

Press Releases: Strengthening American Diplomacy: Reviewing the State Department's Budget, Operations, and Policy Priorities

Testimony
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Secretary of State

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SECRETARY POMPEO: Thank you. Thank you, Chairman Royce, thank you Ranking Member Engel. It's good to see you both again. And thank you distinguished members of the committee that I had the privilege to serve with. It is great to be back.

And I appreciate the opportunity to discuss the 2019 budget request for the State Department –

CHAIRMAN ROYCE: And Mr. Secretary, maybe if we straighten the microphone it'll be –

SECRETARY POMPEO: Yes. How's that? Is that good enough?

CHAIRMAN ROYCE: Perfect.

SECRETARY POMPEO: All right. Very good.

And thanks. I want to talk about both State Department and USAID's budgets this morning.

In order to achieve the objectives laid out in the national security strategy, we have a plan. And you'll hear a great deal about it today. The proposed request reflects our obligation to use taxpayer dollars wisely and effectively.

Our request also makes clear the United States must exert a proportional financial commitment in the pursuit of goals shared by the entire international community. It is time for other nations – especially those with high GDPs – to assume greater responsibilities and devote greater resources towards our common objectives, whether it's crushing terrorists, stopping Iran's malign behavior, strengthening the NATO alliance, eradicating infectious diseases, and so much more. We expect good help, good financial support from our partners and allies.

President Trump is committed to diplomacy as the primary means of achieving the United States foreign policy objectives. So am I. We must maintain America's historic role as a truly global power, whose first instinct and overwhelming preference is to use diplomacy to solve global challenges. We're already seeing this in the preparations for our historic meeting with North Korea, still scheduled for June 12th. We have a generational opportunity to resolve a major national security challenge. Our eyes are wide open to the lessons of history, but we're optimistic that we can achieve an outcome that would be great for the world. Our posture will not change until we see credible steps taken towards the complete, verifiable, and irreversible denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.

On Monday I unveiled a new direction for the President's Iran strategy. We will apply unprecedented financial pressure, coordinate with our DOD colleagues on deterrence efforts, support the Iranian people perhaps most importantly, and hold out the prospect for a new deal with Iran – it simply needs to change its behavior. We seek to work with as many partners, friends, allies as possible to achieve the common objective of stopping all of Iran's nuclear and non-nuclear threats.

The President's highest priority is keeping the American people safe. This request for 7.3 billion in security assistance will help protect Americans at home and overseas, and I look forward to talking more about that today. The State Department will continue to lead the international efforts to denuclearize North Korea, and prevent – and prevent other actors from unlawfully acquiring weapons of mass destruction as their means of delivery,

while strengthening the capacity of partner nations to do so as well. Countering proliferation is at the top of President Trump's national security agenda.

The budget request also calls for 5.7 billion in support for coalition efforts to continue to defeat ISIS and other transnational terrorist and criminal groups that threaten Americans everywhere. The State Department and USAID will sustain programs that address the conditions on the ground that give rise to those threats. And we will work diligently to attract additional donors to support these very same efforts.

America's prosperity and national security depend on a strong and growing American economy. This budget request seeks 2.2 billion to help stimulate American economic growth by expanding markets for U.S. investment, and ensuring that partner countries can fully participate in the global economy.

America's message, a noble one, must be shared with the world at all times. Chairman Royce, you mentioned the Global Engagement Center. We will work with the \$55-plus million available to cover both its original mission, countering extremism, plus countering state-sponsored disinformation campaigns. We will not tolerate Russian interference in our 2018 elections. Much work has been done; there's more to do. Rest assured that we will take the appropriate countermeasures in response to the continued Russian efforts.

Finally, let me also update you on what is happening inside the State Department. Our workforce is the most important asset. Since becoming Secretary of State, now three weeks and a couple days ago, one of my highest priorities has been ensuring the finest diplomatic corps in the world is fully prepared and empowered to do its work in every corner. I am unleashing teams to do what they do best on behalf of the American people.

Last week I held my first town hall in which I laid out my vision and committed to working as one team with all of our personnel. In three weeks they've given me great support; I have taken their counsel, and I have relied on their expertise greatly. There are many challenges that remain.

Among my first acts was to begin to put the team back on the field. We lifted the hiring freeze on eligible family members; indeed, broadened that to lifting the hiring freeze for the entire Foreign and Civil Service. All Foreign Service and Civil Service hiring will be consistent with funding levels, but the freeze is no longer.

To help the team get on the field, I also know we've got work to do on some of our system's IT at the front. I know our professionals need that assistance to perform their work efficiently.

And with that, Mr. Chairman, I'm happy to conclude my statement as it's been submitted for the record, and happy to take questions from you and the committee.

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