THE STATE DEPARTMENT'S FOREIGN POLICY PRIORITIES AND THE FY23 BUDGET REQUEST

Thursday, April 28, 2022

House of Representatives,
Committee on Foreign Affairs,
Washington, D.C.

The committee met, pursuant to call, at 1:04 p.m., in room 2172, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Gregory Meeks [chairman of the committee] presiding.
Chairman Meeks. [Presiding.] The Committee on Foreign Affairs will come to order.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

This budget request makes clear the administration is putting diplomacy and development first, leveraging the United
States' unparalleled soft power, network of alliances, and unmatched influence at international organizations and institutions to protect the American people and advance the United States national interests.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Despite these challenges, there are some reasons, also,
though, to celebrate and be hopeful. I never like to be just negative. We have to also point out some of the hopeful things. Barbados became a republic and swore in its first President since it became independent 55 years ago. We are also seeing positive changes with recently inaugurated Presidents in both Honduras and Chile, ushering in new perspectives on fighting corruption and strengthening democracy.

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

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

The Department's establishment of paid internship positions is an important development, key to opening the door for historically excluded groups. And I hope the Department will take further steps to convert its internships entirely to a paid status.
I also appreciate the steps the Department has taken to support more expeditionary diplomacy and face-to-face engagement in support of America's interests around the world, as well as to modernize visa and passport processes that further facilitate such engagement.

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

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

And I look forward to hearing your testimony and answers to what I know will be very thoughtful questions from our members. And I now yield to Mr. McCaul for his opening remarks.

Mr. McCaul. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And thank you, Mr. Secretary, for being here today. I also want to thank you for meeting with us when we were in Poland
recently. We have a very good discussion. In fact, I have been there twice in the last month.

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

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

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

But the images of corpses littering the streets after Bucha, hands tied behind their backs, bullets in their heads; reports of mobile crematoriums being brought in to cover up the mounting body counts and cover up the evidence; the pregnant woman covered in blood being carried out of a recently-bombed maternity hospital, for God's sakes. Tragically, both she and her baby, as you know, did not survive. But these are Putin's war crimes,
and he must be held accountable. He fancies himself as reclaiming the glory of the Russian Empire. Yet, his legacy will be that of a war criminal.

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

But, you know, they are standing in front of these tanks, risking their lives to fight for their freedom, and against all odds, they are holding off the invading force. We were told in four days this would be over. We are now into the third month. Mr. Putin has underestimated the Ukrainian people, I think to his own peril.

And that is why it is critical, as you know, to get Ukraine the weapons they need to completely defeat Putin's invasion now. I appreciate the efforts made to get these desperately needed weapons into the hands of Ukrainians, once the war started. I wish more of these weapons had gone in before the invasion and not after. I know there was concern about provocation, provoking Putin. The President, in my view, sat on critical weapons packages in the spring of 2021 and again in November of 2021 -- all the while Russia amassed its massive troops on the border.
And as the battle for the Donbass heats up, the United States and her allies are only just now training Ukrainians on vital heavy weapons, including MLRS artillery, air defenses, armed drones, and tanks.

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

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

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

This unprovoked aggression on Ukraine has opened the world's eyes to the threat, though, of other malign actors, primarily
China, and to our partner Taiwan. At the Winter Olympics, as you know, Putin and the Chinese Communist Party General, Secretary Xi, announced their unholy alliance, "no limits," they call it, compact against the United States and NATO.

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

But they just reached a secret military agreement between the Solomon Islands, China did, which took us all by surprise. These are the very islands that my father's generation fought and died for to liberate during World War II. And now, it is under the thumb of the CCP.

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

In short, our arsenal of democracy needs rejuvenation. And that may be for a longer discussion, sir, that we could have. But the slow pace of these weapons that the chairman and I sign off on, not going out, raises concerns.
Turning to Afghanistan, Republicans and Democrats alike expressed alarm over the administration's failure to prepare for the fallout of the withdrawal. We were promised that this would be planned for all contingencies. But, in the end, 13 soldiers died during the evacuation; hundreds of American citizens and tens of thousands of Afghan partners were left behind. I will be releasing an interim report very soon outlining what our investigation has discovered so far. And I look forward to discussing that report with you, sir.

But, at the end of the day, we are in this together. And it is in the interest of the free world to defeat the evils of Mr. Putin and all of our foreign nation adversary countries. And with that, I yield back.

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

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

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

So, basically, you will have 5 minutes to deliver your opening remarks, and I will gently tap my gavel at the appropriate time. I may be a little more liberal with you because I think it is significant and important to hear from you and the reports
back, as we deal with the government's budgetary concerns, with
the requests, with reference to the State authorization and the
State Department.

You are now recognized for 5 minutes.
Secretary Blinken. Chairman Meeks, Ranking Member McCaul, thank you. Thank you for having me here today to speak about the administration's proposed budget for the State Department. But thank you more broadly --

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

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

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

And I did recently get back from Kyiv with Secretary Austin, where we wanted to show, as well as deliver on, America's commitment to the government and to the people of Ukraine. This brutal war of aggression against Ukraine has underscored to me the power and the purpose of American diplomacy. Our diplomacy is rallying allies and partners around the world to join us in supporting Ukraine with security, economic,
humanitarian assistance to impose massive costs on Russia for
its aggression; to strengthen our collective security and
defense, and to address the war's mounting global consequences,
including the refugee and food crises that have flowed from it.

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

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

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

We ask the Congress do the same with the emergency request
that is before you as of today, which seeks $20.5 billion for
security assistance, $8.5 billion for economic assistance, and $3 billion for humanitarian aid, including to address the growing global food security crisis, which is a direct result of Russia's aggression. Approximately $14 billion of this request would be directed to the State Department and to USAID.

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

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

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

Last fall, I had a chance to set out a modernization agenda for the Department and for U.S. diplomacy to enable us to even more effectively respond to many of these complex demands. And
in no small part, thanks to the fiscal year 2022 budget approved by Congress, we have been able to make real progress on this agenda, though much remains to be done.

To give you just a few quick examples:

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

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

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

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

My first 15 months on this job have only strengthened my conviction that these and other reforms aren't just worthwhile,
they are essential to delivering for the American people.

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

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

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

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

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

So, in the issue of time, let me stop there, and, of course,
we can address these and many other issues throughout the course of the testimony.

Thank you. Very good to be with everyone.

[The statement of Secretary Blinken follows:]

********** COMMITTEE INSERT **********
Chairman Meeks. Thank you for your testimony, Mr. Secretary.

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

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

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

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

Many of you are aware that, when I became chair of the committee, that I made a commitment to elevate the voice and the role of not only our senior members and our subcommittee chairs, but also rank-and-file members, including and especially our junior members, who bring valuable experience and perspectives to this committee.
And as such, for budget hearings with the Secretary, I have committed that whenever we hold such hearings, that all members who were not able to ask questions previously, due to time constraints, that I would resume the next hearing where the previous one had ended.

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

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

[Laughter.]

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

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

Mr. Secretary, there are so many things that we could ask. I am going to try to focus my questions just on, since this is a budget hearing, on trying to focus on what is happening internally within the State.

And you know what has been really important to me, looking at it last year. Fortunately, this committee passed the very first State authorization bill to be signed into law since 2002,
which included many important measures to promote diversity and inclusion at State, including the establishment of an appeals process for security clearance restrictions and mandatory training for hiring managers on implicit bias.

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

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

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

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

A five-year strategic plan that was just put forward on diversity, inclusion, access -- a plan that reflects input from more than 700 Foreign Service Officers and civil servants, as well as, of course, many experts.
Work that we're doing, innovative work, to actually get data disaggregated, so we have a complete picture of where we are and where we are not.

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

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

And for all of these programs and more, the budget lays out a funding request to make sure that we can actually carry them through. And so, we really welcome the partnership with Congress on this.
My commitment is this: this is turning around, to some extent, an aircraft carrier. It doesn't happen overnight. But, by what we are doing, by what we are putting in place, I am convinced that over the next few years, if we sustain it and stick to it, and resource it, you are going to see manifest progress throughout the ranks, making sure people have career paths that they can aspire to and get to the highest positions in the Department. All of that will play out over a few years, but we have now put in place the building blocks to do that more effectively, and I hope the resources can follow.

Chairman Meeks. Thank you for that.

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

Secretary Blinken. Mr. Chairman, we took these reports very seriously. And not only did we take them seriously, we acted on them. So, when this first emerged, we were immediately in
contact with our counterparts in Ukraine, as well as in neighboring countries like Poland, making sure that they saw what was apparently happening and that they took action to correct it.

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

To the best of my knowledge, the reports of such incidents have decreased significantly, but it is something that we track. And we will be happy to be in close touch with you. Needless to say, if any further reports emerge, please let us know, so that we can follow up with the governments in question.

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

Secretary Blinken. Thank you.

Very quickly, I would say this: the overall level of
violence in the country has decreased, but we are seeing terrorist attacks, including, horrifically, most recently, against Hazara and Shiite minorities. We are, of course, seeing retribution attacks by Taliban against those who are part of the former government. These seem to be, for the most part, not centrally-directed; that is, they tend to be happening at a local level, but they are happening. And that, of course, is egregious. And then, more generally, there is no doubt that, when it comes to the basic rights of the Afghan people, and especially women and girls, that has moved backwards across the board. We have seen, for example, when it comes to women and girls, the inability of girls to go to school above the sixth grade. The Taliban had made a commitment that they would be allowed to do so. It reneged on that commitment. We are pressing, and many other countries are pressing, very hard on the Taliban to make good on what it said it would do. We will see if they do that.

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

Chairman Meeks. Mr. McCaul?

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

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

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

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

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

My question, very quickly, the chairman and I do sign off on foreign military weapons sales. We sent a letter, a joint letter, to you on December the 3rd of last year. There are about 10 weapons systems. I won't go into detail on all of them, but all very important. When I met the Ambassador from Taiwan, she said, "I have not received any of these."
I think deterrence is important here. And we wrote to request notification of the pending shipment of these sales to Taiwan. Why is this being held up? Many of these were signed off by the chairman and myself two years ago.

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

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

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

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

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

Secretary Blinken. Yes. So, I just wanted to make that
Mr. McCaul. When will Taiwan receive these weapons?

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

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

Secretary Blinken. Well, the point --

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

And thank you, sir.

Chairman Meeks. The gentleman's time has expired.

I now recognize Representative Tom Malinowski from New Jersey, who is the vice chair of the full committee, for 5 minutes.
Mr. Malinowski. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

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

Most of my questions about that have been answered just in the last 24 hours. I did want to ask one question that I think, as we work together on this, will probably be pretty crucial. And that is, you know, we are talking about the oligarchs and the yachts and the villas and bank accounts, and so forth. But we accept that principle, do you think it might also apply to state assets? For example, the much larger amount of money that has been frozen around the world belonging to the Russian Central Bank?
Secretary Blinken. In short, yes. And this is one of the things that we have asked our own lawyers to look at, which is what authorities would be needed, potentially, to seize those assets, but not only to seize them, but to use them in exactly the ways that you and Congressman Wilson have suggested in your legislation.

Mr. Malinowski. Yes, thank you.

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

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

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

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

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

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

The last thing is this: I mentioned this in my opening
remarks. A number of countries around the world are rethinking
their relationships, including their relationship with Russia,
going forward. And some of them have had relationships with
Russia going back decades, including at times when we couldn't
have the same kind of relationship with them, and now we can.
We also need to make sure that we are helping advance that transition, and doing it in a way that, as a strategic matter, moves things in the right direction. And that is something we are factoring in as well.

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

Chairman Meeks. The gentleman's time has expired.

Mr. Malinowski. And I yield back.

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

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

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

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

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

Since this administration took office, our three main global
adversaries have become emboldened and strengthened.

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

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

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

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

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

We have witnessed two enormous foreign policy failures, in my opinion, between this administration's withdrawal from Afghanistan and its early concessions to Russia, as Putin prepared
for, and then, invaded Ukraine. It is clear from these actions, and from what I learned during my meetings on this recent CODEL, that we must reestablish confidence in our allies.

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

Secretary Blinken. Thank you.

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

Indeed, Congressman, one of the first instructions I had on taking office from President Biden was to focus on re-energizing and revitalizing these alliances and partnerships, and that is exactly what we did. We are now in better standing at NATO than we have been in as long as I can remember. We have revitalized partnerships throughout the Asia Pacific, where you were, including with Japan, with Korea, with Australia, with New Zealand. We have energized the Quad that brings together the
United States, India, Australia, and Japan. As you know, this is a vital institution. We have re-engaged with ASEAN.

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

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

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

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

Outrageous gas prices are hurting my constituents. Yet, the administration continues to attack American oil and gas.
Chairman Meeks. Put your microphone on, Mr. Jackson.

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

Okay.

Sir, outrageous gas prices are hurting my constituents. Yet, the administration continues to attack American oil and gas. Biden's price-hike blame game is not only falling on deaf ears, but it is also not believable. Gas prices have risen each week since Biden took office, due to this disastrous and ill-advised posture towards American energy company.

Beyond the failed domestic energy policies, it also seems that your Department's policy towards our Gulf partners is failing. I was disappointed to see that National Security Advisor Sullivan approached the meeting with the Saudi Crown Prince in a way that offended the Kingdom. This, in my opinion, is not the way to handle such relationships during a global energy crisis.

My constituents ask me each day what the government is doing to lower their gas prices. So, I would like to turn that question to you, Mr. Secretary. What is your strategy to work with other countries, particularly our Gulf partners, to increase access to energy and decrease the world's reliance on Russian oil and gas?

Secretary Blinken. It is very important.

Chairman Meeks. You are going to have to do that in writing.
I have got to be strict on the 5-minute rule because we have got so many folks that I want to make sure we get to.

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

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

Thank you.

Mr. McCaul. Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

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

Chairman Meeks. Without objection.

[The information follows:]

********** COMMITTEE INSERT **********
Chairman Meeks. I now recognize Representative Andy Kim of New Jersey for 5 minutes.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

But, beyond that, this aggression is not only an aggression
against Ukraine; it is an aggression against the very basic
principles of the international order that were put in place to
try to keep peace and security after two world wars, both of which
drew the United States in. And those principles, like the
importance of sovereignty, of independence; principles like one
country can't simply invade another, change its borders, and
assert that might makes right; can't dictate to another country its policies, its future, its decisions. That is what Russia is committing aggression against.

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

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

Mr. Kim of New Jersey. I agree with a lot of that. And I think, as we are considering this budget and thinking this through, I think it is really important -- and I would like to work with you -- on how we define success to the American people. Because we spend a lot of time talking about what we are trying to do, but we don't always do as much as we need to to articulate why we are doing it and what we are trying to achieve.

And so, when I think through this, I very much agree with you that we are feeling like we are in this new paradigm-shift moment, where we are seeing these sacrosanct ideas and values of sovereignty being challenged blatantly by authoritarian
governments around this world. And I think this is an opportunity for us to reassert what American leadership is, trying to signify what that is, and define what success can be.

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

Secretary Blinken. Mm-hmm.

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

Secretary Blinken. Congressman, we are working on that right now. And I can't give you a date certain because we want to make sure, obviously, that it is done in a way that looks out for their safety and their security. But we have diplomats back on the ground in Ukraine literally as we speak working on that. I would anticipate that this will play out over the next several weeks, but we will be back in Kyiv and the American flag will be flying over the embassy.

Mr. Kim of New Jersey. And when we understand the challenges that we face with Russia, I think a lot of people also recognize -- and I think the chairman mentioned it -- you know, some of our bigger concerns in some ways are related to China, about what comes next. I heard that there is going to be a comprehensive
Strategy being released sometime soon. I saw the President will be doing some travel, most likely, out to Korea and Japan.

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

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

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

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

Chairman Meeks. We have to be strict on this 5-minute rule. So, I have to tell members, if you know a question, try to get it out, so that the Secretary will have a chance to answer it.

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

Mr. Pfluger. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

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

And I can't thank you, the SPEHA team, and your entire State
Department for doing the right thing, and ultimately, putting
patriotism over politics. That is exactly what happened today.
The reunification with his family was just tremendous -- the
joy on their face to see their son. Obviously, they are very
worried about his health, and it is going to take some time to
heal, to get back to good health, but his spirit is strong. He
is a fighter. He is a survivor. And I think it is an important
day in our country.

I am going to use this word again, patriotism over politics.
And there are many issues that I would like to bring up today,
but I am not going to do that. I am going to, instead, tell you
thank you. I would ask that you tell President Biden thank you
for putting patriotism over politics and doing the right thing
to bring Trevor home.

I can't imagine the tough decision that had to be made, but you made it; you did it, and he is home. And I just would like to give you a couple of minutes to respond to that; and also, to ask that we don't forget Paul Whelan, and that we don't forget other people who are unlawfully incarcerated in other countries. We should leave no American behind. And it started with Trevor. I hope this momentum will continue.

So, Mr. Secretary, over to you.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Mr. Pfluger. Thank you, Mr. Secretary.

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

With that, I yield back.

Chairman Meeks. The gentleman yields back.

I now recognize Representative Sara Jacobs of California, who is the vice chair of the Subcommittee on International
Ms. Jacobs. Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman.
And thank you, Mr. Secretary, for being here with us today.
I, first, want to thank you and the Biden administration for your announcement of the Global Fragility Act countries. I am looking forward to its implementation, particularly in Mozambique and coastal West Africa. And I hope we can continue to work together on that.
I also know that a lot of us will be asking you questions about Ukraine, and it is our job to do oversight, but I think it is, first, important to say that you and the Biden administration and President Biden have been masterful in how you all have handled this crisis -- making sure our allies are and remain united; making sure that our approach is strategic and thoughtful, and weighing all the different calculations, including the risk of escalation. And I just want to say that I go to sleep feeling better every night because I know that President Biden and you all are leading the way here on this.
One of the things I know we are all concerned about -- and I am sure you saw on your trip to Kyiv -- is this question of war crimes and atrocities. And it is increasingly important that the international community comes together to hold Putin accountable. Thankfully, the ICC has announced an investigation
in Ukraine, which I am very supportive of, and I understand the Biden administration is currently undergoing a policy review of the ICC and whether to provide material support to this investigation.

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

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

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

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

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

Ms. Jacobs. That is really great to hear. And I think it is important that we support all of them.
In terms of the ICC, we know that there are certain laws on the books that seem to prohibit material support and funding. Is that correct?

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

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

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

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

I want to go to another part of the world. The last two years have been particularly deadly across the Sahel with attacks claiming more than 3200 victims in Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger, and an alarming trend of coups, many of which were carried out
by U.S.-trained personnel. And this is despite United States
and international investments, the vast majority in the form of
security assistance in the region for, roughly, a decade.

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

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

And so, yes, security is, obviously, a critical component.
But, while it is necessary, it is insufficient. Getting at the
drivers of conflict; getting at the lack of effective
institutions, public services, the lack of inclusion for
minorities and the marginalized; human rights abuses; other
drivers, the strategy covers all of that. And it also makes sure
that, as we are moving forward, we are looking hard at the programs
that we have in place to make sure that they are effective; they are operating as they are designed to be. I believe we have the resources necessary in the budget to carry out that mission.

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

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

Chairman Meeks. The gentlelady yields back.

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

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

And welcome, Mr. Secretary.

Mr. Secretary, as you know, the mass exodus of women and children from Ukraine has left many vulnerable to human traffickers. And we know that, even at some of the points as they are coming across the border, people are saying, you know, "I'll give you shelter. I'll give you food." And yet, it is
an engraved invitation, frankly, to another hell that they are escaping, and that is human trafficking.

As you may know, I am the Special Representative for OSCE Parliamentary Assembly for Human Trafficking. I am in almost daily contact with NGOs, governments, stakeholders in the region. There was an OSCE hearing a few weeks back, and the collective sense was not enough is being done. But I do thank you that there is efforts being made to help groups like IJM, the International Justice Mission. I would respectfully -- and they haven't asked me to say this, but I will say it -- hopefully, they can get even more resources.

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

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

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

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

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

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

And finally, if you could, on April 18th, Congresswoman Salazar and I did send you a letter expressing concern at reports that our Embassy in Guatemala and U.S. Department of State
officials have been interfering in the appointment process for
the next Prosecutor General for Guatemala, and whether our Embassy
is complying with Article 41 of the Vienna Convention on
Diplomatic Relations.

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

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

Secretary Blinken. Thank you very much.

Mr. Smith. Thank you.

Secretary Blinken. And can I just start quickly by
applauding your long-time effective leadership on dealing with
human trafficking. It is something that I very much appreciate
and I also share the concerns that you have expressed about this.
This is something that we have been looking at and that we have
real concern about.

And in these situations, wherever they take place, but here
in Ukraine as well, we have, as you know, 5 million people who
are refugees. There are another 7 million who are internally
displaced inside Ukraine.

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

Mr. Smith. Great. Thank you.

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

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

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

Mr. Smith. Thank you. I appreciate it.

Secretary Blinken. Thank you.
Chairman Meeks. The gentleman's time has expired.

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

Ms. Manning. Thank you, Chairman Meeks.

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

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

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

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

So, Mr. Secretary, what is your assessment of the potential for Russian escalation into Moldova, and what are we doing to prepare and protect Moldova, and to prevent a wider conflict?
Secretary Blinken. Thank you very much, and I appreciate your engagement on this very, very much.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Secretary Blinken. This has very much been our message
around the world. And when Russia's aggression was mounting,
well beyond NATO, or, for that matter, our allies in Asia, that this actually directly affected them because it was a direct challenge to the international order that they depend on -- these principles that I talked about earlier that uphold peace and security; that say one country can't simply attack another or try to change its borders by force; take it over; assert that might makes right; dictate its policies and approach. That is not only relevant to Ukraine; it is relevant to countries around the world. And if this goes forward with impunity, others will take note and may act on it in ways that will be immediately detrimental to those countries.

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

In the OAS recently, the Organization of American States, we led the effort to suspend Russia from its observer status. Countries there recognized the importance of standing clearly against Russian aggression.

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

The last thing that I will say very quickly -- and we want
to work on this with you -- is we are seeing the effects, though, on other countries of Russian aggression -- food security, in particular. And one of the things that we have to do is make clear that the reason that is happening is because of Russia, not because of our sanctions, and to address the problem.


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

Mr. Chabot. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

And so, I wanted to follow up with some of the questions that Ranking Member McCaul had relative to Taiwan defending itself, and specifically, the fact that the supply chain issues are one of the major holdups for arms deliveries to Taiwan. With some of the weapons systems that they need, I understand they
may not be expected to be delivered for a decade or so, and, you know, that could be far beyond the time.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

And the reason that it is particularly interesting now is because I think Beijing is watching very carefully what is happening in Ukraine, and they have seen what Ukrainians have been able to do to repel the Russian aggression. They have also seen the dramatic response of the world in terms of sanctions on Russia that have resulted from this. They have seen the flight
of hundreds of -- by my count, 800 -- companies from Russia. All of this is factoring in. But, in a sense, the somewhat asymmetric response of Ukrainians to Russia is something that other countries are looking at.

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

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

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

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

But I just wanted to say that my staff and I have already been in touch with the State Department, and I just wanted to commend your people for being exceedingly professional, very
cooperative. And I want to thank you and appreciate the State Department's cooperation on this matter, and I look forward to working with them in the near future.

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

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

Secretary Blinken. Just to say thank you for raising that. This is something that is very near and dear to my heart. It has been for a long time. It is being reinforced even more, as a relatively recent father with young children.

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

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

I welcome working with you on this. This is, again,
something that I feel very strongly on a personal level.

Mr. Chabot. Thank you very much.

Secretary Blinken. Thank you.

Mr. Chabot. I yield back.

Mr. Malinowski. Thank you.

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

Mr. Schneider. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

In an otherwise dark world, normalization of relations between Israel and these countries is a very bright spot, lifting the lives of the citizens of these countries and the region. These agreements have brought hope to everyone in the Middle East and North Africa and illuminate a path to peace and cooperation in the region. These agreements have already enhanced security, cooperation, economic development, religious tolerance, and
cultural exchanges, and we must continue to support and build
upon this historic cooperation, as you did when you were at the
Negev Summit.

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

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

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

Let me just say, very quickly, we strongly support them.
We want to deepen them. We want to expand them. And that is
one of the reasons that I was just in Israel, and as you mentioned
in the Negev, and it was extraordinary. We had around the same
table the foreign ministers from Israel, Bahrain, the United Arab
Emirates, Morocco, and Egypt -- Egypt, of course, the first to
make peace with Israel, but, then, more recent countries that
have normalized their relationships with Israel.
And there is a strong and deep agenda to pursue cooperation across a whole wide variety of fronts among these countries. It is incredibly exciting to see. We have been working to accelerate that from almost day one of our administration, including bringing Israel, UAE, and India together to do joint infrastructure projects, including working directly with Israel and the UAE on religious coexistence, on water and energy projects. All of this because these agreements have allowed relationships to change.

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

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

I yield back.

Mr. Malinowski. Thank you.

The chair recognizes Representative Perry of Pennsylvania.

Mr. Perry. I thank the chairman.

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

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

Secretary Blinken. Billions of dollars.

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

How about do you know how many Chinese students are studying
in the United States versus U.S. students studying in China?

Secretary Blinken. It is dramatically disproportionate.

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

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

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

Is that potentially a conflict of interest?

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

Mr. Perry. I know. I am just wondering about taking down
that information off the website.
Secretary Blinken. I have no recollection of what was done or not done with --
Mr. Perry. You didn't order that to be taken down?
Secretary Blinken. Absolutely not.
Mr. Perry. Somebody just did it on their own?
Let me ask you this: would it be a conflict if Hunter Biden traveled to China on a taxpayer-funded plane to set up Bohai Harvest, as you know -- I am sure you are aware of it -- which, then, poured money into a CCP surveillance company, Megvii? And if you are not familiar with that, it is a company whose equipment is used in East Turkestan, and it was also sanctioned by OFAC regarding their biometric surveillance and tracking of ethnic and religious minorities in China.
And furthermore, Bohai Harvest, under Hunter Biden, also facilitated a $3.8 billion deal that transferred 80 percent of the world's most lucrative cobalt mines in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to a Chinese firm that uses children as young as 4 years old to mine cobalt.
And furthermore, under Hunter Biden, Bohai Harvest has also invested in the CCP-owned China General Nuclear Power Group, which was blacklisted in 2019 for allegedly trying to acquire U.S. nuclear technology for the Chinese military.
I am wondering if you view that, traveling on that airplane
which is funded by taxpayers, and is, of course, official business -- would that be viewed as a conflict? Would you view that as a conflict of interest?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Secretary Blinken. Again, I am not --

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

Secretary Blinken. I am here to address the State Department budget. I am here to address our foreign policy.

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

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

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

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

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

Secretary Blinken. I have no --

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

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

Mr. Perry. Is this not foreign policy? U.S. investors helping the Communist Party of China beat the United States industrially -- you know, the administration, the administration that you work for -- God bless them -- they say that we should all be driving an electric vehicle, 80 percent of the contents of which are produced in China. This goes directly to that. Does it help China or does it help the United States of America,
Secretary Blinken. Again, Congressman, you are asking political questions. You are welcome to ask those in the appropriate fora for that. I am here to talk about our budget, and I'm here to talk about our foreign policy.

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

Secretary Blinken. Thank you.

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

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

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

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

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

But as someone who's closely observed Haiti for 40 years,
my concern is that these investments will do little to change
the reality on the ground for the Haitian people if we're not
seriously invested in supporting their aspirations for a real
democratic transition.

The biggest obstacle to this in my view is the entrenchment
of U.S. support for the de facto regime of Prime Minister Ariel
Henry and the corruption and gangsterization his rule represents.
 Further, it seems to me that U.S. support is disincentivizing
Henry from participating in good faith negotiations towards a
transitional government.

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

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

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

Let me say first that we have deep concern about the security
situation writ large in Haiti, the lack of political accord for
elections, gang violence, kidnappings, homicides on the rise
despite efforts being made by the Haitian National Police that we're supporting.

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

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

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

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

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

Secretary Blinken. I'd welcome -- I'd welcome pursuing
Mr. Levin. Okay, thanks. Let me then turn to another important country, Colombia. There were reports of a massacre of civilians in Putumayo, Colombia, by security forces that received U.S. security assistance. And this is very concerning.

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

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

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

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

And if they're credible allegations, we will look into them. And if we find that the allegations have substance, we'll take
action.

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

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

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

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

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

Secretary Blinken. Well, thank you. And first let me just say more broadly, because I very much agree with you, the budget in total provides $11 billion, in fact a little bit more than $11 billion, to help countries implement targets, but also to help them adapt and to build resilience.
And this is very critical in our own hemisphere, including in the Northern Triangle. We've engaged with many of these countries at COP26 and before that and since then. And so these resources, if approved by Congress, will go a long way to helping countries do this, including the Northern Triangle countries.

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

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

But part of dealing with migration challenges is making sure that we get at the root causes of what it is that is causing people to give up everything they know and leave their countries and try to come to the United States or go elsewhere in the hemisphere. And a big part of that of course is trying to create greater economic opportunity for them.

We've been working on that and these kinds of investments that are made to create economic opportunity and also have a lens
on them that looks at energy, climate infrastructure in ways that advance both agendas.

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

I don't know--

Mr. Malinowski. The Chair --

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

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

Mr. Issa. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

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

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

Secretary Blinken. No, I appreciate the question. And
when it comes, for example, to the JCPOA, this is not a -- and Russia's participation in that, along with China, along with the European Union, along with the United Kingdom, Germany and France, Russia --

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

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

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

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

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

Secretary Blinken. Here's what Iran has, Congressman, as we speak. Iran has a nuclear program that is galloping forward
as a result of us pulling out of the nuclear agreement. Under
the nuclear agreement, Iran had a breakout time of about --
Mr. Issa. Mr. Secretary, I know -- I know we pulled out
of the nuclear agreement, but Europe didn't, correct?
Secretary Blinken. Europe, did not, but Iran -- Iran --
Mr. Issa. Iran -- Iran was bound by an agreement with
Europe, and Iran had -- had at that time undeclared materials,
has it as of right now, correct?
Secretary Blinken. The IAEA has been investigating and
looking at any aspects of Iran's nuclear program that remain in
question. We fully support those efforts. And they are separate
and apart from any nuclear agreement.
Mr. Issa. Have you, as of today, have you clarified where
those nuclear materials are located in Iran?
Secretary Blinken. The IAEA has identified places that it
--
Mr. Issa. They'd like to look at.
Secretary Blinken. They want -- they want to look at. And
part of the -- part of the result of the agreement in the first
place was Iran taking on the additional protocol, which enhances
inspection rights, including for the IAEA.
And I would also note that the inspections regime under the
agreement was the most intrusive inspections regime of any arms
controls agreement ever adapted. It gave us great visibility
Mr. Issa. Yeah. Mr. Secretary, the last agreement was not brought to Congress under the treaty requirements. Will you commit to bring this one as a treaty?

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

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

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

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

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

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

Will you commit that Russia will have no part, and you will
not lift any sanctions against Iran or Russia, until the Ukrainian conflict has been satisfactorily resolved? In other words, this agreement would give Russia $10 billion from an Iran that has access to the money to give them.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Secretary Blinken. A couple things on that, Congressman.
Thank you for flying in first. Yes, we have had a number of
Ukrainians who've come through Latin America into the United
States. They've been paroled in for the most part.

The overwhelming majority of Ukrainians who've had to flee
the country are of course in Europe. They are mostly intent on
remaining close by because they want to go home. And as soon
as they're able to, many of them have left sons, husbands, fathers
there to fight. As soon as they're able to, they want to go home.

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

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

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

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

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

Secretary Blinken. Let me be specific.

Mr. Vargas. Yeah, please do.

Secretary Blinken. Toward having the capacity to produce
fissile material on short notice or a nuclear weapon. The
agreement put that ability to -- to break out, in other words to produce fissile material or weapon, at beyond one year.

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

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

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

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

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

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

To give you one example of this, during the time the agreement was first negotiated back in 2012 through 2018, when we pulled
out of the agreement, attacks on Americans, our diplomats, our forces in the region, had gone down to virtually zero.

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

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

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

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

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

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

I yield back. Thank you.

Mr. Malinowski. We'll go to Representative Adam Kinzinger
of Illinois next.

Mr. Kinzinger. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Just a quick thing on the JCPOA since it's been discussed. I think it is worth noting there are provisions of the JCPOA that would be expiring now had we stayed in it. And I think it's important when we talk about the future, in foreign policy time, like ten years actually is pretty quick.

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

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

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

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

And I actually really do believe that if Vladimir Putin moves
in on NATO territory, he would be met with a devastating response.

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

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

Secretary Blinken. Thank you. And some of this may be more appropriate to take on in a different setting. But having said that, this is something we're looking at very, very carefully. I don't believe that we've been able to verify that use. But I want to come back to you.

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

Mr. Kinzinger. Thank you. Next question is the use of, you know, for American aid, to the extent we can answer this in
this setting, what is the prohibition, what is the reason for not basically flying American aid directly into Ukraine versus through proxies? Is it an international law issue, is it a safety issue, is it infrastructure? I'm curious if you can answer that.

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

Mr. Kinzinger. Right.

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

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

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

Mr. Kinzinger. Let me ask you about the air force side of
things. One of the, I believe one of the programs we used to do through the Air National Guard, I'm a member of the Air National Guard, we would pair with Ukrainian Air Force. We'd do fake fights, train each other, we'd train them to fly.

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

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

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

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

Mr. Kinzinger. And I'll just say to wrap up, I think, you know, it takes a lot to change an army from Warsaw equipment
basically to NATO equipment. I think with what we're seeing with our allies and donating some of the old Soviet equipment is actually helping to accelerate that process to switch over to NATO standards.

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

Secretary Blinken. Thank you.

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

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

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

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

Tell me, how did your discussions, if you drill down a bit deeper, go with our NATO allies for the longer term commitment? And certainly the President's statement today I think provides that leadership. But I think eyes clearly wide open, we're going to be in here for the long haul, and I wish you'd give a little more descriptive on that.
Secretary Blinken. I appreciate that, and I agree with you that this is likely to be a long haul proposition. That's exactly why we have been relentlessly focused on working every single day with allies and partners on every aspect of this, making sure the Ukrainians have what they need to defend themselves, making sure that we continue to impose massive consequences on Russia for this aggression.

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

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

Mr. Costa. Well, I think that's a very important point, and obviously one that needs to continue. I participated in the past with NATO parliamentary assemblies as recently as in February, and frankly it's only gotten I think better. But it's the strongest I've seen NATO react since the Cold War time period.
Speaking of which, the world's changed in the last two months in ways that we could never anticipate two months ago. Can you give us a status on the update of Finland and Sweden becoming a part of NATO?

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

Mr. Costa. Any idea on a timeline?

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

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

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

What can we expect for additional support for Armenia and
trying to hold Azerbaijan to the commitments they made in the truce settlement?

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

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

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

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

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

Mr. Costa. Okay, my time has just about expired, but I was wondering about after the last administration hollowed out much of the State Department's capacity, how it's going in terms of rebuilding your ability to do the diplomatic missions you have around the world.
Secretary Blinken. Well, thanks to the support that we've gotten from Congress, including in the last budget, we're making very good progress on that. The budget that we put forward now would allow us to keep doing that and to strengthening the Department, including by bringing in new personnel, including by strengthening our missions abroad in a variety of ways.

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

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

Secretary Blinken. Thank you.

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

I will now call on Representative Zeldin of New York.

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

I wanted to follow up on some of the questions and comments brought up earlier related to the Iran nuclear deal and the JCPOA.
When Secretary of State John Kerry was here sitting where you are nearly seven years ago, he was asked about why it wasn't submitted to JCPOA, why the JCPOA wasn't submitted to Congress as a treaty. And he essentially was stating that the reason why it wasn't submitted was because of difficulty getting it passed.

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

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

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

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

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

Secretary Blinken. Again --
Mr. Zeldin. Legally. What the -- do know what a treaty is? What's a treaty?

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

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

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

Okay, Mr. Vargas was asking you about the sunset provisions. That was a good question, good point, I share his concern. Are you going to agree to a nuclear -- is it possible you would agree to a nuclear agreement that doesn't change the sunset provision dates?

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

Mr. Zeldin. I heard your answer.

Secretary Blinken. So -- so --

Mr. Zeldin. But the question is would you agree to a nuclear
deal that does not change the sunset provision dates?

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

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

The history of arms control agreements in the past --

Mr. Zeldin. I don't want the history of arm control agreements. I want to know if you would agree to a nuclear deal that does not change the sunset provision dates.

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

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

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

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

Secretary Blinken. And including the provisions that are
in that agreement, and those include the sunset agreements.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Mr. Zeldin. Are you saying that -- okay, whatever it -- let's say your attorneys tell you that you don't have to submit the entire agreement. Would you commit to us that you would submit the entire agreement to Congress anyway?
Secretary Blinken. We will follow the law.

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

Secretary Blinken. My commitment is to follow the law.

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

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

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

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

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

Mr. Malinowski. Representative Gerry Connolly of Virginia.

Mr. Connolly. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And Mr. Secretary, welcome. Thank you for all you're doing for the Ukrainian people. It was a pleasure and a privilege to
meet with you when I was in Poland and Ukraine. And I have been so proud of our government in its very strong response, and I know the Ukrainian people understand that and appreciate it as well.

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

Secretary Blinken. It is.

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

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

Mr. Connolly. And during that --

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

Mr. Connolly. Right.

Secretary Blinken. To do exactly that.

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

Secretary Blinken. We did.

Mr. Connolly. And would it be fair to say that perhaps,
some causation, because of that four years' sustained effort by
the United States Government under the Obama Administration, Iran
might have been motivated to come to the negotiating table that
ultimately led to the JCPOA?

Secretary Blinken. That would be my judgment.

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

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

Secretary Blinken. That is correct.

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

Secretary Blinken. That's correct.

Mr. Connolly. And did they?

Secretary Blinken. They did.

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

Secretary Blinken. Both did.
Mr. Connolly. Were they required to reduce the enrichment of uranium to 3.67%?

Secretary Blinken. They were and they did.

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

Secretary Blinken. Sorry.

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

Secretary Blinken. That is correct.

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

Secretary Blinken. They were.

Mr. Connolly. And did they do that?

Secretary Blinken. They did.

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

Secretary Blinken. They did.

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

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

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

Secretary Blinken. They did.

Mr. Connolly. By how much?

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

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

Secretary Blinken. By public accounts, a few weeks.

Mr. Connolly. So that's not progress.

Secretary Blinken. It's the reverse of progress.

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

Secretary Blinken. I would just say this isn't a theoretical exercise. We've seen the world with the JCPOA, we've
seen the world without the JCPOA. With the JCPOA, the nuclear program was put in a box, without it, it's escaped from the box. 

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

Secretary Blinken. There is no doubt about that.

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

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

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

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

Mr. Connolly. Thank you, Mr. Secretary, my time is up.

I appreciate it.

Mr. Malinowski. The Chair now recognizes Representative
Ann Wagner of Missouri.  
Mrs. Wagner. I thank the Chair.  
And I also want to thank Secretary Blinken for his time today and certainly for his service. And for meeting extensively with our Foreign Affairs delegation, sir, when we were in Poland some weeks ago.  
On a different topic, Mr. Secretary, I co-chair the Congressional Caucus on ASEAN. It's the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. And one of -- and one fear I have heard time and again from Southeast Asian leaders is that the United States is ceding the Indo-Pacific to China.  
Our partners are desperate for the United States to demonstrate strength and leadership in the region. And they are deeply concerned that without robust U.S. engagement, Indo-Pacific countries will grow ever more reliant on the People's Republic of China.  
My Southeast Asia Strategy Act, which is now law, will send an unmistakable message of American resolve and leadership to the region. In the meantime, we have an opportunity to make our case that we must remain the region's partner of choice.  
And I hope that the U.S.-led Indo-Pacific Economic Framework announced this past October will serve as a roadmap for the future of free and open Indo-Pacific region.  
I worry, however, that the Administration is letting this
this moment slip away by refusing to offer our partners transparency, and frankly, candor regarding who and what will be included in the -- in the framework.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Mrs. Wagner. Well, I'm very glad to hear that. And I certainly -- I hope that we can send something more reaffirming to our Taiwanese partners, given their trade status and our relationship there.
It is certainly their top request and something that I am deeply involved and concerned about. And hearing from the leaders in the Indo-Pacific that they have real concerns about this. So I hope we can work together on it.

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

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

Secretary Blinken. Certainly, certainly.

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

Mr. Deutch. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

It's that unjust and illegal invasion that has dramatically shifted the international landscape with our allies and partners.
around the world. And we have coalesced in opposition to Russia's aggression and support of the people of Ukraine. We've implemented unprecedented sanctions packages against Russia, increased the supply of weapons to the courageous and resilient fighters in Ukraine.

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

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

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

It also takes Americans and other foreign nationals hostage, like my constituent Bob Levinson, as well as Emad Shargi, the Mazanis and others. Iran and the IRGC support terror groups in Syria and Lebanon and Gaza and Iraq and Yemen, just to name a
The regime has made its intentions to destabilize the region and expand its empire clear since the Islamic Revolution of 1979. Its nuclear program now enriches to 60%, which as the IAEA Director General has said, is done only by countries who are developing or intend to develop nuclear weapons.

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

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

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

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

Secretary Blinken. You're exactly right. Whether or not
there is a JCPOA, all of the actions and activities that you've described will continue.

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

But having said that, your point is a very important one. Which is why, irrespective of an agreement or not, we are working with allies and partners, with our Arab partners, with Israel and others to make sure that we are putting in place the means necessary to deal with all of these other challenges. Hardening defenses, long-range bomber overflights, deepening cooperation to indict, sanctioning relevant Iranian actors, boosting the capacity of our partners.

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

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

Mr. Deutch. And we heard multiple times in -- during the negotiation of the original JCPOA that all options were -- that
all options remained on the table. I want to reconfirm that that continues to be true today.

Secretary Blinken. That is correct.

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

Secretary Blinken. Thank you.

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

Mr. Mast. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

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

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

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

Mr. Mast. Ceasefire at minimum?
Secretary Blinken. Would need to require something like that.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Secretary Blinken. We want to hear from them --

Mr. Mast. And their sanctions.

Secretary Blinken. We want to hear from them and allies and partners and what would be most effective and when. So --
Mr. Mast. We want to hear from them, they want to hear from us. We're the United States of America. Zelensky came to the United States of America, said we're the leader of freedom, we have to be the leader of peace. He addressed the House of Representatives, the Senate. So let's be America and lead. And as the Secretary of State --

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

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

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

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

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

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

Mr. Mast. So answer to the Americans.
Secretary Blinken. No, we're doing all of this in service of ensuring that Ukraine remains sovereign, remains independent. And we are looking at what actions are required to make sure that we can keep doing that, as well as making sure --

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

Secretary Blinken. As well as making sure --

Mr. Mast. We're doing it for Ukrainians, we're doing it for Americans as well. There's a lot that's going on that's hurting Americans. What's going on with energy very specifically, that's an easy one to talk about. Let's go back. Does there have to be a war tribe -- a war crime tribunal for Putin before we will lift any sanctions or allow for any commerce?

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

Mr. Mast. War crime tribunal?

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

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

Secretary Blinken. Not -- not --

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

Secretary Blinken. Not -- not in public, not at this time.
Mr. Mast. Will they have to repay damages for everything that they've destroyed in the Ukraine?

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

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

Secretary Blinken. So we will look --

Mr. Mast. That's been killed?

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

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

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

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

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

Mr. Zeldin. Prior to the U.S. withdrawal from the JCPOA,
that Iran did not violate the letter of the JCPOA, is that your position?

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

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

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

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

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

Mr. Malinowski. I will now yield to Representative Brad Sherman of California for five minutes.
Mr. Sherman. There's some that will hold you to an impossible standard that somehow the Administration has failed if we don't get absolutely total justice in Ukraine and Iran doesn't change its regime and everything. We live in a real world, and it is not a failure of the Administration that the world will be imperfect, even when you lead it, lead the administration.

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

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

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

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

In Syria we still have a huge humanitarian problem. It's important that our humanitarian aid not go through Assad. And
as we have it in our interest to weaken Russia, we might want to take a look at those who are standing up to Assad, to Tehran, and to Russia in Syria.

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

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

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

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

Secretary Blinken. First, there have clearly been atrocities committed by every party in Ethiopia. There is no doubt about that. In terms of an actual legal determination of what they are and their nature, we will make that determination.
Mr. Sherman. Thank you. We have provided substantial defense systems to Israel. Forty-three thousand rockets have been launched by Hamas and Islamic Jihad. Thank God the casualties have been modest, and that is because of Iron Dome. But keep in mind, that was 4,300 attempts to kill as many Israeli civilians as possible. Every one of those rockets was a war crime. Not a single one had any real prospect of hitting a strategic target.

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

Secretary Blinken. We do.

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

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

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

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

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

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

So I don’t know about the specific report, but that certainly sounds possible.
Mr. Fitzpatrick. If you could take that for the record and get a response --

Secretary Blinken. Yes, I will.

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

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

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

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

Secretary Blinken. It is a good question and an important question. And as you know, we have an alliance with obligations and commitments with the NATO countries that includes Article 5. That does not hold for Ukraine and a number of other countries in Europe; and, for that matter, it doesn't hold for other countries around the world.

We are doing, through the security systems we're providing, the economic support we're giving, the humanitarian aid we're making available. We are going through extraordinary lengths to help the Ukrainian people
deal with this aggression, deal with it effectively, and they have been. There’s no doubt that, you’re right, horrific death, destruction has happened and continues in Southern and Eastern Ukraine, which is exactly why we are doubling down on everything that we can do to make sure that they have the means in their own hands to deal with this aggression.

There are, of course, many places around the world; and Congressman Sherman just referred, for example, to Ethiopia where we’re seeing horrific things happening. I could point to 20 or 30 different places, and the question for us 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 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 in advance of and now during this aggression to help the Ukrainians defeat it.

Mr. Fitzpatrick. Sure, you’d acknowledge this is a very unique situation. Three-quarters of Ukrainian children have been displaced, having bombs dropped on their head, pediatric cancer hospital being bombed, maternity wards being bombed, war crimes unlike we’ve ever seen in our lifetime. So, yes, genocide occurs everywhere and it’s wrong everywhere and we should help everywhere we can. This is a very unique circumstance, and I think it’s important that Ukrainians know that.

And what I think is puzzling and concerning to so many of us in this body is this administration’s seeming propensity to tell people what they are not going to do, signal to Vladimir Putin what we’re not willing to do, taking options off the table. Even if that decision has been made internally, why telegraph that?

Secretary Blinken. It is also important to be clear about a few things. And, first, I would say I think we have been extremely clear not only in what we have said but in what we have actually done to make sure that the Ukrainians have in their hands the means to deal with and ultimately defeat this Russian aggression. And when I saw President Zelensky a few days ago with Secretary Austin, he expressed directly to me his deep appreciation for the support this Congress has given to Ukraine and for President Biden’s leadership, and he said the United States was its number-one supporter around the world. And he said something akin to that publicly after the meeting. But, again, I don’t want to put words in his mouth.

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
Mr. Keating.  Thank you, Mr. Chairman.  Secretary, thank you for your extraordinary work and thank you for the work you've done in bringing home Trevor Reed.  I've spoken with the Reed family.  I know and have followed that very closely, and I know the extraordinary effort that went into that.

I also want to thank you for the effort you're giving with trying to bring home Paul Whelan, who has been 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, to try and bring him home as soon as possible.

And the other thing I want to thank you for, not from the perspective, not only from the perspective as a member of Congress here in the U.S., but I don't think it's fully appreciated just the extraordinary work at putting together and holding together and moving forward the Transatlantic coalition that we have in place.  We would not be talking about a Ukraine victory, we would not be even talking about what we could do as a country if we acted alone.  We know that we can't do it alone.  But I just want to share with you the perspective which I have regularly with foreign leaders, European leaders in particular, those are their comments, those are their thoughts.  And it is terrific to have them talk about a U.S. government from State, from Defense, from so many different areas of our government, that are stepping up at a time of crisis the world has never seen.

One of the people I spoke with recently, I spoke to the ambassador from Poland and also the mayor from Warsaw recently, too.  What they're doing there is nothing short of astounding either.  Just the absorption of school children.  Just in several weeks 20,000 children are now in school in Warsaw alone.  Over 180,000 students from Ukraine are now in school in Poland right now.  These are just extraordinary achievements.

They are strained, and I know in the supplemental budgets we have given some funds.  But with the plans for the long-term funding that we released today, will there be areas of assistance we can continue to give countries like
Poland that are just doing these almost Herculean things at a time of great humanitarian need?

Secretary Blinken. I appreciate you pointing that out. Let me just say, first of all, when it comes to Paul Whelan, I am determined that we bring him home, as well. We are not letting up in that effort in the least.

Second, with regard to Poland and other countries, we have seen extraordinary generosity by the Polish people, Moldovans we talked about earlier, others in taking in Ukrainians refugees and supporting them. Europe as a whole has done something remarkable in making sure that Ukrainians who wind up as refugees in Europe can be there for two years and get support that they need. But this is obviously placing a burden on other countries.

So we have been ourselves working to provide appropriate assistance, including to alleviate some of the burden that these countries are facing, to help them provide humanitarian support to Ukrainians who need it, and that includes Poland.

Mr. Keating. The other thing, we had a subcommittee hearing this morning dealing with Northern Ireland, the Good Friday Agreement, and the fragile nature of circumstances there. We had some extraordinarily young people that testified, and there's great hope that change will occur through that generation, as well.

I spoke after that with the Minister of Foreign Affairs Simon Coveney, and we were discussing a letter I led, the bipartisan letter to the State Department calling for a special envoy for Northern Ireland so that we can become more involved. I am very concerned. And so many other things going on in the world, but there remains a real crisis brewing there. And the elections are coming just in the next few days in Northern Ireland, and we don't know the ramifications of what that might be. But could you give me an update on any progress with the special envoy?

Secretary Blinken. In short, I anticipate that we'll be moving forward soon on naming an envoy.

Mr. Keating. Great. Thank you. I yield back, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Malinowski. Thank you. And I would just like to briefly note that we have a delegation of parliamentarians from Ukrainians who just joined us.

(Appause.)

Mr. Malinowski. It is our great hope that you will soon be able to meet, as we do here, without any fear of
violence being done to your beautiful capital and that your democracy will long endure.

And with that, let me call on Representative Buck of Colorado for five minutes.

Mr. Buck. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Secretary, thank you for being here. A little different concern.

I want to move away from Ukraine for just a moment, if we can.

I am concerned about the fentanyl that is coming to this country that is largely manufactured in China. Just a few statistics: fiscal year 2021, Border Patrol seized 11,201 pounds of fentanyl at the southern border, which was more than double what they seized in fiscal year 2020 and five times what they seized in fiscal year 2019. To put that in perspective, the amount seized, the amount of fentanyl seized by Border Patrol in 2021 is enough to kill the entire U.S. population more than seven times over.

The leading cause of death in America of adults between the ages of 18 and 45 is fentanyl overdose.

Recently, in Colorado and Colorado Springs, we had three high school students die of fentanyl overdose, one actually collapsing in class from that use. It is terrible.

I am wondering if you have had conversations with Chinese leadership about the production of fentanyl and what those conversations, whether they are productive or not.

Secretary Blinken. In short, yes to the conversations. Productive remains to be seen. First of all, can I just applaud your leadership on trying to deal with the opioid crisis that we have in this country, and I very much share your concerns about this and, in particular, share the concerns about the fentanyl that is originating in China and is making its way into the United States, including through Mexico.

So two things. We’ve been working on this in three ways. The President has raised this directly with President Xi Jinping of China. Second, we’ve gotten some of the fentanyl precursors that were not on prohibited lists added to those lists so that we were able to get others to police this more effectively. Third, we’re working with the Mexican government on seeing about it having technology necessary to better detect efforts to smuggle fentanyl or precursors into the United States. We are working across all of those lines of effort.

But to your point, it is very important that the Chinese government take action to do something effective about
this, and it is something that we're on.  

Mr. Buck.  My understanding, Mr. Secretary, is there is not much of a fentanyl problem in China.

Secretary Blinken.  I believe that is correct.

Mr. Buck.  And the Chinese government, I think we would all agree, is an authoritarian regime and knows just about everything its citizens are doing.  And if fentanyl is coming into this country from China, they probably know about it.

And I don't want to propose a conspiracy theory, but I do ask whether you believe that this is a long-term strategy by an adversary to undermine this country and the youth in this country?  Drugs tear at the fabric of our country, particularly younger people.  And it would not surprise me if an adversary like China had a strategy to introduce drugs into this country knowing that it would sap our strength.

Secretary Blinken.  I don't want to speculate about any strategies or not.  All I can focus on is what's actually happening and what can be done about it, and there's no doubt in my mind that the Chinese government could act much more effectively in working to prevent the fentanyl from leaving China and getting eventually into the United States.

Mr. Buck.  And why wouldn’t they?

Secretary Blinken.  Good question.

Mr. Buck.  I'm asking.

Secretary Blinken.  No, I don’t -- again, nothing that I can speculate on.  There may be economic motivations, there may be other motivations.  They may claim that this is something that they can't deal with as effectively as we believe they can.  All of those things are possible, but the bottom line is, like you, we want to see results and we want to see concrete actions taken that result in fentanyl or precursors getting into the country.

Mr. Buck.  A country like Colombia will allow American DEA agents and others in, allow our military to help train.  I know I've been to Guatemala, I have seen our Navy Seals working with their marines.  I am assuming that China isn’t quite as open to our military being in their country.  Is this --

Secretary Blinken.  I think that is a fair statement.
Mr. Buck. And, again, it just raises the issue of why not. I appreciate your efforts on this; and anything we can do in Congress to help, we would greatly like to do that.

Secretary Blinken. Thank you.

Mr. Deutch. Will the gentleman yield? Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. Buck. Yes, I will.

Mr. Deutch. Mr. Chairman, thanks. I just want to take a moment to both thank the gentleman from Colorado and thank the Secretary of State. This is -- Mr. Buck is right. This is a crisis that affects every community in our country. And in the case of my nephew who died of accidental fentanyl ingestion, this is not a question of overdose. This is a question of actions taken, whether by the government, whether by drug dealers, the government in China or drug dealers or others, to murder our kids. I'm grateful to you. Thank you.

Mr. Buck. I yield back.

Chairman Meeks. Thank you both. I yield five minutes to Representative Cicilline of Rhode Island.

Mr. Cicilline. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Mr. Secretary, for being here, and I want to really begin by thanking you and the President for the enormous amount of work that I know it took to both build and keep strong an international coalition, not only NATO but our European partners, to respond to Vladimir Putin's aggression in Ukraine. 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 least undermining it in very significant ways. That's why I think we take for granted sometimes what it took for President Biden and you to both build and keep intact this extraordinary coalition that's absolutely essential for the 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 restore American leadership around the world on so many important issues.

I think it's also important to remember that Secretary Kerry told us at the time we originally considered the JCPOA that the mission was to keep Iran from becoming a nuclear power, which remains the commitment of this administration, because then we can, in fact, push back in a variety of different ways. It's much more difficult to do that when someone has nuclear weapons, and we are learning that as we think about responding to Russia's aggression. So
I hope everyone remembers that lesson.

I want to ask you specifically as it relates to Ukraine and the impact it is having on food and security globally.

We just returned from a visit with the head of the World Food Programme, Governor Beasley, and with Ambassador McCain who runs, as you know, the UN Mission. And, you know, the disruption of the supply chain is obviously a piece of it, but we also learned about the efforts that the Chinese are engaging to kind of increase their efforts in responding to the food and security around the world.

And so how is the State Department coordinating our food security efforts, the food security efforts of our allies, to help counter, be effective in responding to this crisis but also to think about it as a way to counter the malign influence of China and others. And in particular, we learned about the Gulf countries to play a meaningful role in responding food insecurity. I wonder kind of what’s the status of those discussions.

Secretary Blinken. I very much appreciate you putting a spotlight on that and the work that you are doing on that, including with David Beasley, with Ambassador McCain. This is vitally important because one of the horrific consequences of the Russian aggression against Ukraine is an accentuation of what was already a significant food security challenge around the world, and we probably have an additional 40 million people as a result of the aggression. And the inability because of Russia of the Ukrainians to export effectively the wheat that they’re producing, blockades of the Black Sea ports, literally attacking farms and farmers. This has, of course, contributed to difficulty in countries getting wheat that they had contracted for. There’s actually a huge amount that’s been produced this year, but it can’t get out of the country because of the Russian blockade, among other things.

So we’re seeing the effects literally around the world, as you know. And we’re operating on a number of lines of effort to address this directly. First, let me just say that next month we’re going to chair the Security Council at the United Nations. I’m putting the focus on our month-long presidency on food security and taking concrete steps to address it.

We have a plan before Congress for dealing with feeding the future that includes $11 billion over five years to address this both in the immediate but also long term. We are pressing countries to make contributions to the World
Food Programme, to the Food and Agriculture Organization, which are underfunded, given the needs that they have now.

We are urging countries that have stockpiles of food to release those stockpiles and also not to put in place export controls that restrict their ability to get food to where it is needed.

Our President has incentivized our own producers of fertilizer to produce more and get more out. We’ve done emergency assistance to a number of countries that most acutely need it for food security: Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, about $100 million.

So across all of these lines, we’re trying to address the problem in the immediate but also longer-term sustainability.

Mr. Cicilline. Great. Thank you, and we look forward to being sure that we are doing our part in supporting those efforts in any way that we can.

My final question, Mr. Secretary, is there is a letter that I led with 150 colleagues requesting an increase in funds which support LGBTQIA rights around the world through the Global Fund and the European Democracy Resilience Initiative. As you know, LGBTQIA around the world are facing really unprecedented violence and repression, and I just hope that you will commit to streamlining democracy and human rights funding to include gender equity, empowerment, and inclusive LGBTQIA people, and support increased funding for our community, which is really in tremendous need.

Secretary Blinken. We do, and I welcome working with you on that.

Mr. Cicilline. Thank you much, Mr. Secretary.

Chairman Meeks. The gentleman’s time has expired. I now recognize Representative Mark Green of Tennessee, who is the Ranking Member of the Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere Civilian Security, Migration, and International Economic Policy, for five minutes.

Mr. Green. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member, and I want to let the Secretary know that the nearshoring bill that your team reviewed has finally been dropped, so thank you for the input from Secretary Zuniga and the others who helped with that. Also, thanks for being here today.

I want to thank you, too, for, I think I understood correctly we’re going to send some State Department people
back in to Ukraine. I think that's a good decision. I thought taking everyone out was a bad decision, I'll be completely
honest with you. I remember from my study of history the State Department stayed all through the bombing of London
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
in.

I want to jump back a few months to Afghanistan. You know where I am on this, and you know my criticisms
of both your department and the DoD and the administration. What I want to ask today is how many American citizens
are still in Afghanistan.

Secretary Blinken. So let me say two things on that. First of all, I appreciate the other points that you
mentioned.

There are, at present, 126, as of a few days ago, American citizens remaining, of whom 37 seek to leave and that
we are assisting. Since we left Afghanistan on August 31st, we directly assisted the departure of, again, as of a few days
ago, 636 American citizens and many LPRs, as well.

Mr. Green. The 37, but you all are working a plan to get the 37 --

Secretary Blinken. That's correct.

Mr. Green. Very good. Mr. Secretary, I assume and I think it was talked about a little earlier, you're familiar
with the company Rosatom or --

Secretary Blinken. Yes.

Mr. Green. So it looks like they're a state-owned enterprise for Russia, and it looks also that they will be the
ones that build the $10 billion reactor for Iran; is that correct?

Secretary Blinken. Under the Bushehr plan, yes, I believe that's correct.

Mr. Green. And my question to you is how much sense does it make, when we have these sanctions on
Russia, to allow a state-owned enterprise of Russia to build a $10 billion nuclear reactor in Iran?

Secretary Blinken. So the tradeoff is this: the reactor that they and others would take part in building would
be a proliferation-resistant reactor, which means that whatever is produced by it or through it could not be effectively
used to build a nuclear weapon or produce material for a weapon, and that’s a very important security concern for the United States. I think --

Mr. Green. Can anybody else build that reactor?

Secretary Blinken. Well --

Mr. Green. I mean, why give the profits to the very guys who we are trying to keep from funding a war in Ukraine?

Secretary Blinken. The question is, if there’s an effective alternative, we can certainly look at that but --

Mr. Green. Yes, I’d ask you to that, and I think most Americans, if they were to apply just some common logic to this, that we’re doing sanctions here to keep the -- we stopped buying their oil so they wouldn’t continue to fund the assault on Ukraine, and why would we give them $10 billion or allow them to get $10 billion to build a nuclear reactor?

So what I’m hearing you say is that you guys are looking for an alternative; is that correct?

Secretary Blinken. If there is an effective alternative. Now, of course, it would require Iran to accept that alternative, so that is part of the equation, as well.

Mr. Green. Okay. Mr. Secretary, the families of American hostages in Venezuela, such as the Marine in Tennessee and Matthew Heath, were told that exchanges were off the table; yet, the administration did make an exchange for Trevor Reed. I am glad to see Trevor Reed home. I was on the phone with Mr. Pfluger late into the night, making sure that he could see his family on the tarmac.

Can you explain the discrepancy between those two?

Secretary Blinken. Congressman, around the world, wherever there is an American arbitrarily detained, including in Venezuela, we are looking at everything possible we can do to bring them home. Each situation is different.

As you know, recently --

Mr. Green. I do.

Secretary Blinken. -- we sent a delegation to Venezuela for the purpose of trying to get our Americans back home, and we were able to get two of them back. But as you know, half a dozen remain. We are working on that
Mr. Green. I appreciate the efforts there. As I understood it, too, though, that trip was designed to find a solution for the $500 billion of oil we were buying from Russia as an alternative, potentially using Venezuela. So it was more than just to negotiate those guys. I mean, but I appreciate the fact, and I think you got two of them home. Secretary Blinken. We got two of them home but six remain.

Mr. Green. Six remain. I appreciate it. Very quickly, and I'm going to ask this to be sent to me because I'm going to run out of time here very quickly, leadership in Guatemala have told me that your department is putting 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 know, offline call, I want to find out why we're putting pressure on another country to pick a certain attorney general and what criteria you are using or what is justifying that bullying, what I believe is bullying.

Secretary Blinken. I am happy to follow up. Thank you.

Chairman Meeks. The gentleman's time is expired. I now recognize Representative Ted Lieu of California for five minutes.

Mr. Lieu. Thank you, Chairman Meeks, for holding this hearing; and thank you, Secretary of State Blinken, for your distinguished public service. I want to first thank you for the action you took on assignment restrictions, announcing that you had left over half of them. I think that is a great first step, so thank you for doing that.

I would like to now turn to Ukraine. And the U.S. hasn't just been helping Ukraine this year. We've been helping them pretty essentially since 2014; is that correct?

Secretary Blinken. That is correct.

Mr. Lieu. And from 2014 until January 20th of last year, we provided a little over a billion dollars in funding; is that correct?

Secretary Blinken. That is correct.

Mr. Lieu. But then under the Biden administration, we significantly ramped up the military aid to Ukraine, and my understanding is that we provided up to now over $4.6 billion to --
Secretary Blinken. That is correct.

Mr. Lieu. -- to Ukraine. Without that military assistance, Russia would have rode in and taken over Kyiv.

That is how the world viewed it. I just want to emphasize what an amazing accomplishment that is that Ukraine will remain a free, sovereign, independent nation. That was not something that people thought was going to happen. It would not have happened but for the involvement of you and others and the President of the United States and NATO countries. So I just want to make sure we emphasize that.

We are now in a second phase of the war, which is how do we help Ukraine push back against Russian forces in the south and in the east. That requires a different set, in my opinion, of weapons, more advanced weapons. And you were right in pushing for MiGs to go to Ukraine. And just based on public reporting, I commend you for trying to do that. I believe that air power and air dominance is a critical component of modern warfare, and I continue to urge you to push to do that.

I would like to now turn to state sponsors of terrorism; and, under State Department policy, you get to designate countries as state sponsors of terrorism. If a country is so designated, then that gives us certain options. One of them is, for example, it would allow us to ban dual use exports to that country; is that correct?

Another is it would allow the U.S. to take economic action against countries that continue to do business with that designated country, correct?

Secretary Blinken. Yes.

Mr. Lieu. It could also freeze that country’s assets in the U.S., including real estate.

Secretary Blinken. Yes.

Mr. Lieu. And it would cause a U.S. to veto efforts of that country to secure, for example, World Bank loans or other loans such as that.

Secretary Blinken. Yes.

Mr. Lieu. In order for you to designate that, you need two instances, at least, of that country sponsoring terrorism. So when we talk about Russia, it is true, right, that Russia provides sanctuary to a U.S.-designated terrorist
group known as the Russian Imperial Movement?

Secretary Blinken. Let me say this, Congressman. I appreciate the question and the issue. We have the office of our legal advisor looking at this question about whether, under the law, the criteria exists to consider Russia a state sponsor of terrorism in the case of Ukraine. That is under review as we speak.

The only other thing I would add is all of the measures that you rightly point out that we would be able to apply on the basis of that law, of course many of them we can and are already applying under other types of designations.

So two things are important, I think. First, of course, is making sure that we are adhering to the law, meeting the law, meeting its requirements. The second is making sure that we are effective by whatever tools we have available to us to be effective in doing a number of things that you pointed to.

Mr. Lieu. Thank you. On April 22nd, ten members of the Foreign Affairs Committee sent you a letter about designating Russia as a state sponsor of terrorism, and we laid out all the various examples of how Russia, in fact, was a state sponsor of terrorism.

I just want to urge you to look at the standard. So the standard is not whether we have to prove this beyond a reasonable doubt. It is not whether an academic professor somewhere could say, hey, maybe Russia doesn't technically meet these requirements, and we believe Russia does meet these requirements. I think we have to supply a common sense standard. The American people will not understand if we do not designate Russia as a state sponsor of terrorism. They are watching horrific images on their TV day after day after day, so I just urge you to apply the common sense standard, go through your process.

And with that, I yield back.

Secretary Blinken. Thank you.

Chairman Meeks. The gentleman yields back. I now recognize Representative Joe Wilson of South Carolina, who is the Ranking Member of the Subcommittee on the Middle East, North Africa, and Global Counterterrorism, for five minutes.

Mr. Wilson. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And, Mr. Secretary, thank you and Secretary Austin for visiting in
Kyiv with Volodymyr Zelensky. Gosh, what an inspiration President Zelensky is to the world, as we are in a worldwide conflict and it is authoritarianism by rule of gun with democracy by rule of law. And with a worldwide conflict, your leadership is so important.

In fact, this week, sadly, war criminal Putin is threatening our appreciated allies of Poland and Bulgaria by cutting off LNG. What is America doing to help these great allies?

Secretary Blinken. Thank you for your engagement and leadership on this, as well. Second, with regard to 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 course, the revenues and resources that it would get from the sale, it will be denied.

Second, we have seen other European countries already jump in to make sure that these countries can get the resources they need to make up for what they might lose from Russia.

Third, we have directed a significant amount of LNG to Europe over the last few months. We have doubled the amount of American LNG going to Europe since February to help compensate for any shortfalls, including those that may result from Russia trying to use this as a tool of blackmail.

Mr. Wilson. And I hope, again, LNG will be promoted and, indeed, the floating terminals that can be provided --

Secretary Blinken. Yes.

Mr. Wilson. -- whatever, to deny the war criminal Putin his ability to conduct mass murder.

In regard to Syria, why isn’t the administration applying the mandatory sanctions of the Caesar Act to the Assad regime and its backers?

Secretary Blinken. Congressman, I am happy to work with you on that. We, of course, are working to use all the authorities that we have. If there are places where you believe we are not effectively using them, I would welcome knowing about it.

Mr. Wilson. Well, again, the opportunity we have to help the people of Syria overcome the oppression they are facing, whatever could be done.
Another issue to me that I’m concerned about are foreign military sales. It appears to me that they have been
handicapped with unnecessary red tape. What can we do to cut through the red tape to help and work with our allies,
such as Turkey and India?

Secretary Blinken. I agree with you. I think we can and should do better in sales, particularly in the rapidity
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
on Congress. So I think, together, we need to look at ways; and we are, in fact, looking at that.

You make an important point, too, because a number of countries, as I said earlier, are rethinking their
relationships, including with Russia, including countries that have had longstanding defense relationships with Russia.
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
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.
So I agree with you, and it is something we are working on and welcome working with Congress, as well, to look
at how we can do this more efficiently.

Mr. Wilson. And in line with that, I am really grateful that, with the leadership of Chairman Greg Meeks and
Ranking Member Mike McCaul, that we just had a very overwhelming vote to provide Lend-Lease for the people of
Ukraine. I particularly love the irony of this. In 2005, I had an opportunity to lead an American delegation to show
our affection and appreciation of the people of Russia to place a wreath at the cemetery there in Saint Petersburg the half
a million people killed in an open grave with the Siege of Leningrad.

While I was there, I was so pleasantly surprised to find out that the reason for that success was American aid
provided through Lend-Lease, and now we will be providing Lend-Lease aid, thanks to the Chairman, to the people of
Kyiv, to the people of Ukraine, to stop an invasion by a war criminal. And so you had the war criminal Hitler, the war
criminal Putin, and now we are going to be there, as we provided Lend-Lease for 30 different countries.

So how is this going to be expedited?

Secretary Blinken. I very much look forward to looking at that. We have a number of important tools and
possibly to include what you have now put forward. The supplemental that I think is before you as of this morning has
a number of very important and immediate ways that we can get assistance and sustained assistance to Ukraine, including more resources for foreign military financing, which is vital; replenishing the draw-down account, which has been used so effectively in order to get security assistance to the Ukrainians. We've done eight draw-downs to date. But I'm happy to pursue this with you.

Mr. Wilson. And, ironically --

Chairman Meeks. The gentleman's time is expired. I now recognize Representative Dina Titus of Nevada for five minutes.

Ms. Titus. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Mr. Secretary. Last week, the President announced that Prime 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 wonder, in kind of reference to your answer to Mr. Wilson's question about other countries stepping up and trying to help countries who have had oil cut off, Greece has stepped up and said they would help Bulgaria.

Secretary Blinken. Yes.

Ms. Titus. What is the State Department doing with our partners along kind of the southern plank of NATO to assist them or increase trade or work on the pipeline, whatever?

Secretary Blinken. Greece has stepped up, you're right, in a big way, not only in assisting the countries in question that Congressman Wilson just referenced but also, as well, in supporting Ukraine directly, and we deeply appreciate that. I just was on the phone with the prime minister and others, and that is, I think, a very important effort that Greece has really stepped up on.

We are working in a variety of ways to support efforts to promote cooperation, regional stability, energy security throughout the Eastern Med. There are a number of projects that are underway or could be underway soon, particularly with regard to energy, where Greece would be a critical partner. We are looking among other things also are very, I think, compelling projects on electricity interconnectors in the region that would involve, for example, Egypt to Cyprus and Greece, as well as Israel, Cyprus, and Greece.

So there are a number of ongoing things where I think we can strengthen both the regional security but also
strengthen energy security and strengthen partnerships among countries in the region.

Ms. Titus. Well, that is encouraging. I'm glad to hear that, and I am sure they will be, too.

Just really shifting gears, I want to ask you about the disability rights, International Disability Rights. We passed as part of the NDAA guidance for establishing a permanent office within the State Department, and then, in the omnibus last year we had $750,000 set aside for a special advisor. I just wonder why the budget doesn't include funding for a special advisor and why the department hadn't moved forward or made the decision to permanently establish this Office of International Disability Rights?

Secretary Blinken. I am happy to come back to you on that to make sure that we do have the resources that 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 the funding is appropriate and necessary, but I am happy to look at whether something else needs to be done to support that mission.

Ms. Titus. Well, thank you. The U.S. has a good reputation internally, and I think we should lead around the world. And I think having this office with the resources it needs to do that will be commendable and recognized as such by our friends and allies.

So thank you, and I will yield back, Mr. Chairman.

Secretary Blinken. Thank you.

Chairman Meeks. The gentlelady yields back. I now recognize Representative Andy Barr of Kentucky for five minutes.

Mr. Barr. Thank you and welcome back to the Committee, Mr. Secretary. Under the previous JCPOA, Russia was allowed to undertake civil nuclear projects in Iran worth billions of dollars. I think Mr. Green was asking you --

Secretary Blinken. Yes, he addressed that.

Mr. Barr. -- about this, as well. Now, in the midst of this Russian invasion of Ukraine, Russia is sitting at the negotiating table in Vienna seeking to revive this deal, setting up an escape valve through Tehran to get relief from
international sanctions. A revived Iran deal would run directly counter to the sanctions that have been imposed.

Can you commit, Mr. Secretary, to the Congress that any renegotiated JCPOA would not enable Russia to profit off of Iran?

Secretary Blinken. What I can commit to is that any renewed JCPOA would not, in any way, be in contravention of the sanctions --

Mr. Barr. No, I understand that, and I understand that is your testimony. That is not exactly the question I am asking. And I think the fact that you can’t answer that question is troubling.

I think a renegotiated JCPOA needs to address that issue. We do not want to give a financial lifeline to Russia at this time.

Sir, in the Russian buildup before the invasion, it was the administration’s/Same National Guard position that imposing sanctions and arming the Ukrainians before invasion would have been provocative. This proved to be spectacularly wrong, and we learned that inadequate deterrence invites aggression. Has the administration learned its lesson and will it accelerate military assistance to Taiwan to enhance deterrence?

Secretary Blinken. With respect to -- that’s not accurate. In fact, before the aggression, well before the aggression, we made sure that the Ukrainians had in their hands the weapons that they needed to deal with it. There was a presidential draw-down of $60 million Labor Day, there was another one of $200 million in December before Christmas.

Now, to your point --

Mr. Barr. Well, let’s get to Taiwan. We can have that debate about pre-invasion of Ukraine, but I do want to emphasize what Ranking Member McCaul, the point he was making, which is that Taiwan and Twin Oaks has asked us for these foreign military sales to be delivered. We haven’t seen delivery, and these are years in the making. Some of these orders have come in and approved long previous to now.

Where are we on actually delivering that to establish that deterrence?

Secretary Blinken. Yes, I agree that there is a need to further streamline the process of actually getting this
equipment, in many cases, made because really this goes to supply chain issues, as you know, as well as delivery. There has been about $18 billion in foreign military financing to Taiwan since 2017. That has continued at the same pace. Another $2.5 billion in direct commercial sales. But there are supply chain issues that we need to work on --

Mr. Barr. Well, I would love to work with you on that. Let's get those resolved. Let's get more lethal military assistance to Taiwan as soon as possible.

The weakness, in my view, the weakness in the sanctions regime against Russia right now is the general license for energy-related transactions. I recognize that our European allies’ over-dependence on Russian energy has been an issue, but I have a bill to close this loophole. I have raised this in the Financial Services Committee with Secretary Yellen, with Wally Adeyemo. They are open to this. Now we see Germany open to the idea of a ban on crude oil imports. So I think our European allies are coming around.

What is the Department of State’s position on closing this energy loophole, this general license, in our sanctions?

Secretary Blinken. We are working to do everything we can to help the Europeans move off of Russian energy of one kind or another as soon as possible, to include oil and ultimately to include gas. I think, as we speak, the European Union is looking very closely at this question of oil. I would anticipate that they will take action on that in the weeks ahead.

Gas is a slightly longer-term challenge because, as you know, the reliance is built up over many decades.

Mr. Barr. Understand. My bill would allow for special approval, specific waivers or licenses, special 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 he would get the proceeds of those sales only when he withdrew.

So I want you to take a look at that.

Secretary Blinken. I am happy to do that.

Mr. Barr. We passed the AXIS Act yesterday. That would require your department to report to Congress on China support to Russia on sanctions evasion. I ask for your commitment to meet those statutorily-imposed reports.

Secretary Blinken. Yes.
Mr. Barr. Thank you. Finally, I represent a nonprofit in my district for the last 56 years. The International Book Project has shipped nearly 8 million books overseas to schools, libraries, and community organizations in every country on the globe. I will be submitting a question for the record to inquire how states can increase awareness of the International Book Project to embassies around the world --

Chairman Meeks. The gentleman's time has expired.

Secretary Blinken. Sounds like a wonderful project.

Mr. Barr. Yes. Thank you.

Chairman Meeks. And let me just say at this juncture, because of the hard stop that the Secretary has, we are going to just have one pair of witnesses, one Democrat and one Republican, and then we will be out of time. So I now will recognize Representative Joaquin Castro of Texas who is the chair of the Subcommittee on International Development and International Organizations and Global Corporate Impact for five minutes, and then the Republican will be Representative Greg Steube.

Mr. Castro. Thank you, Chairman. Thank you, Secretary, for your testimony today. I want to start with a question about Mexico and our relationship with Mexico. The new U.S.-Mexico Bicentennial Framework offers an opportunity to revitalize security cooperation between our two nations with a focus on human rights, public health, and accountability after the failure of the drug war model of the Merida Initiative. In fact, today, Mexico is facing record-high levels of homicides, increased violence against women and journalists, disappearances which are worsening because of corruption. They are being done with impunity, and there seems to be negligence in all aspects or many aspects of these from government.

What specific accountability mechanisms is the State Department implementing in the framework to ensure that Mexico's security forces and prosecutors' offices are respecting human rights, investigating corruption, and holding bad actors accountable?

Secretary Blinken. So, Congressman, thank you for that. We have deepened our cooperation with Mexico across the board, and we want to make sure that our cooperation, including in the security sphere, is generally
comprehensive and, of course, works in both directions. And we also have within the State Department but also DHS and other actors that are engaged with the Mexican security services clear accountability measures to make sure that any assistance that is provided is being provided in the appropriate way and is being used in the appropriate way. And if we see that that is not the case, we will take action to correct it.

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 also refer you to some of the other agencies that are involved in supporting and working with Mexico on security.

Mr. Castro. And I appreciate that. And one reason I think that it is particularly important to focus on accountability for security forces that we partner with in Mexico and elsewhere in the Western Hemisphere is the potential for our security assistance to end up feeding illicit arms trafficking if we don’t have the appropriate safeguards in place. And in my view, this problem has worsened since the authority to review many exports of small arms was shifted from the State Department to the Commerce Department.

I was glad to see President Biden promise to reverse that change during his campaign, and I just wanted to ask you that, as we continue our work, will you work with me to fulfill the President’s promise to return oversight of small arms sales to the State Department and pursue other measures to crack down on arms trafficking in the Western Hemisphere?

Secretary Blinken. Thank you. And I don’t want to get ahead of it, but we should have an arms sales policy coming out shortly, and we have put, among other things, human rights very much front and center in that policy, as well as making sure that we can act efficiently to use these authorities.

So happy to talk to you offline about this, but we should be coming forward with that shortly.

Mr. Castro. I will truncate my second question, which is on the issue of diversity. I remain concerned by the under-representation, for example, of Latino Americans at the State Department, especially at the senior ranks.

State’s own data show that only 3.8 of the Senior Executive Service and 6.8 percent of the Senior Foreign Service identified as Hispanic in September. I led the effort, along with Barbara Lee, on the Appropriations Committee to fund interns at the State Department, which we now, of course, have successfully done. And others, of course, helped, as
well. But that was meant to build the pipeline so that there are more people who can afford to take on internships at
the State Department.

So I want to ask you, that’s an important piece of helping to diversify, how is the implementation of that
program going?

Secretary Blinken. Congressman, first of all, thank you for everything that you have done for a long time
leading on this effort. The paid internship piece is critical, and we are grateful that we now have the authority to do that
and funds to do that. We are starting with about 200 paid internships. I hope that we can build that up over the next
few years. It is just getting off the ground, but what I can tell you is this: we have had thousands of applications since
we have been able to advertise the paid internships.

Mr. Castro. Wonderful. Thank you, Mr. Secretary. And I yield back.

Chairman Meeks. The gentleman yields back, and now I yield to Representative Greg Steube of Florida for
five minutes.

Mr. Steube. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am not going to belabor the Afghanistan issue, but I just want to
make clear, because I came in as Representative Green was asking you the question, so there is 126 American citizens that
are still left in Afghanistan, 37 of which want to return; is that correct?

Secretary Blinken. That’s correct.

Mr. Steube. I have made my position on the disastrous withdrawal of the Biden administration and the State
Department. We are now over six months, and we still have Americans stuck behind enemy lines with the Taliban. I
have made my positions clear on that.

I want to go and move to the Iran Revolutionary Guard --

Secretary Blinken. Could I just mention one thing --

Mr. Steube. No, because I only have four and a half minutes and I am yielding a minute to Rep. Kim because
you are only here until 4:30.

You commented before the Senate on your position that the foreign terrorist organization designation on the
Iran Revolutionary Guard will not be lifted unless the Revolutionary Guard changes its behavior and ceases support for terrorism; is that correct?

Secretary Blinken. That’s correct.

Mr. Steube. Did Iran or the Revolutionary Guard stop their support for terrorism after the JCPOA was reached?

Secretary Blinken. Iran’s support for terrorism has continued --

Mr. Steube. So that’s a yes.

Secretary Blinken. -- for a long time.

Mr. Steube. No, it continued. Did Iran detain 11 U.S. Navy sailors during the period of U.S. participation in the JCPOA?

Secretary Blinken. It did for a brief period of time.

Mr. Steube. Did Iran illegally and unjustly detail Americans during the period of U.S. participation in the JCPOA?

Secretary Blinken. It did and it continues to.

Mr. Steube. Did Iran’s financial support for Hezbollah, Hamas, and Palestinian Islamic Jihad increase during the period of U.S. participation in the JCPOA?

Secretary Blinken. I can’t tell you if it increased, but it was certainly sustained.

Mr. Steube. Did Iran’s support for the Assad regime increase during the period of U.S. participation in the JCPOA?

Secretary Blinken. I can’t tell you if it increased, but it was sustained.

Mr. Steube. It was sustained. Did Iran’s support for the Houthis in Yemen increase during the period of remain the same during the period of U.S. participation in the JCPOA?

Secretary Blinken. I would say it actually increased for that period.

Mr. Steube. Recently, a group of 900 Gold Star family members and wounded veterans who have been
victims of the Revolutionary Guard’s terrorist activities sent President Biden a letter asking him not to lift the FTO designation. Are you familiar with that letter?

Secretary Blinken. I am familiar with the letter.

Mr. Steube. Do you have a copy of it?

Secretary Blinken. Yes, I have seen it.

Mr. Steube. So what is the administration’s response to those families?

Secretary Blinken. Again, Iran knows what it would have to do in order to have that designation lifted. I would also say that, over this period, including since the designation of the IRGC with the FTO, it is a tax on Americans have gone up 400 percent.

Mr. Steube. So then there would be no anticipation then that in any deal with them that you would release the FTO designation on the Revolutionary Guard?

Secretary Blinken. Only if Iran takes necessary actions to merit the lifting of the designation, and I would also note, Congressman, that, were such a designation to be lifted under whatever circumstances, it can always be reimposed if Iran engages in actions that merit the imposition.

Mr. Steube. Well, I don’t know why, given the litany list of things that I just went through, when we were in the JCPOA, when they were not supposed to be engaging in terrorist activity where you just confirmed every single one of those incidents where they did engage in terrorist activity, that this administration would even be considering to remove the terrorist designation for the Revolutionary Guard. I certainly do not support that. Those 900 Gold Star family members do not support that. And with all the force that I have as a member of Congress and as a servicemember who served in Iraq and saw his servicemember brothers and sisters attacked by Revolutionary Guards, 15 percent of which U.S. combat fatalities in the Iraq War were attributed to the Revolutionary Guard’s activities, I think it would be abysmal for this administration to even consider lifting that foreign terrorist designation. And I would encourage you, and I know I am a Republican and you are a Democrat and you are in a Democratic administration, but whatever encouragement I could give you to stay strong on that and fight against terrorism. And if it is lifted, I will do everything within my power
to fight against any lifting of the Iran Revolutionary Guard as a terrorist organization, and I hope that this administration
will think very strongly about any attempt to do that in any deal that they would be negotiating with the Iranians.

With that, I will yield the remainder of my time to Rep. Kim.

Secretary Blinken. And I am happy to go a little bit over. I just want to say to you, Congressman, first of all, that I appreciate what you said and we are both, of course, Americans and we want the same things for our country. I am pleased to be able to work with you and every member of this committee to achieve them. Sometimes, we have differences of view on the best way to achieve them, but we have the same objectives. Certainly, when it comes to Iran, we very much, I know, share the objective that it never acquire a nuclear weapon and that it cease the egregious actions that it is undertaking, including targeting Americans, including supporting proxies that do the same thing, including going after our partners and allies.

The question is really one for all of us to make with our best judgment as to how can we be most effective doing that? And, unfortunately, what we have seen over the last few years is that the policy we inherited is not working. It has been a failure. Iran’s nuclear program is moving forward. Its tax, including, notably, against Americans have increased, not decreased, despite the maximum pressure.

So what I commit to very much is working with you, working with every other member. And I particularly appreciate your patriotism, your service, the Gold Star families. It’s extraordinary. But I commit to work with you to make sure whatever we are doing is effective as possible in dealing with the challenges that you rightfully point out.

Thank you.

Chairman Meeks. So put one minute on the clock of Representative Kim. That was not Mr. Steube’s turn.

Secretary Blinken. Good to see you.

Mrs. Kim of California. Thank you very much. Congressman Steube, I want to thank you for yielding.

A point of clarification, Secretary, are you willing to stay a little more than just a minute that was allotted to me?

Secretary Blinken. Please, go ahead.

Mrs. Kim of California. Will that be okay, Chairman?
Chairman Meeks. Well, are we going to give the Secretary a chance to ask a question --

Mrs. Kim of California. I just have a couple of areas that I wanted to --

Secretary Blinken. Please go ahead.

Mrs. Kim of California. -- so thank you very much. Mr. Secretary, first of all, on Uyghur issues, your budget request says that scaling up international climate programs is a top priority for your department. So can you commit to us that any international climate programs that you approve will completely eliminate ties to the CCP's genocide against Uyghurs, particularly to industries tied to Xinjiang Province in the CCP's nationwide scheme of Uyghur forced labor, such as the solar panel and lithium battery industries?

Secretary Blinken. We want to make sure two things, Congresswoman. We want to make sure, first of all, that our companies and others are not exporting to China tools that could be used for the repression of Uyghurs.

Similarly, we want to make sure that we are not importing products that are made with forced labor, including by Uyghurs. Sometimes, this takes time to put into effect, but that is our determination.

Mrs. Kim of California. Sure.

Chairman Meeks. The gentlelady's time expired.

Secretary Blinken. And I welcome receiving any further questions from you. We can take them up on the record.

Mrs. Kim of California. Thank you.

Secretary Blinken. Thank you very much.

Chairman Meeks. And, Mr. Secretary, you have indicated previously under the question of Mr. Steube that there was a question you wanted to answer in regards to Afghanistan. If you --

Secretary Blinken. I think we have addressed that. Thank you very much.

Chairman Meeks. So in closing, I would like to again thank you, Mr. Secretary, for being our esteemed witness today, for your insightful testimony and participation today. In the past year, State Department has made tangible progress in helping to diversify the Department staff and internships, modernize our systems for passport
processing, information technology, payroll, and other processes, and launched the workplace flexibilities, training, and other resources for our diplomats.

While this progress has been a great step in the right direction, we know, of course, we always have more work to do. But this budget request underscores the importance of diplomacy and development and of the robust foreign assistance to foster key alliances and partnerships to confront the gravest challenges of our time.

So building deeper relationships and helping other countries strengthen their democracies and defend themselves against outside aggression, much like the Department and broader U.S. government is doing every day for Ukraine, it’s not just a matter of foreign policy. It makes Americans more secure, it serves American’s interest by ensuring a more prosperous, stable world in which we all live. It shows that unity is important. I think that the camera of history will show that we are where we are now because of the unity of the State Department and the administration. Thirty nations of NATO stayed together. Before, no one would have predicted that. It is the work of the administration and the State Department. Diplomacy at work because we had to utilize that diplomacy to keep those 30 nations together. We could have gone off by ourselves, but we didn’t. Diplomacy means working with others, not us by ourselves.

Our allies in Asia, in Africa, others on the Western Hemisphere, all staying together, that is the work of diplomacy. That is why it is so important to have our ambassadors and diplomats in various places around the world. We were handcuffed for a while by not having ambassadors in certain key places. We have seen when they are there, 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 their own aggressive self, diplomacy will surround them. And it works also to prevent when we don’t have someone with evil intent from war from taking place.

So I want to thank you, and I am grateful for the Department’s strong requests for funding to continue to modernize the Department and advance its foreign policy objectives. Again, thank you, Mr. Secretary, for always being receptive to me and Mr. McCaul in a bipartisan way in working, and I look forward to continue to work with you and seeing the result of your work to reform and lead the State in its vital work.
So thank you, and this hearing is now adjourned.

[Whereupon, the above-entitled matter went off the record at 4:42 p.m.]