

Secretary Kerry's Testimony to Senate Foreign Relations Committee
April 8, 2014

Chairman Menendez and Ranking Member Corker – thank you. Thank you for your leadership of this Committee, your help in moving our nominees through towards confirmation, and thanks to all of you for your patience and cooperation in rescheduling this hearing to accommodate some urgent issues with respect to Ukraine.

Ukraine, and so many other ongoing, simultaneous challenges globally, reinforce what I think members of this Committee have long appreciated – that because this is an incredibly complicated world, one more challenging than the bi-polar, East/West world order we took for granted for most of my life, more than ever, this is a world where American engagement is absolutely critical.

I know many of you travel too, so you see what I see in every place I travel as Secretary: On issue after issue, people depend on American leadership – whether it's South Sudan, a nation some of you helped give birth to, a nation struggling to survive beyond its infancy – or Venezuela, where leaders are making dangerous choices at the expense of the people – or in Afghanistan where this weekend millions defied the Taliban and went to the polls to choose a new president, or on the Korean Peninsula, where we are working with our allies and partners to make sure we can meet any threat and for the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. U.S. presence and leadership matter, which is why our rebalance to the Asia-Pacific has been supported and welcomed throughout the region.

We have great allies, great partners, but this fact remains: No other nation can give people the confidence to come together and confront the most difficult challenges

the way the United States can and must, and I hear this from leaders all over the world.

I particularly hear it about the Middle East peace process – where I have yet to meet anyone who has argued to me that it’s going to be any easier next week, next year, or five years from now. But I’ve talked to Foreign Ministers from dozens of countries who think that this is something the United States needs to be doing. And whether it was NATO this week, or the G-7 last week, or at the Vatican itself, I heard from minister after minister just how much the global community is invested in this effort – because peace would bring not only security and opportunity to the Israelis and the Palestinians, it would bring an end to one of the most intractable conflicts in the world.

The same is true on Iran -- where every country understands the danger a nuclear-armed Iran would pose to our national security and to the security of our allies. That’s why we’ve been so focused – along with you – on forging an unprecedented coalition to impose sanctions.

From day one, this Administration has sought to prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon. To achieve this goal, we have been clear that we will use all elements of our national power, including direct negotiations with Iran of the kind we are engaged in as I speak.

We are approaching these talks seriously and with our eyes wide open. That’s why, as we negotiate, we will continue to enforce sanctions on Iran not affected by the Joint Plan of Action -- not just over its nuclear activities but because of its support for terrorism and its gross human rights record. We will remain vigilant in

confronting Iranian illicit conduct, including any attempts at sanctions evasion. And we will continue to urge Iran to release our American citizens Amir Hekmati and Saeed Abedini, and work to help find Robert Levinson. All three should be home with their families.

These are just some of the biggest issues we're focused on each and every day, simultaneously. They're not the only ones. Senators Corker and McCain – you have been to the refugee camps on the Syrian border – you've seen these horrors first hand, as I have. This Committee has focused on the moral and security imperative that is Syria – and we are focused on it every single day.

We're wrestling with these tough, tough challenges even as we're moving the State Department ahead to help our businesses succeed in a world where foreign policy is economic policy. That is why we're focused on jobs diplomacy and shared prosperity, that is why Embassy Wellington helped a company in New Jersey land a \$350 million contract to lay fiber optics across the Pacific, and it's why our Consulate in Shenyang has been so engaged to reverse tariffs against American agricultural products.

This is the challenge of the modern State Department in the modern world – to wrestle with challenges and opportunities that come at us faster than ever before.

It's a challenge balanced against security in a dangerous world, which is why this budget implements the recommendations of the independent Accountability Review Board and makes additional investments that go above and beyond. I want to thank you for everything you have done to support the security of our missions.

And I want to thank you for the way this Committee stands up for an active, internationalist American foreign policy. I spent enough time in Congress to know not to call anything that costs billions of dollars a bargain. But when you consider that the American people pay just one penny of every tax dollar for the \$46.2 billion in this request, I think it's safe to say that in the grand scheme of the federal budget, when it comes to the State Department and USAID, taxpayers are getting an extraordinary return on their investment.

I thank you for your partnership in these efforts and I look forward to our conversations today.

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