



COMMITTEE ON  
**SCIENCE, SPACE, & TECHNOLOGY**  
Lamar Smith, Chairman

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**Statement of Chairman Lamar Smith (R-Texas)**

*Eastern Mediterranean Energy: Challenges and Opportunities for U.S. Regional Priorities*

**Chairman Smith:** I thank Chairman Royce and Chairwoman Ros-Lehtinen for working with the Science Committee to host today's hearing. Our shared jurisdiction over international energy issues is an important piece of U.S. foreign policy. I look forward to our discussion on the appropriate roles of the Department of Energy (DOE) and Department of State.

Today, the Subcommittee on Energy and the Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa will examine the opportunities for energy development in the Eastern Mediterranean. We also will discuss how cooperative research and development with our allies can bolster U.S. diplomacy and provide opportunities for new scientific discoveries.

While the State Department's responsibility to execute U.S. foreign policy is well-known, the Department of Energy's Office of International Affairs also plays an important role in foreign policy. DOE describes the purpose of its International Affairs program as integrating the Department's research programs, national labs, and science and technology policy to "pursue U.S. government objectives on energy and national security issues."

The Department also provides subject matter expertise and vital information on the impact energy development can have on global stability and security, which is of interest to our national security agencies. DOE currently engages on energy issues with dozens of countries.

Its agreements include bilateral R&D partnerships and multilateral efforts on regional energy issues that range from energy efficiency and oil and gas exploration to providing electricity to rural communities around the world. By working to ensure energy security for our allies, the U.S. can engage in diplomacy that improves regional stability and increases innovation.

In the Eastern Mediterranean, energy issues have a significant impact on regional security. The United States has a long history of engagement in the region, particularly in support on one of our closest allies, Israel. On energy issues, DOE has led cooperative research efforts with Israeli scientists for decades, with formal agreements on energy research dating back almost 30 years. Programs such as the Binational

Industrial Research and Development (BIRD) Foundation and the Israel-U.S. Binational Science Foundation (BSF) encourage collaboration between the nations' top labs and scientists.

These programs research a broad range of topics that include oil and gas exploration, production, and distribution technologies, energy efficiency and renewable energy, and water desalination and treatment facilities. The U.S. - Israel Energy Dialogue, reestablished by DOE in 2011, fosters scientific engagement on cybersecurity, civil nuclear energy, and basic research and development activities. These programs leverage DOE national labs and researchers to produce the kind of scientific collaboration that can lead to the next technology breakthrough.

The recent discovery of the Tamar and Leviathan gas fields off the coast of Israel have the potential to foster new regional trade relationships. It could even provide a source of natural gas for U.S. allies in Europe.

DOE-led cooperative R&D for natural gas production, transmission, and distribution can help drive this development. It can create the potential for Israel to become a net exporting country, establish energy trade with its neighbors, and ensure Israeli energy security for years to come.

I thank our witnesses, Assistant Secretary Elkind and Special Envoy Hochstein, for testifying today. We look forward to their comments about the role DOE plays in supporting U.S. diplomacy and opportunities for energy engagement with allies in the Eastern Mediterranean.

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