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# Congress of the United States

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### Opening Statement Rep. John F. Tierney, Ranking Member

#### Subcommittee on National Security Committee on Oversight and Government Reform Joint Hearing on "Overturning 30 Years of Precedent: Is the Administration Ignoring the Dangers of Training Libyan Pilots and Nuclear Scientists?"

April 3, 2014

Thank you Mr. Chairman, and thank you for having this hearing.

Today, we examine whether it is prudent to lift a longstanding prohibition against Libyan nationals from entering the U.S. in order to receive aviation and nuclear-related training. The U.S. Government enacted this regulation decades ago to punish Muammar Gadhafi, then a state-sponsor of terrorism.

Starting in the administration of President George W. Bush, the U.S. has taken steps to re-establish diplomatic and security ties with Libya. In 2004, U.S. sanctions were formally lifted. In 2006, Libya was removed from the list of state sponsors of terrorism. Since then, the U.S. has worked to improve the bilateral relationship with Libya, including through military and educational exchanges.

In 2010, both the Departments of State and Defense requested that the Department of Homeland Security lift the restriction on Libyan nationals. In a 2012, after the fall of Gadhafi, the Department of Defense again reiterated the need to lift this restriction. In a letter to the Department of Homeland Security, DOD stated:

This ban will have serious implications for U.S.-Libya military cooperation and the overall bilateral relationship. Now more than ever, the reconstitution of the Libyan CH-47 and C-130 fleet could further U.S. interests in the region, in part by allowing Libya to contribute tactical airlift to African Union and United Nations peacekeeping operations.

Just this week, DOD explained that the current restriction prevents the training of Libyan military pilots and aircraft maintenance personnel and emphasized the importance of lifting the restriction. In an April 1st letter to the Department of Homeland Security, DOD said:

Despite Libya's challenges in building and stabilizing democratic institutions, Libya continues to seek a strong relationship with the United States, the United Nations, and other international partners. A key element of Libya's success in its transition will be its ability to meet national security requirements including by successfully developing the Libyan Armed Forces (LAF). We recognize that there is greater political uncertainty now than when we initially requested that the pilot ban be lifted in 2012, but now more than ever the Libyan government needs capable, centrally controlled Armed Forces.

I understand that some security experts, including the Department of Defense, feel that military cooperation is a good idea, would help stabilize the government of Libya, and help curtail the rise of extremist groups there. I am frankly surprised that the primary advocate for lifting this ban, DOD, was not invited to this hearing to share their views of why this is important.

As we continue to review the current state of affairs in Libya, including whether the current political infrastructure is secure and reliable enough to warrant assuming responsibility for the relief sought, it would seem to make sense to entertain the reasoning of the entity advocating for the action. I hope the majority will consider conducting additional hearings for the purpose of presenting to the Members a full range of considerations as members seek to make a decision on the matter at hand.

Thank you to the panelists for being here, today. I look forward to learning more about whether this visa ban should be lifted or allowed to remain on the books.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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