

**Assistant Secretary of State R. Clarke Cooper
Political-Military Affairs**

Defense Writers Group

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DWG: Assistant Secretary Cooper, thank you so much for taking time out of your busy schedule to talk to us today.

We're on the record but we don't allow streaming or broadcasting or anything like that. We want to have a conversation and learn things about what you think and what you do.

Why don't I start by asking, if I may, you've been in office what, 120 days or so. What do you see as having been up until now the priorities of the administration in the Political-Military Bureau area? What's the bureau doing? How is it different from what the bureau may have been doing under previous administrations? And what are your goals for the next period of time?

A/S Cooper: We'll start with the priorities and the alignment of where we are, how we are making sure that Trump administration priorities are actually serviced and fulfilled and implemented, not just through the Department of State, but also through our interagency colleagues. We're the policy drivers. We have that primacy in directing policy on security assistance, on security cooperation and we have a number of implementing partners in the interagency, particularly the Department of Defense.

So when we're talking about priorities, if we start with the National Security Strategy, that is a very clear guide not only for the Political-Military Affairs Bureau, but for the entire national security enterprise as to where we are going, where we're prioritizing resources, where we're prioritizing equities on foreign policy, national security. Starting with ensuring that our national security interests, our equities, our interests are advancing as well economic security. They are not

Cooper - 9/12/19

mutually exclusive. One can achieve peace through strength by bolstering partners, enabling partners to be able to support their own sovereignty, their own territorial integrity, but at the same time carry the water or also prosecute on our behalf interests in our security. So there's that investment aspect of our partners.

With that is bolstering and enabling industry and innovation at the same time. So when we talk about industry we're not just limiting it to the defense industry, even though that is the primary focus for the Political-Military Affairs Bureau. When we're talking about economic security it's much broader.

But for our conversation, what is incumbent upon PM is ensuring that the operational space, either be it regulatory reform or be it reform of just internal processes in our bureau, in the interagency, enable our industries to have a prime place in a very competitive marketplace, in a very competitive space right now on the globe.

We also want to ensure that we are fostering growth in the work force. So if you break down how jobs are tied to defense industries, one could scale it at 1.7 million, just defense industry associated; but if one opens up that aperture, opens up that definition to include aerospace, now we're talking 2.5 million jobs.

So again, making it amenable for industry to be able to be the prime or the preferred partner, this ties into very much a long-term proposition beyond a sale. The United States has a very lengthy, healthy history of being the preferred partner and provider of not just hardware, but also of security assistance and that security relationship.

So when we're talking about defense trade and defense technology, with that comes security assistance, and in that form it can be a type of an incentive. This reaches back to the National Security Strategy again. If we're looking at the

Cooper - 9/12/19

revisionist powers, particularly China and Russia, there's necessity to meet these near peer adversaries and counter any kind of encroachment not only on our interest, but any kind of degradation or encroachment on our partners and their interests.

What we want to be able to do is ensure that in these partnerships not just a particular sale, but that there's a long-term investment, and this goes with sustainment. This is also training. This is capacity building. This is why we're working to better align or better net our security assistance accounts with sales.

There's a history of that, there's precedence for that. We could do better at that, so this would require more of an internal action or reform, not requiring legislative relief or legal reform. This is more about applying interagency analysis and rigor and better data management as to how we best align our security assistance with sales so that we get the biggest bang for the buck, but ensure that our partners are getting a more fulsome partnership or more fulsome return on their purchase.

So priorities. That ties very much into operability and burden sharing with partners.

Interoperability has been mostly tied specifically to NATO member states. It is not limited to NATO member states. If we're looking at former Soviet Union states or FSUs, or other stats, or partners that have had historic or legacy sustainment lines say with Russia, within the Soviet Union, there's opportunity there.

Some of these states actually are seeking that partnership, aggressively seeking that partnership with us. Some other states, I would say there's a symbiosis of us aggressively seeking each other out.

This is where security assistance accounts help amplify or help prioritize partnership that were wanting to grow.

Cooper - 9/12/19

On the other side of the world if we look at the Indo-Pacific strategy and our intent to ensure that there's a free and open Indo-Pacific region, that is another area where we're wanting to prioritize and incentivize our security partnerships.

So again, I'm speaking broadly. But if one is looking at the Indo-Pacific strategy and how we've aligned security assistance accounts and resources, and if one's looking at what we're doing with particular accounts like the [CRIP], the countering Russian aggression; and BRIP which is a European incentive account, those are two I would say general areas where we're addressing the near peer adversaries. So if we want the National Security Strategy in alignment with sales, in alignment with security assistance, those are two broad areas. If you open up beyond that and we look at how we're in a very asymmetric environment and not limited to geographic or contiguous states to China or Russia, then we are looking also at other partners in places like the African continent where there would be opportunity for us to ensure a partners capacity to be able to protect their own sovereignty and territorial integrity as well as represent our interests.

In some cases we would be defining this as disruption or a provision of disrupting adversaries and their interests.

Going back to security assistance aligned with sales, with strategic sales that tie to not only bolstering our economic security and our national security, but bolstering our partners and their ability to protect their interests and prosecute on our behalf.

With that ties to another presidential priority, and I already referenced where there are some internal processes and reforms that we can address just in the Political-Military Affairs Bureau, but there's others that require either interagency support or legislative relief or legal review. This is on the Conventional Arms Transfer Policy and the implementation of

Cooper - 9/12/19

that.

It was rolled out last year, but here we are a year later moving forward on getting the policy to actually be reflective of where we are today.

If one looks at this year, we are actually marking our 50th Anniversary for the Political-Military Affairs Bureau. A very different world than 1969.

I will tell you, there are days where I have looked at that and I think wow, that might have been pretty luxurious, having a relatively binary world with a less of an asymmetric environment and a much more conventional space. And looking at, when we talk about partners, there were states that didn't exist in 1969 that were still either subordinate or a territorial possession of another country.

I mention 1969 because much of how we've operated as a government on Conventional Arms Transfer and Security Assistance and security cooperation could be recognizable by my counterparts or my predecessors from 1969. That's a challenge, that's a problem, and it's something that this administration recognized as the need to ensure that we could move in a more strategic fashion, but also in a more expedited fashion.

The need to look at how definitions can be either best classified, the look at what could be identified as not a particularly sensitive or not unique technologies could be reclassified maybe in a context of the Department of Commerce versus the Department of State oversight.

So when we're looking at reform or implementation of Conventional Arms Transfer policy, it is everything from what I would consider very uninteresting administrata that we can control inside the department to requiring potential legislative relief from Congress.

Cooper - 9/12/19

Fortunately, there is a bipartisan interest in any kind of an institutional improvement or appropriate application of resources for us to be able to do our work and do our job appropriately. Depending on where one sits in Congress, the interests vary. There are some parochial interests ensuring that the departments work on making sure that American interests and American values continue to be conveyed in every sale and every security cooperation. That is a hallmark and a highlight for some members. For some other members, seeing reform implemented in CAT policy they would like to see a stronger reflection on industry being able to process or apply for a license at a quicker pace.

So pick your interest. There's a number of bridging mechanisms we have found I would say domestically of interest on both sides of the aisle for these reforms, and that is something that is a very exciting time for us, because we are in a place where we have a President and we have a Secretary of State who are quite supportive of us leaning forward. What we will see this autumn, and I would love to -- I don't want to get ahead of my own roll-out, but we are looking to incorporate what I would define as PM modernization or bureau modernization that is part and parcel supportive of what we need to do on implementation of Conventional Arms Transfer policy.

What does that mean? Again, I referenced on regulation that there's harkening back to a different era. There is technology and resources in the department that harkened back to a different era. I have worked very hard so far and prior to, the question was my assessment prior to coming into the department was to identify where we needed to get ourselves to a more modern operational space. That is inclusive of information technology. That's inclusive of data management or data application for better analysis on security assistance and sales. Of having parity in communication with our interagency brothers and sisters, particularly the Department of Defense on the different systems that we operate. And also this would be inclusive of manning, which is our most important resource.

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Cooper - 9/12/19

There are certain elements of the Political-Military Affairs Bureau that probably are right-sized for what their mission is. There are other parts of the bureau where the manning reflects, again, a different era and a different time.

So if we're looking from what we're addressing, it's going to range from IT infrastructure, data management and aggregation, and personnel.

DWG: Mr. Secretary, does that mean that there's going to be an increase in the Political-Military Affairs Bureau staff?

A/S Cooper: I do not want to convey exacting here, but I would say there is certain advocacy on my part for what would be appropriate for particular accounts. And what I mean by that is we have directorates that range in activities. We also have a number of sources of income and revenue that support our oversight, that support our licensing, that support our analysis that support our policy work. And we also have resources that support implementation as well.

What we're wanting to do is to make sure that all the directorates are fully resourced and staffed at an appropriate level to keep pace to where we are in the 21st century. It's safe to say we have been making mission, and I am very proud of that. We have been making mission and we have actually been performing probably much better than what would be defined by I would say on the economy or private sector analysis.

This PM modernization will be inclusive of an analysis so it's not just my world view or some colleague's world view or perspective, but this will be a formal resource review that will include actual measures and recommendations that I'll be providing to the interagency as well as the department to get us to good.

But we're doing the job now and I am very proud of that, but we

Cooper - 9/12/19

could do it better. And considering the prioritization on burden-sharing with our partners, the prioritization on ensuring that U.S. industry, particularly U.S. defense industry and aerospace industry have primacy in place, and considering that we want to ensure that America's position and America's values remain aligned with our sales and our assistance. All of those things do require us to be not only as engaged as we have been in the past, but much more engaged, much more aggressive. Not only with our international partners, but much more engaged, much more aggressive in our own interagency process.

DWG: I want to make sure that a lot of people get a chance to ask questions, so if you can give shorter answers to the following question.

A/S Cooper: Sure.

DWG: No, I thought it was good for you to lay out the philosophy and the history and where you're going, but now let's go to a tighter series of questions if we can.

A/S Cooper: Sure.

DWG: Starting with Meghan Myers of Military Times.

DWG: I wanted to ask about the departmental, particularly your bureau's strategy with Afghanistan right now, and how that is or isn't affected by what's going on with [inaudible].

A/S Cooper: We'll start with our security assistance programming. All of that is predicated based on assessments either at a country team level with the interagency, so including the intelligence community, and also from a trans-regional aspect.

So if we look at Afghanistan broader than just Afghanistan and look at it from a regional aspect, then yes, we're looking at where there would be any potential posture shifts for the Afghan

Cooper - 9/12/19

Security Forces, and any potential posture shifts on their governance capabilities. Why? Because there are, I mentioned, partner nations that have maybe not been historically aligned with the United States. Former Soviet Union satellite states that we are working with to ensure a more cohesive northern access corridor, regardless of what happens with the Afghanistan peace talks or reconciliation.

So one thing that probably won't really change as much where we would stay the course on is on the northern access corridor states is ensuring that they have the capacities and the capabilities to be more interoperable with us and getting them off of those historic sustainment lines with Russia. That's going to happen regardless of where any reconciliation talks may go.

DWG: Dmitry, TAAS.

DWG: Good morning, Mr. Secretary. Thank you for doing this.

I wanted to ask you about Ukraine military aid review. No surprise there. Has the review been completed yet? What are the results if that's the case? And what is the whole point of, what is the point of this whole exercise, these Members of Congress from both the Republicans and the Democrats have already said that if the administration's going to cut the aid, they're going to reinstall it.

A/S Cooper: Speaking of Ukraine, that's a good example of some of the incentivization that we're doing with states. There are several accounts that have been identified for Ukraine. You mentioned there's actually some legislative or statutory requirements on Ukraine security assistance.

In addition to that, the Department of State has assessed further opportunities on Foreign Military Financing and additional opportunities on the Countering Russian Aggression accounts. This also is inclusive of, we also have support to

Cooper - 9/12/19

Conventional Weapons Destruction and Abatement and Weapon Stores. So there's a whole host of security assistance that we have outlined and identified for Ukraine.

I would point to, there's been two, a series of visits including the Vice President's visit to Kiev where he and Zelensky were laying out efforts and efficacy for the standup of the reform government and reform regimes.

I'm happy to say, so TAAS gets the breaking news, well, everybody does, we have done formal notification on our security assistance accounts for the Ukraine, so we're talking about in the ballpark of \$140 million in security assistance for Ukraine. So we've done formal notification to Congress and I think -- I'm waiting for Dave to stab me with a fork. Did we do that -- okay. It's supposed to be either today or tomorrow, so I'm not ahead 24 hours okay.

DWG: Hold on a second. You're saying it's \$140 million, right, but the whole amount was \$250, right?

A/S Cooper: I'm just talking about one piece of our accounts. So there's humanitarian assistance in there as well and then there's some statutory, but if we're talking about security assistance, that includes OCO funding. That's what we did notification on.

I would anticipate there will be further notifications, but we were able to get all that paperwork done and pushed to Capitol Hill yesterday.

DWG: What weapon systems were included in that notification?

A/S Cooper: This was not FMS. This is just security assistance.

DWG: Okay.

Cooper - 9/12/19

Rachel Oswald from CQ.

DWG: Thank you for being here.

Bills have been moving in the House and the Senate that would close what they call a loophole that allowed Secretary of State Pompeo to skirt statutes saying that Congress has to be notified about weapon sales. They would only allow emergency declarations to apply, and you know this, you know to our formal treaty allies plus Israel. So what happened with Saudi Arabia would no longer be able to happen.

What is the department's position on that?

A/S Cooper: I would start with we never skirted anything and there are no loopholes. We followed statute. Statute provided by Congress and passed into law in 1979. This is a 40-year-old law. It's not a loophole. It's a law.

Now Congress historically has reacted, as they did this last time, so it doesn't matter if it was issued under President Carter the first time in 1979 and most recently in 2019 under the Trump administration, Congress has never been really amenable to the use of that application of the emergency declaration. So that hasn't changed. So no surprise on the response.

What I do find interesting is depending on one member's perspective, if they're on a committee's jurisdiction they know what the review process is. They know that we do review all cases before we do formal notification.

So in this case the emergency declaration, there's nothing new there. Everything had been notified, some things had been notified up to 16 months. So there's nothing new. And I think probably what maybe got lost in the cacophony of our announcement in the subsequent hearings was that there was a ripeness or a maturation, as one could call it, for these 22

Cooper - 9/12/19

cases. And when we were looking at security capacities for partners who were and are still sustaining and managing a threat emanating from Tehran, we were looking to move forward.

Questions have been asked as to why did the department just not break the hold. That's certainly within the realm of possible that could have been done. But doing the emergency declaration sent an external message outside of Washington, an external message to two parties, essentially. One was to our partners to say we have not dropped the ball on you, we have not forgotten you. We are acutely aware of your security requirements. We are acutely aware of the direct threat that you are sustaining on yourself, your civilian populace, as well as our interest, our infrastructure and our citizens in your countries.

And then the other audience was Iran. To say we are very serious and we are standing shoulder to shoulder with our partners. We are going to move these forward.

But I do want to make clear that there was nothing in that declaration that Congress had not seen or had been reviewing for quite a long time.

So not a loophole, but statute. And this is something depending on the members, there has been an interesting amount of edification with members, particularly being able to go back to them and speak to them in the classified environment. For some, if they have not worked with us directly, as a matter of just walking through here's how we process a Foreign Military Sale, here's how we process a Direct Commercial Sale, here's when you have opportunity to inject or opine. But having cases languish without response became critical for us.

DWG: So do you support the legislation? Or do you oppose it?

A/S Cooper: We support the statute as it stands. So the statute that we're talking about, the Arms Export Control Act. So the statutory language as it is has been serviceable for

Cooper - 9/12/19

need. And again, the reason why I mention the historic context of it is, it's been rarely applied. Each application from Carter, Reagan, so on, has been very judicious. It's not something any administration has ever done lightly or quickly.

DWG: [Nada], Defense News.

DWG: You said in your opening remarks about Africa and disruption of China there. It sounded like you basically said you'd like to see, maybe we could pack more of a push for things like Foreign Military Sales to get to those countries, make sure they're not hooked up to Chinese military equipment, national security equipment. What does that actually look like? Is it just part of a broad strategy? Is it just kind of an it would be nice to do this?

A/S Cooper: Going back to the National Security Strategy, our priorities when we're talking about interoperability with a partner, bolstering a partner's capability, does not always have to be limited to or is not predicated on a significant Foreign Military Sale. So that does include security cooperation and security assistance. That would be inclusive of presence. Where we direct exercises, where we direct training, where we direct other resources. Or essentially say like standing up particular centers of gravity, like on cyber technology, or centers of gravity on information sharing. We've done this in other places.

Particular to Africa, part of it is about a presence. There are some states where we are looking particular opportunities for sales. In every partner, regardless of what continent they lie on, we do have to factor in their capacity to absorb not only that particular weapon or platform, but their ability to be able to maintain it, to operate it, to sustain it. So that's inclusive of much more than a particular sale.

There are a number of African states that are looking to bolster their relationship with us. Some of that is tied to particular

Cooper - 9/12/19

sales. It's not always the case. But if we're looking at where China has placed themselves or they have placed resources on the continent for very transactional reasons, and transactionally to extract from the continent, then it's within our interest to ensure that that does not disrupt where we may have regional interests or approach beyond the continent. Meaning where we may already be or may be looking to be, we don't want that impeded upon by Chinese presence or influence. To counter that, we need to be present in certain places. Not all.

DWG: Is it fair to say, I want to make sure I characterize this right. Is it fair to say that we should expect to see more pushing back in terms of security assistance in the coming year, years?

A/S Cooper: I would say when one is looking at security assistance writ large, how that ties to countering your peer adversaries. So that could be, again, getting a partner off of an old relationship or an old sustainment line, or it could be getting a partner in a more capable space. So if one is in the interagency or one's down at the country team level doing a country team assessment or an advocacy for a particular project or an account or a grant, how they factor that into countering a near peer adversary weighs heavy.

DWG: So is that a yes?

A/S Cooper: It depends on the account.

What I'm sharing with you in an open and unclassified environment is guidance that we have been providing our colleagues in the Department of State is, as you are advocating for a partner and identifying requirements, and this goes out to geographic combatant commanders, is to say just because it would be nice for a partner to have a particular system or a particular type of training or capability, how does that support a broader regional context? And how does that support us?

Cooper - 9/12/19

There are some pet rocks that have existed historically, and it's not unique to any administration for an embassy or a geographic combatant command. So part of the challenge that's been posed to our colleagues in the field at the post level has been to get that better synchronized from a broader transregional context and how that ties to countering near peer adversaries.

This does tie into when we talk about PM modernization, on refinement, on planning. Security sector assistance planning.

Many of you here may recall back in 2017 then Secretary Tillerson and then Secretary Mattis actually signed a memoranda. It was on security sector assistance review. Right? What happened with that? That's the question I was asking myself.

What we have moved forward on is there is, conjoining at different levels, security sector assistance planning. Not at the top but at the working, mid and what you say, strategic, all the way up to the ministerial level.

State and DoD have done very well historically at planning within what I call the luxury of myopicity, right? So you're inside a particular area of responsibility or area of operation or in a particular country or country team, but looking at it from a context that's much broader and ensuring that we're not duplicating effort. That's almost kind of the best-case scenario, duplication of effort.

Worst case scenario are the anecdotal situations where we've actually countered prioritization or initiative to ourselves.

So to mitigate that and best align our resources, especially at a time when there's extra scrutiny not only within the administration. There's extra scrutiny on Capital Hill. And again, that's both sides of the aisle as to how these assistance dollars are spent.

Cooper - 9/12/19

So when we're talking about PM modernization, and I was highlighting IT infrastructure, resources, regulatory reform and work force, it's also inclusive of how we do business on planning with our Department of Defense counterparts.

This year there are several marks on the calendar where there will be formal sessions on how we align Title 22 and Title 10 security assistance. A significant amount of dollars when we're talking about what gets pushed out and notified to Congress and what gets provided to partners.

Seven billion of that is state. Seven billion of that I have the pen on. Nine billion of that is Department of Defense. And this is a perfect example of where we've had, again, anecdotal situations where there would be almost word for word similar programming for particular projects. And while some may assess that that would be beneficial to the recipient partner and they say wow, the more the better. That's not necessarily the case. Especially if they can't absorb it. Especially if they can't meet the burn rate on it. And especially if it creates an offset and denies another partner potential resources.

So that is something, I'm glad you asked that question because that led me to this point. You will see more visible elements of how we're doing that.

We have people dedicated in our Defense Sector Planning part of PM, who will be, their focus will be working with their Title 10 counterparts and to reconcile where there's any kind of a discord or disconnect inside DoD account offices.

DWG: Eric Schmidt, New York Times.

DWG: One quick administrative question. Who is your direct counterpart in DoD?

A/S Cooper: There isn't one direct counterpart. So this goes back to a very interesting historic challenge. Depending on the

Cooper - 9/12/19

day or the issue, on a broad policy level, Under Secretary John Rood who is relatively directly aligned with Under Secretary Thompson, I would say as far as policy.

But then when we're looking at the nuts and bolts, the hardware aspect of acquisition and sustainment, we're talking about Ellen Lord.

I mention those two, because if you look under them, they have any number of either actual or acting assistant secretaries of defense. If there's a particular policy issue that's brewing, I am in regular stead with Katy Wilbarger, and picking up the phone or [tambor] with her in [sessing] out a position that we want to present our Secretaries. So that's an example.

If it's security assistance planning, then we're talking about a different ASD. If we're talking about getting the Department of Defense to work out an LOA or LOR with a particular partner, that is going to be that implementation piece of the Defense Security Cooperation Agency.

DWG: My substantive question dealt with, you all announced a sale yesterday of 32 F-35s to Poland for \$6.5 billion, and while on the face of it it would seem that would touch all the bases you laid out in your opening comments -- you're helping a NATO ally strengthen their defense against increasing Russian threat, and yet talking to some analysts yesterday, even some people in the embassy in Warsaw, there's some concern about this is an example of pressuring an ally to buy a system they can't really afford. I'm wondering to what extent that's a valid criticism, whether it's for Poland or Hungary or some of these other particularly Eastern European countries and how you might mitigate that, if you think there's any validity to that criticism.

A/S Cooper: To Poland, not. But the validity aspect is that it's definitely an analytical consideration on any sale. So Eric's question about absorption of budget, right? Earlier I

Cooper - 9/12/19

was saying absorption. That was not just inclusive of their ability to take on a system and operate it, it was inclusive of budget.

We don't want, the United States does not want a partner nation's defense budget to be broken because of a particular sale.

It is why we look to closely identify on a particular platform what meets the requirement. So what is the security requirement a partner has, and this goes back to why planning with our defense colleagues at the post and country team level is more critical than ever, because we have had anecdotal historical examples where there's been a push for a system without accounting for say debt burden of a partner. Or not accounting for their ability to maintain a maintenance line.

Those can be addressed if there is an additional build or programming that a shortfall can be met.

Another aspect is not every platform is the same. They are conditional. The requirements are different. An F-16 or an F-35 for one partner is not going to be the same for the other. Some of that is to protect certain aspects of technology for our purposes. Some of that is because the requirement may only necessitate a certain model. That does go into the costing and pricing assessment.

Finally we were talking about looking at incentivizing partners to become more interoperable with us. There is room, an opportunity for assistance in some cases. The most tangible one, and I referenced it at the Defense news conference was what we did with Bulgaria. That was a very positive example of country team and the security cooperation office in Bulgaria working with the Ministry of Defense to identify a requirement. And finding one that could actually meet their budget requirements but not weaken or reduce what they needed for their airframe.

Cooper - 9/12/19

At the end of the day we were able to identify on our side a \$60 million Foreign Military Finance Grant Assistance for them to be able to complete the sale of these F-16s.

Part of that also put in some political calculus and this is where you get the policy and political side of this was looking at the parliament in Bulgaria. Looking at the central government in Bulgaria. In fact, what would be amenable and plausible for them as they were planning out their budget and committing their resources.

So it does factor. A Ministry of Defense as well as a Central government's ability to pay for a frame and sustain it certainly factors in what we would provide them. Not just the security requirements.

DWG: You don't believe the Poles are incurring an undue burden? That [inaudible].

A/S Cooper: I would say, it's fair to assess that like with any other particular significant sale there's going to be an offset, but it would not do us any good to push a system or a sale on a partner that's going to degrade them. That actually goes against the whole long-term proposition of bolstering not only a particular capability but bolstering their own sustainment of their sovereignty.

DWG: Zach, from Center for Public [inaudible].

DWG: Thanks. Historically there's always been a tension between some folks at DoD and State when it came to certain weapon sales. State was the brake because of this obligation to ensure that every sale is in the national security interest of the United States. Obviously with this administration there's been an enormous push to advocate for weapon sales overseas. Do you think that's changed the calculus at all in terms of what you look at to ensure that things are in the national security

Cooper - 9/12/19

interest of the United States, whether that's the sustainment question you were just raising or whether it is a question of stability or ability to ensure that those arms are adequately protected or used. Do you think that equation has changed because of the top leadership view on weapon sales?

A/S Cooper: Going back to your historic comment, I think that it was probably easy for some maybe in the past to cast aspersions and say hey, your sale's not moving because my buddies over here at State are taking their sweet time.

Our rigorous assessment hasn't changed and I would say, to be fair, that's an interagency assessment. This is not limited to analysts at the Department of State. Again, we're talking about protecting our sensitive technology, our sensitive data at the same time, and we're also making sure that we're not creating unnecessary imbalances in the world.

So when we're looking at bolstering a partner's capability and also their ability to prosecute on our behalf, we also don't want to disrupt particular balances or compromise the security or posture of another partner. That is always incumbent a state to have that.

The other piece of that is that when we're looking at particularly policy priorities, we provide that steer. It is necessary for us to do that.

What has changed as far as posture, to your question, is there's certainly been clarity from the administration on how we're prioritizing where we sell and who we sell to, and there's certain clarity as far as recognizing that yes, there are some areas that we can reform that make the process cleaner, more transparent, more cost effective.

Again, if somebody is sitting on the defense industry side, they're the ones that actually care that processing a license has taken less time now in 2019 than it did in 2016. They are

Cooper - 9/12/19

the ones that care that the fees that are applied to licenses have gone down over the past few years.

What hasn't changed is we are making sure that when we are committing to a sale to a partner is that their commitments to us and our ability to build a relationship, ensure a relationship and convey our values, and that's inclusive of civil society, good governance, human rights, that is very much still a part of what we would put in a relationship, be it in a sale or in security assistance. It is what does set us apart.

We are not transactional with our sale and we make that clear, and that is incumbent upon the Department of State, be it at the embassy level or at a ministerial level with myself or one of my regional Assistant Secretary peers, when we're sitting down with a partner to say here's what we expect of you with this sale. With this sale comes tremendous responsibility not just to meet your security requirements, but here's what we expect of you as a partner state.

So what that has done is, with this Secretary, that has certainly given us, I would say, more operational space to reassert the primacy of the State Department on sales and security assistance.

DWG: One of the other factors that may have shifted a little bit is the question of U.S. economic interest in some of these sales. Whether it's supporting industry, ensuring a broader industrial base, et cetera.

Is that a major component of your thinking these days on these sales? Or is that still some secondary --

A/S Cooper: It's a significant component and it ties directly to the National Security Strategy, because what we don't want to do is we do not want to leave a vacuum or a space that could be occupied by an adversary.

Cooper - 9/12/19

So we're not going to sell for the sake of selling, but if we abdicate space or if we see market space, there are adversaries who are quite aggressive. We're in an open source for a and there's enough out there on open source data and market research to show that Moscow is aggressive, Beijing is aggressive, they are looking for opportunities in places to either resecure, revalidate historic relationships, or obtain new ones.

So from where the administration sits, and where the entire U.S. interagency sits, we do not want to incur further risk to our national security interests because we have allowed or ceded space in the marketplace to others.

So yes, this is where our national security does tie to our economic security. We want to ensure that we remain the partner of choice. But being the partner of choice isn't just the hardware. The partner of choice is the relationship, for sure.

But yes, our aggressiveness is to make sure that we are not losing space.

And remember, we don't have state-owned industries. That's a blessing. That's a good thing. But we're also competing in a marketplace where there are state-owned industries. Some of those state-owned industries are also allies and partners who are looking to be in certain places and not investing in the relationship and taking a transactional approach. So much better for U.S. industry to actually be aggressively in a space on behalf of the U.S. government and the national security enterprise and occupying that space, but occupying it with the imprint of U.S. policy and U.S. priorities.

DWG: Courtney, then Tony Capaccio.

DWG: When you talk about the relationship between [inaudible] and in building partner capacity, are you, how does the decision to take [inaudible] \$600 million from [EI] for instance, undermine your case or challenge your efforts to convince

Cooper - 9/12/19

partners?

A/S Cooper: Again, it's conditions based on that particular partner's security requirements. It's also conditional on -- I'm policing myself.

If we are negotiating something that is not directly related to a sale. So when I referenced earlier about the Northern Access Corridor. I would say if one is following a particular sale or a set of suite of sales, any kind of adjustment in other accounts may be in part by design as to where we are shifting focus,. But I would say there is not a myopicity on a particular sale or account, and that is part of where I sit at the department, is ensuring that we may actually have to reprioritize based on something that is not directly tied to Ministry of Defense or physical conventional defense, but could be association or reassociation of another security enterprise aspect for our country.

Offsets, I would say, I'll give an example. There are some anecdotal examples where we have adjusted some security assistance, but we've turned up or amplified humanitarian assistance, because that was more the appropriate fix versus maybe a hardware fix.

DWG: In this case when Secretary Esper talked about the possibility that partners would make up that deficit, in fact it was meant to be --

A/S Cooper: On the burden-sharing piece, and this goes back to we have a number of partners globally that have planned their budgets based on what they receive in U.S. security assistance. So this goes back to when we're saying burden-sharing, we're looking at it from interoperability.

If a partner has been in receipt of particular accounts, and sometimes that's not just in sales or sustainment. We're talking about operational accounts, like actually running

Cooper - 9/12/19

militaries or running ministries. There is analysis to show that a number of partners could do more and do better, and it is incumbent upon them to take a greater role of responsibility for their own national security.

It doesn't mean that we're going to let them to the winds or let them to the wolves and abandon a partner, but encouraging partners to be able to do more for themselves is certainly not only incumbent upon us for being responsible to taxpayers for the revenue that they provide, but it actually is furthering, strengthening. It is steel upon steel, iron upon iron. We are strengthening our partners to be better providers of their own sovereignty.

It doesn't mean we're walking away from them. And there's examples of where we have several partners who I would say, maybe four or five years ago, would not have entertained taking on a greater amount of their GDP toward their own national security, or at least in a multilateral sense who are making that steer and are able to do that.

It does make that more possible to look at additional opportunities. I'm not saying that increased burden-sharing by partner is a predicate for additional resources, but it certainly makes that more amenable, not only for the administration but for Congress. And I'm not limiting this to NATO, by the way. This is, when we say partners we're looking beyond the NATO alliance.

If a partner can show where they're able to take on more, there's opportunity for other.

DWG: Tony and then Vivien.

DWG: To what extent was the Polish sale fast tracked to help compensate for the loss of the 100 fighters that Turkey was going to buy? And what steps are you taking now to help compensate with other partners? Are you pushing other, pulsing

Cooper - 9/12/19

other partners to buy more F-35s because of the Turkish end of participation?

A/S Cooper: Turkey, out of the program. Everyone knows that. There is no pulsing, but I think it's fair to say, and again this is open source, there's a number of participants in the program that are looking at if there's opportunity available.

I would offer, if we look at the production line in the years that it takes to produce just one F-35, it doesn't mean there's an immediate availability of airframes or craft, but there are partners who've expressed interest in additional purchase.

The Poland purchase was well within the works way before we had to impose a break with Turkey. So if we look at the Polish interest and their interoperability and bolstering their airframes, that was happening on a parallel track and started well before we were putting Turkey on notice with their acquisition of the S400.

The Polish sale would have happened regardless if Turkey had acquired or not acquired the S400. It is unfortunate that Turkey acquired the S400 and they went past several opportunities to save themselves from that and remain a member of the program. That said, it certainly didn't shape the timeline for Poland.

DWG: What about Poland, how quickly do you anticipate Poland offering a letter, offer of acceptance after this [inaudible] is approved?

A/S Cooper: I'm not going to opine on Warsaw's politics. I will say that all partners, if we look at any kind of return back from a capital, for most partners there is a parliamentary legislative factor that we are always sensitive to. And that's going to be determined on how they navigate that through their legislative bodies.

Cooper - 9/12/19

We recently worked with that with Taiwan. If you all recall, the Taiwan F-16 notification, that was tied very closely to their legislative timeline and why we were working in that pace. Poland, it's going to be tied to their domestic politics as well.

So those are conditions that we don't have command and control over, but we certainly are sensitive to and are happy to navigate with our partners.

DWG: So it won't happen in two days or something. It could string out for a while.

A/S Cooper: Again, it's conditions based. Some LOAs turn around very quickly because the ministries, if they have a procurement office that works very quickly and clearly with us, and has clear sky, good to go. Some central governments, their procurement processes are multi-layered and are multi-ministerial. Some governments do require parliamentary input.

So Warsaw is different than Taipei. Taipei's different than Sophia. Each LOA process is unique to the partner. It's not, there's not a cookie cutter template as to how one is released on a timeline.

DWG: Defense Daily.

DWG: Staying on the Turkey F-35 situation, can you walk us through how you untangled Turkey from the F-35 program, and if there is any sort of historical precedent to that?

A/S Cooper: We'll start with Turkey. Not F-35 specifically. This is not the first time we, the United States, have had to compartmentalize parts of our relationship with Turkey. So we've been there, done that. What is unique is you have this very significant system with a number of partners and a global supply chain.

Cooper - 9/12/19

That said, there is the ability for us to compartmentalize not only Turkey's role in the program, but those parts of Turkey's contribution to the F-35.

It has not precluded us from maintaining our bilateral relationship and it certainly hasn't precluded us, our expectations on Turkey being an active participant in NATO. That is part of the delicate challenge and the balance that we are going to have with Ankara right now as we remain steadfast in what I would call a surgical precision of their removal. There has been healthy discourse amongst industry and the interagency on how best to do that. I would say that what we will probably see is kind of what I just described as very precise removal from the program and elements that are associated with the program, but not flushing the military to military relationship that we want to keep, and certainly encouraging Turkey to still play an active role in the region as well as in NATO.

I also would offer that they are not out of the woods on imposition of sanctions. That is still at play. That matters, we were talking earlier this morning about development relationships with partners. In addition to getting partners to be better at their own provision of security as well as a provider of security for our interests, it's not all just the incentives of security assistance and sales. There is also the risk of sanctions.

What is a constant point of edification for me with all of our partners is, some of our sanctions regimes including CATSA are statutory. We are obligated to address these.

Turkey is an interesting case because we have a number of partners where we have growing relationships with who are closely watching how Turkey is managed and how they may either seek or choose not to seek acquisition from a near peer adversary.

So still working all of that out. I would say kind of related

Cooper - 9/12/19

to your calendar question, this is all conditions based. This isn't calendar based. There is no finite, I would say, suspense or timeline by statute as far as sanctions are concerned. But it is certainly, all the options are on the table as to how to address that. It's something that has not been completely resolved.

Depending on who one talks to in Turkish government, there are those who are acutely aware and sensitive and appreciative that this is not over and are wanting to get back to the way things may have been at a different time, and decisions coming out of Ankara are not necessarily reflective of the military institution or the foreign ministry.

DWG: The Pentagon has said that it wants to try and sell F-35s to Greece [inaudible]. I know you said the Turkish situation didn't affect the Polish deal, but --

A/S Cooper: The Polish deal was well, well along the way.

DWG: But in terms of essentially sales to Greece, or in your earlier remarks you talked about not wanting to, you know, to avoid imbalance in certain regions. Would that essentially cause --

A/S Cooper: I don't want to talk about a sale that's not in negotiation or opine on something that's not there yet. I would say there's always going to be an opportunity, be it an F-16 frame or an F-35 frame or a ballistic missile defense system that we will see what can be appropriately available or provided that meets that particular partner's requirement, if that's a requirement. So start with that basic question of is there a requirement? What is the requirement? And how could it best be filled?

There have been a number of times in the Department of State's history, including my short tenure there. I'm not even there six months. Where we have actually gone back to a geographic

Cooper - 9/12/19

combatant command and a country came and said we see the requirement review here, are you sure this is the requirement? Perhaps this other option or this other course of action is a better requirement.

So a requirement review is at the very front end, before we even get into any issues about sustainment and absorption. So I'd just say when we're looking at it from the very, very, very start, that first phase is identifying that requirement and is it one that is one from a U.S. standpoint that we define as valid?

DWG: Mr. Secretary, we're over time, but there are three more people on my list here. Have you got time for them?

A/S Cooper: We'll make it happen. I want to say yes. And yes, okay.

DWG: Two quick ones. One following up on the conversation you've just had. When you mentioned other partners watching Turkey [inaudible], is that referring perhaps to India? And [inaudible] that if there are sanctions imposed [inaudible] that that might deter India from making other moves [inaudible]? Or they'll remain more aloof?

A/S Cooper: India has got a long historic sustainment line with Russia. It's well known. And they are certainly looking at how they can play a greater role in the Pacific region and how they project themselves not only West but also East. And they are, we have a bestowed partnership status with them that is something that we're looking to bolster.

That said, we've been very clear with India. I have, Secretary Pompeo has. That we are wanting to invest further in our relationship with India and their capacities, but they cannot expand into what I would say larger defense articles with their previous relationships.

Cooper - 9/12/19

What we're not going to do, and I think sometimes this gets miscast, we're very realistic about that we're talking about a phased approach. And there are some, I would say, long-term sustainments that would be catastrophic if we turned off, and we're not asking any partner to do that.

For example, if one looks back at the fall of the Soviet Union in the 1990s, there were a number of states that when their sustainment lines dried up actually had sincere concerns and capacity issues that developed because their sustainment lines either were suspended or had been reduced. We don't want to cause that. So we're not saying get rid of your Kalashnikovs and all your Kalashnikov rounds tomorrow. That's not what we're talking about.

What we're talking about is significant acquisitions. S400 is a perfect example of a significant acquisition. So yes, I'm sure one would assess that India probably is looking very closely, and there are other states that are watching as well.

DWG: -- bill in the House, and [inaudible] ban the export, to restrict the export of certain [lethals], [inaudible] to Hong Kong police. And there was another letter [inaudible] with the Secretary of State that the State Department support, you know, [inaudible] restrictions?

A/S Cooper: I'm not even familiar with that legislation right now, so I don't want to talk about of naivete, not having seen it.

DWG: [GG] Press.

DWG: [Inaudible] report. Can you tell me where you are right now in terms of the negotiations that you've had?

A/S Cooper: I don't want to do pre-decisional and get ahead of my negotiators and those in Tokyo. Again, this is looking at the long term, so this is just a renewal of where we've been and

Cooper - 9/12/19

where we're going.,

I mentioned the context, the rubric of the National Security Strategy. Partners like Japan have a significant role in the Indo-Pacific, always have, will continue to do so. That weighs heavy in what would be either identified as current commitments from us, current commitments from Tokyo, how those may need to be amended or augmented in certain cases. But it's taking a view of where we are today and looking past the next few years. It's more of these negotiations looking at a long-term perspective.

This is something that is not unique to the State Department, but it aligns with the current administration. It's looking beyond a term or a cycle. Looking from the very much more long-term proposition.

DWG: Have you started already the negotiations?

A/S Cooper: The communications with both capitals on what we do on assistance and security provisions have been ongoing. I'm not going to get ahead of our nuke issues, but we've been long in communication with Tokyo. So some of it not new at all and I would say cyclical. Other aspects of it probably are more reflective of today.

DWG: Last question.

DWG: I'm Marcus [Whitson] from [inaudible]. Thank you.

Earlier in the week [inaudible] Council came out with a survey of Americans that caught me by surprise, like 70 percent said that they feel that foreign arms sales make us less safe. I was wondering, particularly in light of both Democratic and Republican administrations pushing for arms sales, just your reaction. Does that surprise you? Does it even really --

A/S Cooper: How was the question asked? I mean as a member of

Cooper - 9/12/19

the IC my first question to that was how was the question asked? Do you feel less safe because of foreign arms sales? Or was it asked as in do you feel like U.S. national security interests and the concentric rings of security are better supported by foreign arms sales?

So my point is, how was that question asked? I don't know. I saw the banner headline of the article. But when I saw that my first question as an analyst was well, what did they ask them? You're going to get a different response -- everyone here at this table knows that. How you present a question in a survey will help steer an answer. I think if the question was asked to Americans of if national security is better supported and is augmented because of enduring security partnerships and ensuring that those partnerships are advocating and carrying the water for national interests, I think the answer might have been different. But I wasn't there and I wasn't part of the polling service.

DWG: How would you answer the question? Do you think that foreign military sales are ever damaging to U.S. national security? Presumably there have been such occasions.

A/S Cooper: Well this is why we need to make sure that the sales align with our policy priorities. You've actually provided a good talking point as to why there needs to be an imprint and review.

I mentioned earlier, the analysis that's conducted on any individual sale is, does it meet a security requirement for the partner? But does it also meet a security requirement for us?

Regardless of administration, we cannot be everywhere, nor should we be everywhere. Having partners to be able to provide security for themselves and for us, our interests and our infrastructure, wherever that may be is a practical necessity. We may be able to fight several conventional fronts at the same time. That's what we've planned for for decades. That's across

Cooper - 9/12/19

administrations. We also have incorporated in that an asymmetric environment that we are addressing with non-state actors.

But we don't need to have boots on the ground in every place. And it's also why we've invested in peacekeeping operations and troop contributing countries. So when we say security assistance, security cooperation, it isn't just limited to the bilateral. It isn't limited to just partner/partner. But a Foreign Military Sale, be it something as a ballistic missile defense system or an offensive airframe, we would much rather have a partner using a system that we have built and that we have more of an influence on and is a point of entre for us to be present and have a relationship with that partner.

Not being present and not providing those sales actually creates a vacuum and it cedes terrain. We abdicate terrain.

So sales are just a tool. They're just a tool of foreign policy. They're not the end. They're a tool. We have other tools that we use but when we're looking at how we support a partner or develop a partner, it's for endurance. And if that is better fostered or fertilized through assistance or a sale, then yes, that's something that we're going to do at the end of the day. It's on our behalf. But sales are tools of foreign policy. They're not the end. And they are part of a larger I'd say host of tools.

When we're looking at diplomacy, defense, we're also talking development as well. And so if one is sitting at a country team and you're an ambassador and you're looking at what's available for security forces. If not military and law enforcement, you're looking at humanitarian assistance. Sometimes a sale is just, I don't want to say on par, but depending on the country, it may not be the primary tool that that chief of mission has at that time. It could be at times a chief tool or the primary tool, but sales are a tool.

Cooper - 9/12/19

DWG: Thank you so much, and thanks for staying over.

A/S Cooper: My pleasure.

DWG: That's everyone for coming.