

SENATOR PATRICK LEAHY
HEARING ON FISCAL YEAR 2013 BUDGET REQUEST
FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE AND FOREIGN OPERATIONS
FEBRUARY 28, 2012

Welcome, Madam Secretary. We appreciate that this is your first appearance before Congress on the President's fiscal year 2013 budget request for the Department of State and Foreign Operations.

Before we begin I would like to note that we are missing a member of the Subcommittee today, Senator Mark Kirk. We are thinking of Senator Kirk and wish him the best for a speedy recovery.

The request for the Department of State and Foreign Operations totals \$54.7 billion which is a 2.6 percent increase over last year. However, the increases are mostly limited to a few areas. Funding for the majority of programs is frozen at current levels, and there are few new initiatives.

We live in an increasingly competitive and dangerous world. China's growing military power and global influence pose major challenges and opportunities for the United States, as it does for many countries, and I am concerned that we may not be responding to those challenges as vigorously as we should.

When you testified before this subcommittee a year ago the Arab Spring was just starting and we were witnessing the power of citizens to force their governments to begin a transition to democracy and the protection of fundamental freedoms.

A year later, Syria is devolving further and further into civil war. The Egyptian military and Mubarak holdovers are trying to silence those who are working for democracy and human rights.

The Government of Bahrain continues to use force against civilians who are demonstrating peacefully, and it is increasingly difficult to predict what is going to emerge from the growing chaos in Libya and Yemen.

While our intelligence agencies were caught off guard by the dramatic changes in the Middle East and North Africa, on the whole I believe the State Department's response has been commendable. The question is where we go from here and what your intentions are for your proposed Middle East and North Africa Incentive Fund.

In the midst of all this turmoil and the growing challenges in East Asia and our own hemisphere, the Department continues to focus resources -- disproportionately, in my view -- on Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan.

I believe history will show that our ambitions in Afghanistan and Iraq were naïve and enormously wasteful, and that we should scale back our costs in both countries to amounts that can be justified and sustained.

Despite many attempts and billions of dollars over the years, it is sobering how little progress we have made in building a positive, stable relationship with the people of Pakistan, not to mention its military and civilian leadership. Yet your budget proposes more of the same. It is understandable that some consider it budgeting by inertia. Perhaps that is overly pessimistic.

Yesterday I returned from Haiti and Colombia where there has been notable progress. President Martelly and President Santos deserve our strong, if not unconditional, support. I also visited Cuba whose government and a vocal but small population of Cuban-Americans are, in my view, the primary beneficiaries of our misguided embargo.

I also want you to know that my delegation received invaluable help from our Ambassadors and their staffs in each of the countries we visited. They gave us excellent advice and support.

Madam Secretary, like last year, we are faced with an extremely difficult budget environment. We will almost certainly receive an allocation that is below the amount requested by the President, and getting a bill to his desk will require difficult choices.

But for as long as I have held the gavel of this subcommittee we have functioned in a bipartisan, cooperative manner. We also work that way with our House counterparts. Every detail of what we recommend is open to scrutiny and debate.

I want to thank Senator Graham for being such an active and constructive partner, and the other Members here. We have a lot of work ahead of us.

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