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GRANGER OPENING STATEMENT: STATE AND FOREIGN OPERATIONS APPROPRIATIONS HEARING ON FY 2013 STATE DEPARTMENT BUDGET REQUEST

The Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs will come to order. I want to start by welcoming all of the subcommittee members to our first hearing on the fiscal year 2013 budget request.

Mrs. Lowey and I share a commitment to oversight, and we will continue to work with each of you to get the right information to make fair, although sometimes difficult, funding decisions on programs in our Subcommittee's jurisdiction.

Madam Secretary, I want to welcome you to today's hearing. You are serving as secretary during a very challenging time, and as you have said, American leadership is more important than ever.

Two weeks ago, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff came before our Defense Subcommittee. General Dempsey told us that, in his judgment formed over a 38 year military career, we are living in the most dangerous time in his life.

I have to agree with General Dempsey. It seems as if every corner of the world faces significant challenges – both economic and political – and the United States is not immune. With our country facing record deficits and debt, this committee has a special responsibility to ensure that taxpayer dollars are well spent.

Our constituents demand that our foreign aid is aligned with our national security interests and American values. For that reason, the Fiscal Year 2012 Appropriations bill contained conditions on funding to many countries so that we would have time to see how events on the ground unfold before funds are disbursed.

The Congress provided the Administration flexibility because we believed it was the most responsible approach to take in a constantly-changing environment.

Madam Secretary, you now have the responsibility to ensure that this Committee is properly consulted, certifications are made when required, and notifications are sent

before funds are obligated. We know that these conditions create challenges, but oversight by the Congress is critical.

We are faced with several policy issues that are especially troubling – the current unrest in Afghanistan, causing all of us to question the security of our troops and civilians working there; the ongoing crisis in Egypt over nonprofit groups working there to promote democracy; Iran’s continued pursuit of nuclear weapons and the resulting threat to our friends and allies in the region; the possibility of the Palestinians going around direct negotiations with Israel, and the intensifying conflict within Syria.

During the hearing today, I hope you will address these issues, and explain how the Administration’s requested increase for programs in this Subcommittee’s jurisdiction will deal with these issues successfully, especially when the defense budget is proposed to be reduced.

The \$54.7 billion request for the State-Foreign Operations Subcommittee is an increase of 2.6% above fiscal year 2012, and the majority of that increase is for State and USAID’s programs.

Part of this increase is for a new account – the Middle East and North Africa Incentive Fund.

The subcommittee needs to understand why the budget proposes such a significant increase – roughly \$700 million – without a clear plan for how the funds will help these new and emerging democracies.

We also need more information on why the budget proposes a decrease in assistance to Latin America, Asia, and Africa – regions we cannot afford to overlook or take for granted.

The President himself was in Latin America last year and said that the region is more important to the prosperity and security of the United States than ever before. He also visited the Asia-Pacific area in the fall and said it was a region of “huge strategic importance”.

We have also heard about military officials wanting to position special operations forces in Latin America, Asia, and Africa because of growing threats.

Madam Secretary, we will need more information to understand how the State Department’s budget proposal is consistent with these statements by Administration officials.

The budget request also proposes to reduce global health programs. As we work with you and USAID Administrator Shah, we will need to understand how these reductions can be achieved without jeopardizing our progress and leadership on these issues.

As you look ahead to the coming year, I would like to offer a few comments on some priorities that I hope you will focus on. I think that many, if not most, of these concerns are shared by my Subcommittee colleagues.

First, I hope the Administration will continue to focus on efforts in the “frontline states” so that you can solidify the military’s accomplishments in Iraq, identify sustainable solutions once our troops leave Afghanistan, and ensure that extremists no longer have safe havens in Pakistan. There is so much at stake in these countries.

Next, I hope you will remain vigilant in your support for our neighbors and friends to the south. Latin America’s enormous security challenges affect the United States every day. On the diplomatic front, I hope you and other Administration officials will continue to keep pressure on Iran, wherever and whenever possible, to stop them from obtaining nuclear weapons.

Finally, I want to reiterate a topic we discussed last year during the Subcommittee hearing – multi-year funding commitments. I continue to be concerned about the effect of these out year pledges on the State-Foreign Operations budget.

While I support many of the same causes, the United States remains in an economic crisis and we will be in a very difficult position if we cannot live up to these promises.

I hope you will seriously consider any additional commitments and follow the consultation and notification requirements we have now included in the appropriations bill. Your job as secretary is certainly not without its challenges. We truly thank you and all the dedicated men and women of the State Department and USAID for what you do every day to promote American interests abroad. I want to say a special thank you to Ambassador Anne Patterson, her team in Cairo, and numerous staff in Washington who are dealing with a very complex situation in Egypt. We all look forward to your testimony.

I’ll now turn to Mrs. Lowey for her opening remarks.