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**GRANGER OPENING STATEMENT: STATE-FOREIGN OPERATIONS
BUDGET HEARING – SECRETARY OF STATE JOHN KERRY**

The Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs will come to order.

Mr. Secretary, I want to start by welcoming you for your first appearance before this committee. We look forward to working with you to address some very difficult issues.

We now realize that what was first called the Arab Spring may last for a very long time. We continue to watch the conflict in Syria with tremendous concern and sadness as the humanitarian crisis continues. And Iran appears focused on developing its own nuclear capability, while they interfere in other countries and create instability.

We must recognize that what happens in the Middle East and North Africa can and does impact us here at home. We have to remain engaged in the region and support democracies that respect the rights of all people. We need partners who want to work with the United States and be responsible members of the international community. During a period of tremendous unrest in the region, it is critical that we support our strong, steadfast allies such as Jordan and Israel.

During the hearing today, I hope you will address these issues and also begin to explain the Administration's fiscal year 2014 request. The \$52 billion requested for the State-Foreign Operations Subcommittee includes \$47.8 billion for State and USAID. This request is an increase above the prior year when sequestration is factored in. This will be hard to defend at a time when discretionary spending is decreasing.

One difficult budget issue we need to address together is embassy security. The recent death of a Foreign Service officer, American soldiers, and a government contractor in Afghanistan remind us that we must stay focused on keeping American employees safe in a very unsafe world. Our thoughts go out to their families, and I hope we all remember them as we work together to meet security requirements.

Secretary Kerry, it is already clear in your first two months in office that you want to work closely with other foreign leaders. You have traveled several times to the Middle East and Europe, and you just returned from the Asia-Pacific region.

This Subcommittee knows it is important to move Israel and the Palestinians toward peace, and we look forward to hearing more about what the Administration is doing. We also need to know if the recent changes in the Palestinian authority will have an impact on U.S. assistance.

Outreach to European countries is also critical because the U.S. must work with its allies on our most difficult problems - from Syria to Iran to Mali. We know you just returned from South Korea, China, and Japan. We need a read-out of your discussions to understand what these countries are doing to address the threat from North Korea. But it is just as important to make sure our neighbors know they are our partners. We need to know how the Administration will work with our allies in Latin America, particularly with the new president in Mexico.

The budget request shifts funds away from what we have traditionally called the front-line states of Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. We need to know how the U.S. will maintain its influence in these countries if the congress follows the Administration's proposal.

Finally, I want to raise a concern I know I share with many of my colleagues on the Subcommittee. We must do more to stop the poaching crisis that is affecting stability in Africa.

Mr. Secretary, I want to thank you and the dedicated men and women of the State Department and USAID for what you do every day to promote U.S. interests abroad. As you've said, what you do "over there has an enormous impact over here."

And in closing, I want to offer my sincere condolences to you and the people of your home state of Massachusetts for the tragic events that occurred on Monday. An investigation is underway and we hope to get more information soon, but it reminds us all that terrorism knows no boundaries and the work of the State Department and other federal agencies helps to keep this country safe. My thoughts are with you and the people of Boston.

I'll now turn to my ranking member, Mrs. Lowey, for her opening remarks.