do that. That is  
479           critical.

480           And for all of these programs and more, the budget lays out  
481           a funding request to make sure that we can actually carry them  
482           through. And so, we really welcome the partnership with Congress  
483           on this.

484           My commitment is this: this is turning around, to some  
485           extent, an aircraft carrier. It doesn't happen overnight. But,  
486           by what we are doing, by what we are putting in place, I am  
487           convinced that over the next few years, if we sustain it and stick  
488           to it, and resource it, you are going to see manifest progress  
489           throughout the ranks, making sure people have career paths that  
490           they can aspire to and get to the highest positions in the  
491           Department. All of that will play out over a few years, but we  
492           have now put in place the building blocks to do that more  
493           effectively, and I hope the resources can follow.

494           Chairman Meeks. Thank you for that.

495           And also, I think that I have to raise this question also,  
496           Mr. Secretary. During the early chaotic days of Russia's  
497           horrific invasion of Ukraine, there were some reports and videos  
498           of the mistreatment of non-white residents of Ukraine while trying  
499           to flee the country. And during my trip that Mr. McCaul and I  
500           took to the Polish-Ukrainian border, I was assured that any  
501           mistreatment or discrimination was being addressed. And so, I  
502           just have to ask the question, Mr. Secretary: are you aware of  
503           any further such discrimination against non-white refugees? And  
504           did this come up at your recent travel in Poland?

505           Secretary Blinken. Mr. Chairman, we took these reports very  
506           seriously. And not only did we take them seriously, we acted  
507           on them. So, when this first emerged, we were immediately in

508 contact with our counterparts in Ukraine, as well as in  
509 neighboring countries like Poland, making sure that they saw what  
510 was apparently happening and that they took action to correct  
511 it.

512 And as I have seen it -- and we are happy to provide more  
513 information to the committee -- the governments in question did  
514 take action to send very clear messages to folks throughout their  
515 system that people could not in any way be mistreated or treated  
516 differently, in particular, as they were trying to leave Ukraine  
517 in the face of the Russian onslaught.

518 To the best of my knowledge, the reports of such incidents  
519 have decreased significantly, but it is something that we track.

520 And we will be happy to be in close touch with you. Needless  
521 to say, if any further reports emerge, please let us know, so  
522 that we can follow up with the governments in question.

523 Chairman Meeks. And before I go to Mr. McCaul, I have just  
524 got one final question I need to ask, Mr. Secretary. Recognizing  
525 the disparities by the providence in Afghanistan before the fall  
526 of the Ghani government, how would you characterize the security  
527 situation in Afghanistan and the treatment, especially, of women  
528 and girls in Afghanistan, under the Taliban rule, as we speak  
529 right now?

530 Secretary Blinken. Thank you.

531 Very quickly, I would say this: the overall level of



532 violence in the country has decreased, but we are seeing terrorist  
533 attacks, including, horrifically, most recently, against Hazara  
534 and Shiite minorities. We are, of course, seeing retribution  
535 attacks by Taliban against those who are part of the former  
536 government. These seem to be, for the most part, not  
537 centrally-directed; that is, they tend to be happening at a local  
538 level, but they are happening. And that, of course, is egregious.

539 And then, more generally, there is no doubt that, when it  
540 comes to the basic rights of the Afghan people, and especially  
541 women and girls, that has moved backwards across the board. We  
542 have seen, for example, when it comes to women and girls, the  
543 inability of girls to go to school above the sixth grade. The  
544 Taliban had made a commitment that they would be allowed to do  
545 so. It reneged on that commitment. We are pressing, and many  
546 other countries are pressing, very hard on the Taliban to make  
547 good on what it said it would do. We will see if they do that.

548 So, the rights picture is challenging. The security  
549 picture, as I said, is mixed because, while the overall level  
550 of violence has gone down, terrorism attacks within Afghanistan  
551 against Afghans continue and some of these retribution attacks  
552 continue.

553 Chairman Meeks. Mr. McCaul?

554 Mr. McCaul. Yes, thank you, Mr. Chairman.

555 And, Secretary, you know, I have been critical that more

556 weapons didn't go in before the invasion; seemed to be waiting  
557 until after the invasion. I will say I was at the Polish-Ukraine  
558 border last week, and I was actually very pleased to see a lot  
559 of 18-wheelers going in. And we know what they were carrying.

560 But Zelensky said, "If we had access to all the weapons we  
561 need, which our partners have and which are comparable to the  
562 weapons used by the Russian Federation, we would have already  
563 ended this war."

564 I don't think we can afford to make the same mistakes, though,  
565 in Taiwan. The stakes are high. They make 90 percent of the  
566 advanced semiconductor chips. If the CCP controlled, if they  
567 take Taiwan, they could weaponize the semiconductor supply chain  
568 and decimate the United States economy.

569 If CCP controlled Taiwan, it would give China physical base  
570 in the first island chain that would cut the United States off  
571 from our allies and put us in a strategic disadvantage to future  
572 aggression in the archipelago of the Solomon Islands and that  
573 security group.

574 My question, very quickly, the chairman and I do sign off  
575 on foreign military weapons sales. We sent a letter, a joint  
576 letter, to you on December the 3rd of last year. There are about  
577 10 weapons systems. I won't go into detail on all of them, but  
578 all very important. When I met the Ambassador from Taiwan, she  
579 said, "I have not received any of these."

580 I think deterrence is important here. And we wrote to  
581 request notification of the pending shipment of these sales to  
582 Taiwan. Why is this being held up? Many of these were signed  
583 off by the chairman and myself two years ago.

584 Secretary Blinken. Thank you. Let me just very quickly  
585 address Ukraine, and then, come quickly to your question.

586 First on Ukraine, again, with great appreciation for  
587 everything that you have done, that the chairman has done, and  
588 continue to do -- and we have got to keep doing together -- the  
589 reason that the Ukrainians were able, so effectively, to push  
590 back the Russians from their aggression against Kyiv and the  
591 surrounding areas, and push them back to the east and the south,  
592 is two things.

593 One, starting with their remarkable courage and resilience,  
594 which the Russians underestimated, and probably the entire world  
595 did.

596 But, two, because they actually had in hand in the moment  
597 the tools they needed to do it. And the reason that they had  
598 those tools in hand is because, among other things, President  
599 Biden engaged in a drawdown way back on Labor Day of last year;  
600 another one, Christmastime. And these things were not --

601 Mr. McCaul. And I apologize. I have got a few minutes,  
602 and I have one more question for you.

603 Secretary Blinken. Yes. So, I just wanted to make that

604 point.

605 Mr. McCaul. When will Taiwan receive these weapons?

606 Secretary Blinken. So, on Taiwan, two things. I agree with  
607 you that it is vital that Taiwan continue to have the means to  
608 defend itself, because we have seen mounting aggression from --

609 Mr. McCaul. And I agree. I think there is a problem. I  
610 don't know if it is State or DOD or defense contractors. But  
611 maybe to move on to my next question --

612 Secretary Blinken. Well, the point --

613 Mr. McCaul. -- maybe it would be helpful if we got State  
614 and DOD and the contractors in the same room together to find  
615 out, how can we fix this broken system? And as you know, these  
616 are Patriot battery systems, right? We can't even give those  
617 to the eastern flank NATO countries. We have got a serious  
618 backlog in weapons systems, and I would like to work with you  
619 to fix that.

620 My last question, Financial Times broke a story yesterday  
621 that the CCP's national champion for memory chips, a company  
622 called YMTC, is breaking the U.S. foreign direct product rule  
623 and providing critical technology to Huawei. Do you agree that  
624 any company that violates U.S. law to provide critical technology  
625 to a sanctioned CCP-controlled country poses a threat to our  
626 national security? And if so, would you commit today to getting  
627 YMTC, which is a real threat, sir, as you know, putting that on

628 the Entities List?

629 Secretary Blinken. First, just quickly on Taiwan, I welcome  
630 working with you and other Members on this to make sure that we  
631 can streamline the timelines, to make sure that they are getting  
632 what they need to defend themselves.

633 Second, with regard to this specific case, I will commit  
634 right now to look into it as soon as we are done, to figure out  
635 what is going on, and if there are sanctionable activity, to make  
636 sure that it is sanctioned.

637 Mr. McCaul. Well, we are providing the equipment that they  
638 buy from the United States to make these advanced semiconductor  
639 chips. And I think we need to work on this Entities List. I  
640 think the Department of Commerce and DOD, we have got to harmonize  
641 this, and we also need to look at outbound investment streaming.

642 With all the technology and capital flows going into China, which  
643 you know they use -- and we are the backbone -- that were made  
644 in America, but they also made their hypersonic weapon.

645 And I sent a letter to Secretary Raimondo about this, as  
646 you know as well. And I hope you would especially take a look  
647 at this particular company.

648 And thank you, sir.

649 Chairman Meeks. The gentleman's time has expired.

650 I now recognize Representative Tom Malinowski from New  
651 Jersey, who is the vice chair of the full committee, for 5 minutes.

652           Mr. Malinowski. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

653           Thank you, Mr. Secretary. Thank you for going to Kyiv.

654           Thank you for everything that you have done, and that President  
655           Biden has done, to stand with Ukraine, and for showing the world  
656           once again what principled American leadership in the world can  
657           do. It has been absolutely extraordinary.

658           I have some questions that mostly will focus on sanctions,  
659           the economic side of this war. Yesterday, as you know, the House  
660           passed legislation that I led with Representative Joe Wilson that  
661           was designed to encourage the use of frozen, blocked Russian  
662           assets ultimately in the rebuilding of Ukraine. And I was  
663           delighted to see today that the President, the administration,  
664           embraced this basic principle, that we should be using the wealth  
665           that built the Putin regime to rebuild the country that Putin  
666           is destroying.

667           Most of my questions about that have been answered just in  
668           the last 24 hours. I did want to ask one question that I think,  
669           as we work together on this, will probably be pretty crucial.

670           And that is, you know, we are talking about the oligarchs and  
671           the yachts and the villas and bank accounts, and so forth. But  
672           we accept that principle, do you think it might also apply to  
673           state assets? For example, the much larger amount of money that  
674           has been frozen around the world belonging to the Russian Central  
675           Bank?

676           Secretary Blinken. In short, yes. And this is one of the  
677 things that we have asked our own lawyers to look at, which is  
678 what authorities would be needed, potentially, to seize those  
679 assets, but not only to seize them, but to use them in exactly  
680 the ways that you and Congressman Wilson have suggested in your  
681 legislation.

682           Mr. Malinowski. Yes, thank you.

683           More broadly, it seems to me that this is a moment kind of  
684 like 9/11, a moment when people and countries around the world  
685 need to choose what side they are on. We have imposed  
686 extraordinary sanctions with our allies, but I am concerned that  
687 those sanctions may be undermined by other countries that may  
688 view participation as optional, may be hedging their bets. We  
689 have countries around the world continuing to purchase not just  
690 Russian oil, but diamonds, for example. We have Roman  
691 Abramovich's yacht sailing into a harbor in Turkey.

692           I am particularly concerned about countries in the Persian  
693 Gulf. I am sure you have seen the reports of dozens of Russian  
694 officials, business people close to Putin, owning property in  
695 the United Arab Emirates, and in the last few weeks, significant  
696 potential targets of sanctions moving assets into the UAE, in  
697 particular. Clearly, they are doing this because they believe  
698 that, if they are sanctioned, they will be safe in these countries.

699           So, I guess what I want to ask you is, are they right? Will

700       they be safe?

701               Secretary Blinken.   We are looking around the world at where  
702       resources are moving, as well as where countries or institutions  
703       may be trying to help evade the sanctions or in any way undermine  
704       them.

705               Thanks to the colleagues in the Senate, we now have working  
706       for us a sanctions coordinator who reports directly to me, Jim  
707       O'Brien.   This is one of his responsibilities, to look at  
708       sanctions evasion, and to make sure that we are doing everything  
709       we can to cut off any such evasion.

710               We are working that as well with our G7 partners.   And I  
711       would just say, very quickly, two things.   Look, it is much better  
712       in the first instance if we can get any countries in question  
713       to voluntarily make sure that they are joining us in implementing  
714       the sanctions and not allowing them to be evaded.   But, if  
715       necessary to use authorities that we have to take action against  
716       those that are not, that is certainly something we are looking  
717       at.

718               The last thing is this:   I mentioned this in my opening  
719       remarks.   A number of countries around the world are rethinking  
720       their relationships, including their relationship with Russia,  
721       going forward.   And some of them have had relationships with  
722       Russia going back decades, including at times when we couldn't  
723       have the same kind of relationship with them, and now we can.



724           We also need to make sure that we are helping advance that  
725           transition, and doing it in a way that, as a strategic matter,  
726           moves things in the right direction. And that is something we  
727           are factoring in as well.

728           Mr. Malinowski. Well, thank you. I hope we recognize who  
729           has the power in our relationship with some of these countries,  
730           and particularly, the Gulf countries, ask the question, are they  
731           America's allies in the Gulf or Russia's allies in the Gulf?

732           Chairman Meeks. The gentleman's time has expired.

733           Mr. Malinowski. And I yield back.

734           Chairman Meeks. I now recognize Representative Ronny  
735           Jackson of Texas for 5 minutes.

736           Mr. Jackson. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Member  
737           McCaul.

738           Thank you, Mr. Secretary, for being here today.

739           Mr. Secretary, it is hard to see any signs of success from  
740           the Biden administration over the past 15 months. Our  
741           constituents are facing higher prices and lower supplies across  
742           all industries, particularly at the gas pump. The world is  
743           markedly less safe and many of our allies are in immediate danger.

744           And the administration seems more worried about catering to the  
745           socialist left and about virtue signaling than about actually  
746           getting things done to help everyday Americans.

747           Since this administration took office, our three main global

748 adversaries have become emboldened and strengthened.

749 In Europe, President Biden failed to deter Vladimir Putin  
750 from invading Ukraine, despite ample evidence for months of  
751 military buildup. And now, we all watch with horror at war crimes  
752 and the violence that is unfolding.

753 In the Indo-Pacific, as I saw firsthand on a CODEL I recently  
754 was on last week to Australia, Japan, and Taiwan, China continues  
755 its attempts to disrupt the world order through threatening its  
756 neighbors like Taiwan, through vaccine diplomacy for a virus it  
757 both created and covered up, and through its malicious Belt and  
758 Road Initiative.

759 And in the Middle East, according to reports from  
760 negotiations in Vienna, Iran stands poised to receive enormous  
761 gains without giving up its nuclear deployment.

762 Each concession by this administration means more of our  
763 servicemembers abroad and more of allies, particularly Israel,  
764 are at imminent risk.

765 Mr. Secretary, I think many of us in this room are concerned  
766 about the evolving crisis faced by Taiwan, and that has been  
767 mentioned, and the economic and security risk of nations around  
768 the world if China decides to invade Taiwan.

769 We have witnessed two enormous foreign policy failures, in  
770 my opinion, between this administration's withdrawal from  
771 Afghanistan and its early concessions to Russia, as Putin prepared

772 for, and then, invaded Ukraine. It is clear from these actions,  
773 and from what I learned during my meetings on this recent CODEL,  
774 that we must reestablish confidence in our allies.

775 Mr. Secretary, what steps are you taking to ensure allies  
776 like Taiwan are confident in America's support, particularly  
777 after our mistakes in Afghanistan and Ukraine?

778 Secretary Blinken. Thank you.

779 Look, I don't want to put words in allies' and partners'  
780 mouths. That wouldn't be appropriate. But I think it is fair  
781 to say, from what I am hearing around the world -- and I would  
782 certainly invite the chairman and the ranking member as well who  
783 have been making the rounds -- I would suggest to you that the  
784 confidence of our allies and partners in the United States right  
785 now is at a high point, precisely because of the leadership that  
786 we have exerted through these many months with regard to Ukraine,  
787 but also on many other issues.

788 Indeed, Congressman, one of the first instructions I had  
789 on taking office from President Biden was to focus on  
790 re-energizing and revitalizing these alliances and partnerships,  
791 and that is exactly what we did. We are now in better standing  
792 at NATO than we have been in as long as I can remember. We have  
793 revitalized partnerships throughout the Asia Pacific, where you  
794 were, including with Japan, with Korea, with Australia, with New  
795 Zealand. We have energized the Quad that brings together the

796 United States, India, Australia, and Japan. As you know, this  
797 is a vital institution. We have re-engaged with ASEAN.

798 Across the board -- and I could down the list -- I think  
799 our standing with allies and partners is stronger than it has  
800 ever been. And there is a good reason for it, and you are right  
801 to focus on it. It is because most of the challenges we face  
802 are most effectively dealt with when we are working together with  
803 allies and partners, and that is exactly what you are seeing in  
804 Ukraine right now. Because of all the countries that we have  
805 brought together, the Ukrainians have what they need to repel  
806 this Russian aggression.

807 And we have got to keep working on that. The Secretary of  
808 Defense was just in Germany with 40 other defense ministers from  
809 around the world to make sure that we could continue to get the  
810 Ukrainians exactly what they need to continue to do the job.

811 And on Taiwan, we are resolute in making sure that Taiwan  
812 has what it needs to defend itself, as we have been for decades  
813 across eight administrations. And we will work with you and work  
814 with other members of the committee to make sure that we are doing  
815 that as effectively as possible.

816 Mr. Jackson. Thank you, Mr. Secretary. I have another  
817 question here, sir.

818 Outrageous gas prices are hurting my constituents. Yet,  
819 the administration continues to attack American oil and gas.

820 Chairman Meeks. Put your microphone on, Mr. Jackson.

821 Mr. Jackson. Can you hear me, sir? How about that? No?

822 Okay.

823 Sir, outrageous gas prices are hurting my constituents.

824 Yet, the administration continues to attack American oil and gas.

825 Biden's price-hike blame game is not only falling on deaf ears,

826 but it is also not believable. Gas prices have risen each week

827 since Biden took office, due to this disastrous and ill-advised

828 posture towards American energy company.

829 Beyond the failed domestic energy policies, it also seems

830 that your Department's policy towards our Gulf partners is

831 failing. I was disappointed to see that National Security

832 Advisor Sullivan approached the meeting with the Saudi Crown

833 Prince in a way that offended the Kingdom. This, in my opinion,

834 is not the way to handle such relationships during a global energy

835 crisis.

836 My constituents ask me each day what the government is doing

837 to lower their gas prices. So, I would like to turn that question

838 to you, Mr. Secretary. What is your strategy to work with other

839 countries, particularly our Gulf partners, to increase access

840 to energy and decrease the world's reliance on Russian oil and

841 gas?

842 Secretary Blinken. It is very important.

843 Chairman Meeks. You are going to have to do that in writing.

844 I have got to be strict on the 5-minute rule because we have  
845 got so many folks that I want to make sure we get to.

846 Secretary Blinken. I will follow up in writing for you.

847 Mr. Jackson. Thank you, Mr. Secretary. I appreciate it.

848 Thank you.

849 Mr. McCaul. Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

850 I would like to enter into the record the letter to Secretary  
851 Blinken, dated December 3rd, 2021, from both you and myself on  
852 the weapon sales to Taiwan, and another to the Honorable Gina  
853 Raimondo, Secretary of Commerce, dated July 12th, 2021.

854 Chairman Meeks. Without objection.

855 [The information follows:]

856

857 \*\*\*\*\* COMMITTEE INSERT \*\*\*\*\*

858 Chairman Meeks. I now recognize Representative Andy Kim  
859 of New Jersey for 5 minutes.

860 Mr. Kim of New Jersey. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

861 And thank you, Mr. Secretary, for coming here.

862 Just the other day, you mentioned that Ukraine won the battle  
863 for Kyiv. And I guess I just wanted to ask you, do you assess  
864 that they are winning the war as a whole?

865 Secretary Blinken. The Ukrainians, as things stand -- well,  
866 first of all, let's define winning. What is important is this:  
867 first, on Putin's own terms, his objective going into Ukraine  
868 was to erase its independence and sovereignty, to deny its  
869 existence as an independent country.

870 And on that basis, thanks to the extraordinary courage of  
871 the Ukrainians, he has already failed. I am very confident in  
872 saying that a sovereign, independent Ukraine is going to be around  
873 a lot longer than Vladimir Putin will be on the scene. So, on  
874 that basis, they are succeeding and Russia is failing.

875 Now, ultimately, how this plays out and on what terms, that  
876 has to be up to the Ukrainians, the Ukrainian people, the  
877 government that represents them. We will support whatever they  
878 want to do going forward. There is a ferocious battle taking  
879 place right now across hundreds of miles in eastern and southern  
880 Ukraine. And the Russians bring a lot of firepower to that, but  
881 that is exactly why we and 40 or more countries around the world

882 are making sure that the Ukrainians have what they need to deal  
883 with that.

884 Mr. Kim of New Jersey. Yes, thank you for that, and I  
885 appreciate that articulation.

886 The reason I ask this question is because I recently  
887 conducted a town hall in my district and I was asked a question  
888 about, how does the war in Ukraine affect us? How does it affect  
889 the people in Burlington County, the New Jersey 3rd Congressional  
890 District? And they asked the question just point blank, why  
891 should we care? And I guess I just wanted to ask you, if you  
892 were there at the town hall with me, what would you say back to  
893 them?

894 Secretary Blinken. I guess I would say two things. First  
895 of all, I think we should care because the brutalization of the  
896 country and what is being done to the Ukrainian people by this  
897 Russian aggression are horrific, and simply as fellow human  
898 beings, we should care.

899 But, beyond that, this aggression is not only an aggression  
900 against Ukraine; it is an aggression against the very basic  
901 principles of the international order that were put in place to  
902 try to keep peace and security after two world wars, both of which  
903 drew the United States in. And those principles, like the  
904 importance of sovereignty, of independence; principles like one  
905 country can't simply invade another, change its borders, and



906       assert that might makes right; can't dictate to another country  
907       its policies, its future, its decisions. That is what Russia  
908       is committing aggression against.

909             And if we allow that to stand with impunity, it is going  
910       to open a Pandora's box around the world, where other countries  
911       may take note and take action. And we know from history that  
912       draws us in.

913             Second, or third, I guess I should say, we are actually seeing  
914       direct impacts of this aggression around the world way beyond  
915       Europe, including rising food prices because of Russia's  
916       aggression, energy prices that have gone up. They have gone up  
917       more than a dollar at the pump since Putin began to put this  
918       aggression together. So, it is having direct impacts as well.

919             Mr. Kim of New Jersey. I agree with a lot of that. And  
920       I think, as we are considering this budget and thinking this  
921       through, I think it is really important -- and I would like to  
922       work with you -- on how we define success to the American people.

923       Because we spend a lot of time talking about what we are trying  
924       to do, but we don't always do as much as we need to to articulate  
925       why we are doing it and what we are trying to achieve.

926             And so, when I think through this, I very much agree with  
927       you that we are feeling like we are in this new paradigm-shift  
928       moment, where we are seeing these sacrosanct ideas and values  
929       of sovereignty being challenged blatantly by authoritarian

930 governments around this world. And I think this is an opportunity  
931 for us to reassert what American leadership is, trying to signify  
932 what that is, and define what success can be.

933 Now a question, going back to Ukraine, is, one measure of  
934 success, as you said, we won the battle for Kyiv. I know that  
935 you announced that we are going to start having our diplomats  
936 go back.

937 Secretary Blinken. Mm-hmm.

938 Mr. Kim of New Jersey. I was wondering if you could commit  
939 to us when we are to expect the embassy to open up and have  
940 Americans come back into Kyiv.

941 Secretary Blinken. Congressman, we are working on that  
942 right now. And I can't give you a date certain because we want  
943 to make sure, obviously, that it is done in a way that looks out  
944 for their safety and their security. But we have diplomats back  
945 on the ground in Ukraine literally as we speak working on that.

946 I would anticipate that this will play out over the next several  
947 weeks, but we will be back in Kyiv and the American flag will  
948 be flying over the embassy.

949 Mr. Kim of New Jersey. And when we understand the challenges  
950 that we face with Russia, I think a lot of people also recognize  
951 -- and I think the chairman mentioned it -- you know, some of  
952 our bigger concerns in some ways are related to China, about what  
953 comes next. I heard that there is going to be a comprehensive

954 Strategy being released sometime soon. I saw the President will  
955 be doing some travel, most likely, out to Korea and Japan.

956 I want to just ask, what would be the top thing that we wanted  
957 to raise with the new President of Korea when the President will  
958 go out there?

959 Secretary Blinken. The partnership that we have with Korea,  
960 the alliance that we have with Korea --

961 Chairman Meeks. Again, unfortunately, Mr. Secretary, you  
962 will have to do it in writing.

963 Secretary Blinken. I am happy to follow up in writing.

964 Chairman Meeks. We have to be strict on this 5-minute rule.

965 So, I have to tell members, if you know a question, try to get  
966 it out, so that the Secretary will have a chance to answer it.

967 I now recognize Representative August Pfluger from Texas  
968 for 5 minutes.

969 Mr. Pfluger. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

970 I am currently in San Antonio. What a momentous day this  
971 is, Mr. Secretary. This will, undoubtedly, be the easiest  
972 questioning that I offer in this session for sure. But what I  
973 wanted to do today was tell you thank you. It is with great  
974 pleasure that, just a few hours ago on the tarmac of an Air Force  
975 Base in San Antonio, that we welcomed Trevor Reed back home to  
976 the United States.

977 The very first time that I questioned you, I asked if you

978 would be committed to doing everything in your power to bring  
979 him home, and you said yes. And every single time that we have  
980 talked, I have mentioned his name to you, and you have kept it  
981 at the forefront of your mind, I believe. And there are many  
982 people on the committee -- Colin Allred and Joaquin Castro and  
983 other Texans, Sheila Jackson Lee, that have helped out on the  
984 other side of the aisle -- and I believe all 435 Representatives  
985 and every one of the 100 Senators know Trevor Reed and knows his  
986 story, understands the situation that he was in, and brought  
987 awareness to this.

988 And I can't thank you, the SPEHA team, and your entire State  
989 Department for doing the right thing, and ultimately, putting  
990 patriotism over politics. That is exactly what happened today.

991 The reunification with his family was just tremendous -- the  
992 joy on their face to see their son. Obviously, they are very  
993 worried about his health, and it is going to take some time to  
994 heal, to get back to good health, but his spirit is strong. He  
995 is a fighter. He is a survivor. And I think it is an important  
996 day in our country.

997 I am going to use this word again, patriotism over politics.

998 And there are many issues that I would like to bring up today,  
999 but I am not going to do that. I am going to, instead, tell you  
1000 thank you. I would ask that you tell President Biden thank you  
1001 for putting patriotism over politics and doing the right thing

1002 to bring Trevor home.

1003 I can't imagine the tough decision that had to be made, but  
1004 you made it; you did it, and he is home. And I just would like  
1005 to give you a couple of minutes to respond to that; and also,  
1006 to ask that we don't forget Paul Whelan, and that we don't forget  
1007 other people who are unlawfully incarcerated in other countries.

1008 We should leave no American behind. And it started with Trevor.

1009 I hope this momentum will continue.

1010 So, Mr. Secretary, over to you.

1011 Secretary Blinken. Congressman, first, let me just say,  
1012 right back at you. You and other colleagues have been relentless  
1013 in working on, advocating for, getting Trevor home. And your  
1014 voice, your action, your engagement on this has been critical,  
1015 too.

1016 And I am so glad that you were there to take part in the  
1017 homecoming. And thank you for all of the engagement and effort  
1018 that you have made over this long, long period of time.

1019 And it is gratifying to see that he is home. And I really,  
1020 also, have to join you in praising the extraordinary work of Roger  
1021 Carstens, who handles these issues for us and for the President;  
1022 the State Department; our Ambassador in Moscow, John Sullivan,  
1023 and many others who worked on this. But, finally, and most  
1024 importantly, President Biden, who made the decision to do this.

1025 But every American who remains arbitrarily detained anywhere

1026 around the world, a hostage, remains on our minds and in our  
1027 hearts, starting with Paul Whelan. And I want to commit to you,  
1028 and to every member of this committee, that we will continue to  
1029 be relentless in bringing every single one of them home.

1030 This is at the very top of my priority list. I have, in  
1031 my judgment, a couple of almost sacred responsibilities. One  
1032 is, of course, to look out for the men and women of my Department,  
1033 but the other is to do everything I possibly can to bring home  
1034 Americans who, wherever they are around the world, may be  
1035 arbitrarily detained or held hostage. So, we will not relent  
1036 in this.

1037 But, again, to you, Congressman, thank you. Thank you for  
1038 your partnership on this, but thank you for your leadership and  
1039 everything you have done to make sure that we could get to this  
1040 day.

1041 Mr. Pfluger. Thank you, Mr. Secretary.

1042 Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, both of you have been  
1043 instrumental in this. I appreciate your leadership and your  
1044 voice. Trevor Reed is back on American soil. I am proud to  
1045 report that a Texan, a Marine, and a patriot has returned home.

1046 With that, I yield back.

1047 Chairman Meeks. The gentleman yields back.

1048 I now recognize Representative Sara Jacobs of California,  
1049 who is the vice chair of the Subcommittee on International

1050 Development, International Organizations, and Global Corporate  
1051 Social Impact, for 5 minutes.

1052 Ms. Jacobs. Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman.

1053 And thank you, Mr. Secretary, for being here with us today.

1054 I, first, want to thank you and the Biden administration  
1055 for your announcement of the Global Fragility Act countries.  
1056 I am looking forward to its implementation, particularly in  
1057 Mozambique and coastal West Africa. And I hope we can continue  
1058 to work together on that.

1059 I also know that a lot of us will be asking you questions  
1060 about Ukraine, and it is our job to do oversight, but I think  
1061 it is, first, important to say that you and the Biden  
1062 administration and President Biden have been masterful in how  
1063 you all have handled this crisis -- making sure our allies are  
1064 and remain united; making sure that our approach is strategic  
1065 and thoughtful, and weighing all the different calculations,  
1066 including the risk of escalation. And I just want to say that  
1067 I go to sleep feeling better every night because I know that  
1068 President Biden and you all are leading the way here on this.

1069 One of the things I know we are all concerned about -- and  
1070 I am sure you saw on your trip to Kyiv -- is this question of  
1071 war crimes and atrocities. And it is increasingly important that  
1072 the international community comes together to hold Putin  
1073 accountable. Thankfully, the ICC has announced an investigation

1074 in Ukraine, which I am very supportive of, and I understand the  
1075 Biden administration is currently undergoing a policy review of  
1076 the ICC and whether to provide material support to this  
1077 investigation.

1078 So, Mr. Secretary, does the Biden administration support  
1079 the ICC's investigation in Ukraine?

1080 Secretary Blinken. We do. And let me add very quickly that  
1081 we welcome it. We are looking to see how we can support it.  
1082 There are other critically important efforts at accountability  
1083 for these war crimes and other atrocities that have been committed  
1084 that we are also supporting.

1085 The Ukrainian Prosecutor General, she is leading a major  
1086 effort to do this, to document; to collect the evidence; to prepare  
1087 prosecutions. We have our own experts working directly with her  
1088 and her team.

1089 Second, because we got back on the Human Rights Council at  
1090 the United Nations, we were able to lead the effort to establish  
1091 a commission of inquiry at the Human Rights Council to do the  
1092 same thing. We are also supporting that.

1093 So, along with the ICC and the Prosecutor General, the Human  
1094 Rights Council, and some other investigations that are going  
1095 forward, across the board, they will have our support.

1096 Ms. Jacobs. That is really great to hear. And I think it  
1097 is important that we support all of them.



1098           In terms of the ICC, we know that there are certain laws  
1099           on the books that seem to prohibit material support and funding.  
1100           Is that correct?

1101           Secretary Blinken.   There are laws on the books, but we have  
1102           found ways in the past -- and we are not a state party to the  
1103           ICC; we do not intend to become one -- but we have found ways  
1104           in the past to support investigations.   In fact, there is a  
1105           prosecution going on right now, the Janjaweed from Darfur, that  
1106           is, in part, the result of information and support that we  
1107           provided.

1108           Ms. Jacobs.   Okay.   Would it be helpful for Congress to  
1109           waive some of these prohibitions for the purpose of an ICC  
1110           investigation for Ukraine?

1111           Secretary Blinken.   To the extent that we find that anything  
1112           would be blocking useful support that we could provide, that is  
1113           something we should look at, yes.

1114           Ms. Jacobs.   Okay.   Great.   Well, I look forward to working  
1115           with you on that, and I think you will find a lot of support here  
1116           in Congress to make sure we are doing everything we can to hold  
1117           Putin accountable.

1118           I want to go to another part of the world.   The last two  
1119           years have been particularly deadly across the Sahel with attacks  
1120           claiming more than 3200 victims in Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger,  
1121           and an alarming trend of coups, many of which were carried out

1122 by U.S.-trained personnel. And this is despite United States  
1123 and international investments, the vast majority in the form of  
1124 security assistance in the region for, roughly, a decade.

1125 And that is why I, along with my colleagues, including  
1126 Chairman Meeks, sent a letter to President Biden urging a new  
1127 strategy for the Sahel. And as part of this letter, we requested  
1128 an evaluation of security assistance and other efforts in the  
1129 Sahel over the last 15 years. Does the Department have the  
1130 adequate resources necessary to carry out such a review?

1131 Secretary Blinken. Thank you for putting a flag on that,  
1132 because I do think this is very important and I share your  
1133 concerns. We have seen mounting instability. We have seen the  
1134 coups that you have alluded to in Mali and Guinea and Burkina  
1135 Faso. And I think we have strongly felt the need for what you  
1136 have suggested, and others have suggested, is a more comprehensive  
1137 strategy to approach this. And that is exactly what we have put  
1138 in place.

1139 And so, yes, security is, obviously, a critical component.

1140 But, while it is necessary, it is insufficient. Getting at the  
1141 drivers of conflict; getting at the lack of effective  
1142 institutions, public services, the lack of inclusion for  
1143 minorities and the marginalized; human rights abuses; other  
1144 drivers, the strategy covers all of that. And it also makes sure  
1145 that, as we are moving forward, we are looking hard at the programs

1146 that we have in place to make sure that they are effective; they  
1147 are operating as they are designed to be. I believe we have the  
1148 resources necessary in the budget to carry out that mission.

1149 Ms. Jacobs. That is great to hear. I know, in June 2020,  
1150 the State OIG report on the CT Bureau was concerned that it would  
1151 take seven years to fully comply with the Department's monitoring  
1152 and evaluation standards. So, I would love to work with you to  
1153 make sure that we are giving you the resources that you need to  
1154 be able to do this, and that we are learning the lessons that  
1155 we need to from these investments and actually reform our  
1156 approach, so that we are promoting values, and not only looking  
1157 at short-term security, but our long-term priorities as well.

1158 And with that, Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

1159 Chairman Meeks. The gentlelady yields back.

1160 I now recognize Representative Chris Smith of New Jersey,  
1161 who is the ranking member of the Subcommittee on Africa, Global  
1162 Health, and Global Human Rights, for 5 minutes.

1163 Mr. Smith. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

1164 And welcome, Mr. Secretary.

1165 Mr. Secretary, as you know, the mass exodus of women and  
1166 children from Ukraine has left many vulnerable to human  
1167 traffickers. And we know that, even at some of the points as  
1168 they are coming across the border, people are saying, you know,  
1169 "I'll give you shelter. I'll give you food." And yet, it is

1170 an engraved invitation, frankly, to another hell that they are  
1171 escaping, and that is human trafficking.

1172 As you may know, I am the Special Representative for OSCE  
1173 Parliamentary Assembly for Human Trafficking. I am in almost  
1174 daily contact with NGOs, governments, stakeholders in the region.

1175 There was an OSCE hearing a few weeks back, and the collective  
1176 sense was not enough is being done. But I do thank you that there  
1177 is efforts being made to help groups like IJM, the International  
1178 Justice Mission. I would respectfully -- and they haven't asked  
1179 me to say this, but I will say it -- hopefully, they can get even  
1180 more resources.

1181 A lot of the money that is going to UNHCR I don't think is  
1182 getting into the trafficking fight. Even the representative for  
1183 the UNHCR recently testified at the Helsinki hearing that not  
1184 enough is being done, and that is from his lips. So, I think  
1185 we need to take that very seriously.

1186 IJM, as you know, is really pushing hard for protection  
1187 officers who can really help weed out where the threats are.

1188 And I would ask unanimous consent, Mr. Chairman, to put these  
1189 flyers, or at least a few of these flyers, which are really good,  
1190 into the record. And they are from Poland. They are from  
1191 Hungary, from Romania, and they are in Romania.

1192 [The information follows:]

1193

1194

\*\*\*\*\* COMMITTEE INSERT \*\*\*\*\*

1195           Mr. Smith. So, I would ask, if you could, to take back to  
1196 try to step up a regional effort, similar to what IJM is doing  
1197 in Romania. What they are doing is very efficacious,  
1198 cost-effective, and I think it just needs to be done. So, if  
1199 you could bring that back, and perhaps comment on it, if you would  
1200 like?

1201           Secondly, on March 8th, I chaired a hearing on the importance  
1202 of declaring Putin, and others, war criminals, but Putin  
1203 especially. Now I know the ICC has initiated an investigation.  
1204 You know, I won't hold my breath, how long it will take. They  
1205 want to be thorough, and that is all important.

1206           But David Crane testified at the hearing that I had, and  
1207 he was our Special Prosecutor for Sierra Leone who put Charles  
1208 Taylor behind bars for 50 years. And he said that there is another  
1209 avenue, another route available to us, and that would be using  
1210 the General Assembly, not the Security Council where there is  
1211 veto power, as you know so well, but the General Assembly to stand  
1212 up a tribunal and immediately indict Putin. People around him,  
1213 including Lukashenko and others, may be harder-pressed to be  
1214 following and doing in a subservient way what he tells them to  
1215 do, but he is a war criminal, and he is an indicted one at that.

1216           And finally, if you could, on April 18th, Congresswoman  
1217 Salazar and I did send you a letter expressing concern at reports  
1218 that our Embassy in Guatemala and U.S. Department of State

1219 officials have been interfering in the appointment process for  
1220 the next Prosecutor General for Guatemala, and whether our Embassy  
1221 is complying with Article 41 of the Vienna Convention on  
1222 Diplomatic Relations.

1223 I asked Deputy Secretary Sherman about this on April 6th.  
1224 I haven't heard back.

1225 But I want to point out that Prosecutor General Porras has  
1226 been extremely helpful when it comes to extraditing criminals  
1227 from Guatemala, 63 in 2021, including 54 drug dealers. Now  
1228 Guatemalan social media is abuzz, and there appears to be a  
1229 memorandum circulating that is entitled, quote, "Engagement Plan  
1230 on the Guatemalan Attorney General Selection Process," close  
1231 quote, reportedly from the U.S. Government. And I wonder if you  
1232 could confirm whether or not that is authentic, and I certainly  
1233 hope it is not.

1234 Secretary Blinken. Thank you very much.

1235 Mr. Smith. Thank you.

1236 Secretary Blinken. And can I just start quickly by  
1237 applauding your long-time effective leadership on dealing with  
1238 human trafficking. It is something that I very much appreciate  
1239 and I also share the concerns that you have expressed about this.

1240 This is something that we have been looking at and that we have  
1241 real concern about.

1242 And in these situations, wherever they take place, but here

1243 in Ukraine as well, we have, as you know, 5 million people who  
1244 are refugees. There are another 7 million who are internally  
1245 displaced inside Ukraine.

1246 I want to take the suggestion back and look at it. I think  
1247 trying to make sure that we have a regional focus on this makes  
1248 good sense to me. And I would love to come to you on that, if  
1249 I could.

1250 Mr. Smith. Great. Thank you.

1251 Secretary Blinken. Second, with regard to accountability,  
1252 let say this: we will look at anything and everything to make  
1253 sure that we get there. Whether it is tomorrow, next month, next  
1254 year, 10 years, it will happen. You are right, sometimes this  
1255 takes a while. But here is the most important point: those who  
1256 committed atrocities and those who ordered them need to be held  
1257 to account, and we will look at ways to do that.

1258 I am not aware, but I will come back to you, if I can, on  
1259 the question of Guatemala. I can say, as a general matter, we  
1260 are very focused everywhere on making sure that there are  
1261 independent prosecutors, judiciary, et cetera, to make sure that  
1262 countries can deal with corruption, can deal with crime in an  
1263 appropriate way. So, that is the direction that we always take.

1264 But let me, if I can, look into this and come back to you.

1265 Mr. Smith. Thank you. I appreciate it.

1266 Secretary Blinken. Thank you.



1267 Chairman Meeks. The gentleman's time has expired.

1268 I now recognize Representative Kathy Manning of North  
1269 Carolina, who is the vice chair of the Subcommittee on the Middle  
1270 East, North Africa and Global Counterterrorism, for 5 minutes.

1271 Ms. Manning. Thank you, Chairman Meeks.

1272 And thank you, Secretary Blinken, for your service and for  
1273 being with us again today.

1274 I appreciate the administration's extraordinary efforts to  
1275 help Ukraine, including intelligence-sharing and unprecedented  
1276 coordination among our allies that have led to crippling  
1277 sanctions, humanitarian assistance, and for providing Ukraine  
1278 with \$3.7 billion in U.S. military aid.

1279 However, I am very concerned by the prospect that Putin may  
1280 try to widen the war, in light of recent events, including  
1281 explosions in Moldova's breakaway region of Transnistria, which  
1282 I have visited, and I recall very vividly having to go from Moldova  
1283 through passport control, as if we were entering a Russian  
1284 country.

1285 My State of North Carolina and my community in Greensboro  
1286 have long had strong partnerships with Moldova. So, this is of  
1287 particular concern to me.

1288 So, Mr. Secretary, what is your assessment of the potential  
1289 for Russian escalation into Moldova, and what are we doing to  
1290 prepare and protect Moldova, and to prevent a wider conflict?

1291 Secretary Blinken. Thank you very much, and I appreciate  
1292 your engagement on this very, very much.

1293 Simply put, we are watching this like a hawk. I was in  
1294 Moldova myself some weeks ago. Another senior official from the  
1295 Department was just there, our Assistant Secretary for Population  
1296 Migration and Refugees. We have done a number of things, and  
1297 we are very focused on this.

1298 First, because there is a tremendous strain, as you know,  
1299 on Moldova as a result of the many refugees it has taken in, we  
1300 want to make sure that it has the resources necessary to deal  
1301 with that. The Moldovan people have been remarkable. When I  
1302 was there, I saw the yellow and blue all over Moldova.

1303 We just joined a pledging conference that Germany led. We  
1304 have committed \$100 million in additional resources out of the  
1305 existing funds to Moldova to help it deal with a number of things,  
1306 but, in particular, the humanitarian challenge that it faces now.

1307 Second, we have programs, including in this budget, to do  
1308 things like help Moldova bolster its cybersecurity, because this  
1309 is one of the ways it is under threat; economic stabilization  
1310 and resilience, so that it can stand up effectively; programs  
1311 to counter disinformation, which, as you know, it is on the  
1312 receiving end of, and also, critically, one of the good things  
1313 that happened is there is now an opportunity to fully integrate  
1314 Moldova's energy system with Europe's. And that is moving

1315 forward. We have programs in place that are also in the budget  
1316 to work on that.

1317 Finally, we have been working with the U.N. and international  
1318 agencies to make sure that they are dedicating the appropriate  
1319 resources to help Moldova deal with the potential influx of even  
1320 more refugees from Ukraine, as this goes forward.

1321 But the budget includes all of this and more: judicial  
1322 reform programs; independent media support programs; energy  
1323 security; infrastructure. In many ways, we are doing that, but,  
1324 of course, we are also making sure that our European allies and  
1325 partners are focused on challenges and threats to Moldova.

1326 Ms. Manning. Thank you. Those are all things that Moldova  
1327 will need.

1328 So, I want to turn to a different aspect of this conflict.

1329 How is the administration working with non-NATO countries to  
1330 work with us to repel the Russia regression and to get them to  
1331 agree that this destruction of another country, the resulting  
1332 fuel and food shortages, the instability this is creating, and  
1333 the use of force to redraw borders sets a dangerous precedent  
1334 that creates instability and leaves the world worse off? In  
1335 particular, how can we get China to be part of the solution?

1336 Secretary Blinken. This has very much been our message  
1337 around the world. And when Russia's aggression was mounting,  
1338 we made the case to countries around the world, well beyond Europe,

1339 well beyond NATO, or, for that matter, our allies in Asia, that  
1340 this actually directly affected them because it was a direct  
1341 challenge to the international order that they depend on -- these  
1342 principles that I talked about earlier that uphold peace and  
1343 security; that say one country can't simply attack another or  
1344 try to change its borders by force; take it over; assert that  
1345 might makes right; dictate its policies and approach. That is  
1346 not only relevant to Ukraine; it is relevant to countries around  
1347 the world. And if this goes forward with impunity, others will  
1348 take note and may act on it in ways that will be immediately  
1349 detrimental to those countries.

1350 Part of the reason that 141 countries stood up at the United  
1351 Nations against the Russian aggression and for Ukraine is because  
1352 they realized that their own interests were potentially at stake.  
1353 And we've seen that manifest itself again and again.

1354 In the OAS recently, the Organization of American States,  
1355 we led the effort to suspend Russia from its observer status.

1356 Countries there recognized the importance of standing clearly  
1357 against Russian aggression.

1358 The U.N. Human Rights Council, we led the effort to suspend  
1359 Russia from its seat, and that vote succeeded in a dramatic fashion  
1360 -- again, countries well beyond Europe and our NATO allies. So,  
1361 I think countries are getting the message.

1362 The last thing that I will say very quickly -- and we want

1363 to work on this with you -- is we are seeing the effects, though,  
1364 on other countries of Russian aggression -- food security, in  
1365 particular. And one of the things that we have to do is make  
1366 clear that the reason that is happening is because of Russia,  
1367 not because of our sanctions, and to address the problem.

1368 Ms. Manning. Thank you. My time has expired. I yield  
1369 back.

1370 Mr. Malinowski. [Presiding.] Thank you. The chair  
1371 recognizes Representative Steve Chabot, the ranking member of  
1372 the Asia Subcommittee.

1373 Mr. Chabot. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

1374 Mr. Secretary, I am one of the co-chairs of the Congressional  
1375 Taiwan Caucus, and have been for many years. And I was actually  
1376 in Columbus just last week, where the state legislature in Ohio,  
1377 up in Columbus, formed their version of our Congressional Taiwan  
1378 Caucus. It is a Taiwan Friendship Caucus with them. They do  
1379 a lot of business with Taiwan; have probably met with the  
1380 Ambassador herself five or six times in the last month or two  
1381 months, or so.

1382 And so, I wanted to follow up with some of the questions  
1383 that Ranking Member McCaul had relative to Taiwan defending  
1384 itself, and specifically, the fact that the supply chain issues  
1385 are one of the major holdups for arms deliveries to Taiwan. With  
1386 some of the weapons systems that they need, I understand they

1387 may not be expected to be delivered for a decade or so, and, you  
1388 know, that could be far beyond the time.

1389 We know that the PRC has been more and more active, more  
1390 and more confrontational, more and more provocative. So, we  
1391 really do need to get them these weapons systems, so it can  
1392 actually, potentially, be a deterrence. We don't want war, you  
1393 know. We want to arm them, but we don't want those weapons to  
1394 be used. We want peace.

1395 That being said, what specific action -- and I know that  
1396 the ranking member asked a question -- what specific actions is  
1397 the administration doing now, or intends to do, to deal with these  
1398 supply chain issues which have been so frustrating?

1399 Secretary Blinken. Well, thank you very much, and I  
1400 appreciate your focus on this. I think it is very important.

1401 We, of course, have, generically, many supply chain  
1402 challenges that are affecting people in their daily lives. I  
1403 will be, in the next few weeks, actually, helping to lead a summit  
1404 with the Secretary of Conference, Gina Raimondo, on  
1405 internationally dealing with breaking through logjams in supply  
1406 chains, both in the near term as well as for the long term.

1407 And, of course, I think there is a tremendous adaptation  
1408 that is going on now, as we realize the importance -- COVID-19  
1409 shows this to us -- of building resilient and more self-reliant  
1410 supply chains. That is going to take time, but it is something

1411 that we are intensely focused on.

1412 With regard to Taiwan, in particular, look, I think there  
1413 are two things going on.

1414 First, there has been, as you know, sustained effort over  
1415 many administrations to make sure that we are making good on our  
1416 commitments to help Taiwan defend itself. There has been about  
1417 \$18 billion in foreign military sales since 2017, another \$2.5  
1418 billion of direct commercial sales that administrations have  
1419 approved. I approve these things on a regular basis. We are  
1420 looking to see how, specifically, we can streamline this to deal  
1421 with some of the problems that you pointed to, to make delivery  
1422 timelines shorter.

1423 But, at the same time, there is another thing I want to  
1424 emphasize. And I know you know this very well because you are  
1425 so focused on it. It is also vital that Taiwan strengthen its  
1426 asymmetric capabilities to deter potential aggression from  
1427 Beijing: reserve force reform, cost-efficient, mobile, lethal,  
1428 and resilient systems. And all of this would go to deterrence.

1429 And the reason that it is particularly interesting now is  
1430 because I think Beijing is watching very carefully what is  
1431 happening in Ukraine, and they have seen what Ukrainians have  
1432 been able to do to repel the Russian aggression. They have also  
1433 seen the dramatic response of the world in terms of sanctions  
1434 on Russia that have resulted from this. They have seen the flight

1435 of hundreds of -- by my count, 800 -- companies from Russia.  
1436 All of this is factoring in. But, in a sense, the somewhat  
1437 asymmetric response of Ukrainians to Russia is something that  
1438 other countries are looking at.

1439 We would welcome working with you on this and making sure  
1440 that we can do this even more effectively going forward.

1441 Mr. Chabot. Thank you very much. And I have a whole slew  
1442 of other Taiwan questions to ask you, but I am already running  
1443 out of time. So, let me shift over to an unrelated topic at this  
1444 point.

1445 Mr. Secretary, I have been involved with the issue of  
1446 international child abduction for -- well, this is my 26th year  
1447 in Congress -- so, quite a few of them over the years. One, in  
1448 particular, is a Cincinnati case. The country was Austria. And  
1449 we had worked with the late Madeleine Albright on this one, and  
1450 she was very, very helpful in this.

1451 And I was just approached this last week in Cincinnati by  
1452 a constituent whose granddaughter -- he is trying to get his  
1453 granddaughter home to the United States. They have custody, but,  
1454 unfortunately, the child was taken to another country. I don't  
1455 want to go into the specifics of this.

1456 But I just wanted to say that my staff and I have already  
1457 been in touch with the State Department, and I just wanted to  
1458 commend your people for being exceedingly professional, very



1459 cooperative. And I want to thank you and appreciate the State  
1460 Department's cooperation on this matter, and I look forward to  
1461 working with them in the near future.

1462 Because, as you know, these cases can be heartbreaking, and  
1463 unfortunately, you know, we have had quite a few cases where  
1464 American children have been taken to other countries. And I have  
1465 been to the Hague and the Hague Convention, and all that.

1466 I have only got a little time left. So, I will just turn  
1467 it over to you, whatever you would like to say.

1468 Secretary Blinken. Just to say thank you for raising that.

1469 This is something that is very near and dear to my heart.

1470 It has been for a long time. It is being reinforced even more,  
1471 as a relatively recent father with young children.

1472 I have gone directly to the leadership of countries,  
1473 including as recently as a month ago, where we have a parental  
1474 child abduction case, and spent time and focus on trying to get  
1475 countries to do the right thing. In many cases, countries are  
1476 not part of the Hague Convention. Even so, they need to do the  
1477 right thing.

1478 And in the most recent case that I dealt with directly with  
1479 a leader of that country, its own courts had actually ruled in  
1480 favor of asserting the rights of an American parent, but the  
1481 decision was not implemented. We pressed them to implement it.

1482 I welcome working with you on this. This is, again,

1483 something that I feel very strongly on a personal level.

1484 Mr. Chabot. Thank you very much.

1485 Secretary Blinken. Thank you.

1486 Mr. Chabot. I yield back.

1487 Mr. Malinowski. Thank you.

1488 We will go to Representative Schneider of Illinois next for  
1489 5 minutes.

1490 Mr. Schneider. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

1491 And, Mr. Secretary, thank you for joining us today. It is  
1492 always wonderful seeing you.

1493 I want to thank you and your team for your outreach and direct  
1494 engagement as we navigate complex issues around the world,  
1495 especially the Russian invasion of Ukraine, as well as  
1496 developments in the Middle East; in particular, the discussions  
1497 with Iran and the advancement of the Abraham Accords.

1498 With respect to Ukraine, I am grateful for the leadership  
1499 of this administration, as well as the leadership of Congress,  
1500 and notably, this committee. It is imperative that we continue  
1501 to do all we can to deliver any and all necessary security,  
1502 economic, and humanitarian assistance. And your diplomacy is  
1503 clearly yielding results. We must demonstrate to Putin that the  
1504 world is, and will remain, united in not just stopping Russia's  
1505 unprovoked and illegal invasion, but reversing it and securing  
1506 Ukraine's independence and sovereignty, and helping Ukrainians

1507 rebuild their country.

1508           Turning to Iran, as we have personally discussed many times,  
1509 I firmly believe the only way to peacefully end Iran's nuclear  
1510 ambitions is through diplomacy. But I also fundamentally believe  
1511 that successful diplomacy requires a very real and fully  
1512 appreciated commitment and capability to stop Iran from acquiring  
1513 nuclear arms by any means necessary. And that clearly means that  
1514 Iran and our allies must know that we would use our military force,  
1515 if all else failed. I think strong deterrence enhances our  
1516 likelihood of diplomatic success.

1517           I would also like to express my grave concern about the  
1518 possible lifting of the IRGC's foreign terrorist organization  
1519 designation and the role such a move may play in ongoing nuclear  
1520 negotiations. The IRGC is, without a doubt, a terrorist  
1521 organization. The IRGC's malign influence extends beyond its  
1522 borders to Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Yemen, Gaza, and beyond. They  
1523 are responsible for suffering, violence, and death, including  
1524 the loss of many American lives. I sincerely hope you will not  
1525 lift this designation.

1526           And, of course, it is not just Iran's nuclear program, but  
1527 the entirety of Iran's malign activities in the region and around  
1528 the world that concerns me, and threatens the United States and  
1529 our allies. We must not forget about the Iranian regime's human  
1530 rights abuses, ballistic missile program, and support for

1531 terrorist proxies outside its borders.

1532           Specifically, for our ally Israel, Iran may be on the  
1533 one-yard line with its nuclear enrichment program, but they are  
1534 also knocking at the door through proxies in Lebanon, Syria, and  
1535 Gaza. I trust that the administration appreciates this reality,  
1536 and as it assesses ways to thwart Iran's nuclear activities, we  
1537 don't trade lessening one threat for dangerously expanding  
1538 another.

1539           Counterbalancing the threats posed by Iran are the positive  
1540 impacts and limited potential created by the Abraham Accords.

1541       Mr. Secretary, I know I don't need to tell you that American  
1542 engagement in this region is crucial, and there is no better  
1543 demonstration of the American leadership than the role we have  
1544 played in supporting peace agreements between Israel and her  
1545 neighbors -- first, with Egypt and Jordan, and more recently,  
1546 the peace and normalization agreements with UAE, Bahrain, Sudan,  
1547 and Morocco.

1548           In an otherwise dark world, normalization of relations  
1549 between Israel and these countries is a very bright spot, lifting  
1550 the lives of the citizens of these countries and the region.  
1551 These agreements have brought hope to everyone in the Middle East  
1552 and North Africa and illuminate a path to peace and cooperation  
1553 in the region. These agreements have already enhanced security,  
1554 cooperation, economic development, religious tolerance, and

1555 cultural exchanges, and we must continue to support and build  
1556 upon this historic cooperation, as you did when you were at the  
1557 Negev Summit.

1558 I am proud to have authored the Israel Relations  
1559 Normalization Act, and I am grateful President Biden signed it  
1560 into law. We must keep working on expanding these agreements,  
1561 not only to create a more secure and prosperous Middle East, but,  
1562 also, since it is an important tool in preventing Iran's malign  
1563 endeavors.

1564 So, with not much time left, I would like to ask or give  
1565 you the opportunity to expand on how the administration is  
1566 addressing concerns about Iran, Iran's nuclear programs, and  
1567 Iran's nuclear other activities, but also the prospects for  
1568 expanding the peace and prosperity of the Abraham Accords.

1569 Secretary Blinken. Thank you very much, Congressman, and  
1570 I appreciate your leadership on the Abraham Accords.

1571 Let me just say, very quickly, we strongly support them.

1572 We want to deepen them. We want to expand them. And that is  
1573 one of the reasons that I was just in Israel, and as you mentioned  
1574 in the Negev, and it was extraordinary. We had around the same  
1575 table the foreign ministers from Israel, Bahrain, the United Arab  
1576 Emirates, Morocco, and Egypt -- Egypt, of course, the first to  
1577 make peace with Israel, but, then, more recent countries that  
1578 have normalized their relationships with Israel.

1579           And there is a strong and deep agenda to pursue cooperation  
1580 across a whole wide variety of fronts among these countries.  
1581 It is incredibly exciting to see. We have been working to  
1582 accelerate that from almost day one of our administration,  
1583 including bringing Israel, UAE, and India together to do joint  
1584 infrastructure projects, including working directly with Israel  
1585 and the UAE on religious coexistence, on water and energy  
1586 projects. All of this because these agreements have allowed  
1587 relationships to change.

1588           And I am happy to come back to you on Iran because I see  
1589 our time is up.

1590           Mr. Schneider. Great. Thank you. I look forward to the  
1591 conversation.

1592           I yield back.

1593           Mr. Malinowski. Thank you.

1594           The chair recognizes Representative Perry of Pennsylvania.

1595           Mr. Perry. I thank the chairman.

1596           Mr. Secretary, welcome. It is good to see you. Thank you.

1597           Do you know the value of U.S. intellectual property theft  
1598 annually by the CCP?

1599           Secretary Blinken. Billions of dollars.

1600           Mr. Perry. Okay. So, according to NBC -- or correction  
1601 -- CNN, \$300 to \$600 billion annually.

1602           How about do you know how many Chinese students are studying

1603 in the United States versus U.S. students studying in China?

1604 Secretary Blinken. It is dramatically disproportionate.

1605 Mr. Perry. Three hundred and forty thousand in the United  
1606 States, according to NBC; 2500 U.S. citizens studying in China.

1607 Mr. Secretary, knowing that multiple members of your firm  
1608 WestExec were being considered by the incoming Biden  
1609 administration just prior to then-Mr. Biden accepting the  
1610 nomination at the Democrat National Convention, your website at  
1611 your company, WestExec, had this statement: "and continue to  
1612 provide capability to and remain a trusted partner of the U.S.  
1613 Government, while pursuing commercial activities in China, and  
1614 remain a trusted partner for DOD-sponsored research grants, while  
1615 expanding foreign research collaboration, accepting foreign  
1616 donations, and welcoming foreign students in key STEM programs."

1617 Mr. Secretary, this isn't meant to be, just because there  
1618 are multiple people that worked at your firm -- Avril Haines,  
1619 Michele Flournoy, Jen Psaki -- is that a potential conflict of  
1620 interest? Because that was taken off your website literally just  
1621 within a week or so of President Biden accepting the nomination.

1622 Is that potentially a conflict of interest?

1623 Secretary Blinken. Congressman, what I can tell you is,  
1624 of course, like any nominee for a position in government, you  
1625 go through intense --

1626 Mr. Perry. I know. I am just wondering about taking down

1627           that information off the website.

1628           Secretary Blinken. I have no recollection of what was done  
1629 or not done with --

1630           Mr. Perry. You didn't order that to be taken down?

1631           Secretary Blinken. Absolutely not.

1632           Mr. Perry. Somebody just did it on their own?

1633           Let me ask you this: would it be a conflict if Hunter Biden  
1634 traveled to China on a taxpayer-funded plane to set up Bohai  
1635 Harvest, as you know -- I am sure you are aware of it -- which,  
1636 then, poured money into a CCP surveillance company, Megvii? And  
1637 if you are not familiar with that, it is a company whose equipment  
1638 is used in East Turkestan, and it was also sanctioned by OFAC  
1639 regarding their biometric surveillance and tracking of ethnic  
1640 and religious minorities in China.

1641           And furthermore, Bohai Harvest, under Hunter Biden, also  
1642 facilitated a \$3.8 billion deal that transferred 80 percent of  
1643 the world's most lucrative cobalt mines in the Democratic Republic  
1644 of the Congo to a Chinese firm that uses children as young as  
1645 4 years old to mine cobalt.

1646           And furthermore, under Hunter Biden, Bohai Harvest has also  
1647 invested in the CCP-owned China General Nuclear Power Group, which  
1648 was blacklisted in 2019 for allegedly trying to acquire U.S.  
1649 nuclear technology for the Chinese military.

1650           I am wondering if you view that, traveling on that airplane



1651 which is funded by taxpayers, and is, of course, official business  
1652 -- would that be viewed as a conflict? Would you view that as  
1653 a conflict of interest?

1654 Secretary Blinken. Congressman, I am here to address the  
1655 State Department budget --

1656 Mr. Perry. I know what you are here -- yes.

1657 Secretary Blinken. -- and to address our foreign policy.  
1658 That is a political question. You are welcome to take that up  
1659 in any appropriate --

1660 Mr. Perry. So, you can't answer whether you think it is  
1661 -- I am not saying it even happened. But if it did, would it  
1662 be a conflict --

1663 Secretary Blinken. I'm not, I'm not, I'm not going to  
1664 address -- I'm not going to address a hypothetical.

1665 Mr. Perry. Okay. Well, if it did --

1666 Secretary Blinken. I am here to talk about the budget.  
1667 I am here to talk about our foreign policy. I am happy --

1668 Mr. Perry. Since it did happen, at least the investments,  
1669 is it a conflict of interest?

1670 Secretary Blinken. Again, I am not --

1671 Mr. Perry. Is it morally -- would it be morally wrong?

1672 Secretary Blinken. I am here to address the State  
1673 Department budget. I am here to address our foreign policy.  
1674 I am happy to --

1675           Mr. Perry. Would any of those things that I outlined for  
1676 you, would any of them -- would you say they enhanced U.S. national  
1677 security or Chinese national security?

1678           Secretary Blinken. Again, I am not going to entertain  
1679 hypotheticals. I am not --

1680           Mr. Perry. No, this isn't hypothetical. These investments  
1681 were made.

1682           Secretary Blinken. I have no -- I have no basis --

1683           Mr. Perry. So, let's take Hunter Biden and Bo Biden capital  
1684 out of it --

1685           Secretary Blinken. I have no --

1686           Mr. Perry. -- and just say, if these investments were made,  
1687 would they enhance U.S. national security or Chinese national  
1688 security?

1689           Secretary Blinken. Again, I'm here to talk about our  
1690 budget. I'm here to talk about our foreign policy. I am happy  
1691 to address --

1692           Mr. Perry. Is this not foreign policy? U.S. investors  
1693 helping the Communist Party of China beat the United States  
1694 industrially -- you know, the administration, the administration  
1695 that you work for -- God bless them -- they say that we should  
1696 all be driving an electric vehicle, 80 percent of the contents  
1697 of which are produced in China. This goes directly to that.  
1698 Does it help China or does it help the United States of America,

1699 sir?

1700 Secretary Blinken. Again, Congressman, you are asking  
1701 political questions. You are welcome to ask those in the  
1702 appropriate fora for that. I am here to talk about our budget,  
1703 and I'm here to talk about our foreign policy.

1704 Mr. Perry. Mr. Chairman, I yield the balance.

1705 Secretary Blinken. Thank you.

1706 Mr. Malinowski. Thank you, Mr. Secretary. Sometimes I  
1707 wonder if anyone will ever ask the question about members of  
1708 Congress who are personally invested in Chinese companies engaged  
1709 in surveillance activities.

1710 Let me, with that side comment, call on Representative Andy  
1711 Levin of Michigan.

1712 Mr. Levin. Thanks so much, Mr. Chairman.

1713 And Mr. Secretary, thank you so much for your tremendous  
1714 work on Ukraine and so many other fronts. I'm going to get back  
1715 to the talking about the actual policy of the State Department  
1716 and the budget.

1717 The President's budget calls for \$275 million in support  
1718 for Haiti, which is 46% more than last year's request, including  
1719 funding to strengthen the capacity of the Haitian National Police,  
1720 combating corruption, and strengthening the capacity of civil  
1721 society.

1722 But as someone who's closely observed Haiti for 40 years,

1723 my concern is that these investments will do little to change  
1724 the reality on the ground for the Haitian people if we're not  
1725 seriously invested in supporting their aspirations for a real  
1726 democratic transition.

1727 The biggest obstacle to this in my view is the entrenchment  
1728 of U.S. support for the de facto regime of Prime Minister Ariel  
1729 Henry and the corruption and gangsterization his rule represents.

1730 Further, it seems to me that U.S. support is disincentivizing  
1731 Henry from participating in good faith negotiations towards a  
1732 transitional government.

1733 Do you believe the assistance I mentioned will create  
1734 sustainable change and development in Haiti if the de facto Prime  
1735 Minister has credible links with criminal gangs and corrupt actors  
1736 and the Haitian National Police has been credibly accused of  
1737 violence, such as the latest incident of firing at protesters  
1738 who are demanding higher wages?

1739 And does the State Department believe its support for Henry  
1740 is making political dialog among Haitian actors more likely  
1741 somehow?

1742 Secretary Blinken. Congressman, thank you. Thank you for  
1743 your focus on this issue and for raising it.

1744 Let me say first that we have deep concern about the security  
1745 situation writ large in Haiti, the lack of political accord for  
1746 elections, gang violence, kidnappings, homicides on the rise

1747 despite efforts being made by the Haitian National Police that  
1748 we're supporting.

1749 We are working with a large number of allies with the  
1750 Organization of American States to address these issues, to press  
1751 for more resources. For example, for the police, to try to deal  
1752 with the gang violence.

1753 When it comes to the political situation, we are not taking  
1754 sides in the political dialog. We're working with the government  
1755 that's in place on an inclusive Haitian-led process toward  
1756 elections. That's the goal, and that's what we're supporting.

1757 Mr. Levin. Well, can I respectfully submit we have taken  
1758 sides. It was the U.S. that said that Henry should be there he  
1759 -- when there -- we basically are what's -- are the reason he's  
1760 in power.

1761 And I just, I would love it if you would be open to having  
1762 a dialog about supporting the unbelievably robust and broad  
1763 agreement in Haitian civil society, something I consider  
1764 historic, sir, I've never seen anything like it in the  
1765 post-Duvalier era. And yet we say it's one among contending  
1766 views.

1767 And you know, I'd love to have a further dialog with you  
1768 about this, because I really think we're -- we're not on the right  
1769 road here. If you'd be open to that.

1770 Secretary Blinken. I'd welcome -- I'd welcome pursuing

1771 that.

1772 Mr. Levin. Okay, thanks. Let me then turn to another  
1773 important country, Colombia. There were reports of a -- of a  
1774 massacre of civilians in Putumayo, Colombia, by security forces  
1775 that received U.S. security assistance. And this is very  
1776 concerning.

1777 So if U.S-trained security forces are found to have been  
1778 involved, in my view they have to be cut off from the U.S.  
1779 assistance and the Colombian Government has to be urged to hold  
1780 units accountable for these violations.

1781 Is the State Department committed to investigating these  
1782 allegations and cutting off units from assistance from the U.S.  
1783 if there is credible evidence of their abuses? And how will the  
1784 State Department adjust future U.S. security assistance to  
1785 Colombia, given these allegations?

1786 As you know, there's a long history of this kind of problems  
1787 there.

1788 Secretary Blinken. We take this very seriously, and of  
1789 course we'll look into allegations. We're very serious about  
1790 the Leahy Vetting Process that we have committed resources to  
1791 again in our budget to make sure that we have the means to always  
1792 carry those forward.

1793 And if they're credible allegations, we will look into them.

1794 And if we find that the allegations have substance, we'll take

1795       action.

1796               Mr. Levin. All right, well, I look forward to seeing the  
1797 results of your investigation, and I appreciate that very, very  
1798 much. I -- and I appreciate your commitment to human rights.

1799               Let me turn to climate change quickly. I'm glad to see that  
1800 the President's request prioritizes addressing the climate crisis  
1801 and proposes an integrated approach to tackling its effects across  
1802 our foreign assistance.

1803               I think the scale of the climate crisis demands a massive  
1804 U.S. response, both to demonstrate our potential to lead in the  
1805 region and compete with other actors like China, but also to signal  
1806 our resolve to addressing the legacy of U.S. emissions.

1807               One region that seems right for U.S. investments is the  
1808 Northern Triangle, where we're trying to deal with migration  
1809 issues anyway and where we know the effects of climate change  
1810 are contributing to that migration and insecurity.

1811               And so my question is how does proposed assistance for the  
1812 Northern Triangle integrate climate concerns, and what are the  
1813 State Department's priorities for that region?

1814               Secretary Blinken. Well, thank you. And first let me just  
1815 say more broadly, because I very much agree with you, the budget  
1816 in total provides \$11 billion, in fact a little bit more than  
1817 \$11 billion, to help countries implement targets, but also to  
1818 help them adapt and to build resilience.

1819           And this is very critical in our own hemisphere, including  
1820           in the Northern Triangle. We've engaged with many of these  
1821           countries at COP26 and before that and since then. And so these  
1822           resources, if approved by Congress, will go a long way to helping  
1823           countries do this, including the Northern Triangle countries.

1824           At the same time, as we're looking at making infrastructure  
1825           investments and bringing others together, including using the  
1826           Development Finance Corporation, working through the program that  
1827           the President established at the G7 that we've been calling Build  
1828           Back Better World, one of the focuses of that program is to support  
1829           projects that strengthen infrastructure but do it in a way that  
1830           also addresses climate change challenges. And that too can be  
1831           a focus of the work that we're doing.

1832           Finally, I'd say that there are many other things that we're  
1833           doing of course in the Northern Triangle countries, partly to  
1834           deal with migration challenges.

1835           But part of dealing with migration challenges is making sure  
1836           that we get at the root causes of what it is that is causing people  
1837           to give up everything they know and leave their countries and  
1838           try to come to the United States or go elsewhere in the hemisphere.

1839           And a big part of that of course is trying to create greater  
1840           economic opportunity for them.

1841           We've been working on that and these kinds of investments  
1842           that are made to create economic opportunity and also have a lens



1843 on them that looks at energy, climate infrastructure in ways that  
1844 advance both agendas.

1845 Mr. Levin. Precisely. You know, excuse me, as I -- as I  
1846 yield back, I just -- just imagine if we helped the Northern  
1847 Triangle countries leapfrog straight to renewable energy  
1848 generation and electricity for everybody. It would do so much  
1849 to transform the root causes of migration, as you say.

1850 I don't know-

1851 Mr. Malinowski. The Chair --

1852 Mr. Levin. Who I'm yielding back to, but whoever it is --

1853 Mr. Malinowski. The Chair recognizes -- the Chair  
1854 recognizes Representative Issa of California.

1855 Mr. Issa. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

1856 Secretary, good to see you again. I wish we were seeing  
1857 each other at a better time. The world is clearly in chaos.

1858 I don't mean to be glib, but one of the series of questions  
1859 that I'll have today, really any part of the questions related  
1860 to JCPOA really will by definition include Russia.

1861 So trying not to be too cynical, how are the -- how are those  
1862 maneuvers in Belarus going with the Russian military? Have they  
1863 accidentally strayed into Ukraine? In other words, how is it  
1864 that we can accept anything that involves Russia as an important  
1865 verifier and interlocutor at this time?

1866 Secretary Blinken. No, I appreciate the question. And

1867 when it comes, for example, to the JCPOA, this is not a -- and  
1868 Russia's participation in that, along with China, along with the  
1869 European Union, along with the United Kingdom, Germany and France,  
1870 Russia --

1871 Mr. Issa. The other countries I'm comparatively okay with.

1872 Secretary Blinken. I agree with you. They don't have a  
1873 role in verification. They -- and the agreement that we pulled  
1874 out of, had Iran been found to be in violation of the agreement,  
1875 under the terms of the agreement, the United States, together  
1876 with the European Union and our European partners, had the rights  
1877 under that agreement without Russia or without China to hold Iran  
1878 to account.

1879 Any agreement that we might include would have the same  
1880 thing.

1881 Mr. Issa. Well, to that end, the State Department has just  
1882 published a report that's titled Arms Control Non-Proliferation,  
1883 the Disarmament Agreements and Commitments. The report states  
1884 that the United States has concluded that serious concerns remain  
1885 outstanding regarding possible undeclared nuclear material and  
1886 activities in Iran as of the end of the reporting period.

1887 I read that pretty straightforward: Iran cheated. Iran has,  
1888 as we speak, unreported nuclear materials, correct?

1889 Secretary Blinken. Here's what Iran has, Congressman, as  
1890 we speak. Iran has a nuclear program that is galloping forward

1891 as a result of us pulling out of the nuclear agreement. Under  
1892 the nuclear agreement, Iran had a breakout time of about --

1893 Mr. Issa. Mr. Secretary, I know -- I know we pulled out  
1894 of the nuclear agreement, but Europe didn't, correct?

1895 Secretary Blinken. Europe, did not, but Iran -- Iran --

1896 Mr. Issa. Iran -- Iran was bound by an agreement with  
1897 Europe, and Iran had -- had at that time undeclared materials,  
1898 has it as of right now, correct?

1899 Secretary Blinken. The IAEA has been investigating and  
1900 looking at any aspects of Iran's nuclear program that remain in  
1901 question. We fully support those efforts. And they are separate  
1902 and apart from any nuclear agreement.

1903 Mr. Issa. Have you, as of today, have you clarified where  
1904 those nuclear materials are located in Iran?

1905 Secretary Blinken. The IAEA has identified places that it  
1906 --

1907 Mr. Issa. They'd like to look at.

1908 Secretary Blinken. They want -- they want to look at. And  
1909 part of the -- part of the result of the agreement in the first  
1910 place was Iran taking on the additional protocol, which enhances  
1911 inspection rights, including for the IAEA.

1912 And I would also note that the inspections regime under the  
1913 agreement was the most intrusive inspections regime of any arms  
1914 controls agreement ever adapted. It gave us great visibility

1915       into --

1916               Mr. Issa.   Yeah.   Mr. Secretary, the last agreement was not  
1917 brought to Congress under the treaty requirements.   Will you  
1918 commit to bring this one as a treaty?

1919               Secretary Blinken.   Congressman, we will commit to  
1920 following the law, including INARA.

1921               Mr. Issa.   Okay, so it's fair to say you're not going to  
1922 bring this for ratification as a treaty.

1923               Secretary Blinken.   Again, we'll follow the law.   INARA has  
1924 requirements, we'll meet whatever requirements INARA has.   This  
1925 is the law that the --

1926               Mr. Issa.   No, I understand.   The reason I ask is the  
1927 American people really don't know every acronym.   They do  
1928 understand that Senate ratifies treaties and that under that law,  
1929 there will not be a Senate-ratified treaty.

1930               Secretary Blinken.   The vast majority of multilateral  
1931 agreements in the arms controls non-proliferation space are not  
1932 codified as treaties.   It actually gives us much greater  
1933 flexibility if there is any kind of cheating or reneging on those  
1934 agreements if they're not.

1935               Mr. Issa.   Pursuant to the renewal of the -- this JCPOA,  
1936 one of the portions of it would be that Russia would receive a  
1937 \$10 billion contract to produce a nuclear facility, basically.

1938               Will you commit that Russia will have no part, and you will

1939 not lift any sanctions against Iran or Russia, until the Ukrainian  
1940 conflict has been satisfactorily resolved? In other words, this  
1941 agreement would give Russia \$10 billion from an Iran that has  
1942 access to the money to give them.

1943 Will you commit not to do that, for that not to take effect  
1944 until after a satisfactory resolution for the people of Ukraine?

1945 Secretary Blinken. Any actions that Russia would be called  
1946 upon to take pursuant to the agreement would not be in  
1947 contravention of the sanctions that are being imposed on Russia  
1948 before --

1949 Mr. Issa. But those particular \$10 billion, I can't say  
1950 whether they're covered. I know, I just need a second to finish  
1951 as the previous one did. I just want to know would this be under  
1952 those sanctions in your opinion?

1953 Secretary Blinken. And we of course will make sure that  
1954 lawyers look at everything, but the actions that Russia would  
1955 take pursuant to the agreement, if there's a return to the  
1956 agreement, would not be in contravention of the sanctions imposed  
1957 on Russia for its action in Ukraine.

1958 Mr. Issa. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

1959 Mr. Malinowski. Thank you. The Chair now calls on  
1960 Representative Vargas for five minutes.

1961 Mr. Vargas. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

1962 Mr. Secretary, thank you very much for being here, we

1963 appreciate it. I do want to congratulate you because I do think  
1964 that our standing with our allies and our friends around the world  
1965 is very high now, not only because of what you've done and what  
1966 the President, but I'd also throw in Secretary Austin, I don't  
1967 think he's been mentioned here enough. I think he's done an  
1968 outstanding job. So I want to congratulate you.

1969 I have a very quick question, and then a series of questions.

1970 A quick question is I represent the area of San Diego, and we've  
1971 had a number of Ukrainians that have been able to come through  
1972 Tijuana to San Diego. And we've done everything we can to receive  
1973 them. And I think that the federal authorities have done a pretty  
1974 good job.

1975 But now since you've changed the rules, which is good and  
1976 we're all in favor of that, there are some people that are stuck  
1977 now in Tijuana, Ukrainians that flew to Mexico City and are now  
1978 in Tijuana.

1979 What can you do to help these poor people make sure that  
1980 they can reunite with their families in the United States?

1981 Secretary Blinken. A couple things on that, Congressman.

1982 Thank you for flying in first. Yes, we have had a number of  
1983 Ukrainians who've come through Latin America into the United  
1984 States. They've been paroled in for the most part.

1985 The overwhelming majority of Ukrainians who've had to flee  
1986 the country are of course in Europe. They are mostly intent on

1987 remaining close by because they want to go home. And as soon  
1988 as they're able to, many of them have left sons, husbands, fathers  
1989 there to fight. As soon as they're able to, they want to go home.

1990 For any remaining Ukrainians, the President's made a couple  
1991 of commitments. He's committed that we will welcome 100,000  
1992 Ukrainians into the United States. We've just, as you've noted,  
1993 established a new program to facilitate that.

1994 Along with the refugee program, along with the asylum  
1995 program, we now have a program that allows for sponsorship of  
1996 Ukrainians by any American. They can, Ukrainians can apply for  
1997 that from any of our embassies in Europe and around the world.

1998 If there are any remaining individuals in this situation  
1999 of course we'll make sure that we're working to address that.

2000 Mr. Vargas. Okay, those are the ones I'm concerned about.

2001

2002 Now, I don't normally agree with my good friend, Mr. Issa,  
2003 but I do agree with him on this JCPOA. I have great concerns,  
2004 and one of the things that you just said concerns me significantly,  
2005 and that is that Iran is now galloping towards a nuclear bomb  
2006 or nuclear program.

2007 Secretary Blinken. Let me be specific.

2008 Mr. Vargas. Yeah, please do.

2009 Secretary Blinken. Toward having the capacity to produce  
2010 fissile material on short notice or a nuclear weapon. The

2011 agreement put that ability to -- to break out, in other words  
2012 to produce fissile material or weapon, at beyond one year.

2013 As a result of the actions that they've taken since we pulled  
2014 out of the agreement, that breakout time, as we call it, is down  
2015 to a matter of weeks, that's what I meant.

2016 Mr. Vargas. Right, and that's very concerning of course  
2017 to all of us. Now, the JCPOA was very concerning to me, and I  
2018 did not support it because of the timelines. They weren't  
2019 permanent restrictions, things rolled off.

2020 Now that we're negotiating them again and you say that it's  
2021 going to be stronger and better, could you give us some information  
2022 on where this is and what means?

2023 Secretary Blinken. What we inherited was a failure, a  
2024 failure to actually curb Iran's nuclear program, a failure to  
2025 curb its malicious activities throughout the region.

2026 As I noted, while the agreement itself put the nuclear  
2027 program in a box and pushed the breakout time to beyond a year,  
2028 in the absence of that agreement, Iran has taken steps to cut  
2029 that breakout time down to a matter of weeks.

2030 At the same time, despite the maximum pressure being exerted  
2031 against Iran, which were told could cause them to curb their  
2032 malicious activities in the region, we've seen them accelerate.

2033 To give you one example of this, during the time the agreement  
2034 was first negotiated back in 2012 through 2018, when we pulled



2035 out of the agreement, attacks on Americans, our diplomats, our  
2036 forces in the region, had gone down to virtually zero.

2037 Since we pulled out of the agreement, the IRGC was designated  
2038 as a foreign terrorist organization, Soleimani, who no one is  
2039 shedding a tear, was killed. Those attacks have gone up 400%.

2040 Our ability to, under the previous policy, to deter Iran clearly  
2041 was not succeeding.

2042 So we're focused on how we can be most effective, both in  
2043 dealing with the nuclear program and our commitment to ensure  
2044 that Iran never acquires a nuclear weapon. But also to dealing  
2045 with the malicious actions of this engagement throughout the  
2046 region, including support for terrorist groups, various proxies  
2047 that are threatening allies and partners, etc.

2048 That's what we're focused on, and we want to make sure that  
2049 unlike what we inherited, we're able to do that more effectively.

2050 Mr. Vargas. And I guess my concern is that we do have to  
2051 refocus once again. Because I remember what happened in North  
2052 Korea when we said that because of the deal that we had, they'd  
2053 never have a nuclear weapon. We woke up one day and they had  
2054 one.

2055 And so, again, my concern is that that's going to happen  
2056 and Iran. So again, I think you and I hope we remain vigilant.

2057 I yield back. Thank you.

2058 Mr. Malinowski. We'll go to Representative Adam Kinzinger

2059 of Illinois next.

2060 Mr. Kinzinger. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

2061 Mr. Secretary, thank you for being here. I know it's a  
2062 little bit going on out there, and I appreciate your time.

2063 Just a quick thing on the JCPOA since it's been discussed.

2064 I think it is worth noting there are provisions of the JCPOA  
2065 that would be expiring now had we stayed in it. And I think it's  
2066 important when we talk about the future, in foreign policy time,  
2067 like ten years actually is pretty quick.

2068 And so that one's -- I want to pivot a little to Ukraine  
2069 from that perspective. First off, I want to say thank you to  
2070 the Administration for changing your tone.

2071 I think it's become clear over the next few weeks that the  
2072 Administration is clear-eyed about the seriousness of this  
2073 threat. I was concerned with some of the -- some of the wording  
2074 early on. But it does appear that we've doubled down on our  
2075 commitment.

2076 I mean, it's very clear to me that Ukraine, and I think you've  
2077 said this too, sir, Ukraine is fighting for all of us. They happen  
2078 -- we have to arm them because they are fighting for all of us.

2079 And I think it's important for people to remember, if Ukraine  
2080 falls -- and I think we're doing the right thing by stressing  
2081 our commitment to NATO territory.

2082 And I actually really do believe that if Vladimir Putin moves

2083 in on NATO territory, he would be met with a devastating response.

2084

2085 But I think it's important for people to remember, there's  
2086 a lot of real estate still that's not in Ukraine that's not part  
2087 of NATO. And that's why it's important right now for us to make  
2088 sure that Vladimir Putin can go no further. I hope he loses some  
2089 of us occupied territories.

2090 Just a couple of legitimate questions that I want to know  
2091 the answer to, believe it or not. I want to ask first off, about  
2092 a month ago it was reported that there might be have been a use  
2093 of chemical weapons in Ukraine. I wondered if you had an update  
2094 on that in terms of what we know.

2095 Secretary Blinken. Thank you. And some of this may be more  
2096 appropriate to take on in a different setting. But having said  
2097 that, this is something we're looking at very, very carefully.

2098 I don't believe that we've been able to verify that use. But  
2099 I want to come back to you.

2100 There are different kinds of chemical agents that could be  
2101 in play, including riot control agents that would be prohibited,  
2102 that kind of thing. But in terms of the use of a chemical weapon,  
2103 I think what I can say here is that we've not yet verified the  
2104 use, but it's something that we're very, very much focused on.

2105 Mr. Kinzinger. Thank you. Next question is the use of,  
2106 you know, for American aid, to the extent we can answer this in

2107       this setting, what is the prohibition, what is the reason for  
2108       not basically flying American aid directly into Ukraine versus  
2109       through proxies? Is it an international law issues, is it a  
2110       safety issue, is it infrastructure? I'm curious if you can answer  
2111       that.

2112             Secretary Blinken. I think first the most important thing  
2113       is the aid is getting in.

2114             Mr. Kinzinger. Right.

2115             Secretary Blinken. Getting in in record time. It used to  
2116       be, for example, under presidential draw downs, it would often  
2117       be weeks between the time the President made a draw-down decision  
2118       and the aid got into the hands of those who needed it.

2119             I was just there, as you know, including at the staging site  
2120       for where some of this aid is getting in. And it's down to in  
2121       some cases 72 hours. That's how rapidly it's getting in. So  
2122       I don't think we have an issue right now with the assistance not  
2123       only being provided, but actually getting to where it needs to  
2124       get.

2125             Once it gets to the border and it's handed over to Ukrainians,  
2126       they're the ones of course who are getting it where it needs to  
2127       go. They know this a lot better than we do, and they've been  
2128       extremely effective in making sure that these supplies could get  
2129       where it needs to get.

2130             Mr. Kinzinger. Let me ask you about the air force side of

2131 things. One of the, I believe one of the programs we used to  
2132 do through the Air National Guard, I'm a member of the Air National  
2133 Guard, we would pair with Ukrainian Air Force. We'd do fake  
2134 fights, train each other, we'd train them to fly.

2135 Has there been any consideration to restoring those  
2136 programs, bringing Ukrainian pilots potentially to American air  
2137 force bases to learn to fly?

2138 Because I mean, yes, it takes a long time to train a pilot,  
2139 it does, because we're so good. But it takes a long time to train  
2140 a pilot, but there's no time like now to start. So I wanted to  
2141 ask you about that.

2142 Secretary Blinken. I agree with the general proposition,  
2143 and indeed, we are moving forward on training. Because here's  
2144 one of the challenges: the -- some of the systems that Ukrainians  
2145 would like to have that could be effective in repelling the Russian  
2146 aggression and defending the country are systems that they're  
2147 not trained on, and it does take some time.

2148 The Pentagon, and I think Secretary Austin referred to this  
2149 the other day, is engaged in some training. So are other allies  
2150 and partners in Europe. I can't address that specific program,  
2151 the Pentagon would have to address that. But generically, yes,  
2152 we're engaged in training.

2153 Mr. Kinzinger. And I'll just say to wrap up, I think, you  
2154 know, it takes a lot to change an army from Warsaw equipment

2155 basically to NATO equipment. I think with what we're seeing with  
2156 our allies and donating some of the old Soviet equipment is  
2157 actually helping to accelerate that process to switch over to  
2158 NATO standards.

2159 So thank you, Mr. Secretary, and I'll yield back.

2160 Secretary Blinken. Thank you.

2161 Mr. Malinowski. Thank you so much. The Chair now  
2162 recognizes Representative Jim Costa of California.

2163 Mr. Costa. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

2164 And Secretary, I want to thank you. Generally I think we've  
2165 detected a good bipartisan effort taking place in terms of  
2166 supporting our efforts in Ukraine, and we want to see that  
2167 continue.

2168 Your mission with Secretary Austin was by all accounts  
2169 successful. And the President's announcement today in terms of  
2170 additional funding I think really underlines that incredible  
2171 strong commitment we're making to Ukraine and really providing  
2172 the leadership as it relates to NATO.

2173 Tell me, how did your discussions, if you drill down a bit  
2174 deeper, go with our NATO allies for the longer term commitment?

2175 And certainly the President's statement today I think provides  
2176 that leadership. But I think eyes clearly wide open, we're going  
2177 to be in here for the long haul, and I wish you'd give a little  
2178 more descriptive on that.

2179 Secretary Blinken. I appreciate that, and I agree with you  
2180 that this is likely to be a long haul proposition. That's exactly  
2181 why we have been relentlessly focused on working every single  
2182 day with allies and partners on every aspect of this, making sure  
2183 the Ukrainians have what they need to defend themselves, making  
2184 sure that we continue to impose massive consequences on Russia  
2185 for this aggression.

2186 Making sure that we're also shoring up our alliance, NATO,  
2187 so that it is properly postured to deal with any Russian aggression  
2188 directed at it. And this is being done, Congressman, literally  
2189 day in, day out.

2190 On the specifics of security assistance to Ukraine, I think  
2191 I may have mentioned this early. After Secretary Austin and I  
2192 visited with the Ukrainian Government, with President Zelensky  
2193 in Kyiv over the weekend, Secretary Austin then went on to Germany  
2194 to chair a conference that he had convened that involved ministers  
2195 of defense from 40 different countries to make sure that we are  
2196 moving forward on coordinating and providing the security  
2197 assistance that Ukraine needs.

2198 Mr. Costa. Well, I think that's a very important point,  
2199 and obviously one that needs to continue. I participated in the  
2200 past with NATO parliamentary assemblies as recently as in  
2201 February, and frankly it's only gotten I think better. But it's  
2202 the strongest I've seen NATO react since the Cold War time period.

2203           Speaking of which, the world's changed in the last two months  
2204           in ways that we could never anticipate two months ago. Can you  
2205           give us a status on the update of Finland and Sweden becoming  
2206           a part of NATO?

2207           Secretary Blinken. You're right, the world has changed  
2208           pretty dramatically. And one of the ways it's changed is in the  
2209           very strong interest in both countries to become members of NATO.  
2210           We of course look to them to make that decision. If that's what  
2211           they decide, we will strongly support it, and we will work, and  
2212           including working with --

2213           Mr. Costa. Any idea on a timeline?

2214           Secretary Blinken. I can't give you a timeline. I think  
2215           it's under -- let me put it this way: it's under very active  
2216           consideration by both countries. There's a NATO summit, as you  
2217           know very well coming up soon, so I would anticipate that we'll  
2218           hear more about that by the time of the summit.

2219           Mr. Costa. Let me move on. It's in the neighborhood but  
2220           a separate matter. The situation with Armenia and Azerbaijan  
2221           has been very frustrating. And I don't believe Azerbaijan has  
2222           lived up to their agreements.

2223           And certainly we've learned a lot of things in the last two  
2224           months, but Russia clearly is not good at keeping their word with  
2225           the war criminal who is heading the country today.

2226           What can we expect for additional support for Armenia and



2227 trying to hold Azerbaijan to the commitments they made in the  
2228 truce settlement?

2229 Secretary Blinken. Congressman, this is something that  
2230 I've been very engaged on, including throughout the Ukraine  
2231 situation. I've spoken repeatedly with Prime Minister Pashinyan  
2232 from Armenia, as well as President Aliyev from Azerbaijan, trying  
2233 first of all to make sure that no one takes any steps that would  
2234 potentially revert to conflict.

2235 But also to try to advance and support a long-term political  
2236 settlement. And by the way, we still have our status as the Minsk  
2237 Group co-chair. We've been developing and promoting  
2238 confidence-building measures. And again, I've spoken repeatedly  
2239 to both leaders, as well the foreign ministers.

2240 Our budget has \$45 million of assistance in it for Armenia.  
2241 Two million of that is --

2242 Mr. Costa. Forgive me, that ain't right, and we need to  
2243 do more.

2244 Secretary Blinken. And we're happy to work with you on all  
2245 of that.

2246 Mr. Costa. Okay, my time has just about expired, but I was  
2247 wondering about after the last administration hollowed out much  
2248 of the State Department's capacity, how it's going in terms of  
2249 rebuilding your ability to do the diplomatic missions you have  
2250 around the world.

2251 Secretary Blinken. Well, thanks to the support that we've  
2252 gotten from Congress, including in the last budget, we're making  
2253 very good progress on that. The budget that we put forward now  
2254 would allow us to keep doing that and to strengthening the  
2255 Department, including by bringing in new personnel, including  
2256 by strengthening our missions abroad in a variety of ways.

2257 So we very much hope that members of Congress will support  
2258 the budget, take a hard look at it. Because it does go a long  
2259 way to enable us to modernize the Department and to make it  
2260 stronger, more agile, more agile, more effective in advancing  
2261 our diplomacy going forward.

2262 Mr. Costa. Mr. Secretary, stay with it, my friend. We're  
2263 all in this together.

2264 Secretary Blinken. Thank you.

2265 Mr. Malinowski. Mr. Secretary, the staff have informed me  
2266 that we may need to place another microphone in front of you for  
2267 better pickup. So we're going to take just a few seconds to do  
2268 that, and that way you can -- yeah. No, you don't have to do  
2269 anything. This way you can continue to speak softly while we  
2270 carry a big stick, so. A great progressive and Republican.

2271 I will now call on Representative Zeldin of New York.

2272 Mr. Zeldin. Mr. Secretary, thank you for -- for being here.

2273 I wanted to follow up on some of the questions and comments  
2274 brought up earlier related to the Iran nuclear deal and the JCPOA.

2275           When Secretary of State John Kerry was here sitting where  
2276           you are nearly seven years ago, he was asked about why it wasn't  
2277           submitted to JCPOA, why the JCPOA wasn't submitted to Congress  
2278           as a treaty. And he essentially was stating that the reason why  
2279           it wasn't submitted was because of difficulty getting it passed.

2280           Now this is relevant again as the Biden Administration may  
2281           be entering into a nuclear deal with Iran. Why wouldn't this  
2282           be a treaty?

2283           Secretary Blinken. As I think -- thank you, Congressman.

2284           I think, as I noted a short while ago, many in fact most, arms  
2285           control non-proliferation agreements that are multilateral in  
2286           nature, as this one is, are actually not submitted to -- as  
2287           treaties. If you go back through the long history of that, many  
2288           are not. The question is --

2289           Mr. Zeldin. Yeah, I'm asking why not. I'm asking why  
2290           wouldn't a nuclear deal similar to the JCPOA, why would that not  
2291           be a treaty?

2292           Secretary Blinken. Because in many instances, doing it in  
2293           the way that we would do it gives us much greater flexibility  
2294           to make sure that if, for example, there's a violation of the  
2295           agreement by the Iranians, we can act quickly to deal with that  
2296           and --

2297           Mr. Zeldin. Why wouldn't it be a treaty --

2298           Secretary Blinken. Again --

2299 Mr. Zeldin. Legally. What the -- do know what a treaty  
2300 is? What's a treaty?

2301 Secretary Blinken. So the legally required obligations  
2302 undertaken by both parties to an agreement.

2303 Mr. Zeldin. So how would this not be a treaty? Under the  
2304 definition you just provided -- see, the thing is that you would  
2305 then have to submit to Congress, and then it would have to  
2306 ratified. And then it's non-binding if that doesn't happen.

2307 But the definition that you just provided, which is one that  
2308 I would agree with, means that this is a treaty that under the  
2309 United States Constitution would then get submitted to Congress  
2310 for ratification.

2311 Okay, Mr. Vargas was asking you about the sunset provisions.

2312 That was a good question, good point, I share his concern. Are  
2313 you going to agree to a nuclear -- is it possible you would agree  
2314 to a nuclear agreement that doesn't change the sunset provision  
2315 dates?

2316 Secretary Blinken. Congressman, the situation that we  
2317 inherited is such that, as I mentioned, Iran is moving vigorously  
2318 forward on its nuclear program to the point that its breakout  
2319 time --

2320 Mr. Zeldin. I heard your answer.

2321 Secretary Blinken. So -- so --

2322 Mr. Zeldin. But the question is would you agree to a nuclear

2323 deal that does not change the sunset provision dates?

2324 Secretary Blinken. We are looking at getting back into  
2325 mutual compliance with the agreement. That includes the various  
2326 provisions that were in the agreement from the start, including  
2327 the sunsets.

2328 The most important sunsets in the agreement, that is on the  
2329 stockpile that Iran is allowed to have of material and the  
2330 processing speed of the centrifuges and enrichment capacity,  
2331 those provisions remain in place for almost another decade.

2332 The history of arms control agreements in the past --  
2333 Mr. Zeldin. I don't want the history of arm control  
2334 agreements. I want to know if you would agree to a nuclear deal  
2335 that does not change the sunset provision dates.

2336 Secretary Blinken. We, without getting into the discussion  
2337 --

2338 Mr. Zeldin. I mean, it's a yes or no. Is the answer yes,  
2339 you are willing to enter into a nuclear agreement that does change  
2340 the sunset provision date?

2341 Secretary Blinken. The answer is quite simply that what  
2342 we are seeking to do is to get back into mutual compliance with  
2343 the agreement, with the agreement that was reached seven years  
2344 ago --

2345 Mr. Zeldin. We're looking for some straight answers here.

2346 Secretary Blinken. And including the provisions that are

2347 in that agreement, and those include the sunset agreements.

2348 Mr. Zeldin. But would be willing to enter into an agreement  
2349 that does not change the sunset provisions? And if you're not  
2350 able to say yes or not that, we're not going to assume that you're  
2351 there fighting for a change to the sunset provisions because  
2352 you're not even telling us that.

2353 Why would we expect that you're drawing a tougher stance  
2354 on the Iranians than you're willing to say to Congress and to  
2355 the American people?

2356 You said that you're going to follow INARA. Does that mean  
2357 that you would submit the entire agreement?

2358 Secretary Blinken. The lawyers will look at that, are  
2359 looking at that. If they make a determination that under INARA,  
2360 there are requirements that we have, of course, we will follow  
2361 those.

2362 Mr. Zeldin. So you can't make a commitment that you would  
2363 submit the entire agreement.

2364 Secretary Blinken. I can tell you again that we will follow  
2365 the law and we will follow INARA. And whatever it -- whatever  
2366 it requires --

2367 Mr. Zeldin. Are you saying that -- okay, whatever it --  
2368 let's say your attorneys tell you that you don't have to submit  
2369 the entire agreement. Would you commit to us that you would  
2370 submit the entire agreement to Congress anyway?

2371 Secretary Blinken. We will follow the law.

2372 Mr. Zeldin. You're not willing to make a commitment that  
2373 you'll submit the entire agreement.

2374 Secretary Blinken. My commitment is to follow the law.

2375 Mr. Zeldin. Now, under INARA, the clock starts once the  
2376 entire agreement is submitted. So the clock for reviewing it  
2377 then wouldn't start, correct?

2378 Secretary Blinken. Again, what I can tell you and what I  
2379 can commit to, as always is we will follow the law, including  
2380 of course INARA.

2381 Mr. Zeldin. Okay. I don't know, and this is not the right  
2382 setting to get into the reports of added security for your  
2383 predecessor and other issues. We are very concerned about that.  
2384 And especially with regards to negotiations with Iran and how  
2385 that relates.

2386 Just know that there's a massive concern with negotiating  
2387 with Iran while that may be ongoing to the extent of a conversation  
2388 that we can have here. I yield back.

2389 Secretary Blinken. I appreciate that and I'm happy to  
2390 follow up in a different setting with you.

2391 Mr. Malinowski. Representative Gerry Connolly of Virginia.

2392 Mr. Connolly. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

2393 And Mr. Secretary, welcome. Thank you for all you're doing  
2394 for the Ukrainian people. It was a pleasure and a privilege to

2395 meet with you when I was in Poland and Ukraine. And I have been  
2396 so proud of our government in its very strong response, and I  
2397 know the Ukrainian people understand that and appreciate it as  
2398 well.

2399 Since so many want to talk about the JCPOA, let me ask you,  
2400 you were in the Obama Administration as well, is that not true,  
2401 Mr. Secretary?

2402 Secretary Blinken. It is.

2403 Mr. Connolly. Would it be a fair statement to say that  
2404 between 2011 and 2015, the Obama Administration exercised maximum  
2405 sanctions pressure on Iran that almost led to its economic  
2406 collapse? Would that be a fair statement?

2407 Secretary Blinken. I don't know if I'd go as far as to say  
2408 economic collapse, but I can certainly say that yes, they exerted  
2409 maximum economic pressure. And significantly --

2410 Mr. Connolly. And during that --

2411 Secretary Blinken. We had already, the United States had  
2412 been engaged in that. We brought other countries along --

2413 Mr. Connolly. Right.

2414 Secretary Blinken. To do exactly that.

2415 Mr. Connolly. And during that time period, did we succeed  
2416 in cutting Iranian oil exports by 50%?

2417 Secretary Blinken. We did.

2418 Mr. Connolly. And would it be fair to say that perhaps,



2419 some causation, because of that four years' sustained effort by  
2420 the United States Government under the Obama Administration, Iran  
2421 might have been motivated to come to the negotiating table that  
2422 ultimately led to the JCPOA?

2423 Secretary Blinken. That would be my judgment.

2424 Mr. Connolly. That would be a fair thing. So once we did  
2425 a agree with a U.S.-led set of negotiations, and kind of an  
2426 extraordinary thing, with China, Iran, Russia, and the Europeans,  
2427 plus us at a table, our -- we led it, and we get an agreement  
2428 for the first time.

2429 Iran says yes, we'll do this, understanding that it pushes  
2430 them further away from the development of a nuclear weapon. Is  
2431 that correct?

2432 Secretary Blinken. That is correct.

2433 Mr. Connolly. Would it be fair to say, for example, let's  
2434 look at the elements of the JCPOA. They were required to cover  
2435 up -- stop the functionality of the plutonium production reactor,  
2436 is that correct?

2437 Secretary Blinken. That's correct.

2438 Mr. Connolly. And did they?

2439 Secretary Blinken. They did.

2440 Mr. Connolly. They did. And did the IAEA and the U.S.  
2441 Government certify as such?

2442 Secretary Blinken. Both did.

2443 Mr. Connolly. Were they required to reduce the enrichment  
2444 of uranium to 3.67%?

2445 Secretary Blinken. They were and they did.

2446 Mr. Connolly. And did -- well, don't jump on my line.

2447 Secretary Blinken. Sorry.

2448 Mr. Connolly. They -- and they did that, is that correct,  
2449 Mr. Secretary?

2450 Secretary Blinken. That is correct.

2451 Mr. Connolly. And were they required to ship out any  
2452 enriched or stockpiles of enriched uranium that went beyond that?

2453 Secretary Blinken. They were.

2454 Mr. Connolly. And did they do that?

2455 Secretary Blinken. They did.

2456 Mr. Connolly. Did they allow inspections, including  
2457 unannounced inspections of facilities that the monitoring group  
2458 felt they needed to inspect?

2459 Secretary Blinken. They did.

2460 Mr. Connolly. They did. Is there any metric contained in  
2461 the JCPOA they violated?

2462 Secretary Blinken. To the best of my knowledge, they  
2463 adhered to their obligations under the agreement. To the extent  
2464 that those were called into question and the agreement had in  
2465 it provisions when there was a concern that they were not in --

2466 Mr. Connolly. And we heard --

2467 Secretary Blinken. -- the agreement.

2468 Mr. Connolly. And Mr. Secretary, we heard that this body,  
2469 before JCPOA went into effect, all kinds of predictions about  
2470 Iran would cheat and so forth. As a matter of fact, they didn't.  
2471 They didn't, that's a fact. They met the terms of the agreement,  
2472 and by doing so, did they push back their ability to develop a  
2473 nuclear weapon?

2474 Secretary Blinken. They did.

2475 Mr. Connolly. By how much?

2476 Secretary Blinken. The breakout time, that is the time  
2477 needed to produce enough fissile material for one nuclear weapon,  
2478 was pushed back to beyond a year.

2479 Mr. Connolly. And where are they now, Mr. Secretary, that  
2480 we walked away from that agreement that was working?

2481 Secretary Blinken. By public accounts, a few weeks.

2482 Mr. Connolly. So that's not progress.

2483 Secretary Blinken. It's the reverse of progress.

2484 Mr. Connolly. So maybe one could say people who say they  
2485 don't want a nuclear Iran but are opposing the revival of a nuclear  
2486 agreement based on JCPOA but with other provisions might actually  
2487 unwitting, I'll assume unwittingly, actually be achieving the  
2488 very opposite is what is desired.

2489 Secretary Blinken. I would just say this isn't a  
2490 theoretical exercise. We've seen the world with the JCPOA, we've

2491       seen the world without the JCPOA. With the JCPOA, the nuclear  
2492       program was put in a box, without it, it's escaped from the box.

2493             Mr. Connolly. And you and I would agree that, you know,  
2494       Iran's a bad actor.

2495             Secretary Blinken. There is no doubt about that.

2496             Mr. Connolly. Do we -- is it our habit when we have weapons  
2497       agreements, including especially nuclear weapons agreements,  
2498       that it's all-encompassing in terms of behavior? That it  
2499       includes all malign behavior, not just nuclear. That's what we  
2500       did with the Soviet Union, for example, isn't that what we did?

2501             Secretary Blinken. This agreement was focused exclusively  
2502       on Iran's nuclear activities. And it in no way took away our  
2503       ability or the ability of anyone else to push back hard against  
2504       their other malicious --

2505             Mr. Connolly. And my only point is and that's precisely  
2506       what we did with the Soviet Union.

2507             Secretary Blinken. It's what we did with the Soviet Union,  
2508       and indeed, it's what we continued to do with Iran. Even when  
2509       the agreement was in force, we continued to take actions in  
2510       coordination with others to deal with the other malicious  
2511       activities --

2512             Mr. Connolly. Thank you, Mr. Secretary, my time is up.  
2513       I appreciate it.

2514             Mr. Malinowski. The Chair now recognizes Representative

2515 Ann Wagner of Missouri.

2516 Mrs. Wagner. I thank the Chair.

2517 And I also want to thank Secretary Blinken for his time today  
2518 and certainly for his service. And for meeting extensively with  
2519 our Foreign Affairs delegation, sir, when we were in Poland some  
2520 weeks ago.

2521 On a different topic, Mr. Secretary, I co-chair the  
2522 Congressional Caucus on ASEAN. It's the Association of Southeast  
2523 Asian Nations. And one of -- and one fear I have heard time and  
2524 again from Southeast Asian leaders is that the United States is  
2525 ceding the Indo-Pacific to China.

2526 Our partners are desperate for the United States to  
2527 demonstrate strength and leadership in the region. And they are  
2528 deeply concerned that without robust U.S. engagement,  
2529 Indo-Pacific countries will grow ever more reliant on the People's  
2530 Republic of China.

2531 My Southeast Asia Strategy Act, which is now law, will send  
2532 an unmistakable message of American resolve and leadership to  
2533 the region. In the meantime, we have an opportunity to make our  
2534 case that we must remain the region's partner of choice.

2535 And I hope that the U.S.-led Indo-Pacific Economic Framework  
2536 announced this past October will serve as a roadmap for the future  
2537 of free and open Indo-Pacific region.

2538 I worry, however, that the Administration is letting this

2539 -- this moment slip away by refusing to offer our partners  
2540 transparency, and frankly, candor regarding who and what will  
2541 be included in the -- in the framework.

2542 Mr. Secretary, I am particularly concerned that Taiwan is  
2543 being shut out of the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework. Even  
2544 though the Administration may try to kind of hide this by never  
2545 formally closing the door, so to speak, to participation, Taiwan's  
2546 offer to become a full member is not being accepted.

2547 When our countries' top trade negotiators met last week,  
2548 this was Taiwan's number one and top request. But the Biden  
2549 Administration did not allow Taiwan to join the framework. This  
2550 policy is self-defeating and dangerous, frankly. Taiwan was our  
2551 eighth largest trading partner last year and one of our largest  
2552 certainly in -- in Asia.

2553 Present size -- the Administration has even changed  
2554 Taiwan's domestic law in hopes of starting free trade  
2555 negotiations, which the Administration is also refusing.

2556 As a rule-of-law democracy and a top local trading partner,  
2557 Taiwan should be certainly a top priority for the framework.  
2558 But instead this administration is marginalizing Taiwan and  
2559 showing the Chinese Communist Party that the United States is  
2560 deterred from working with a critical partner.

2561 Can you explain, Mr. Secretary, how the Administration  
2562 arrived at this policy? Because it truly does not make -- make

2563 any sense.

2564 Secretary Blinken. Thank you. First, let me just say it  
2565 was great to be with you in Poland, and very important that you  
2566 were there with -- with other colleagues.

2567 On this question of the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework,  
2568 there is no such policy, in the sense that this agreement is going  
2569 to be open, it's going to be inclusive.

2570 And we're just in the process of launching it, including  
2571 beginning conversations with a number of countries as potential  
2572 partners. And there is nothing that is closing the door on  
2573 anyone, including -- including Taiwan. We're just getting this  
2574 off the ground.

2575 It has a number of important I think opportunities that will  
2576 bring us together and assert our economic leadership in the  
2577 region, trade facilitation, working on standards for the digital  
2578 economy, and technology supply chain resilience, infrastructure  
2579 investments, worker standards, etc.

2580 So we're just at the starting point. And again, it's going  
2581 to be open, it's going to be inclusive. And I imagine we're going  
2582 to be engaging virtually every country in the region.

2583 Mrs. Wagner. Well, I'm very glad to hear that. And I  
2584 certainly -- I hope that we can send something more reaffirming  
2585 to our Taiwanese partners, given their trade status and our  
2586 relationship there.

2587           It is certainly their top request and something that I am  
2588 deeply involved and concerned about. And hearing from the  
2589 leaders in the Indo-Pacific that they have real concerns about  
2590 this. So I hope we can work together on it.

2591           Let me to -- in my brief amount of time, I'll just say that,  
2592 you know, I am concerned about the disastrous Iran nuclear deal  
2593 also. Mr. Secretary, I think it is a deeply flawed agreement.  
2594 And certainly a windfall for the world's top supporter of  
2595 state-sponsored terrorism.

2596           So I hope that I can submit some of these questions,  
2597 especially vis-a-vis Iranian oil, today and some of the sanctions  
2598 that are -- are not being enforced for -- for the record, and  
2599 see if I can get some response from you and your team. I'd be  
2600 grateful.

2601           Secretary Blinken. Certainly, certainly.

2602           Mr. Malinowski. The Chair -- the Chair recognizes  
2603 Representative Deutch from Florida.

2604           Mr. Deutch. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

2605           Mr. Secretary, nice to see you. Thank you for being here,  
2606 thank you for your service. Thank you for you and the  
2607 Administration's leadership, especially on standing up to  
2608 Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine.

2609           It's that unjust and illegal invasion that has dramatically  
2610 shifted the international landscape with our allies and partners



2611 around the world. And we have coalesced in opposition to Russia's  
2612 aggression and support of the people of Ukraine.

2613 We've implemented unprecedented sanctions packages against  
2614 Russia, increased the supply of weapons to the courageous and  
2615 resilient fighters in Ukraine.

2616 And while many were surprised Putin went ahead with the  
2617 invasion, we shouldn't have been. His desire to force Ukraine  
2618 under Russian control to spread counterfactual narratives and  
2619 delegitimize Ukrainian history is longstanding.

2620 His consistent and public declaration of this desire  
2621 resulted now -- has now resulted in another land war in Europe  
2622 with a nuclear power in Russia attempting to impose its will  
2623 against the people of Ukraine in response to their desire for  
2624 democracy, rule of law, alignment with the West.

2625 Unfortunately, Mr. Secretary, I feel that we're witnessing  
2626 a similar pattern with Iran, and I want to explain. Iran is the  
2627 largest state sponsor of terrorism. Regularly calls for the  
2628 destruction of Israel. Launched attacks against U.S. military  
2629 forces and U.S. partners in the region from Saudi Arabia to the  
2630 UAE.

2631 It also takes Americans and other foreign nationals hostage,  
2632 like my constituent Bob Levinson, as well as Emad Shargi, the  
2633 Mazanis and others. Iran and the IRGC support terror groups in  
2634 Syria and Lebanon and Gaza and Iraq and Yemen, just to name a

2635       few.

2636               The regime has made its intentions to destabilize the region  
2637       and expand its empire clear since the Islamic Revolution of 1979.

2638       Its nuclear program now enriches to 60%, which as the IAEA  
2639       Director General has said, is done only by countries who are  
2640       developing or intend to develop nuclear weapons.

2641               Now, it sometimes seems that our policy towards Iran, and  
2642       we've seen this here in this committee even today, that our policy  
2643       towards Iran is entirely the JCPOA. The conversations we've had  
2644       here have focused on the JCPOA and whether or not to reenter the  
2645       nuclear deal. But that's not obviously a policy to address  
2646       everything that Iran represents.

2647               And just as we have led our European allies in confronting  
2648       Russia, we should lead our partners in the region, Israel, the  
2649       Abraham Accords nations, our other partners in confronting Iran  
2650       to address all of Iran's actions.

2651               So my first question to you, Mr. Secretary, is can you --  
2652       can you tell us -- and by the way, one last thing on this. Whether  
2653       there is JCPOA or not, whether there is a deal that's struck or  
2654       not, everything that I described will continue.

2655               So let's start by asking if you could just define what our  
2656       policy is with respect to Iran, the country whose mullahs have  
2657       taken all of these actions consistently now for decades.

2658               Secretary Blinken. You're exactly right. Whether or not

2659 there is a JCPOA, all of the actions and activities that you've  
2660 described will continue.

2661 Now, one fundamental question for us is an Iran with a nuclear  
2662 weapon or the capacity to get one on short order is likely to  
2663 act with even greater impunity in doing all of these things, which  
2664 is one of the reasons we want to do everything we can do to deny  
2665 it the capability to have weapons.

2666 But having said that, your point is a very important one.

2667 Which is why, irrespective of an agreement or not, we are working  
2668 with allies and partners, with our Arab partners, with Israel  
2669 and others to make sure that we are putting in place the means  
2670 necessary to deal with all of these other challenges. Hardening  
2671 defenses, long-range bomber overflights, deepening cooperation  
2672 to indict, sanctioning relevant Iranian actors, boosting the  
2673 capacity of our partners.

2674 Again, all of these things to confront and contend with  
2675 everything you've just described, irrespective of whether there's  
2676 a nuclear agreement.

2677 Mr. Deutch. And it is our position still, as you referred  
2678 to earlier, imagine Iran with a nuclear weapon, that JCPOA or  
2679 no, it is our policy that Iran will not acquire a nuclear weapon.

2680 Secretary Blinken. That is correct.

2681 Mr. Deutch. And we heard multiple times in -- during the  
2682 negotiation of the original JCPOA that all options were -- that

2683 all options remained on the table. I want to reconfirm that that  
2684 continues to be true today.

2685 Secretary Blinken. That is correct.

2686 Mr. Deutch. I appreciate it, Mr. Secretary. As we go  
2687 forward, instead of talking about plan B, if there is no JCPOA,  
2688 I would just respectfully suggest that plan A always be and  
2689 continue to be exactly what you described just now. And I yield  
2690 back the balance of my time.

2691 Secretary Blinken. Thank you.

2692 Mr. Malinowski. Thank you. I now recognize Representative  
2693 Brian Mast of Florida for five minutes.

2694 Mr. Mast. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

2695 Mr. Secretary, over here. Robust sanctions on Russia. You  
2696 called them massive consequences. I want to speak a little bit  
2697 about those. At minimum, would there have to be an agreed-upon  
2698 ceasefire to lift, for the United States of America to lift any  
2699 of those sanctions?

2700 Secretary Blinken. Congressman, we're not, we're certainly  
2701 not talking about lifting sanctions. We're talking about --

2702 Mr. Mast. Would there have to be a ceasefire for America  
2703 to lift our sanctions?

2704 Secretary Blinken. Well, at a minimum. Any movement on  
2705 any sanctions --

2706 Mr. Mast. Ceasefire at minimum?

2707 Secretary Blinken. Would need to require something like  
2708 that.

2709 Mr. Mast. Would they have to remove forces from Ukraine  
2710 to lift any sanctions?

2711 Secretary Blinken. Again, all of this, first, most  
2712 important thing is we will support whatever it is the  
2713 democratically elected government of Ukraine wants to do.

2714 Mr. Mast. These are our sanctions, American sanctions --

2715 Secretary Blinken. They're our sanctions, but they're --

2716 Mr. Mast. Commerce, America's commerce with Russia,  
2717 America's determination on who we are going to get energy from,  
2718 everything else, decisions that affect Americans. So for America  
2719 and our sanctions and our commerce resuming, does Russia have  
2720 to be out of the Ukraine?

2721 Secretary Blinken. Congressman, the Ukrainians that we are  
2722 supporting in every way that we can, it's vital that they determine  
2723 the actions that would be most effective in --

2724 Mr. Mast. So you're saying Ukraine will determine --

2725 Secretary Blinken. No, I'm saying we want to hear --

2726 Mr. Mast. How the United States of America --

2727 Secretary Blinken. We want to hear from them --

2728 Mr. Mast. And their sanctions.

2729 Secretary Blinken. We want to hear from them and allies  
2730 and partners and what would be most effective and when. So --

2731           Mr. Mast. We want to hear from them, they want to hear from  
2732 us. We're the United States of America. Zelensky came to the  
2733 United States of America, said we're the leader of freedom, we  
2734 have to be the leader of peace. He addressed the House of  
2735 Representatives, the Senate. So let's be America and lead. And  
2736 as the Secretary of State --

2737           Secretary Blinken. It's what we've been doing.

2738           Mr. Mast. A great honor. Do they have to have a ceasefire,  
2739 do they have to be out of Ukraine in order for United States of  
2740 America to regain commerce, any type of commerce, or lift  
2741 sanctions?

2742           Secretary Blinken. Again, what I'm -- what I'm not going  
2743 to do is lay out or engage or negotiate in public on something  
2744 that we will work in close coordination with Ukrainians and with  
2745 --

2746           Mr. Mast. I think what you mean is you won't answer clearly  
2747 to the American people. This our country, these are our  
2748 sanctions, this what we're doing. We are providing arms, we are  
2749 doing cyber warfare, we are doing economic warfare.

2750           We are in situation on the global stage where nobody can  
2751 say there's zero percent chance of nuclear war. That's a tough  
2752 situation to be in.

2753           Secretary Blinken. We're doing all of this --

2754           Mr. Mast. So answer to the Americans.

2755 Secretary Blinken. No, we're doing all of this in service  
2756 of ensuring that Ukraine remains sovereign, remains independent.  
2757 And we are looking at what actions are required to make sure that  
2758 we can keep doing that, as well as making sure --

2759 Mr. Mast. We're doing stuff for Americans too --

2760 Secretary Blinken. As well as making sure --

2761 Mr. Mast. We're doing it for Ukrainians, we're doing it  
2762 for Americans as well. There's a lot that's going on that's  
2763 hurting Americans. What's going on with energy very  
2764 specifically, that's an easy one to talk about. Let's go back.

2765 Does there have to be a war crime tribunal  
2766 for Putin before we will lift any sanctions or allow for any  
2767 commerce?

2768 Secretary Blinken. There has to be accountability and there  
2769 will be accountability.

2770 Mr. Mast. War crime tribunal?

2771 Secretary Blinken. But again, I'm not -- I'm going to get  
2772 into spelling out a roadmap of when or if sanctions will be lifted.  
2773 We will determine that --

2774 Mr. Mast. That's sad that we won't lay out a roadmap for  
2775 what has to happen. That's very weak negotiation.

2776 Secretary Blinken. Not -- not --

2777 Mr. Mast. Negotiate from strength, not from weakness.

2778 Secretary Blinken. Not -- not in public, not at this time.

2779           Mr. Mast. Will they have to repay damages for everything  
2780 that they've destroyed in the Ukraine?

2781           Secretary Blinken. We want to make sure that not only is  
2782 there accountability for war crimes that have been committed,  
2783 but there is accountability for the fact that they committed these  
2784 acts of destruction --

2785           Mr. Mast. Be reparations, reparations for everybody --

2786           Secretary Blinken. So we will look --

2787           Mr. Mast. That's been killed?

2788           Secretary Blinken. We will look at making sure that the  
2789 damage that was done to Ukraine is assumed by those who committed  
2790 it.

2791           Mr. Mast. I hope that these are bare minimum things that  
2792 take place before the United States of American consider resuming  
2793 any commerce with Russia, Putin, whatsoever, before we consider  
2794 lifting any sanctions whatsoever. And that we begin starting  
2795 to speak to them from these positions of strength.

2796           I want to yield a couple of moments to my colleague, Mr.  
2797 Zeldin, to address some of the lies that you told us earlier.

2798           Mr. Zeldin. Thank you. In response to Mr. Connolly, you  
2799 said that prior to the U.S. withdrawal, that Iran did not violate  
2800 the letter of the JCPOA. Is that your position?

2801           Secretary Blinken. That prior -- I'm sorry, can you repeat?

2802           Mr. Zeldin. Prior to the U.S. withdrawal from the JCPOA,



2803 that Iran did not violate the letter of the JCPOA, is that your  
2804 position?

2805 Secretary Blinken. At various points we had concerns that  
2806 they were in violation. We brought that to the dispute resolution  
2807 mechanism that was built into the agreement, and those concerns  
2808 were resolved.

2809 Mr. Zeldin. So twice IAEA found Iran in violation of heavy  
2810 water. They found that they had assembled more IR-6s, that they  
2811 had acquired more IR-8 rotor assemblies. That they attempted  
2812 to acquire carbon fiber that they're not allowed to. All in  
2813 violation of the letter of the JCPOA.

2814 Now, you all know this, but you come here anyway and you  
2815 gaslight us so we're forced to call you out on it. Next time  
2816 you come here, please make don't make believe like they haven't  
2817 violated the letter of the JCPOA before --

2818 Mr. Malinowski. The gentleman's time has expired. And let  
2819 me remind all members, that tough questioning, challenging  
2820 questioning is perfectly appropriate. But accusing the  
2821 Secretary of State of lying is in my view a violation of the decorum  
2822 that we have, on a bipartisan basis tried to maintain --

2823 Mr. Zeldin. Don't lie and we won't make the accusation,  
2824 it's that simple.

2825 Mr. Malinowski. I will now yield to Representative Brad  
2826 Sherman of California for five minutes.

2827           Mr. Sherman. There's some that will hold you to an  
2828 impossible standard that somehow the Administration has failed  
2829 if we don't get absolutely total justice in Ukraine and Iran  
2830 doesn't change its regime and everything. We live in a real  
2831 world, and it is not a failure of the Administration that the  
2832 world will be imperfect, even when you lead it, lead the  
2833 administration.

2834           I want to commend you, Mr. Secretary, for talking about how  
2835 important it is that we have an international vaccination program.  
2836 Not only is that moral, but every infection leads to replication.  
2837 Every replication is an opportunity for mutation.

2838           And if you're on team human, we've got to immunize every  
2839 human on the planet, or another variant is coming back to the  
2840 United States.

2841           In Pakistan you see the most internally contentious and  
2842 unpredictable politics of any nuclear power. And Congress has  
2843 directed the Voice of America to reach out to the people of  
2844 Pakistan in the Sindhi language as well as Urdu.

2845           The VOA has ignored that. We even gave them money for it,  
2846 they ignored that. I hope that they hear from you how important  
2847 it is that we reach the people of Pakistan and southern Pakistan  
2848 in the Sindhi language.

2849           In Syria we still have a huge humanitarian problem. It's  
2850 important that our humanitarian aid not go through Assad. And

2851 as we have it in our interest to weaken Russia, we might want  
2852 to take a look at those who are standing up to Assad, to Tehran,  
2853 and to Russia in Syria.

2854 Some of us have been urging lethal weapons go to Ukraine  
2855 for many, many years. We faced a lot of headwinds from the last  
2856 administration. Thank you for what you're doing.

2857 The world focuses on Ukraine, but 500,000 people have died  
2858 in Tigray. I commend you for your visit to Ukraine. I hope that  
2859 we pay if not equal, at least more attention to Tigray. The  
2860 Ethiopian and Eritrean governments are using starvation as a  
2861 weapon. And the World Food Program says that 90% of the people  
2862 there need assistance.

2863 Your Deputy Secretary came us to very late last year and  
2864 said that a decision had been made to refrain from making a --  
2865 a public determination on atrocities and to whether this is  
2866 genocide. Do you want to, I mean, you got to call them as you  
2867 see them.

2868 Can I count on the State Department for making a public  
2869 determination? Are there gross human rights abuses and is there  
2870 genocide in Tigray?

2871 Secretary Blinken. First, there have clearly been atrocities  
2872 committed by every party in Ethiopia. There is no doubt about  
2873 that. In terms of an actual legal determination of what they  
2874 are and their nature, we will make that determination.

2875 Mr. Sherman. Thank you. We have provided substantial defense systems to Israel. Forty-three thousand  
2876 rockets have been launched by Hamas and Islamic Jihad. Thank God the casualties have been modest, and that is  
2877 because of Iron Dome. But keep in mind, that was 4,300 attempts to kill as many Israeli civilians as possible. Every  
2878 one of those rockets was a war crime. Not a single one had any real prospect of hitting a strategic target.

2879 As you know, the Obama-Biden administration agreed to a comprehensive memorandum of understanding on  
2880 our minimum level of aid. You and President Biden have indicated opposition to imposing new political conditions or  
2881 restrictions on this assistance. Do you continue to oppose new political restrictions on our defense assistance to Israel?

2882 Secretary Blinken. We do.

2883 Mr. Sherman. Good. And turning to the caucuses, should the administration not waive Section 907, at  
2884 least until the POWs are released and those of Armenian ethnicity are able to go back to their homes from which they've  
2885 been cleansed.

2886 Secretary Blinken. First, we're working very assiduously on any POWs. This is something that I've engaged  
2887 the most senior leadership in Azerbaijan. Second, 907, as it is annually, under review; and as soon we have the results  
2888 of that review, obviously we'll make those known to you.

2889 Mr. Sherman. Hopefully, you will not waive it. I yield back.

2890 Mr. Malinowski. Thank you. I now yield five minutes to Representative Fitzpatrick of Pennsylvania.

2891 Mr. Fitzpatrick. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Secretary, for being here. Before I get to Ukraine, and if this  
2892 question has already been posed, I apologize. But CNN reported yesterday that over \$7 billion in military equipment  
2893 was left behind in Afghanistan, to include aircraft, which is, literally, twice the amount of defensive equipment that we just  
2894 authorized for Ukraine a few weeks back. I just wanted to give you an opportunity to comment on that.

2895 Secretary Blinken. I haven't seen that specific report, but you're correct. Over 20 years, a huge amount of  
2896 military equipment was provided to the Afghan Security Forces, which, unfortunately, as we know collapsed in extremis;  
2897 and much of that equipment, 20 years later, remained; and, in turn, much of that equipment was taken by the Taliban.

2898 So I don't know about the specific report, but that certainly sounds possible.

2899 Mr. Fitzpatrick. If you could take that for the record and get a response --

2900 Secretary Blinken. Yes, I will.

2901 Mr. Fitzpatrick. -- that would be great. Back to Ukraine, there's two different paradigms that I hear  
2902 from all sorts of people whether this is Ukraine's fight between them and Russia versus is this the world's fight, is this  
2903 democracy versus dictatorship? What's your view on this?

2904 Secretary Blinken. It is both. In the first instance, of course Ukraine's fight because they are under horrific  
2905 assault by Russia. We're standing with them on that. But you're also correct that I believe this should be the world's  
2906 fight and, indeed, we've worked to make it that because, as we were discussing a little bit earlier, the aggression that  
2907 Russia is committing is not only against Ukraine, it's against some of the basic principles of the international order that  
2908 should be important to countries around the world because, if those principles are violated with impunity and we let that  
2909 go, then we open a Pandora's box for more of this to happen in other parts of the world. So it's both.

2910 Mr. Fitzpatrick. Is there any Rubicon that would be crossed, any red line, that can or will be determined which  
2911 will change this NATO/non-NATO distinction? Because a lot of people are having a hard time reconciling how we  
2912 could assist on the periphery through sanctions, through defensive military equipment, but never going in, and watch tens  
2913 of thousands, perhaps hundreds of thousands Ukrainians get slaughtered. And, yet, if one step is taken over the  
2914 Romanian border and one Romanian is killed, that the full force of 30 nations' militaries will come to bear.

2915 Is a Romanian life worth that much more than Ukrainian life? All life is equal, and we should care about all  
2916 life. Why the cliff effect of this NATO/non-NATO distinction? Because, yes, the NATO addresses the legal  
2917 obligations we have under Article 5, but there's a second prong to this analysis: what's our moral obligation?

2918 Secretary Blinken. It is a good question and an important question. And as you know, we have an alliance  
2919 with obligations and commitments with the NATO countries that includes Article 5. That does not hold for Ukraine and  
2920 a number of other countries in Europe; and, for that matter, it doesn't hold for other countries around the world.

2921 We are doing, through the security systems we're providing, the economic support we're giving, the  
2922 humanitarian aid we're making available. We are going through extraordinary lengths to help the Ukrainian people

2923 deal with this aggression, deal with it effectively, and they have been. There's no doubt that, you're right, horrific death,  
2924 destruction has happened and continues in Southern and Eastern Ukraine, which is exactly why we are doubling down on  
2925 everything that we can do to make sure that they have the means in their own hands to deal with this aggression.

2926 There are, of course, many places around the world; and Congressman Sherman just referred, for example, to  
2927 Ethiopia where we're seeing horrific things happening. I could point to 20 or 30 different places, and the question for us  
2928 in each instance is what can we do and what are we responsible for doing to try to deal with the situation. There is not  
2929 a one-size-fits-all approach to this. And with regard to Ukraine, I think it's fair to say that we've taken exceptional steps  
2930 in advance of and now during this aggression to help the Ukrainians defeat it.

2931 Mr. Fitzpatrick. Sure, you'd acknowledge this is a very unique situation. Three-quarters of Ukrainian  
2932 children have been displaced, having bombs dropped on their head, pediatric cancer hospital being bombed, maternity  
2933 wards being bombed, war crimes unlike we've ever seen in our lifetime. So, yes, genocide occurs everywhere and it's  
2934 wrong everywhere and we should help everywhere we can. This is a very unique circumstance, and I think it's  
2935 important that Ukrainians know that.

2936 And what I think is puzzling and concerning to so many of us in this body is this administration's seeming  
2937 propensity to tell people what they are not going to do, signal to Vladimir Putin what we're not willing to do, taking  
2938 options off the table. Even if that decision has been made internally, why telegraph that?

2939 Secretary Blinken. It is also important to be clear about a few things. And, first, I would say I think we have  
2940 been extremely clear not only in what we have said but in what we have actually done to make sure that the Ukrainians  
2941 have in their hands the means to deal with and ultimately defeat this Russian aggression. And when I saw President  
2942 Zelensky a few days ago with Secretary Austin, he expressed directly to me his deep appreciation for the support this  
2943 Congress has given to Ukraine and for President Biden's leadership, and he said the United States was its number-one  
2944 supporter around the world. And he said something akin to that publicly after the meeting. But, again, I don't want to  
2945 put words in his mouth.

2946 So it is very clear not what we're not doing but what we are doing, and I think that's manifesting itself in Ukraine

2947 on the battlefield.

2948 Mr. Fitzpatrick. My time is expired. I yield back.

2949 Secretary Blinken. Thank you.

2950 Mr. Malinowski. Thank you. The Chair recognizes Representative Bill Keating of Massachusetts.

2951 Mr. Keating. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Secretary, thank you for your extraordinary work and thank you  
2952 for the work you've done in bringing home Trevor Reed. I've spoken with the Reed family. I know and have followed  
2953 that very closely, and I know the extraordinary effort that went into that.

2954 I also want to thank you for the effort you're giving with trying to bring home Paul Whelan, who has been  
2955 illegally imprisoned for 1,200 days and I've pledged to do anything I could do, and I'm not alone in Congress saying that,  
2956 to try and bring him home as soon as possible.

2957 And the other thing I want to thank you for, not from the perspective, not only from the perspective as a  
2958 member of Congress here in the U.S., but I don't think it's fully appreciated just the extraordinary work at putting together  
2959 and holding together and moving forward the Transatlantic coalition that we have in place. We would not be talking  
2960 about a Ukraine victory, we would not be even talking about what we could do as a country if we acted alone. We  
2961 know that we can't do it alone. But I just want to share with you the perspective which I have regularly with foreign  
2962 leaders, European leaders in particular, those are their comments, those are their thoughts. And it is terrific to have  
2963 them talk about a U.S. government from State, from Defense, from so many different areas of our government, that are  
2964 stepping up at a time of crisis the world has never seen.

2965 One of the people I spoke with recently, I spoke to the ambassador from Poland and also the mayor from  
2966 Warsaw recently, too. What they're doing there is nothing short of astounding either. Just the absorption of school  
2967 children. Just in several weeks 20,000 children are now in school in Warsaw alone. Over 180,000 students from  
2968 Ukraine are now in school in Poland right now. These are just extraordinary achievements.

2969 They are strained, and I know in the supplemental budgets we have given some funds. But with the plans for  
2970 the long-term funding that we released today, will there be areas of assistance we can continue to give countries like

2971 Poland that are just doing these almost Herculean things at a time of great humanitarian need?

2972 Secretary Blinken. I appreciate you pointing that out. Let me just say, first of all, when it comes to Paul  
2973 Whelan, I am determined that we bring him home, as well. We are not letting up in that effort in the least.

2974 Second, with regard to Poland and other countries, we have seen extraordinary generosity by the Polish people,  
2975 Moldovans we talked about earlier, others in taking in Ukrainians refugees and supporting them. Europe as a whole  
2976 has done something remarkable in making sure that Ukrainians who wind up as refugees in Europe can be there for two  
2977 years and get support that they need. But this is obviously placing a burden on other countries.

2978 So we have been ourselves working to provide appropriate assistance, including to alleviate some of the burden  
2979 that these countries are facing, to help them provide humanitarian support to Ukrainians who need it, and that includes  
2980 Poland.

2981 Mr. Keating. The other thing, we had a subcommittee hearing this morning dealing with Northern Ireland,  
2982 the Good Friday Agreement, and the fragile nature of circumstances there. We had some extraordinarily young people  
2983 that testified, and there's great hope that change will occur through that generation, as well.

2984 I spoke after that with the Minister of Foreign Affairs Simon Coveney, and we were discussing a letter I led, the  
2985 bipartisan letter to the State Department calling for a special envoy for Northern Ireland so that we can become more  
2986 involved. I am very concerned. And so many other things going on in the world, but there remains a real crisis  
2987 brewing there. And the elections are coming just in the next few days in Northern Ireland, and we don't know the  
2988 ramifications of what that might be. But could you give me an update on any progress with the special envoy?

2989 Secretary Blinken. In short, I anticipate that we'll be moving forward soon on naming an envoy.

2990 Mr. Keating. Great. Thank you. I yield back, Mr. Chair.

2991 Mr. Malinowski. Thank you. And I would just like to briefly note that we have a delegation of  
2992 parliamentarians from Ukrainians who just joined us.

2993 (Applause.)

2994 Mr. Malinowski. It is our great hope that you will soon be able to meet, as we do here, without any fear of



2995 violence being done to your beautiful capital and that your democracy will long endure.

2996 And with that, let me call on Representative Buck of Colorado for five minutes.

2997 Mr. Buck. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Secretary, thank you for being here. A little different concern.

2998 I want to move away from Ukraine for just a moment, if we can.

2999 I am concerned about the fentanyl that is coming to this country that is largely manufactured in China. Just a  
3000 few statistics: fiscal year 2021, Border Patrol seized 11,201 pounds of fentanyl at the southern border, which was more  
3001 than double what they seized in fiscal year 2020 and five times what they seized in fiscal year 2019. To put that in  
3002 perspective, the amount seized, the amount of fentanyl seized by Border Patrol in 2021 is enough to kill the entire U.S.  
3003 population more than seven times over.

3004 The leading cause of death in America of adults between the ages of 18 and 45 is fentanyl overdose.

3005 Recently, in Colorado and Colorado Springs, we had three high school students die of fentanyl overdose, one actually  
3006 collapsing in class from that use. It is terrible.

3007 I am wondering if you have had conversations with Chinese leadership about the production of fentanyl and  
3008 what those conversations, whether they are productive or not.

3009 Secretary Blinken. In short, yes to the conversations. Productive remains to be seen. First of all, can I just  
3010 applaud your leadership on trying to deal with the opioid crisis that we have in this country, and I very much share your  
3011 concerns about this and, in particular, share the concerns about the fentanyl that is originating in China and is making its  
3012 way into the United States, including through Mexico.

3013 So two things. We've been working on this in three ways. The President has raised this directly with  
3014 President Xi Jinping of China. Second, we've gotten some of the fentanyl precursors that were not on prohibited lists  
3015 added to those lists so that we were able to get others to police this more effectively. Third, we're working with the  
3016 Mexican government on seeing about it having technology necessary to better detect efforts to smuggle fentanyl or  
3017 precursors into the United States. We are working across all of those lines of effort.

3018 But to your point, it is very important that the Chinese government take action to do something effective about

3019 this, and it is something that we're on.

3020 Mr. Buck. My understanding, Mr. Secretary, is there is not much of a fentanyl problem in China.

3021 Secretary Blinken. I believe that is correct.

3022 Mr. Buck. And the Chinese government, I think we would all agree, is an authoritarian regime and knows just  
3023 about everything its citizens are doing. And if fentanyl is coming into this country from China, they probably know  
3024 about it.

3025 And I don't want to propose a conspiracy theory, but I do ask whether you believe that this is a long-term  
3026 strategy by an adversary to undermine this country and the youth in this country? Drugs tear at the fabric of our  
3027 country, particularly younger people. And it would not surprise me if an adversary like China had a strategy to  
3028 introduce drugs into this country knowing that it would sap our strength.

3029 Secretary Blinken. I don't want to speculate about any strategies or not. All I can focus on is what's actually  
3030 happening and what can be done about it, and there's no doubt in my mind that the Chinese government could act much  
3031 more effectively in working to prevent the fentanyl from leaving China and getting eventually into the United States.

3032 Mr. Buck. And why wouldn't they?

3033 Secretary Blinken. Good question.

3034 Mr. Buck. I'm asking.

3035 Secretary Blinken. No, I don't -- again, nothing that I can speculate on. There may be economic  
3036 motivations, there may be other motivations. They may claim that this is something that they can't deal with as  
3037 effectively as we believe they can. All of those things are possible, but the bottom line is, like you, we want to see results  
3038 and we want to see concrete actions taken that result in fentanyl or precursors getting into the country.

3039 Mr. Buck. A country like Colombia will allow American DEA agents and others in, allow our military to help  
3040 train. I know I've been to Guatemala, I have seen our Navy Seals working with their marines. I am assuming that  
3041 China isn't quite as open to our military being in their country. Is this --

3042 Secretary Blinken. I think that is a fair statement.

3043 Mr. Buck. And, again, it just raises the issue of why not. I appreciate your efforts on this; and anything we  
3044 can do in Congress to help, we would greatly like to do that.

3045 Secretary Blinken. Thank you.

3046 Mr. Deutch. Will the gentleman yield? Will the gentleman yield?

3047 Mr. Buck. Yes, I will.

3048 Mr. Deutch. Mr. Chairman, thanks. I just want to take a moment to both thank the gentleman from  
3049 Colorado and thank the Secretary of State. This is -- Mr. Buck is right. This is a crisis that affects every  
3050 community in our country. And in the case of my nephew who died of accidental fentanyl ingestion, this is not a  
3051 question of overdose. This is a question of actions taken, whether by the government, whether by drug dealers, the  
3052 government in China or drug dealers or others, to murder our kids. I'm grateful to you. Thank you.

3053 Mr. Buck. I yield back.

3054 Chairman Meeks. Thank you both. I yield five minutes to Representative Cicilline of Rhode Island.

3055 Mr. Cicilline. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Mr. Secretary, for being here, and I want to really begin  
3056 by thanking you and the President for the enormous amount of work that I know it took to both build and keep strong an  
3057 international coalition, not only NATO but our European partners, to respond to Vladimir Putin's aggression in Ukraine.  
3058 And it wasn't that long ago, sadly, that we had a president of the United States advocating for the abolition of NATO or at  
3059 least undermining it in very significant ways. That's why I think we take for granted sometimes what it took for  
3060 President Biden and you to both build and keep intact this extraordinary coalition that's absolutely essential for the  
3061 Ukrainians to win this fight. So I want to begin by saying thank you for that and for all the work that you're doing to  
3062 restore American leadership around the world on so many important issues.

3063 I think it's also important to remember that Secretary Kerry told us at the time we originally considered the  
3064 JCPOA that the mission was to keep Iran from becoming a nuclear power, which remains the commitment of this  
3065 administration, because then we can, in fact, push back in a variety of different ways. It's much more difficult to do that  
3066 when someone has nuclear weapons, and we are learning that as we think about responding to Russia's aggression. So

3067 I hope everyone remembers that lesson.

3068 I want to ask you specifically as it relates to Ukraine and the impact it is having on food and security globally.

3069 We just returned from a visit with the head of the World Food Programme, Governor Beasley, and with Ambassador  
3070 McCain who runs, as you know, the UN Mission. And, you know, the disruption of the supply chain is obviously a piece  
3071 of it, but we also learned about the efforts that the Chinese are engaging to kind of increase their efforts in responding to  
3072 the food and security around the world.

3073 And so how is the State Department coordinating our food security efforts, the food security efforts of our allies,  
3074 to help counter, be effective in responding to this crisis but also to think about it as a way to counter the malign influence  
3075 of China and others. And in particular, we learned about the Gulf countries to play a meaningful role in responding  
3076 food insecurity. I wonder kind of what's the status of those discussions.

3077 Secretary Blinken. I very much appreciate you putting a spotlight on that and the work that you are doing on  
3078 that, including with David Beasley, with Ambassador McCain. This is vitally important because one of the horrific  
3079 consequences of the Russian aggression against Ukraine is an accentuation of what was already a significant food security  
3080 challenge around the world, and we probably have an additional 40 million people as a result of the aggression. And  
3081 the inability because of Russia of the Ukrainians to export effectively the wheat that they're producing, blockades of the  
3082 Black Sea ports, literally attacking farms and farmers. This has, of course, contributed to difficulty in countries getting  
3083 wheat that they had contracted for. There's actually a huge amount that's been produced this year, but it can't get out  
3084 of the country because of the Russian blockade, among other things.

3085 So we're seeing the effects literally around the world, as you know. And we're operating on a number of lines  
3086 of effort to address this directly. First, let me just say that next month we're going to chair the Security Council at the  
3087 United Nations. I'm putting the focus on our month-long presidency on food security and taking concrete steps to  
3088 address it.

3089 We have a plan before Congress for dealing with feeding the future that includes \$11 billion over five years to  
3090 address this both in the immediate but also long term. We are pressing countries to make contributions to the World

3091 Food Programme, to the Food and Agriculture Organization, which are underfunded, given the needs that they have now.

3092 We are urging countries that have stockpiles of food to release those stockpiles and also not to put in place export  
3093 controls that restrict their ability to get food to where to where it is needed.

3094 Our President has incentivized our own producers of fertilizer to produce more and get more out. We've  
3095 done emergency assistance to a number of countries that most acutely need it for food security: Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia,  
3096 about \$100 million.

3097 So across all of these lines, we're trying to address the problem in the immediate but also longer-term  
3098 sustainability.

3099 Mr. Cicilline. Great. Thank you, and we look forward to being sure that we are doing our part in supporting  
3100 those efforts in any way that we can.

3101 My final question, Mr. Secretary, is there is a letter that I led with 150 colleagues requesting an increase in funds  
3102 which support LGBTQIA rights around the world through the Global Fund and the European Democracy Resilience  
3103 Initiative. As you know, LGBTQIA around the world are facing really unprecedented violence and repression, and I just  
3104 hope that you will commit to streamlining democracy and human rights funding to include gender equity, empowerment,  
3105 and inclusive LGBTQIA people, and support increased funding for our community, which is really in tremendous need.

3106 Secretary Blinken. We do, and I welcome working with you on that.

3107 Mr. Cicilline. Thank you much, Mr. Secretary.

3108 Chairman Meeks. The gentleman's time has expired. I now recognize Representative Mark Green of  
3109 Tennessee, who is the Ranking Member of the Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere Civilian Security, Migration,  
3110 and International Economic Policy, for five minutes.

3111 Mr. Green. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member, and I want to let the Secretary know that the  
3112 nearshoring bill that your team reviewed has finally been dropped, so thank you for the input from Secretary Zuniga and  
3113 the others who helped with that. Also, thanks for being here today.

3114 I want to thank you, too, for, I think I understood correctly we're going to send some State Department people

3115 back in to Ukraine. I think that's a good decision. I thought taking everyone out was a bad decision, I'll be completely  
3116 honest with you. I remember from my study of history the State Department stayed all through the bombing of London  
3117 in World War II; yet we kind of ran away on this one, we shouldn't have, and I'm glad to hear that you're moving folks back  
3118 in.

3119 I want to jump back a few months to Afghanistan. You know where I am on this, and you know my criticisms  
3120 of both your department and the DoD and the administration. What I want to ask today is how many American citizens  
3121 are still in Afghanistan.

3122 Secretary Blinken. So let me say two things on that. First of all, I appreciate the other points that you  
3123 mentioned.

3124 There are, at present, 126, as of a few days ago, American citizens remaining, of whom 37 seek to leave and that  
3125 we are assisting. Since we left Afghanistan on August 31st, we directly assisted the departure of, again, as of a few days  
3126 ago, 636 American citizens and many LPRs, as well.

3127 Mr. Green. The 37, but you all are working a plan to get the 37 --

3128 Secretary Blinken. That's correct.

3129 Mr. Green. Very good. Mr. Secretary, I assume and I think it was talked about a little earlier, you're familiar  
3130 with the company Rosatom or --

3131 Secretary Blinken. Yes.

3132 Mr. Green. So it looks like they're a state-owned enterprise for Russia, and it looks also that they will be the  
3133 ones that build the \$10 billion reactor for Iran; is that correct?

3134 Secretary Blinken. Under the Bushehr plan, yes, I believe that's correct.

3135 Mr. Green. And my question to you is how much sense does it make, when we have these sanctions on  
3136 Russia, to allow a state-owned enterprise of Russia to build a \$10 billion nuclear reactor in Iran?

3137 Secretary Blinken. So the tradeoff is this: the reactor that they and others would take part in building would  
3138 be a proliferation-resistant reactor, which means that whatever is produced by it or through it could not be effectively

3139 used to build a nuclear weapon or produce material for a weapon, and that's a very important security concern for the  
3140 United States. I think --

3141 Mr. Green. Can anybody else build that reactor?

3142 Secretary Blinken. Well --

3143 Mr. Green. I mean, why give the profits to the very guys who we are trying to keep from funding a war in  
3144 Ukraine?

3145 Secretary Blinken. The question is, if there's an effective alternative, we can certainly look at that but --

3146 Mr. Green. Yes, I'd ask you to that, and I think most Americans, if they were to apply just some common logic  
3147 to this, that we're doing sanctions here to keep the -- we stopped buying their oil so they wouldn't continue to fund the  
3148 assault on Ukraine, and why would we give them \$10 billion or allow them to get \$10 billion to build a nuclear reactor?

3149 So what I'm hearing you say is that you guys are looking for an alternative; is that correct?

3150 Secretary Blinken. If there is an effective alternative. Now, of course, it would require Iran to accept that  
3151 alternative, so that is part of the equation, as well.

3152 Mr. Green. Okay. Mr. Secretary, the families of American hostages in Venezuela, such as the Marine in  
3153 Tennessee and Matthew Heath, were told that exchanges were off the table; yet, the administration did make an  
3154 exchange for Trevor Reed. I am glad to see Trevor Reed home. I was on the phone with Mr. Pfluger late into the  
3155 night, making sure that he could see his family on the tarmac.

3156 Can you explain the discrepancy between those two?

3157 Secretary Blinken. Congressman, around the world, wherever there is an American arbitrarily detained,  
3158 including in Venezuela, we are looking at everything possible we can do to bring them home. Each situation is different.  
3159 As you know, recently --

3160 Mr. Green. I do.

3161 Secretary Blinken. -- we sent a delegation to Venezuela for the purpose of trying to get our Americans back  
3162 home, and we were able to get two of them back. But as you know, half a dozen remain. We are working on that

3163 every single day.

3164 Mr. Green. I appreciate the efforts there. As I understood it, too, though, that trip was designed to find a  
3165 solution for the \$500 billion of oil we were buying from Russia as an alternative, potentially using Venezuela. So it was  
3166 more than just to negotiate those guys. I mean, but I appreciate the fact, and I think you got two of them home.

3167 Secretary Blinken. We got two of them home but six remain.

3168 Mr. Green. Six remain. I appreciate it. Very quickly, and I'm going to ask this to be sent to me because  
3169 I'm going to run out of time here very quickly, leadership in Guatemala have told me that your department is putting  
3170 pressure on them to pick a certain candidate for an attorney general, and I'd like for someone to send a letter to me or, you  
3171 know, offline call, I want to find out why we're putting pressure on another country to pick a certain attorney general and  
3172 what criteria you are using or what is justifying that bullying, what I believe is bullying.

3173 Secretary Blinken. I am happy to follow up. Thank you.

3174 Chairman Meeks. The gentleman's time is expired. I now recognize Representative Ted Lieu of California  
3175 for five minutes.

3176 Mr. Lieu. Thank you, Chairman Meeks, for holding this hearing; and thank you, Secretary of State Blinken, for  
3177 your distinguished public service. I want to first thank you for the action you took on assignment restrictions,  
3178 announcing that you had left over half of them. I think that is a great first step, so thank you for doing that.

3179 I would like to now turn to Ukraine. And the U.S. hasn't just been helping Ukraine this year. We've been  
3180 helping them pretty essentially since 2014; is that correct?

3181 Secretary Blinken. That is correct.

3182 Mr. Lieu. And from 2014 until January 20th of last year, we provided a little over a billion dollars in funding; is  
3183 that correct?

3184 Secretary Blinken. That is correct.

3185 Mr. Lieu. But then under the Biden administration, we significantly ramped up the military aid to Ukraine,  
3186 and my understanding is that we provided up to now over \$4.6 billion to --



3187 Secretary Blinken. That is correct.

3188 Mr. Lieu. -- to Ukraine. Without that military assistance, Russia would have rode in and taken over Kyiv.

3189 That is how the world viewed it. I just want to emphasize what an amazing accomplishment that is that Ukraine will  
3190 remain a free, sovereign, independent nation. That was not something that people thought was going to happen. It  
3191 would not have happened but for the involvement of you and others and the President of the United States and NATO  
3192 countries. So I just want to make sure we emphasize that.

3193 We are now in a second phase of the war, which is how do we help Ukraine push back against Russian forces in  
3194 the south and in the east. That requires a different set, in my opinion, of weapons, more advanced weapons. And  
3195 you were right in pushing for MiGs to go to Ukraine. And just based on public reporting, I commend you for trying to  
3196 do that. I believe that air power and air dominance is a critical component of modern warfare, and I continue to urge  
3197 you to push to do that.

3198 I would like to now turn to state sponsors of terrorism; and, under State Department policy, you get to designate  
3199 countries as state sponsors of terrorism. If a country is so designated, then that gives us certain options. One of them  
3200 is, for example, it would allow us to ban dual use exports to that country; is that correct?

3201 Another is it would allow the U.S. to take economic action against countries that continue to do business with  
3202 that designated country, correct?

3203 Secretary Blinken. Yes.

3204 Mr. Lieu. It could also freeze that country's assets in the U.S., including real estate.

3205 Secretary Blinken. Yes.

3206 Mr. Lieu. And it would cause a U.S. to veto efforts of that country to secure, for example, World Bank loans or  
3207 other loans such as that.

3208 Secretary Blinken. Yes.

3209 Mr. Lieu. In order for you to designate that, you need two instances, at least, of that country sponsoring  
3210 terrorism. So when we talk about Russia, it is true, right, that Russia provides sanctuary to a U.S.-designated terrorist

3211 group known as the Russian Imperial Movement?

3212 Secretary Blinken. Let me say this, Congressman. I appreciate the question and the issue. We have the  
3213 office of our legal advisor looking at this question about whether, under the law, the criteria exists to consider Russia a  
3214 state sponsor of terrorism in the case of Ukraine. That is under review as we speak.

3215 The only other thing I would add is all of the measures that you rightly point out that we would be able to apply  
3216 on the basis of that law, of course many of them we can and are already applying under other types of designations.

3217 So two things are important, I think. First, of course, is making sure that we are adhering to the law, meeting  
3218 the law, meeting its requirements. The second is making sure that we are effective by whatever tools we have available  
3219 to us to be effective in doing a number of things that you pointed to.

3220 Mr. Lieu. Thank you. On April 22nd, ten members of the Foreign Affairs Committee sent you a letter about  
3221 designating Russia as a state sponsor of terrorism, and we laid out all the various examples of how Russia, in fact, was a  
3222 state sponsor of terrorism.

3223 I just want to urge you to look at the standard. So the standard is not whether we have to prove this beyond a  
3224 reasonable doubt. It is not whether an academic professor somewhere could say, hey, maybe Russia doesn't  
3225 technically meet these requirements, and we believe Russia does meet these requirements. I think we have to supply a  
3226 common sense standard. The American people will not understand if we do not designate Russia as a state sponsor of  
3227 terrorism. They are watching horrific images on their TV day after day after day, so I just urge you to apply the common  
3228 sense standard, go through your process.

3229 And with that, I yield back.

3230 Secretary Blinken. Thank you.

3231 Chairman Meeks. The gentleman yields back. I now recognize Representative Joe Wilson of South  
3232 Carolina, who is the Ranking Member of the Subcommittee on the Middle East, North Africa, and Global  
3233 Counterterrorism, for five minutes.

3234 Mr. Wilson. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And, Mr. Secretary, thank you and Secretary Austin for visiting in

3235 Kyiv with Volodymyr Zelensky. Gosh, what an inspiration President Zelensky is to the world, as we are in a worldwide  
3236 conflict and it is authoritarianism by rule of gun with democracy by rule of law. And with a worldwide conflict, your  
3237 leadership is so important.

3238 In fact, this week, sadly, war criminal Putin is threatening our appreciated allies of Poland and Bulgaria by  
3239 cutting off LNG. What is America doing to help these great allies?

3240 Secretary Blinken. Thank you for your engagement and leadership on this, as well. Second, with regard to  
3241 this cutoff, I'd say a few things. First, there is an element of Russia shooting itself in the foot by doing this because, of  
3242 course, the revenues and resources that it would get from the sale, it will be denied.

3243 Second, we have seen other European countries already jump in to make sure that these countries can get the  
3244 resources they need to make up for what they might lose from Russia.

3245 Third, we have directed a significant amount of LNG to Europe over the last few months. We have doubled  
3246 the amount of American LNG going to Europe since February to help compensate for any shortfalls, including those that  
3247 may result from Russia trying to use this as a tool of blackmail.

3248 Mr. Wilson. And I hope, again, LNG will be promoted and, indeed, the floating terminals that can be provided  
3249 --

3250 Secretary Blinken. Yes.

3251 Mr. Wilson. -- whatever, to deny the war criminal Putin his ability to conduct mass murder.

3252 In regard to Syria, why isn't the administration applying the mandatory sanctions of the Caesar Act to the Assad  
3253 regime and its backers?

3254 Secretary Blinken. Congressman, I am happy to work with you on that. We, of course, are working to use  
3255 all the authorities that we have. If there are places where you believe we are not effectively using them, I would  
3256 welcome knowing about it.

3257 Mr. Wilson. Well, again, the opportunity we have to help the people of Syria overcome the oppression they  
3258 are facing, whatever could be done.

3259 Another issue to me that I'm concerned about are foreign military sales. It appears to me that they have been  
3260 handicapped with unnecessary red tape. What can we do to cut through the red tape to help and work with our allies,  
3261 such as Turkey and India?

3262 Secretary Blinken. I agree with you. I think we can and should do better in sales, particularly in the rapidity  
3263 with which we are able to do things, review things. That is on, I think that is on us in the executive branch. It is also  
3264 on Congress. So I think, together, we need to look at ways; and we are, in fact, looking at that.

3265 You make an important point, too, because a number of countries, as I said earlier, are rethinking their  
3266 relationships, including with Russia, including countries that have had longstanding defense relationships with Russia.  
3267 If we're in a position to be a partner to them in ways that maybe we couldn't be some decades ago, I think that is  
3268 something we need to be able to act on. And because, of course, if we don't, we know who is likely to do it in our place.

3269 So I agree with you, and it is something we are working on and welcome working with Congress, as well, to look  
3270 at how we can do this more efficiently.

3271 Mr. Wilson. And in line with that, I am really grateful that, with the leadership of Chairman Greg Meeks and  
3272 Ranking Member Mike McCaul, that we just had a very overwhelming vote to provide Lend-Lease for the people of  
3273 Ukraine. I particularly love the irony of this. In 2005, I had an opportunity to lead an American delegation to show  
3274 our affection and appreciation of the people of Russia to place a wreath at the cemetery there in Saint Petersburg the half  
3275 a million people killed in an open grave with the Siege of Leningrad.

3276 While I was there, I was so pleasantly surprised to find out that the reason for that success was American aid  
3277 provided through Lend-Lease, and now we will be providing Lend-Lease aid, thanks to the Chairman, to the people of  
3278 Kyiv, to the people of Ukraine, to stop an invasion by a war criminal. And so you had the war criminal Hitler, the war  
3279 criminal Putin, and now we are going to be there, as we provided Lend-Lease for 30 different countries.

3280 So how is this going to be expedited?

3281 Secretary Blinken. I very much look forward to looking at that. We have a number of important tools and  
3282 possibly to include what you have now put forward. The supplemental that I think is before you as of this morning has

3283 a number of very important and immediate ways that we can get assistance and sustained assistance to Ukraine, including  
3284 more resources for foreign military financing, which is vital; replenishing the draw-down account, which has been used so  
3285 effectively in order to get security assistance to the Ukrainians. We've done eight draw-downs to date.

3286 But I'm happy to pursue this with you.

3287 Mr. Wilson. And, ironically --

3288 Chairman Meeks. The gentleman's time is expired. I now recognize Representative Dina Titus of Nevada  
3289 for five minutes.

3290 Ms. Titus. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Mr. Secretary. Last week, the President announced that Prime  
3291 Minister Mitsotakis was coming. I know you don't want to step on any of his news or get ahead of the President, but I  
3292 wonder, in kind of reference to your answer to Mr. Wilson's question about other countries stepping up and trying to help  
3293 countries who have had oil cut off, Greece has stepped up and said they would help Bulgaria.

3294 Secretary Blinken. Yes.

3295 Ms. Titus. What is the State Department doing with our partners along kind of the southern plank of NATO to  
3296 assist them or increase trade or work on the pipeline, whatever?

3297 Secretary Blinken. Greece has stepped up, you're right, in a big way, not only in assisting the countries in  
3298 question that Congressman Wilson just referenced but also, as well, in supporting Ukraine directly, and we deeply  
3299 appreciate that. I just was on the phone with the prime minister and others, and that is, I think, a very important effort  
3300 that Greece has really stepped up on.

3301 We are working in a variety of ways to support efforts to promote cooperation, regional stability, energy security  
3302 throughout the Eastern Med. There are a number of projects that are underway or could be underway soon,  
3303 particularly with regard to energy, where Greece would be a critical partner. We are looking among other things also  
3304 are very, I think, compelling projects on electricity interconnectors in the region that would involve, for example, Egypt to  
3305 Cyprus and Greece, as well as Israel, Cyprus, and Greece.

3306 So there are a number of ongoing things where I think we can strengthen both the regional security but also

3307 strengthen energy security and strengthen partnerships among countries in the region.

3308 Ms. Titus. Well, that is encouraging. I'm glad to hear that, and I am sure they will be, too.

3309 Just really shifting gears, I want to ask you about the disability rights, International Disability Rights. We  
3310 passed as part of the NDAA guidance for establishing a permanent office within the State Department, and then, in the  
3311 omnibus last year we had \$750,000 set aside for a special advisor. I just wonder why the budget doesn't include  
3312 funding for a special advisor and why the department hadn't moved forward or made the decision to permanently  
3313 establish this Office of International Disability Rights?

3314 Secretary Blinken. I am happy to come back to you on that to make sure that we do have the resources that  
3315 we need to carry out this vital mission, but we have a very strong leader for the team. We have the office, I believe, that  
3316 the funding is appropriate and necessary, but I am happy to look at whether something else needs to be done to support  
3317 that mission.

3318 Ms. Titus. Well, thank you. The U.S. has a good reputation internally, and I think we should lead around  
3319 the world. And I think having this office with the resources it needs to do that will be commendable and recognized as  
3320 such by our friends and allies.

3321 So thank you, and I will yield back, Mr. Chairman.

3322 Secretary Blinken. Thank you.

3323 Chairman Meeks. The gentlelady yields back. I now recognize Representative Andy Barr of Kentucky for  
3324 five minutes.

3325 Mr. Barr. Thank you and welcome back to the Committee, Mr. Secretary. Under the previous JCPOA,  
3326 Russia was allowed to undertake civil nuclear projects in Iran worth billions of dollars. I think Mr. Green was asking  
3327 you --

3328 Secretary Blinken. Yes, he addressed that.

3329 Mr. Barr. -- about this, as well. Now, in the midst of this Russian invasion of Ukraine, Russia is sitting at  
3330 the negotiating table in Vienna seeking to revive this deal, setting up an escape valve through Tehran to get relief from

3331 international sanctions. A revived Iran deal would run directly counter to the sanctions that have been imposed.

3332 Can you commit, Mr. Secretary, to the Congress that any renegotiated JCPOA would not enable Russia to profit  
3333 off of Iran?

3334 Secretary Blinken. What I can commit to is that any renewed JCPOA would not, in any way, be in  
3335 contravention of the sanctions --

3336 Mr. Barr. No, I understand that, and I understand that is your testimony. That is not exactly the question I  
3337 am asking. And I think the fact that you can't answer that question is troubling.

3338 I think a renegotiated JCPOA needs to address that issue. We do not want to give a financial lifeline to Russia  
3339 at this time.

3340 Sir, in the Russian buildup before the invasion, it was the administration's/Space National Guard position that  
3341 imposing sanctions and arming the Ukrainians before invasion would have been provocative. This proved to be  
3342 spectacularly wrong, and we learned that inadequate deterrence invites aggression. Has the administration learned its  
3343 lesson and will it accelerate military assistance to Taiwan to enhance deterrence?

3344 Secretary Blinken. With respect to -- that's not accurate. In fact, before the aggression, well before the  
3345 aggression, we made sure that the Ukrainians had in their hands the weapons that they needed to deal with it. There  
3346 was a presidential draw-down of \$60 million Labor Day, there was another one of \$200 million in December before  
3347 Christmas.

3348 Now, to your point --

3349 Mr. Barr. Well, let's get to Taiwan. We can have that debate about pre-invasion of Ukraine, but I do want to  
3350 emphasize what Ranking Member McCaul, the point he was making, which is that Taiwan and Twin Oaks has asked us  
3351 for these foreign military sales to be delivered. We haven't seen delivery, and these are years in the making. Some of  
3352 these orders have come in and approved long previous to now.

3353 Where are we on actually delivering that to establish that deterrence?

3354 Secretary Blinken. Yes, I agree that there is a need to further streamline the process of actually getting this

3355 equipment, in many cases, made because really this goes to supply chain issues, as you know, as well as delivery. There  
3356 has been about \$18 billion in foreign military financing to Taiwan since 2017. That has continued at the same pace.  
3357 Another \$2.5 billion in direct commercial sales. But there are supply chain issues that we need to work on --

3358 Mr. Barr. Well, I would love to work with you on that. Let's get those resolved. Let's get more lethal  
3359 military assistance to Taiwan as soon as possible.

3360 The weakness, in my view, the weakness in the sanctions regime against Russia right now is the general license  
3361 for energy-related transactions. I recognize that our European allies' over-dependence on Russian energy has been an  
3362 issue, but I have a bill to close this loophole. I have raised this in the Financial Services Committee with Secretary  
3363 Yellen, with Wally Adeyemo. They are open to this. Now we see Germany open to the idea of a ban on crude oil  
3364 imports. So I think our European allies are coming around.

3365 What is the Department of State's position on closing this energy loophole, this general license, in our sanctions?

3366 Secretary Blinken. We are working to do everything we can to help the Europeans move off of Russian energy  
3367 of one kind or another as soon as possible, to include oil and ultimately to include gas. I think, as we speak, the  
3368 European Union is looking very closely at this question of oil. I would anticipate that they will take action on that in the  
3369 weeks ahead.

3370 Gas is a slightly longer-term challenge because, as you know, the reliance is built up over many decades.

3371 Mr. Barr. Understand. My bill would allow for special approval, specific waivers or licenses, special  
3372 licenses but not a general license on the gas, and escrow that and create a carrot, not just a stick but a carrot for Putin that  
3373 he would get the proceeds of those sales only when he withdrew.

3374 So I want you to take a look at that.

3375 Secretary Blinken. I am happy to do that.

3376 Mr. Barr. We passed the AXIS Act yesterday. That would require your department to report to Congress on  
3377 China support to Russia on sanctions evasion. I ask for your commitment to meet those statutorily-imposed reports.

3378 Secretary Blinken. Yes.



3379 Mr. Barr. Thank you. Finally, I represent a nonprofit in my district for the last 56 years. The International  
3380 Book Project has shipped nearly 8 million books overseas to schools, libraries, and community organizations in every  
3381 country on the globe. I will be submitting a question for the record to inquire how states can increase awareness of the  
3382 International Book Project to embassies around the world --

3383 Chairman Meeks. The gentleman's time has expired.

3384 Secretary Blinken. Sounds like a wonderful project.

3385 Mr. Barr. Yes. Thank you.

3386 Chairman Meeks. And let me just say at this juncture, because of the hard stop that the Secretary has, we are  
3387 going to just have one pair of witnesses, one Democrat and one Republican, and then we will be out of time. So I now  
3388 will recognize Representative Joaquin Castro of Texas who is the chair of the Subcommittee on International  
3389 Development and International Organizations and Global Corporate Impact for five minutes, and then the Republican will  
3390 be Representative Greg Steube.

3391 Mr. Castro. Thank you, Chairman. Thank you, Secretary, for your testimony today. I want to start with a  
3392 question about Mexico and our relationship with Mexico. The new U.S.-Mexico Bicentennial Framework offers an  
3393 opportunity to revitalize security cooperation between our two nations with a focus on human rights, public health, and  
3394 accountability after the failure of the drug war model of the Merida Initiative. In fact, today, Mexico is facing  
3395 record-high levels of homicides, increased violence against women and journalists, disappearances which are worsening  
3396 because of corruption. They are being done with impunity, and there seems to be negligence in all aspects or many  
3397 aspects of these from government.

3398 What specific accountability mechanisms is the State Department implementing in the framework to ensure  
3399 that Mexico's security forces and prosecutors' offices are respecting human rights, investigating corruption, and holding  
3400 bad actors accountable?

3401 Secretary Blinken. So, Congressman, thank you for that. We have deepened our cooperation with Mexico  
3402 across the board, and we want to make sure that our cooperation, including in the security sphere, is generally

3403 comprehensive and, of course, works in both directions. And we also have within the State Department but also DHS  
3404 and other actors that are engaged with the Mexican security services clear accountability measures to make sure that any  
3405 assistance that is provided is being provided in the appropriate way and is being used in the appropriate way. And if we  
3406 see that that is not the case, we will take action to correct it.

3407 I am happy to come back to you, in the interest of time, with more detail on how we are doing that, as well as  
3408 also refer you to some of the other agencies that are involved in supporting and working with Mexico on security.

3409 Mr. Castro. And I appreciate that. And one reason I think that it is particularly important to focus on  
3410 accountability for security forces that we partner with in Mexico and elsewhere in the Western Hemisphere is the  
3411 potential for our security assistance to end up feeding illicit arms trafficking if we don't have the appropriate safeguards in  
3412 place. And in my view, this problem has worsened since the authority to review many exports of small arms was  
3413 shifted from the State Department to the Commerce Department.

3414 I was glad to see President Biden promise to reverse that change during his campaign, and I just wanted to ask  
3415 you that, as we continue our work, will you work with me to fulfill the President's promise to return oversight of small  
3416 arms sales to the State Department and pursue other measures to crack down on arms trafficking in the Western  
3417 Hemisphere?

3418 Secretary Blinken. Thank you. And I don't want to get ahead of it, but we should have an arms sales policy  
3419 coming out shortly, and we have put, among other things, human rights very much front and center in that policy, as well  
3420 as making sure that we can act efficiently to use these authorities.

3421 So happy to talk to you offline about this, but we should be coming forward with that shortly.

3422 Mr. Castro. I will truncate my second question, which is on the issue of diversity. I remain concerned by  
3423 the under-representation, for example, of Latino Americans at the State Department, especially at the senior ranks.  
3424 State's own data show that only 3.8 of the Senior Executive Service and 6.8 percent of the Senior Foreign Service  
3425 identified as Hispanic in September. I led the effort, along with Barbara Lee, on the Appropriations Committee to fund  
3426 interns at the State Department, which we now, of course, have successfully done. And others, of course, helped, as

3427 well. But that was meant to build the pipeline so that there are more people who can afford to take on internships at  
3428 the State Department.

3429 So I want to ask you, that's an important piece of helping to diversify, how is the implementation of that  
3430 program going?

3431 Secretary Blinken. Congressman, first of all, thank you for everything that you have done for a long time  
3432 leading on this effort. The paid internship piece is critical, and we are grateful that we now have the authority to do that  
3433 and funds to do that. We are starting with about 200 paid internships. I hope that we can build that up over the next  
3434 few years. It is just getting off the ground, but what I can tell you is this: we have had thousands of applications since  
3435 we have been able to advertise the paid internships.

3436 Mr. Castro. Wonderful. Thank you, Mr. Secretary. And I yield back.

3437 Chairman Meeks. The gentleman yields back, and now I yield to Representative Greg Steube of Florida for  
3438 five minutes.

3439 Mr. Steube. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am not going to belabor the Afghanistan issue, but I just want to  
3440 make clear, because I came in as Representative Green was asking you the question, so there is 126 American citizens that  
3441 are still left in Afghanistan, 37 of which want to return; is that correct?

3442 Secretary Blinken. That's correct.

3443 Mr. Steube. I have made my position on the disastrous withdrawal of the Biden administration and the State  
3444 Department. We are now over six months, and we still have Americans stuck behind enemy lines with the Taliban. I  
3445 have made my positions clear on that.

3446 I want to go and move to the Iran Revolutionary Guard --

3447 Secretary Blinken. Could I just mention one thing --

3448 Mr. Steube. No, because I only have four and a half minutes and I am yielding a minute to Rep. Kim because  
3449 you are only here until 4:30.

3450 You commented before the Senate on your position that the foreign terrorist organization designation on the

3451 Iran Revolutionary Guard will not be lifted unless the Revolutionary Guard changes its behavior and ceases support for  
3452 terrorism; is that correct?

3453 Secretary Blinken. That's correct.

3454 Mr. Steube. Did Iran or the Revolutionary Guard stop their support for terrorism after the JCPOA was  
3455 reached?

3456 Secretary Blinken. Iran's support for terrorism has continued --

3457 Mr. Steube. So that's a yes.

3458 Secretary Blinken. -- for a long time.

3459 Mr. Steube. No, it continued. Did Iran detain 11 U.S. Navy sailors during the period of U.S. participation in  
3460 the JCPOA?

3461 Secretary Blinken. It did for a brief period of time.

3462 Mr. Steube. Did Iran illegally and unjustly detain Americans during the period of U.S. participation in the  
3463 JCPOA?

3464 Secretary Blinken. It did and it continues to.

3465 Mr. Steube. Did Iran's financial support for Hezbollah, Hamas, and Palestinian Islamic Jihad increase during  
3466 the period of U.S. participation in the JCPOA?

3467 Secretary Blinken. I can't tell you if it increased, but it was certainly sustained.

3468 Mr. Steube. Did Iran's support for the Assad regime increase during the period of U.S. participation in the  
3469 JCPOA?

3470 Secretary Blinken. I can't tell you if it increased, but it was sustained.

3471 Mr. Steube. It was sustained. Did Iran's support for the Houthis in Yemen increase during the period of  
3472 remain the same during the period of U.S. participation in the JCPOA?

3473 Secretary Blinken. I would say it actually increased for that period.

3474 Mr. Steube. Recently, a group of 900 Gold Star family members and wounded veterans who have been

3475 victims of the Revolutionary Guard's terrorist activities sent President Biden a letter asking him not to lift the FTO  
3476 designation. Are you familiar with that letter?

3477 Secretary Blinken. I am familiar with the letter.

3478 Mr. Steube. Do you have a copy of it?

3479 Secretary Blinken. Yes, I have seen it.

3480 Mr. Steube. So what is the administration's response to those families?

3481 Secretary Blinken. Again, Iran knows what it would have to do in order to have that designation lifted. I  
3482 would also say that, over this period, including since the designation of the IRGC with the FTO, it is a tax on Americans  
3483 have gone up 400 percent.

3484 Mr. Steube. So then there would be no anticipation then that in any deal with them that you would release  
3485 the FTO designation on the Revolutionary Guard?

3486 Secretary Blinken. Only if Iran takes necessary actions to merit the lifting of the designation, and I would also  
3487 note, Congressman, that, were such a designation to be lifted under whatever circumstances, it can always be reimposed if  
3488 Iran engages in actions that merit the imposition.

3489 Mr. Steube. Well, I don't know why, given the litany list of things that I just went through, when we were in  
3490 the JCPOA, when they were not supposed to be engaging in terrorist activity where you just confirmed every single one of  
3491 those incidents where they did engage in terrorist activity, that this administration would even be considering to remove  
3492 the terrorist designation for the Revolutionary Guard. I certainly do not support that. Those 900 Gold Star family  
3493 members do not support that. And with all the force that I have as a member of Congress and as a servicemember who  
3494 served in Iraq and saw his servicemember brothers and sisters attacked by Revolutionary Guards, 15 percent of which U.S.  
3495 combat fatalities in the Iraq War were attributed to the Revolutionary Guard's activities, I think it would be abysmal for  
3496 this administration to even consider lifting that foreign terrorist designation. And I would encourage you, and I know I  
3497 am a Republican and you are a Democrat and you are in a Democratic administration, but whatever encouragement I  
3498 could give you to stay strong on that and fight against terrorism. And if it is lifted, I will do everything within my power

3499 to fight against any lifting of the Iran Revolutionary Guard as a terrorist organization, and I hope that this administration  
3500 will think very strongly about any attempt to do that in any deal that they would be negotiating with the Iranians.

3501 With that, I will yield the remainder of my time to Rep. Kim.

3502 Secretary Blinken. And I am happy to go a little bit over. I just want to say to you, Congressman, first of all,  
3503 that I appreciate what you said and we are both, of course, Americans and we want the same things for our country. I  
3504 am pleased to be able to work with you and every member of this committee to achieve them. Sometimes, we have  
3505 differences of view on the best way to achieve them, but we have the same objectives. Certainly, when it comes to Iran,  
3506 we very much, I know, share the objective that it never acquire a nuclear weapon and that it cease the egregious actions  
3507 that it is undertaking, including targeting Americans, including supporting proxies that do the same thing, including going  
3508 after our partners and allies.

3509 The question is really one for all of us to make with our best judgment as to how can we be most effective doing  
3510 that? And, unfortunately, what we have seen over the last few years is that the policy we inherited is not working. It  
3511 has been a failure. Iran's nuclear program is moving forward. Its tax, including, notably, against Americans have  
3512 increased, not decreased, despite the maximum pressure.

3513 So what I commit to very much is working with you, working with every other member. And I particularly  
3514 appreciate your patriotism, your service, the Gold Star families. It's extraordinary. But I commit to work with you to  
3515 make sure whatever we are doing is effective as possible in dealing with the challenges that you rightfully point out.

3516 Thank you.

3517 Chairman Meeks. So put one minute on the clock of Representative Kim. That was not Mr. Steube's turn.

3518 Secretary Blinken. Good to see you.

3519 Mrs. Kim of California. Thank you very much. Congressman Steube, I want to thank you for yielding.

3520 A point of clarification, Secretary, are you willing to stay a little more than just a minute that was allotted to me?

3521 Secretary Blinken. Please, go ahead.

3522 Mrs. Kim of California. Will that be okay, Chairman?

3523 Chairman Meeks. Well, are we going to give the Secretary a chance to ask a question --

3524 Mrs. Kim of California. I just have a couple of areas that I wanted to --

3525 Secretary Blinken. Please go ahead.

3526 Mrs. Kim of California. -- so thank you very much. Mr. Secretary, first of all, on Uyghur issues, your  
3527 budget request says that scaling up international climate programs is a top priority for your department. So can you  
3528 commit to us that any international climate programs that you approve will completely eliminate ties to the CCP's  
3529 genocide against Uyghurs, particularly to industries tied to Xinjiang Province in the CCP's nationwide scheme of Uyghur  
3530 forced labor, such as the solar panel and lithium battery industries?

3531 Secretary Blinken. We want to make sure two things, Congresswoman. We want to make sure, first of all,  
3532 that our companies and others are not exporting to China tools that could be used for the repression of Uyghurs.  
3533 Similarly, we want to make sure that we are not importing products that are made with forced labor, including by  
3534 Uyghurs. Sometimes, this takes time to put into effect, but that is our determination.

3535 Mrs. Kim of California. Sure.

3536 Chairman Meeks. The gentlelady's time is expired.

3537 Secretary Blinken. And I welcome receiving any further questions from you. We can take them up on the  
3538 record.

3539 Mrs. Kim of California. Thank you.

3540 Secretary Blinken. Thank you very much.

3541 Chairman Meeks. And, Mr. Secretary, you have indicated previously under the question of Mr. Steube that  
3542 there was a question you wanted to answer in regards to Afghanistan. If you --

3543 Secretary Blinken. I think we have addressed that. Thank you very much.

3544 Chairman Meeks. So in closing, I would like to again thank you, Mr. Secretary, for being our esteemed  
3545 witness today, for your insightful testimony and participation today. In the past year, State Department has made  
3546 tangible progress in helping to diversify the Department staff and internships, modernize our systems for passport

3547 processing, information technology, payroll, and other processes, and launched the workplace flexibilities, training, and  
3548 other resources for our diplomats.

3549 While this progress has been a great step in the right direction, we know, of course, we always have more work  
3550 to do. But this budget request underscores the importance of diplomacy and development and of the robust foreign  
3551 assistance to foster key alliances and partnerships to confront the gravest challenges of our time.

3552 So building deeper relationships and helping other countries strengthen their democracies and defend  
3553 themselves against outside aggression, much like the Department and broader U.S. government is doing every day for  
3554 Ukraine, it's not just a matter of foreign policy. It makes Americans more secure, it serves American's interest by  
3555 ensuring a more prosperous, stable world in which we all live. It shows that unity is important. I think that the  
3556 camera of history will show that we are where we are now because of the unity of the State Department and the  
3557 administration. Thirty nations of NATO stayed together. Before, no one would have predicted that. It is the work  
3558 of the administration and the State Department. Diplomacy at work because we had to utilize that diplomacy to keep  
3559 those 30 nations together. We could have gone off by ourselves, but we didn't. Diplomacy means working with  
3560 others, not us by ourselves.

3561 Our allies in Asia, in Africa, others on the Western Hemisphere, all staying together, that is the work of  
3562 diplomacy. That is why it is so important to have our ambassadors and diplomats in various places around the world.  
3563 We were handcuffed for a while by not having ambassadors in certain key places. We have seen when they are there,  
3564 diplomacy works. It works in one way or the other. It works in the way that if someone does decide to go off and be  
3565 their own aggressive self, diplomacy will surround them. And it works also to prevent when we don't have someone  
3566 with evil intent from war from taking place.

3567 So I want to thank you, and I am grateful for the Department's strong requests for funding to continue to  
3568 modernize the Department and advance its foreign policy objectives. Again, thank you, Mr. Secretary, for always being  
3569 receptive to me and Mr. McCaul in a bipartisan way in working, and I look forward to continue to work with you and  
3570 seeing the result of your work to reform and lead the State in its vital work.



3571 So thank you, and this hearing is now adjourned.

3572 [Whereupon, the above-entitled matter went off the record at 4:42 p.m.]