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THE U.S. ROLE AND STRATEGY IN THE MIDDLE EAST: YEMEN AND THE COUNTRIES OF THE GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL

HEARING

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS
UNITED STATES SENATE

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THE U.S. ROLE AND STRATEGY IN THE MIDDLE EAST: YEMEN AND THE COUNTRIES OF THE GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 6, 2015

U.S. SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS,
Washington, DC.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 2:32 p.m., in room SD–419, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Bob Corker (chairman of the committee) presiding.

Present: Senators Corker, Risch, Flake, Perdue, Cardin, Menendez, Shaheen, Murphy, Kaine, and Markey.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. BOB CORKER, U.S. SENATOR FROM TENNESSEE

The CHAIRMAN. The Senate Foreign Relations Committee will come to order. We thank our witnesses for being here and look forward to your testimony.

Today's hearing is the third in a series of hearings examining the role of the United States in the Middle East. This hearing will focus on two related topics, U.S. policy toward our GCC allies and the war in Yemen.

In May of this year, the President hosted delegations from six GCC countries in an effort to allay their concerns about the nuclear deal and to reaffirm American commitment to our allies. That was almost 5 months ago. I think it is unclear at present what the outcome of that has been.

As you talk to our gulf partners, there is clear skepticism about American leadership in the region.

Meanwhile, there has been a marked increase in American weapon sales to the gulf over the last few years. That said, a business relation, certainly, is not equivalent to a strategic partnership.

There is a strong case to be made that almost every decision this administration has made concerning the Middle East over the last few years has been considered with pursuit of the Iran nuclear agreement in mind, or at least that has impacted, certainly, their decisions.

Now that the agreement is going to be implemented, it is vitally important—vitally important—that we close the daylight between us and our GCC allies.

I hope our witnesses will cover why the GCC is important to American interests and what the future of security cooperation in that region should look like.

That future should be on display right now in Yemen, where the perception of a disengaged America and a resurgent Iran has led the GCC to take a stand.

Now, in fairness, that stand is not entirely on their own, as Gulf States are displaying their use of American equipment and training with surprising effectiveness, but also an intolerable level of civilian casualties.

The war and the resulting extreme humanitarian crisis are receiving the reluctant support of this administration. Yet I am not sure what the defined objectives and end state of that support is at present. Hopefully, you will help us with that.

I hope our witnesses can help us understand what American policy toward the GCC countries should look like and how we balance that against real humanitarian concerns.

Thank you again for appearing before our committee, and I look forward to your testimony.

And with that, we turn to our distinguished ranking member and my friend, Ben Cardin.

STATEMENT OF HON. BEN CARDIN,
U.S. SENATOR FROM MARYLAND

Senator CARDIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I strongly support this hearing and having a discussion on the regional security strategies involving our Gulf Cooperation Council in Yemen.

Last week, as you know, I introduced legislation, the Iran Policy Oversight Act, and part of that was a response to the debate we had during the Iran nuclear agreement review. What came out loud and clear from all of our Members is that it is critically important that the United States has a well-articulated regional security strategy that gives comfort to our allies, to Israel, to the Gulf Cooperation Council, and deals with the challenges in Yemen.

So this hearing is, I think, critically important for us to try to understand what we can do to strengthen the understanding in the region about the U.S. leadership.

Working closely with the Gulf Cooperation Council countries is absolutely critical to ensuring that we push back on all Iranian destabilizing behavior. Although the U.S.–GCC collaboration has taken on new importance and urgency as the Iran deal is implemented, it is also important to recognize that these relationships and the policy objectives of deepening multilateral cooperation is not new.

U.S. commitment to the legitimate defense needs of the gulf countries dates back to the first gulf war. U.S. commitment to security cooperation extends through the last decade's engagement in Iraq and Afghanistan. And recently, this commitment has been underscored through the U.S.–GCC strategic cooperative forums hosted by Secretaries of State Clinton and Kerry and the U.S.–GCC Camp David summit hosted by President Obama.

U.S. engagement with the GCC is fundamental to achieving any shared goal in the region, whether it is defeating ISIL, restoring stability in Iraq and Yemen, shoring up Jordan and Lebanon, addressing persistent instability in North Africa, reinvesting in the peace process between Israel and the Palestinians, or working toward a negotiated political transition away from Assad in Syria.

The GCC countries play a critical role in a multitude of shared interests from maritime security to counterterrorism, to humanitarian response, to the hosting and basing of U.S. forces in the region.

So there are many, many reasons why this relationship is critically important.

I want to just add one additional point, if I might, as it relates to Yemen.

We need to move forward with a political solution in Yemen. It is not going to be a military victory. There is going to have to be a political solution in that country. We know it is not easy. We know it is complicated. But I think the United States leadership is going to be critically important as we look at dealing with the impact that Yemen has on the GCC countries as well as on the regional stability issues.

So I look forward to listening to our witnesses. I look forward to this discussion. As I was saying before we sat down with our two distinguished witnesses, there are going to be a lot more questions than answers, I am afraid. I think this discussion is going to be important so that we can reach an understanding as to how the United States leadership can advance the security of our friends and allies in the region.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you for your comments.

I will introduce our two witnesses.

One witness is the Hon. Mary Beth Long, founder and chief executive officer of Metis Solutions and was the first-ever Senate-confirmed female Assistant Secretary of Defense.

We thank you for being here.

Our other witness today is the Hon. Stephen Seche, executive vice president of the Arab Gulf States Institute and former Ambassador to Yemen.

So you all have a lot to share with us. We thank you both for being here. I know you all have been here before and understand we would like for you to keep your comments to about 5 minutes. Any written materials you have will be entered into the record.

With that, Ambassador Seche, if you would begin, we would appreciate it.

STATEMENT OF HON. STEPHEN SECHE, EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT, THE ARAB GULF STATES INSTITUTE, WASHINGTON, DC

Ambassador SECHE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Cardin, members of the committee, as we meet this afternoon, powerful, destructive forces are at work in the Middle East, tearing apart societies, provoking a massive migration, and threatening the very existence of established states.

None of this is news to anyone who pays even cursory attention to events in the region. But what may be less apparent is the extent to which Arab Gulf States are involved in the conflicts and the crises that are roiling the Middle East.

In unprecedented ways, the states of the Gulf Cooperation Council are employing their wealth and modern military arsenals to try to achieve outcomes that serve their interests from Libya to Egypt, and from Syria to Yemen. What drives them and what the United

States can do to influence their behavior are questions worthy of careful examination. I am very grateful for the opportunity to contribute to your discussion of these issues.

My own assessment may seem counterintuitive. On the face of it, the newfound assertiveness of the Arab Gulf States like Saudi Arabia and the UAE might well suggest a greater degree of confidence and maturity than seen in the past. While I would like to think this is the case, I strongly suspect that it is motivated at least in equal measure by a collective anxiety that flows from three major concerns: first, that the United States, long a guarantor of gulf security, is disengaging from the region; second, that a resurgent, relegitimized, and emboldened Iran will increase its efforts to destabilize Arab Gulf States; and finally, that the wave of political and social unrest that engulfed the Middle East in 2011 will make its way to gulf doorsteps, threatening the status quo and the very survival of the monarchies themselves.

I will very quickly touch on each of these points, which I examine more closely in my written testimony.

There is no doubt that the fundamental underpinning of the U.S. relationship with the Arab Gulf States is changing. Their oil for our security assurances has been the fundamental premise upon which the relationship has existed for years. But I think reports of the U.S. disengagement from the region are wildly premature. We are simply too deeply invested in the region and the strategic partnerships with our Arab gulf partners to walk away.

Regarding Iran, I believe that its nuclear program is only the tip of the iceberg, the part that draws the most attention because it looms so large in the public mind. It is the threat that lies beneath that most worries our gulf partners, the financial and military support Iran provides to destabilizing political and armed insurgent movements in the region. This brings me briefly to Yemen because it is here that the Sunni Arab coalition led by Saudi Arabia has chosen to draw a line in the sand and tell Iran that its interference in the region will no longer be tolerated, at enormous cost to the Yemeni people and the nation's already fragile infrastructure.

It has never been my view that the Houthi movement comes with a "Made in Iran" label. In fact, I would argue that the support provided by former Yemeni President, Ali Abdullah Saleh, has been much more decisive than whatever Iran has made available.

Finally, let me address the response of Arab Gulf States to internal pressure for political reform, which is two-pronged. On the one hand, they are monitoring internal dissent carefully and, to one extent or another, taking steps to quash it. At the same time, there are efforts afoot to provide citizens of the gulf monarchies with a modest level of political participation through elections, in particular to municipal councils that have only limited authority.

Mr. Chairman, while in the long run it is a good thing if Gulf States are disposed to engage more readily in finding solutions to regional crises, we can also hope they become proficient in using tools other than military hardware to do so. One of these tools might be the political will necessary to agree to a framework within which GCC states and Iran engage in direct talks on those issues that divide them.

Of course, nothing would please the United States more than to see Iran's engagement with its neighbors and the West increase, whether through trade, investment, academic exchanges, or tourism. Every contact is seen as one less brick in the foundation supporting the conservative theocratic regime in Tehran, a sort of slow-motion soft-power transition to a more open, inclusive form of governance.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I look forward to elaborating on these points with you and the members of your committee.

[The prepared statement of Ambassador Seche follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF AMBASSADOR STEPHEN A. SECHE

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Cardin, members of the committee. As we meet today, powerful, destructive forces are at work in the Middle East, tearing apart societies, provoking a massive wave of migration and threatening the very existence of established states. None of this is news to anyone who pays even cursory attention to the region, but what may be less apparent is the extent to which Arab Gulf States are involved in the conflicts and the crises that are roiling the Middle East at this moment.

In unprecedented ways, states of the Gulf Cooperation Council are employing their wealth and modern military arsenals to try and shape outcomes that serve their interests from Libya to Egypt and from Syria to Yemen. What drives them, and what the U.S. can do to influence their behavior, are questions worthy of careful examination, and I am very grateful for the opportunity to contribute to your discussion of these issues.

My own assessment may seem counterintuitive. On the face of it, the newfound assertiveness of Arab Gulf States like Saudi Arabia and the UAE might well suggest a greater degree of confidence and maturity than seen heretofore. And while I would like to think this is the case, I am persuaded that it is motivated at least in equal measure by a collective anxiety that flows from three major concerns:

(1) That the United States, long the guarantor of Gulf security, is disengaging from the region;

(2) That a resurgent, relegitimized, and emboldened Iran will increase its efforts to destabilize Arab Gulf States;

(3) That the wave of political and social unrest that engulfed the Middle East in 2011 will make its way to their doorsteps, threatening the status quo and the very survival of the monarchies themselves.

Allow me to briefly address each of these points:

There is no doubt that the nature of the U.S. relationship with the Arab Gulf States is changing. The fundamental underpinning of that relationship—their oil for our security assurances—has come into question as a result of the shale revolution in this country, and a profound reluctance on the part of the United States to send American troops into combat in the region yet again.

This administration, correctly I believe, has decided that the more appropriate response is to provide essential support to our regional partners—including the Arab Gulf States—that will allow them to attend to their own security needs: form their own alliances, build their own capacity and police their own neighborhoods. This is both a reasonable and strategically sound approach. In support of this policy, the United States has committed itself to work with the Arab Gulf States to prevent and deter external threats and aggression. This commitment was reiterated just last week when Secretary Kerry met in New York with the GCC Foreign Ministers under the rubric of our joint Strategic Cooperation Forum.

This forum is the mechanism identified to tackle the range of security issues discussed last May when President Obama hosted GCC leaders at Camp David. Expedited arms transfers, robust counterterrorism cooperation, enhanced cyber and maritime security, and establishing an interoperable ballistic missile defense are some of the key areas where work is being done in support of this strategic partnership.

As we proceed to intensify our engagement with the GCC member states, it is important to bear in mind that the GCC is not a monolith: its six member states bring their own perspectives to the table, and the challenges inherent in overcoming these differences and developing a collective and comprehensive approach to defense and security should not be underestimated. President Obama has gone so far as to authorize the sale of U.S. arms to the GCC itself, which is a laudable aspiration, but hardly a practical option: the GCC is not NATO. It has no procurement author-

ity, and each member state makes its own defense decisions. Even the effort to establish a peninsula-wide ballistic missile defense will run into strong headwinds, given that it will require extensive sharing of sensitive military data among the GCC states.

My point is that the United States is so deeply invested in the long-standing, strategic partnerships with the nations of the Arab Gulf that it is difficult to imagine it disengaging. In this respect, I strongly suspect that our partners in the region are less worried about the U.S. packing up and departing than they are about the U.S. introducing its new friend.

Which brings me to my second point of neuralgia for the Arab Gulf States: Iran.

Let me suggest at the outset that, in very important respects, Iran's nuclear program is only the tip of the iceberg here. It is the part that draws the most attention because it looms so large in the public mind. But in fact, the biggest threat that Iran poses to its neighbors is that which lies beneath the surface, if you will: the financial and military support it provides to destabilizing political and armed insurgent movements in the region, much of which is delivered sub rosa.

And in this regard, Iran has been doing quite well influencing events in the region without having to rely on a nuclear weapon. Its support for the regime of Bashar al-Assad in Syria has been decisive in the regime's ability to cling to power.

In Iraq, elements of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Force have been fighting side by side with the Iraqi Army to dislodge Islamic State fighters. And in Yemen, the armed Shia insurgency known as the Houthis, which Iran has supported in a variety of ways for years, still controls the capital, Sanaa, and other portions of the country, in spite of having suffered serious military setbacks in recent weeks.

All that said, it is also quite true that the Arab Gulf States are unhappy with the Iran agreement but again, for reasons that have little to do with any nuclear weapons threat the agreement is supposed to neutralize.

Their unhappiness flows from other concerns:

First, that the agreement will provide Iran with a financial windfall as sanctions are lifted that is estimated to be in the neighborhood of $100 billion, which Iran will turn around and use to fuel greater instability in the region by arming insurgents, and bankrolling subversion of the Gulf States. The Obama administration argues that, having been cash-starved for so many years, the regime in Tehran will be under enormous pressure to use this money to rebuild the nation's infrastructure and improve services to its citizens. Given the amount of money potentially in play, I suspect there will be a little bit of both, although it is important to bear in mind that sanctions relief is calibrated to take place as Iran meets its obligations under the nuclear agreement.

Another area of concern for the Gulf States is that, courtesy of the nuclear agreement with the West, Iran has just managed to negotiate its way out of its political and economic isolation back into the mainstream of regional affairs. Look at Iran's political leadership, jetting around the region, calling for direct talks with its neighbors, proposing four point plans to resolve the conflict in Syria, and generally acting like statesmen when, in fact, their government's deeply destabilizing behavior continues unabated.

This brings me to Yemen, because it is here, in one of the poorest countries on earth, that the Sunni Arab world, led by Saudi Arabia and the UAE, has chosen to draw a line in the sand and tell Iran that its interference in the region will no longer be tolerated. In fact, Yemen is now the most prominent example of a more assertive Arab Gulf intervening militarily to protect its perceived security interests in the region. The Saudi-led coalition entered the conflict on March 26, when it began a campaign of air strikes against Houthi rebels that continues to this day, a full 6 months later. And while the momentum on the ground seems to have shifted decisively in favor of the coalition and their efforts to reinstate the government of exiled President AbdRaboo Mansour Hadi, it was not until the UAE and Saudi Arabia introduced ground forces into Yemen that the tide truly began to turn.

Which is not to say that the air strikes did not contribute to the shifting momentum, but they clearly were insufficient on their own to make a decisive difference. And the truth is, the Saudi-led air campaign has wreaked enormous damage on Yemen's civilian population and its already fragile infrastructure. In a nation of 23 million people, the United Nations now estimates that 1.5 million have been driven from their homes and are now internally displaced. A full 80 percent of the population, according to the U.N., needs urgent humanitarian assistance.

What this suggests to me is that Saudi Arabia was focused on one thing as it began its air campaign, and it was something other than the physical well-being of Yemen's citizens. Saudi Arabia was focused on sending a clear and unequivocal message to Iran, which it believes is the driving force behind the Houthi rebellion. This is by no means a universally held belief, however. Certainly, it is not clear to me

that the Houthi insurgency comes with a Made-in-Iran label. While I do not doubt that Iran has provided political, financial, and military support to the Houthis, we must remember that they are a 100-percent Yemeni phenomenon, and it is almost certainly true that the military support provided to them by former Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh has been much more decisive than whatever Iran has made available.

Most worrisome now is that the Saudi coalition, buoyed by recent gains on the ground, and intent on avenging the death of coalition forces (45 Emirati soldiers and 10 Saudis died in a single incident on September 4), are not terribly interested in sitting down to negotiate an end to this conflict. The United States has been encouraging the Saudis to reconsider its position, and not for altogether altruistic reasons. We have supported the Saudi-led coalition since its air campaign began, providing logistical and intelligence support, and munitions. I have some sympathy for the U.S. in this case, though: the Saudis clearly were intent on moving swiftly and forcefully against the Houthis, and I believe the administration decided it was better to be in the tent with the coalition where it could perhaps exercise some influence over the way it conducted itself, than outside where it had no influence at all. Clearly, things have not worked out as planned, and where the conflict in Yemen is headed simply is not clear. The worst outcome, in my estimation, would be a ground assault on the Yemeni capital, Sanaa, a city of 2 million people, with sizeable pockets of support for the Houthis, and former President Saleh. I fervently hope that before the conflict reaches this stage, all the parties will step back and realize that the only certain outcome of continued combat is greater suffering for the Yemeni people, and will decide to negotiate terms for an end to the conflict and a viable powersharing arrangement.

Finally, let me address concerns among Arab Gulf States that by the voices calling for political and economic reform in the region will eventually become those of their own citizens, who will insist on a greater role in the fundamental decisions of governance that affect their lives. With the exception of Bahrain, the only Arab Gulf State with a restive, and majority, Shia population, there is no real evidence of major domestic fault lines that would generate alarm at this time. That said, all the Arab Gulf States are monitoring internal dissent carefully and, to one extent or another, taking steps to quash it. At the same time, there are efforts afoot to provide citizens of the Gulf monarchies with some level of political participation through elections. In some cases, this participation is tightly controlled, as with the elections held over the weekend for the UAE's Federal National Council. In other Gulf States, elections focus on municipal councils, which have only limited ability to make substantive changes. That said, it is worth noting that, for the first time, women will be able to participate as both voters and candidates in Saudi Arabia's municipal elections set for December.

Clearly, America's Arab gulf allies feel much more liberty to undertake external defense and security initiatives than they do to make difficult domestic-reform decisions. While in the long run it is a good thing if Gulf States are disposed to engage more readily in finding solutions to regional crises, we also can hope they become proficient in using tools other than military hardware to do so. One of these tools is the wealth of the GCC states, and we are seeing an increasing willingness on their part to use this wealth as an instrument of economic statecraft. And in spite of the fact that a post-sanctions environment will see Iran reenter the regional and international economy as a serious competitor, a number of GCC states should be able to realize clear benefits from economic ties with Iran.

For one thing, the economic isolation imposed on Iran by sanctions have made its economy heavily driven by domestic demand, which has represented an average of 85 percent of real GDP over the last 5 years, according to the IMF. This suggests a lot of pent-up interest on the part of Iranians to invest their money abroad, which would certainly contribute to the growth of regional economies. Trade, real estate, banking and infrastructure are all areas likely to benefit from these linkages.

Of course, nothing would please the United States more than to see Iran's engagement with the West increase: whether through trade, investment, academic exchanges, or tourism. Every contact is seen as one less brick in the foundation supporting the conservative, theocratic regime in Tehran, a sort of slow-motion, soft-power transition to a more open, inclusive governance.

Like it or not, the Iran that emerges from this nuclear agreement is going to very quickly reestablish itself as a major influence in the region. To my way of thinking, the most sensible way for the Arab Gulf States to respond to this new reality would be to consider an approach to Iran other than the very heavy reliance on acquisition of greater firepower that is currently underway. While this may provide short-term comfort, in the long run what is needed is a vehicle that will allow the Arab Gulf

States and Iran to discuss the issues that divide them and, in doing so, obviate the need to resort to military means to resolve their differences.

While the exact framework for these negotiations can be discussed, their value would seem to be clear, particularly given the deep skepticism with which Arab Gulf States view Tehran's intentions, and Iranian regime concerns that its neighbors in the region are conspiring with the U.S. to hasten its demise.

What seems indisputable is that the dynamics in the Gulf region are undergoing dramatic change, as a resurgent Iran faces off against its increasingly anxious and assertive Arab neighbors. In between stands the United States, exercising what influence it enjoys—and it is limited—to try and ensure that competition in this instance does not become conflict.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much.

Secretary Long.

STATEMENT OF HON. MARY BETH LONG, FOUNDER AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, METIS SOLUTIONS, WASHINGTON, DC

Ms. LONG. Chairman Corker, Ranking Member Cardin, and members of the committee, thank you very much for the invitation to be here today.

As the former Assistant Secretary of Defense who was responsible for strategies in the Middle East, I learned the critical importance to the United States of our close and continuing relationship with our gulf Arab partners. Unfortunately, those close and continual partnerships are strained today, in part because of the implicit policy that they view by the United States to allow Iran to build its regional power and its influence much along the lines of the Ambassador's comments and to be soft on Iran as far as its political, asymmetric military and other activities that for our important gulf neighbors are at least if not more critical than its nascent nuclear weapons advances.

The United States primary concern in Yemen is that of a growing perception if not reality that Iran is using this conflict in order to increase its power and that the Gulf States have decided they are to respond, again, much along the lines of my colleague.

The CHAIRMAN. If I could, I would have to say it is actually amazing to hear his presentation. I know most people understand we have a witness and this side has a witness. It is amazing how on all these issues, the alignment has been as it has been.

But anyway, keep going.

Ms. LONG. Absolutely.

But I believe ?????? are making a mistake. Yemen is not a model for United States counterterrorism efforts, as asserted by the White House a very short time ago, and we are missing the strategic.

Yemen is just the most recent piece of Iran's efforts to increase its power and the most recent development of the Russian-Iranian alliance is worrisome not only in Yemen but in Syria. And the linkages between these regional participants and what is happening in both those conflicts is something I believe that is inimical to U.S. interests and something that we need to examine.

The reentry of Russian military into the region suggests that things could get much worse in Yemen in the near term, particularly to the extent that there is a division of labor between Russia and Iran on what is happening in Syria and that the role of Hezbollah in Iran is increased, forcing the division of labor. And the nascent show of the Houthis willing to come to the table will

be delayed even further because of operating space or reprieve that they will be getting from Iran and/or Hezbollah.

In fact, it was a Russian Tochka missile that killed the 45 Emiratis earlier this fall. Russia has long had strategic interests in Yemen and its use of Iran to further those interests is something we ought to be thinking about, particularly in light of what is happening in both Iraq and Syria.

This is particularly true as the administration does not appear to be willing to call out either Iran or Russia for what they are doing in the region, nor to understand Russia and Iran's full motives, as I believe the GCC does.

Thus far in Yemen, the political situation is at best a stalemate. The big question is how far must the Houthis be pushed in order to negotiate and is it really a Houthi decision any longer, given the myriad players who are now involved not only on the ground but also in supplying weaponry, advice and support, including the United States.

Arguably, the clearest benefactors of the ongoing conflict are Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula and ISIS, al-Qaeda being, according to the State Department and the Center for Counterterrorism in the United States, still the only organization taking advantage of the power vacuums that play along the fears of the Sunni tribes who are convinced that Iran would be allowed to run its course, and it must turn to either AQ or ISIS in order to counter the Iranian-backed Shia and Houthis.

What is the nature of the conflict? It is asymmetrical. It employs missiles and incredibly increasing political meddling not unlike the political meddling in Bahrain, Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon. All of these are at least as worrisome as the Iran nuclear aspirations.

Of note, Saudi Arabia has over 1,500 kilometers of shared border with Iran that are at great risk

The American interests in Yemen are legion. We must build a strategic deterrence to containing Iran in the gulf. We must increase and demonstrate our partnerships to the GCC in much more than just selling of weapons as requested. The Gate of Tears and freedom of navigation along and among the parties that are using the Strait of Hormuz for the majority of their oil and gas, not just the United States but China and elsewhere that have severe impact on American jobs and economy, must be considered in what we are doing in Yemen and in the region.

So what is the endgame? The endgame for the United States should be augmenting our very little on-the-ground information and visibility on what the Gulf States are doing, alleviating the human suffering and poverty by helping the GCC target better, and marginalize and mitigate the collateral damage performed by the military activities. We should expedite the sales of precision-guided weaponry, targeting, and other assistance to the gulf Arabs in order to help their military actions be more effective and reduce the number of casualties.

Although our efforts to work through the GCC and the Arab League may have been a good idea, they were premature. Neither organization is able nor equipped to deal with acquisitions nor our expert regulations and laws. And our bureaucracy alone is delaying

and deterring military support that is necessary to the ongoing conflict as we speak.

Finally, we need to lead internally. The President and administration has been opaque in what are United States interests in Yemen, and we need to come up with a policy and a strategy that articulates our aims and goals.

And finally, current limitations on our naval deployments in the gulf as a result of sequestration and the lack of operational funds due through the BCA is limiting and tying our military's hands to be effective support. We can do better.

Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Long follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. MARY BETH LONG

Chairman Corker, Ranking Member Cardin, and members of the committee, thank you for inviting me to testify today. I am honored to be here to speak about the U.S. role and strategy in the Arabian Peninsula, particularly Yemen. While Yemen looks better now than it did a few months ago, we are—at best—looking at a stalemate that does not appear to lead to a political resolution anytime soon. Make no mistake: Yemen is not a model for U.S. counterterrorism efforts, as asserted by the White House spokesman in March of this year. Washington must provide a clear expression of U.S. interests, clarify our policies to our allies and our enemies, and follow through with timely and decisive action.

The primary U.S. concern in Yemen is that Iran is using the conflict there to increase its power in the region. Washington must help contain Iran and its regional meddling, which counters U.S. interests. The U.S. should also be concerned about Iran and Russia working together in Yemen and the broader Middle East. At this time, we do not understand their strategy or respective roles in what appear to be a division of labor. Washington must also recognize that Yemeni territory and islands are critical to U.S. interests. In particular, the global "chokepoint" at the Bab el-Mandab ("Gate of Grief") is the gateway to virtually all Suez Canal traffic. Finally, it is important to note that the threat posed by terrorists and extremists in Yemen is likely a far greater risk to the U.S. and its Gulf allies than ISIS currently appears to be.

- As an Iranian official said earlier this year, "We are everywhere now: Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, and Palestine." Yemen should be on that list, though Iran may be keeping a low profile.
- The Russian-Iranian alliance suggests that the situation in Yemen could get much worse in the near term. It is a clear continuation of their aggression in other parts of the Middle East.
- The Bab el-Mandab is not only a key passageway for U.S.-bound energy, but also to other economies upon which our jobs and economy relies.
- Yemen is still home to the "single most active extremist organization planning attacks against the U.S.": Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), according to State Department and the Counter Terrorism Center.
- The rise of ISIS in Yemen will only make that worse.

The current status of the war in Yemen is thus: the pro-Yemen Government coalition faces a political stalemate in Yemen although with recent military success.

- A timely political solution to the war in Yemen is needed to save lives and avoid further humanitarian strain in the country. The U.N. is trying to push negotiations between the Yemen Government and the Houthis, but progress appears to be stalled. The Bottom Line question is how far must the Houthis be pushed militarily to feel compelled to negotiate?
- The Saudi-led coalition of 10 or more countries is making some progress, having pushed the Houthis out of Aden and moving north toward Sanaa.
- A significant byproduct of the internal chaos is a security vacuum that AQAP and, to a lesser extent, ISIS are exploiting. They are portraying themselves as the protectors of Sunnis against the Shia Houthis and Iran. The Sunni coalition is offering a counter to that dangerous narrative.

Russia and Iran have partnered to advance the Houthis' interests in Yemen as part of a broader Middle East strategy of aggression. Washington does not fully understand how Iran and Russia are cooperating regionally—they appear to have a strategy and we do not. In Yemen, there appears to be a tacit division of labor.

- The most recent development is evidence of an Iranian-Russian alliance in Yemen, in addition to their alliance in Syria and Iraq. Early indications are that their goals may be inimical to Washington's and its allies' interests. The Russian-Iranian alliance suggests that things could get much worse in the near term, particularly to the extent that Russia's more overt role provides the Houthis with operating space or reprieve.
  - What was likely a Russian Tochka missile killed 45 Emiratis fighting in the pro-Yemeni Government coalition in Yemen earlier this fall. The missile was either supplied directly from Russia or delivered from Syria through Iran, according to a Hezbollah official. These missiles require military guidance to use correctly so it is likely the Houthis have either Russian or Lebanese Hezbollah assistance.
  - There is also reporting that Russia met with Houthis about future financial alliances prior to the beginning of coalition airstrikes.
- The Obama administration does not appear to be willing to call out Russia for its military activities in the region and elsewhere. There is a relationship between what Russia is doing in Syria and what Russia is doing in Yemen and we need to be realistic about what that is.

The Obama administration has declared that we support the pro-Yemen Government coalition, but has not adequately explained to the American people what are the U.S. interests at stake. A simple answer is that we support the coalition efforts in Yemen because coalition countries share our concerns about Iranian influence and terrorism in Yemen.

- Containing Iran is critical.
- Yemeni territory and islands are critical to the global "chokepoint" at the Bab el-Mandab ("Gate of Grief"), which is the gateway between the Red Sea and the Horn of Africa—virtually all Suez Canal traffic.
  - Freedom of Navigation of the Strait of Hormuz. There is lots of talk of U.S. energy independence, but the bottom line is somewhere around 25–30 percent of our oil comes from the GCC countries and must pass unimpeded through the Gulf (Iran is at 4 percent).
- Key passageway not only for U.S.-bound energy, but also to other economies upon which our jobs and economy relies.
- Most powerful threat to Saudi Arabia and other southern Gulf States.

There are substantial challenges to U.S. and other operations in Yemen.

- The U.S. withdrew most of its Embassy staff from Yemen, meaning we have very little visibility on the ground.
  - The United Nations has reported that 86 percent of those killed civilians (2,000 dead/4,000 wounded).
  - There are 1.5M displaced and 90 percent in urgent need of humanitarian assistance.
- We are supporting the coalition through the provision of targeting information (though we do not select targets), intelligence, 45 intelligence analysts, logistical and search and rescue support, and weapons.
- The U.S. relationship with GCC countries, which make up the bulk of the coalition, is weak.
  - The U.S.-GCC summit at Camp David in May failed to do the most important thing: close the credibility gap between the White House and our GCC partners. Washington's contributions to the coalition in Yemen could be a confidence builder and put these important relationships on firmer ground.

The U.S. made the following assertions of support at the May U.S.–GCC summit:

- On Yemen, the parties emphasized the need to move rapidly from military operations to a political process and support U.N. humanitarian efforts (including a Saudi pledge of $274M to U.N. humanitarian efforts in Yemen);
- Security Cooperation—provision of military equipment and training, and joint exercises;
- Security Assurances vs. Guarantees
  - "We [the U.S.] are prepared to work jointly with our GCC partners" was considered a rather "tepid" response and simply sustained misguided efforts to work through the GCC/Arab League on a unified Arab force. The idea of a united GCC block is evidence of our failure to understand how the region works. Notably, Washington insisted on an agreement that the GCC "consult" with the U.S. if it plans to take military action beyond its borders.

- Ballistic Missile Defense (and a revival of the decades-old goal of a GCC-wide Missile Early Warning System);
- Military Exercises and Training Partnership, including more Special Operations Forces cooperation and training with member states;
- Arms Transfers Fast Tracking (and, again, a misguided effort for GCC-wide sales after a GCC procurement capability is established);
- Maritime Security;
- Counter-Terrorism;
- Foreign Terrorist Fighters;
- Counter-Terrorism Financing;
- Critical Infrastructure and Cybersecurity;
- Countering Violent Extremism;
- Counter proliferation.

The most important thing that will come out of that meeting is if it will restore U.S. credibility with our Gulf allies. Timely, robust follow through is critical.

Bringing the war in Yemen to a close as swiftly as possible and containing negative Iranian influence will require that Washington provide a clear expression of our interests and our policies to our allies and our enemies, and follow through with timely and decisive action. Washington should:

- Help the coalition determine its end game and how to achieve it definitively. The U.S. should increase our support to the coalition—particularly in the areas of deterrence—by providing additional intelligence, logistics and weapons support. We should also provide additional combat support, particularly that which supports ground troops' safety and better directs lethal activity, thus reducing civilian and economic collateral damage (note: precision guided weaponry saves lives);
- Strengthen U.S. efforts to intercept Iranian and Russian support, particularly weapons, to the Houthi rebels and Hezbollah in Yemen. We cannot continue to tie one hand behind our back by failing to have sufficient military equipment and activities funded and deployed;
- Help secure the Saudi border;
- Put pressure on Iran and Russia diplomatically and otherwise, including by routine coalition exercises;
- Lead internally (and lead abroad) by explaining why we should ramp up our support to "moderate" opposition in Syria and remove the constraints on our military leadership to provide unfiltered advice on best courses of action;
- Fix current and future limitations on our naval deployments to the region as a result of sequestration and the lack of operational funds due to the BCA.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you both for your testimony.

If I could, I will just briefly, Madam Secretary, you are referring to a request that the Saudis have right now for guided weaponry to refurbish what they have been using in Yemen. I guess there is a concern if we do not act upon that, they will have to resort to dumb bombs, which in every way will be more damaging to the civilian population.

I think that is the specific issue you are referring to. Is that correct?

Ms. LONG. Yes, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. If I could, you also spoke to something else. I would like both of you to respond. You mentioned that we need to demonstrate our support for the GCC in Yemen, so I would like to ask you both this. Are we involved in the way that we are there to demonstrate support for the GCC or is there some national interest in Yemen that we care deeply about, if you would elaborate? Is it more about us demonstrating support or is it because Yemen itself has in itself a national interest to our country?

Ambassador SECHE. If I may, Mr. Chairman, I will begin and then let Mary Beth finish where I end off, and probably better.

But I do believe that we are there at the moment principally because of our alliance with Saudi Arabia. When Saudi Arabia decided in March to go in with the coalition to begin the bombing

campaign, we did not get a whole lot of advance warning. We did not get a question as to whether we thought it was a good idea or not. We were told fundamentally that Saudi Arabia had decided there was such a crisis on its southern border, it had to move forcefully and decisively to route the Iranians and their proxies, the Houthis, as they see the world.

So we went in I think believing it was better to be in the tent than not in hopes that we could somehow chart the course with the Saudis, so this expedition of theirs might turn out better in the process.

I think the instinct was right. I think the execution has been less than good. I think what we have now is kind of a tiger by the tail, where we are now complicit in what the Saudis are doing with the coalition in Yemen without a real ability to change the course of what they are doing. We are trying very hard to persuade them, I think, to see their way clear to get the parties to the conflict to the negotiating table, but it has not been easy.

I do believe the Saudis and the coalition members are so enthused at the moment by what they see in terms of their victories on the ground, they are reluctant to say let us call a halt to this and give the Houthis an advantage. So they went to press harder even perhaps.

I hope that they do not have in mind, in this context, an attack on the capital, Sanaa. I think that would be an absolute disaster. It is a city of 2 million people with deep pockets of support for Houthis and former President Saleh.

I cannot imagine what a ground assault would do, other than lead to more deaths and more carnage in Yemen. I think it is very ill-advised.

Ms. LONG. I do not disagree. I actually think it is that, but it is more complicated.

There are three reasons why——

The CHAIRMAN. It is what—but it is more complicated?

Ms. LONG. More complicated.

The CHAIRMAN. It is what?

Ms. LONG. It is our support to Saudi Arabia and our support to the gulf, but I think there are two other very key interests.

The first are U.S. national interests. I mean, for all our talk of being energy independent, the fact of the matter is approximately 30 percent of our oil and gas does come through either the Strait of Hormuz or the Gateway of Tears, and that is not going to change in the near future. To the extent it is not our oil and gas, China and others are still highly dependent on the oil and gas they transfer through there. And, as you know, the Gate of Tears also controls all the traffic that goes through the Suez Canal.

Secondly, it is not only us supporting the gulf and the Saudis, but it is us showing Iran and us showing Russia that we are serious about hegemonic behavior in the region, and we do intend to draw a line and that military involvement, particularly to the extent in Yemen that we are now seeing, is not acceptable to United States interests and it is something that we do not support.

So it is really those three things, our interests, support to the gulf, messaging to our enemies.

The CHAIRMAN. Do you think members of the GCC, without our leadership, have demonstrated effectiveness in Yemen?

Ms. LONG. I think the GCC has done two things. I think they demonstrated their lack of confidence that we would lead and join them and thus the reason they have gone out on their own and delayed in informing us. And I think that they have demonstrated that they could have remarkable military success.

I do not think that you would find any argument either the U.S. or in the GCC that this is not something that is going to be won militarily and it is the political piece that is missing. And there we do have a lack of—certainly, the goals have been ambiguous and the means have been even more difficult to determine.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Seche.

Ambassador SECHE. If I may, Mr. Chairman, I think what we have seen in Yemen is that the coalition went in without an endgame. They went in really very hot. They were in a state seeing what they did see, in terms of the Houthis taking over territory willy-nilly heading south toward Aden. I think what we have seen now is that they have learned what we have learned, that you cannot do this entirely by the air. You cannot do this just by airstrikes alone. You cannot win a conflict.

So they had to introduce ground forces, and at some considerable cost. There was just an attack this morning that has killed more Emiratis and more Saudis, and this is following the one in early September in which 55 Emiratis and Saudis were killed as well.

So I think it has started to really dawn on our gulf allies that there is more to this than demonstrating to the world a very resolute Saudi Arabia taking care of its own defense needs. I think what we have seen, to some extent, is a very inexperienced Saudi Minister of Defense with the reins given to him by his father in this case, and asked to control and manage and orchestrate a very complicated issue in Yemen militarily.

As you suggested yourself earlier, Mr. Chairman, it has not yet gone as they might have thought.

The CHAIRMAN. I think they are learning some of the same lessons we have learned for the last 15 years.

As far as what our involvement should be with them for a better outcome, what would the two of you suggest?

Ms. LONG. I think three things.

I apologize. We are both so polite.

The CHAIRMAN. And you are both on the same page. It is very refreshing.

Ms. LONG. I think from a concrete standpoint, we need to help them more aggressively with targeting, not only in order to help them but to be more effective militarily, but we have to start mitigating these collateral damages and human rights issues.

The CHAIRMAN. And we would do that how?

Ms. LONG. There are means of lasing targets on the ground that I do not believe that we are employing. The White House, there seems to be some ambiguity as to the extent to which we are involved in targeting, whether we are preparing packaging and helping prioritization. I would leave it to our military experts and our commanders to discuss the detail but, certainly, more involved targeting.

And as we all know from what happened in Kunduz, it is not a perfect exercise. But we can certainly do better, and we need to help them do better, provide them with munitions that are precision-guided and that can be lased and targeted.

I think one of the big mistakes we are making, and the one I hear the gulf complain about the most, is this idea of working through the Arab League and having a unified Arab force and working through the GCC. It is just misguided. The GCC was not set up to do procurements. The GCC was not set up for end-user certification. It is an idea whose time may come, but now is not it. We need to be working bilaterally.

And although the GCC and the United States talked at Camp David about expediting exports, I think what has happened in the follow-through is it has devolved to midlevel or bureaucrats at my level that are working as much and as well as they can through the bureaucracy, but this is not an easy bureaucracy, and it needs leadership and attention at the highest most levels.

We can increase our intelligence. Our intelligence is still weak. We have very little visibility on what is going on on the ground. That visibility, frankly, can also help us monitor what the gulf——

The CHAIRMAN. We have very little visibility of what? Say that again.

Ms. LONG. On what is going on on the ground. We are relying primarily through third-party and other reporting. We can do better.

My understanding is from satellite tasking and other measures, we are extremely limited in the region and that a lot of our information could be shaped by those who are providing it to us.

Finally, exercises, we have talked a lot at Camp David about performing exercises to send signals. We have not really put any on the table. Part of that are the limitations that are imposed by our military commanders because of resources, in part because of the way the budget and sequestration have evolved, and our naval presence that is available even to go to the gulf.

I have a further list in my written testimony.

The CHAIRMAN. If you would be brief, I am over my time, and I want to try to set an example.

Ambassador SECHE. What I would say, Mr. Chairman, at this point is if the Saudis, and I believe they do, are looking to us for a refill on munitions they need to continue to fight in Yemen, I would really put that offer on the table with considerable strings. One of them would be that we need to have the Saudis really facilitate some kind of venue in which talks can begin.

I think the Saudis have been very slow, as I said earlier, to see that this is a moment at which talks could be profitable and productive and perhaps bring an outcome to this conflict. I think they see this as a military victory right now. I think we need to make it clear to them that there is no military victory here and that only some kind of negotiation with all the parties to the conflict can bring this to a rapid close.

And they need to allow President Hadi, because they really are the ones who are behind him dictating the terms he will set, to sit down with the Houthis and others in the conflict and really come to some kind of a power-sharing agreement that will allow every-

one to be inside a government and be able to resolve their issues within Yemen themselves.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you both very much.

Senator Cardin.

Senator CARDIN. Thank you both. I certainly agree with your final comment, as I said in my introductory remarks.

It is clear that security in this region very much depends upon U.S. leadership, not just because we have the military capacity and are able to bring a coalition together for effective results, but also because of the universal values that America represents—something that is desperately needed in this region.

So I want to first quote from President Obama in an interview he gave this past April where he observed that in many countries across the Middle East populations "are alienated, youth that are underemployed, an ideology that is destructive and nihilistic, and in some cases, just a belief that there are no legitimate political outlets for grievances."

So part of our job is to work with these states and say, how can we build your defense capabilities against external threats, but also how can we strengthen the body politic in these countries so that the Sunni youth feel that they have something other than ISIL to choose from?

I think the biggest threat that they face may not be coming from Iran invading. It is going to be from dissatisfaction inside their own countries.

That is a tough conversation to have, but it is one that we have to have.

I state that because we should look at what happened in Egypt. The United States was criticized by the GCC that we were not strong enough in defending the Mubarak regime. We were criticized internationally that we were on the wrong side of history, in regard to the rights of the people of Egypt. Are we going to be on the right side of regional security in the Middle East, if we are not effective in bringing about political reform in the GCC?

We see protests. We saw the protest in Bahrain in 2011, the Shia.

The question is: How can we effectively engage our partners in the region on their external security threats in a way that we can also strengthen their internal rights for their citizens?

Ambassador SECHE. Senator Cardin, I think you have touched on what is probably the most neuralgic point for our gulf allies, which is political reform. This is an area where we have not been able to engage with them as fully and effectively as I think we all would like.

I think we tend to be deferential. We tend to depend upon them as security allies. Therefore, we let a lot of the internal conditions in the Gulf States go by without sitting down and pressing points about what we think is necessary for long-term stability, as you said yourself.

I give President Obama credit for speaking publicly about the need to have these conversations because they are essential. And I think no partnership can really thrive without a full scope of discussion about all the elements of security and stability in those nations. And certainly, civil society, how they can cultivate a civil so-

ciety that is supportive of the regime and not looking to tear it down, is a fundamental issue for them to come to grips with.

I think so often our gulf allies see civil society and reform movements as a threat to their longevity. It does not need to be that way at all. I think they tend to be, in more cases than not, loyal to the regime. But they do want to see a little breathing space and a little room where they can become viable, functional parts of, if not a democracy, at least something that is more representative and something that is more inclusive.

Ms. LONG. I do not dispute the need to engage our gulf allies and our allies worldwide on the role of civil society and engagement of the peoples. However, as a more pragmatist, I think right now that the problems are not in the gulf and the problems are not in Saudi Arabia due to internal conflict. And in fact, the GCC will tell you that one of the reasons it is operating in Yemen is in order to give the Sunni there some alternative other than ISIS and AQAP to protect their interests while they are believe that they are being forced out and limited in their exercise of their rights by the Shia-led Houthis, by the Iranians, and by other interlocutors who are limiting the Sunni ability to exercise their freedoms within Yemen, and that this is the line that they are drawing.

Having engaged in the gulf countries for many years as one of the senior negotiators, I have actually found them remarkably willing to discuss the roles of civil society. The openness of the conversations has always been very full.

I do not think that is the problem that we are dealing with now, as the region basically becomes a conflagration of Yemen, Iraqi, Lebanese, Syria and now nascent conflicts in other areas where there is actually battle engaging.

Senator CARDIN. I would just say that if I had that conversation with Egypt a few years ago, talking to our military and the military-to-military relationship between Egypt and the United States and how close that was, I probably would have gotten a similar answer.

Arab Spring happened. People want freedom. It may not be the immediate issue, but it will emerge.

If we do not use the opportunities we have to make those advances it will come back to hurt U.S. interests and security interests.

I appreciate your compliments to President Obama, and that is why I quoted his comments. I am not aware of this being even on the agenda at the summit. I just think we make a huge mistake when we do not take advantage of opportunities to make it clear that we expect advances.

We do not expect overnight change. We do not expect them to adopt an American system. We do expect them to adhere to international human rights. And in every one of these countries, there is need for significant improvement. And I think at our own peril, if we do not bring that up at times, it works against our long-term interests.

I want to ask one more question, if I might, before my time expires, in deference to my colleagues. And that is, I would like to get your assessment as to how the GCC sees Russia in this region. Russia obviously has had an impact on Iran directly, and now in

Syria, it is having a much larger military presence. There is some talk about Russia and Egypt getting together and having some discussions.

My question basically is, from the GCC point of view, how do they see their relationship with Russia evolving, based upon the reliability of the United States?

Ms. LONG. I think they are not sure. I think they see Putin as a stronger leader who is more decisive than our White House. So in some respects, they are attracted to him. I also think they are attracted to him because Putin and the Russians often represented an alternate means to military sales when we were unwilling. As you see, Egypt, I think, is one of the examples.

I think now that they are seeing Russia's involvement in Syria, Iraq, and possibly Yemen, they are not sure of Russian goals. And they are offended and frightened by the fact that Russia appears to be aligning itself with Iran.

I am sorry, I am not sure that they have decided, frankly.

Senator CARDIN. Can we change that equation?

Ms. LONG. We need to.

Ambassador SECHE. I think that Mary Beth is right on that issue, Senator. I think that what our gulf partners see now in Russia is a betrayal to some extent, because they had made overtures to Russia. The Saudi Defense Minister did go there in July. They were looking to make some kind of relationship. I think Russia is a useful foil in some ways for the Gulf Arab States, as they look to say to us, "We can find other markets. We can find other friends. We have other strategic alliances we can form. It is not just you, Washington. We can go to Moscow. We can go elsewhere."

I do not think fundamentally that is a threat to the primacy that we enjoy with our Arab Gulf allies. I think that this is something that is useful, and the Gulf States tend to spread their wealth around, in terms of purchases of military supplies. They have always done so. They do not adhere to a one-market relationship with any country. But I do not think it is a serious courtship.

I do think what we have seen now with Russia coming in and siding itself with the Assad regime and with Iran and Syria is a deep, deep distrust of Russian motives. I think we see in Saudi Arabia just today clerics by the dozen speaking out against Russia and what it has done basically to punish the Sunni population in Syria beyond where they have already been punished by the Assad regime. I think this is going to be the downfall of Vladimir Putin's adventure in Syria, that he is going to be seen as really working against the Sunni Muslim population around the world.

Senator CARDIN. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Perdue.

Senator PERDUE. Thank you both for your lifetime of service.

I want to go back. I have made two trips to the Middle East this year and talked to most of our GCC partners and four or five heads of state over there. I want to get more involved in Russia. But first, I want to talk about the Iranian involvement, specifically in Yemen.

Just last month, there was an interdiction of a private vessel with arms, serious arms, going into Yemen. Yet we still have some sanctions relative to Iran's activity.

Can you be more specific? I would ask both of you this question. And the second part of that question specifically is: What is Iran's on-the-ground involvement today in Yemen? Secondly, How does the military presence in Syria affect our future position vis-a-vis what we are trying to do in Yemen?

Ms. Long.

Ms. LONG. On the first point, interdiction, I think, statistically, if you go back and look, United States-led and international interdiction over the last year in particular against Iranian and other vessels going into Yemen has been low. The Gulf States will tell you that is one of the examples of us giving the Iranians a bye, because we have not been enforcing even the existing sanctions that are applicable to Iranian military activities, particularly to Yemen, and that there have been instances where we have backed off. So I am not sure that we know or anybody really knows the extent.

Certainly, weaponry, the Russian missile incident against the Emiratis, anyone will you tell you, much like the incident in Ukraine, successfully firing one of those missiles and having it hit the target with the precision that it did is no small feat. It is highly unlikely those were done by Houthis or tribesmen. It is very likely that they were done either by Hezbollah, who had access to those weaponry and training in the past, or by Russians or Iranians who were on site providing strategic and other help.

I think that the role and the numbers of IRGC or Quds Force, the Revolutionary Guard of Iran, who are participating in Yemen, has done nothing but increase. There are some analysts who think there is a tacit division of labor that is occurring between Iran and Russia in Iraq, Syria in Yemen, whereas in one place someone is the weapons supplier and in the other place someone is the guy on the ground. Russia takes the air in Syria; Iran takes the ground in Yemen.

But I do not think we have good visibility on the numbers and types except that it is increasing.

Ambassador SECHE. Senator, I think there is no doubt that Iran has for years supported the Houthi movement politically, financially, and militarily. This is what Iran does. We know this around the world. Whenever they see a besieged Shia community anywhere, they come to its assistance. They do it anyway they can. They always do it sub rosa if possible, because they do not want to have any fingerprints on it, but they are there. And they are there in Yemen, and they are in Bahrain, as Mary Beth said earlier.

But I think that, again, what we see in Yemen is a nationalist movement, the Houthis, the Shia. The Zaydis have been in Yemen for thousands of years. The Houthis are just a portion of that community. They have grievances that have endured for years and years. They have had six conflicts with the government of Ali Abdullah Saleh when he was President over a period of several years.

So there is a lot of grievance that the Houthis bring that did not need Iran to provoke them or to spur them on. They have enough of their own angst and their own anxieties to last a lifetime.

So I think what we see, though, is Iran taking advantage of a situation, exploiting it as best they can. I do not think that the Iranians are there in any really decisive way. As I said earlier, I think they are there. But I think the Houthis have been able to do what they have done because they were speaking to a population in Yemen that was as disenfranchised as they were.

And it was not a sectarian conflict, I believe, until Saudi Arabia entered. Then it became very pronounced. Then it was Sunni Saudi Arabia against Shia Iran.

Prior to that, it was the Houthis with a political message that really resonated across all sectarian lines in Yemen. And it was: There is corruption. There is an ineffective government. There is a better future of reform. But no one is giving it to us, despite all the time we spent following 2011 trying to get to that point.

Senator PERDUE. You both have spoken about the underlying crisis over there. That is really the religious-sectarian conflict, Sunni on Shia, Shia on Sunni. In certain countries, the minority is in control, and so forth. So you have continuing conflict there.

When you look at it as it relates to nation-states, though, the concern that I have is that we do not have a strategy. So when it gets down to the detailed tactics of supporting allies there relative to the Obama doctrine in the region, I am at a loss for really how we execute against that.

So my question is, as these strategic partnerships have failed us in the region, relative to the Obama doctrine laid out 1.5 years ago, I think at one of the military academies, How do we go forward with these partnerships that now have great doubts about our intentions in the area? Without an overlying strategy long-term, how do they even begin to think about a GCC close-in strategy relative to Syria and Yemen?

And one last derivative of that is this proliferation threat. I am really very concerned about that after talking to these Foreign Ministers and some of the heads of state. Particularly after the JCPOA, what can we do to combat that, because that is another derivative of our lack of long-term strategy?

Ms. LONG. I think the most important thing we can do is become engaged, clearly send signals that we have not left the region, that we are not going to leave the region, that there are consequences to the proliferation of weapons, and there are consequences to entities from outside the region basically taking what was an internal conflict—and I agree with my colleague regarding the Houthis—but hijacking it so that it is has morphed well beyond anything that we would recognize 10 years ago.

Senator PERDUE. Sorry to interrupt. I heard the chairman asked you earlier, how would you do that? And the answer was more specific arms delivery. But are there any other things that we could do to execute what you just said?

Ms. LONG. Yes. We need to increase our presence in the gulf, get back to the naval carriers that we had a few years ago before we had to reduce them because of sequestration.

Senator PERDUE. And that creates a real problem. To have any kind of foreign policy in the Middle East, we have to have a strong military.

The problem is, right now, we are about to be in a position where we have the smallest Army since World War II, the smallest Navy since World War I, the smallest Air Force ever, and we are not done yet.

I am not trying to make this a political comment, but I really am trying to point out and get you to answer how serious this threat is if we cannot back up what you are suggesting, in terms of interdicting, our position there.

Ms. LONG. We cannot. And the way that we are headed with our congressional impasse on budget and sequestration and the reduction in our forces, particularly to our naval forces, we will not be able to in the foreseeable future. And that is huge, because our credibility is gone, because we are not participating. We are not following through.

Senator PERDUE. And you do not think that is lost on Mr. Putin or the ayatollah either, do you?

Ms. LONG. Of course, it is not. That is why Russia and Iran have expanded their participation, both militarily and politically, in all these conflicts that should have been and could have been contained at least in some respects. They could have been at least mitigated from creeping into the other region had we had a strong U.S. foreign policy and a plan that we were executing. And frankly, we have and had neither.

Senator PERDUE. Ambassador, I am out of time, but with your forbearance?

The CHAIRMAN. Sure, absolutely.

Ambassador SECHE. Just briefly, Senator. I think you make a very valid point. I think we probably are not going to increase our presence in the gulf. We have a very solid presence there now. We have a number of military bases, Al Udeid. We have the Fifth Fleet in Bahrain. We have Al Dhafra in the UAE. We have 40,000 service men and women. This is a very strong statement of our support and strategic partnership in the region.

I think that our gulf Arab allies are worried not so much because they think we are going to walk away from there, but because they think we are going to introduce Iran back into——

Senator PERDUE. Could I interject just one thing though? What we are about to do in Afghanistan, that also is not lost on the leaders in the area. We are about to cut in half, basically, our troops over there. That is what is being recommended right now by the administration. That is not lost on the people there.

So the change in direction is as serious to me as the total numbers. Would you disagree with that?

Ambassador SECHE. I do not think it is changing direction. This has been plotted out as a course that we are going to take for years now. I think a lot of circumstances have prevented us from moving more resolutely toward taking those steps on a timeline we had initially projected.

So I think what we are seeing now are basically events forcing us to step away from some of these conflicts. I think that is fair. I think part of what the President has looked to do with our gulf

allies is build their capacity, build their ability to do their own self-defense in ways that are functional and fair to them, and fair to us as an ally.

We cannot be there, and we cannot project our force around the world as we did once in our history. We have to let those regional powers, with our support, with our munitions, with our modern weaponry, with our training, and with our political will and our political skills, engage in those conflicts and in those crises effectively.

Senator PERDUE. Mr. Chairman, only one comment. I do not disagree with that. It is the timing of when you do that, and the vacuum that you leave behind. We have had one really solid lesson in that recently in Iraq, and I hope we do not do it again in other areas there. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Senator Menendez.

Senator MENENDEZ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you both for your service and your testimony.

Ms. Long, you said in your written testimony, and I will quote from it, "Russia and Iran have partnered to advance the Houthis' interest in Yemen as part of a broader Middle East strategy of aggression. Washington does not fully understand how Iran and Russia are cooperating regionally. They appear to have a strategy, and we do not."

You further go on to say the Obama administration does not appear to be willing to call out Russia for its military activities in the region and elsewhere. There is a relationship between what Russia is doing in Syria and what Russia is doing in Yemen, and we need to be realistic about what it is.

So as we see Russia unfolding in Syria, and regardless of what one may think about what may be the ultimate consequences for Russia as a result of that, what would you have the administration do that it is not doing now that evokes those comments in your written testimony?

Ms. LONG. I think actually the issue with Russia in Iran actually is not unlike the problem that we have with Russia in Ukraine, where it is the most recent example of Russian use of Russian irregulars, of Russian weaponry, of Russian targeting that went unresponded to not only by the United States but by NATO. We danced around for quite some time actually identifying Russian forces in the Ukraine, in Crimea, and others.

This is yet another step in that direction where Russia at first under the auspices of solidifying its long-term basing in Syria made noises about moving Russian equipment in. The next thing we know, it is missile defense equipment. The next thing we know, it is tanks. The next thing we knew, there is other. This has been a creeping problem where it finally took Russian planes flying over Turkey and the incidents of just last week, or maybe the week before, where our Secretary of Defense noted Russian involvement in flying sorties and lack of coordination within 24 hours of us having met with the Russian leadership about coordinating these things.

This is a pattern of activity. It is not Russia protecting Russian citizens in the Baltic. It is not Russia protecting just its base in

Syria. There are other motivations here, and we need to be very clear about those.

Senator MENENDEZ. So what should we do?

Ms. LONG. We need to be clear about them and call them out publicly. There need to be consequences. There could be hearings, frankly. There could be United Nations resolutions about examining Russia's role, about examining the equipment and the level of technology that is moving into Syria. We could unequivocally back the Gulf States regarding not having Assad play any role in any kind of reconciliation that may come in the future. We could actually more forcefully complain about Russian targeting of moderate Islamic fighters that we have trained.

Although that has come out a little bit in the U.S. paper, the President has not made any statements that I am aware of. We have not made any international resolutions or call for the unjustified targeting of our trained, moderate——

Senator MENENDEZ. So while I appreciate that, certainly, anything at the U.N., which might be with the purpose of trying to focus attention, would be vetoed by Russia or the Security Council. But it might be worthy of just driving the point of where Russia is.

I found it a little amazing to see the Secretary of State next to Foreign Minister Lavrov, side by side, talking about deconflicting. First of all, I do not think it was necessary at a press event. Certainly, the sense while deconflicting as a reality may be desirable, the image it sent is somehow an ascent to Russia being there, at least at that point in time, which I thought should have been very clear that there are no circumstances, at least unless there is a coalition effort and Russia is committed to working with us as well as the coalition that exists, to fight against ISIL.

But the Secretary of State and the Foreign Minister side by side talking about deconflicting and nodding about deconflicting, it boggles my imagination.

Let me ask you this. The reason the GCC countries were brought to Washington to have a summit is why? What is the core reason? It was not because there was tumult at this given time, right? It was not even Yemen, per se.

Ms. LONG. No, frankly, the political skeptic in me thinks it was two things. Number one, we wanted the GCC nations not to interfere with the Iranian nuclear agreement that was still being examined by the Hill and the U.N., and we wanted to reassure them in order to buy their silence. Number two, we were aware that they were skeptical regarding our overtures broadly to Iran, and that we wanted to at least publicly appear to be assuaging those and actually committing to them that we would do something in parallel to the Iranians.

Senator MENENDEZ. So if, in fact, the reason we bring the GCC countries is to reassure them of something that to some degree we have instigated, forgetting about one's views on the nuclear agreement, I get concerned when I read the President saying in an interview, I think it was with Tom Friedman, that Iran should be a regional power.

Now, if you are the GCC countries and you hear the President of the United States say Iran should be a regional power, I think

you have a lot of reason to be concerned, which then brings us to the summit and what happened and what has transpired since.

So I read the statement that basically we are willing to work with the GCC countries. But at the end of the day, that is far from even a security assurance much less a guarantee. We gave security assurances to the Ukraine in the Budapest memorandum. We wrote it down and told them, give up your nuclear weapons, and we will make sure that we protect your territorial integrity. That did not work out too well for Ukraine.

So there is not even that here, as far as I can tell. There is no assurance, much less a guarantee. So what is it, in fact, that at this point the gulf countries have from us, other than the attempt to warm their concerns and try to make them feel more comfortable? At this point, from both of you, I would say, what have you seen take place other than a conference of words? What have you seen take place? What needs to take place?

If we are talking about weapon sales just as one dimension of that, at some point you bump up against the qualitative military edge that we are obligated, and I believe we should be, to Israel.

So how do you meet those challenges? Could you both comment on that?

Ambassador SECHE. Senator, I think my recollection is it was a fairly explicit assurance delivered at Camp David, that any external aggression against our gulf allies would be met by us with force. So I believe that we did try to make that reassurance very public and very clear, because I think you are right. If it is only a question of bringing them over here so that we can have them walk outside and say, yes, we support the JCPOA, that is not exactly going to do anything in the long run.

But I think there is a sense here now that a framework and a structure have been created to take up the issues. It is not just arms sales. It is training. It is cybersecurity. It is maritime security. It is the integrated ballistic missile defense in the peninsula. All of which is key to the Gulf States being able to defend themselves with our support, with our technique, with our technical support, with our expertise, and with our weaponry.

Senator MENENDEZ. So you believe we gave them explicit assurances?

Ambassador SECHE. I believe we did.

Senator MENENDEZ. And how was that memorialized?

Ambassador SECHE. I believe in the communiques that were issued after Camp David, and I also think that when Secretary Kerry met in New York on the margins of the U.N. last week in the Strategic Cooperation forum with the GCC Foreign Ministers, it was reiterated.

Senator MENENDEZ. One final one, Mr. Chairman.

Ms. Long.

Ms. LONG. I have a very different view. I think the gulf allies walked away, and it is very difficult to find any kind of explicit assurance. We certainly attempted to provide vague, broad statements, but it was far short of the explicit guarantees that they asked.

While the list of things that we talked about and the discussions were broadly presented, none of them were new. All of those issues have been discussed in our strategic dialogues on annual basis.

What the gulf allies, I think, walked away with was an agreement with us that a peaceful Iran in the region that is a responsible international player is a good thing, that they understand that our implicit if not explicit policy is to return Iran to its proper role in the region, that they believe that that role is a threat to them, and that there is very little detail as to what we would do and what we are willing to do currently to deter Iran above and beyond the nuclear weapons issue.

Senator MENENDEZ. Thank you.

Senator CARDIN. This is the subject to interpretation, so I am not trying to say it is determinative, but the joint statement coming out of the Gulf Cooperation Council at Camp David stated the United States is prepared to work jointly with the GCC states to deter and confront any external threat to any GCC state's territorial integrity that is inconsistent with the U.N. Charter. In the event such aggression or threat of such aggression, the United States stands ready to work with our GCC partners to determine urgently what action may be appropriate, using the means at our collective disposal, including the potential use of military force for the defense of our GCC partners.

That was the official statement that came out.

Senator MENENDEZ. Mr. Chairman, if I may, I would like to say to the distinguished ranking member, I am prepared to work with you on many things. But being prepared to work with you and actually making—most time between us, it does happen.

Senator CARDIN. As I said, it may be subject to different interpretations, in the beginning. I just wanted to put in the record the specific language that came out, because it did say specifically territorial integrity, and it did say specifically all options, including military.

Senator SHAHEEN. Mr. Chairman?

The CHAIRMAN. With divisions occurring between my Democratic friends, I am going to turn to Senator Flake.

Senator SHAHEEN. Mr. Chairman, can I ask before that we can put a date on what Senator Cardin just read?

Senator CARDIN. It was May 14, 2015. Why not put the entire statement in the record?

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[EDITOR'S NOTE.—The statement mentioned above can be found in the "Additional Material Submitted for the Record" section at the end of this hearing.]

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Flake.

Senator FLAKE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you for the testimony.

Let me continue with the JCPOA and the effect of it. We had a number of hearings over the past couple months to study JCPOA, and there was grave concern among any of us that while the nuclear side of the agreement may be tight, may be a net-plus, many of us had the concern that we might lose some of our leverage when it came to Iran's malign behavior in the region. What was

going on in Yemen was going on long before the JCPOA was finalized, and some of these activities obviously have been going on.

But what is your view there? Do we have the same leverage we had before, or will we worry even more that we will give Iran pretext to forgo their obligations on the nuclear side of the agreement, if we challenge their behavior in the region?

Mr. Seche.

Ambassador SECHE. Senator Flake, I do not think that the JCPOA, the way it is enforced, is going to encourage Iran one way or another. I think their malign behavior has predated this agreement, we all know, by years and years. It will continue. This is not going to be a disincentive to them.

There are separate reasons for them to want to go with the nuclear agreement. Release of sanctions is the one big one, and the ability to regain some economic footing in this world of ours really for them is the big prize, and basically that sense of being relegitimized, being allowed to come back into the community of nations.

I also think they understand that if the behavior that they are involved in now in destabilizing their neighboring states continues, that is really going to be an impediment to the kind of work we are looking to do with them.

This had always been the problem, I think, right? We have had one track, which is the JCPOA, and that is not involved in the behavioral issues. The behavioral issues are what really drive our gulf partners crazy, because that they see is not impeded at all by the agreement. But the agreement has value inherent in and of itself.

We have to find a way to address the behavioral issues apart from what the nuclear agreement can do for us. I think what the nuclear agreement does on balance is a very solid piece of work. But it does not help us one way or another with the behavioral issues. That is something we are going to have to do with Iran, with their neighbors, with the partnerships we have around the world to try to persuade Iran to give this up.

I think, again, this is probably, to some extent, wishful thinking, but the hope is that as Iran opens up to investment, as students travel back and forth, as windows get open and fresh air blows in, Iran will begin to feel that, and it will want to become part and parcel of this international community.

I do not see that as a policy, however. That is more like hope.

Senator FLAKE. Ms. Long.

Ms. LONG. I have a different view, in that I actually think the Iran nuclear agreement actually greatly impedes our leverage.

Number one, it is what Iran wanted most. And to the extent that we exercise any leverage over its bad behavior prior to the agreement, now having achieved the agreement, we no longer have that leverage.

More importantly, as a practical matter, the lifting of sanctions will provide Iran with a windfall of tens of billions of dollars, some portion of which could be used to support the IRGC or its other external meddling.

The real problem is, with or without the JPOA and the leverage, I think the gulf countries would say, to the extent we have any leverage, we have been unsuccessful in using it. And, frankly, given

our willingness to give Iran a bye and treat Iran nicely with that with the hope, if not a strategy, with the hope that if Iran's cool air that blows through its economic and political systems, that it will become more moderate, that that is unrealistic. And even if we had leverage, we would be unwilling to use it for fear of not opening up these windows to allow the moderates to come forth.

Senator FLAKE. Specifically, a concern that was raised, you talked about once we open the door, once we relieve the sanctions, the concern was raised during the discussion of the JCPOA that imposition of those sanctions, Iran believes imposition of any of the same sanctions that we had before—we all know the only effective sanctions really particularly imposed unilaterally by us are the ones on their central bank that make it difficult for them to move money around. If we were to do that or threaten that, then they would take it, as they said already, as a violation of the agreement on our part.

So the concern that many of us had is that we would lose leverage that we currently have, certainly. And if we have not been able to deter them from this behavior, we certainly will not be able to do it later.

So it is great concern that we have, because they have said flat out, imposition of these sanctions would be a violation on our part.

So with regard to Yemen, specifically, have we seen any change at all since the signing of the JCPOA that somebody could tag to, "Well, hey, Iran may be more reasonable now"? There has been no change in behavior on either side really in that conflict, has there?

Ambassador SECHE. I have not seen anything material that I would connect to the JCPOA at all. Again, I do not think that the Iranians are calling the shots for the Houthis. I think the Houthis have made their mind up, and what they have done is based on their own perception of their interests and where they think they can be.

Once again, I think that former President Saleh was much more of a support for them than any external support Iran provided.

Once again, Iran is exploiting the situation as best it can, but it is not, at the moment, driving the train that the Houthis are on. The Houthis are their own bosses. They will make their own decisions based on their own calculations. That is my judgment.

Senator FLAKE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator CARDIN [presiding]. Senator Kaine.

Senator KAINE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thanks to the committee members.

I have not been impressed with the efforts of the GCC nations against ISIL. Do I see it wrong?

Ambassador SECHE. I do not think that the GCC has come to grips yet with Sunni extremism, armed Sunni extremism, terrorism. I think that even when you look at Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, when you look at ISIL in Yemen, I do not believe they see these organizations as the most serious threat they face.

Senator KAINE. They see the Shia threat as greater.

Ambassador SECHE. They see Iran as the principal threat they face. I believe to some extent they see that there is an opportunity for them to use the Sunni extremist organizations as a tool that they can use to counter the threat posed to them by Iran, in their

perception. So I do not think that is necessarily something we are going to see them jump at.

Senator KAINE. Secretary Long.

Ms. LONG. I do not disagree. I think the GCC nations see Iran and the Shia militia in Iraq and the border security to be much more of a threat than ISIL. I think their response on ISIL is complicated in part because of the physical location of ISIL, at least traditionally in Syria, and the disagreement among various other players in Syria as to the role of Assad continuing and how they would play with the various other organizations, including the al-Nusra organizations and Qatar's role. So it is little bit more ambiguous.

Senator KAINE. The willingness of the GCC nations, Sunni nations, to tackle Sunni extremism, I mean obviously now goes back many years and continues to be a real concern. I think their worry about the Shia is very legitimate. I think their indifference to some of the Sunni extremism is incredibly troubling.

I do not see the GCC nations doing that much to deal with Syrian refugees. Am I wrong about that?

Ambassador SECHE. No, Senator. In fact, none of the gulf countries have signed the U.N. Convention on Refugees, so none of them are under an obligation at this point to respond.

What they have done, and what they have claimed to do, is taken in a lot of Syrian citizens, Syrian nationals, and they have done so. But a lot of that happens via work permits. They come in and they work there. And they also then are vulnerable to having those permits suspended, and they can be sent out of the country.

Senator KAINE. A lot of these refugees, they are Sunni refugees fleeing the Shia-allied Assad atrocities in Syria, but I am just not seeing a lot of activity.

I compare that with the vigorous response of Saudi Arabia, for example, to the situation in Yemen. There is a capacity. There is a willingness. There are resources to act when they want to. It causes me some significant concern.

I was in Kuwait just coincidentally 24 hours after the massive Sunni bombing of the largest Shia mosque in Kuwait. Sunni extremists, ISIL claimed to do that bombing. Now at least the leadership in Kuwait really worked hard to try to desectarianize this by having a memorial service in the largest Sunni mosque and bringing the Shia families there.

But I am just not seeing a lot of that throughout the region. I am seeing an indifference to the Sunni extremism and a concern, it could be legitimate, about the Shia influences.

You indicated you did not think, Ambassador Seche—and I think, Secretary Long, you agreed, too—you did not think that the Yemen conflict was sectarian at its origins, but now it has kind of become sectarian because of the squaring off of the Saudi and Iranian proxies.

You would agree with me—let me not ask a leading question. Does the United States have a position theologically, Sunni versus Shia?

Ambassador SECHE. I do not believe that we do, Senator. I think what we are looking at is conduct, behavior, ability to work with other communities, reach across the aisle, reach across the table,

and really prosper in some fashion that benefits all of us, so it is a win-win situation.

Senator KAINE. So we should not have a position in a theological or sectarian debate?

Ambassador SECHE. I cannot imagine why.

Senator KAINE. We should not take positions that would be viewed even unwittingly as expressing a preference in a theological debate. Would you agree with me?

Ambassador SECHE. I cannot imagine why we would.

Senator KAINE. Let us talk about Bahrain for minute. We have a huge military presence there in the Fifth Fleet. Talk to me a little bit about the current internal political situation in Bahrain and that ongoing instability with a small ruling minority that is Sunni, and a large Shia majority. Talk to me about whether that instability poses challenges to us in terms of the stability of the Fifth Fleet headquarters there in Bahrain.

Ms. LONG. The Shia majority in Bahrain is significant. It is also the largest trading and merchant class and has been historically.

I think the bigger challenge, beyond the civil society issue that the Bahrainis are dealing with, with changes to some of their laws and perhaps incremental but too slow reforms, is their concern that Iran is using the Shia religious aspects of this largely I would not even say particularly religious group, certainly a mercantile group, for its own aims. And sorting out and separating the legitimate aspirations of the Shia and those that are being manipulated by Iran is a big problem.

Senator KAINE. And we do not need to go into intel here. I mean, that is clearly happening, that Iran is manipulating the disaffection of the 70 percent of the population with respect to their place in the Nation of Bahrain.

Do you worry about that instability down the road? You were Assistant Secretary of Defense, so especially as it affects the viability of our military operations in Bahrain?

Ms. LONG. I do not see any dangers to the Fifth Fleet in the near term. It is certainly a challenge that we need to push Bahrain to deal with, as we would any of our neighbors or colleagues.

It is not very dissimilar to our military installations in Qatar. They all pose their own internal challenges. But I do not see any physical security threat in the near term.

Senator KAINE. One last comment, just something that I do not think I thought of until I was listening to your testimony. It might have been you, Ambassador Seche, or it might have been both of you, who said that ultimately the solution in Yemen is not a military solution.

We hear, with respect to Syria, we have heard again and again from the administration, the ultimate solution is not a military solution. Even with respect to the battle against ISIL, we have heard that while there is a huge military component, the deradicalization and other elements of it suggest that the ultimate solution is not a military solution.

It kind of got me thinking about when we say at the front end that the ultimate solution is not a military solution, sort of what is, over time, the proven utility of use of military assets to promote an end-state when we all agree at the front end that the desired

end-state is not a military solution? It seems like we are involved in a number of challenging conflicts right now where we say at the front end there is not a military solution here, but we nevertheless use and are asked to use more military assets to promote the non-military solution.

I am just doing a little bit of historical card sorting in my brain as to what the proof of the proposition is, that military assets play a major role in promoting the right outcome when we state at the beginning that the right outcome is not a military solution. That is just something I need to ponder.

Thank you to the witnesses. Thank you to the Chair.

The CHAIRMAN [presiding]. Senator Shaheen.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And thank you both for being here.

I want to continue to explore some of the issues that Senator Kaine was raising, particularly the failure of some of the GCC countries to engage more directly in the threat that we believe that the Islamic states pose to not just the West, but to the Middle East as well.

I cannot remember, I think it was maybe you, Ambassador Seche, who talked about the failure of Saudi Arabia to more directly put resources into the fight against the Islamic state.

To what extent do we think that those people who have funded over the years some of the extreme fundamentalism, Muslim fundamentalists, are continuing to do that? And how overt are they? And how much do the governments in some of the GCC countries understand that that is going on or not?

I would like both of you, if you could, to respond with what you know.

Ambassador SECHE. Senator Shaheen, I think that the issue of terrorist financing in the gulf has been a long-standing bone of contention between us and our gulf partners. I think that we have seen several of the states take measures to try to close off the avenues that were available.

I do not think it has been government funding, by the way. I think these are individuals.

Senator SHAHEEN. No, I understand that, but, certainly, in the past, the governments of some of those countries have known that that was going on.

Ambassador SECHE. Absolutely. They have, and they turned a blind eye to it, because it is useful for them domestically.

But I think they have closed off some of the avenues. I still think that in Kuwait, in Qatar, for example, there are issues of terrorist financing. But I think the Treasury here does a very good job of tracking financial flows around the globe. I think we have been able to close off some of the opportunities that been available. Not fully, by any means. And it is complicated, and it will be a permanent conflict we are going to have to try to resolve.

This goes along with the deradicalization. These are the toughest nuts for us to crack in this fight against ISIL and al-Qaeda and others, stop the flow of money, stop the flow of ideas, and stop the flow of individuals.

You can do the combat. You can do the military side of it. But these other ones take a generation perhaps to really close it all off.

Ms. LONG. I would agree with the Ambassador. I also think that there is a perception the gulf countries are somehow trying to have it both ways with ISIL. That is not the case, at least the GCC primary countries, the Saudi Arabians and the Emiratis have been unequivocal in their horror and disgust at ISIL, particularly after the Jordanian pilot incident. And in fact, to some extent at least the Emiratis and the Saudis will tell you that some of their support for Egyptian border security has been an attempt to keep ISIL on the Libyan side of the border and not creeping into the Sinai and other places.

I think the confusion and where it gets very difficult is in Syria, where we talk about the GCC as if it were one entity, which is our problem, not so much theirs, where there are differing views among the members as to who is supporting what particular factions of moderate or less than moderate opposition to the Assad regime.

Senator SHAHEEN. Well, to what extent then has the conflict in Yemen diverted resources that GCC countries might be putting into the fight against the Islamic state, because they view the threat from Shia and what is happening in Yemen as more important? Is that a concern?

Ambassador SECHE. I think it has to be a concern. They do not have that many trained, efficient pilots, for example. They have a lot of hardware. The software is not at the point where it wants to be yet. So I think what we are looking at then is a focus in Yemen, which has been so single-minded that it has distracted them. And it has also sapped resources from their ability to address something like we have seen in Syria.

I would love to see Saudi Arabia and the gulf countries now take a more muscular view of what is happening in Syria, given the Russian intervention, and make it very clear that their resources are now going to shift to Syria to make sure that they can push back against what Russia is doing in support of the Assad regime, which is anathema to the Gulf States, and they made it very clear that that is the case.

Senator SHAHEEN. And to what extent do you think, given Russia's actions in recent weeks, that they might take another look at what is happening there and possibly divert some of those resources back to Syria?

Ambassador SECHE. I do not see it happening immediately, ma'am.

Ms. LONG. I agree with my colleague. For them, it is a priority of threats. Saudi Arabia is extremely vulnerable and always has been on that border, particularly now that the Houthis are now being pushed northern. There is an incredible threat, as far as they are concerned, while ISIS down into Syria, from a geographic standpoint, but also from a threat level standpoint, is just further away. Now there are many other countries involved in Syria and it is a much larger issue. So for them, particularly, it is a manpower issue. I think they will remain focused on Yemen.

That is not to say that Saudi Arabia and the GCC are just involved with military activity. For example, by far the largest immigration and displaced person issues as a result of Syria are in Jordan and in Lebanon. Both Saudi Arabia and other GCC countries are funneling an incredible amount of money to help with those ef-

forts, particularly in Jordan where basic human care is beyond the Jordanian Government's effort to provide with their Iraqi and Palestinian and other issues. It is something like doubled the population, or even more. So they are funding a tremendous amount of assistance there.

Senator SHAHEEN. Actually, that is not what I have understood from people who are dealing with the refugee challenges as a result of Syria. It has been that while they committed a certain amount of money some time ago, in the current crisis, they have not been forthcoming with providing resources to provide further help to Jordan and Lebanon and to the refugees who are fleeing.

So is that recent information that you have gotten?

Ms. LONG. No, I know, as in all things, what countries pledge and what they deliver, sometimes there is a lag. The GCC is not alone on that. I think the price of oil has caused some rethinking, as far as budgetary. But I am sure that, in any case, additional resources are needed.

Senator SHAHEEN. Mr. Chairman, my time is up, but I just wanted to go back to a statement that one of you made about the GCC countries and their complete opposition to Assad continuing in his position, which has been the United States position and I think the allies' position with respect to the conflict in Syria.

So given the stalemate that exists on the ground in Syria, and the unwillingness on the part of the international community to make any progress in that conflict, is there any reason to think we should reexamine that position and try to figure out how to end that conflict and then figure out what happens to Assad? I think about Bosnia, for example, where the priority became ending the conflict and then we went back and tried to hold the perpetrators responsible for what they had done. But given where we are and the stalemate there, should we be looking at reexamining the position that we have taken?

Ambassador SECHE. Senator Shaheen, I cannot imagine a circumstance under which the Syrian people, the Sunni majority in Syria, would accept Bashar al-Assad or anyone in the Assad-Makhlouf clan at this point as a leadership figure. I think they have burned that bridge a long time ago. I think that he is so discredited and absolutely abhorred inside his own country now, the best we can do is hope he will find a way that he can exit as the situation starts to develop where there can be some kind of national salvation organization or government or something that would be seen as a fair vehicle that would be inclusive and would bring all the parties to the table but not Bashar al-Assad, however.

Ms. LONG. I agree.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. Thank you both very much.

Senator Markey.

Senator MARKEY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, very much.

Ambassador Seche, I would like to turn your attention to the rapidly escalating humanitarian crisis in Yemen. We have heard very credible reports that it has grown dramatically worse since the start of the Saudi-led military campaign. In 6 months, almost 3,000 civilians have been killed, over 1 million displaced, no hu-

manitarian access, especially in the north, and a country on the brink of famine.

Certainly, the external military intervention, which has been supported by U.S. logistics, intelligence, and arms supplies was a large escalation in the violence. And the tragedy there shows every sign of growing worse, much worse.

Looking back to last March, it seems like we were on autopilot to reflexively support a Saudi decision to intervene without a full examination of the diplomatic alternatives. What are your thoughts on this now? What might have we done differently, in terms of diplomatic action, especially in 2014 and earlier this year, to stop the erosion of the transition that was negotiated in 2012?

Ambassador SECHE. Well, Senator, you have touched on a very sensitive and difficult subject. I think hindsight is 20/20 and you look back now to what was happening as you say in 2014 when the Houthis went into the capital, Sanaa, and basically occupied and took over the reins of government at that time.

That was a moment when I think it should have been clear to all of us that this was a phenomenon that was not going to go away, that they had basically restructured and reorganized the country's governance, for all intents and purposes, and they were in control. I think at that point, that was probably the last chance we had, anyone had, to go in and find some kind of negotiation, because the Houthis had not yet, I do not think, decided to sweep south all the way to the Gulf of Aden. But I do think at that point President Saleh counseled them to go ahead and finish the job now.

Senator MARKEY. So should we have at that point urged the parties to renegotiate the transition right then, rather than this radical escalation, which we have now witnessed over the last couple of years?

Ambassador SECHE. Honestly, Senator, I do not think the Houthis at that time were ready to negotiate either. I think they were full of what they had seen as remarkable ease with which they swept south from their homeland up in Saada in the north just hard on the Saudi border. So they were prepared at that point to see how far they could go, and they got the encouragement they needed from the former President.

This is a very difficult situation, to see how you can negotiate this.

Senator MARKEY. What is our greatest leverage right now to try to force a negotiation between the parties? What would you recommend as the best strategy that we adopt to bring the parties to a table? What do you recommend to us?

Ambassador SECHE. Well, we do not have a lot of leverage. What I would use is the little leverage we have. As I said earlier, if the Saudis do want a brand new supply of modern weaponry to bring to bear in Yemen, I think we sit down with them and say, if you need this, we need to find out what your endgame is. How can you bring this to a negotiated end? What can be a resolution that is not going to depend upon a military solution?

And as Senator Kaine said earlier, you say this at the outset, that there is no military solution. But what is going to be a negotiation? What is it going to look like? Who is going to be at the table? And who is going to be willing to make a concession?

Neither party at the moment, I believe, is prepared to make the important concessions.

Senator MARKEY. Okay, and you are not prepared to make a recommendation as to how we might get them to that point?

Ambassador SECHE. Well, we need to speak more publicly. The White House has recently begun to say that we are disappointed in the fact that the U.N. envoy talks that were scheduled have not taken place. This is a modest assertion for us to make publicly, but I think it is important.

Senator MARKEY. You are saying it modest. Should it be more robust?

Ambassador SECHE. In my judgment, yes.

Senator MARKEY. All right, what with the words be? Say the words that you want to hear spoken.

Ambassador SECHE. I am not sure I am ready to write press guidance at the moment, Senator. But I do think what we need to say is——

Senator MARKEY. You are not sure of what?

Ambassador SECHE. That I can write press guidance at the moment. But I think what we want to say is that there is an important, critical juncture we have reached here where the outcome at the moment is going to be more human suffering if we do not find a way to bring the parties to a table.

Senator MARKEY. Ambassador, Secretary, I have been an advocate for increased cooperation with our security partners in the gulf with a particular emphasis on defensive systems. These most certainly include the kind of ballistic missile defense systems, such as the Patriot Advanced Capability-3, our PAC–3 missile defense system, and also advanced air and naval defense systems. I fear that our failure to strongly advocate diplomacy in Yemen over the past 2 years, coupled with our failure to urge restraint in the face of crises last spring, may put the viability of this critical partnership at risk.

The Leahy Law prohibits U.S. security assistance and many forms of defense cooperation with forces that have engaged in gross violations of human rights. If reports are accurate, the Saudi indiscriminate targeting in the air campaign, and an overly broad naval blockade, could well constitute such violations.

If the Yemen war grinds on the way it is going to apparently happen, we could continue to have indiscriminate targeting and an overly broad Saudi naval operation that obstructs humanitarian relief that would constitute gross violations of human rights under the Leahy law.

What is your perspective on the risk this situation could present for the long-term viability of our critical security partnerships in the gulf?

Ambassador SECHE. Well, Senator, I think the loss of human life that we have seen so far in Yemen, and the infrastructure destruction, in my judgment, borders on a serious violation of international law. I think that what we need to do with our allies, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, is really figure out from them how they see their way out of this. They must have some thought that they have given to how this is going to end, and we need to find out if that is viable, if it is feasible, if we can support that.

If we cannot, then I think we need to find a way to try to distance ourselves from a conflict that has no end and the only outcome is more human suffering.

Senator MARKEY. So, again, what diplomatic actions would you recommend to ensure respect for human rights in Yemen as this conflict continues, given the role that we are playing in providing logistical support for the Saudis, so that we inject those sets of values into our relationships with the Gulf States?

Ambassador SECHE. Given the conflict at the moment and the fact that it is ongoing, I do not advocate a public discussion of this issue. I think that the Saudis and our gulf allies have proven over the years that they respond best to a private conversation, to a sense of a friend coming to speak to them to provide counsel and advice, but not in a public eye, where there is a finger-wagging attachment to it. So I think we need to be very cautious, if we are going to use diplomacy on this, that it is private, it is forceful, and it is straightforward.

I do not think we want to do a nuanced kind of demarche. I think we want to be very clear to them what we think the threats and the risks are that they are running at the moment.

Senator MARKEY. Let me just ask, when you say that, you are saying that you want a nuanced response from our government?

Ambassador SECHE. No, I do not want a nuanced response.

Senator MARKEY. You do not?

Ambassador SECHE. No, I do not. I want something straightforward and forceful.

Senator MARKEY. But private.

Ambassador SECHE. But private.

Senator MARKEY. Now would it help if this committee, unconstrained by the diplomatic relationship that the United States has with Saudi Arabia, what if this committee spoke loudly about what we expect of Saudi Arabia? Would that be helpful?

Ambassador SECHE. I think it is always helpful. When I was in the field, I always found it was very helpful if I could go to the government of any country and say, "This is what my Congress, my Senate, feels. My hands are getting tied on this. You need to move so I can get this Congress away from this."

Senator MARKEY. I think that is an important component to this right now, because there is an obvious catastrophe unfolding there, and our silence ultimately is complicity to the actions that are taking place. I think it is time for us to stand up and demand from Saudi and others a diplomatic resolution of this issue in a telescoped time frame.

Thank you both for testifying today.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

You all have been outstanding witnesses. I have had numbers of Senators walk by and thank us for the hearing because of your testimony, so I want to thank you both for being here.

And just to make an observation, this is not meant in any way to just be a pejorative statement, but I do not think the administration itself is committed to anything specifically in the Middle East. I think it is obviously a very light touch, except for the nuclear agreement with Iran. They were very committed to that.

But it appears to me that what is developing is a situation where you have Russia, Iran, and the Shia countries—I mean, Iraq, really, let us face it, Iraq appears to me when I am there to be a country that we are making better for Iran. I mean, it is just a very different place than it was a few years ago.

It appears that where we are is basically in a very light-handed way, although it might get stronger over time, but we have created a Sunni-dominant sphere for us to operate in.

In the past, we were trying to keep Iraq whole. Obviously, we are playing almost no role in that today, except, again, continued Shia domination there.

So am I right? I mean, it appears to me that the GCC of the Sunni countries are the places where we can develop deeper ties. We have had deeper ties for some time. We are sort of abdicating, if you will, the role of keeping the other nation-states or countries together, and basically creating a very one-sided relationship in the region.

Can you all respond to that?

Ms. LONG. Senator, I think that is exactly it, and it is the failure of U.S. leadership or even perceived leadership that is causing some of these conflicts to not only involve outside parties to a much greater extent than are probably necessary as evidenced by the fact that the Houthis, we do not even know if they will come to the table and whether that will even count because no one knows what influence they are getting from Iran as far as negotiating a diplomatic resolution. It is this light touch that has been interpreted by both our friends and our enemies in the region as us not being involved, us not being committed, and as one of the Senators pointed out, an implicit hope that Iran will actually increase its role in the region at the expense of our traditional Arab allies.

The CHAIRMAN. Do you want to speak to that, Ambassador?

Ambassador SECHE. Yes, thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to speak to that, because I do think that we have been able to begin this process of reconciliation and reassurance with our gulf allies, who are very much concerned about our long-term staying power in the region.

I think what has come out of Camp David, and some people were dissatisfied with the results because they were not concrete enough, but I think it is a real reassertion of the fact that we are going to be involved in a strategic partnership with the countries of the Arab Gulf region going forward. There is no question in my mind that this is a cornerstone of our international foreign policy in the Middle East to have the gulf allies with us, working with us and trying to come to resolution of these very deep and unsettling crises.

So I think that there is a way we can do this. I think introducing Iran into this equation is complicating our ability to reassure them. But I do not think it needs to be a fatal blow to this process. I think we need to make sure that we reassure them Iran can play a role, and we will definitely monitor what that role is to the extent we can with them, working with them in partnership.

This is not an easy solution to anything. And it is probably not a satisfactory answer to your question. But I think what we have is such a difficult kind of tapestry to look at that you do not always

see how it is going to appear until you step back a little bit and get a better feel for it. That is where we are now. We are so close to our allies, so close to Iran, so close to these issues, I am having a hard time, as I think that Obama administration is, to say this is what this is going to look like at the end of the day.

The CHAIRMAN. I think Senator Cardin may have a question. But it seems to me that Yemen involvement that we have had, I know that Madam Secretary spoke to the fact it was international interests, but it feels more to me like we did what we did to demonstrate that we were with the Saudis and our other GCC friends. It was that that drove us to do what we did, not necessarily some type of national interest that we thought was paramount.

I know you said both were apparent in our activities, but with this administration, it appears to me it was more of a show because of what was happening with Iran and the negotiations.

Do you want to speak to that?

Ms. LONG. With this administration, I do think the overtly political was tantamount. As you are aware, we have had some limited United States forces in Yemen. That continued. And I think those were a signal previous to the gulf involvement that we were exercising our protection of our national interests. But certainly, other interests prevailed more prominently with this administration, and those are the support of our gulf allies.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Cardin.

Senator CARDIN. Mr. Chairman, I just would take exception with the United States having a light touch here. I would not call it a light touch, our involvement in Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, the Middle East generally, GCC with our military presence. We are actively engaged. It is not an easy answer.

Senator Markey's comments about the humanitarian crisis were right on target. We had a hearing on the humanitarian crisis in Syria and the number of people who could not be reached. And today we added to that the humanitarian crisis in Yemen and the number of people who are not being reached there.

And Senator Kaine was correct when he challenged, why are we using our military? I do not think he was questioning our military being there, but the role of our military I think is what Senator Kaine was talking about. We want to see our military. It has to be engaged there because it is an important part of our overall strategy.

But we cannot win a military victory in these countries. We know that. We have to establish a government that represents all the people. That is what we tried to do in Iraq, and we have made some progress in Iraq in moving that forward.

We certainly need a political solution in Syria, and it must be without Assad. I agree with that completely. Assad has no legitimacy. And we need to transition to a government that can have the confidence of its people.

In Yemen, we have to get the parties together to talk about how their future country will represent the will of all its people.

Mr. Ambassador, I particularly appreciated your assessment that it is really an internal fight going on, and although there are external issues, it is more of an internal matter that has to be resolved.

So I guess my point is that there is no simple answer here. The United States is critically important.

Certainly there are other players in the GCC areas. There are other players that are operating, including Russia. But there is only one country that has the capacity to not only be involved but to represent universal values that can give us lasting peace in the region, and that is the United States.

That is why it is so critically important that we try to get this right. There is no easy answer, but I thought today's discussion I found very, very helpful. And I thank both of our witnesses.

The CHAIRMAN. I cannot let that stand. I cannot imagine how anybody would think the steps that you and I encouraged to happen in Syria that did not were indications of anything other than an incredibly light touch. I opposed what we did in Libya, but to go in and take out a leader and leave it in disarray as we have done is an incredibly light touch.

I think much of what we are doing at present, talking about just in the last several years, is really more about face-saving and acting as if we are doing something than really trying to drive an outcome. I just cannot imagine that there is anybody in our country that thinks differently than that, but maybe there is one.

But anyway, with that, if you would, there will be questions until the close of business Thursday, if you all would answer those as responsively as you could.

And we thank you very, very much for being here. We thank you for your service to our country in your various positions.

And with that, our meeting is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 4:11 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

ADDITIONAL MATERIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

CAMP DAVID JOINT STATEMENT SUBMITTED BY SENATOR BENJAMIN L. CARDIN

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary
For Immediate Release, May 14, 2015

U.S.–GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL CAMP DAVID JOINT STATEMENT

President Obama and Heads of Delegations of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) member states, the Secretary General of the GCC, and members the President's Cabinet met today at Camp David to reaffirm and deepen the strong partnership and cooperation between the United States and the GCC. The leaders underscored their mutual commitment to a U.S.–GCC strategic partnership to build closer relations in all fields, including defense and security cooperation, and develop collective approaches to regional issues in order to advance their shared interest in stability and prosperity.

The United States shares with our GCC partners a deep interest in a region that is peaceful and prosperous, and a vital interest in supporting the political independence and territorial integrity, safe from external aggression, of our GCC partners. The United States policy to use all elements of power to secure our core interests in the Gulf region, and to deter and confront external aggression against our allies and partners, as we did in the Gulf war, is unequivocal.

The United States is prepared to work jointly with the GCC states to deter and confront an external threat to any GCC state's territorial integrity that is inconsistent with the U.N. Charter. In the event of such aggression or the threat of such aggression, the United States stands ready to work with our GCC partners to determine urgently what action may be appropriate, using the means at our collective

disposal, including the potential use of military force, for the defense of our GCC partners.

As with Operation Decisive Storm, GCC states will consult with the United States when planning to take military action beyond GCC borders, in particular when U.S. assistance is requested for such action.

In this spirit, and building on the U.S.–GCC Strategic Cooperation Forum, the leaders discussed a new U.S.–GCC strategic partnership to enhance their work to improve security cooperation, especially on fast-tracking arms transfers, as well as on counter-terrorism, maritime security, cybersecurity, and ballistic missile defense. They reviewed the status of negotiations between the P5+1 and Iran, and emphasized that a comprehensive, verifiable deal that fully addresses the regional and international concerns about Iran's nuclear program is in the security interests of GCC member states as well as the United States and the international community. The United States and GCC member states oppose and will work together to counter Iran's destabilizing activities in the region and stressed the need for Iran to engage the region according to the principles of good neighborliness, strict non-interference in domestic affairs, and respect for territorial integrity, consistent with international law and the United Nations Charter, and for Iran to take concrete, practical steps to build trust and resolve its differences with neighbors by peaceful means.

The leaders decided to enhance their counter-terrorism cooperation on shared threats, particularly ISIL/DAESH and al-Qaeda, to deter and disrupt terrorist attacks with a focus on protecting critical infrastructure, strengthening border and aviation security, combating money laundering and terrorist financing, interdicting foreign fighters, and countering violent extremism in all its forms.

The leaders, furthermore, discussed how best to address regional conflicts and defuse growing tensions. In this context, the leaders discussed the most pressing conflicts in the region, including Syria, Iraq, Yemen, and Libya, and what could be done to advance their resolution. They decided on a set of common principles, including a shared recognition that there is no military solution to the regions' armed civil conflicts, which can only be resolved through political and peaceful means; respect for all states' sovereignty and noninterference in their internal affairs; the need for inclusive governance in conflict-ridden societies; as well as protection of all minorities and of human rights.

With regard to Yemen, both the United States and GCC member states underscored the imperative of collective efforts to counter Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, and emphasized the need to rapidly shift from military operations to a political process, through the Riyadh Conference under GCC auspices and U.N.-facilitated negotiations based on the GCC initiative, National Comprehensive Dialogue outcomes, and the Security Council's relevant resolutions. Taking into consideration the humanitarian needs of civilians, they welcomed the start of a 5-day humanitarian pause to facilitate delivery of relief assistance to all those in need and expressed hope it would develop into a longer, more sustainable cease-fire. They expressed their appreciation for the generous grant of $274 million provided by Saudi Arabia for the U.N. humanitarian response in Yemen. The United States reaffirmed its commitment, in partnership with GCC member states and other members of the international community, to seek to prevent the resupply of Houthi forces and their allies in contravention of U.N. Security Council Resolution 2216.

The United States and GCC member states further affirmed their commitment to assisting the Iraqi Government and the international coalition in their fight against ISIL/DAESH. They stressed the importance of strengthening ties between GCC member states and the Iraqi Government, based on the principles of good neighborliness, non-interference in internal affairs, and respect for state sovereignty. They encouraged the Iraqi Government to achieve genuine national reconciliation by urgently addressing the legitimate grievances of all components of Iraqi society through the implementation of reforms agreed upon last summer and by ensuring that all armed groups operate under the strict control of the Iraqi state.

The leaders committed to continue working towards a sustainable political resolution in Syria that ends the war and establishes an inclusive government that protects all ethnic and religious minorities, and preserves state institutions. They reaffirmed that Assad has lost all legitimacy and has no role in Syria's future. They strongly supported increased efforts to degrade and ultimately destroy ISIL/DAESH in Syria and warned against the influence of other extremist groups, such as al-Nusrah, that represent a danger to the Syrian people, to the region and to the international community. They expressed deep concern over the continuing deterioration of the humanitarian situation in Syria and condemned the prevention of aid distribution to the civilian population by the Assad regime or any other party.

The leaders decided to move in concert to convince all Libyan parties to accept an inclusive power-sharing agreement based on proposals put forward by the U.N. and to focus on countering the growing terrorist presence in the country.

The United States and GCC member states strongly affirmed the necessity of resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict on the basis of a just, lasting, comprehensive peace agreement that results in an independent and contiguous Palestinian state living side by side in peace and security with Israel. To that end, the United States and GCC member states underscored the enduring importance of the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative and the urgent need for the parties to demonstrate—through policies and actions—genuine advancement of a two-state solution, and decided to remain closely engaged moving forward. The United States and GCC member states also recommitted to continue to fulfill aggressively their pledges made for Gaza's reconstruction, to include pledges made at the October 2014 Cairo Conference.

The leaders expressed their concern over the delay in electing a new president of Lebanon, called on all parties to strengthen Lebanese state institutions, and emphasized the critical importance of Lebanon's Parliament moving forward to elect a President of the Lebanese Republic in accordance with the constitution. The leaders also emphasized their determination to support the Government of Lebanon in its resistance to ISIL/DAESH and al-Nusrah which threaten Lebanon's security and stability.

The leaders pledged to further deepen U.S.–GCC relations on these and other issues in order to build an even stronger, enduring, and comprehensive strategic partnership aimed at enhancing regional stability and prosperity. They agreed to meet again in a similar high level format in 2016, in order to advance and build upon the US–GCC Strategic Partnership announced today.

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary
For Immediate Release, May 14, 2015

ANNEX TO U.S.-GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL CAMP DAVID JOINT STATEMENT

President Obama and Heads of Delegations of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) member states came to Camp David to reaffirm and deepen their close partnership, make progress on a shared set of priorities, confront common threats, and work to resolve, or at a minimum de-escalate, regional crises and provide humanitarian assistance to those in need. The United States has worked with its GCC partners over six decades on matters of mutual interest, including confronting and deterring external aggression against allies and partners; ensuring the free flow of energy and commerce, and freedom of navigation in international waters; dismantling terrorist networks that threaten the safety of their people; and preventing the development or use of weapons of mass destruction. In recent years, we have made significant progress, under the framework of the U.S.–GCC Strategic Cooperation Forum, to work cooperatively on security and political issues of regional importance. Today, the United States and GCC member states recognize the need to consolidate and develop this relationship based on friendship and cooperation to more effectively address the challenges we face.

At Camp David, the leaders of the GCC states and President Obama reaffirmed the longstanding U.S.–GCC partnership and pledged to further enhance the relationship between the United States and GCC member states. This partnership is based on a shared commitment to the stability and prosperity of the region, mutual interest in confronting the threat of terrorism and other destabilizing activities, and resolving regional conflicts through political means. The leaders underscored their mutual commitment to the U.S. GCC strategic partnership to provide for closer relations in all fields, including defense and security cooperation, and to develop collective approaches to regional issues in order to advance their shared interest in stability and prosperity.

The U.S. GCC strategic partnership involves both enhanced cooperation between the United States and the GCC collectively and between the United States and individual GCC member states in accordance with their respective capacities and interests. It establishes a common understanding on mutual assurances and heightened cooperation, including efforts to build collective capacity to address the threats of terrorism and other regional security threats.

As part of this new partnership, the leaders of the United States and the GCC decided on the following steps to enhance their cooperation:

Security Cooperation

The U.S. GCC security relationship remains a major pillar of our strategic partnership and a cornerstone of regional stability. Our existing cooperation, including basing, information sharing, joint military exercises, and provision of sophisticated military equipment and training are a testament to the sustained value we place on our shared security interests. The leaders decided at Camp David to enhance security cooperation in the following areas:

Security Assurances: At the core of the partnership is our shared interest in a region that is peaceful and prosperous. At Camp David, we have recommitted to the importance of this vision. President Obama affirmed that the United States shares with our GCC partners a deep interest in a region that is peaceful and prosperous, and a vital interest in supporting the political independence and territorial integrity, safe from external aggression, of our GCC partners. The United States policy to use all elements of power to secure our core interests in the Gulf region, and to deter and confront external aggression against our allies and partners, as we did in the Gulf War, is unequivocal.

The United States is prepared to work jointly with the GCC states to deter and confront an external threat to any GCC state's territorial integrity that is inconsistent with the U.N. Charter. In the event of such aggression or the threat of such aggression, the United States stands ready to work with our GCC partners to determine urgently what action may be appropriate, using the means at our collective disposal, including the potential use of military force, for the defense of our GCC partners.

The United States and GCC member states also decided to set up a senior working group to pursue the development of rapid response capabilities, taking into account the Arab League's concept of a "unified Arab force," to mount or contribute in a coordinated way to counter-terrorism, peacekeeping and stabilization operations in the region. The United States and GCC member states also affirmed their strong support for the efforts of the P5+1 to reach a deal with Iran by June 30, 2015, that would verifiably ensure that Iran does not develop a nuclear weapon, noting that such a deal would represent a significant contribution to regional security.

As with Operation Decisive Storm, GCC states will consult with the United States when planning to take military action beyond GCC borders, in particular when U.S. assistance is requested for such action.

Ballistic Missile Defense: GCC member states committed to develop a region-wide ballistic missile defense capability, including through the development of a ballistic missile early warning system. The United States will help conduct a study of GCC ballistic missile defense architecture and offered technical assistance in the development of a GCC-wide Ballistic Missile Early Warning System. All participants decided to undertake a senior leader tabletop exercise to examine improved regional ballistic missile defense cooperation.

Military Exercises and Training Partnership: Building on their extensive existing program of military exercises and training activities, the United States and GCC member states decided to establish a new, recurring, large-scale exercise emphasizing interoperability against asymmetric threats, such as terrorist or cyber-attacks, or other tactics associated with hybrid warfare. The United States will also dispatch a military team to GCC capitals to discuss and decide on ways to increase the frequency of Special Operations Forces counter-terrorism cooperation and training.

Arms Transfers: In order to ensure that GCC member states are able to respond quickly to current and future threats, the United States and GCC member states will take steps necessary to ensure arms transfers are fast-tracked to GCC member states contributing to regional security. To that end, President Obama will dispatch a senior team to the region in the coming weeks to discuss specific modalities. The United States and the GCC will work together to set up a dedicated Foreign Military Sales procurement office to process GCC-wide sales, streamlining third-party transfers, and exploring ways the United States could accelerate the acquisition and fielding of key capabilities.

Maritime Security: To protect shared maritime security interests and freedom of navigation, the GCC member states decided to increase their participation in international maritime task forces on counter-terrorism and counter-piracy. They also decided to take further steps to exchange information about and, as appropriate, interdict illicit arms shipments to conflict areas. The United States committed to provide additional training and technical assistance for coastal security, protection of offshore infrastructure, and counter-smuggling.

Counterterrorism

Building on a shared commitment to address the acute threats posed by al-Qaeda, ISIL/DAESH and their affiliates, the United States and GCC member states will pursue initiatives to further build their capacity to track, investigate, and prosecute those engaged in terrorist activities within their borders, as well as to contain and deter transit, financing and recruitment by violent extremists. The United States and the GCC will hold a second U.S.–GCC Strategic Cooperation Forum Working Group on Counter-terrorism and Border Security to follow up on previous efforts to cooperate on border security, countering the financing of terrorism, cybersecurity, and critical infrastructure protection. Leaders also decided to strengthen counter-terrorism cooperation in the following areas:

Foreign Terrorist Fighters: The United States and GCC member states will bolster their joint efforts to identify and share information on suspected foreign terrorist fighters (FTF). In response to the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2178 (2014), the United States and GCC member states will work together to implement traveler screening systems and enhanced biometrics collection capability, and share best practices to make it more difficult for terrorists to avoid detection at any GCC airport.

Counterterrorist Financing: The United States and GCC member states will increase efforts to cut off terrorist financing, including through enhanced intelligence exchange and enforcement efforts to freeze assets of individuals and entities designated under relevant U.N. Security Council Resolutions, especially in the region. The United States will organize a public-private sector banking dialogue in the fall of 2015 to facilitate discussions on anti-money laundering and terrorist financing.

Critical Infrastructure and Cybersecurity: The United States and GCC member states will consult on cybersecurity initiatives, share expertise and best practices on cyber policy, strategy, and incident response. The United States will provide GCC member states with additional security assistance, set up military cybersecurity exercises and national policy workshops, and improve information-sharing.

Countering Violent Extremism: Recognizing the need to counter recruitment by extremist groups from at-risk youth and vulnerable communities, the United States and GCC member states will provide financial support for multilateral initiatives to counter violent extremism (CVE) aimed at strengthening resilience in vulnerable communities, including support for the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund. In addition, GCC leaders offered to host a CVE religious leaders conference aimed at boosting efforts that will expose the true nature of ISIL/DAESH and other terrorist organizations.

Counterproliferation: The GCC member states determined to accelerate efforts against the proliferation of WMD, the means of their delivery, as well as advanced conventional weapons, by enhancing national controls on proliferation-sensitive items and technologies.

Regional Security

The United States and GCC member states reaffirmed their shared interest in de-escalating regional tensions, resolving regional armed civil conflicts, and addressing the critical humanitarian needs of populations affected by conflict. The leaders made clear their belief that the conflicts in the region, including Syria, Iraq, Yemen, and Libya, are eroding state structures, creating ungoverned spaces, and promoting sectarianism, all of which serve as fodder for terrorists and other extremist groups and directly threaten their shared security interests.

The leaders set out core principles that, in their view, must govern efforts to resolve regional armed civil conflicts in Syria, Iraq, Yemen and Libya, including:

- The respect for state sovereignty;
- A shared recognition that there is no military solution to the regions' civil conflicts, and that they can only be resolved through political and peaceful means; and
- The importance of inclusive governance; and respect for, and protection of, minorities and human rights.

The leaders also held in-depth discussions on the most pressing conflicts in the region and steps they decided should be taken to help resolve them.

Iran: The United States and GCC member states oppose and will cooperate in countering Iran's destabilizing activities in the region and continue consultations on how to enhance the region's security architecture. As part of this effort, the United States will work in partnership with GCC member states to build their capacity to defend themselves against external aggression, including in terms of air and missile

defense, maritime and cybersecurity, as GCC member states take steps to increase the interoperability of their military forces and continue to better integrate their advanced capabilities. At the same time, the United States and GCC member states reaffirmed their willingness to develop normalized relations with Iran should it cease its destabilizing activities and their belief that such relations would contribute to regional security.

Yemen: The United States and GCC member states expressed deep concern over the situation in Yemen and its destabilizing impact on the region. Leaders emphasized the need to rapidly shift from military operations to a political process, through the Riyadh Conference under GCC auspices and U.N.-facilitated negotiations based on the GCC initiative, National Comprehensive Dialogue outcomes, and the Security Council's relevant resolutions. Taking into consideration the humanitarian needs of civilians, they welcomed the start of a five-day humanitarian pause to facilitate delivery of relief assistance to all those in need and expressed hope it would develop into a longer, more sustainable ceasefire. They expressed their appreciation for the generous grant of $274 million provided by Saudi Arabia for the U.N. humanitarian response in Yemen. Leaders emphasized the importance of working with the international community to prevent the provision of weapons to designated Yemeni parties or those acting on their behalf or at their direction in contravention of U.N. Security Council Resolution 2216.

The United States also reaffirmed its assurance to help GCC member states defend themselves against external threats emanating from Yemen and emphasized its particular support for Saudi Arabia's territorial integrity. The leaders underscored that Yemen's political transition should be in accordance with the GCC Initiative, National Dialogue outcomes and UNSC resolutions. Furthermore, leaders stressed the imperative of collective efforts to counter the shared threat from Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, which is exploiting the crisis.

Iraq: The United States and GCC member states reiterated their support for the Iraqi government in its efforts to degrade and defeat ISIL/DAESH. They encouraged the Iraqi government to achieve genuine national reconciliation by urgently addressing the legitimate grievances of all components of Iraqi society through the implementation of reforms agreed upon last summer and by ensuring that all armed groups operate under the strict control of the Iraqi state. GCC member states recommitted themselves to reestablishing a diplomatic presence in Baghdad and to working with the Iraqi government to support efforts against ISIL/DAESH, including in Anbar and other provinces.

Libya: Noting growing concern about political deadlock at a time when violent extremism is expanding, the United States and GCC member states decided to coordinate their efforts more closely on Libya's political transition. They will press all parties to reach a political agreement based on proposals put forward by the U.N. and to urgently establish a national unity government before Ramadan, and stand ready to substantially increase their assistance to such a government. Leaders committed to seek to stem illicit arms flows into Libya, and called on all Libyans to focus on countering the growing terrorist presence, including that of ISIL/DAESH, instead of fighting their political rivals.

Syria: The United States and GCC member states reaffirmed the importance of a genuine, sustainable political solution as soon as possible to end the war in Syria and prevent the further suffering of its people. All affirmed that Assad had lost all legitimacy and had no role in Syria's future. They affirmed their commitment to working towards a post-Assad government that is independent, inclusive, and protects the rights of minority groups. The United States and the GCC member states committed to increasing support to the moderate opposition. GCC member states decided to intensify efforts to combat extremist groups in Syria, notably by shutting down private financial flows or any form or assistance to ISIL/DAESH, Al Nusrah Front, and other violent extremist groups, and to intensify efforts to prevent the movement of foreign terrorist fighters in and out of Syria. They expressed their determination to work together to mobilize the international community for post-Assad reconstruction of Syria. All affirmed their commitment to continue to support Syria's neighbors as they face the immense challenges posed by the ongoing conflict and to work together to strengthen the stability and security of these countries.

Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: The United States and GCC member states strongly affirmed the necessity of resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict on the basis of a just, lasting, comprehensive peace agreement that results in an independent and contiguous Palestinian state living side-by-side in peace and security with Israel. To that end, the United States and GCC member states underscored the enduring importance of the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative and the urgent need for the parties to demonstrate—through policies and actions—genuine advancement of a two-state

solution, and decided to remain closely engaged moving forward. The United States and GCC member states also recommitted to continue to fulfill aggressively their pledges made for Gaza's reconstruction, to include pledges made at the October 2014 Cairo Conference.

Lebanon: The leaders expressed their concern over the delay in electing a new president of Lebanon, called on all parties to strengthen Lebanese state institutions, and emphasized the critical importance of Lebanon's parliament moving forward to elect a president of the Lebanese Republic in accordance with the constitution.

U.S.–GCC Strategic Cooperation Forum

The leaders pledged to further deepen U.S.–GCC relations on these and other issues, to build an even stronger, enduring, and comprehensive strategic partnership and work together for the same, aimed at enhancing regional stability and prosperity.

To ensure continuity of those efforts, and speedy implementation of decisions expressed in the Camp David Joint Statement of 14 May 2015, they directed their respective administrations to strengthen the framework of the U.S.–GCC Strategic Cooperation Forum, to include more frequent ministerial and technical meetings for foreign affairs, defense, security, economic and other areas relevant to the Forum's activities. They agreed to meet again in a similar high level format in 2016, in order to advance and build upon the U.S.–GCC Strategic Partnership announced today.

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