

Under Secretary Kennedy, I join Chairwoman Granger in welcoming you this morning. As this is our first hearing of the year, I want to thank Chairwoman Granger for her leadership during the last Congress. I too want to welcome the new and returning members to this great Subcommittee.

I also want to welcome my full committee chairman, Mr. Rogers-himself a former chairman with jurisdiction over embassy operations. Chairwoman Granger, Chairman Rogers, I look forward to working with you in the same bipartisan fashion that this subcommittee has in the past as we take on the challenges of this year.

Throughout the world, U.S. diplomatic and development professionals play a critical role in protecting our national security, promoting peace, stability, and economic growth, and maintaining America's global leadership. This work is not without risk.

The men and women who serve in these positions know that in order to be most effective in their jobs, they have to leave embassy compounds and office buildings and get out into the communities in which they work. Ambassador Chris Stevens knew this, and by all accounts his contacts and connections among the people of Libya were what made him so effective as a representative of our government.

Our challenge, which I hope you will discuss in detail today, is how to strike the right balance between mission objectives and evolving security environments: How do we provide the brave men and women who serve overseas with the protection they need, while still allowing them the freedom to do their jobs?

We cannot retreat from dangerous places or allow security threats to paralyze us into a bunker mentality, nor can we allow our diplomats and development professionals to fall victim to those who wish to do them harm. I hope today's discussion will shed some light on how to address these serious challenges.

I also want to note that if sequestration goes into effect, the cut to embassy security and protection of personnel will be \$168 million. At a time of crisis around the world – from Syria to

West Africa to Afghanistan – we cannot allow political gamesmanship to endanger our men and women on the front lines.

Very simply, a budget cut of this magnitude will take a toll on the ability of the State Department and USAID to execute our vital national security, diplomacy, and development mission.

Thank you again, and I look forward to your testimony.