

EVALUATING THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION'S POLICIES ON IRAN, IRAQ AND THE USE OF FORCE

HEARING BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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EVALUATING THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION'S POLICIES ON IRAN, IRAQ AND THE USE OF FORCE

Friday, February 28, 2020

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
Washington, DC.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 8:34 a.m., in room 2172, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Eliot L. Engel (chairman of the committee) presiding.

Chairman ENGEL. The committee will come to order.

Without objection, all members will have 5 days to submit statements, extraneous material, and questions for the record, subject to the length limitation in the rules.

We will begin.

Mr. Secretary, thank you for meeting with us this morning. Weeks ago we invited you to testify about American policy toward Iran, Iraq, and the use of force. No one doubts that Qasem Soleimani was a dangerous terrorist, but it is important that we look at foreign policy in terms of whether it makes Americans safer and advances our interests.

Weeks later, we have seen attacks that have injured more than a hundred servicemembers, the need to move thousands more personnel back to the region, a derailment of our relationship with Iraq, and a setback in the fight against ISIS, and Iran again pushing headlong toward nuclear weapon.

You promised the American people that they would be safer and Iran would be deterred. So by your own metrics, this policy has been a failure.

Mr. Secretary, it should not have been so difficult to get you here and your appearance here today is far too short. And while we have had to wait for you, the world does not wait for anyone, and now we are facing another potential crisis, coronavirus, and I imagine you will hear some questions about that this morning as well. And there are dozens of other issues we would like to ask you about, including the lawful subpoena that this committee issued in September that you have ignored.

So we expect to see you here again soon for our annual budget hearing, and I would appreciate if you renewed your commitment to appear for that hearing when I recognize you for an opening statement.

I am going to forego any additional opening in the hopes of getting to as many members as possible this morning. And I will yield to Mr. McCaul, our ranking member, for any remarks he might have.

Mr. McCAUL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Secretary, thank you for being here—thank you for your service—to talk about Iran and Iraq, as we agreed to as a committee. More importantly, thank you and the President for taking decisive action to protect Americans overseas.

If President Trump had not made the bold decision to strike Qasem Soleimani, Iran's mastermind of terror, we might be having a different hearing on why he did not stop the deaths of more Americans.

Striking Soleimani was the right decision, and the world is safer for it. He organized an escalating series of attacks against our forces in Iraq which killed an American. He also directed an attack on the embassy in Baghdad. Further, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Milley said the administration would have been culpably negligent had they not acted to take out Soleimani who had the blood of hundreds of Americans and American soldiers on his hands.

I fully agree with you and the general that this strike was necessary and well within the President's authorities under Article II. The President acted with tremendous restraint over the past year, as we saw in the White House, continually making the choice to deescalate, even as Iran launched attacks on international commerce, Saudi oil assets, and a United States drone. But some people cannot grasp that this strike was justified, legal, and our troops are indeed safer because of it.

And now the Senate passed a preemptive War Powers resolution that the House will vote on in the coming weeks to direct the United States to cease hostilities against Iran. I believe this is based on a false premise.

So, Mr. Secretary, my questions will be to ask you this. Are we engaged in active hostilities against Iran? And, second, as you know better than anyone, we need to show unity, not division, in the Congress and as Americans, overseas and especially in the Middle East. So what can Congress do to support your efforts to curb Iran's destabilizing activities?

I look forward to your answers and your testimony.

And with that, I yield back.

Chairman ENGEL. The gentleman yielded back.

Thank you, Mr. McCaul.

Our witness this morning is Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, who served in this body for many years.

Mr. Secretary, without objection, your complete testimony will be included in the record. I will ask you to please summarize your statement in 5 minutes. And because we are so tight on time, I am going to have to be very quick with the gavel. So I now recognize you for 5 minutes.

**STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE MICHAEL R. POMPEO,
SECRETARY, UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE**

Secretary POMPEO. Thank you. Thank you, Chairman McCaul. Thank you, Ranking Member McCaul. I will do this in less than 5 minutes. I do have a statement that I will submit for the record.

I am just back from a trip where I traveled to Saudi Arabia and Oman. The central topic of each of those discussions was what we

are talking about here today, the threat posed by the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Some basic facts. Iran is the world's No. 1 State sponsor of terror and the world's largest State sponsor of anti-Semitism, wanting to wipe Israel off the face of the Earth. You just have to listen to them.

Iran and its proxies are responsible for the death of hundreds of Americans in Iraq, including an American contractor who was killed on December 27 of 2019.

Its forces, Iran's forces and the militias it supports, prop up Bashar al-Assad, undermine democracy in Lebanon and Iraq, and steal humanitarian aid in Yemen.

Speaking of Yemen, the Iran-backed Houthis have launched hundreds of missiles and armed drones at civilian targets in Saudi Arabia, where 80,000 Americans live, since the start of the conflict. Indeed, hours after I visited our troops at Prince Sultan Air Base on February 20, Iran-backed Houthi forces launched an attack at the port city of Yanbu.

Iran, too, is responsible for the downing of a civilian airliner in January, 176 people killed. The regime lied about the tragedy. The regime has still not turned over the black box.

The Iranian regime slaughtered at least several hundred of its own people, with reports of as many as 1,500, during the protests last November. Many millions more have suffered since the revolution began more than 40 years ago.

Iranians and those impacted by the regime are thankful that the United States is finally holding their oppressors accountable. The Trump administration will neither appease nor tolerate the enormous national security threat that Iran poses to the United States, our friends, and our allies. Our pressure campaign is aimed at reducing these threats and convincing Iran to change its behavior.

I want to spend 1 minute specifically addressing the strike on the Quds Force Commander Qasem Soleimani. He was the regime's top terrorist and the mastermind of the killing of innocent Americans, Syrians, Iraqis, and others. Removing him from the battlefield was a deescalatory measure. His death reduced the risk to our personnel overseas.

Both my diplomats and our military have made clear that we are able and willing to impose costs on our adversaries if they threaten or attack us.

I know that, sadly, some American troops were injured during Iran's retaliatory ballistic missile attack on al-Asad Air Force Base. The limited nature of Iran's counterattack, however, indicates that Iran's leadership is not eager to escalate a military confrontation. They know if we fight, they will lose. That is deterrence. It is our policy.

It is not just military deterrence. The JCPOA had bankrolled the regime's murderous campaigns of terror and destabilization. We have reversed that appeasement and imposed the most aggressive economic sanctions campaign in history to deprive the regime of at least \$50 billion in revenue.

And diplomatically we have rallied allies and partners to ban Mahan Air, a courier of regime weaponry and personnel around the Middle East. And in part due to our efforts, Colombia, Honduras,

Kosovo, Paraguay, and the United Kingdom have declared Hezbollah a terrorist organization in all aspects.

That is real American leadership to confront Iran. We will sustain our pressure. We will continue to protect the American people and American interests by any means necessary, and we will continue to impose costs on the regime for its campaigns of carnage. And we will work with our allies and partners for a more stable and secure Middle East.

Thank you. I look forward to your questions, Mr. Chairman.
[The prepared statement of Secretary Pompeo:]

**Secretary of State Mike Pompeo
House Iran Hearing Opening Statement
February 28, 2020**

Chairman Engel, Ranking Member McCaul, thank you for having me today.

I'm just back from a trip that included stops in Saudi Arabia and Oman, where the grave threat the Islamic Republic of Iran poses to us, our allies and partners, and the Iranian people themselves is crystal clear.

Here are the facts:

- Iran is the world's number one state sponsor of terrorism – and anti-Semitism.
- Iran and its proxies are responsible for the death of hundreds of Americans in Iraq, including an American contractor, Nawres Hamid, on December 27th.
- Its forces, and the militias it supports, prop up Syria's Bashar Assad, undermine democracy in Lebanon and Iraq, and steal humanitarian aid in Yemen.
- Speaking of Yemen, the Iran-backed Houthis have launched hundreds of missiles and armed drones at civilian targets in Saudi Arabia – where 80,000 Americans live and work – since the start of this conflict.
- Hours after I visited our troops at Prince Sultan air base on February 20th, Iran-backed Houthi forces launched an attack aimed at the port city of Yanbu.
- Iran is responsible for downing a civilian airliner in January. 176 people were killed. The regime lied about that tragedy, and still hasn't turned over the black box.

- The Iranian regime slaughtered at least several hundred of its own people, with reports of up to 1,500, during the protests last November. Many millions more have suffered since the Revolution began more than 40 years ago.
- The regime just rigged an election – yet again denying the Iranian people the free and fair elections they’ve sought for 41 years. More than 7,000 candidates that didn’t get the regime’s seal of approval were banned from running. What a tragedy.

But don’t take it from me about how loathsome and destructive this regime is. Listen to the anger and frustration the Iranian people are expressing on social media, on the streets, and at the polls. And even further to the point: look at the popular protests against the Iranian regime’s influence in Iraq and Lebanon.

Iranians, and those impacted by the regime, are thankful the United States are finally holding their oppressors accountable.

The Trump Administration will neither appease nor tolerate the enormous national security threat Iran poses to the United States and to our friends and allies.

Our maximum pressure campaign is aimed at reducing these threats, and convincing Iran to change its behavior.

I want to specifically address our strike on Quds Force commander Qasem Soleimani. He was the regime’s top terrorist and the mastermind of the killing of innocent Americans, Syrians, Iraqis, and many others. Removing him from the battlefield was a de-escalatory measure.

His death reduced the risk to our personnel overseas, and made clear we are willing and able to impose costs on our adversaries if they threaten or attack us.

I know that, sadly, some American troops were injured during Iran's retaliatory ballistic missile attack on al-Asad air base. The limited nature of Iran's counterattack, however, indicates that Iran's leadership is not eager to escalate a military confrontation.

They know if we fight, they will lose. That's deterrence.

Our maximum pressure campaign doesn't just entail military deterrence.

The JCPOA bankrolled the regime's murderous campaigns of terror and destabilization.

We've reversed that appeasement and imposed the most aggressive economic sanctions campaign in history to deprive the regime of at least \$50 billion in revenue.

Diplomatically, we've rallied allies and partners to ban Mahan Air – a courier of regime weaponry and personnel around the Middle East.

In part due to our efforts, Colombia, Honduras, Kosovo, Paraguay, and the UK have declared Hizballah a terrorist organization in all its aspects.

That's real American leadership.

Going forward, we will sustain our pressure until Iran behaves like a normal nation.

We will continue to protect the American people and American interests by any means necessary.

We will continue to impose costs on the regime for its campaigns of carnage.

And we will work with our allies and partners for a more stable and secure Middle East.

Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.

Chairman ENGEL. I thank you.

I recognize myself for 5 minutes, and I yield to Mr. Cicilline.

Mr. CICILLINE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Pompeo, I am concerned that the so-called maximum pressure campaign against Iran has not achieved what you promised it would. After all, since January 2 there have been four Iranian attacks on American personnel, we have had to deploy 6,000 additional troops to the region, and Iran is once again on the path toward a nuclear weapon.

The American people have heard conflicting information from you and other members of the administration about the reasons for the Soleimani strike and about the detail of its impacts. Because of the dishonesty from this administration on this and many other issues, Americans have lost trust in their government.

Now we are facing a serious global health crisis in the form of the coronavirus, and trust is more important than ever. Unfortunately, we have also heard conflicting information when it comes to the administration's response on this as well. We know that this is a threat that does not respect borders, that impacts its victims indiscriminately, and that is starting to show up in our own communities.

We have now heard different explanations of who in the administration is responsible for managing the American response to the potential spread of this virus.

Successfully managing the global aspect of this crisis will require American leadership. So can you tell us exactly what your role is in this response?

Secretary POMPEO. The coronavirus? Is that the question?

Mr. CICILLINE. Yes. What precisely falls under your set of responsibilities as Secretary of State?

Secretary POMPEO. Sure. So, Mr. Chairman, just so you know, we agreed that I would come here today to talk about Iran, and the first question today is not about Iran.

Mr. CICILLINE. Well, make it about Iran. Let me make it easier.

Secretary POMPEO. No. I am happy to answer—

Mr. CICILLINE. We have learned there has been an outbreak in Iran of 245 cases—

Secretary POMPEO. Right.

Mr. CICILLINE [continuing]. Is the latest number. Have you or any other senior-level American official been in touch with anyone inside the Iranian Government to coordinate on this response to the virus and to mitigate the further spread of the virus?

Secretary POMPEO. We have made offers to the Islamic Republic of Iran to help, and we have made clear to others around the world, in the region, that assistance, humanitarian assistance to push back against the coronavirus in Iran is something that the United States of America fully supports. We will continue to support. That is true for every nation. We will bring to bear our diplomatic power and our capacity to deliver technical and medical assistance wherever we can.

Mr. CICILLINE. Well, sir, I am worried that, because of this administration's 3-year history of blatant disregard for facts, that the American people do not know who to trust. Because of the policies you have championed, we have isolated ourselves within the global

community. We have ignored or defunded key government offices or international entities that deal with global health and pandemics. And the aggressive military-focused foreign policy of this administration has not achieved any articulated goals or made the American people safer.

American leadership around the world is paramount in keeping Americans safe, and I am concerned today about this administration's ability to do so.

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

Chairman ENGEL. All right. I now yield to Mr. Bera.

Mr. BERA. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Secretary, I am a doctor, and on Wednesday we found out that my former colleagues at the University of California, Davis are treating the first possible case of community transmission of coronavirus in the United States. My home county of Sacramento has been reminded that disease has no borders.

So following my colleague, Mr. Cicilline, I am deeply alarmed by our approach to Iran in terms of impacting the fight against coronavirus.

Mr. Secretary, do you believe that sharing data about new diseases like coronavirus makes America and the world safer?

Secretary POMPEO. Yes.

Mr. BERA. Yes or no?

Secretary POMPEO. Yes.

Mr. BERA. And, Mr. Secretary, do you believe that Iran is up to the fight against coronavirus, yes or no?

Secretary POMPEO. Their healthcare infrastructure is not robust, and to date their willingness to share information about what is really going on inside of the Islamic of Iran has not been robust. And I am very concerned that it is—it is that Iran that is not sharing information—

Mr. BERA. Exactly. Reclaiming my time.

Secretary POMPEO [continuing]. To help the Iranian people.

Mr. BERA. I agree with some of that assessment that they do not have that infrastructure, and I am worried about that. As a doctor, I know that when we are fighting a new disease, time is of the essence. That means people and medical supplies at the epicenter, because that will help limit the spread before it reaches other countries.

It took over a week after the disease was first diagnosed for the administration just to clarify that sending humanitarian assistance would not trigger sanctions. Will the administration be issuing new licenses for Iran sanctions to address issues connected to coronavirus?

Secretary POMPEO. The predicate of your question is not accurate. There has been continuously an avenue for the movement of medical and humanitarian goods inside the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. BERA. Great.

Secretary POMPEO. They have not been sanctioned at any time, before the advent of the coronavirus and concurrently.

Mr. BERA. Great. Reclaiming my time.

Let's just make sure we do everything we can to stop and assist Iran. Iran's isolation has made it less open, less transparent, and

as a result coronavirus is flourishing in that country. It is not making America safer.

And with that, I yield back.

Chairman ENGEL. Okay. The time of the gentleman has expired.

Mr. MCCAUL.

Mr. MCCAUL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Secretary, the Senate, as I mentioned, passed a preemptive War Powers resolution that the House will vote on in the coming weeks directing the United States to cease hostilities against Iran. Again, I believe this is based on a false premise.

So my question is very simple. Let me ask you this. Are we engaged in active hostilities against and in Iran?

Secretary POMPEO. We are not. Our posture to push back against the behaviors of the Islamic Republic of Iran is designed to deter and to defend America's interests.

Mr. MCCAUL. Thank you.

What signal does this division in the Congress send to the largest State sponsor of terror, Iran?

Secretary POMPEO. So, as a former Member, I always have a high tolerance for people expressing their views, the views of their constituents. And so, you know, Members of Congress have a responsibility to do that.

Having said that, it is the case that around the world leaders observe when there is not a consistent view across all of the U.S. Government, and America's policies are best effectuated when there is a consensus that emerges around American foreign policy.

And I would encourage everyone to take on board what the administration is doing and urge them to come to the consensus and assist us in delivering the change in the regime's behavior that I think everyone this room today understands is both necessary and in America's best interests.

Mr. MCCAUL. I am all for Article I constitutional authorities, but I do believe the President had authorities under Article II in self-defense. In addition, he is a designated foreign terrorist under the Obama Administration.

Let me ask you this, though. The Washington Post recently reported the Quds Force has been significantly deterred from retaliating against—further against the United States since the death of Soleimani. Can you tell us how Iran's activities have changed since the United States took out Mr. Soleimani?

Secretary POMPEO. So that is probably best for a classified setting. But I can say in an unclassified setting they recognize the seriousness with which America acted to take the strike against Qasem Soleimani and I think they appreciate the seriousness with which President Trump and the administration are taking our obligation to defend America and our partners. And it clearly demonstrated our preparedness to continue to deter Iran's behavior, and I think they have taken that seriously.

Mr. MCCAUL. And last question. Do you believe that in terms of a threat in the future, depending, not saying on what type of time scale, that Mr. Soleimani was planning to kill more Americans, possibly in Iraq?

Secretary POMPEO. Oh, a hundred percent.

Mr. MCCAUL. And that would be best based on—

Secretary POMPEO. And on a very short timeframe. He was in the region, actively plotting to kill Americans in the region.

Mr. MCCAUL. So we are—in a way, had the President done nothing and more Americans had been killed or we had a 1979 hostage situation, the President would be blamed for that, would not he, if he did nothing?

Secretary POMPEO. It was my judgment that this reduced risk to America to take the strike. I think the team all presented that to the President. He made a final decision that that was right, that we would reduce risk, both in the short term, in the medium term, and in the long term, to American interests.

Mr. MCCAUL. And so the American people, but most importantly our diplomats and soldiers in the region, are certainly safer because of that decision. Wouldn't you agree with that?

Secretary POMPEO. Undoubtedly.

Mr. MCCAUL. I would just like to close with, you know, I have been in the White House with some of these discussions. The President was very clear: I do not want to go to war with Iran. And he said that repeatedly, and I still think he believes that. I saw tremendous restraint when we were looking at how to respond to the U.S. drone that was shot down by the Iranians, a U.S. military asset, when 50 percent of the Saudis' refining capability taken out, you know.

And then, finally, when they attacked our American Embassy, it was not some brush fire. It was bombed out. I had the picture on the House floor. A serious attack on our American Embassy. That cannot go without a response.

And I think the President was very restrained time and time again. But they, I think, crossed a red line when they attacked our embassy, killed a contractor and wounded three soldiers, in addition to the hundreds of American soldiers that Soleimani killed and maimed.

One of whom is right in front of me, does not have his legs anymore, Mr. Mast, because of Soleimani, the biggest terrorist in the Middle East since bin Laden.

And I think the world, Mr. Secretary, is much safer without him. And with that, I yield back.

Chairman ENGEL. Thank you, Mr. McCaul.

Mr. MEEKS.

Mr. MEEKS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Sir, every time you testify, I cannot help but think of those days when you were on this side of the dais. I can remember vividly you thundering away at Secretary Clinton during the Benghazi hearing.

You know what? She showed up voluntarily, sat there for 11 hours. But with you, sir, we had to move heaven and earth to get you here today for just 2 hours. To me, that shows disregard for the oversight responsibilities of the U.S. Congress.

It is clear that the Trump administration's decisions in Iran are reckless and impulsive. Even after Iran emerged as a hotspot of the coronavirus outbreak that is on the verge of being a pandemic, you can only commit today to 2 hours.

After the Soleimani strike, the Iraqi Council of Representatives passed a resolution calling for U.S. troops to be kicked out of Iraq, which is exactly what Soleimani wanted to do for 20 years.

Pushing the U.S.-Iraq relationship to the brink and plunging the Middle East into chaos and uncertainty does not benefit the United States of America.

The list of actions that are legally and strategically questionable continue to pile up in this administration, and yet the administration refuses to provide clear and honest answers. These include pulling out of the JCPOA—no strategy. Abandoning the Kurds—no strategy. Strategic benefit of assassinating Soleimani—no strategy. Suggesting that the U.S. will destroy cultural sites in Iran—no strategy. Denying Iran's foreign minister a visa to go to the U.N.—no strategy. Suggesting that we will punish Iraq if it through on expelling our military—no strategy.

Sir, nobody here mourns the death of Soleimani, but it backfired in completely foreseeable ways. Killing him undermined all of the objectives and did not do anything to make America safer.

Now, I had many other things I would have loved to have asked you, but I have to give up some of my time because you are only here for 2 hours. I cannot use my whole 5 minutes because my colleagues would like to have something to say.

So I now yield to Mr. Sherman.

Mr. SHERMAN. Mr. Secretary, it has taken you 2-1/2 months to come here before this committee to explain the actions of January 3. Today, the world faces a worldwide pandemic, the coronavirus. Will you come here next week and explain our international efforts to deal with the coronavirus or will it take us 2-1/2 months to have you back here?

Secretary POMPEO. We have——

Mr. SHERMAN. Yes or no?

Secretary POMPEO. We have briefed Congress over 70 times on Iran—70 times.

Mr. SHERMAN. My question is about the coronavirus——

Secretary POMPEO. I understand.

Mr. SHERMAN [continuing]. And whether you will come here next week or whether you think we should focus on the coronavirus.

Secretary POMPEO. I am happy to work with you to find a time that works with everyone's schedule to talk about this.

Mr. SHERMAN. Well, let's hope it does not take——

Secretary POMPEO. I am happy to. But, Mr. Sherman——

Mr. SHERMAN. Reclaiming my time.

Secretary POMPEO [continuing]. I cannot let go——

Mr. SHERMAN. Reclaiming my time.

Sir, you limit us to 2 hours. Secretary Clinton spent 11 hours.

Secretary POMPEO. We have briefed——

Mr. SHERMAN. You must adhere to the rules of this committee, just as you enforced them when you were sitting in this room.

VOICE. Come on, order.

Mr. SHERMAN. I am reclaiming my time.

VOICE. Order. Let him speak.

Mr. SHERMAN. Mr. Chairman, my time has been interrupted. I would like order in the committee.

Chairman ENGEL. The gentleman from California will continue.

Mr. SHERMAN. Now, 110 of our servicemembers suffered traumatic brain injuries. The Pentagon had thought it would be even worse. But the day after 110 of our servicemembers were hurt, the President said “no Americans were harmed in last night’s attack by the Iranian regime.” Nineteen days after that, those injuries, the President said, “I heard they had headaches. I can report it is not very serious.”

Thirty of them are still in the hospital. All of them will be suffering their whole lives or be studied their whole lives for their traumatic brain injury.

Mr. Secretary, do you want to take the opportunity—this is a yes-or-no question—do you want to take the opportunity here today to apologize to those servicemembers for trivializing their injuries?

Secretary POMPEO. Mr. Congressman, I have never trivialized the injuries—

Mr. SHERMAN. But do you want to apologize on behalf of the administration for trivializing their injuries?

Secretary POMPEO. Sir, I have never trivialized any injury to any—

Mr. SHERMAN. You are part of an administration. You speak for that administration. Do you want to apologize for the administration’s trivializing those injuries?

Secretary POMPEO. Are you looking for me to answer the question?

Mr. SHERMAN. Yes.

Secretary POMPEO. I am happy to answer the question if you would cease speaking over me. I have to—just give me a second.

We take seriously every American servicemember’s life. It is why we have taken the very policies in Iran that we have.

Chairman ENGEL. Okay. The gentleman’s time has expired.

Mr. SMITH.

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

I am very deeply disappointed in several of my colleagues and their disrespect that they are showing you, the Secretary of State, who I think has done an extraordinary job.

The world is a caldron. You have been everywhere, leading this Nation and leading the world, of course with the President at the helm. And I want to thank you for that service. And know that I and my colleagues, and so many most Americans, deeply respect your integrity, your honesty. And, again, I think some of this has already gotten very much out of hand and I am deeply disappointed in my colleagues.

As I know—as you know, I should say—the Iraq and Syria Genocide Relief and Accountability Act of 2018, which I authored—it was a bipartisan bill—was designed to provide humanitarian aid relief to victims of ISIS genocide, religious minorities such as the Chaldean Christians and Yazidis first and foremost. Ideally, they would have returned to their homes in the Nineveh Plain or on Mount Sinjar, something that was contemplated by Vice President’s directive of 2018.

Now, however, it has become apparent that the Iranian-backed—again, just like you spoke early in Yemen—the Iranian-backed Shia Popular Mobilization Forces, or PMFs, do not intend to leave the

Nineveh Plain area, particularly given the acquiescence of the government in Baghdad to Tehran.

I wonder if you could give us your assessment of the permanency of this violent organization and organizations in Nineveh. And is it our policy to try to change that? What steps are we taking? And would you support, if they do not leave, a modified aid directive that would support the displaced minorities in Erbil and elsewhere in the Kurdistan region.

I will just say very briefly, I chaired 10 congressional hearings when Barack Obama would not help the Chaldean Christians in Erbil, 70,000 strong, who made their way, fleeing ISIS genocide. I went there, and there was an IDP camp 10 minutes away from our consulate in Erbil, and when they learned that I wanted to go there, they finally visited there, but we were not providing that aid.

Working with colleagues across the aisle, it was a bipartisan bill, we said enough is enough, and we did a bill to direct that that aid would get there.

And you have delivered and USAID has delivered mightily, and I want to thank you for that and the Vice President and the President.

But if you could speak to the——

Secretary POMPEO. Thank you.

Mr. SMITH [continuing]. These groups.

Secretary POMPEO. Thank you.

So there were three questions in there. The last one was, would we work on a modified policy? Yes. The continued problem and presence of the PMF, the Shia militias in the Nineveh region, is something that we have worked hard on, our Ambassador, now second Ambassador to Iraq, Ambassador Jeffrey, have all worked very diligently on, but we have not succeeded.

We have had repeated promises from now repeated Iraqi Governments that they would work that problem set, move them back, allow security forces that would permit this aid to get to the Christians, the Yazidis, all the people in that region, and we have had some success at getting this in. But we need—we need the PMF out. We need the Shia militias out.

If we are going effectively deliver and create space for religious freedom in the north of Iraq in that Nineveh region, in the Nineveh Plain, we have got to convince the Iraqi Government, and we need an Iraqi Government that is prepared to defend its own sovereignty and pull back those Shia militias that are controlling that region.

Mr. SMITH. Again, I just want to say, again, Mr. Secretary of State, please do not take from this meeting. Some of those comments I think were almost to the point where their words should have been taken down.

You have been honest, straightforward. And as my good friend Michael McCaul said, the taking out of Soleimani, who was not in Iran when he was killed, he was a combatant if ever there was one, and directing what we all know, 600-plus Americans have died and thousands through his use of the IEDs and other methods of destruction were wounded, including our dear colleague.

I yield back.

Chairman ENGEL. The gentleman yields back.

Mr. KEATING.

Mr. KEATING. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, Mr. Secretary.

Mr. Secretary, fair enough to say you talk a lot with the President? That is not a tough one.

Secretary POMPEO. Yes.

Mr. KEATING. That was the best question you had this morning, right?

Secretary POMPEO. It is true.

Mr. KEATING. You ever hear him say—

Secretary POMPEO. I welcome that.

Mr. KEATING. You ever hear him say the phrase, “Eh, we will see what happens”? You ever hear him say that?

Secretary POMPEO. Yes, I think I have said that many times myself as well.

Mr. KEATING. Really? Okay.

Secretary POMPEO. Yes, absolutely.

Mr. KEATING. We know you are on the team.

Secretary POMPEO. I said it to my son all the time.

Mr. KEATING. We know you are on the team. But you said consistency—

Secretary POMPEO. Absolutely. We will see what happens.

Mr. KEATING [continuing]. In your opening statement, please. You said consistency in your opening statement. And what I got to tell you time and time again is what we are getting back when we have people is this attitude that people have of America, our allies, of we will see what happens.

I mean, just last night, you know, after the President pulled out and took us away from the Syrian issue, just last night we found out that it is escalating. Now Turkey is looking for NATO Article 4 discussions, maybe leading to Article 5, pulling us in with our allies again. And I remember the President saying, when he did that, he said: Eh, we will see what happens.

I remember with the discussions in North Korea, when he was having his discussions, oh, we will have the discussions, we will talk, we will have love letters, but we will see what happens.

Well, we know what has happened. There is new escalation of their missile system, their nuclear system. We have seen by pulling out of the nuclear agreement with Iran, JCPOA, we have seen that, well, we will pull out, well, we will see, we will see what happens, we will see what they do. And now they are enriching to a greater extent and moving forward in their program.

So this idea of consistency. I just came back—you were there—at the Munich Security Conference. I have got to tell you, in discussions we had with our closest allies they are telling us that: We are not as sure about your commitment as a country.

And it is all this—if I had to give a watchword for the policy right now, it is, well, we are going to do something and we will see how it happens.

Well, I am concerned about the lack of consistency. And, you know, with the coronavirus, when that issue came forward, the President said it again. He said: Well, it is going to get warm and we have got a vaccine in the corner. It looks pretty good. We will see what happens.

"We will see what happens" isn't being consistent.

And now, after last night's activities, we are going to be moving forward again because of what is happening in Syria. We are going to be calling on the United Nations. We are going to be calling on NATO again. We are going to be calling on our allies again.

And, you know, we left them on the ground in Syria when the President made that decision. Even your own administration told us that was a mistake, not notifying our allies.

So I am just going to say the policy has to change because "we will see what happens" isn't happening.

And I yield back.

I yield to Mr. Deutch.

Mr. DEUTCH. I thank my friend from Massachusetts.

Mr. Secretary, thank you for being here.

First, I want to not miss this opportunity to implore to you do everything that you can to bring home my constituent, Bob Levinson, to his family.

And I do not have a lot of time left. So I would like to just share with you something I think a lot of us are feeling, Mr. Secretary.

The American people are becoming increasingly worried about coronavirus. We get phone calls every minute of every day. People are really concerned. And when they hear conflicting messages, they do not know what to make of it.

So, Mr. Pompeo, any misinformation, any misinformation is bad. A pattern of misinformation undermines our entire system.

When the President lied about the size of his inaugural crowd, it was embarrassing. It was hard to believe when he falsified a hurricane weather map. It was disgraceful when he told the American people that Iranian bombs injured no one when 110 soldiers were seriously injured, and traumatic brain injuries are not just headaches.

But now, now we face coronavirus, and the President tells us that a vaccine is almost ready, and it is not. And then he tells us that warm weather will miraculously take care of this, take care of everything, and it will not.

This does not just impact the President's supporters at his rallies, and it does not just impact Democrats voting in the Presidential primaries. This impacts everyone in America. And it is more important than politics, Mr. Secretary. The administration must do better.

I yield back.

Chairman ENGEL. Okay.

Mr. CHABOT.

Mr. CHABOT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Secretary, thank you for being here today. We very much appreciate it.

The humanitarian situation in Idlib province, Syria, is alarming. Innocent civilians and women and children have been slaughtered.

Could you tell us what Iran or its proxies, what their involvement has been there relative to this ongoing assault on those civilians?

Secretary POMPEO. So consistently since the previous administration's decision to allow the Russians to come into Syria, that combined with the long history of Iranian influence in parts of Syria,

has led us to where we are today. You can see with the Israeli strikes that are taking place against Iranians in Syria. You can see the work that the United States is doing in the north and east. We have an enormous Iranian problem inside of Syria.

These attacks that are Syrian regime led, Iranian supported, Hezbollah supported, underwritten by Iran, along with the Russians, are now causing a humanitarian calamity in Syria that once again re-ups what we saw several years back. The numbers rage from three-quarters of a million to 1.1 million people in that upper northwest part of Idlib province, many of whom will be displaced, too many of whom will be killed.

And our mission set has been diplomatic, to urge the parties to a cease-fire, both bilaterally, with each of the participant. We have U.N. Security Council resolution that, sadly, the regime will not adhere to, that the Iranians will not adhere to, which was designed to find the political resolution to U.N. Security Council Resolution 2254. We have not been able to make progress there.

So in light of that, we have done what we can with American assistance, stabilization assistance throughout the region to try to lend both food and assistance and medical through USAID and to try and build back some of the institutions so that they will be capable of pushing back against what the Russians and the Iranians and the Syrians are doing in this hellish place of Idlib.

Mr. CHABOT. Thank you.

The U.N. arms embargo on Iran expires next year. Are our European partners committed to extending the embargo? What can we do to put pressure on China and Russia to cooperate as well?

Secretary POMPEO. So, yes, one of the central flaws of the JCPOA was that you had very short duration for many of the most important provisions.

The first really significant provision expires in October of this year, so now just a handful of months away, where the very missiles that rained down on our American forces will be permissibly sold, lawfully sold to the Iranians come October of this year. That is a big flaw in the deal.

And so we are working diplomatically. We are hopeful that the Europeans will take seriously this risk that there will be Chinese weapon systems, Russian weapon systems sold into Iran. I am confident that they are gearing up already to deliver those weapons come October with the full authority, with no U.N. Security Council resolution prohibiting it.

We will work at the United Nations, we will try to convince the Russians and the Chinese not to veto that resolution, and we will urge our European colleagues to use the tools that they have at hand to prevent conventional weapon sales from once again being lawfully sold to the world's largest State sponsor of terror.

Mr. CHABOT. Thank you.

And finally, Iran's proxy in Lebanon, of course, is Hezbollah. How has the administration's, this administration's maximum pressure campaign impacted Iran's ability to support Hezbollah in Lebanon?

Secretary POMPEO. So we have had impact but not enough. We have had a material change in their capacity to do harm. That is, they no longer have access to all of the capital that they had.

Under the JCPOA we have restricted Hezbollah's money, their resources.

There is more work to do there. We have also used our diplomatic efforts to build out a coalition to support the Lebanese Government, to do the reforms that you can see.

You can see the protests in the streets in Beirut and outside of Beirut and Lebanon as well. You could see. The Lebanese people are exhausted from Iran. They are exhausted from Hezbollah. And you see the same thing in Iraq. You see protests in Tahrir Square.

These are not protests against the United States of America seeking our departure. They are protests for the people of Iraq and Lebanon who want a sovereign, nonsectarian, non-Iranian-dominated government.

Our diplomatic mission is to do all that we can to assist those governments, to make this transition from Hezbollah backed or Iranian controlled in Iraq to governments that are sovereign, independent, and deliver on what their people, the people of their countries really want and desperately need.

Mr. CHABOT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I yield back.

Chairman ENGEL. Okay. I am going to call on Mr. Phillips. But before I do, I just want to quickly express the fact that what is going on in Idlib province in Syria breaks my heart. And the world, and particularly our country, cannot just stand by while Putin and Erdogan are killing people. It just breaks my heart. It is not fair to the Syrian people. It is just terrible, terrible atrocities. I wish we had more time to talk about it.

Mr. PHILLIPS.

Mr. PHILLIPS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Welcome, Mr. Secretary. Thank you for your service.

My constituents in Minnesota know that American diplomacy is integral to keeping all of us safe in the United States. But they are afraid, as can you imagine, afraid about the potential for a far more significant response from Iran, and they are, frankly, terrified, as my colleague Mr. Deutch just referred to, about coronavirus. And, sadly, they are increasingly lacking faith in the administration's ability to address it.

So can you tell them that you have done everything humanly possible, both around the globe and even here, to keep us safe from coronavirus?

Secretary POMPEO. I am confident that this administration has taken actions that have significantly reduced risk and will continue to do so.

It is a very complex problem. The State Department has a piece of it. The work that your State Department did to get Americans out of Wuhan, not only our diplomats, the people that work for the U.S. Government, but civilians who were there as well, is in the finest tradition of the American diplomatic corps. It was done with excellence and with vigor and brought Americans home safely. I am incredibly proud of the work that my team did there. We will continue to do that.

We have diplomats in China today and we are working to make sure we keep them safe, but keep them in place so that we can con-

tinue to perform all of the missions we need to help China deal with this virus where it began.

Mr. PHILLIPS. OK. I appreciate that. But how do you reconcile what you just said with the budget you just submitted to us, which cuts State Department funding for the WHO by more than 50 percent? How does that—how can you reconcile that budget request with your set investment in global health?

Secretary POMPEO. Oh, there we will have plenty of money.

Mr. PHILLIPS. We will have plenty of money?

Secretary POMPEO. Oh, yes. Yes, sir. I am very confident we will.

Mr. PHILLIPS. So we have enough resources. You are doing everything possible—

Secretary POMPEO. Sir—

Mr. PHILLIPS [continuing]. and 50 percent reductions in these—

Secretary POMPEO. Sir—

Mr. PHILLIPS [continuing]. Budget is enough to address the potential for a global pandemic that seems to be emerging in front of our eyes.

Secretary POMPEO. Sir, I commit to you, as we need resources, if we find out that there are not sufficient resources to address a problem where we can create value and reduce risk, we will come to you, we will execute that, and we will deliver for the American people.

Mr. PHILLIPS. Do you understand why it might be suspect to submit a budget like that in light of what we are facing—

Secretary POMPEO. I do not.

Mr. PHILLIPS [continuing]. —that cuts State's budget for WHO by 50 percent?

Secretary POMPEO. I do not understand. I have great confidence that we will have the resources as well.

Mr. PHILLIPS. Okay. Well, I do not understand either.

With that, I yield to my colleague, Mr. Connolly.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Phillips.

Welcome, Mr. Secretary.

Secretary POMPEO. Good to see you again, sir.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Mr. Secretary, let me ask you an organizational question, because in addition to the budget-recommended cuts which seem ill-timed at the very least, given what is happening with coronavirus, I am worried about the fact that we do not have a permanent structure for dealing with pandemics.

You know, we set up a structure in the previous administration on Ebola and then we dismantled it. On May 18, this administration dismantled the Global Health Security Directorate at the National Security Council.

In light of what is happening today and in light of what could happen year in and year out, we do not know, in retrospect was that perhaps an unwise decision, Mr. Secretary, to abolish a coordinator in the NSC, a coordinator I think we need today?

Secretary POMPEO. I have watched this process move forward since the very first days that we became aware of the coronavirus. I have watched the part that the State Department has responsibility for, the part that Secretary Azar and his—have his team working. I have seen CDC officers when I traveled to Ethiopia and

to Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. We ought to focus on actions, activities, and not org charts.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Mr. Secretary, let's stipulate that every decision made by the President and this administration is beyond reproach, including questionable budgets.

Chairman ENGEL. So stipulated.

Mr. CONNOLLY. So stipulated. Okay. So we get that out of the way.

So I want to engage here. As we look at the reality today, it is more than an org chart. It is about coordination. It is about having a focal point in the Federal Government that is specifically mandated with this mission, and that person and those persons are networking with WHO and the international health community. They are at the front lines, monitoring situations.

We felt we had to do it in the previous pandemic or on the brink of pandemic Ebola. This seems more serious in terms of its spread. And I just wonder whether from your point of view, because, after all, you oversee an org chart, would not it be helpful to have somebody at the NSC charged specifically with this mission?

Secretary POMPEO. Well, I have watched the coordination through the task force that Secretary Azar was leading. The Vice President now has his mission set. We now have a woman named Deborah Birx, who has been running a significant global health program for me, for the United States Department of State, who will begin to work for the Vice President to deliver on this.

I am very confident that we will coordinate among our agencies and, importantly from my perspective, coordinate with our partner agencies around the world to help those countries as well.

Chairman ENGEL. The gentleman's time has expired.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman ENGEL. Mrs. Wagner.

Mrs. WAGNER. Over here, Secretary.

Secretary POMPEO. Yes, ma'am. Good to see you.

Mrs. WAGNER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And, Secretary Pompeo, I thank you for your time here this morning.

On January 3, President Trump ended Qasem Soleimani's brutal, brutal reign of terror that killed and maimed countless Americans and coalition forces and threatened many more to come, as we have heard today and many times over. For too long, Tehran has been permitted to act with impunity against U.S. allies, U.S. interests and personnel.

I was proud when the administration acted decisively to restore deterrence in the Middle East, just as I was proud when former President Obama succeeded in his decision to kill Osama bin Laden in Pakistan.

This was a defensive move to strike one of the world's most powerful terrorists who was organizing against—attacks against Americans in Iraq in defiance of U.N. Security Council Resolution 2231.

I applaud the President for making our red lines clear to the Iranian regime. Attacking Americans is never acceptable, and when American lives hang in the balance, Iran will be held to account for its actions. The Middle East is a safer place when the United States is, as you said, clear and consistent in its intentions.

Soleimani's successor, Mr. Secretary, as head of the Quds Force, Esmail Ghaani, was Soleimani's counterpart in countries east of Iran—Afghanistan, Pakistan, and the Central Asian Republic—while Soleimani headed operations in the west.

Mr. Secretary, are you concerned that Ghaani will seek to expand Iran's malign activities in Afghanistan? And how is the administration mitigating the risk to U.S. interests?

Secretary POMPEO. So I can say more about Iranian activity in Afghanistan in a classified setting. But I will say in this forum they share a long border. There is a history of Iran engaging in activity inside of Afghanistan to act as a spoiler.

We have seen just these last 6 days a significant reduction in violence in Afghanistan, and we are watching closely to see if the Islamic Republic of Iran begins to take even more active measures, active measures that undermine our efforts at peace and reconciliation in Afghanistan and, just as importantly, put our American soldiers who are on the ground there in both the Kabul area and in the west at risk as well.

Yes, this guy had this as part of his——

Mrs. WAGNER. Yes.

Secretary POMPEO [continuing]. His territory. We are very mindful that that is an area he knows well and might well seek to expand Iranian activity both through the Quds Force and otherwise.

Mrs. WAGNER. I am glad you are on top of it.

How did the Soleimani strike change the IRGC's standing in Iran? And have we been able to take advantage of any loss of prestige through information operations in Iran?

Secretary POMPEO. Soleimani was a strategic target. There was strategic deterrence that resulted from that strike. He was absolutely a terrorist. He absolutely had American blood on his hands. He absolutely intended to kill more Americans in the immediate future.

But he also occupied a position which was very close to the Ayatollah, and there is no one that is going to be capable of replacing that strategic input that he was able to provide to the Ayatollah. And, therefore, we believe not only did we achieve the battlefield deterrence that his departure now has led to, but we also have changed the calculus inside of Iran and the understanding.

Your point about the red line. It is not possible for the Islamic Republic of Iran to have been surprised by the actions President Trump took. We had communicated clearly that the loss of American lives would result in a strike of significance that would impose real costs on Iran.

So we exercised deterrence by making sure they understood what America was prepared to do. And then, when they took actions that were inconsistent with the things that we had told them, we executed against that.

Mrs. WAGNER. Very quickly, media reports this week show that the Vice President of Iran, as well as Iran's top health official, have both contracted coronavirus. Are you able to comment on the potential destabilization of Iran or their senior political leadership to be deathly ill or even perhaps die? Specifically, does the State have concerns about a void in leadership as it relates to their nuclear program and the Quds Force?

Secretary POMPEO. I do not have any—I do not have very much information about beyond what we have seen in the open press reporting. And, as I said earlier, we are going to do what we can on the humanitarian side to assist the Iranian people against building out their systems inside of the country.

Mrs. WAGNER. I thank you. I thank you for your time.

I yield back.

Chairman ENGEL. Ms. Spanberger.

Ms. SPANBERGER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Sir, after the strike you were the administration's point person making the case that we had to kill Soleimani at that moment on January 3. Here is what you said. I will read it. You said: "We had specific information on an imminent threat, and those threats streams included attacks on U.S. Embassies. Period, full stop."

That was January 10, after you had about a week to get your story straight. Except when we are looking at the fact that taking out Soleimani was essential to addressing a blow to Iran's malign activity, I question the fact that the day after Soleimani's death Iran's Supreme Leader Khamenei appointed Soleimani's longtime deputy to replace him and continue operations.

They did not stop, and they did not slow down. Isn't that true? Didn't they shoot rockets at our people just days later, sir?

The answer is yes.

Secretary POMPEO. The strike——

Ms. SPANBERGER. And the same day that you made that statement, you gave a classified briefing in Congress. I was there, and you did not provide evidence to us about that claimed imminence.

Secretary POMPEO. That is not true.

Ms. SPANBERGER. The evidence of that claimed imminence was not given during that briefing.

Secretary POMPEO. No, we absolutely did. We absolutely did.

Ms. SPANBERGER. And, sir, you and I both know that the claim of imminence was necessary and pivotal to the administration's justification for action in circumventing Congress.

VOICE. Point of order——

Ms. SPANBERGER. I said there was nothing in that briefing. With conflicting information, it is hard——

Chairman ENGEL. Point of order. The gentlewoman has the time.

Ms. SPANBERGER. With conflicting information, it is hard for the American people to know what to believe. But, fortunately, we have what is called a 1264 report and the President is required by law to send this report to Congress to explain the legal and policy justifications for killing Soleimani. And since it is a crime to make false statements to Congress, I presume that we can take the 1264 at face value. We received this on January 31.

Sir, how many times does this report refer to an imminent attack on a U.S. Embassy that would be stopped by killing General Soleimani? The answer is none.

Secretary POMPEO. You tell me.

Ms. SPANBERGER. So your own report directly contradicts what you and the President told the American people over and over. You said there were imminent threats to American lives, and that is not true. And when the administration was constrained by the law to tell the truth, you abandoned the talking points.

Mr. Pompeo, there is another report on Iran that is due this Sunday. It is required by a piece of law that I authored. It should give more transparency to the American people about why you risked plunging us into war, and I expect the President will comply with the law and provide that report this weekend. Do you expect that will be the case, sir?

Secretary POMPEO. We always do our best to comply with every legal requirement. I promise you we will continue to do that.

Ms. SPANBERGER. I look forward to reading it.

And, last, as this administration has been so inconsistent with the facts as it relates to coronavirus, on matters of security and public health the American people need credible, consistent information, and we are consistently not receiving that from the administration.

I yield to Representative Levin.

Secretary POMPEO. Mr. Chairman, is it possible I could respond to a couple of things? I was not asked a question but there were—

Ms. SPANBERGER. You were, sir. You did not answer them.

I yield to Representative Levin.

Secretary POMPEO. There were material—there were misstatements made.

Chairman ENGEL. Mr. Levin controls the time. The problem is we do not have enough time.

Mr. LEVIN. All right. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Secretary POMPEO. We briefed Congress 70 times.

Mr. LEVIN. Sir, sir, to your left you will see a map of the world, right there. Would you please point out for us on this map which of our embassies were under threat of imminent attack so that you had to kill General Soleimani, regardless of the consequences for American safety, on January 3, 2020?

Secretary POMPEO. I am happy to answer your question.

Mr. LEVIN. Which four?

Secretary POMPEO. I am happy to answer your question. I am not going to get into classified material.

Mr. LEVIN. Okay. Well, sir, reclaiming my time, we all know that Soleimani was a bad guy, but what I am talking about is the decisions made leading up to January 3 that brought us to the brink of war. And you are not willing to tell us which embassies were under attack? Under threat of attack?

Secretary POMPEO. I am never willing to disclose classified information. I assume you are not either.

Mr. LEVIN. Right, sir. Well, you cannot hide behind classification on this one because you cannot classify something that does not exist.

The administration has given us shifting stories—you, the President, others—about what was going on there. On January 10, the same day you briefed Congress, the President said this to FOX News.

[Video shown.]

Mr. LEVIN. So this is, again, the same day you were up here briefing us—and I was there—on Soleimani strikes, and we did not hear a word from you on the threats to four embassies. Why not?

Secretary POMPEO. There were multiple embassies which my Diplomatic Security team had enormous concern about.

Mr. LEVIN. Sir, I have such little time.

Secretary POMPEO. Sir, are you going let me answer the question?

Mr. LEVIN. No, because you are not answering the question, sir. I am not asking you reveal classified information.

Ms. McCAUL. Mr. Chairman, will you please let the witness answer the question? Have respect.

Chairman ENGEL. Well, let me say this. I want the witness to answer the question. I hope that when we run out of time at the end that the Secretary will agree to stay for a few extra minutes.

Secretary POMPEO. I will not agree to stay for a few minutes, but I am happy to answer whatever questions I can.

Mr. Chairman—

Chairman ENGEL. This is the problem, Mr. Secretary.

Secretary POMPEO. We briefed 70 times, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman ENGEL. All right. Mr. Levin.

Mr. LEVIN. Yes.

Sir, here is the bottom line. If we had the time, I would play the Defense Secretary's statement that he had no information about embassies.

We are facing a possible coronavirus pandemic. This administration had three different stories about the events that brought to us the brink of war. So it is no surprise that Americans are scared because this administration keeps proving it cannot be trusted to tell us the truth.

I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman ENGEL. Thank you.

Mr. ZELDIN.

Mr. ZELDIN. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

And, Mr. Secretary, thank you for being here. I apologize. This hearing has been a joke. You are getting asked a lot of questions that my colleagues on the other side of the aisle are choosing either to answer the question for you, if you do not answer in the first split second of them finishing with a question mark, or if you attempt to answer they cut you off to reclaim their time.

So I first would like to give you the opportunity to answer any of the questions posed, because what we just witnessed, for anyone at home, witnessing the last 5 minutes, it is an embarrassment.

Mr. Secretary, go ahead.

Chairman ENGEL. Well, let me just say, Mr. Zeldin, what is really an embarrassment is that we could not get more than 2 hours from the Secretary of State. That is really an embarrassment to this committee.

Mr. ZELDIN.

Mr. ZELDIN. Mr. Secretary.

Secretary POMPEO. So the record should reflect that the U.S. Government has briefed Congress over 70 times on the issue of Iran. So I think it is difficult to claim that we have not been prepared to share. Indeed, I briefed all of you—some of you have referred to that briefing—extensively. I briefed the Senate side as well.

The entire Member—every Member of Congress was invited to a hearing where we had not only myself, but the Secretary of Defense, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, an individual from the Department of Justice to talk about the legal issues, as well as the intelligence community. We gave a thorough and complete briefing.

I am happy to be here for an additional 2 hours today.

Secretary POMPEO. Let me just respond to the question that came in previously about the embassies, the embassies that I have responsible for security for.

In the days that led up to this strike that we took, our embassies all across the region went to heightened security posture. We moved resources around the region. We did that for two purposes: so that we could respond and deliver medevac capabilities in the event that we had to do so, as well as to deter attacks on our embassies.

We took these threats from Qasem Soleimani on our embassies seriously, we responded appropriately, and we delivered for the American people.

And I will tell you that today I still have officers in these places. I still have a significant embassy in Baghdad. I have got officers in Beirut. These are amazing people who are living under—in a threatening region. We are doing everything we can to reduce that threat, and the strike against Qasem Soleimani made each of my officers at the State Department more safe than they were when he was walking this planet.

Mr. ZELDIN. Well, thank you, Mr. Secretary.

And for anyone posing questions to you at the hearing today, I think it would be great to give you an opportunity to answer any of the questions that they are posing to you.

You are doing a great job. I am proud of you. I am honored to have you as our Secretary of State. We have seen al-Baghdadi get killed, al-Rimi, the ISIS caliphate destroyed in Iraq and Syria, decisions to move the embassy in Israel to Jerusalem, recognizing Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights, reversing flawed Obama-era policies as it relates to Israeli activity in Judea and Samaria.

I have heard it referred, as far as the decisions with regards to oil sanctions and taking out Qasem Soleimani, as going after the fuel and then taking out the driver.

Instead of seeing oil from Iran go from two to three to five million barrels a day and \$140 million a day in proceeds to the Iranian Government to fund their bad activities, instead, we see it going down to 300,000 barrels a day, and then you take out Qasem Soleimani.

The amount of attacks that you have endured for the decision of the administration to take out Qasem Soleimani is insane. And I have used—I have heard the Speaker refer to it as disproportionate to take out Qasem Soleimani, and I have posed the question, I still have not gotten an answer: At what point is it proportionate?

There were 600 U.S. troops got killed at the hands of Qasem Soleimani. Thousands of U.S. troops were injured at the hands of Qasem Soleimani. In the days leading up to taking out Qasem

Soleimani, our embassy was attacked, and we saw U.S. civilians end up getting killed and injured.

At what point is it proportionate to take out the one person who is responsible for killing 600 U.S. troops and wounding thousands of others?

I think the problem is that people are getting antsy at what a good job you have been doing. I saw it posed in the transcripts, as now revealed, when Mr. McKinley was at the closed-door deposition and he was asked about the State Department under Mike Pompeo, and has it gotten worse?

And they were shocked that McKinley's answer was: No, actually, the State Department, it has gotten better. And they thought that this guy who had just left, just retired from the State Department was going to come in and throw you under the bus. But even in that situation that person comes to that situation of the House Intel Committee—it used to be called the House Intel Committee—the House impeachment committee—and then posing that question and getting the answer that you are doing such a great job.

So that is really the problem. I encourage my colleagues to let you answer the questions going forward.

I yield back.

Chairman ENGEL. The gentleman yields back.

Ms. WILD.

Ms. WILD. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Good morning, Mr. Secretary.

We know that Iran has a long history of revenge killings. I am sure that is something you and I can agree on. And it is one of the reasons that Iran is one of the most dangerous and unpredictable countries in the world, right?

Secretary POMPEO. That is all true, yes, ma'am.

Ms. WILD. Do you think that the Iranians' revenge strike on bases in Iraq that injured more than 100 servicemembers is the last that we have seen of Iranian retaliation for the Soleimani killing? That is a yes or no.

Secretary POMPEO. Yes. The reason I often pause is I have tried to make sure and give answers that are not classified.

Ms. WILD. So you believe it is the last we have seen of—

Secretary POMPEO. I did not say that. No. I think the strike on Qasem Soleimani was necessary, but not sufficient.

Ms. WILD. Not my question. My question—

Secretary POMPEO. And I think—I think—

Ms. WILD. I am going to reclaim my time.

My question is: Do you think that the strike by the Iranians on bases in Iraq after the Soleimani killing was the last that we have seen of retaliatory action by Iran?

Secretary POMPEO. Oh, no. We have seen the Iranians take actions after that already.

Ms. WILD. Okay.

Secretary POMPEO. Whether you characterize them as retaliatory or not. This is a 40-year theocratic revolutionary regime—

Ms. WILD. And I am with you on that. I am very, very concerned about the likelihood of tragic and severe retaliation going forward.

We know that, as you have alluded to, that Iran has a pattern of waiting before retaliating. You will recall that in 1994 Hezbollah

bombed AMIA, the Jewish community center in Buenos Aires. Those attacks came 2 years after Israel killed Hezbollah co-founder Abbas Musawi in 1992.

Secretary POMPEO. Right.

Ms. WILD. Iran waited 2 years to get revenge.

We know that retaliation is not immediate. They will be patient. It would be foolish of us to think that revenge for the killing of their general is over.

And I am terribly concerned that Iran is going to be looking for even more vulnerabilities and opportunities to harm Americans as retribution that will play out over the years. Are you worried about that, too?

Secretary POMPEO. Oh, yes. We are very worried about Iran.

Ms. WILD. Okay.

Secretary POMPEO. This is why we have a strategic campaign to change the course of their behavior.

Ms. WILD. Well, let me just say that I think every day of the diplomats and troops spread all over the world, some of whom I visited over Christmas with a codel from this committee. They are already doing dangerous work, and that is what they sign up for, but I am worried that we have increased the chances of harm to these people who serve us.

I think it has just led us down a more dangerous and unpredictable path of Iran seeking revenge, and I fear for the brave public servants who are going to brave—who are going to bear the brunt of that.

With that, I yield to Ms. Omar.

Ms. OMAR. Thank you.

Sir, I just want to followup to see if enough has been done to protect Americans in harm's way.

The day of the strike, your department issued a warning against all U.S. citizens to depart Iraq immediately. Was there a concern before or after the strike that Americans could be targeted for retaliation?

Secretary POMPEO. We have known that Americans traveling not only in Iraq—

Ms. OMAR. Sir, yes or no would be sufficient.

Secretary POMPEO. Yes. But the answer is a little more complicated.

Ms. OMAR. I know, but we do not really have that much time, so—

Secretary POMPEO. I feel that—

Ms. OMAR. Did you warn—

Secretary POMPEO [continuing]. I need to be accurate.

Ms. OMAR. Sir, did you warn—

Secretary POMPEO. I apologize for wanting to be accurate.

Ms. OMAR. Did you warn the embassy either before or after the attack?

Secretary POMPEO. The embassy was completely in the loop as we were working through not only hours and days—

Ms. OMAR. Okay.

Secretary POMPEO [continuing]. But months.

Ms. OMAR. The people—

Secretary POMPEO. The people—

Ms. OMAR. The people at the embassy, who are the ones in harm's way, said that they were not warned. I hope you are not saying that they are lying.

Sir, were you aware—were you not aware that Americans might be targeted by this assassination and be retaliated against?

Secretary POMPEO. Oh, the threat from the Islamic Republic is now 40 years on.

Ms. OMAR. All right. Well, I ask this because Brian Hook, your special representative on Iran, received extra security at a speech in Los Angeles after the attack, not in Baghdad; Los Angeles. Mr. Hook got protection from Diplomatic Security, the LAPD, and counter-assault team.

Look, I think making sure our public servants have proper security is incredibly important. But I have to ask, if we were so much safer after the strike, why did a U.S. diplomat need counter-assault team to protect him at a speech in California?

Secretary POMPEO. Yes. It is undoubtedly the case that we are all safer. There are distributional elements to this; that is, there are certain persons who made certain decisions that might be more at risk. But let me assure you, cumulatively, the American people are far—

Ms. OMAR. I will say, sir—

Secretary POMPEO [continuing]. Are far more safer.

Ms. OMAR [continuing]. If you are claiming that Americans are safer after this attack, apparently your department disagrees, at least as far as Mr. Hook and our embassy in Baghdad are concerned.

Chairman ENGEL. The time of the gentlewoman has expired.

Ms. OMAR. I yield back.

Chairman ENGEL. Okay.

Mr. PERRY.

Mr. PERRY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Great to see you, Mr. Secretary. Welcome to "Masterpiece Theatre." Unfortunately, this is really serious business.

I am going to read you a quote and see if it is familiar to you. "Turns out I am really good at killing people. Didn't know that was going to be a strong suit of mine."

Do you know who said that?

Secretary POMPEO. No, I do not.

Mr. PERRY. That was the previous President. That was President Obama.

So in the country of Pakistan, 2,741 killed, not including civilians; in Yemen, 975 killed, not including civilians; in Somalia, 286 killed, not including civilians, during the last administration.

Do you remember when it occurred in Congress?

Secretary POMPEO. I am sorry. I do not understand the question. What is the question?

Mr. PERRY. Oh, I am sorry. Mr. Secretary, when did we declare war on Pakistan, Yemen, and Somalia?

Secretary POMPEO. Yes.

Mr. PERRY. I missed that. Did you miss that?

Secretary POMPEO. It did not happen during my 6 years. I am highly confident of that.

Mr. PERRY. Yes, I do not remember it either.

Do you remember this committee or any committee dragging in the Secretary of State and asking them what the strategy was during that period of time when we killed—that the United States was responsible with killing 4,000 combatants around the world, not on the battlefield, declared by the United States of America? Do you remember when that happened?

Secretary POMPEO. I am sure there were oversight hearings where Congress asked questions about it, but I cannot recall specifically.

Mr. PERRY. Do you remember what the strategy was?

Secretary POMPEO. In which particular theater?

Mr. PERRY. Any one of those places.

Secretary POMPEO. I know what the administration said they were trying to do.

Mr. PERRY. Do you remember any of my and your colleagues on the other side of the aisle—quite honestly, do you remember any colleagues on this side of the aisle—complaining about removing terrorists off the face of the Earth?

Secretary POMPEO. I do not recall that happening.

Mr. PERRY. I do not remember it either.

When you have, Mr. Secretary, actionable intelligence regarding impending or imminent attacks on U.S. citizens or U.S. interests, including embassies, what is your duty?

Secretary POMPEO. It is to ensure, to the maximum extent possible, that none of the Americans that are in any of those places—civilian, State Department officials, or military folks—have any harm brought to them, so to reduce that risk with every tool that we have in our arsenal.

Mr. PERRY. And so you were made aware of security risks prior to the strike on Soleimani to U.S. interests and individuals, personnel, and took corrective action to make sure that the risk was mitigated?

Secretary POMPEO. Yes. That is the decision that the President made.

Mr. PERRY. Do you remember we had a consulate in Benghazi, Libya, when the Ambassador had asked repeatedly for increased security at the time from the previous administration? And do you recall what occurred? Did he and the embassy receive the increased security or did it not?

Secretary POMPEO. My recollection is that some of the requests for increased security were made available to them and others were not.

Mr. PERRY. And what was the result?

Secretary POMPEO. There was a tragic day where four Americans were killed.

Mr. PERRY. Yes. Four Americans were killed, and we had hearings up here, and the bottom of it was never gotten to as far as many Americans are concerned and considered. Yet we sit here today and second guess your decisions and the administration's decisions to keep America and America's interests safe in the face of a terrorist with the responsibility of hundreds, if not thousands of American deaths and maimings on his hands.

Mr. Secretary, are we or were we at the brink of war, as has been claimed in this committee, with Iran?

Secretary POMPEO. Yes, I—we were at a heightened sense of risk on both sides, but I never observed that we were at a risk of anything that—when I hear people talk about—talk about World War III, that is not where we were—

Mr. PERRY. Yes. I mean, I do not—

Secretary POMPEO [continuing]. At any time during this—these moments from the first of November through to date.

You could—you could—having said that, I will tell you that the Islamic Republic of Iran considers themselves at war against the United States of America and against Israel.

Mr. PERRY. Yes. It would seem to me listening to some of my colleagues that we should allow Iran to kill as many Americans as they want to and not respond for the fear that they might kill even more. I do not know how you cannot reach that assessment here if you listen to the rhetoric in this committee.

Let me just clear something up here regarding the JCPOA in closing.

Is there any reason to enrich to the level that Iran has or have a heavy water reactor constructed for a peaceful nuclear power program? Is there any reason at all to do that.

Secretary POMPEO. The current set—the current installation set for centrifuges in Iran and the—both the magnitude and levels of enrichment that are taking place, they are not consistent with what one would historically find for medical isotopes and the like.

Mr. PERRY. I yield.

Chairman ENGEL. The gentleman's time has expired.

Let me, before I call on Ms. Houlahan, say that the strikes that my colleague referenced were authorized by Congress under the 2001 AUMF. Congress has not authorized to strike against Soleimani. There is no authorization for use of force against Iran. And that is really the difference.

Ms. Houlahan.

Ms. HOULAHAN. Thank you.

Sir, thank you for being here.

On January 7, Iran responded to the Soleimani strike by launching missiles at American personnel housed at Iraqi bases. We now know it caused permanent brain damage and trauma to our servicemembers. And the story the administration tells us about what happened keeps changing.

The day after the President told the Nation that, quote, “The American people should be extremely grateful and happy no Americans were harmed in last night’s attack by the Iranian regime,” end quote. And like many Americans, I believed them, and I was relieved.

But that was not, in fact, true. In fact, many people were harmed.

Following the attacks and ensuing reports of injured servicemembers, the President had this to say, and I quote: “I heard they had headaches and a couple of other things, and I can report it is not very serious.”

Just briefly, Mr. Pompeo, with a yes or no, do you believe that traumatic brain injury is serious?

Secretary POMPEO. Yes.

Ms. HOULAHAN. I do, too. I am a third-generation veteran, and I have family members currently serving in harm's way, and I am very familiar with the devastation that these kinds of injuries can cause.

But on January 24 the Pentagon told us that 34 servicemembers had suffered traumatic brain injuries as a result of these strikes. And then, on January 28, 4 days later, we were told that, no, actually, that number was 50.

And then, 2 days after that, the number was 64.

Sir, with a simple yes and a number, what is the number standing at now in terms of U.S. servicemembers who have sustained traumatic brain injuries, which the President has previously dismissed as simply headaches?

Secretary POMPEO. Yes. You will have to go to the Department of Defense to get the precise number.

Ms. HOULAHAN. So I can give you the number. It is 110. And, thankfully, many of them have been cleared and returned to duty, and we have heard that about 30 of them still remain in hospital care.

Sir, the administration claimed that the strike on Soleimani was, quote, "to deter Iran from conducting or supporting further attacks against the United States forces and interests," end quote.

This was not deterrence. It was a decision lacking strategy and an endangerment of our national security and of our men and women in uniform.

Mr. Pompeo, the President's decision had clearly very real consequences: 110 servicemembers suffered TBI, what the President has called headaches. And what we know is not even close to ending is the campaign against us and the allies on behalf of Iran. And they are currently enriching uranium again. By your own admonition, you have told us that we are not in safety and we are clearly still in harm's way.

And so I guess my concern to you, sir, is that I am not sure what we have accomplished other than injuring 110 servicemembers and other than making our Nation a less safe place.

And with the remainder of my time I yield to Ms. Titus.

Ms. TITUS. Thank you for yielding.

Let me just point out that quote attributed to President Obama was in a book allegedly overheard, reviewed in The Washington Times. I do not think anybody here heard him say that, and it was—who knows if that is true or not.

I would like to ask you, Mr. Pompeo, about something that was said after the Soleimani strike. On January 6 the President told the American people in a tweet in all caps—I think we have it here—Iran will never have a nuclear weapon. It will never have a nuclear weapon.

Now, I agree Iran should not have a nuclear weapon. But in that now famous radio interview with Mary Louise Kelly—I think you know her—she asked you not once, not twice, but three times what the administration was going to do to stop Iran from having a nuclear weapon.

Here is what you said.

[Video shown.]

Ms. TITUS. Well, since you made that comment, Iran has tripled the amount of stockpiled uranium it has. So I am going to give you another chance to answer the question: How are we going to stop Iran from getting a nuclear weapon?

Secretary POMPEO. We will stop them.

Ms. TITUS. Well, you know, that is really not a plan.

Secretary POMPEO. Let me give you—let me give you a more fulsome response if you will permit me—

Ms. TITUS. I will take my—I will take my time back since you are making fun of my question.

Secretary POMPEO. I would be happy to—I would be happy to give a more fulsome—

Ms. TITUS. We will stop them is like a bumper sticker. That is not a plan.

Secretary POMPEO. I would be happy to give you a more fulsome response.

Ms. TITUS. So I will go back to the interview with Ms. Kelly.

Secretary POMPEO. You decided to have some fun. I thought I would have a moment, too.

Ms. TITUS. Excuse me, Mr. Pompeo. I have got my time back.

To use your words, further on in the interview—I guess you think this is funny—she asked you—told you that Iran had admitted that they had removed all limits on their centrifuge program, and you said, in effect, well, he is blustering.

Frankly, Mr. Pompeo, I agree blustering is dangerous, especially when it comes to nuclear weapons development, but today you are just blustering. This is not a plan. This is not an acceptable substitute for a plan. And we are just not going to allow that.

And I yield back.

Chairman ENGEL. Gentlewoman's time has expired.

Mr. KINZINGER.

Mr. KINZINGER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

This is exhausting. I mean, this multimedia dog-and-pony show that is being put on.

And nobody thinks the Secretary of State thinks this is humorous. We can have a moment of levity without trying to get a YouTube moment out of it or without, you know, being upset and feigning anger so that you can go get a TV hit tonight on a cable station.

And, Mr. Secretary, you were on this—you understand this committee. I fought like hell to get a waiver, because I am on Energy and Commerce, to get on this committee, because the thing I love about this committee—loved—was its bipartisanship. The whole time we had the majority, we never took one vote that was partisan on this committee, not once.

Ms. TITUS. Now, that is not true.

Mr. KINZINGER. Our very first thing that we did on this committee under the new majority was take a partisan vote. I think we took two of them. One of the very first ones was Yemen, preventing the U.S. from doing anything in Yemen, because that is a campaign issue out there right now, even though most people have no idea what is going on.

I will just ask you real quick, Mr. Secretary: How much humanitarian aid has Iran provided to the Yemen crisis?

Secretary POMPEO. Zero.

Mr. KINZINGER. Thank you.

But you have been on this. You understand what is going on here, this show. You know, Soleimani—initially, I think a lot of folks in—did not even know who Soleimani was, and then, all of a sudden, find out he is killed, and then they are outraged about it.

A point I would like to make is we operated—and I was part of those operations—against Iranians in Iraq during the Iraq war. So by killing Soleimani in Iraq, protecting U.S. troops, like we did on Task Force 17, we were operating under the same authority that we had to defend American troops against Iran that we did when we killed Soleimani—in Iraq, by the way.

So when all this discussion about not having the authority, then you are you saying that we did not have the authority to defend ourselves and operate against Iranian IED networks in Iraq in 2007 and 2008. So all those—all that positive movement we made to defend our troops was totally illegal because Congress did not authorize it.

It is the same authorization that we have today, and I would argue that it was quite proportional, because instead of blowing up sites where there is 100 soldiers working that want a paycheck in Iran—it may come to that someday if Iran decides to escalate—but instead of doing that, we killed the man responsible for these deaths.

Mr. Secretary, let me ask you quickly, how many Americans have been killed and injured as a result of Mr. Soleimani?

Secretary POMPEO. Hundreds.

Mr. KINZINGER. How many people around that region do you think are dead, including the Syria crisis, because of Mr. Soleimani?

Secretary POMPEO. Thousands from every faith, including thousands and thousands of Muslims.

Mr. KINZINGER. So I think, you know, my friends on the other side of the aisle say, well, we get it. He was a bad guy. Yes, he was a bad guy. However, X, Y, Z, whatever the argument is.

It is like saying Osama bin Laden was a bad guy. No, he was a demon. Mr. Soleimani also was a demon. This is a guy that traveled around arrogantly in the Middle East bragging about the amount of people he killed, bragging about his ability to expand the Iranian empire and the methods that come along with that, half a million dead Syrians right now.

By the way, Assad would not be in power if it was not for Iran. We look at the destabilization of Lebanon. We look at the innocent dead people in Yemen, at the Yemen conflict. That is not America in Saudi Arabia. That is because the Iranian regime overthrew the legitimate Government of Yemen, parks weapons in the middle of populated territory so that when they are bombed, when they threaten airplanes, it kills civilians, and they can parade the civilians out. That is the heartlessness of what we are talking about.

Mr. Secretary, I also want to just mention on the airliner. After the Iranians shot down the airliner, it was amazing to see the number of people that blamed President Trump for shooting down

the air—none of this would have happened if it was not for President Trump's irresponsibility, is what I was told.

I think an important thing to remember is we killed Soleimani, the right move. Iran reacted. And then, fully expecting us to react, they turned their surface-to-air missile sites on trying to defend their airspace, fully assuming America would react, and we did not, because we showed restraint.

And then a trigger-happy, or whatever the situation was, surface-to-air missile operator shot down the airliner. That was not President Trump. I would argue President Trump showed a great deal of restraint.

So, Mr. Secretary, I appreciate you coming in here. I am sorry—some of my colleagues have been very respectful in their questions, legitimate questions, but I am sorry that some have not.

And I yield back.

Chairman ENGEL. Okay. The gentleman yields back.

Mr. CASTRO.

Mr. CASTRO. Thank you, Chairman.

Mr. Secretary, you and I were both on the Intelligence Committee before you left to go to the CIA, and I am still on that committee. I listened to your answers on classified information, and I have seen that classified information, and, after reviewing it, I do not think that you are telling us the truth. And I would encourage the President and you to declassify as much of that as possible. I think, if the American people read it themselves, they would not believe that you are telling us the truth.

Here is my question. My colleagues have shown killing Soleimani made America less safe in ways that were entirely predictable, and yet it does not seem like the administration was at all prepared for a vote to expel American forces from Iraq or for guided missile strikes that forced our servicemembers to hide in bunkers, or for a complete halt to the fight against ISIS. Just like the pullout from Syria, the President made a decision with no planning and no understanding of the consequences.

This is exactly why the Framers of our Constitution decided not to entrust any single person with the power to take America to war.

Instead of following the law and seeking authorization, you first said there was an imminent threat, which we know is not true. You then concocted a theory that Congress had somehow already authorized you to attack Iran.

Mr. Secretary, do you really believe Congress authorized the President to attack Iran?

Secretary POMPEO. I am very confident that every action that this administration has taken is fully lawful.

Mr. CASTRO. The President and the administration has referenced the 2002 AUMF. Let me ask you, Mr. Secretary, how many times has the 2002—how many times does the 2002 Saddam Hussein authorization, which you are invoking here, mention Iran?

Secretary POMPEO. I will leave to the lawyers to debate the scope of that, but I know that this was discussed, vetted, approved by the lawyers, as has every action this administration has taken. We conducted this attack fully inside our statutory and constitutional responsibility. The President acted lawfully.

Mr. CASTRO. You know, Mr. Secretary, that it does not mention Iran.

Every member of this body knows that Congress never authorized war with Iran, and we certainly did not do it 18 years ago on an authorization for an entirely different war.

I yield to Mr. Espallat of New York.

Mr. ESPAILLAT. Thank you.

Mr. Secretary, good morning.

We all came here to discuss some very important issues, issues of life and death, war and peace, ultimately also about the separation of powers and our constitutional rights as a duly elected branch of government to know what is going on and whether or not we will engage in warlike action.

But the fact of the matter is that Americans across the country, as they send their children to school, as they went to work, were terrified—we are terrified as a Nation about the coronavirus, particularly when we read in the papers that one of the top officials, the vice president of women and family affairs in Iran, contracted the disease, and we saw yesterday how Wall Street took an unprecedented dive.

Americans are terrified. I am terrified about the coronavirus. My question—I know you want to answer questions, so my question is a very direct one, a yes-or-no answer required.

Do you feel that we should divert funding to build the wall to stop the spread of this coronavirus that is terrifying American families across our Nation?

We have a money problem. The President has presented a deep cut to your Department. Do you feel we should divert money from building the wall to stop this pandemic, yes or no?

Secretary POMPEO. That is a straw man argument.

Mr. ESPAILLAT. Yes or no?

Secretary POMPEO. It is a straw man argument.

Mr. ESPAILLAT. Yes or no? Give me an answer. You want to answer questions. Yes or no?

Secretary POMPEO. We can do all of the——

Mr. ESPAILLAT. I reclaim my time. Yes or no, do you feel we should divert funding from building the wall to stop this pandemic that is terrifying American families, yes or no?

Secretary POMPEO. America has the resources——

Mr. ESPAILLAT. You are not answering my question.

Let me ask you another question. Your State Department personnel are the first point of contact, or regularly the first point of contact overseas, from diplomatic engagements to consular service. Do you feel your employees are at risk exposed to the coronavirus? They are in China. They are all over Asia. Do you feel your employees are in danger and risk of contracting the coronavirus?

Secretary POMPEO. We have taken a number of actions——

Mr. ESPAILLAT. Are they in risk of contracting this virus, yes or no?

Secretary POMPEO. Sir, would you permit me to answer the question?

Mr. ESPAILLAT. Yes. Give me a yes-or-no answer.

Secretary POMPEO. It is more complicated. It is a complicated——

Mr. ESPAILLAT. No, it is not.

Secretary POMPEO. Yes, it is.

Mr. ESPAILLAT. You are sitting in a consular office interviewing people in China or in Japan or in Asia. Are you at risk of contracting this disease?

Secretary POMPEO. Every one of our Ambassadors evaluates the risks to their officers every day. Our officers, all across the world—not just from coronavirus—are at risk. That is why I am so proud of what they are doing.

Chairman ENGEL. The time of the gentleman has expired.

Mr. YOHO.

Mr. ESPAILLAT. Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Chairman ENGEL. Mr. Yoho.

Mr. YOHO. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Secretary, thank you for being here. I will answer that last question. Yes, everybody is at risk of it.

Secretary POMPEO. Yes. Everyone is at risk—

Mr. YOHO. Mr. Secretary, you said in the beginning the Trump administration will neither tolerate—

Secretary POMPEO. Yes.

Mr. YOHO [continuing]. Or appease the Iranian terrorist regime. Yet the President has said he would be open to talking to them, and I think that is great, and we are thankful for that. But that should be the policy of America beyond this administration, and hopefully for the next administrations, that we will not tolerate this kind of activity against our country. So I appreciate them standing strong.

My colleagues have—I was just going to point out one of them, but many of them have laid out claims that there is no strategy. Pulling out of the JCPOA, eliminating Soleimani, sanctions on Iran, you know, the other things, no response to coronavirus. But a lot of the things we did do—pulling out of the JCPOA, the sanctions—those are the strategies, and I think you will see the response down the road.

As far as the coronavirus, my colleagues on the other side said this administration has done nothing. We have had two hearings in this committee, on the subcommittee, Chairman Bera and myself, and we have had the administration here. In fact, we had two epidemiologists showed up, we have had two hearings on coronavirus with epidemiologists, State Department employees, Dr. Redfield from the CDC, and we have offered help to Iran and to China, and they have not taken it.

To date, you know, everybody is worried about coronavirus. You know, the last thing we need to do is dramatize it that everybody is going to get coronavirus. We did that with Zika, we did that with Ebola, and we were blessed because of the system we have in this country.

To date, there are 57 cases confirmed of coronavirus of Americans. Forty of them were on a cruise ship. I won't mention the name. Three were from Wuhan. Twelve are travel related. And two are person-to-person.

So I think, in a country of 330-some million people, that is pretty darn good. And so I applaud the administration.

We talked to Dr. Redfield yesterday. He says they are staged, they are ready to go. We talked to Patrick Kennedy that received

the cruise ship in Cambodia. The State Department was there. They had six staging areas. They worked with Hun Sen and the Cambodian Government, which I appreciate, and they got those people home safely.

I do have some questions that are pertinent to this hearing. With Soleimani being eliminated, can you report in this setting have you seen a weakening in Iran's Quds Force or their proxies in Syria, Lebanon, or Yemen, or anywhere else?

Secretary POMPEO. I would prefer to answer that by saying that the cumulative effect of the actions that we have taken since this administration has come into office have reduced the capacity for the Islamic Republic of Iran to inflict terror around the world. There is no doubt about that.

Mr. YOHO. No doubt about that, and I feel like that.

Do you have a sense on the replacement of Mr. Ghaani?

Secretary POMPEO. In this setting, I will simply say that Qasem Soleimani was a unique leader in that the broader institution and array of the Islamic Republic of Iran, he was a loud voice, he was a voice that had lots of people who were willing to listen to him, and there is not a leader that is likely to be able to replace him completely, adequately, and fully.

Mr. YOHO. And I think that is justification enough. If we look at our servicemen and—women that were either killed or were wounded in Iraq and Afghanistan, we know 70 percent of those came from IEDs; 90 percent of those came from Iran.

Who was in charge of those?

Secretary POMPEO. They were—those were Quds Force operations that was led by Qasem Soleimani.

Mr. YOHO. Right. And then we can go back to when Bill Clinton and President Obama—or prior to President Obama, Bill Clinton had the opportunity to remove Osama bin Laden. He had 10 to 12 different times he had the opportunity to apprehend him or eliminate him. He chose not to. The question is, would 9/11 have happened had we done that?

Secretary POMPEO. I do not want to speculate.

Mr. YOHO. We cannot speculate.

Secretary POMPEO. Yes.

Mr. YOHO. But we can probably look into the future. Had Soleimani stayed there would have been more deaths attributed to Iran and the IEDs. And so I commend this administration for doing what they did.

And, sir, you have got a tough job. We need to focus on what is going on in the world. It is not just Iran. We have got China. We have got North Korea. We have got what is going on in Venezuela. We have got the economies, you know, being adjusted all over the world. And so we cannot just focus on one area. We have got to look at the whole picture. And I would think Congress would come together to focus on that.

And I yield back. Thank you.

Secretary POMPEO. Thank you.

Chairman ENGEL. The gentleman's time has expired.

Mr. MALINOWSKI.

Mr. MALINOWSKI. Thank you.

Mr. Secretary, you and I had what I thought was a very constructive conversation at the Munich conference about the importance of defending State Department personnel, and I appreciated some of the things that you said to us about that. But since we got home we have heard the following statement from a White House deputy spokesperson, who said: "Too often we have people in this government—I mean, the Federal Government is massive, with millions of people—and there are a lot of people out there taking action against this President, and when we find them we will take appropriate action."

We have seen reports that the White House personnel office is compiling lists of so-called deep State people, disloyal people, to purge.

There are some 24,000 civil and foreign service officers, Mr. Secretary, who are also listening to you right now. They know that they have a duty to implement this President's policies, and they do. You called them just a moment ago amazing people. You know they are not working against this President.

But they also feel they have a responsibility to share with you and their President their best judgment, to tell you the truth as they see it, whether it is what the leadership wants to hear or not.

So my question is, if they do that, if, for example, a State Department official goes to a meeting at the White House and reports that there are more ISIS fighters today than when ISIS took over half of Iraq in 2014, that the strike against Soleimani may have temporarily hampered our ability to fight them, or if a public health expert working for you tells the public or the President that, you know, this virus isn't necessarily going to go away when it gets warm, are you going to back them up when they speak what they believe to be the truth? Are you going to stand by while people in the White House talk about purging your employees?

Secretary POMPEO. Yes, actually, this is a really easy question. There is not a day goes by that State Department officials do not tell me things that I disagree with—not one. Can't imagine a big organization—I actually welcome it. I had all my Ambassadors in this week. The chief of mission conference was in town. I heard lots of voices.

What I always demand from them is the truth as best they know it; their policy judgments as well. They have lots of experience, time on the ground in many of these places, and I always welcome that.

Mr. MALINOWSKI. Are you willing to get into a fight with the White House if necessary, as all of your predecessors would have, in the face of these kinds of comments from, like, a 29-year-old guy in the White House personnel office?

Secretary POMPEO. Yes, it is not about fighting. It is about being right. It is about making sure that we deliver on behalf of the American people.

I do that every day. I work to make the case for delivering American diplomacy in the way that this institution always has. We have built it up. We have made it better than when my predecessors were there. And I hope that my successor makes it better than when I am there.

Mr. MALINOWSKI. Thank you, Mr. Secretary. I hope we see you do that publicly.

And I yield to Mr. Lieu.

Mr. LIEU. Thank you. Mr. Pompeo——

Secretary POMPEO. Yes, sir.

Mr. LIEU [continuing]. On January 7th, Iran's foreign minister told NPR's Mary Louise Kelly that, following the Soleimani strike, Iran was going to get rid of all limits on the centrifuges that Iran uses to enrich uranium.

So let me put that in some context. As of last November, the IAEA said that the Iran stockpile had grown to over 800 pounds, but then, after the Soleimani attacks, Iran told the world that stockpile has more than tripled to about 2,600 pounds. So my question to you is, does Iran have more enriched uranium now than when Donald Trump took office?

Secretary POMPEO. Yes.

Mr. LIEU. Okay.

I want to switch to coronavirus. That is on top of people's minds.

Secretary POMPEO. May I just make sure I get that accurate?

Mr. LIEU. That is fine. Yes is good.

Secretary POMPEO. They have more—they have enriched to a higher level than they did when we took office.

Mr. LIEU. Thank you.

Secretary POMPEO. That is a true statement.

The maximum—it is a little more complicated, and I just want to be precise.

Mr. LIEU. Thank you.

Secretary POMPEO. Thanks.

Mr. LIEU. So I am going to switch to coronavirus, which is at the top of people's minds. Donald Trump's chief of staff, Mick Mulvaney, told the Conservative Political Action Conference that the coronavirus was the hoax of the day.

Do you agree with Donald Trump's Chief of Staff Mulvaney that the coronavirus is the hoax of the day?

Secretary POMPEO. The State Department is doing everything it can to protect American citizens around the world from the coronavirus.

Mr. LIEU. Do you believe that coronavirus is the hoax of the day?

Secretary POMPEO. I am not going to comment on what others are saying.

Mr. LIEU. Just a yes or not. I am just asking you, do you believe the coronavirus is a hoax?

Secretary POMPEO. I am just telling you what the Secretary of State is doing.

Mr. LIEU. Do you believe the coronavirus is a hoax?

Secretary POMPEO. We are working to keep people safe.

Mr. LIEU. You cannot even answer that question?

Secretary POMPEO. Yes. I mean——

Mr. LIEU. It is not even a gotcha question. Do you believe the coronavirus is a hoax.

Secretary POMPEO. It is a gotcha moment. It is not useful.

Mr. LIEU. Is the coronavirus a hoax? Can you just answer that question?

Secretary POMPEO. We are taking it seriously. This is a serious—

Mr. LIEU. All right. Are you—at 12:15 today, are you, in fact, yourself speaking at CPAC? At 12:15 today, are you speaking at CPAC?

Secretary POMPEO. Yes, I am. I am planning—

Mr. LIEU. All right. So you could only give 2 hours to this bipartisan group of Members of Congress, and instead of answering questions on life-and-death issues from a bipartisan group of America's Representatives, you are going to go talk to a special interest group.

Secretary POMPEO. Yes.

Mr. LIEU. You, sir, represent all Americans, not a special interest group. It is shameful you cannot even answer basic questions.

I yield back.

Chairman ENGEL. The gentleman's time has expired.

Mr. MAST.

Mr. MAST. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The first question that I would offer—I would offer to yield you 10 seconds, Mr. Chairman. Was it appropriate for Ms. Lowenthal to offer information from a classified setting?

Chairman ENGEL. Who?

Mr. LEVIN. Ms. Lowenthal?

Mr. MAST. Was it appropriate—I did not yield you any time, ma'am.

Mr. Chairman—

Ms. SPANBERGER. That is kind of—

Chairman ENGEL. I think—I think we have—I do not decide on the appropriateness of it. Every Member of Congress has a right to say whatever they feel they need to.

Mr. MAST. I will be asking that the Ethics Committee determine whether that was appropriate for her to offer information from a classified setting.

Now, I want to talk about some important points that were made in the very beginning of this hearing.

The first comment from the other side today was how can we offer—how can we make sure that we offer Iran aid? From Mr. Cicilline, can we make sure, can we ensure that we can offer aid over to Iran? That was the first question that came out of this committee.

Second comment from the other side—

Ms. SPANBERGER. Would the gentleman yield?

Mr. MAST. No, I will not.

Second question that came out was this. Offering that you should spend more time here and that Secretary Clinton spent 11 hours here. Wow, we should give her a hand of congratulations. Not even 1 hour for every hour that she allowed our men and women overseas to be killed without dispatching any QRF, any quick response force. Congratulations for that.

I want to ask a couple questions here.

It does make sense to me that many on the other side are upset about killing somebody who was attacking our embassy. That is consistent with not defending Benghazi. That would be consistent.

So I want to ask here, are any of my colleagues—I am willing to offer time for this—who have been chastising the President, who keep saying over and over and over that we are less safe because of killing Soleimani, willing to say right now—I will offer you time—that you wish Soleimani was still alive?

I am willing to yield you time. You said we are less safe. I am willing to yield you time if you want to say you wish to see Soleimani was still alive.

Mr. CICILLINE. I am happy to answer your question. Of course we think the American——

Mr. MAST. I did not yield you time yet. If you want to ask me——

Mr. CICILLINE. Well, you said you want to yield time. Do you want an answer or not?

Mr. MAST. Would you like to ask me if I would yield you a moment?

Mr. CICILLINE. Yes. Happy to answer your question.

Mr. MAST. I would yield you a moment.

Mr. CICILLINE. We believe the principal responsibility of the President of the United States is keep the American people safe. We believe this action ultimately has made us less safe.

Mr. MAST. So do you want Soleimani still alive?

Mr. CICILLINE. Of course not. Nobody on this side wants Soleimani alive. You know better than that. Shame on you for even asking that question.

Mr. MAST. Everybody says that we are less safe.

Mr. CICILLINE. And shame on you for suggesting——

Mr. MAST. I reclaim my time.

Mr. CICILLINE [continuing]. We are not——

Mr. MAST. I reclaim my time.

Mr. CICILLINE [continuing]. Concerned about the safety of our embassies.

Mr. MAST. I reclaim my time.

Mr. CICILLINE. You know better than that.

Mr. MAST. I reclaim my time.

Ms. SPANBERGER. Will the gentleman yield? Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. MAST. I will offer a moment of time.

Ms. SPANBERGER. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. MAST. Would you like to offer that you wish Soleimani was still alive? I will yield time——

Ms. SPANBERGER. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. MAST [continuing]. If you would like to offer it.

Ms. SPANBERGER. Yes. I am Congresswoman Spanberger from Virginia.

Mr. MAST. I am sorry. I apologize for stating you incorrectly.

Ms. SPANBERGER. And, referencing what you stated earlier, the point of it was there was no evidence given in the classified briefing, none. None of imminence. None. And as a former CIA case officer, I am very happy that Soleimani is dead. So we need to have——

Mr. MAST. I reclaim my time again.

Ms. SPANBERGER [continuing]. A strategy.

Mr. MAST. I will reclaim my time.

Ms. SPANBERGER. And we need to ensure that we are protecting the American people.

Mr. MAST. I reclaim my time.

Ms. SPANBERGER. And those are the focuses of our questions to the Secretary today.

Chairman ENGEL. Everyone yield, please. Everyone yield. The gentleman reclaims his time.

Mr. MAST. Again, it was said no less than 10 times, we are less safe, we are less safe, we are less safe because Soleimani was killed. It was said over and over here.

So it is a simple question: Do you wish he was still alive? I will still hold on for another moment here if anybody wants to offer they wish he was still alive.

Ms. SPANBERGER. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. MAST. I am not yielding you any more time, no. You have used up enough. Thank you.

Chairman ENGEL. We will try to get the gentlewoman—

Mr. MAST. I have another question.

Chairman ENGEL. It is his time now.

Mr. MAST. At this point, would any of my colleagues like to offer this? At what point would you say that Iran has gone too far? I am willing to offer time for that. When can you say Iran has crossed a red line?

I will sit here and wait.

Ms. SPANBERGER. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. MAST. Absolutely, if you want to offer when Iran goes too far for you, please.

Ms. SPANBERGER. Well—

Mr. MAST. But if not, I will reclaim my time.

Ms. SPANBERGER. The question was when Iran crossed a red line, and so I am asking, in response, I would like you to first define what a redline is. What red line?

Mr. MAST. I am asking what is your red line. When, for you, does Iran go too far that it justifies killing Soleimani or taking up some other sort of action against Iran? What is your red line? For any of my colleagues over here—

Ms. SPANBERGER. Iran went too far decades ago, but the question is whether or not there is authorization for this particular strike.

Mr. MAST. Which? When we go out there and label somebody a designated terrorist, when we put that wanted sign on their back, there is justification for a strike. Just as if—

Ms. SPANBERGER. That is a sanctions designation. That has nothing to do with use of force.

Mr. MAST. I reclaim my time, ma'am. I am reclaiming my time.

Just as if his now replacement, Mr. Esmail Ghaani, he has a wanted poster on his back, being the head of a designated terrorist organization.

So would anybody else care to offer that they have a red line for actions of Iranian aggression?

In my last couple seconds, I will offer this. I heard—I heard one response for a red line of Iranian aggression. That leads me to believe there are no red lines for many of my colleagues for Iranian aggression.

Chairman ENGEL. The gentleman's time has expired.

Mr. MAST. That should be concerning.

Chairman ENGEL. Mr. Deutch.

Mr. DEUTCH. No, I will pass, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman ENGEL. Mr. Trone.

Mr. TRONE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Eleven hours of testimony by Secretary Clinton on Benghazi. Two hours—2—by Secretary Pompeo on Iran. Arrogance. Arrogance.

Mr. Pompeo, I think the way the administration has handled Iran policy in recent months explains why so many of us are concerned about the response to coronavirus.

If the administration is not going to tell the truth about the alleged imminent threat to our people in our embassies, why should the American people have the confidence in the statements about the threat this disease poses?

If the administration hides the fact that the number of servicemembers who are injured in an attack, how can we know the numbers about diagnosis and quarantines are accurate?

When the administration fires or sidelines people like Ambassador Yovanovitch, Lieutenant Colonel Vindman, DNI Maguire, or this week the HHS whistleblower who is being targeted just because they told the truth, should we believe what you tell us about another looming crisis?

The American people are scared, sir. My constituents are scared. And the administration's track record of incompetence in dealing with crisis does not inspire confidence. And to make it worse, the President has tried to slash the personnel and programs that can make us better equipped to grapple with a global health crisis. It is reckless.

So we end up with mixed messages, muddled information, confusion. It is really the last thing we want in this situation.

We need to do better. The American people clearly deserve better.

I yield to Mr. Allred.

Mr. ALLRED. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

I am going to make a statement. I am not going to ask you any questions, Mr. Pompeo.

No one disputes that Soleimani was a dangerous, hardened terrorist, and no one over here mourns his death. I know that some would prefer to take a simple path, to call hard-fought negotiations to cap Iran's nuclear program that is now back on, as has been evidenced today, appeasement, a term with, we know, historic freight, or declare an unauthorized strike to kill one of Iran's most senior generals the same as taking out any other terrorist, as if there are not geopolitical consequences at stake.

But as a member of this committee it is our job to ask: And then what? Because foreign policy and the actions taken on the global stage cannot be shortsighted, they have to consider what comes next.

What happened after the strike was a series of actions that were both predictable and hurt the long-term national security interests of the United States, similar to some of the impulsive decisions we have seen from this administration, such as turning our backs on

the Kurds after a phone call, or inviting the Taliban to Camp David on the week of 9/11.

And now we face the possibility of a historic global pandemic led by a President and an administration that have shown they are incapable of thinking about what happens next.

This administration has left the State Department and key positions vacant, has left the National Security Council and the CDC with key positions vacant, and of course, as my colleagues have pointed out, sought to slash critical funding.

Governing and leading the world requires stable leadership. The world looks to us for that leadership. They watch us. They fear our military, but more than that, they respect our values and how we lead.

Government by chaos makes us less safe and the world less safe. I hope and pray for our great country that we will get our act together as we face this coronavirus, and I will work with this administration to do everything I can to protect my constituents and our great country.

I hope that you will in the future give this committee the time that it deserves to discuss these issues. The American people want to know why we took this strike, what went into it, what the explanation is. There has been no debate. We need to talk about the authorizations for such actions. That is our role in a democracy, and I encourage you to give us the time to have that discussion.

I yield back.

Chairman ENGEL. Okay. The gentleman yields back.

Mr. Wright.

Mr. WRIGHT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And, Mr. Secretary, thank you for being here today.

As you have seen, Ringling Brothers has nothing on this committee. Rarely have I seen adults behave in such a despicable and rude manner as they have today, including employing bullying tactics, which I think is reprehensible.

I want you to know that I think you are doing an outstanding job and that the United States of America and the world are safer because you are the Secretary of State.

I have a real simple question, and then I am going to yield, because we are about out of time for the committee, and it has to do with the protesters in Iran. And realizing the limitations that we have to affect things internally, do you believe we are doing everything we can to support those protesters? Is there anything Congress can do that would help the protesters in Iran?

Secretary POMPEO. So we have taken a very different approach with respect to the protesters than the previous administration did. We are doing all the things that we have in our toolkit. This is what we do in countries where people are demanding freedom, liberty. They want simple, basic human rights that have been denied them for so long inside the Islamic Republic of Iran.

We saw what happens with this fraudulent election that not only did not let people run, but then the Iranian people chose not to vote as well. They knew it was a fraud, a joke, that it was not a real election.

I am happy also to share with you in another setting all of the things that the administration is doing to try to create an environ-

ment that the Iranian protesters can, at the very least, not be harmed.

And then our effort, our effort more broadly even than just Iran, throughout the Middle East, is aimed at standing up a free and sovereign Iraq, a Lebanon that is not suffering under the hands and control of Hezbollah. Same thing with the Islamic Republic of Iran. It is a comprehensive strategic approach to the region, and, if we get it right, the people of that region will be better off and America will be more secure.

Mr. WRIGHT. Right. Thank you.

And I am going to yield the remainder of my time to Mr. Burchett.

Mr. BURCHETT. Thank you, sir. Thank you, Mr. Wright. I appreciate that.

And thank you, sir, for being here.

And I have not been in Congress long enough to be bitter or shout out at you or anything to, you know, cause any great attention to myself.

Secretary POMPEO. You will learn quickly.

Mr. BURCHETT. Yes. Well, I was kind of hoping I would so I could get more TV time, and I have not—nobody has even taken my picture, as you can see. So I will just keep—thank you, brother. I appreciate that. I will put you on my Christmas card list.

But since we took out Soleimani have Iran's actions changed any that you have seen? I suspect they walk out every morning and look up in the sky.

Secretary POMPEO. Yes.

Mr. BURCHETT. But besides that.

Secretary POMPEO. So the answer is—the answer is yes, but it is much more complicated than that. There is no single act that you can stare at independently and say that this was the one variable that moved the entire strategic puzzle. It is more comprehensive. It is bigger than that. This is just one element of the efforts that we have undertaken.

So to say that the responses are—to draw a correlation like that I want to be very cautious about.

Mr. WRIGHT. More of a long-term thing. So thank you for that.

How has the administration's maximum pressure campaign affected Iran's ability to fund Hezbollah?

Secretary POMPEO. You can see it in a classified setting. We are happy to share the actual data. But there are hard decisions being made, difficult decisions about whether you should make payroll for Hezbollah, how big a Shia militia can you support inside of Iraq, should you work on your external assassination campaign in Europe, should you underwrite malign activity in Afghanistan.

Finite resources, that was referenced earlier, they were shipping roughly somewhere between 2.7 and 2.9 million barrels per day of crude oil at closer to market prices. Today, that number is somewhere between a quarter million and 300,000 barrels a day, and they are getting deeply discounted or having to ship it to Syria in exchange for their work on the ground there.

This has put enormous constraints on the regime and its ability to foment terror around the world. And America is safer. Israel is safer as well.

Mr. WRIGHT. Thank you.

What can be done to mend the rift between the Gulf countries to make the GCC an effective local deterrent against Iran?

Secretary POMPEO. We are encouraging all the Gulf States to join us in this effort. They all see the threat to a nation, see the threat from the Islamic Republic of Iran. Disputes amongst them make that more difficult to prosecute effectively, and we hope they will get this figured out.

Mr. WRIGHT. All right.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back the remainder of my time.

Chairman ENGEL. Thank you. The gentleman yields back.

We are just about run out of time. Let me say two things.

First of all, Mr. Secretary, we hope you will come back soon. We hope you will give us more time when you come back. I think you can sense the frustration on this side of the aisle that we only had you for 2 hours. There is a lot more time we could have done. I have been on this committee for over 30 years, and most Secretaries give us 3 or 4 hours when they come, and we hope we can get back to that as well.

That is the frustration on this side, that we did not feel that we were able to get into a lot of topics that we think are necessary to discuss with the Secretary of State.

But I do want to thank you for coming here and let you know that you are always welcome. Whenever you want to come to discuss matters with us, we are always happy to have you.

Let me ask—so thank you, and safe travels to wherever you are going.

Before I adjourn the committee, I would ask everyone to please keep their seats while the Secretary departs. So we can do that now.

The committee stands adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 10:31 a.m., the committee was adjourned.]

APPENDIX

FULL COMMITTEE HEARING NOTICE
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6128

Eliot L. Engel (D-NY), Chairman

February 28, 2020

TO: MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

You are respectfully requested to attend an OPEN hearing of the Committee on Foreign Affairs to be held in Room 2172 of the Rayburn House Office Building (and available live on the Committee website at <https://foreignaffairs.house.gov/>):

DATE: Friday, February 28, 2020

TIME: 8:30 a.m.

SUBJECT: Evaluating the Trump Administration's Policies on Iran, Iraq and the Use of Force

WITNESS: The Honorable Michael R. Pompeo
Secretary
United States Department of State

By Direction of the Chairman

The Committee on Foreign Affairs seeks to make its facilities accessible to persons with disabilities. If you are in need of special accommodations, please call 202/225-5021 at least four business days in advance of the event, whenever practicable. Questions with regard to special accommodations in general (including availability of Committee materials in alternative formats and assistive listening devices) may be directed to the Committee.

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
MINUTES OF FULL COMMITTEE HEARING

Day Friday Date 02/28/2020 Room 2172 RHOB

Starting Time 8:35 a.m. Ending Time 10:30 a.m.

Recesses 0 (____ to ____) (____ to ____) (____ to ____) (____ to ____) (____ to ____) (____ to ____)

Presiding Member(s)

Chairman Eliot L. Engel

Check all of the following that apply:

Open Session ☒

Electronically Recorded (taped) ☒

Executive (closed) Session ☐

Stenographic Record ☒

Televised ☒

TITLE OF HEARING:

Evaluating the Trump Administration's Policies on Iran, Iraq and the Use of Force

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

See attached.

NON-COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

HEARING WITNESSES: Same as meeting notice attached? Yes ☒ No

(If "no", please list below and include title, agency, department, or organization.)

STATEMENTS FOR THE RECORD: *(List any statements submitted for the record.)*

IFR - Curtis

QFR - Castro, Curtis

TIME SCHEDULED TO RECONVENE _____

or

TIME ADJOURNED 10:30 a.m.


Full Committee Hearing Coordinator

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

FULL COMMITTEE ATTENDANCE

<i>PRESENT</i>	<i>MEMBER</i>
X	Eliot L. Engel, NY
X	Brad Sherman, CA
X	Gregory W. Meeks, NY
	Albio Sires, NJ
X	Gerald E. Connolly, VA
X	Theodore E. Deutch, FL
X	Karen Bass, CA
X	William Keating, MA
X	David Cicilline, RI
X	Ami Bera, CA
X	Joaquin Castro, TX
X	Dina Titus, NV
X	Adriano Espaillat, NY
X	Ted Lieu, CA
X	Susan Wild, PA
X	Dean Phillips, MN
X	Ilhan Omar, MN
X	Colin Allred, TX
X	Andy Levin, MI
X	Abigail Spanberger, VA
X	Chrissy Houlahan, PA
X	Tom Malinowski, NJ
X	David Trone, MD
X	Jim Costa, CA
X	Juan Vargas, CA
	Vicente Gonzalez, TX

<i>PRESENT</i>	<i>MEMBER</i>
X	Michael T. McCaul, TX
X	Christopher H. Smith, NJ
X	Steve Chabot, OH
	Joe Wilson, SC
X	Scott Perry, PA
X	Ted Yoho, FL
X	Adam Kinzinger, IL
X	Lee Zeldin, NY
	James Sensenbrenner, Jr., WI
X	Ann Wagner, MO
X	Brian J. Mast, FL
	Francis Rooney, FL
X	Brian K. Fitzpatrick, PA
X	John Curtis, UT
X	Ken Buck, CO
X	Ron Wright, TX
X	Guy Reschenthaler, PA
X	Tim Burchett, TN
X	Greg Pence, IN
X	Steve Watkins, KS
X	Michael Guest, MS

LETTER

Iranian people must forge a path to a constitutional democracy

The Islamic Republic of Iran is a failed state

By Khosrow B. Semnani and Amir Soltani | Monday, February 24, 2020

<https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2020/feb/24/iranian-people-must-forge-a-path-to-a-constitution/>

ANALYSIS/OPINION:

In response to President Trump's escalation of tensions with Iran, the Senate voted on Feb. 13 to require the president to seek congressional authorization for military action against Iran. Mr. Trump himself has claimed that he wants a better Iran nuclear deal — not a war with Iran. But his demands that Iran permanently curb its nuclear ambitions, restrict its ballistic missile program and stop destabilizing the region have fallen on deaf ears. So have his reassurances that the United States does not seek regime change.

What then is the way out of the Iran crisis? The Iran nuclear deal is dead. An Iran war is out of the question. And a more comprehensive and complex agreement is impossible to envision, secure and enforce.

With U.S. presidential elections around the corner, Iran's supreme leader is in no rush to boost Mr. Trump's electoral prospects. This was reinforced in a meeting last year between Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Mr. Khamenei stated, "I don't regard Trump as deserving any exchange of messages and have no response for him and will give no response." He further stated, "What Trump says — that he is not after regime change — is a lie. For, if he could do so, he would. However, he is not capable of doing it."

From the hostage crisis to the nuclear crisis today, Iran's revolutionary clerics have used foreign policy — enmity with the United States and hatred toward Israel — as the key to survival at home. The price of their foreign policy — the tab for fundamentalism, tyranny, corruption and terrorism — has stunted Iran's growth, decimated its economy and shattered Iran's security. That formula has ceased to work.

After 40 years of anti-Americanism, Iran's revolutionary clerics — boosted by their apologists from liberals like Jimmy Carter to socialists like Bernie Sanders — can no longer scapegoat the late shah of Iran, let alone fool the Iranian people with a "Blame America First" strategy. The nuclear crisis is a symptom of a theocracy in meltdown. The cause of the crisis is the theocracy's democracy deficit wherein a kleptocracy plunders Iran's resources behind the veil of religion.

Today, the need for structural change in Iran is not a matter of theory, but a practical imperative — a matter of national survival and, one might add, the key to reframing American foreign policy in the region.

The rift between state, religion and society has never been greater. The schisms within Iran's religious establishment and the factional divisions among Iran's political oligarchs have exposed a massive crisis of legitimacy. The promise of reform from within has collapsed. Parliamentary and presidential elections are rigged to silence the people and snuff out the truth. The system deflects blame for its defects on others and does so in the face of compounding political, military and economic crises. Look no further than the lies surrounding Iran's recent downing of a Ukrainian airliner.

The human toll of the regime's ideology and policies inside Iran is unfathomable — oil exports are almost zero. The economy, already decimated under Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, is contracting at a 9.5 percent annual rate, according to the IMF. Iran's Statistical Center has predicted a 50 percent rise in prices in 2019 compared to the previous year. Prices for daily consumer items have risen over 80 percent. In a country where the monthly minimum wage is \$110, workers at factories across Iran are cheated out of their salary and then brutalized for revolting against injustice. Forty percent of university graduates are unemployed. Addiction, depression, divorce and suicide are fraying Iran's social fabric as never before. To divine the Islamic Republic's future, look no further than the ayatollah's shoot-to-kill policy — a response to nationwide protests against a three-fold spike in gasoline prices last November.

Like Venezuela, the Islamic Republic of Iran is a failed state.

The credit for that failure does not go to Mr. Trump. It goes to the ayatollah. He is waging the real war on the Iranian people.

This is not the moment for Iran policy to become hostage to partisan bickering. Democrats and Republicans deserve credit for reducing the risks of an Iran war. They have made it harder for the ayatollah to escalate the nuclear and regional crisis to provoke the United States into a war. But Mr. Trump and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo also deserve credit for rejecting an Iran deal that fails to contain the regime's regional and military interventions. It is reckless to leave America and its allies — including the Iranian people — hostage to an ideological threat. With millions of Iranians boycotting parliamentary elections last Friday and millions more likely to boycott presidential elections in 2021, Iran's revolutionaries — reformists and hardliners — stand stripped of democratic legitimacy and religious sanctity.

Change is coming to Iran as surely as it did to the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe and South Africa. Our fixation on Iran's nuclear program should not blind us to tectonic, demographic, political and economic shifts that signal the end of clerical rule in Iran.

The passion driving the Iranian people forward on their path to a constitutional democracy has deep roots dating to 1906. The revolution of 1979 — Khomeini's religious coup — is a detour, not the destination.

Instead of being provoked into an Iran war or seeking a nuclear deal premised on the sacrifice of democracy and human rights in the crucible of fundamentalism, let us stand by the Iranian people. Their triumph over an ayatollah who equates the fundamentals of religion with tyranny and terrorism will not only break the nuclear impasse, it will advance our ideals and interests by ushering in an era of freedom, prosperity and security across the region.

Instead of embracing fear and pessimism, let us summon our spirit to secure a future worthy of our great democracy — an Iranian Spring.

• *Khosrow B. Semnani is an Iranian-American industrialist, community leader and philanthropist. He is the author of "Where is My Oil? Corruption in Iran's Oil and Gas Sector."*
Amir Soltani, a human rights activist, is the author of "Zahra's Paradise," an award-winning graphic novel on Iran's 2009 protests.

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

Questions for the Record from Representative Castro
“Evaluating the Trump Administration’s Policies on Iran, Iraq and the Use of Force”
February 28, 2020

Question:

“When asked by Congressman Malinowski if you would resist, in substance, White House comments that Executive Branch personnel who do not support Trump policies should no longer serve in the Executive Branch, you did not provide a direct answer. Instead, you provided a pat response that you would ensure that the State Department continues to serve as the leading diplomatic force for the United States. Given your tepid defense of former Ambassador Marie Yovanovitch during the recent controversy surrounding U.S. foreign assistance to the Ukraine, your assurances are not convincing.

What steps has the State Department taken since Ambassador Yovanovitch’s public testimony to guard against retribution for personnel expressing opinions and insights that may differ in nature than the Administration’s?”

Answer:

Secretary Pompeo: Every Ambassador serves at the pleasure of the President of the United States.

Question:

“Under what circumstances, according to the State Department’s interpretation, does the Authorization of Use of Military Force Against Iraq Resolution of 2002 (Public Law 107-243) authorize war against the Iranian government and its forces?”

Answer:

Secretary Pompeo: While I cannot comment on hypotheticals, it is clear that the President has the constitutional authority to deploy military force in certain circumstances, but the Constitution reserves to Congress the power to declare war. The Administration remains committed to keeping Congress informed about these important matters.

Question:

“What foreign leaders or government officials did you or senior officials at the State Department speak to regarding the strike against Qassem Soleimani before providing notice to the House Foreign Affairs Committee and other members of Congress?”

Answer:

Secretary Pompeo: As a general principle, the Department maintains contact with allies and partners on matters that implicate their interests or bilateral relationships. I am not going to comment on any private diplomatic discussions.

Question:

“Do you believe that “traumatic brain injury” is a serious medical condition?”

Answer:

Secretary Pompeo: If your question is referring to the seriousness of injuries sustained by U.S. personnel due to Iran’s January 7 attack on Ain Al-Assad Airbase, I would refer you to medical experts in the Department of Defense.

Question:

“I have serious concerns that the application of ‘snapback’ UN sanctions and other restrictions lifted by UNSCR2231 would jeopardize our relationship with our European allies and further undermine the prospect of resuming multilateral or bilateral diplomatic efforts with Iran.

What discussions have you had with our European allies on the issue of ‘snapback’ under UNSCR2231?

What conversations have you had with Russia and China, or what other assessments have you conducted, regarding the likely effect of unilateral UN snapback under UNSCR2231 on potential arms sales to Iran, either of weapons systems covered by the arms embargo or systems not covered by the embargo, such as air defense systems?

On the day President Trump announced withdrawal from the JCPOA, then-National Security Adviser John Bolton explained “We are not using the provisions of UNSC 2231 because we are out of the deal.” Not as a legal matter but as a policy matter, what factors have led you to reconsider this conclusion?”

Answer:

Secretary Pompeo: European allies including the United Kingdom, France, and Germany share our concern regarding Iran’s nuclear program and the destabilizing effect of Iran’s regional activities. My team and I continue to engage with our allies and partners on both our broader Iran strategy as well as our specific efforts to extend the UN arms embargo on Iran, an effort that has broad bipartisan support. We have been clear with both our European allies and other members of the UN Security Council that while we would prefer to extend the UN arms embargo on Iran through a new UN Security Council resolution, if those efforts fail, all options remain on the table, including a U.S.-initiated snapback of all UN sanctions.

Regarding arms sales from Russia and China, Russia has publicly stated their interest and intention to pursue weapons contracts with Iran should the UN arms embargo not be extended. I would refer you to the intelligence community regarding the potential for specific arms sales to Iran from Russia or China.

Questions for the Record from Representative Curtis
“Evaluating the Trump Administration’s Policies on Iran, Iraq and the Use of Force”
February 28, 2020

Question:

“Earlier this week, my constituents, Khosrow Semnani and Amir Soltani, published an op-ed in the Washington Times entitled, “Iranian people must forge a path to a constitutional democracy.”

This op-ed has been inserted into the record.

As we witness the war the Ayatollah is waging from within, the United States must do more than provide words of assurance that we stand with the Iranian people. Mr. Secretary, how do we turn words into action—to truly show our support?”

Answer:

Secretary Pompeo: We will continue to take concrete action to support the Iranian people, the longest suffering victims of the Iranian regime. We have sanctioned several senior Iranian officials for their human rights abuses against their own people. We condemned and exposed the regime’s killing of as many as 1,500 of its own citizens in November 2019 and have urged other nations to join us in holding Iran accountable for these killings. We will continue to hold those responsible accountable, and have also taken a number of steps to help Iranians access the internet and bypass the regime’s efforts to hide its abuses by censoring information and disrupting internet access. Meanwhile, our sanctions contain broad authorizations for the export to Iran of food, medicine, medical devices, and agricultural products, which benefit the Iranian people. Through support to human rights and civil society groups, our campaign of maximum pressure, and many other actions, we remain committed to standing with the Iranian people and exposing the regime’s brutality and lack of democratic legitimacy.

Question:

“With millions of Iranians boycotting parliamentary elections, what can we do to ensure free and fair elections that reflect the will and aspirations of the Iranian people?”

Answer:

Secretary Pompeo: Iran’s Supreme Leader uses an unelected 12-member Guardian Council to maintain effective control over Iranian politics and ensure that political candidates not fully aligned with his views cannot run for political office, thereby depriving Iranian citizens of their right to free and fair elections. The Iranian people know better than to believe the regime’s false façade of democracy, and this is why a record number of Iranians stayed home this year rather than confer legitimacy on a rigged process. We stood with the Iranian people throughout this process, amplifying their voices in how the election lacked legitimacy. We also worked with the Treasury Department to sanction Guardian Council members such as Ahmad Jannati who prevent the Iranian people from freely choosing their leaders.