

INTERNATIONAL SECURITY UPDATE
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1. [State's Nuland at House Hearing on Situation in Ukraine \(03-04-2015\)](#)

*Testimony of Victoria Nuland, Assistant Secretary, Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs
Statement Before the House Foreign Affairs Committee, Washington, D.C*

Testimony on Ukraine Before the House Foreign Affairs Committee

Chairman Royce, Ranking Member Engel and members of this committee – thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today on the situation in Ukraine and for your personal investment in that country's future. As many of you know from your travels, your meetings and your bipartisan engagement, Ukrainians deeply appreciate this committee's support on behalf of their country's security, democracy, sovereignty and future prosperity.

We also share your sadness and outrage over the murder of freedom fighter, Russian patriot, and friend, Boris Nemtsov, who was senselessly gunned down in central Moscow last week. The outpouring of concern from Congress, including this Committee, again demonstrates bipartisan U.S. respect for those in Russia and across the region who are working for reform, clean government, justice and dignity.

March 4, 2015

Today Ukraine is central to our 25 year Transatlantic quest for a “Europe whole, free and at peace.” With your permission, I’d like to focus on three challenges. First, I’ll focus on the work Ukraine is doing – with U.S. and international community support – to build a more democratic, independent, European country. Second, I will address both the opportunity Russia has to implement the February and September 2014 Minsk Agreements as well as the further costs the United States and our European allies and partners will have to impose if Minsk is further violated. Finally, I will talk about other new threats to European security – energy vulnerability, corruption and propaganda – that the Ukraine conflict brings into high relief and what we’re doing to address them.

First – a quick reminder of why we’re here. Fourteen months ago, the Maidan and towns across Ukraine erupted in peaceful protest by ordinary Ukrainians fed up with a sleazy, corrupt regime bent on cheating the people of their sovereign choice to associate with Europe. They braved frigid temperatures, brutal beatings and sniper bullets. The leader of that rotten regime fled the country, and he was voted out by the parliament – including most members of his own party. Then, Ukraine began to forge a new nation on its own terms – signing an Association Agreement with the European Union; holding free and fair elections – twice – while under siege; and undertaking deep and comprehensive economic and political reforms.

In the four months since the new Rada was sworn in, it has been a hive of activity, passing important but difficult economic reforms just two days ago which will help to stabilize the economy and support the swift disbursement of additional support by the IMF and other international donors. The parliament has passed laws to enhance transparency in public procurement; reduce government inefficiency and corruption; make the banking system more transparent; and measures to improve the climate for business and attract foreign investment. New laws passed recently by the Rada will clean up Ukraine’s energy sector while bringing parity between state-owned and private energy companies to enhance competitiveness. The Rada is also moving forward on political decentralization to give Ukraine’s regions more authority in advance of local elections this October. Previous action by the Rada and the Cabinet includes: the creation of a new anti-corruption agency, steps to strengthen the Prosecutor General’s Office to go after more offenders; making strides on judicial reform; and standing up a new police service in Kyiv.

As Ukraine has stood up, the United States and our European allies and partners have stood with her – supporting programs to keep homes warm, secure more of the border, protect citizens’ rights and to meet urgent defensive, non-lethal needs of the Ukrainian military and security forces. Since the crisis began, the United States provided almost \$355 million in foreign assistance – in addition to the May 2014 \$1 billion loan guarantee – to strengthen energy security; insulate Ukraine’s poorest citizens from the impact of rising gas costs; help fight corruption; strengthen the Ukrainian border guard and military – \$118 million in security support alone – and to support political reforms, elections and cleaner government.

And there’s more on the way. The President’s budget includes an FY16 request of \$513.5 million – almost six times more than our FY14 request – to build on these efforts. Today we are working with Europe, the Ukrainians, and the IMF to strengthen the country’s economy and support implementing the government’s reform plan, including a new \$1 billion U.S. loan guarantee. If Ukraine continues making concrete progress on its economic reform agenda and conditions warrant, the U.S. Administration will also be willing, working with Congress, to consider providing an additional loan guarantee of up to \$1 billion in late 2015.

Which brings me to my second point – even as Ukraine began building a peaceful, democratic, independent nation across 93% of its territory, Crimea and parts of eastern Ukraine suffered a reign of terror. Today Crimea remains under illegal occupation and human rights abuses are the norm, not

the exception, for many at risk groups there – Crimean Tatars, Ukrainians who won't surrender their passports, LGBT citizens and others. In eastern Ukraine, Russia and its separatist puppets unleashed unspeakable violence and pillage; MH17 was shot down; hundreds of Russian heavy weapons and troops poured across the border, fueling the conflict; 16 Russian uninspected “humanitarian convoys” entered Ukraine in violation of agreements with the Ukrainian government, the ICRC and the international community; Donetsk airport was obliterated; Nadiya Savchenko languishes in a Moscow jail on day 82 of her hunger strike; Debaltseve, a key rail hub beyond the cease-fire lines, fell to the separatists and Russian forces six days after Minsk was signed, following a vicious assault that resulted in over 500 deaths, according to the UN; overall, 1.7 million Ukrainians have been forced to flee their homes; and over 6000 have lost their lives.

This is a manufactured conflict – controlled by the Kremlin; fueled by Russian tanks and heavy weapons; financed at Russian taxpayers' expense and costing the lives of young Russians whose mothers, wives and children are told not to investigate their deaths too closely if they want to receive benefits.

The United States and the EU have worked in lock-step to impose successive rounds of tough sanctions – including sectoral sanctions – on Russia and its separatist cronies as the costs for their actions. In Crimea, we have shown through our sanctions on investment that, if you bite off a piece of another country, it will dry up in your mouth. Our unity with Europe remains the core of our policy toward this crisis.

And it is in that spirit that we salute the efforts of German Chancellor Merkel and French President Hollande in Minsk on February 12 to try again to end the fighting in Ukraine's East. The Minsk Package of Agreements – September 5th, September 19th and the February 12th implementing agreement – offer the promise of peace, disarmament, political normalization and decentralization in eastern Ukraine and the return of Ukrainian state sovereignty and control of its territory and borders. The package – if implemented – represents a fair deal brokered and agreed to by all sides. Russia agreed to it; Ukraine agreed to it; the separatists agreed to it. And the international community stands behind it.

For some eastern Ukrainians, conditions have begun to improve; the guns have quieted in some towns and villages; some weapons have been withdrawn; some hostages have been released. But the picture is very mixed. Progress is fragile.

In the coming days, not weeks or months – here is what we need to see:

- A complete cease-fire in all parts of eastern Ukraine;
- Full, unfettered access to the whole conflict zone including all separatist-held territory, for OSCE monitors. They are getting this access in Ukrainian government controlled territory, but the separatists to date have allowed only sporadic access at agreed times on major roads, and;
- A full-pull back of all heavy weapons – Ukrainian, Russian and separatist – as stipulated in the agreements, under OSCE monitoring and verification.

If fully implemented, these steps will bring peace, true quiet to eastern Ukraine for the first time in almost a year. And it will allow Ukraine access and the opportunity for dialogue and political normalization with its own people.

Russia's commitments under the Minsk agreements are crystal clear and again the choice is Russia's. The United States will start rolling back sanctions on Russia only when the Minsk agreements are fully implemented.

As the president has said, we'll judge Russia by its actions, not its words. We have already begun consultations with our European partners on further sanctions pressure should Russia continue fueling the fire in the east or other parts of Ukraine, fail to implement Minsk or grab more land as we've seen in Debaltseve.

Finally, as this committee knows, traditional military force is only one of the threats to European security. There are others: the danger of overdependence on energy from an unreliable and, at times, hostile neighbor; the cancer of corruption that weakens institutions and undermines security and sovereignty; and the Kremlin's pervasive propaganda campaign poisoning minds across Russia, on Russia's periphery and across Europe. We are working across all fronts to harden European resilience to these vulnerabilities.

On energy security – project by project – we are working with the EU and key countries to change Europe's energy landscape to make it more secure, resilient and diverse; first, by working with European Allies to increase reverse flow capacity from Slovakia, Poland and Hungary to Ukraine; then, by building out LNG infrastructure in Northern Europe and the Baltic states; and now working to establish interconnectors, new pipelines and LNG networks in Southern Europe to provide energy options to Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary, Serbia and other countries in Central Europe and the Balkans.

On corruption – we are working with governments, civil society, and the business community across Central and Eastern Europe and the Balkans to close the space for dirty money to undercut democratic institutions and pervert the business environment. And with these efforts, we're also helping to protect these nations' sovereignty from malign outside influence.

And on Russia's propaganda, we're working with the Broadcasting Board of Governors to ramp up efforts to counter lies with truth. This year, the BBG is committing \$23.2 million to Russian-language programming, a 49 percent increase over FY14, and is requesting an additional \$15.4 million for FY16. We are also requesting more than \$20 million in foreign assistance and public diplomacy funds to counter Russian propaganda through training for Russian-speaking journalists; support for civil society watchdogs and independent media; exchange programs for students and entrepreneurs; and access to fact-based news on the air, on front pages and online.

Mr. Chairman, members of this committee, America's investment in Ukraine is about far more than protecting the choice of a single European country. It's about protecting the rules-based system across Europe and globally. It's about saying "no" to borders changed by force, and to big countries intimidating their neighbors or demanding spheres of influence. It's about protecting our 25 year American investment in the prospect of a Europe whole, free and at peace and the example that sets for nations and people around the world who want more democratic, prosperous futures.

I thank this committee for its bipartisan support and commitment.

Related Sites:

[Obama's Videoconference with European Leaders on Ukraine](#)

[President Obama on Murder of Boris Nemtsov](#)

[Kerry on Murder of Boris Nemtsov in Russia](#)

[U.S. Response to Russia on Its Violations in Ukraine](#)

2. Iran Nuclear Negotiations (03-04-2015)

Remarks by John Kerry, Secretary of State, Montreux, Switzerland

SECRETARY KERRY: So good afternoon to all, and thank you very, very much for your patience. We've been involved in some long discussions over the past few days, and even well before that. And before I leave Montreux, I wanted to quickly share with you where we are.

From the beginning, these negotiations have been tough and intense, and they remain so. And we've made some progress from where we were, but there are still significant gaps and important choices that need to be made. The purpose of these negotiations is not to get any deal; it's to get the right deal, one that can withstand scrutiny – the scrutiny of experts on nuclear affairs all around the world, the scrutiny of other governments, the scrutiny of people, the scrutiny of the Congress of the United States, people in America, and the scrutiny of countries in the region that are affected by it. And so we know that. We approach these negotiations with a full understanding of the test that will be applied to this and of the expectations that exist.

We also want an agreement that is sustainable over time, and particularly that achieves the singular goal of proving that Iran's nuclear program is and will remain peaceful. We aren't going to be distracted by external factors or politics. We will continue to be guided by our experts, our scientists, our national interests and those of our partners and allies.

Now, for all the objections that any country has to Iranian activities in the region – and believe me, we have objections and others in the world have objections – the first step is to prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon. And we know that absent a deal, Iran will have the ability to move ahead with its nuclear program; that we know for sure, because that's exactly what's happened to date. We also know that any deal that we would agree to would significantly increase the breakout time, leaving Iran further – far further than it is today – from producing enough fissile material for a weapon, while it undertakes the effort of proving to the world that the program is, in fact, peaceful.

Clearly, increased breakout time makes any nation in the vicinity or any nation of concern safer. We also know that any deal that we reach would give us the intrusive access and verification measures necessary to confirm that Iran's nuclear facilities are indeed on a peaceful path. And that would allow us to promptly detect any attempt to cheat or to break out, and then to respond appropriately. And contrary to some public reports, we are only contemplating a deal in which important access and verification measures will endure.

We also know that the international sanctions, which many want to simply hang their hats on – they may have gotten Iran to the table, but to date they haven't stopped Iran from advancing its nuclear program. In fact, the first and only thing that had stopped their program from progressing in almost a decade was the Joint Plan of Action that we negotiated and we reached in November of 2013, and that has been adhered to in every single respect since then.

And most importantly, as President Obama said yesterday, we know that no one has presented a more viable, lasting alternative for how you actually prevent Iran from getting a nuclear weapon. So folks, simply demanding that Iran capitulate is not a plan, and nor would any of our P5+1 partners support us in that position. And it's very important to remember we have partners in this effort – France, Germany, Britain, China, Russia – all of whom have similar feelings about the importance of what must be done here.

So we continue to be focused on reaching a good deal, the right deal, that closes off any paths that Iran could have towards fissile material for a weapon and that protects the world from the enormous threat that we all know a nuclear-armed Iran would pose.

Now, we still don't know whether we will get there, and it is certainly possible that we won't. It may be that Iran simply can't say yes to the type of deal that the international community requires. But we do know that we owe it to the American people in my case, people in the world, to try to find out. And we will return to these talks on the 15th of March, recognizing that time is of the essence, the days are ticking by, and important decisions need to be made. Thank you.

Related Sites:

[Background Briefing on Secretary Kerry's Meetings on the Iran Nuclear Negotiations](#)

3. Secretary General and Slovak President discuss keeping NATO strong in a challenging world (03-03-2015)

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg welcomed Slovak President Andrej Kiska to NATO on Tuesday (3 March 2015) for talks on current security challenges. Mr. Stoltenberg thanked the President for his nation's many contributions to the Alliance, highlighting Slovakia's deployment to the Resolute Support mission in Afghanistan and its role in strengthening military capabilities, such as reconnaissance drones. "Slovakia plays an important role in our Alliance," he said.

Discussions focused on the crisis in Ukraine, caused by Russia's aggressive actions. Secretary General Stoltenberg said that the ceasefire was "fragile", but stressed that the Minsk agreement must be "respected and implemented in full".

Secretary General Stoltenberg and President Kiska reviewed how NATO is adapting to face new security challenges, including through the creation of a very high readiness "Spearhead Force", and the establishment of command and control centres in Eastern European Allies. Mr. Stoltenberg welcomed Slovakia's commitment to invest more in defence, including on new equipment and technologies, stressing that this will help keep our nations safe.

4. Kerry: Advancing Universal Values at U.N. Human Rights Council (03-03-215)

Secretary of State John Kerry speaks to the U.N. Human Rights Council in Geneva.

This blog post by Secretary of State John Kerry originally appeared on the State Department website on March 2.

Advancing Universal Values at the U.N. Human Rights Council By John Kerry

Our commitment is driven by the founding values of our nation, and the conviction that international peace, security, and prosperity are strengthened when human rights and fundamental freedoms are respected and protected.

I had the opportunity to speak at the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) in Geneva today (March 2) — at a time that represents an extraordinarily important moment not only for the future of the HRC, but also for human rights around the globe.

We support the HRC because we strongly believe in its mission and its possibilities. We know that at best the Council can be a valuable means for reminding every nation of its commitments and obligations to human rights and for holding countries accountable when they fail to meet international standards. It provides a means for self-evaluation on the part of individual nations, including through the universal periodic review process.

The HRC can help countries to respond successfully to domestic human rights challenges, as we've seen firsthand in Côte d'Ivoire and elsewhere. The Council can help countries advance global norms like LGBT rights.

The HRC can also play a critical role in shaping the global response to situations where human rights violations have reached levels that stagger the imagination and shock the conscience.

Sadly, that is the case in far too many countries today.

In parts of the Middle East and Africa, violent extremists have made it clear that not only do they have zero regard for human rights, but they have zero regard for human life. We've seen groups like Daesh burn human beings alive, barbarically behead prisoners, sell girls into slavery, and execute widely and indiscriminately.

In Syria, those who escape the horrific attacks of extremist thugs do so only to face a brutal dictator who gasses his own people, starves them as a weapon of war, and continues to barrage them with barrel bombs that fall on their schools, their hospitals, their mosques, their children and women indiscriminately.

In North Korea, tens of thousands of people live as virtual slaves in 2015. There is no freedom of expression, worship, or political dissent.

And then there's the crisis in Ukraine. In Crimea and in the separatist-controlled areas of eastern Ukraine, men, women, and children are being killed, tortured and sexually assaulted. They are detained arbitrarily, abducted for ransom, forced into labor, prosecuted and persecuted because of who they are and where they worship.

Too many people in too many places are facing unbearable realities.

It is up to the HRC to shed light on those realities and to help to hold those who violate human rights accountable. Working with governments across the globe, the HRC can help to create a future that is much brighter than the present or the past.

Since re-engaging the HRC in 2009, we have made historic progress and gains — gains made in partnership with HRC member countries.

Consider the unprecedented resolutions this Council has passed to respond to threats facing civil society, to better protect the human rights of LGBT persons, to promote freedom of religion and freedom of expression, including through HRC Resolution 16/18.

Consider the indispensable role the HRC has played in encouraging leaders to live up to their promises and commitments in countries such as Burma and Sri Lanka, where there are opportunities for real change.

Consider the mountain of evidence we've compiled detailing horrific human rights abuses by government forces and terrorists in Syria.

Consider how the Commission of Inquiry created by this council changed the conversation regarding the DPRK's appalling record on human rights.

And consider the great work of the special rapporteur on human rights in Iran, which spotlighted violations there.

Make no mistake, these are all significant accomplishments. The more the international community understands about specific human rights violations, the greater the pressure will be on bad actors to change course. Although progress may not be seen as rapidly as we might wish, that pressure often translates into the kind of change that saves lives and expands freedom.

Together we can continue to make progress and help the Council fulfill its mandate to make the world a better and safer place. But we must address the roadblocks that can hinder our progress. The HRC's continued bias against Israel risks undermining the credibility of the entire organization. We will oppose any effort — wherever it occurs — by any group or participant in the UN system to arbitrarily and regularly delegitimize or isolate Israel. When it comes to human rights, no country on earth should be free from scrutiny, but neither should any country be subject to unfair or unfounded bias.

When the stakes are as high as they are today and when people in every corner of the globe are denied the rights that they deserve, the HRC must live up to the standards upon which it was created. Together, we have to be the voice for those who are silenced by their leaders.

The world desperately needs a Council to be the source of hope for those who fear that their suffering may never end or never even be recognized. The United States remains deeply committed to the HRC's important mission, and we certainly intend to remain deeply involved in the HRC, which is why we are running for re-election. The Council needs us, all of its member nations, to dare greatly and to live up to the highest standards. Because, when it does that, all of our nations can live up to the ideals that we share.

5. Officials Outline Policy, Posture in Middle East (03-03-2015)

By Claudette Roulo
DoD News, Defense Media Activity

WASHINGTON, March 3, 2015 – Defeating the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant terrorist organization and preventing Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon are the top two issues that must be addressed in the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility, the undersecretary of defense for policy told Congress today.

Speaking to the House Armed Services Committee alongside Centcom commander Army Gen. Lloyd J. Austin III, Christine E. Wormuth said new realities have forced the Defense Department to take a hard look at its near and long-term goals for engagement in the Middle East.

Rapidly Changing Region

Centcom's area of responsibility is today more volatile and chaotic than ever before, Austin said, "and the stakes have never been higher."

Forces of evil thrive in the region's poorly governed areas, the general said. "And therefore," he added, "it is essential that we be present and engaged and that we cultivate strong partnerships and continue to do our part to address emerging threats and to move the region in the direction of greater stability and security."

In Iraq and Syria, the department is working with partners for a whole-of-government effort toward degrading and ultimately defeating ISIL, Wormuth said.

"At the same time," Austin said, "we've dealt with a number of difficult challenges in Yemen, Egypt, Lebanon and in a host of other locations throughout our area of responsibility."

Operation Inherent Resolve

As part of Operation Inherent Resolve, more than 2,600 U.S. service members are in Iraq working with the government and training Iraqi forces, and more than 60 countries are participating in the global coalition against ISIL, Wormuth said.

"This is going to be a long-term campaign and we need to be patient, but we are making progress," she noted.

"This barbaric organization must be defeated, and it will be defeated," Austin said.

"Since commencing our operations in early August -- just seven months ago -- we've killed more than 8,500 ISIL fighters and we've destroyed hundreds of its vehicles, along with tanks and heavy weapons systems," he said.

Coalition efforts have stalled ISIL's momentum, degraded its ability to mass and maneuver forces, pressured or eliminated its leadership cells and disrupted its command and control and supply lines, Wormuth said.

"In short, we've put ISIL on the defensive," the undersecretary said.

Partner Nations Key to Success

These successes would not have been possible without local partners in the lead, Wormuth noted. In Iraq, advise-and-assist teams began partnering with local forces last summer, and earlier this year training of these forces began at four different sites, she said.

"We are also working with our coalition partners in Syria, and we are also working to build the capabilities of the moderate Syrian opposition there," the deputy undersecretary said. Training of the first class of vetted opposition elements is expected to begin later this month, she added.

"Our forces in the region are strengthening our partners' ability to fight terrorism locally, but, ultimately, it's going to be Iraq forces and Syrian fighters who will secure the gains against ISIL and inflict a lasting defeat," Wormuth said.

Preventing a Nuclear-armed Iran

"The president has made clear his top priority is preventing Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon," Wormuth said.

The department hopes that continued “P5+1” discussions will result in a “comprehensive and verifiable agreement that will ensure the peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear program,” she said. The P5+1 are the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council -- the United States, Russia, China, the United Kingdom and France -- plus Germany.

But, the undersecretary noted, the Defense Department’s job is to remain vigilant. “And we do that by helping to underwrite negotiations with our robust posture and capabilities in the region,” Wormuth said.

“As the president has said publicly, we will do whatever's necessary to prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon -- including the use of military force if necessary. And we're postured to do that in the region today,” she said.

Fiscal Year 2016, Return of Sequestration

The president's budget request for 2016 supports the department’s strategy for the region and enables the services to continue to address the nation’s most critical needs, Wormuth said.

“If sequestration returns, however, in 2016 and beyond, the department's readiness would deteriorate markedly, which would harm our ability to respond promptly and efficiently when called upon,” she said.

“We are constantly responding to unforeseen contingencies and facing multiple threats from a wide range of actors that include nation states and transnational extremist groups,” Austin said. “We cannot afford to constrict our ability to do so effectively by maintaining across-the-board spending cuts that severely limit our flexibility and authority to apply critical defense resources based on demand and the current security environment.”

“We are clear-eyed about the fiscal constraints that we're facing, but we believe it's necessary -- even in the face of those constraints -- to maintain our commitment to protect our interests in the region and to combat the threats that we face there,” Wormuth said.

Biographies:

[Christine E. Wormuth](#)

[Army Gen. Lloyd J. Austin III](#)

Related Sites:

[U.S. Central Command](#)

6. 28th Session of the Human Rights Council (03-02-2015)

Remarks at the 28th Session of the Human Rights Council

Remarks by John Kerry, Secretary of State, Palais des Nations, Geneva, Switzerland

Let me start by thanking the Council’s president, Joachim Rucker, for convening this session. And I particularly appreciate the opportunity to be here at such an extraordinarily important time not only for the future of this body, but for human rights around the globe. President Obama believes deeply in the mission of the Human Rights Council, and he recognizes the importance of engagement – U.S. engagement; other engagement – and leadership within the organization. He made the decision

to re-engage shortly after he became President because he knew it is vital for the United States and for allies to have a seat at the table as the HRC sets its priorities and implements its agenda.

The moral standard that summons us all here and unites us in common action does not belong to any one nation or continent. The fundamental struggle for dignity has been a driving force in all human history worldwide, and what drives us are a set of universal values and aspirations. We in America know well that even in our own journey, there is still more work to be done. We also know that it is because of the courage and commitment of citizens in each generation that the United States has come closer and still works to always live up to its founding ideals. Our journey has not been without great difficulty or, at times, contradiction. But I think we can fairly say that we have dared to discuss these challenges openly and hold ourselves accountable, including through our free press and unyielding commitment to protecting freedom of expression. And even as we acknowledge the challenges of our history and those that we continue to face today, I can say, I think safely, I don't know any other country that has worked harder to promote human rights than the United States of America. And we are proud of that.

President Obama and I support the HRC for a simple reason: We believe in its mission and its possibilities. We know that at best this council can be a valuable means for reminding every nation of its commitments and obligations and holding countries accountable when they fail to meet international standards. It can help countries to respond successfully to domestic human rights challenges, as we've seen firsthand in Cote d'Ivoire and elsewhere, and advance global norms like LGBT rights. It provides a means for self-evaluation on the part of individual nations, including through the universal periodic review process. And we have seen this type of self-examination and engagement with the international community actually produce real process on the ground.

And, of course, the HRC can play a critical role in shaping the global response to situations where human rights violations have reached levels that stagger the imagination and shock the conscience. And sadly, that is the case in far too many countries today. In parts of the Middle East and Africa, violent extremists have made it clear that not only do they have zero regard for human rights, they have zero regard for human life, period. We've seen groups like Daesh burn human beings alive, barbarically behead prisoners, sell girls into slavery, and execute widely and indiscriminately. And recently, the UN reported the horrifying ways that Daesh treats even its most vulnerable captives: crucifying children, burying children alive, hand-picking mentally challenged children to serve as suicide bombers and kill even more innocent people. Almost every week brings new examples of just how far the evil of these groups reaches.

But we also know that the best antidote to violent (inaudible) – best ally is civil society, that activists, journalists, community organizers, critical thinkers, all of whom reject extreme ideologies while showing people a way to express hopes and grievances peacefully. So it is especially troubling that so many people in so many places are facing grotesque restrictions on their freedoms and rights from their own governments, including in some cases their right to life.

In Syria, those who escape the horrific attacks of extremist thugs do so only to face a brutal dictator who gasses his own people, starves them as a weapon of war, and continues to barrage them with barrel bombs that fall on their schools, their hospitals, their mosques, their children and women indiscriminately. Anyone who has seen the images will never forget them – in the images of the Caesar photos, maimed bodies, people with their eyes gouged out, emaciated prisoners. It defies anybody's sense of humanity.

In North Korea, tens of thousands of people live as virtual slaves in 2015. There is no freedom of expression, worship, or political dissent. Kim Jong Un executes those who disagree with him,

purging his country of anyone he knows or imagines to be disloyal. For decades, the government has subjugated its citizens, starving them, torturing them, incarcerating them, or worse. Hundreds of thousands have lost their lives.

And then there's the crisis in Ukraine, and here I urge the council: Look at the facts. Do not allow yourselves to be misled. In Crimea and in the separatist-controlled areas of eastern Ukraine, men, women, and children are being killed. They're being tortured, they're being raped and sexually assaulted, detained arbitrarily, abducted for ransom, forced into labor, prosecuted and persecuted because of who they are and where they worship. And that is what is happening, and it's up to the HRC to shed light on it and to help to hold accountable those who violate those human rights.

The bottom line is that too many people in too many places are facing unbearable realities. We cannot accept that – we, all of us collectively – and we do not accept that. And this council, working with governments across the globe, can help to create a future that is much brighter than the present or the past. I believe it is fair to say that we are already making historic progress, gains. And I'm proud to say that since 2009, the United States has been privileged to join with many of you and work hard in order to achieve those gains. Consider the unprecedented resolutions this council has passed to respond to threats facing civil society, to better protect the human rights of LGBT persons, to promote freedom of religion and freedom of expression, including through resolution 16/18. Consider the indispensable role the HRC has played in encouraging leaders to live up to their promises and commitments in countries such as Burma and Sri Lanka, where there are opportunities for real change. Consider the mountain of evidence we've compiled detailing horrific human rights abuses by government forces and terrorists in Syria.

The wheels of justice may not turn as rapidly as all of us would wish, but the foundation for establishing justice is being prepared. Consider how the Commission of Inquiry created by this council changed the conversation regarding the DPRK's appalling record on human rights. As a result of the COI's conclusions, the Security Council put the DPRK on its agenda, a clear condemnation of what is happening in the country and an important acknowledgment of the link between human rights and international security and peace. And consider the great work of the special rapporteur on human rights in Iran, which spotlighted violations there. Make no mistake, these are all significant accomplishments. The more the international community understands about specific human rights violations, the greater the pressure will be on bad actors to change course. And eventually – not always overnight, but eventually – that pressure often translates into the kind of change that saves lives and expands freedom.

My government believes that together we can continue to make progress and help this body fulfill its mandate to make the world a better and safer place. But for that to happen, we have to get serious about addressing roadblocks to our own progress. And the most obvious roadblock, I have to say to you, is self-inflicted. I'm talking, of course, about HRC's deeply concerning record on Israel. No one in this room can deny that there is an unbalanced focus on one democratic country. No other nation has an entire agenda item set aside to deal with it. Year after year, there are five or six separate resolutions on Israel. This year, there was a resolution sponsored by President Assad concerning the Golan. How, I ask, is that a sensible priority at the very moment when refugees from Syria are flooding into the Golan to escape Assad's murderous rule and receive treatment from Israeli physicians in Israeli hospitals?

It must be said that the HRC's obsession with Israel actually risks undermining the credibility of the entire organization. It has the potential to limit the good that we have to do. No one should doubt for a second that the United States will measure these things, I hope, fairly and dispassionately, but we will oppose any effort by any group or participant in the UN system to arbitrarily and regularly

delegitimize or isolate Israel, not just in the HRC but wherever it occurs. When it comes to human rights, no country on earth should be free from scrutiny, but neither should any country be subject to unfair or unfounded bias.

My friends, the United States absolutely remains deeply committed to this important mission, and we certainly intend to remain deeply involved in the HRC, which is why we are running for reelection. When the stakes are as high as they are today – and believe me, they could not be higher – when people in every corner of the globe are denied the rights that they deserve, the HRC must live up to the standards upon which it was created. Together, we have to be the voice for those who are silenced by their leaders. We have to be a ray of light for those who spend their days locked away without cause, many times in anonymity, in dark and dank cells somewhere in the world. We have to be the source of hope for those who fear that their suffering may never end or never even be recognized. This is the kind of organization – this council – that the world desperately needs. But it needs us, all of us, to dare greatly and to live up to the highest standards. And this is the kind of organization that, when it does that, can help all of our nations live up to the ideals that we share. Thank you. (Applause.)

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7. Kerry's Interview with ABC News on Middle East, Iran, Russia (03-01-2015)

Interview

Secretary of State John Kerry With Martha Raddatz of ABC This Week

QUESTION: Secretary Kerry, thanks for joining us.

SECRETARY KERRY: Glad to be with you. Thank you.

QUESTION: Secretary, I have seen this threat firsthand over the last month in this region, walking along the Syrian border this weekend, and the situation really seems bleak. In fact, The New York Times described it this way: “The reports are like something out of a distant era of ancient conquest – entire villages emptied, with hundreds taken prisoner, others kept as slaves, the destruction of irreplaceable works of art, a rampage reminiscent of Tamerlane or Genghis Khan.” And these were actions by ISIS just this week.

So do you stand by your recent comments that we're on the road to beating ISIS?

SECRETARY KERRY: What I said was we're on the road to success, and that begins in Iraq, and yes, I stand by it. We are growing in the capacity on the ground, Martha. Each time the Iraqis have now gone forward in an offensive effort together with allies, the coalition, we have routed ISIL. And the fact is that in Iraq, they have gained back a fixed, significant percentage of the area that ISIL was controlling.

Now Syria is a different matter. Syria is a bigger challenge. We will need people on the ground. It will not be American forces, but we are working on that. There's training and equipping of the opposition that begins this month. Arab countries in the region are stepping up their efforts. I have meetings this week with all of the GCC. I'll be meeting with King Salman of Saudi Arabia. There's a great deal of energy and effort being put into this, and I am confident that over time we will beat, we will indeed degrade and ultimately destroy ISIL, yes.

QUESTION: Let me read you a few comments from this week. A top FBI official testified we're losing the battle in countering ISIS online. Director of National Intelligence James Clapper says this has been the most lethal year for global terrorism and the latest figures show more foreign fighters have joined ISIS in the past six months than have been killed.

You said this week to Congress that we're living in a period of less daily threat to Americans, with fewer violent deaths than any time in the last century. Can you understand why the American people just aren't feeling that?

SECRETARY KERRY: Well, I understand. Of course, I understand it, Martha, because people are thinking about the day-to-day vision of what is happening on the ground in Syria, in Libya, where 21 Coptic Christians had their heads cut off, where a soldier is burned and a pilot in a cage, where American journalists have been beheaded publicly. We understand that. But I still stand by what I said, which is in large terms, compared to the last century, there are, in fact, fewer people dying of the means that you look at, by state war, violence, health, et cetera.

But that's not what's important. What's important right now is what James Clapper said. There is an uptick in the level of terrorism and specific incidents of people being killed, and that threat is very, very real. Nobody is trying to minimize it. President Obama has put together a coalition of countries that have come together. We're all super focused on this. And we are focused on the internet cyberspace battle also. We have a center that is being stood up in Abu Dhabi.

QUESTION: Let --

SECRETARY KERRY: It will be --

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary?

SECRETARY KERRY: Yeah.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, I want to move forward to Mosul. And I know your efforts by setting up these internet.

In Mosul, it is a hugely important city, second largest city. When will the Iraqis be ready to retake Mosul? Will it happen this spring? Will it happen in the fall?

SECRETARY KERRY: Martha, contrary to what was in the newspaper earlier sometime, I think, in the week, we're not going to advertise when that will happen. It will happen, but we're not going to talk about the strategy. We're not going to lay out the plans.

The Iraqis are working hard to come up to speed. There's a lot of effort being put into this. And we will do it when the moment is right and when we know we can proceed forward with the confidence that we want.

QUESTION: I just want to say, Mr. Secretary, it wasn't just in the newspapers. It was Central Command that said it would probably be this spring. I want to turn to Israel and Iran.

SECRETARY KERRY: Yes, but that's, as I think you've seen, Martha --

QUESTION: You are headed overseas, as you said.

SECRETARY KERRY: As I think you've seen, that has been contradicted and I think walked back. And there are a number of different options out there, so nobody should count on what they've read or what they've seen. This will happen when we are ready. It will happen on the coalition's schedule, and it will happen when there is confidence that it will be successful.

QUESTION: But maybe this year?

SECRETARY KERRY: I'm not going to get into timetables. It will happen.

QUESTION: Okay, let's move back then to Israel and Iran. You're headed over for further negotiations. While you're gone, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu will be addressing Congress. Susan Rice said it was destructive to U.S.-Israeli relations. Do you agree with that?

SECRETARY KERRY: Well, look, we're not – the prime minister of Israel is welcome to speak in the United States, obviously. And we have a closer relationship with Israel right now in terms of security than at any time in history. I was reviewing the record the other day. We have intervened on Israel's behalf, in the last two years, more than several hundred – a couple of hundred times in over 75 different fora in order to protect Israel. I talk to the prime minister regularly, including yesterday. We are not – we don't want to see this turned into some great political football.

Obviously, it was odd, if not unique, that we learned of it from the Speaker of the House and that the Administration was not included in this process. But the Administration is not seeking to politicize this. We want to recognize the main goal here is to prevent Iran from getting a nuclear weapon. And on that, Israel and the United States agree.

And the testimony, in fact, to the efficiency with which we've been able to pursue that is the interim agreement that is in place today. Israel is safer today because of the interim agreement that we created. The 20 percent enriched uranium has been reduced to 0. We have stopped the centrifuge production. We are inspecting inside of their facilities. We have stopped the Arak plutonium reactor in its tracks.

Israel is safer today and that is the standard that we will apply to any agreement going forward. It is to guarantee that we will know that Iran cannot develop a nuclear weapon under the procedure that we're putting in place.

QUESTION: Secretary Kerry, one of Iran's vice presidents said today that Netanyahu's speech actually serves Iran's interests. I was recently in Iran and there were a lot of people who wanted this agreement. Does Netanyahu's action actually help Iran?

SECRETARY KERRY: Yeah, I'm just not going to play the game of walking into a debate about Iranian propaganda with respect to this visit. As I said, the prime minister is welcome in the United States at any time. We have an – we have an unparalleled close security relationship with Israel and we will continue to.

President Obama has done more to ensure the security of Israel by the creation of Iron Dome, by the development of weapons that are specifically calculated to be able to deal with Iran's nuclear weapon problem. And the president has pledged that they will not get a nuclear weapon.

Now, I guarantee you, we have said again and again, no deal is better than a bad deal. We're not going to make a bad deal. But remember, Martha, there were many people who opposed the interim

agreement and said that was terrible. The fact is, the interim agreement has been adhered to. It has been inspected. We have proven that we have slowed Iran's, even set back its nuclear program. And we are going to continue now to the next step to see – I can't promise you we can. But we are going to test whether or not diplomacy can prevent this weapon from being created, so you don't have to return to additional measures, including the possibility of a military confrontation.

Our hope is diplomacy can work. And I believe, given our success on the interim agreement, I believe we deserve the benefit of the doubt to find out whether or not we can get a similarly good agreement with respect to the future. It is better to do this by diplomacy than to have to do a strategy militarily, which you would have to repeat over and over again and which I think everybody believes ought to be after you have exhausted all the diplomatic remedies.

QUESTION: Secretary Kerry, just a final question, and very quickly, if you will. I want to turn to Russia and the murder of one of Putin's most outspoken critics. Do you have any intelligence, does the U.S. have any intelligence or suspicions who may be responsible for that murder?

SECRETARY KERRY: No, we have none and we wouldn't comment anyway, Martha. But we don't have any. And the bottom line is that we hope there will be a thorough, transparent, real investigation, not just of who actually fired the shots, but who, if anyone, may have ordered or instructed this or been behind this. Four men jumping out of a car – I think it was four – in the middle of Moscow in daylight is not sort of a common affair.

And so our hearts go out to the Russian people. This was a man who was deeply committed to a better relationship with the world. As deputy prime minister, he worked hard to improve the relationship with the United States. He was known as an activist, as engaged and engaging. And we are enormously saddened to hear of his murder and we hope the authorities will join the world in producing the credible, transparent investigation necessary to find out who was behind this and who did it.

QUESTION: Thanks very much for joining us, Mr. Secretary.

SECRETARY KERRY: Thank you.

QUESTION: And have a good trip.

SECRETARY KERRY: Thank you so much. It's good to be with you.

8. U.S. Envoy at OSCE on Detention of Nadiya Savchenko (02-26-2015)

U.S. Mission to the OSCE

As delivered Chargé d'Affaires a.i. Kate Byrnes to the Permanent Council, Vienna

Statement on the Continued Detention of Nadiya Savchenko

We once again draw attention to the case of Ukrainian Verkhovna Rada Deputy Nadiya Savchenko, who was captured outside Metallist, Ukraine by Russia-backed separatists in June 2014, and was moved across the border and handed over to Russian authorities who have consistently violated her most basic rights. The United States deplores her continued ill-treatment and is deeply concerned by reports of her deteriorating health.

On February 25 Moscow City Court decided to uphold an earlier decision to extend the detention of Ms. Savchenko through May 13. The Moscow City Court also denied a motion to move Ms. Savchenko to house arrest in the Ukrainian Embassy for the duration of the extension in order to allow her to receive increased medical attention. Ms. Savchenko has entered the third month of a hunger strike to protest her detention. She has lost over 25 kilograms and is experiencing severe medical repercussions. We understand that the next hearing on Ms. Savchenko's case is scheduled for March 2, when the court will review a request by the defense to disregard the results of an October 2014 medical assessment because it no longer reflects her current, fragile medical condition. It is difficult to imagine any grounds for denying that request.

By any standard, Russia's detention and treatment of Ms. Savchenko is unacceptable. We call on Russia to release her immediately – a commitment Russia made when it signed the September Minsk agreements, and again when it signed the February 12 Package of Measures for the Implementation of the Minsk agreements.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

9. U.S. Envoy on Ongoing Violations by Russia in Ukraine (02-26-2015)

U.S. Mission to the OSCE

As delivered by Chargé d'Affaires a.i. Kate Byrnes to the Permanent Council, Vienna

Ongoing Violations of International Law and Defiance of OSCE Principles and Commitments by the Russian Federation in Ukraine

One year ago, the corrupt former President of Ukraine abandoned his office and the people of Ukraine took their opportunity to choose a future based on democracy, free trade, and rule of law. In response, Russia occupied and attempted to annex a portion of Ukraine's sovereign territory, where it has systematically persecuted ethnic minorities and others who oppose the occupation. It has also sparked a conflict that has left more than 5,700 people dead, and displaced nearly 1.5 million. During the course of the conflict, Ukraine – supported by the international community - has made several efforts to find diplomatic solutions to the crisis – in Geneva, Normandy, Berlin, Moscow and Minsk. A very clear and sobering pattern has developed. After intense diplomatic effort, an agreement is reached. Both sides make commitments, but only one side implements them. Time and again Russia and the separatists it backs fail to implement their commitments.

We welcomed the latest round of intensive diplomacy aimed at finding a lasting and peaceful resolution to the conflict, which culminated in the February 12 Minsk package of implementation measures that provided for a full ceasefire, the withdrawal of heavy weapons, unfettered access by the Special Monitoring Mission, and the full implementation of the September 2014 Minsk agreements. Unfortunately, the past two weeks have demonstrated a repeat of the pattern that we have witnessed too many times already, as Russia and the separatists it backs have repeatedly violated the ceasefire and refused the SMM unfettered and unrestricted access to separatist-controlled areas.

Russia-backed separatist forces captured Debaltseve on February 20, five days after the ceasefire went into effect on February 15. Russian military personnel have participated in the recent attacks on Debaltseve and Vuhlehirsk, a town located nearby. The separatists have denied the Special Monitoring Mission access to Debaltseve, with the exception of a single 30 minute visit while the SMM escorted an ICRC relief convoy on February 21. Notably, an SMM UAV flying over

Debaltseve on February 21 recorded a significant military presence, including armored personnel carriers, a truck that may have been carrying missiles, and three artillery positions.

The Normandy format ministers met on February 24, and issued a joint statement calling yet again for a comprehensive ceasefire, withdrawal of heavy weapons, and full access for OSCE monitors to all areas. Following this latest good faith effort by Ukraine, France, and Germany to find a peaceful solution to the conflict, we once again look to Russia and the separatists to live up to their commitments.

The actions taken by Russia and the separatists suggest instead an effort to consolidate the ground the separatists gained in recent weeks, and preparations for further military action. The Russian military continues to provide equipment, including tanks and artillery, to separatist forces inside Ukraine. Separatist associated heavy artillery and combat elements remain deployed in and around Debaltseve. Separatist or Russian military elements, including trucks and artillery batteries, are on the outskirts of Mariupol. The SMM has reported numerous ceasefire violations in recent days, and we are concerned that Russia and the separatists intend to begin chipping away at Ukrainian defenses around Mariupol in advance of an assault. If Russia wants to demonstrate to the international community that this is not the case, Russia and the separatists need to implement a genuine ceasefire and allow the SMM access to monitor the withdrawal of heavy weapons.

On February 25, Foreign Minister Lavrov claimed that a withdrawal of heavy weapons is underway in separatist-controlled areas. He criticized the SMM for not being present to monitor the alleged withdrawal despite the fact that it is the Russia-backed separatists who have repeatedly denied access to the SMM. For effective monitoring of the withdrawal of heavy weapons to occur, Russia and the separatists must provide the SMM with full information on what heavy weapons they have in eastern Ukraine, where these weapons are now, which routes will be used to withdraw them, and where they will be located after they have been withdrawn.

Mr. Chair, colleagues, while the United States hopes that this time Russia and the separatists will follow through on their commitments, we must also remain clear-eyed about the situation in eastern Ukraine. The Russia-backed separatists now have a fighting force numbering in the hundreds of tanks, armored vehicles, heavy artillery pieces, and other military vehicles. Pro-Russia separatists now have a larger and better equipped fighting force than many of the countries represented around this table.

The separatist movement at this point is a de facto extension of the Russian military and an instrument of Russian national power. The Russian military has put in place a robust command structure in eastern Ukraine, ranging from Russian General Officers overseeing operations down to junior officers. Russian personnel conduct communications, intelligence gathering, direct military operations, and help correct artillery fire. Separatist fighters have publicly acknowledged that they are operating under instructions from Moscow.

As if this is not enough, we have seen attempts to bring the conflict to Ukrainian cities far from the front lines. Most recently, a bomb exploded during a February 22 Maidan commemoration in Kharkiv. The explosion – which occurred just 100 meters from an SMM observation team – killed four people, including two teenagers, and injured several more. Ukrainian authorities have disclosed that there were several other unsuccessful terrorist attempts that day. There have been bombings in Odesa and attempted bombings in Kyiv and Lviv. The United States condemns these efforts.

Mr. Chair, let us also recall that Russia's violation of international law and defiance of OSCE principles and commitments includes its occupation and attempt to annex Crimea, which remains a

March 4, 2015

part of Ukraine. Resolving the Russia-Ukraine crisis will require Russia to make a fundamental decision to recognize Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity and support peace. Russia and the separatists it backs must stop their aggression in eastern Ukraine and contribute to a genuine ceasefire; Russia and the separatists it backs must allow the SMM unfettered access to all areas under their control; and, Russia and the separatists it backs must withdraw heavy weapons from the conflict zone in a verifiable manner. Should Russia fail to live up to its international commitments, there will be further consequences.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.
