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NOMINATIONS OF THE 117th CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION—PART II

HEARINGS

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS
UNITED STATES SENATE

ONE HUNDRED SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

Part II
June 23, 2022 thru November 30, 2022

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CONTENTS

Responses to additional questions from the committee and any other material submitted for the record are located at the end of each hearing transcript.

PART I

Wednesday, January 12, 2022 ..... **1**

Cleveland, Sarah H., of New York, nominated to be Legal Adviser of the Department of State 9

O'Brien James C., of Nebraska, nominated to be head of the Office of Sanctions Coordination, with the rank of Ambassador 12

Tsunis, George J., of New York, nominated to be Ambassador to Greece ... 15

Van Schaack, Beth, of California, nominated to be Ambassador-at-Large for Global Criminal Justice 18

Additional Material Submitted for the Record *33*

Tuesday, February 8, 2022 ..... **91**

Lipstadt, Dr. Deborah E., of Georgia, nominated to be Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Antisemitism, with the rank of Ambassador 98

Dogu, Hon. Laura Farnsworth, of Texas, nominated to be Ambassador to the Republic of Honduras 101

Levine, Randi Charno, of New York, nominated to be Ambassador to the Portuguese Republic 104

Perry, Hon. N. Nickolas, of New York, nominated to be Ambassador to Jamaica 107

Additional Material Submitted for the Record *128*

Thursday, March 3, 2022 ..... **167**

Romanowski, Hon. Alina L., of Illinois, nominated to be Ambassador to the Republic of Iraq 172

Hickey, Douglas T., of Idaho, nominated to be Ambassador to the Republic of Finland 175

Fagin, Steven H., of New Jersey, nominated to be Ambassador to the Republic of Yemen 177

McKee, Hon. Erin Elizabeth, of California, nominated to be an assistant administrator of the United States Agency for International Development 180

Additional Material Submitted for the Record *192*

Page

Tuesday, March 15, 2022 ..... **239**

Meehan, Bernadette M., of New York, nominated to be Ambassador to the Republic of Chile 241

Nkengasong, Dr. John N., of Georgia, nominated to be Ambassador-at-Large, Coordinator of the United States Government Activities to Combat HIV/AIDS Globally 244

Muyangwa, Dr. Monde, of Maryland, nominated to be an assistant administrator of the United States Agency for International Development 247

Gonzales, Hon. Rebecca Eliza, nominated to be Director of the Office of Foreign Missions 250

Additional Material Submitted for the Record *273*

Thursday, April 7, 2022 ..... **317**

Kennedy, Hon. Caroline, of New York, nominated to be Ambassador to the Commonwealth of Australia 322

Goldberg, Hon. Philip S., of the District of Columbia, nominated to be Ambassador to the Republic of Korea 325

Nathanson, Marc B., of California, nominated to be Ambassador to the Kingdom of Norway 328

Carlson, Marykay Loss, of Arkansas, nominated to be Ambassador to the Republic of the Philippines 331

Additional Material Submitted for the Record *351*

Wednesday, May 4, 2022 ..... **391**

Turner, Dr. Bruce I., of Colorado, nominated to be U.S. Representative to the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, with the rank of Ambassador during his tenure of service 396

Leventhal, Alan M., of Massachusetts, nominated to be Ambassador to the Kingdom of Denmark 400

Milstein, Constance J., of New York, nominated to be Ambassador to the Republic of Malta 403

Hartley, Hon. Jane D., of New York, nominated to be Ambassador to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland 405

Additional Material Submitted for the Record *419*

Tuesday, May 10, 2022 ..... **511**

Brink, Hon. Bridget A., nominated to be Ambassador to Ukraine 515

Richard, Hon. Elizabeth H., of Virginia, nominated to be Coordinator for Counterterrorism, with the rank and status of Ambassador-at-Large 518

Laskaris, Hon. Alexander Mark, of the District of Columbia, nominated to be Ambassador to the Republic of Chad 520

Additional Material Submitted for the Record *547*

Wednesday, May 18, 2022 ..... **585**

Bagley, Hon. Elizabeth Frawley, of Florida, nominated to be Ambassador to the Federative Republic of Brazil 590

Aponte, Hon. Mari Carmen, of Florida, nominated to be Ambassador to the Republic of Panama 593

Mora, Dr. Francisco O., of Florida, nominated to be Permanent Representative to the Organization of American States, with the rank of Ambassador 596

Kwan, Michelle, of California, nominated to be Ambassador to Belize 599

Additional Material Submitted for the Record *622*

Tuesday, May 24, 2022 ..... **651**

Brigety, Hon. Reuben E. II, of Florida, nominated to be Ambassador to the Republic of South Africa 656

Battle, Hon. Michael A. Sr., of Georgia, nominated to be Ambassador to the United Republic of Tanzania 658

Whitman, Margaret C., of Colorado, nominated to be Ambassador to the Republic of Kenya 660

Page

Tuesday, May 24, 2022 —Continued
Gonzales, Michael C., of California, nominated to be Ambassador to the Republic of Zambia 675
Godfrey, John T., of California, nominated to be Ambassador to the Republic of Sudan 677
Adler, Michael J., of Maryland, nominated to be Ambassador to the Republic of South Sudan 680
Additional Material Submitted for the Record *690*

Tuesday, June 7, 2022 ..... **763**
Bennett, Amanda, of the District of Columbia, nominated to be Chief Executive Officer of the United States Agency for Global Media 765
Additional Material Submitted for the Record *780*

Thursday, June 16, 2022 ..... **791**
Wittes, Dr. Tamara Cofman, of the District of Columbia, nominated to be an Assistant Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development 794
Ratney, Michael Alan, of Massachusetts, nominated to be Ambassador to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia 797
Davis, Timmy T., of Virginia, nominated to be Ambassador to the State of Qatar 800
Gupta, Dr. Geeta Rao, of Virginia, nominated to be Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues 803
Additional Material Submitted for the Record *827*

Part II

Thursday, June 23, 2022 ..... **875**
Shortino, Elizabeth, of the District of Columbia, nominated to be United States Executive Director of the International Monetary Fund for a term of two years 878
Pressman, Hon. David, of New York, nominated to be Ambassador to Hungary 881
Pyatt, Hon. Geoffrey R., nominated to be an Assistant Secretary (Energy Resources) 883
Wood, Hon. Robert A., of New York, nominated to be Alternate Representative for Special Political Affairs in the United Nations, with the rank of Ambassador, and to be an Alternate Representative to the Sessions of the General Assembly of the United Nations, during his tenure of service 887
Additional Material Submitted for the Record *902*

Wednesday, July 13, 2022 ..... **937**
Godec, Hon. Robert F., of Virginia, nominated to be Ambassador to the Kingdom of Thailand 941
Thompson, Dean R., of Maryland, nominated to be Ambassador to Nepal . 944
Abraham, Yohannes, of Virginia, nominated to be Representative to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, with the rank and status of Ambassador 947
Buangan, Richard Lee, of California, nominated to be Ambassador to Mongolia 950
Damour, Marie C., of Virginia, nominated to be Ambassador to the Republic of Fiji, and to serve concurrently and without additional compensation as Ambassador to the Republic of Kiribati, the Republic of Nauru, the Kingdom of Tonga, and Tuvalu 953
Additional Material Submitted for the Record *972*

Page

Wednesday, July 27, 2022 ..... **1015**

Talwar, Hon. Puneet, of the District of Columbia, nominated to be Ambassador to the Kingdom of Morocco 1018

Henick, Dr. Jonathan, of Virginia, nominated to be Ambassador to the Republic of Uzbekistan 1021

Viguerie, Lesslie, of Virginia, nominated to be Ambassador to the Kyrgyz Republic 1024

Rosenblum, Hon. Daniel N., of Maryland, nominated to be Ambassador to the Republic of Kazakhstan 1026

Hood, Joey R., of New Hampshire, nominated to be Ambassador to the Republic of Tunisia 1029

Additional Material Submitted for the Record *1043*

Thursday, July 28, 2022—a.m. **1103**

Duncan, William H., of Texas, nominated to be Ambassador to the Republic of El Salvador 1110

Rodriguez, Hugo F., Jr., of Pennsylvania, nominated to be Ambassador to the Republic of Nicaragua 1112

Bond, Candace A., of Missouri, nominated to be Ambassador to the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago 1115

Fulton, Heide B., of West Virginia, nominated to be Ambassador to the Oriental Republic of Uruguay 1118

Faucher, Robert J., of Arizona, nominated to be Ambassador to the Republic of Suriname 1121

Additional Material Submitted for the Record *1138*

Thursday, July 28, 2022—p.m. **1173**

Duggal, Shefali Razdan, of California, nominated to be Ambassador to the Kingdom of the Netherlands 1177

Patman, Carrin F., of Texas, nominated to be Ambassador to the Republic of Iceland 1180

Aggeler, Angela Price, of the District of Columbia, nominated to be Ambassador to the Republic of North Macedonia 1182

Rana, Gautam A., of New Jersey, nominated to be Ambassador to the Slovak Republic 1185

Berry, Hon. Randy W., of Colorado, nominated to be Ambassador to the Republic of Namibia 1187

Additional Material Submitted for the Record *1197*

Wednesday, August 3, 2022 ..... **1231**

Ba, Jessica Davis, of the District of Columbia, nominated to be Ambassador to the Republic of Côte D'Ivoire 1239

Tamlyn, Hon. Lucy, of Rhode Island, nominated to be Ambassador to the Democratic Republic of the Congo 1242

Korhonen, Rachna Sachdeva, of New Jersey, nominated to be Ambassador to the Republic of Mali 1245

Schiffer, Rolfe Michael, of New York, nominated to be an Assistant Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development 1248

Fick, Nathaniel, of Maine, nominated to be Ambassador-at-Large for Cyberspace and Digital Policy 1250

Additional Material Submitted for the Record *1271*

Tuesday, November 29, 2022 ..... **1355**

Robinson, Christopher T., of Maryland, nominated to be Ambassador to the Republic of Latvia 1359

Kent, George P., of Massachusetts, nominated to be Ambassador to the Republic of Estonia 1362

Merten, Hon. Kenneth, of Virginia, to the Republic of Bulgaria 1365

Kavalec, Kathleen Ann, of California, nominated to be Ambassador to Romania 1367

Page

Tuesday, November 29, 2022 —Continued
Sabet, Bijan, of Massachusetts, nominated to be Ambassador to the Czech Republic 1370
Sullivan, Hon. Stephanie Sanders, of Maryland, nominated to be Representative to the African Union, with the rank and status of Ambassador 1389
Jardine, Henry V., of Virginia, nominated to be Ambassador to the Republic of Mauritius, and to serve concurrently and without additional compensation as Ambassador to the Republic of Seychelles 1392
Gorordo, L. Felice, of Florida, nominated to be Alternate Executive Director of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development for a term of two years 1394
Weiner, Richard L.A., of the District of Columbia, nominated to be Director of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development 1397
Micaller, Manuel P., Jr. of California, nominated to be Ambassador to the Republic of Tajikistan 1400
Additional Material Submitted for the Record *1414*

Wednesday, November 30, 2022 ..... **1513**
Tracy, Hon. Lynne M., of Ohio, nominated to be Ambassador to the Russian Federation 1516
Fisher, Hon. Julie D., of Tennessee, nominated to be Ambassador to the Republic of Cyprus 1542
Kvien, Kristina A., of California, nominated to be Ambassador to the Republic of Armenia 1545
Spahn, Carol, of Maryland, nominated to be Director of the Peace Corps .. 1548
Dyer, Cynthia, of Virginia, nominated to be Director of the Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking, with the rank of Ambassador-at-Large 1550
Additional Material Submitted for the Record *1564*

NOMINATIONS

THURSDAY, JUNE 23, 2022

U.S. SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS,
Washington, DC.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:22 a.m., in Room SD–419, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Edward J. Markey presiding.

Present: Senators Markey [presiding], Cardin, Shaheen, Murphy, Kaine, Booker, Johnson, and Portman.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. EDWARD J. MARKEY, U.S. SENATOR FROM MASSACHUSETTS

Senator MARKEY. This nomination hearing of the Senator Foreign Relations Committee will come to order.

We are here today to consider the nominees before us: Ms. Elizabeth Shortino to serve as United States Executive Director of the International Monetary Fund; the Honorable David Pressman to serve as Ambassador to Hungary; the Honorable Geoffrey Pyatt to serve as Assistant Secretary of State for Energy Resources; and the Honorable Robert Wood to serve as Alternate Representative for Special Political Affairs in the United Nations.

I would like to congratulate each of you on your nominations. We thank you for your service.

We thank your families, who have served and will continue to serve beside you as you embark on your new post.

Elizabeth Shortino is nominated to be the United States Executive Director of the International Monetary Fund. Ms. Shortino has spent 17 years as a dedicated public servant at the Office of Management and Budget and the Department of Treasury.

Since February of 2021, Ms. Shortino has served as the acting U.S. Executive Director at the International Monetary Fund. U.S. leadership at the IMF will be crucial as Russia's unprovoked war against Ukraine rages on, further straining Ukraine's economy and jeopardizing global economic growth.

Next, Ambassador David Pressman, nominated to be Ambassador to Hungary. Ambassador Pressman previously served as U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations for Special Political Affairs.

Ambassador Pressman is a prominent international human rights lawyer. This experience will serve him well as Ambassador to Hungary, where Prime Minister Viktor Orban continues to serve as a foe of democratic institutions and human rights.

In this role, we will rely on you to champion the restoration of checks and balances, support for an independent media, and sup-

port for LGBTQI rights that have come under assault under the Orban government.

Next, Ambassador Geoffrey Pyatt, nominated to be Assistant Secretary of State for Energy Resources. Ambassador Pyatt is a dedicated public servant, having served most recently as Ambassador to Greece and before that Ambassador to Ukraine.

The Assistant Secretary for Energy Resources will be a crucial part of the Administration's efforts to lead a clean energy revolution.

We need to cut fossil fuel demand and deploy renewable and energy efficient technologies in order to provide real long-term security for ourselves and for our allies.

As President Biden works to take short-term steps to support Europe in the face of war and disruption, I urge the Administration to continue to direct investments, funding, and private sector collaborations towards the renewable energy and electrification solutions that will keep Americans and our allies and partners safe, healthy, and supplied with affordable energy.

Ambassador Pyatt, I look forward to hearing how you will advance those goals as Assistant Secretary.

And finally, I would like to introduce Ambassador Robert Wood, who is nominated to be the Alternate Representative for Special Political Affairs at the United Nations.

Ambassador Wood has extensive experience with multilateral bodies from his time as the U.S. Ambassador to the Conference on Disarmament, Deputy Chief of Mission at the U.S. mission to the European Union, and Deputy Chief of Mission at the U.S. mission of international organizations in Vienna, Austria.

We welcome you as well, Ambassador Wood, and as we continue to navigate the pressing challenges to the international community posed by Russia's invasion of Ukraine and North Korea's continued illicit development of weapons of mass destruction, we need to ensure that voice at the United Nations remains strong.

We have to continue to build coalitions even as Russia and China continue to serve as spoilers within the United Nations Security Council.

Congratulations to each of you on your nomination to serve in these crucial posts.

Now let me turn and recognize the ranking member today, Senator Portman from Ohio.

STATEMENT OF HON. ROB PORTMAN,
U.S. SENATOR FROM OHIO

Senator PORTMAN. Thank you, Senator Markey, and thank you for your perfect timing. I apologize for being a couple minutes late. We are all juggling all of our commitments this morning.

But I am delighted to be here and particularly with these nominees. Thank you all for being willing to serve our country.

We were just told by Senator Markey something about your background so I will not go into that except to say that all of you are looking to join the ranks of some very important responsibilities.

Elizabeth Shortino to be at IMF—I look forward to talking to you about that; Ambassador David Pressman, U.S. Ambassador to

Hungary; Geoffrey Pyatt, who I got to know when he was ambassador in Ukraine, to be Assistant Secretary of State for Energy Resources; and Ambassador Robert Wood at the U.N.

This is a critical time—I guess we always say that—in global affairs, but I think it is not an overstatement to say that right now it is particularly difficult because it is a time of great instability, which requires U.S. leadership, in my view, on the world stage.

The positions you have been nominated to are all very important and maybe now more than ever.

Ambassador Pyatt, energy security, as you know, is of critical importance as Russia continues to wage this war against Ukraine. Eight hundred and seventy million dollars a day is about what the Europeans are sending to Russia to help fund the war machine and so we need to see a change there. We are seeing it slowly, more quickly if the United States has an even stronger leadership role.

Unfortunately, it took us a while to work with the EU to get them to make any moves, but they have embargoed Russian coal now, which will take effect in mid-August, as you know, and then they are phasing in this embargo on Russian oil.

I would like to hear from you today, of course, about how we can be more helpful to accelerate Europe's independence from Russia.

Strong concerns with our energy policies here at home because I do not think they are helping right now, and so we need to do what we can to increase production in this country rather than rely on the Venezuelas and Saudi Arabias even and, certainly, the Iranian sources to backfill our own energy needs.

Ambassador Pressman, Hungary has found itself in the middle of these conversations about European energy security and energy independence from Russia. They were a particularly difficult partner to deal with during Europe's attempts to agree to ban Russian oil. In fact, the compromise was required because of them.

I have concerns with the influence of Russia and China in Hungary and I would like to hear from you today about the dynamic and ways in which the United States can work to counter this and the ways in which you personally would work to do so.

Ambassador Wood, no shortage of global issues before the Security Council—as was noted, Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine, the global food and energy crises. Multiple humanitarian disasters have confirmed your plate will be full.

I want to talk to you about what your priorities will be at the U.N., if confirmed, and how you plan to work with our partners and allies there to pursue those priorities.

And we do have a lot of allies, and it turns out that Vladimir Putin's brutal and unwarranted attack on Ukraine has strengthened some of those alliances. I note that the NATO meeting coming up will have the heads of state from countries like South Korea and Japan and Australia and New Zealand attending.

Although they are not expanding NATO they are, in effect, expanding its reach by allying with us so closely.

Ms. Shortino, inflation and energy prices continue to climb upwards. Of course, this is impacting us here at home but also impacting emerging and developing countries around the world and to compound that, of course, we have a sovereign country, Ukraine, that needs to be rebuilt.

I am interested—really interested in talking to you about that. I think that IMF can play a central role. Following on the $40 billion dollar package that Senator Markey and I supported to help Ukraine, I would hope that the IMF can play a bigger role, going forward, to help Ukraine get back on its feet.

I would like to thank you all for being here, again, and, again, for stepping forward to serve your country and we look forward to hearing from you.

Senator MARKEY. Thank you, Senator Portman.

And now we will turn to our opening statements from our witnesses. I would ask each of you to keep your statements to five minutes.

And we will begin with you, Ms. Shortino. Whenever you feel comfortable, please begin.

STATEMENT OF ELIZABETH SHORTINO OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, NOMINATED TO BE UNITED STATES EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND FOR A TERM OF TWO YEARS

Ms. SHORTINO. Thank you so much, Chairman Markey, and Ranking Member Portman and members of the committee. I am truly honored that President Biden has nominated me to serve as Executive Director of the United States to the International Monetary Fund.

I am also thankful for the support of Vice President Harris, Secretary Yellen, and Deputy Secretary Adeyemo.

I am very pleased to be joined today by my husband, Michael Shortino, my mother, Peggy Demarest, and my son, Alex Shortino, behind me.

I have spent the last 17 years of my career working in international affairs for the U.S. Government, serving administrations from both parties to advance U.S. economic interests.

My interest in public service took hold during my years at the University of North Carolina where I majored in political science. Following graduation, I took a position in management consulting.

But after four years of working on business strategy I was drawn to public service. As a graduate student at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, I developed a passion for international economics and diplomacy and, specifically, the role of the Bretton Woods Institutions in the global economic order.

I formally began my career in federal service at the Office of Management and Budget, overseeing State Department and USAID economic and development assistance programs.

Four years later, I made the transition to the Treasury Department in the midst of the global financial crisis. My career at Treasury has spanned a wide range of international topics that have all, on some level, involved the use of IMF engagement to advance U.S. interests.

As an economist working on Pakistan, I worked closely with the State Department, Defense Department, and USAID to leverage the IMF and enhancing U.S. national security interests in the region.

As the director of the Office of the Middle East and North Africa, I developed strong relationships with IMF staff and partnered with

the IMF to design lending programs that would support Arab Spring countries in their economic transitions.

Later, as director of the International Monetary Policy Office, I led Treasury's engagement on IMF policies, IMF lending, and G–7 and G–20. I also spearheaded the U.S. agenda for the G–7 during its presidency in 2020 and oversaw the IMF response to the COVID–19 pandemic.

The IMF has a pivotal role to play in supporting the global economy. It is truly a unique organization in its ability to rapidly mobilize support for countries in crisis.

In response to the COVID–19 crisis, it mobilized $33 billion in emergency financing. More recently, it approved $1.4 billion in rapid financing to support Ukraine.

Its engagement often provides a catalytic effect. Its sound policy advice and robust economic lending conditions can unlock other international support and market financing, and facilitate critical transitions towards a stable and growing economic outlook.

It is the only international institution charged with assessing exchange rate stability and global economic imbalances, and its capacity development programs are of the highest caliber and provide much needed support, particularly for low income and fragile states.

While the IMF has many strengths, it also faces challenges. It is an organization that boasts a broad and diverse membership, and leveraging the IMF's toolkit to advance U.S. interests requires active engagement with IMF management and other board members.

Its lending programs need to incorporate measures to strengthen governance by corruption and bolster anti-money laundering frameworks, which will help ensure that IMF funds and other funds are used appropriately.

With low income countries facing rising debt challenges compounded by the increase in energy and food prices, the IMF has a significant role to play to support its poorest members.

If confirmed as U.S. Executive Director, I will work tirelessly to help ensure the IMF delivers on these future challenges while still executing its core mission.

Building upon my experience, I will press for the IMF to call out unfair and opaque Chinese lending as part of its broader efforts to promote debt sustainability. I will ensure that U.S. interests are protected in the next review of IMF quota and governance reform, which is scheduled to conclude in 2023.

I will take steps to make sure IMF lending is in line with and supports U.S. national and economic goals, including fighting corruption and money laundering.

Finally, I will work to improve the operational effectiveness of the IMF as an institution. I look forward to regularly engaging with the U.S. Congress and this committee on all of these issues, and I would be honored to have the opportunity to serve in this role.

I look forward to your questions today. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Shortino follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF ELIZABETH SHORTINO

Thank you, Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Risch, and members of the committee. I am honored that President Biden nominated me to serve as Executive Director of the United States to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and I am thankful for the support of Vice President Harris, Secretary Yellen, and Deputy Secretary Adeyemo. I am pleased to be joined today by my husband, Michael Shortino and my three children: Jack, Alex, and Julia.

I have spent the last 17 years of my career working in international affairs for the U.S. Government, serving administrations from both parties to advance U.S. economic interests. My interest in public service took hold during my undergraduate years at the University of North Carolina, where I majored in political science and interned at the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments. Following graduation, I took a position in management consulting; but after four years working on business strategy, I was drawn to public service. As a graduate student at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, I developed a passion for international economics and diplomacy, and specifically the role of the Bretton-Woods institutions in the global economic order.

I formally began my career in federal service at the Office of Management and Budget overseeing State Department and USAID economic and development assistance programs to advance economic diplomacy and support U.S. national security interests. Four years later, I made the transition to the Treasury Department in the midst of the global financial crisis.

My career at Treasury has spanned a wide range of international topics that have all, on some level, involved the use of IMF engagement to advance U.S interests. As a desk economist for Pakistan, I worked closely with the State Department, Defense Department, and USAID to leverage the IMF in enhancing U.S. national security interests in the region. As Director of the Office of Middle East and North Africa, I developed strong relationships with IMF staff and partnered with the IMF to design lending programs that would support Arab Spring countries in their economic transitions. Later, as Director of the International Monetary Policy office, I led Treasury's engagement on IMF policies, IMF lending, and G7 and G20 engagement, including spearheading the U.S. agenda for the G7 during its presidency in 2020 and overseeing the IMF response to the COVID–19 pandemic.

The IMF has a pivotal role to play in supporting the global economy. It is truly a unique organization in its ability to rapidly mobilize funding to support countries in a crisis. In the response to the COVID–19 crisis, it mobilized more than $33 billion in emergency financing, and more recently it approved $1.4 billion in rapid financing to support Ukraine. Its engagement often provides a catalytic effect; its sound policy advice and robust economic lending conditions can unlock other international support and market financing and facilitate critical transitions towards a stable and growing economic outlook. It is also the only international institution charged with assessing exchange rate stability and global economic balances. And its capacity development programs are of the highest caliber and provide much needed support for low-income countries and fragile states.

While the IMF has many strengths, it also faces challenges. It is an organization that boasts a broad and diverse membership and leveraging the IMF's toolkit to advance U.S. interests requires active engagement with IMF management and other Board members. Its lending programs need to incorporate measures to strengthen governance, fight corruption, and strengthen anti-money laundering frameworks to help ensure IMF funds are used appropriately. With low-income countries facing rising debt challenges, compounded by increasing energy and food prices, the IMF will have a significant role to play to support its poorest members.

If confirmed as U.S. Executive Director, I will work tirelessly to help ensure the IMF delivers on these future challenges while still executing its core mission. Building upon my experience, I will press for the IMF to call out unfair and opaque Chinese lending as part of its broader efforts to promote debt sustainability. I will ensure that U.S. interests are protected in the next review of IMF quota and governance reform, scheduled to conclude in 2023. I will take steps to make sure IMF engagement are in line with and support U.S. national and economic goals, including fighting corruption and money laundering. Finally, I will work to improve the operational effectiveness of the IMF as an institution.

I look forward to regularly engaging with the U.S. Congress and this committee on all of these issues. I would be honored to have the opportunity to serve in this role. I look forward to answering your questions.

Senator MARKEY. Thank you very much.

Now we will turn to you, Mr. Pressman, for your testimony.

STATEMENT OF HON. DAVID PRESSMAN OF NEW YORK, NOMINATED TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES TO HUNGARY

Mr. PRESSMAN. Chairman Markey, Ranking Member Portman, distinguished members of the committee, it is an honor to return to this committee as the President's nominee to serve as United States Ambassador in Hungary.

I am grateful to President Biden and to Secretary Blinken for the opportunity, if confirmed, to join the exceptional team of public servants at Embassy Budapest at this time of enormous complexity and urgency.

As you know, we meet against a backdrop of rising authoritarianism and democratic backsliding around the world.

Vladimir Putin has once again attacked a sovereign democratic neighbor, flouting the rules-based international order and challenging the institutions that America and its partners stood up to protect it, including the United Nations Security Council where I previously served as the United States ambassador.

Even for someone who has spent much of my career focused on the worst humanity has to offer—national security threats, human rights abuses, war crimes—the carnage Putin continues to wreak in Ukraine is staggering.

But where Putin expected weakness he has found strength. The Ukrainian people's courage and determination, to borrow the words of a former president, has, quote, "lit a candle of hope and inspiration, reminding the world that brave hearts still exist to fight injustice," end quote.

When President Reagan spoke those words he was speaking of Hungary and Hungarians, who, like their Ukrainian neighbors today, inspired people everywhere with their bravery, their thirst for freedom, their zeal for democracy.

In October 1956, Hungarian men and women took to the streets to stand up to Soviet oppression and demanded the right to control their destinies. They did so knowing that they could be imprisoned, tortured, or killed.

Their courage changed the course of Hungary and Europe, and inspired successive generations who chose to dedicate their lives to advancing dignity, freedom, and liberty, including me.

Whether serving in government to advance our nation's interests in the Security Council or working outside of government to uphold human rights, I have always strived to dedicate myself to advancing the fundamental values that make our nation exceptional.

If confirmed, I will bring that same passion for our interests and values to my work as Ambassador to Hungary. Hungary is a longtime friend, ally, and partner that makes significant contributions to common security objectives such as combating terrorism, transnational crime, and weapons proliferation.

As a NATO ally, Hungary supports efforts to defend NATO's eastern flank at this critical moment and has been our partner in addressing challenges around the world, including in Afghanistan, Iraq, and the Balkans.

Hungary is also home to hundreds of U.S. companies and the citizens of our nations take part in rich and growing cultural, educational, and scientific exchanges.

As both a NATO ally and a member of the European Union, Hungary joined the world in condemning Putin's unprovoked and brutal war in Ukraine and, ultimately, supported European Union efforts to impose severe costs on Putin.

However, Hungary's reticence in that process and the obvious influence of Russia and China in Hungary and on its government are causes for serious concern, not just for the United States' interests or Europe's but for the people of Hungary.

If confirmed, combating the malign influence of Moscow and Beijing and preserving and, indeed, strengthening our collective response to Putin's war of choice will be a top priority.

The threats to democracy in Hungary are real and they merit our determined attention. Human rights, media freedom, and the rule of law are not "nice to haves" in Hungary or anywhere else. They are fundamental foundations for sustaining democracy and liberty, and for meeting people's most basic needs.

Today in Hungary we see deeply troubling trends in each of these areas. If confirmed, I will support efforts to advance and protect these fundamental rights and transatlantic values.

The opportunity to serve as U.S. Ambassador to Hungary is an opportunity to bring our countries closer together and deepen ties between our economies and our people, and that is essential because the fates of our nations are already very much linked.

A free, safe, and secure Europe of which Hungary is an integral part is fundamental to a free, safe, and secure United States. The Hungarian people overwhelmingly view themselves as we do, as an integral part of the transatlantic community, and that shared conviction is something we have a vital interest in preserving.

No matter how difficult the issues we face, we will not lose sight of our common interest in restoring peace and security in Europe or of Hungary's role in that, and we will not equivocate in advancing the cause of liberty and human dignity.

If confirmed, I will do my utmost to bring us closer to each other and closer to democracy's promise.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I would be honored to answer your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Pressman follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. DAVID PRESSMAN

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, distinguished members of the committee, it is an honor to return to this committee as the President's nominee to represent the United States in Hungary. I am grateful to President Biden and Secretary Blinken for the opportunity, if confirmed, to join the exceptional team of public servants at Embassy Budapest at a time of enormous complexity and urgency.

As you know, we meet against a backdrop of rising authoritarianism and democratic backsliding around the world. Vladimir Putin has—once again—attacked a sovereign, democratic neighbor, flouting the rules-based international order and challenging the institutions that America and its partners stood up to protect it, including the United Nations Security Council, where I previously served as United States Ambassador. Even for someone who has spent much of my career focused on the worst humanity has to offer—national security threats, human rights abuses, and war crimes—the carnage Putin continues to wreak in Ukraine is staggering.

But where Putin expected weakness, he has found strength. The Ukrainian people's courage and determination has, to borrow the words of a former President, "lit a candle of hope and inspiration . . . [reminding] the world that brave hearts still exist to challenge injustice."

When President Reagan spoke those words, he was speaking of Hungary and Hungarians, who, like their Ukrainian neighbors today, inspired people everywhere with their bravery, their thirst for democracy, their zeal for freedom. In October 1956, Hungarian men and women took to the streets to stand up to Soviet oppression, and demanded the right to control their destinies. They did so knowing they could be imprisoned, tortured, or killed.

Their courage changed the course of Hungary and Europe, and inspired successive generations who chose to dedicate their lives to advancing dignity, freedom, and liberty—including me.

Whether serving in government to advance our Nation's interests in the Security Council, or working outside of government to uphold human rights, I have always strived to dedicate myself to advancing the fundamental values that make our Nation exceptional. If confirmed, I will bring that same passion for our interests and values to my work as Ambassador to Hungary.

Hungary is a long-time friend, ally, and partner that makes significant contributions to common security objectives such as combating terrorism, transnational crime, and weapons proliferation. As a NATO Ally, Hungary supports efforts to defend NATO's eastern flank at this critical moment, and has been our partner in addressing challenges around the world, including in Afghanistan, Iraq, and the Balkans. Hungary is also home to hundreds of U.S. companies, and the citizens of our nations take part in rich and growing cultural, educational, and scientific exchanges.

As both a NATO Ally and member of the European Union, Hungary joined the world in condemning Putin's unprovoked and brutal war in Ukraine, and ultimately supported European Union efforts to impose severe costs on Putin.

However, Hungary's reticence in that process, and the obvious influence of Russia and China in Hungary—and on its Government—are causes for serious concern. Not just for the United States' interests, or Europe's, but for the people of Hungary. If confirmed, combatting the malign influence of Moscow and Beijing, and preserving—and indeed, strengthening—our collective response to Putin's war of choice will be a top priority.

The threats to democracy in Hungary are real and merit our determined attention. Human rights, media freedom, and the rule of law, are not nice-to-haves in Hungary—or anywhere else. They are fundamental foundations for sustaining democracy and liberty—and for meeting people's most basic needs. Today in Hungary, we see deeply troubling trends in each of these areas. If confirmed, I will support efforts to advance and protect these fundamental rights and transatlantic values.

The opportunity to serve as U.S. Ambassador to Hungary is an opportunity to bring our countries closer together, and to deepen the ties between our economies and our people. And that is essential, because the fates of our nations are already very much linked. A free, safe, and secure Europe, of which Hungary is an integral part, is fundamental to a free, safe, and secure United States. The Hungarian people overwhelmingly view themselves as we do—as an integral part of the transatlantic community. That shared conviction is something we have a vital stake in preserving.

No matter how difficult the issues we face, we will not lose sight of our common interest in restoring peace and security to Europe, or of Hungary's role in that. And we will not equivocate in advancing the cause of liberty and human dignity.

If confirmed, I will do my utmost to bring us closer to each other, and closer to the ideals of democracy's promise.

Thank you for your consideration. I would be honored to answer any questions.

Senator MARKEY. Thank you, Mr. Pressman, very much.

Now we will recognize Mr. Pyatt for your opening statement.

STATEMENT OF HON. GEOFFREY R. PYATT OF CALIFORNIA, A CAREER MEMBER OF THE SENIOR FOREIGN SERVICE, CLASS OF CAREER MINISTER, NOMINATED TO BE AN ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE [ENERGY RESOURCES]

Mr. PYATT. Thank you very much, Chairman Markey, Ranking Member Portman, members of the committee, for the honor of appearing again before you as President Biden's nominee for Assistant Secretary of State for Energy Resources.

This is a pivotal time for the ENR Bureau, with headlines highlighting the importance of energy issues to our economy, daily lives

of Americans, and to our national security, and I am grateful for the confidence that President Biden and Secretary Blinken have placed in me with this nomination.

I would also like to introduce my wife, Mary, who has been my indispensable partner through a 33-year Foreign Service career and is joining me today.

I am grateful for the support that members of this committee and its staff have offered through my nine years as an American ambassador in Europe and, if confirmed, I am committed to continuing that collaboration.

Energy issues have been a major focus through the past two decades of my career. As U.S. Ambassador to Ukraine, I saw every day how Russia weaponized energy to undermine European sovereignty and facilitate corruption.

Putin's brutal invasion has caused a global spike in energy prices and Americans are suffering at the pump as a result. Our government is working tirelessly to minimize this pain, including by leading historic coordinated releases from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve alongside our partners and allies, and if confirmed, I will continue ENR's efforts to bolster fuel supplies on the global market and thwart Russia's use of energy as a weapon of war.

Energy diversification is crucial to this effort. Over six years in Athens I was proud to partner with the Greek government to help that country become a leading ally promoting diversity of energy sources and routes in Europe.

Importantly, our embassy team also supported Greece to adopt one of the EU's most ambitious energy transition agendas, often partnering with American companies that are creating jobs here at home.

This committee has shown welcome interest in China's efforts to dominate the supply chain for inputs like critical minerals essential to the deployment of clean energy technologies.

If confirmed, I commit to collaborating with you and your colleagues to secure critical mineral supply chains. I would also seek to sustain momentum for the Department of State's recently announced Mineral Security Partnership to ensure U.S. access to minerals that go into clean tech like batteries. I would work with the ENR team to build robust responsible supply chains to support economic prosperity in the United States.

Putin's brutal and unprovoked invasion of Ukraine has rewritten the global energy map, and the United States has worked with our allies and partners to address the severe impacts, especially on Europe's energy security.

Among Putin's many miscalculations in launching this war was his failure to anticipate how his actions would make our alliances stronger and accelerate energy transition.

Together, with the EU, member states, global allies and partners, and the private sector, we are redirecting energy supplies to Europe, increasing efficiency measures to reduce overall energy demand, and accelerating the deployment of renewable technologies.

My aim, if confirmed, will be to work with our allies and partners diplomatically and programmatically to free them from dependence on malign actors like Russia, to ensure that the United States and our partners benefit from the economic opportunities of

the clean energy revolution and expedite a low-carbon future that provides reliable and affordable energy to all segments of society.

Earlier in my State Department career I was honored to serve at the U.S. mission to the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna, where we worked intensively to advance clean nuclear power.

I was also part of the negotiating team for the U.S.-India Civil Nuclear Agreement, which played a critical role in unlocking the relationship between our two democracies.

If confirmed, I will work closely with colleagues from the State Department's ISN Bureau and the Department of Energy to support American leadership in civil nuclear technology, including the new generation of small modular reactors that promise a reliable source of base load power while advancing urgent climate goals.

As a career economic officer, I take seriously the imperative to defend American commercial and technology leadership.

If confirmed, I will work with business leaders and entrepreneurs to promote investment in U.S.-led energy technologies across all sectors, especially those needed to realize a low-carbon future. I would look forward to working with ENR's energy transformation and programs offices to amplify this effort.

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, energy security is front page news right now. But as Senator Lugar recognized in calling attention to these issues some two decades ago, our success requires persistent and strategically focused diplomacy to bolster our international energy partnerships. If confirmed, I would be honored to contribute to that task.

Thank you for your consideration, and I look forward to answering your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Pyatt follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. GEOFFREY R. PYATT

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Mr. Ranking Member, for the honor of appearing again before this committee as President Biden's nominee for Assistant Secretary of State for Energy Resources. This is a pivotal time for the ENR bureau, with headlines highlighting the importance of energy issues to our economy, the daily lives of Americans, and our national security, and I am grateful for the confidence that President Biden and Secretary Blinken have placed in me with this nomination.

I would also like to introduce my wife Mary, who has been my indispensable partner through a 33-year Foreign Service career and is joining me today. I am grateful for the support that members of this committee and its staff have offered through my nine years as an Ambassador in Europe. If confirmed, I am committed to continuing that collaboration.

Energy issues have been a major focus through the past two decades of my career. As U.S. Ambassador to Ukraine, I saw every day how Russia weaponized energy to undermine European sovereignty and facilitate corruption. Putin's brutal invasion has caused a global spike in energy prices and Americans are suffering at the pump as a result. Our Government is working tirelessly to minimize this pain, including by leading historic coordinated releases from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve alongside our partners and allies. If confirmed, I will continue ENR's efforts to bolster fuel supplies on the global market and thwart Russia's use of energy as a weapon of war.

Energy diversification is crucial to this effort. Over six years in Athens, I was proud to partner with the Greek Government to help that country become a leading ally promoting diversity of energy sources and routes in Europe. Importantly, our Embassy team also supported Greece to adopt one of the EU's most ambitious energy transition agendas, often partnering with American companies that are creating jobs here at home.

This committee has shown welcome interest in China's efforts to dominate the supply chain for inputs like critical minerals essential to the deployment of clean energy technologies. If confirmed, I commit to collaborating with you and your colleagues to secure critical mineral supply chains. I would also seek to sustain momentum for the Department of State's recently-announced Minerals Security Partnership to ensure U.S. access to minerals that go into cleantech like batteries. I would work with the ENR team to build robust, responsible supply chains to support economic prosperity in the United States.

Putin's brutal and unprovoked invasion of Ukraine has rewritten the global energy map and the United States has worked with our allies and partners to address the severe impacts, especially on Europe's energy security. Among Putin's many miscalculations in launching this war was his failure to anticipate how his actions would make our alliances stronger and accelerate energy transition. Together with the EU, member states, global allies and partners, and the private sector, we are re-directing energy supplies to Europe, increasing efficiency measures to reduce overall energy demand, and accelerating the deployment of renewable technologies.

My aim, if confirmed, will be to work with our allies and partners diplomatically and programmatically to free them from dependence on malign actors like Russia, to ensure that the United States and our partners benefit from the economic opportunities of the clean energy revolution, and expedite a low-carbon future that provides reliable and affordable energy to all segments of society.

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As a career economic officer, I take seriously the imperative to defend American commercial and technology leadership. If confirmed, I will work with business leaders and entrepreneurs to promote investment in U.S.-led energy technologies across all sectors—especially those needed to realize a low carbon future. I would look forward to working with ENR's energy transformation and programs offices to amplify this effort.

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, energy security is front page news right now, but as Senator Lugar recognized in calling attention to these issues some two decades ago, our success requires persistent and strategically focused diplomacy to bolster our international energy partnerships. If confirmed, I would be honored to contribute to that task.

Thank you for your consideration, and I look forward to answering your questions.

Senator MARKEY. Thank you, Ambassador Pyatt, and I would also like to enter into the record this letter of support for Ambassador Pyatt's nomination from the American Jewish Committee and from the Hellenic American Leadership Council, without objection, be entered into the record.

[The information referred to above is located at the end of this hearing transcript.]

Senator MARKEY. And finally, Ambassador Wood, your opening statement, please?

STATEMENT OF HON. ROBERT A. WOOD OF NEW YORK, NOMINATED TO BE ALTERNATE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA FOR SPECIAL POLITICAL AFFAIRS IN THE UNITED NATIONS, WITH THE RANK OF AMBASSADOR, AND TO BE AN ALTERNATE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE SESSIONS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE UNITED NATIONS, DURING HIS TENURE OF SERVICE AS ALTERNATE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA FOR SPECIAL POLITICAL AFFAIRS IN THE UNITED NATIONS

Mr. WOOD. Chairman Markey, Ranking Member Portman, distinguished members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to come before you today as you take up my nomination to serve as United States Alternate Representative for Special Political Affairs at the United Nations in New York.

I am greatly honored by the confidence and trust President Biden and Secretary Blinken have placed in me through this nomination, and if confirmed by the Senate I will defend to the utmost of my ability the fundamental values and interests of the American people.

I also wish to thank my lovely wife, Gita, and son, Jonathan, for their love and support throughout our extraordinary Foreign Service journey. Without them, I would simply not be where I am today.

As you know from reviewing my body of work over 34 years of government service, I have a great deal of experience working on multilateral issues that spans leadership roles in our missions to the European Union, the U.N. in Vienna, and the Conference on Disarmament.

Multilateral diplomacy can be extremely challenging and frustrating, yet it is so vitally important to the defense and promotion of American values and national security interests.

During a previous assignment at the U.S. mission to the U.N. in the immediate aftermath of 9/11, I witnessed the great work the U.N. can do, for example, the passage of U.N. Security Council Resolution 1267, which mandated sanctions on the Taliban and al-Qaeda, and of U.N. Security Council Resolution 1373, establishing the U.N. Security Council Counterterrorism Committee.

The passage of these two critical measures exemplified what the founders of the U.N. had envisioned—a body whose members would take prompt and effective action against those forces that represent serious threats to international peace and security.

What also stood out for me at that time was just how essential U.S. leadership was to the passage of those two resolutions. U.S. leadership is especially crucial today as the international community confronts Russia's unprovoked and brutal war of aggression against the people and territory of Ukraine.

Because of Russia's war in Ukraine its international isolation is now profound. If confirmed, I will work with other nations at the U.N. to widen and deepen that isolation.

Russia must understand that its military and political leadership will be held accountable for the death and destruction it has perpetrated upon Ukraine. Let there be no mistake about that.

Mr. Chairman, there are, of course, other immense challenges around the globe that call out for urgent international action, such as the COVID–19 pandemic, the climate crisis, the proliferation and use of weapons of mass destruction, growing anti-Semitism, and a rise in the number of autocratic regimes and the inherent threats they pose to freedom of expression.

No single state can or should be expected to tackle any of these issues by itself. It is only through collective action that we can hope to successfully address major threats.

In the Security Council and beyond, the relentless efforts of our adversaries to undermine the broader rules-based international order should be a call to action for all who believe in a transparent, open, and human rights-centric United Nations.

If confirmed, I will work vigorously to push back on Russian and Chinese efforts to reshape and undermine international law, institutions, and standards.

The U.N. needs reform. If confirmed, one of my priorities will be to pursue President Biden's reform agenda for the United Nations. I will work tirelessly to ensure that American taxpayers' money is being well spent at the U.N., that sexual exploitation and abuse are rooted out of U.N. peace operations, that the U.N. Secretary General is given the tools to better fight malign influence, that human rights remain at the core of the U.N.'s work, and that everything possible is done to put an end to anti-Israel bias throughout the entire U.N. system.

If confirmed, I would be honored to join Ambassador Thomas-Greenfield and her team at the U.S. mission in New York in pushing forward the President's robust agenda at the United Nations, which includes increasing the number of qualified Americans employed at the world body, something, Mr. Chairman, I know you and your colleagues on this distinguished committee want to see as well.

Again, thank you for giving me the opportunity to come before you. I look forward to answering any questions you may have.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Wood follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. ROBERT A. WOOD

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, distinguished members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to come before you today as you take up my nomination to serve as the United States' Alternate Representative for Special Political Affairs at the United Nations in New York. I am greatly honored by the confidence and trust President Biden and Secretary Blinken have placed in me through this nomination; and if confirmed by the Senate, I will defend to the utmost of my ability the fundamental values and interests of the American people.

I also wish to thank my lovely wife, Gita, and son, Jonathan, for their love and support throughout our extraordinary Foreign Service journey. Without them, I would simply not be where I am today.

As you know from reviewing my body of work over 34 years of government service, I have a great deal of experience working on multilateral issues that spans leadership roles in our Missions to the European Union, the U.N. in Vienna, and the Conference on Disarmament. Multilateral diplomacy can be extremely challenging and frustrating, yet it is so vitally important to the defense and promotion of American values and national security interests.

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In the Security Council and beyond, the relentless efforts of our adversaries to undermine the broader rules-based international order should be a call to action for all who believe in a transparent, open, and human rights-centric United Nations. If confirmed, I will work vigorously to push back on Russian and Chinese efforts to reshape and undermine international law, institutions, and standards.

The U.N. needs reform. If confirmed, one of my priorities will be to pursue President Biden's reform agenda for the U.N. I will work tirelessly to ensure that American taxpayers' money is being well spent at the U.N.; that sexual exploitation and abuse are rooted out of U.N. peace operations; that the U.N. Secretary-General is given the tools to better fight malign influence; that human rights remain at the core of the U.N.'s work; and that everything possible is done to put an end to anti-Israel bias throughout the entire U.N. system.

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Again, thank you for giving me the opportunity to come before you. I look forward to answering any questions you may have.

Senator MARKEY. Thank you, Ambassador, very much and we thank each of the witnesses.

Before we go to questions and answers from the members of the committee, I have a few questions that speak to the importance that this committee places on responsiveness of all officials in the executive branch and that we expect and will be seeking from you. I would ask each of you to provide just a yes or no answer.

Do you agree to appear before this committee and make officials from your office available to the committee and designated staff when invited?

I ask each of you to say yes.

[All witnesses answer in the affirmative.]

Senator MARKEY. Thank you. Do you agree—do you commit to keep this committee fully and currently informed about the activities under your purview?

[All witnesses answer in the affirmative.]

Senator MARKEY. Do you commit to engaging in meaningful consultation while policies are being developed, not just providing notification after the fact?

[All witnesses answer in the affirmative.]

Senator MARKEY. Do you commit to promptly responding to requests for briefings and information requested by the committee and its designated staff?

[All witnesses answer in the affirmative.]

Senator MARKEY. We thank you for that. Now we will turn to a question and answer period from the members.

Ms. Shortino, from your perspective, what role should the United States play in the conversations to ensure that the IMF and other international institutions guarantee that Ukraine gets the help that they need? Their economy is collapsing by 40 percent. What would you consider to be the correct plan for us to implement in the months and years ahead?

Ms. SHORTINO. Absolutely. Thank you for that very important question, Senator.

I think there is quite a lot that the Fund can do in terms of helping stabilize Ukraine's economy and help rebuild it. I do want to just say at the outset, like others here, I strongly condemn Russia's illegal war against Ukraine. This is a clear violation of rules and principles.

The IMF can really step forward. It already has stepped forward with $1.4 billion in emergency financing to help stabilize and provide urgent needs to the Ukraine foreign exchange reserves.

The IMF can provide policy advice, going forward, in terms of what the Ukrainians can do to stabilize their economy and also help identify financing needs and gaps that need to be filled.

And as Ukraine moves into the reconstruction phase, we hope, at some point, IMF—the IMF will be a key player in terms of laying out the foundation for what a stable macro economy looks like and helping lay that foundation for other institutions, bilateral and multilateral, to step in.

If confirmed, I would be working very hard to make sure that the IMF is very forward leaning in terms of its engagement with Ukraine.

I would be working with other shareholders at the IMF and with management and staff to advance all of these issues.

Senator MARKEY. Thank you.

Ambassador Pressman, according to Freedom House, Hungary stands out in Europe for its unparalleled democratic erosion over the last decade, undergoing the largest decline over—ever measured in Freedom House's Report on Democracy in Europe or Eurasia.

As ambassador, how would you engage with government officials, like-minded partners, and members of civil society to support independent media, advance the rights of the LGBTQI community, and support democratic institutions?

Mr. PRESSMAN. Chairman Markey, thank you for the question.

You are absolutely correct with respect to the Freedom House ranking. In addition, I would say that, really, regardless of what political perspective you look at the indicators in Hungary, the American Enterprise Institute, the Cato Institute, the Heritage Foundation, the World Bank, and Freedom House have all looked at indicators in terms of democratic processes and institutions and have seen decline in Hungary, and that should be a cause of enormous concern.

Hungary is our partner and our ally. But what we are seeing—we use the term democratic backsliding and that is a little bit of a euphemism. I mean, I use the term as well, but it is—it belies

the fact that—it suggests that as we are climbing up Mount Olympus, so to speak, we are slipping back unintentionally, and in fact, what we see in Hungary are affirmative choices by our partner that are having the predictable consequence of limiting media freedom, of undermining the independence of the judiciary, of targeting vulnerable populations.

And so it is incumbent upon us, if I am confirmed, to engage unequivocally at the senior most political levels of the government to express our concerns but also to be engaging with civil society and the rich civil society that does exist in Hungary and that the space for which to operate has been limited to ensure that we are providing them with the most support we can to engage in the democratic process.

Senator MARKEY. Thank you.

And to you, Ambassador Pyatt, according to the Biden administration's review, the United States is 100 percent dependent on imports of 17 critical minerals and relies on China for refining and reprocessing.

For instance, China processes 90 percent of the world's rare earth elements, 55 percent of the world's lithium, 65 percent of the world's cobalt.

What is your plan for the United States to be able to respond to this challenge that our country has now been posed with?

Mr. PYATT. Thank you, Chairman Markey.

And let me start by saying that I think all of us as Americans should be concerned about the kind of monopoly that China has been able to achieve on these critical elements of the solar supply chain.

Similarly, it is extremely important that the United States works with our partners and allies in order to ensure transparency and reliability of critical mineral supply chains around the world and to develop diversity of sources.

In that regard, I am proud to say that the ENR Bureau has really been ahead of the curve in developing policy mechanisms and multilateral structures to work with like-minded countries on these issues through initiatives like the EITI—the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative—through the Mineral Security Partnership.

These are the industries of the future and, Mr. Chairman, if you will allow me a short comment about Massachusetts. A great example is an American company that I was able to work with as ambassador in Greece called Advent Technologies.

Advent is a path breaker on hydrogen fuel cell technology. It has an operation in Greece, and I was very proud to support Advent in their advocacy before the Greek government and they, just last week, received a positive signal.

They will be getting about a billion dollars of EU funding to deploy hydrogen fuel cell technologies in Western Macedonia, a region of Greece formerly dominated by coal mining.

It is a great example of the work our embassies can do but it is also a great example of how we need to build these international partnerships on these cutting-edge clean technologies. This is an area where we can prevail.

Thank you very much.

Senator MARKEY. Excellent. No, thank you, and thank you for singling out a Massachusetts company. Much appreciated.

Secretary—Senator Portman?

Senator PORTMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will take that promotion.

So I mentioned earlier that I have had the opportunity to work with you, Ambassador Pyatt, in your role in Ukraine. I thought you did a very good job there and, particularly, advocating a stronger position vis-a-vis Russia, and I am glad you are stepping up to do this.

I am going to put you on the spot here, though, a little bit. You said, "I have seen how Russia weaponized energy. We need to free Europeans of malign actors like Russia."

That is good. I just wonder if we are doing that, and I think about Nord Stream 2, what we did there. I mean, what this administration thought, as I understand it, is that if they approved Nord Stream 2, which the previous administration had disapproved, that somehow that would make Russia a better partner.

What do you think about that? Do you think it made Russia a better partner?

Mr. PYATT. Senator, let me start by saying thank you to you and all the members of the committee for the tremendous support that I enjoyed as U.S. Ambassador in Ukraine. It made an extraordinary difference in the effectiveness of our diplomacy and our effort to support the choices of the Ukrainian people.

On the question of energy, I will say a couple of quick things. First, Nord Stream 2 was a bad deal. I wish it did not take this brutal war to make the rest of the world understand that so clearly.

Senator PORTMAN. Let me just—I have only got a few minutes here, but not just the rest of world. What I am asking you, really, is what lessons did you learn from that and what did the United States learn from it? Because I think we made a mistake.

I mean, some people say it gave Putin a green light. I do not go that far. I think he was seeing a green light everywhere he looked.

But that was one of the reasons, I think, he decided, well, this is an indication that Europe and the United States are not going to stand up to me because I have weaponized energy effectively. They have even now approved Nord Stream 2 to make them more dependent on Russian oil.

Is that the lesson you get from it?

Mr. PYATT. Senator, I would say Russia's manipulation continues today. You see it in the reduction of energy supplies——

Senator PORTMAN. Forty percent reduction on Nord Stream 1.

Mr. PYATT [continuing]. Even now.

Senator PORTMAN. And let me ask you that because I—again, I do not see you are going to answer my first question directly. But do you think we should do something about Nord Stream 1?

Mr. PYATT. I think we need to make sure that we do everything possible to ensure that people in Europe and everywhere else remember the way they felt on the 25th of February; that is, to make sure that we make sure that nobody ever again says that Russia can be a reliable energy supplier, that we do everything possible

to reduce Russian revenues from oil and gas while also avoiding further disruption of a highly disrupted global energy marketplace.

Senator PORTMAN. Let me just suggest that we are doing the opposite in some regards, not with regard to Nord Stream 2 anymore, although we did, thanks to the Germans finally deciding rightly so. That is not the issue.

But last week, the Biden administration Treasury Department announced an extension of HC licenses through December 5th. This is allowing energy transactions to continue to be exempted from sanctions.

It otherwise would have ended tomorrow, June 24th. We have extended that license. So these Russian banks are now able to transact energy deals and support the—again, the continued reliance on Russian energy.

I pushed Treasury on this and was told the decision was made based on Europe's phased in of the energy embargo—the oil embargo, in particular—and, again, $870 million a day. That is what I am told is the average daily receipts that Russia is receiving with a nice margin and that is one reason you see the ruble gaining strength.

That is why you see the Russian economy not being nearly as debilitated as the Ukrainian economy and, frankly, they are not feeling the pressure.

What do you think about that? Should that license have been renewed that was set to expire tomorrow?

Mr. PYATT. Senator, I was not part of those policy deliberations. I do not have the benefit of all the perspectives so I cannot address that.

What I will say is that it is very clear to me that we are in the early stages of this campaign and that if you look at what is happening in the Russian oil and gas industry—the gradual European phase out, the European decision on insurance for seaborne Russian oil, the disengagement of international companies from the Russian oil and gas industry, which is taking away technology and will inevitably damage Russia's ability to produce oil and gas—all of these things will raise the cost for Vladimir Putin of the outrageous events that have unfolded since the 24th of February.

Senator PORTMAN. As you know, I think we should be more aggressive and I hope you will be, and despite all the things you are saying they are doing just fine. And it is not just China and India that is providing all these resources to fund the war machine. It is our allies in Europe and elsewhere.

I have lots more questions about Hungary and about the IMF. Hopefully, we will have a second round and, again, I am glad you are stepping up. I hope you will be as aggressive as I saw you in Ukraine where you actually helped push the Administration policy toward a more realistic view of Russia. I want to see the same thing with regard to your new role with regard to our energy crisis we face.

Thank you.

Mr. PYATT. Thank you, Senator.

Senator MARKEY. Senator Kaine?

Senator KAINE. Thank you to my colleagues, and congratulations to the nominees. What a qualified panel.

I have questions for you, Ambassador Pyatt and Ms. Shortino.

Ambassador Pyatt, not a question, just an observation. Your position is really important and I think it is really important the coordination that you will do with other parts of the Government, the Department of Energy and others.

I am not an energy expert but I have been confused by the Administration's kind of messaging around energy policy. I give the Biden administration very high praise for the degree to which they have snapped together a set of democratic allies, not just NATO members but others as well, to deal with the illegal invasion of Ukraine.

I think that a lot is going to be written about the prenegotiation of consequences if there should be an invasion—we agree that this has to be done.

The one piece, though, that I am confused about in the whole sort of comprehensive effort is the energy policy piece, and I get it that it is complicated because there are a number of goals we are trying to achieve at the same time.

We want to transition the United States and the world to a lower and no-carbon energy future to save the planet. We are worried about pricing effects on Americans who are paying too much for gas at the pump.

We want to help nations break free of reliance on petro dictators, both for the good of the planet but also because we do not want to have resources flowing to petro dictators that will embolden them.

These are difficult goals to accomplish at the same time and, occasionally, there is timing that makes me confused. We had a hearing a couple of weeks ago. It was an energy-related hearing in this committee where sort of on the same day news was breaking that the President was going to be going to Saudi Arabia to try to get them to produce more energy.

I have got major problems with any meeting with MBS because he is complicit in the murder of a Virginia journalist, Jamal Khashoggi, who was a Washington Post journalist whose family still lives in Virginia.

But at the same time as the news was coming out about the potential for this meeting there was also an announcement out of a different part of the U.S. Government that oil leases that some oil companies had in Alaska were being canceled.

Those leases, if they had not been canceled, they were not going to produce oil like this. But there was something odd about we are going to go to a dictator with blood on his hands and ask him to produce more energy and cancel leases at the same time.

But, again, there is multiple goals that we are trying to accomplish and it is hard. But what I really have not yet seen from the Administration is sort of here is the near-term strategy that we are going to pursue to help backstop European allies and help wean them away from reliance on Russian energy.

Here is what U.S. productive capacity can help them do in the short term. But here is the long-term strategy where we are going to help our allies move toward the lower and no-carbon energy future.

That, obviously, is a tall order to have a strategy that has got this near-term and medium-term and long-term approach to it. But I think you are going to be in a unique position because of the work that you have already done and the credibility you have to in the kind of interagency dialogue, whether it is at the White House or DOE or State, to kind of balance these domestic policy imperatives with foreign policy imperatives.

I think you are just perfectly suited for this role. But I am just putting that marker down to say I would like to see a lot more clarity from the Administration about how we are going to try to accomplish these goals. We cannot accomplish them all at once but we can have a phased effort to do so.

Ms. Shortino, I want to talk to you. I am very—I am focused on the Americas a lot. I am the chairman of the Subcommittee over the Americas, and a nation that we have some opportunities with but I am really worried about now is Argentina.

The IMF—I think the largest loan that the IMF ever did was a 2018 loan to Argentina that, frankly, was to stabilize their economy and it did not really work, and the IMF has studied, okay, why did we do it that way and why did it not work.

Argentina is, in some instances now, getting closer to China, invited to be part of the BRICS meetings. They are the latest addition to the Belt and Road Initiative with China. They are, I think, participating in the Shanghai—the alternate development bank that China is setting up as kind of a competitor to the IMF.

I would like you—now I have really filibustered. I have asked my question and I only have a few seconds left. Talk a little bit about what we might do with Argentina through the IMF to, hopefully, improve the relationships we have with them.

And I apologize, Mr. Chair, for taking five minutes to ask a question. But if you will let her answer I would really appreciate it.

Senator MARKEY. Absolutely.

Please, Ambassador.

Ms. SHORTINO. Absolutely.

And, Senator Kaine, I could not share your concerns any more. I mean, Argentina—it is a complicated case. This is a country that has seen economic issues for decades now. There are no easy answers, to be sure.

Can the IMF come in and bring this economy back to a place where it can be stable and it can eventually grow and reaccess markets? I, certainly, hope so. It is not going to be an easy task.

That said, this new IMF program that is in place it does have the ability, if executed, to lay the foundation by bringing inflation down, bringing down the fiscal deficit, restoring confidence in markets, that will actually move Argentina on the right path.

Is that path going to be quick? Absolutely not. But can we start nudging them in that direction? Yes, I think we can.

If confirmed, I would, really, be working to see is Argentina—are we holding Argentina's feet to the fire? Are they executing on what they committed to do with the IMF? And if they are not we need to have the courage to stand up and say we do not support this.

If they are, I think we can work with other key members at the IMF to really push them in the right direction. It is going to take

a lot of work but I think the IMF is uniquely placed in its role to actually get them headed in that direction.

Senator KAINE. Thank you so much. I appreciate my colleagues' patience.

Senator MARKEY. And I thank the Senator.

I know Senator Johnson had signed on to ask questions remotely.

Are you there, Senator Johnson?

[No response.]

Senator MARKEY. If not, the Senator from New Hampshire, Senator Shaheen?

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And congratulations to each of you on your nominations and thank you for your willingness to continue to serve the country.

Ambassador Pyatt, I would like to begin with you because so much of our focus has been on how do we produce more energy—how do we replace what Russia is doing.

But there has not been much on the demand side on energy, and at some point before the Russian invasion a couple of years ago I remember seeing a report that showed that Ukraine was the most energy inefficient country in Europe.

I wonder if you could talk about how we can get some of these countries focused on using less energy. Most of that technology is off the shelf that can be put in very quickly.

But I think there are a lot of both residential consumers and businesses that do not understand what a difference it would make if they swap out all their light bulbs and light fixtures and do other measures that would ensure that they are more efficient.

Mr. PYATT. Thank you, Senator, and you are exactly right, and Mary will tell you that when we were living in Kyiv, because you had centralized heating every October the centralized heating system would turn on and then we would open all the windows because that is how you kept the temperature manageable before it got really cold outside.

Senator SHAHEEN. It is kind of like the Capitol here, that it is—the warmer it gets outside the colder it gets in here.

Mr. PYATT. And, Senator, the challenge is that in so much of Europe a major demand driver for natural gas is, in fact, home heating. And so while Europe is not having the debate we are having here in the United States over $6 a gallon gasoline, what it is having is an enormous debate over home utility bills, which are going through the roof as gas prices have quadrupled, gone up over seven times since the start of the COVID pandemic.

Making these changes is critically important. Rewiring European energy infrastructure to electrify home heating, to introduce efficiency measures like smart thermostats, this is all going to take time, especially in developing countries, in the western Balkans, in places like Ukraine. There is an important role to be played by USAID, by the Department of Energy, by ENR.

And I will say, Senator, during my time in Kyiv I was really grateful for the interagency partnership that we had, largely, led by ENR, by the way, but bringing together all these instruments of the U.S. Government to help the Ukrainians reduce their dependence on Russia.

It was a major accomplishment that almost simultaneous with the invasion Ukraine switched its electricity grids over to the European grid.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank goodness.

Mr. PYATT. That was the fruit of resources that this committee helped to provide but work that started way back in 2014 in terms of modernizing the infrastructure.

You are exactly right and, certainly, if confirmed, this will be part of the agenda that I will bring to the office.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you. I appreciate that. I know it is longer term but I think it is very important to have that on the agenda.

Ms. Shortino, it is clear that part of what is happening in Ukraine with Russia is their effort to control the Black Sea to keep Ukraine from getting its grain out and the impact that that is having not just on Ukraine but on the rest of the world.

Can you talk about whether IMF has a role in trying to help put pressure on Russia?

Ms. SHORTINO. Absolutely, and I think you raise a very valid concern.

I mean, the IMF has quite a few roles to play in this whole broader crisis. The first is to assess and provide countries with policy advice around these spillover impacts. It will be bringing forward a program soon for Egypt. This is one of the countries that is significantly impacted by higher food prices.

It is also engaging in other countries as well. It is looking, more broadly, at the food crisis impact for all of these countries. Its surveillance and its lending, its capacity development, are very key in terms of supporting the policy response.

With regards to Russia, I think in this instance, really, if confirmed, my role would be to sort of minimize Russia's impact, Russia's voice at the Fund.

The Fund—they have a responsibility to do surveillance on the Russian economy. The Russians should allow them to do that because then we can see just how badly the economy is doing. Right now, Russia is not publishing a lot of that data.

If confirmed, I would really push for the IMF to be doing that sort of analysis so that we can have an accurate picture of this—what the effect has been on the Russian economy.

Senator SHAHEEN. I, certainly, hope that you and our other international institutions will voice the concern about what Russia is doing with respect to food stocks and the impact that that is having around the world, and take the position that that is not acceptable and that we need to stand up to Putin on that.

And my view is we should work through the U.N. and escort ships into the Black Sea and get that grain out because we should not let Vladimir Putin starve millions of people in Africa and Latin America.

I know that my time is up but I would just like to add, Ambassador Wood, the news reports yesterday and today have been about the devastating earthquake in Afghanistan and, obviously, given the role of the Taliban it is—the kind of international aid that might be coming is more difficult under the current circumstances.

I hope you, at the U.N., will lobby the U.N. agencies that have continued to work in Afghanistan to ensure that we are doing everything possible to respond and also to address what is happening with women and girls in the country.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator MARKEY. Senator Cardin?

Senator CARDIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator MARKEY. Excuse me. I have been told that Senator Booker has been waiting in line—I apologize to you—on video.

If you do not mind, Senator Cardin.

Senator CARDIN. Not a problem.

Senator MARKEY. Senator Booker, if you are there you are recognized.

Senator BOOKER. I am here. I just want to mark for history that this may be the only time in my life that I get to cut ahead of a man with such seniority and stature as Senator Cardin. Thank you for your graciousness.

Senator CARDIN. As long as Senator Booker does not use physical force to get in between me, as he did with Senator Tester.

[Laughter.]

Senator BOOKER. I appreciate that.

I am really excited that this is, really, in my opinion, a very important Pride Month here in the United States of America with a lot of the challenges we are seeing that the LGBTQ community persists to face.

But I want to talk, Mr. Pressman, if I can, about LGBTQ issues on an international stage but more specifically in Hungary.

Since Viktor Orban's rise to power over a decade ago, the Hungarian Government has rolled back a lot of democratic norms, as the chairman mentioned in his comments earlier.

It has diminished the independence of governing institutions meant to provide the necessary checks and balances, limiting space for civil society and has been openly hostile towards vulnerable populations and, specifically, the LGBTQ+ population.

Orban's government has rescinded legal recognition of transgender people and passed a law banning the use of materials seen as, "promoting homosexuality and gender fluidity at schools."

If confirmed, how will you press the Hungarian Government to respect the rights of all of her citizens, especially vulnerable, discriminated against groups like the LGBTQ+ population?

And then I just want to add to that, how can the U.S. work with the EU to ensure that the Hungarian Government is held accountable for any violations of human rights in its crackdown on civil society in general and LGBTQ groups specifically?

Mr. PRESSMAN. Thank you, Senator, for that question.

And I cannot emphasize enough how important the issues you raise are and they would be the crackdown on civil society, generally, but the use of anti-LGBT rhetoric and policies in a way that is about, fundamentally, trying to exclude a population from the democratic process.

And so whether the rhetoric is anti-LGBT, antisemitic, anti-Roma, to the extent that it has the impact of trying to remove a population from its ability to engage in democracy it is a corrosive. It is dangerous and merits a unequivocal and immediate response

from people across society, including at the senior most levels of government.

And so, Senator, if confirmed, you have my commitment that I would engage directly at all levels with the Hungarian government—thank you—at all levels with the Hungarian Government but, in addition, would work very much with civil society, who is operating in a limited space, to try to make progress on this important set of issues.

Senator BOOKER. And while I have you—and by the way, that assurance gives me great confidence in my support for you on the floor in the United States Senate as well as in committee.

But you know the challenges we are facing, obviously, in Ukraine. I was in Poland and just recently in Germany, but Hungary has taken 700,000 Ukrainian refugees, which is a good thing.

But I am worried about Hungary's increasing nationalism and the backsliding and, frankly, their cozy relationship with Russia and their dependence on Russia for natural gas and oil.

I am skeptical, really, of Hungary's continued actions regarding the war in Ukraine and so, just really quickly, because I still want to get one more question in, if confirmed, how will you work with the Orban government regarding Hungary's approach and response to the war in Ukraine?

And if you can do that in 20 seconds I would appreciate it.

Mr. PRESSMAN. I will try my best, Senator.

Let me just say I share your concern. I think that in terms of engaging on this issue we have to tackle the problem of Russian influence on the government of Hungary and to do that it requires being direct with our concerns.

It requires investing in civil society's capacity to render more transparent what those relationships are, including independent media, and it requires supporting the European Union in tackling some of the corruption challenges as well.

Senator BOOKER. That was an impressive 20 seconds, sir. You have a——

Mr. PRESSMAN. I tried.

Senator BOOKER [continuing]. You have a talent and a gift in diplomacy that many Senators do not share.

Really quick, Ms. Shortino, can you just talk to me? One of my biggest concerns in the Senate right now is the global food crisis and we have been working very hard, my office along with others on this committee, to try to get that addressed.

And so what role can the IMF play in helping countries hit by high food prices and what kind of financial assistance can the IMF provide to the worst affected nations? If you could just give me that answer.

And, Mr. Chairman, thank you for your indulgence.

Ms. SHORTINO. Absolutely, and that is a huge concern right now. I mean, this is a crisis that is really facing a lot of countries and low income countries in particular, who already have very high debt levels and very limited fiscal space.

It is really incumbent upon the IMF to come in and provide support. Briefly, they can provide policy advice to these countries in terms of how to address their fiscal structure, how to strengthen

their external position so that they are able to import higher priced goods.

They can also provide lending, and as I had mentioned earlier, there is going to be a large program coming up for Egypt. There are several other lending programs in the works that will address—in a good way will provide near-term financing but will also include conditions that address some of the underlying vulnerabilities that have gotten these countries into this position in the context of the higher food prices.

And, of course, capacity development. The IMF has very strong capacity development, particularly in the area of fiscal and monetary policy, and can help build up these countries' ability to manage higher debt, to manage, fiscal transparency.

All of these things, in the end, will help make these economies more stable and able to respond to crises such as these.

Senator BOOKER. Thank you. I look forward to working with you on this issue. I look forward to supporting you on the floor and in committee.

And, Senator Cardin and Chairman, thank you for the indulgence of the extra one minute and 45 seconds.

Senator MARKEY. Thank you, Senator Booker.

Senator Cardin?

Senator CARDIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

What I think I will do—we have a business meeting of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that will take place at 11:00. I know we have a limited amount of time.

I am going to ask most of my questions for the record in respect for the time that we have available. I just want to thank all of our nominees for their willingness to serve.

Mr. Pressman, I enjoyed our conversation, and just to further enlighten our members, I think your background in regards to war crimes is something that could be extremely helpful to us as we look at the challenges that we have in regards to holding Russia accountable for its activities in Ukraine.

I do want to just underscore also the point of your background as co-chair of the International Bar Association's Human Rights Law Committee. It will serve you well as our representative in Hungary.

I just really want to underscore the importance for the U.S. Embassy to be a refuge for the human rights defenders within Hungary.

Hungary presents challenges for us as a NATO ally and as a member of the European Union. The Orban government has not only violated the commitments of the Helsinki Final Act—I chair the U.S. Helsinki Commission—but also represents a challenge for Europe in violating its commitments in regards to the rights in the law that they pass affecting the LGBTQ community.

You are going to have your hands full in Hungary. But I think you are the right person to do that and I thank you for your willingness to serve.

Mr. Chairman, I will ask my questions for the record.

Thank you.

Senator MARKEY. Thank you, Senator.

And we thank all of our witnesses for your answering of our questions today. We are looking forward to seeing all of the good work which you are going to be doing in your new post.

Members of the committee will have until the close of business tomorrow, Friday, June 24th, to revise and extend their remarks and submit questions for the record with a prompt response from witnesses to those questions.

We thank everyone for their participation today.

With that, this hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 10:28 a.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

Additional Material Submitted for the Record

Communication Urging the Confirmation of Hon. Geoffrey R. Pyatt to be an Assistant Secretary of State for Energy Resources

June 22, 2022

Esteemed Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the American Jewish Committee (AJC) and the Hellenic American Leadership Council (HALC), we are writing to support the nomination of Ambassador Geoffrey R. Pyatt to be an Assistant Secretary of State for Energy Resources.

Our organizations have worked closely with Ambassador Pyatt – both while he served as U.S. Ambassador to Ukraine and especially during his tenure as U.S. Ambassador to Greece. During his tenure as Ambassador to Greece, he, along with AJC and HALC, worked to advance cooperation and integration in the Eastern Mediterranean. Given that many key diplomatic developments and regional institutions – the U.S., Greece, Cyprus, Israel "3+1", the East Mediterranean Gas Forum, etc. – are related to energy, Ambassador Pyatt's insight, experience, and relationships are critical. He has been a crucial part of regional projects focusing on natural gas and sustainable energy.

His last two postings put him on the front lines of some of the most pressing energy diplomacy issues we face today, providing the experience needed to assume the role of Assistant Secretary of State for Energy Resources. At a time when energy diplomacy is so vital, and the regions in which Ambassador Pyatt served are playing an outsized role, we cannot think of anyone more capable and ready to assume this role.

We enthusiastically support Ambassador Pyatt's nomination and urge his speedy confirmation. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out. Thank you for the consideration of our views.

Respectfully,

Julie Rayman
Senior Director of Policy and Political Affairs
American Jewish Committee

Endy Zemenides
Executive Director
Hellenic American Leadership Council

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO ELIZABETH SHORTINO BY SENATOR ROBERT MENENDEZ

Fiscal Consolidation Measures

Question. The compounding crises of the COVID–19 pandemic and war in Ukraine have exacerbated significant challenges faced by many countries that were already facing rising debt distress prior to the pandemic, as well as a widening financing gap to achieve their development goals. The IMF provided critical emergency support for many countries during the pandemic, which came with few strings attached. However, it has recently returned to including fiscal consolidation measures as conditions to its programs, such as cuts to social spending and regressive tax measures, that can exacerbate both economic and gender inequality. These measures threaten to undermine efforts to achieve an equitable and sustainable recovery. A report released in 2021 by the Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) of the IMF has called on the institution to strengthen its monitoring and reporting of the social and distributional impacts of its programs and policies to protect vulnerable groups.

- Would you support a policy at the IMF that would require measures such as the systematic use of robust poverty and distributional impact assessments, that evaluate the possible and actual effects of programs on wages, health and social protection programs, vulnerable populations, and inequality?

Answer. Since the onset of the COVID crisis, the IMF has provided over $200 billion in financing to countries in need, more than $33 billion of this total as fast-disbursing emergency financing. More recently, as countries have begun to transition toward establishing longer-term recovery plans, the IMF has supported this shift through traditional financing programs grounded in an agreed framework of critical macroeconomic and structural reforms. These frameworks are essential to help cement sustainable recoveries and build the confidence of citizens and external lenders in the credibility of the borrower's policy framework. Policy conditionality is also essential to ensure that IMF resources are appropriately safeguarded.

In this context, IMF staff have increasingly incorporated assessments of the poverty and distributional impacts of any proposed policy changes, and have worked to design conditionality such that it supports the most vulnerable while addressing macroeconomic imbalances. For instance, many IMF programs include minimum targets that countries must maintain on social safety net spending, or couple reforms to ill-targeted or regressive price controls with enhancement of programs that provide support to the poorest households. If confirmed, I will continue to press the need to incorporate this type of analysis into the IMF's policy engagement with countries, especially those in IMF financing programs, and to work to ensure that policy conditionality takes into account the impacts on the most vulnerable.

Special Drawing Rights

Question. As the largest shareholder at the IMF, the U.S. is in a unique position to advance or block progress on key issues, as we saw with the Special Drawing Rights issuance that was finally approved more than a year into the pandemic because the former Administration held up the release of these critical resources. Many countries have now used the majority or even all of the SDRs they received in the recent issuance, in large part because the distribution of SDRs was incredibly uneven. The vast majority went to countries like the U.S. that don't need them because the issuance has not been based on need but on quota.

- What is your position on the U.S. reallocating some of its SDRs and would you support alternative channeling vehicles outside of the IMF?

Answer. Domestic legal requirements limit the ability of the United States to "reallocate" SDRs. Treasury is seeking, and requires, Congressional authorization to lend up to $21 billion to the IMF for the Poverty Reduction and Growth Trust and the Resilience and Sustainability Trust. The G20 is exploring viable alternative vehicles for channeling SDRs at the multilateral development banks, but many central banks face constraints on the use of their reserves, which include SDRs, outside of the IMF.

Question. Secondly, do you think that the problem of uneven distribution of SDRs and that they have now been used in 2 recent crisis contexts (including in 2009 during the Global Financial Crisis) means that the IMF should reform the rules around SDR issuances?

Answer. The IMF issues SDRs to meet the long-term global demand for reserves. Under a general allocation of new SDRs, the IMF allocates SDRs in proportion to members' quota shares, which are broadly linked to their share of the global econ-

omy. Changing the rules regarding SDR issuance would require an amendment to the IMF's Articles of Agreement.

While an SDR allocation does result in advanced economies receiving SDRs, the most recent allocation was part of a broader strategy to help hard-hit countries respond to the economic impacts of the COVID crisis and has allowed some major economies to lend their new SDRs in support of low-income countries through the IMF's Poverty Reduction and Growth Trust and the Resilience and Sustainability Trust. Low-income countries received about $21 billion in SDRs through the allocation, which represents approximately 2.8 percent of their GDP.

Quota Reform Agenda

Question. Next year the IMF will be undergoing its 16th General Review of Quotas. The Board has requested that this Quota Reform revisit the adequacy of quotas, and continue the process of IMF governance reform-including a proposed new quota formula as a guide. Any adjustment in quota shares would likely result in an increase in the share of emerging market and developing countries as a whole, while protecting the voice and representation of the poorest members.

Under the Resolution, the 16th Review should be completed no later than December 15, 2023.

- What will you prioritize in this reform agenda?

Answer. Treasury has not yet begun detailed discussions around the 16th General Review of Quotas. If confirmed, I look forward to engaging as appropriate with Congress to help ensure this review advances key U.S. interests at the IMF.

Question. Do you think the U.S. should maintain its veto power or is it time to move on, and if so, why or why not?

Answer. U.S. leadership at the international financial institutions remains indispensable, including at the IMF. The United States remains the world's largest economy accounting for nearly 25 percent of global GDP. The United States should maintain its veto power over major policy decisions at the IMF. If confirmed, I will strongly oppose any change in IMF governance that would remove or threaten the U.S. veto.

Question. How would you balance the clear need for more democratic decision making at the IMF with the leadership role of the U.S.?

Answer. The IMF has strong governance structures underpinned by U.S. leadership, and governance systems that reflects the need for members to take on appropriate roles and responsibilities in the global economy. The IMF should remain a quota-based institution with votes linked to quota shares, and the United States should retain its leadership role, including its veto over major policy decisions.

At the same time, most decisions taken by the Executive Board are based on majority decisions and reflect the broad views of the IMF's membership. Countries whose economic weight has expanded rapidly have a growing expectation that their influence over these decisions should increase as well. For this to happen, I believe it is important that these countries demonstrate their willingness and ability to act in ways that support and strengthen the global institutional framework that the IMF and other organizations comprise. If confirmed, I will press for beneficiaries of governance reform to act as responsible stewards of the IMF and the global economy.

Question. As part of governance reform, a strong case could be made that it is important to have more space for civil society to inform IMF programs in their countries and to have opportunities to hold the IMF more accountable when harm occurs. The MDBs have such policies but the IMF does not.

- Would you support a policy to mandate CSO consultation in IMF operations and a system of accountability?

Answer. I support IMF country teams engaging robustly with groups that represent key economic stakeholders in respective countries, which is important to enhance IMF staff's understanding of the political and economic realities in each country and to underpin the credibility of IMF policy engagement. Discussions with CSOs already form a regular component of many country teams' economic surveillance and program development processes. Additionally, the IMF Executive Board generally meets with CSOs from around the world to discuss broad global issues and IMF policies twice a year

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO ELIZABETH SHORTINO BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Manangement

Question. Many U.S. missions have been under enormous stress over the last few years, in large part due to COVID. What is your understanding of morale throughout your post?

Answer. Morale is generally high within the Office of the U.S. Executive Director at the International Monetary Fund (IMF) as the post is staffed with experienced Treasury personnel who are rotating into these positions through a competitive process. That said, due to the COVID–19 crisis, the workload at the office has never been higher, and opportunities for in-person interaction remain limited by COVID policies and restrictions, both of which have created new stress for staff.

Question. How do you intend to improve morale at your post?

Answer. If confirmed, I intend to work closely with staff within Office of the U.S. Executive Director to ensure the office is meeting their personal and professional needs. This includes providing flexible work schedules where feasible; regularly adjusting workload across the office; providing opportunities for training, staff development, and leadership; and regularly seeking out and incorporating feedback from staff on the operations of the office. I also intend to work closely with the Senior Advisor to the U.S. Executive Director, a seasoned Treasury civil servant, to provide day-to-day guidance and support to staff.

Question. How do you intend to create a unified mission and vision at your post?

Answer. The mission of the U.S. Executive Director and its office is to advance U.S. priorities and interests at the International Monetary Fund. If confirmed, I will work closely with the Treasury Department and staff within the U.S. Executive Director's office to confirm we have a shared understanding of this mission and develop a vision for how the office can effectively execute this mission. This includes identifying key policy priorities and issue areas, developing strategies for engagement, and monitoring progress. I would hold regular, quarterly sessions with Treasury and office staff to discuss these topics, in addition to ad hoc engagement on specific issues as they arise. I would also hold regular strategy sessions with staff in the office to discuss how the office can operate most effectively in executing this mission.

Question. Management is a key responsibility for senior officials. How would you describe your management style?

Answer. I would describe myself as a manager who likes to empower and develop staff. I delegate many tasks to staff and provide oversight, guidance, and direction. I support staff efforts to seek out training or take on new challenges. I also hire people with a diverse set of skills and backgrounds so that the office has a range of views and perspectives. I believe a more diverse team is critical to enhancing the effectiveness of the office. Finally, I try accommodating staff personal and professional needs in my management approach, allowing for flexibility wherever feasible.

Question. Do you believe it is ever acceptable or constructive to berate subordinates, either in public or private?

Answer. Absolutely not, and I have never done so. It is important for a manager to create an environment of trust, including by supporting staff and developing strong working relationships.

Question. How do you envision your leadership relationship with your deputy?

Answer. If confirmed, I envision relying upon my deputy for day-to-day management responsibilities of the office so that I can take a more strategic approach to executing the mission of the office. I also plan to seek regular advice from my deputy on a range of issues and to delegate topics that do not require my direct engagement. I plan to discuss the division of labor with my deputy to ensure we are both in agreement on how to run the office most effectively.

Question. If confirmed, what leadership responsibilities do you intend to entrust to your deputy?

Answer. If confirmed, I would entrust the day-to-day management of staff and workload within the Office of the U.S. Executive Director to my deputy. I would also rely upon my deputy to form relationships with other offices within the IMF, as well as to represent the United States in certain Executive Board meetings of the IMF.

Human Rights, Democracy, and International Organizations

Question. If confirmed, how will you work with interlocutors and policy-makers at the IMF to encourage the inclusion of a counter-trafficking strategy, including risk assessment and mitigation efforts as need, in proposed IMF projects in countries listed on Tier 2 Watch List and Tier 3 of the State Department's most recent Trafficking in Persons report?

Answer. I share your deep concern over the terrible human toll of Trafficking in Persons (TIP), and if confirmed I will work to incorporate consideration of TIP into the IMF's activities at every opportunity, consistent with the scope of the IMF's mandate. I will continue to implement our mandate from Congress to vote against funding for any countries listed on Tier 3 of the TIP Report, absent relevant waivers or legislative exceptions. More broadly, improving economic governance and reducing channels for corruption is a key tool for fighting human trafficking, and to that end I will work with other Board members and with IMF staff and management to incorporate consideration of TIP issues into the IMF's framework for addressing governance and corruption, which is set for Executive Board review later this year.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO ELIZABETH SHORTINO BY SENATOR BENJAMIN L. CARDIN

Ukraine and Russia

Question. If confirmed, what direction would you provide for the IMF related to support for Ukraine and restrictions on Russia?

Answer. Russia's unprovoked war against Ukraine is horrific and unjustifiable. I am committed to continuing to work with Treasury, IMF management, and U.S. partners at the IMF to prevent Russia from obtaining financing, loans, or other benefits from its membership at the IMF. Likewise, if confirmed, I will press for the IMF to use every available tool to support Ukraine as it contends with the economic fallout of Russia's brutal invasion. This includes engagement by the IMF country team to help Ukraine's authorities understand and evaluate policy options, and financial support consistent with IMF policies.

China

Question. In your view, how should the United States seek to influence the IMF's engagement with China as China's role in the global economy continues to widen?

Answer. It is essential that the IMF engages with China across a broad scope of issues as its global role widens. On debt issues, China is the world's largest bilateral official creditor, and the IMF must be willing to press PRC authorities, including publicly if necessary, to take appropriate actions to deal with growing debt risks, including by fulfilling China's commitments under the Common Framework. In country surveillance, the IMF must credibly address the policies that sustain China's chronic external imbalances and identify and assess the risks to its economic and financial sustainability, as the potential for spillovers from these channels to the global economy increases. If confirmed, I will work closely with IMF management and like-minded Board members to press for these steps.

Question. How do U.S. actions at the IMF and other international institutions affect China's interest in establishing Chinese-led institutions, such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB)?

Answer. The United States plays an indispensable role in helping to ensure that international institutions in which we participate uphold the highest standards of integrity and credibility and work to achieve the broad goals of the international community. In some cases, our insistence on high levels of transparency and accountability, and the implementation of policy reforms as a condition for financing, has led some countries to seek alternative lending options that do not uphold these high standards. Although I cannot speak for China's motives in establishing the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, I believe it is in the interest of the United States to support the international institutions that we helped to establish, and we should work to maintain their effectiveness and ability to respond to members' needs. As part of this effort, the United States should work with emerging market economies to ensure their responsible engagement in these important institutions.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO ELIZABETH SHORTINO BY SENATOR MARCO RUBIO

Question. Last year, the IMF agreed to distribute more than $650 billion worth of "special drawing rights" or "SDRs" to all of its member states. Countries can exchange SDRs for cash in the event they need money, or to supplement their foreign currency reserves. Through the distribution, the People's Republic of China received more than $30 billion in free cash from the IMF. More than that, since 2016, countries can exchange SDRs for the PRC's currency, the yuan. Countries indebted to the CCP can exchange these SDRs for yuan to pay off their Belt and Road Initiative debts, which funnels even more money to a genocidal regime.

- Which countries have exchanged their SDRs for yuan since 2021?

Answer. As of end-May 2022, China's SDR holdings have increased by about $2.3 billion, meaning China has purchased additional SDRs, though it may not have provided RMB in all of these exchanges. The IMF does not publish information on specific transaction parties or the currencies for which SDRs are exchanged.

Question. How does the IMF monitor the use of funds provided by SDRs to the CCP?

Answer. China's SDRs are held by its central bank as reserve assets. Broadly, China has no need to "use" its SDRs—i.e., exchange its SDRs for hard currency or use them to service IMF obligations—as its central bank already holds very ample foreign exchange reserves. Since the 2021 SDR allocation, China has purchased additional SDRs, which continue to be held by its central bank. Additionally, in 2021, China agreed to loan 1 billion SDRs to the IMF's Poverty Reduction and Growth Trust, and has pledged to lend additional SDRs to the IMF's newly approved Resilience and Sustainability Trust. If confirmed, I will continue to push for the IMF to enhance transparency around members' use of SDRs.

Question. How much of it is being utilized, or in contribution, to commit genocide, steal American technology, or fund the modernization of China's military?

Answer. SDRs are not currency; rather they are a reserve asset that can only be exchanged by a holder for useable currency in transactions recorded by the IMF's SDR Department. Accordingly, China holds its SDRs as a reserve asset at its central bank. China's central bank has not used its SDRs, but rather has purchased additional SDRs (i.e., provided hard currency to other IMF members in exchange for SDRs).

Question. If confirmed, will you commit to opposing future SDR allocations until the CCP agrees to an audit of its use of SDR funds, or the IMF implements restrictions on the CCP's use of those funds?

Answer. China has not used its SDRs; it holds more SDRs than its allocation and has not gained additional usable currency as a result of any SDR exchanges.

Question. The IMF plays a critical role in the global economy by providing sovereign lending to countries experiencing fiscal problems and improving these countries' financial practices. Most prominently, it has provided sorely needed loans to Ukraine, which is defending itself against Putin's unprovoked and unjustified invasion. The IMF can and should play a role in helping countries resist the less dramatic, but no less dangerous, influence of the Chinese Communist Party, which has ensnared countries like Sri Lanka, Uganda, and Ecuador in hundreds of millions of dollars' worth of predatory loans. In return for debt relief, the CCP extracts enormous concessions out of these countries that reduces their independence and expands the military presence of the People's Liberation Army. In Cambodia, the Hun Sen regime's external debt is estimated to be $9 billion, with China accounting for 40 percent. As was reported a few weeks ago, the PLA Navy opened a naval base in Ream, and some believe the PLA Air Force is setting up a facility at Dara Sakor. These installations would significantly improve the PLA's power projection abilities in the region.

- Should the IMF support countries suffering from the Chinese Communist Party's predatory lending practices?

Answer. Yes. The IMF must continue to engage robustly with countries for whom debt vulnerabilities—including from unfair and opaque PRC official lending—is an increasing problem. The IMF can provide technical assistance and policy engagement to help countries better understand the scope of their debt issues and to identify policy options for addressing them. It can also provide critical visibility into the impact of PRC debt on its members' macroeconomic vulnerabilities, to enable more effective bilateral and multilateral engagement by other countries. Finally, where

appropriate, IMF lending can help support countries' economic reform efforts when they are underpinned by a credible macroeconomic framework, which may include debt restructuring or forgiveness where debt has become unsustainable. If confirmed, I commit to working to ensure that the IMF's engagement in these areas strengthens the ability of borrowing countries to resist and respond to the negative effects of predatory lending practices, including by the PRC.

Question. How would this priority fit with President Biden's January 2021 Executive Order that U.S. representatives to international financial institutions only support lending and investment to projects "in alignment with the Paris Climate Accords"?

Answer. I agree that the IMF plays a critical role in the global economy by supporting countries experiencing economic and financial crises. Regarding aligning the IMF's operations with the goals of the Paris Agreement, the IMF provides financing to support members' balance-of-payments needs; it does not provide project-based lending. Under the IMF's climate strategy, country engagements, including for lending, will incorporate assessment of the climate impacts of key policies to help ensure consistency with countries' targets pursuant to the Paris Agreement.

Question. To your knowledge, has the IMF offered loans to countries currently indebted to CCP, such as Sri Lanka, Uganda, and Ecuador?

Answer. The IMF currently has ongoing financing programs with Ecuador and Uganda. In IMF programs where debt is deemed unsustainable, the IMF works with countries to incorporate appropriate debt restructuring to regain sustainability, and to ensure that all creditors, including China, are treated on comparable terms that achieve fair burden sharing. IMF country staff remain deeply engaged with the Sri Lankan authorities. Due to the country's current debt situation, we expect that a significant debt restructuring will be an important part of any IMF-backed program of reforms and adjustment.

Question. If confirmed, will you support lending to these countries?

Answer. I support the IMF's continued robust engagement with member countries experiencing balance of payments needs. Any full-fledged IMF financing program must incorporate a credible macroeconomic framework that could include, where necessary, debt restructuring. In such cases, if confirmed, I will continue to press for IMF engagement that prioritizes the participation of all parties, including bilateral creditors, on an equal basis to ensure that the burden of debt restructuring is borne fairly, and I will press the IMF to play its critical role in ensuring that members, both debtors and creditors, engage appropriately to achieve effective and timely debt restructuring outcomes.

Question. What steps will you take to ensure these countries are properly supported by the international community in confronting the CCP?

Answer. I am deeply committed to ensuring that the IMF plays its appropriate role in helping member countries respond to their economic stability risks, including those stemming from China's irresponsible lending practices. If confirmed, I will work closely with Treasury, IMF leadership, and like-minded members of the Executive Board to press for robust IMF engagement and support to help enable these countries' effective recoveries. This will require IMF teams working closely with governments to identify and address vulnerabilities. I will also seek to require the IMF to hold China to account for past and present behavior that undercuts the ability of these countries to establish and maintain sustainable economic recoveries.

Question. At the beginning of this year, the IMF proposed the creation of a Resilience and Sustainability Fund, which would grant loans to countries contingent on them agreeing to reduce emissions. This is just the latest step in a single-minded focus at the IMF and other international financial institutions, like the World Bank, to prioritize emissions reductions in the face of other, more urgent, priorities. Many of the countries most in need of lending to bring electricity to their populations, distribute lifesaving medicine, and build critical infrastructure to lift their people out of poverty are also the lowest emitters. Requiring these countries to cut their already low emissions risks needlessly keeping their people poor and their governments eager to turn to China for the investment they seek.

- Should the U.S., though the IMF, support making loans to developing countries contingent on their promises to cut current and future emissions? Is this a priority of yours, if confirmed?

Answer. The Resilience and Sustainability Trust (RST) will provide transparent, affordable, longer-term loans to poor and developing countries alongside policy reforms to reduce the macroeconomic risks posed by pandemics and climate change.

Crucially, loans from the RST will not be contingent on promises to cut current and future emissions. Such loans will be used to help countries strengthen pandemic preparedness and support their efforts to respond to a range of macroeconomic issues posed by climate change, including reducing their vulnerabilities to shocks from dependence on energy supplied by malign actors.

Question. Would the Administration prefer crippling a country's economic development and keeping its people poor if it meant keeping future emissions in check?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work to ensure that the IMF retains its core focus on helping members build stable and robust frameworks for economic growth and stability, which includes incorporating the economically critical impacts of climate and climate-related policies.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO ELIZABETH SHORTINO BY SENATOR JOHN BARRASSO

Question. If confirmed, will you commit to ensuring the International Monetary Fund (IMF) provides lending for traditional energy projects across the globe, including oil, gas, nuclear and coal?

Answer. The IMF is not a development bank and does not provide project-based lending. The IMF provides financing to countries to address their balance of payments problems, and IMF loans are typically used to address reserve needs of the central bank or, in limited cases, budgetary support. If confirmed, I will support IMF lending that is underpinned by credible, country-specific macroeconomic frameworks that address its members' energy needs, reflect their economic priorities, and incorporate pandemic, climate and other risks where they are macro-critical and important for the program's success.

Question. In August 2021, the IMF with the approval of the Biden administration issued $650 billion in Special Drawing Rights (SDRs)—the largest in history. The majority of the allocations ended up going to those countries that need it the least.

- What was your involvement in the design of the Special Drawing Rights?

Answer. Secretary Yellen supported the 2021 SDR allocation to help address the long-term global need for reserves. In considering the 2021 allocation, I provided technical-level input to Secretary Yellen in my role as Acting Executive Director.

Question. How much did the United States receive from the $650 billion in SDR? How did the United States use our SDR?

Answer. The United States received about $113 billion worth of SDRs from the 2021 allocation. Those SDRs, along with all of our previously held SDRs and those exchanged with other IMF members, are held in the Exchange Stabilization Fund as reserve assets. Since the dollar is the world's leading reserve currency, we do not need to "use" our SDRs.

Question. How much did Russia receive from the SDR?

Answer. In accordance with the IMF's Articles of Agreement, the SDR allocation was distributed to all IMF members in proportion to their respective IMF quota shares. As such, Russia received approximately $17.5 billion in SDRs. Russia has not exchanged any of these SDRs for usable currency.

Question. How much did China receive from the SDR?

Answer. The SDR allocation was distributed to all IMF members in proportion to their respective IMF quota shares. China received approximately $42 billion worth of SDRs. China has not exchanged any of these SDRs for usable currency.

Question. How much total funding did developing countries receive from the SDR?

Answer. The SDR allocation was distributed to all IMF members in proportion to their respective IMF quota shares. Developing and emerging market countries, excluding China, received about $232 billion worth of SDRs from the 2021 SDR allocation.

Question. Why were you unable to get enhanced transparency and accountability measures attached to any reallocation effort?

Answer. As part of the SDR allocation, Treasury successfully pressed IMF staff to enhance the details it reports on members' SDR holdings and transactions by breaking out transactions into the aggregate categories of IMF operations and SDR trading. IMF staff also agreed to publish a note on best practices for SDR use to

guide their country teams and authorities—this note was published in August 2021 on the IMF's website.[1] The IMF publishes members' SDR holdings on a monthly[2] and quarterly[3] basis. In addition, at Treasury's request, the IMF started publishing an annual summary update on SDR transactions[4] and has committed to undertaking an ex-post report on members' use of SDRs, which it will publish two years after the allocation.

Question. The Biden administration is attempting to turn the IMF into a climate change bank. The original intended purpose of the $650 billion SDR was to help support economic stability. Now, it appears it is using those funds to support climate change. On April 13, 2022, the Executive Board of the IMF approved the establishment of the Resilience and Sustainability Trust (RST).

• Do you support the establishment of the RST?

Answer. Treasury has engaged extensively with partners in the G7 and G20 around the need to increase IMF support for countries to address certain longer-term economic risks that can affect global economic and financial stability. The Resiliency and Sustainability Trust (RST) represents the product of that intensive engagement, and will help middle- and lower-income countries address the macroeconomic risks of pandemics and climate change, including from energy insecurity. If confirmed, I will work with IMF management and like-minded partners to ensure that the RST remains tied to the IMF's core mandate of economic and financial stability.

Question. Why should we allow these funds, originally meant to help support economic stability due to the global pandemic, to be used for climate change?

Answer. As research from the IMF and many other institutions has conclusively demonstrated, pandemics, and climate change pose substantial and increasing risks to many countries' macroeconomic and financial stability. The RST is designed to help countries address these risks by including policy conditionality that increases resilience to the macroeconomic impacts of pandemics, and climate shocks, including from energy insecurity. The RST will be subject to the same strong safeguards as traditional IMF lending with IMF Executive Board oversight for every RST disbursement.

Question. Would China be eligible to receive funds under the RST?

Answer. China has no need for IMF financing; but it has committed to lend its SDRs to support the RST. Moreover, even if China did want to borrow from the RST it would be unlikely to agree to a regular IMF program engagement, which is a precondition for RST eligibility.

Question. What climate changes policies have you supported while serving at the International Monetary Fund?

Answer. While serving as Acting U.S. Executive Director to the IMF, I voted to support the IMF's Strategy to Help Members Address Climate Change, which became effective in July 2021. The strategy directs the IMF to support members in assessing the macroeconomic impacts of climate and climate-related policies, including their impacts on financial markets, through its surveillance and technical assistance.

Question. In a report released in April 2021, the IMF stated "At $1.9 trillion, the Biden administration's new fiscal package is expected to deliver a strong boost to growth in the United States in 2021 and provide sizable positive spillovers to trading partners." Managing Director of the IMF, Kristalina Georgieva, explained that since the IMF's most recent forecast the "horizon has darkened."

• Why did the IMF get it so wrong?

Answer. The United States experienced the fastest GDP growth in 40 years in 2021 and the fastest calendar year decline in the unemployment rate on record, consistent with the IMF's forecast. U.S. growth would inevitably slow once the economy was back to full employment, but Russia's unprovoked and unjustified war against Ukraine has added further headwinds that are slowing growth. The most recent

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[1] https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/Policy-Papers/Issues/2021/08/19/Guidance-Note-for-Fund-Staff-on-the-Treatment-and-Use-of-SDR-Allocations-464319

[2] Guidance Note for Fund Staff on the Treatment and Use of SDR Allocations (imf.org)

[3] International Monetary Fund's Financial Statements and the Quarterly Reports on IMF Finances

[4] First year of publication: https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/Policy-Papers/Issues/2021/10/26/Annual-Update-on-SDR-Trading-Operations-498096

IMF forecast has lowered estimates of U.S. and global growth based on those headwinds.

Question. Is the U.S. in a recession?

Answer. U.S. recessions are determined by National Bureau of Economic Research's Business Cycle Dating Committee, so I would defer to that committee for a full assessment.

Question. What is the main reason for the decrease in U.S. growth?

Answer. U.S. growth has slowed in 2021 as the United States returned to full employment, and Russia's unprovoked and unjustified war against Ukraine has generated a large negative supply shock, raising food and energy prices, which has reduced household income and may limit households' ability to spend on other goods and services, slowing the economy.

Question. Do you believe the $1.9 trillion Biden spending package contributed to inflation?

Answer. Inflation has risen to high levels in both the United States and across nearly all advanced economies. More than half of inflation experienced in the United States in 2022 is the result of high energy and food prices, exacerbated by Russia's war against Ukraine. The United States had high inflation in 2021 due in large measure to global supply chain disruptions generated by the ongoing pandemic.

Question. The IMF suspended engagement with Afghanistan until there is clarity within the international community of the recognition of the Government.

- Under what conditions, if any, would you recommend the United States support the IMF providing special drawing rights or access to resources by the Taliban?

Answer. The IMF has stated publicly that Afghanistan's access to IMF resources and SDRs remains on hold as a consequence of a lack of clarity among IMF members regarding recognition of the Government of Afghanistan. If confirmed, I will continue to work closely with Treasury and the State Department to convey our policy stance with respect to Afghanistan, and will engage robustly with IMF management and staff to help safeguard Afghanistan's resources for its people.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO HON. DAVID PRESSMAN BY SENATOR ROBERT MENENDEZ

Question. How will you balance encouraging unprecedented behavior by the Hungarian Government in allowing so many refugees to enter Hungary, while also pushing the government to live up to its international obligations in supporting them once there?

Answer. The Government and the people of Hungary have responded in an unprecedented way to the Ukrainian refugee crisis. Over 800,000 people have crossed the border directly from Ukraine to Hungary and many thousands more by way of Romania as well. The country mobilized to set up receptions centers and shelters to meet basic needs of refugee families and to provide health care and integration services. Hungary's capacity to accommodate a surge of refugees of this magnitude during the current crisis was surely tested. Hungary and its generous people should be recognized for that effort.

Hungary, of course, has been controversial in recent years due to its refugee policies, including the criminalization of NGOs for providing aid to refugees and limiting access to asylum procedures. These policies have likely affected Hungary's ability to respond to the current Ukrainian refugee crisis. The slower processing time of requests for temporary protective status in Hungary may have contributed to lower numbers of Ukrainians receiving that status in Hungary than in neighboring countries.

If confirmed, I would seek to cooperate with the Hungarian Government as well as local NGOs and international organizations to help build capacity. I would also advocate for the fair and equitable treatment of all refugees and asylum seekers and encourage the Hungarian Government to meet its international obligations with respect to refugees, both from Ukraine or otherwise.

Question. How will you use your position to advocate for independent media in Hungary, and ensure that Hungarians have access to accurate and unbiased journalism?

Answer. I am concerned about declining media pluralism in Hungary, as are the leading international press freedom advocates and many Hungarians. A diversity of

independent voices and opinions is essential to democracy, and if I am confirmed I will urge the Government of Hungary to promote an open media environment, an environment that is in line with EU law. In addition, I would support regional programs to build the capacity of independent media. Finally, I would call attention to actions that further erode the space for an independent media or that fuel disinformation, which threaten the availability of accurate information in the public square. Freedom of expression and a thriving independent press are vital for the functioning of a pluralistic democracy, and the U.S. Government will continue to emphasize the importance of media freedom.

Question. What would be your approach to supporting the LGBT, Roma, and other vulnerable communities that face discrimination and abuse in Hungarian society?

Answer. The United States has made advocacy for human rights an important element of its foreign policy. If confirmed, I would engage vulnerable communities in Hungary directly to learn about their experiences first-hand.

The United States provides support to human rights defenders and non-governmental organizations around the world, including in Hungary. If confirmed, I would work to strengthen these partnerships in Hungary and determine how the United States can optimally support vulnerable groups. It is critical that we partner with the Government of Hungary on areas of common values to ensure that all people are treated with dignity and that their basic human rights are respected.

Anomalous Health Incidents

Question. I am very concerned about directed energy attacks on U.S. Government personnel (so-called Anomalous Health Incidents). Ensuring the safety and security of our personnel abroad falls largely on individual Chiefs of Mission and the response of officers at post. It is imperative that any individual who reports a suspected incident be responded to promptly, equitably, and compassionately.

- Do you agree these incidents must be taken seriously, and pose a threat to the health of U.S. personnel?

Answer. The issue of Anomalous Health Incidents—including the interagency effort to protect and care for our personnel and uncover the cause of these incidents—is an absolute priority for the Department, and it would be an absolute priority for me if I am confirmed.

As the President has said, the health and well-being of American public servants is of paramount importance to the Administration. On a personal level, I have no higher priority than the safety of the members of the Embassy team and their family members.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to ensuring that any reported incident is treated seriously and reported quickly through the appropriate channels, and that any affected individuals receive prompt access to medical care?

Answer. Yes. Protecting Americans and all those who serve our country is our first duty, and I will do everything I can to care for our personnel and their families in Hungary.

The Administration has developed and deployed a standardized medical evaluation process for U.S. medical staff who respond to AHI reports.

Embassies around the world have trained their medical staff on how to respond to an incident, evaluate affected individuals, and report evaluation results to the appropriate medical and security elements across the U.S. Government to initiate a holistic response to the incident.

Question. Do you commit to meeting with medical staff and the RSO at post to discuss any past reported incidents and ensure that all protocols are being followed?

Answer. Yes. This issue is a top priority, and I would consult with the RSO and the Embassy's Health Unit, as well as relevant offices in Washington as soon as possible after I arrive to make sure we provide maximum support to our personnel and their families in Hungary.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO HON. DAVID PRESSMAN BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

State Department Manangement and Public Diplomacy

Question. Many U.S. missions have been under enormous stress over the last few years, in large part due to COVID. What is your understanding of morale throughout Mission Budapest?

Answer. My understanding from the State Department is that morale is strong, and the Mission is well-run. The one area in this regard that has been flagged as needing attention is the salaries of the Locally Employed Staff, which have not kept up with the local cost of labor.

Question. How do you intend to improve morale at Mission Budapest?

Answer. High morale in a workforce is of the utmost importance, both because I am committed to staff being satisfied and fulfilled, and because it leads to better performance. If confirmed, I will seek to foster a culture of empowerment and open, transparent communication, and I will work to create an environment in which all members of the team understand the importance of their contribution to advancing U.S. foreign policy goals.

Question. How do you intend to create a unified mission and vision at Mission Budapest?

Answer. If confirmed, I will ensure all team members at all levels of the Mission understand the strategic priorities of the Mission, understand their role in advancing those priorities, and receive sufficient support in carrying out those responsibilities.

Question. Management is a key responsibility for Chiefs of Mission. How would you describe your management style?

Answer. My management style is collaborative, inclusive and empowering. I believe in creating a work environment in which all members of the team are encouraged to think rigorously and creatively about challenges we are confronting. I am also a strong proponent of open communication and ensuring that people are recognized for the important work they do. This includes ensuring that members of the team have opportunities to grow and further develop skills in order to advance their careers.

Question. Do you believe it is ever acceptable or constructive to berate subordinates, either in public or private?

Answer. No. Berating subordinates is counterproductive and is never acceptable. If confirmed, I will treat employees with the utmost respect and expect all within the Embassy's leadership to do the same.

Question. How do you envision your leadership relationship with your Deputy Chief of Mission?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work to build a relationship of deep trust and mutual respect with the Deputy Chief of Mission, delegating when appropriate and empowering him or her to ensure he or she can step in for me if I am not available. At the same time, I will remain personally accountable for our Mission's success.

Question. If confirmed, what leadership responsibilities do you intend to entrust to your Deputy Chief of Mission?

Answer. While the exact division of labor will be determined based on the interests and skills of the incoming Deputy Chief of Mission, I see the role of the Deputy Chief of Mission as both a chief operating officer and the right hand and alter ego of the ambassador.

Question. In order to create and continue employee excellence at the Department, accurate and direct employee evaluation reports (EERs) for Foreign Service Officers are imperative, though often lacking.

- Do you believe that it is important to provide employees with accurate, constructive feedback on their performances in order to encourage improvement and reward those who most succeeded in their roles?

Answer. Absolutely. Candid and comprehensive performance reviews are essential for employees to know where they stand and for them to understand where they need to improve. Beyond the annual reviews, it is also important for supervisors to make clear what the expectations are and to give continuous constructive feedback.

Question. If confirmed, would you support and encourage clear, accurate, and direct feedback to employees in order to improve performance and reward high achievers?

Answer. Yes. This kind of communication and feedback is fundamental to a high functioning and healthy work environment.

Question. It is imperative that U.S. diplomats get outside of posts abroad to meet with local actors, including host government officials, non-government organizations, and fellow foreign diplomats stationed in Hungary.

- In your opinion, do U.S. diplomats get outside of our embassy walls enough to accomplish fully their missions?

Answer. I strongly believe that diplomats need to get outside of the embassy in order to effectively advance our interests. It is important that our diplomats are doing all that we can to safely engage with the broadest cross-section of the countries in which we are deployed. Hungary is an environment where this kind of engagement is possible and, if confirmed, I would view broad and frequent engagement throughout the country as an essential component of our Embassy's work.

Question. How do you intend to improve the ability of U.S. diplomats to better access all local populations?

Answer. If confirmed, I will make clear that this kind of outreach is a core component of our responsibilities. I will encourage our diplomats to engage with and reach into the broadest cross-section of communities across Hungary, and will ensure that U.S. diplomats under my authority can do so safely.

Question. Public diplomacy is an important aspect of U.S. foreign policy efforts. What is the public diplomacy environment like in the Hungary?

Answer. The majority of Hungarians have a favorable opinion toward the United States and support a stronger relationship with the United States. In addition, the Hungarian public generally has a positive opinion of the United States and NATO in terms of Hungary's national security.

Consolidation of media under government-aligned or state-funded control has created a difficult environment, both for the Hungarian public to get reliable, unbiased information, and for the U.S. embassy to reach all audiences.

Question. What public diplomacy challenges do U.S. diplomats face there?

Answer. Prevalent disinformation and a shrinking space for independent media in Hungary is a challenge to our public diplomacy efforts. COVID–19 has also been a significant challenge and had a negative impact on in-person public diplomacy and exchange programming in Hungary, as it has everywhere.

Question. How do you balance the importance of Main State versus the in-country mission when it comes to tailoring public diplomacy messages for foreign audiences?

Answer. Public diplomacy is most effective if it is tailored and crafted by those present in a particular country. If confirmed, I will work with the Embassy's Public Diplomacy Section to closely coordinate the efforts of public diplomacy professionals in both Washington and Budapest to ensure that there is a unified, informed, and effective approach to advancing our interests through public diplomacy in Hungary. The Public Diplomacy Section engages on a variety of different social media platforms in both English and Hungarian to deliver tailored messages on U.S. foreign policy priorities; promote Embassy activities and events; provide information on security, voting, and other topics of interest to U.S. citizens; and communicate with the Hungarian public.

Question. "Anomalous health incidents," commonly referred to as "Havana Syndrome," have been debilitating and sidelining U.S. diplomats around the world for years. They have caused serious, negative consequences for U.S. diplomacy, yet many believe that the Department is not doing enough to care for, protect, and communicate to its personnel.

- If confirmed, do you commit to taking this threat seriously?

Answer. The issue of Anomalous Health Incidents—including the interagency effort to protect and care for our personnel and uncover the cause of these incidents—is an absolute priority for the Department, and it would be an absolute priority for me if I am confirmed.

As the President has said, the health and well-being of American public servants is of paramount importance to the Administration. On a personal level, if confirmed, I will have no higher priority than the safety of the members of the Embassy team and their family members.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to talking as openly as you can to Mission Budapest personnel?

Answer. Absolutely. I believe open and transparent communication is critical for a workplace to function well, and leadership should set the example for that. This is particularly true in the context of anomalous health incidents

Human Rights, Democracy, and International Organizations

Question. In the State Department's 2021 Trafficking in Persons Report, Hungary remained on Tier 2 for its ongoing efforts to meet the minimum standards to elimi-

nate trafficking but did not adequately do so in a few key areas, including failing to appropriately screen third country nationals for trafficking indicators, and a failure to implement a specialized framework for child victims services. How will you work with the Hungarian Government to address these issues if you are confirmed as Ambassador?

Answer. If confirmed, I will ensure Hungarian interlocutors understand the United States is committed to combating trafficking in persons in Hungary and beyond. While the Hungarian Government is making efforts to address this issue, more needs to be done. If confirmed, I will encourage the Hungarian Government to increase proactive identification and assistance for victims, particularly among vulnerable groups to include third-country nationals, and encourage consistent and sufficient funding for victim services, including for child victims. If confirmed, I will lead Mission Budapest to develop and implement both short- and long-term strategies of engagement with government officials, business leaders, and civil society in Hungary.

Question. The office to monitor and combat trafficking in persons plays a key role in assisting Ambassadors in promoting anti-trafficking work.

- Please describe how you can work with the Ambassador-at-Large to improve Hungary's anti-trafficking work in country.

Answer. Fighting human trafficking is a priority and, if confirmed, I will work closely with the Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons and its Ambassador-at-Large to draw on their expertise in order to develop plans and programs to work with the Hungarian Government to make improvements. I understand that the Office sometimes sends its experts to the field for fact-finding and consulting with embassies and host governments, which, if confirmed, I would welcome.

Question. What concrete steps can you, if confirmed, take with your mission to help Hungary improve its anti-trafficking efforts?

Answer. As an initial matter, if confirmed, I will make clear this is a priority and ensure Hungarian interlocutors understand the United States is committed to combating trafficking in persons in Hungary and beyond. If confirmed, I will lead Mission Budapest to develop and implement strategies of consistent engagement with government officials, private sector leaders, civil society, and the faith-based community in order to combat trafficking in Hungary.

Question. In the State Department's 2021 International Religious Freedom report, societal respect for religious freedom in Hungary was generally lacking, including noted antisemitic incidents and casual verbal insults directed at Muslim minorities. What is your assessment of this particular issue and if confirmed, how will you work with the Ambassador-at-Large to bolster religious freedom in-country?

Answer. Increasing societal respect for religious freedom and religious minorities in Hungary is deeply important. If confirmed, I will work closely with the faith-based community, civil society organizations, religious minorities, and government entities to facilitate dialogue on this issue and identify ways to address it. Hungary has a rich faith-based community, and I will strongly promote inter-faith dialogue among religious groups in Hungary about this challenge. If confirmed, I will work with both the Office of International Religious Freedom and the Office of the Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Antisemitism to ensure Mission Hungary identifies creative and effective strategies to combat discrimination and promote tolerance.

Question. In the State Department's 2021 Human Rights Report, Hungary was noted as having several significant human rights abuses, including infringement on independence of the judiciary, restrictions on free speech and media, refoulement of refugees, and more. It was noted the Government did take some steps to address these issues.

- If confirmed, what steps will you take to continue to address these instances with the host government?

Answer. The United States consistently encourages our Allies and partners to continually strengthen democratic processes and institutions, including safeguarding the rule of law, judicial independence, media freedom, and transparent and accountable governance. We hold ourselves to these same standards.

If confirmed, I will unequivocally engage the Government of Hungary about our concerns on these issues. As a member of NATO, the European Union, and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, Hungary has made commitments and undertaken obligations to democratic processes, human rights, and fundamental freedoms. The United States and other members of the transatlantic fam-

ily of nations have called on Hungary to uphold those obligations and commitments. If confirmed, I will do so as well.

Question. How will you direct your Embassy to work with civil society organizations to improve the human rights situation on the ground?

Answer. If confirmed, I will ensure we strengthen our engagement with civil society organizations across Hungary. Civil society has a special role to play in holding democracies accountable. If confirmed, I will work closely with civil society organizations, as well as government entities, to bolster respect for human rights. I will also encourage the Government to pursue greater consultation with civil society actors and to broaden the space for their activities. We will leverage the strength of our civil society partnerships and the depth of our public diplomacy tools to engage with Hungarians to defend and promote human rights in Hungary and the region.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to personally raising human rights issues with the Hungarian Government?

Answer. Yes. Human rights are a core element of U.S. foreign policy, and if confirmed, I will directly and unequivocally engage the Government of Hungary on these issues.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO HON. DAVID PRESSMAN BY SENATOR BENJAMIN L. CARDIN

Question. Do you agree with the assessment of many analysts that Hungary has devolved to be an authoritarian country or an "illiberal democracy?"

Answer. Several independent organizations that assess and rank countries' democratic standing have downgraded Hungary in recent years, including Freedom House. Hungary is a long-time friend, ally, and partner of the United States. The United States remains committed to strengthening our partnership with Hungary, where we believe the threats to democracy are real and merit our determined attention.

The United States consistently encourages our Allies and partners to promote democratic values, including safeguarding the rule of law, judicial independence, media freedom, human rights, and transparency. We hold ourselves to these same standards.

Hungary has undertaken commitments to democratic values and governance as a member of NATO, the European Union, and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. The United States and other members of the transatlantic family of nations have called on Hungary to uphold those obligations and commitments. If confirmed, I will do so as well.

Question. If confirmed as Ambassador, how would you encourage Hungary to play a more constructive role as a member of NATO and the EU, particularly where the Russian invasion of Ukraine is concerned?

Answer. Hungary is a valued NATO partner making critical contributions to our shared defense. As a NATO Ally, Hungary has publicly condemned Russia's aggression against Ukraine, including supporting the March 2022 Extraordinary Leaders' Statement calling Russia's aggression against Ukraine the gravest threat to Euro-Atlantic security in decades and condemning the full-scale invasion. Hungary hosts and commands a NATO Enhanced Vigilance Activities Battle Group, and it has regularly participated in other NATO activities to deter Russia, including the NATO Baltic Air Policing Mission. Our joint training and exercises are a visible example of our cooperation and part of a longstanding partnership between our armed forces. We were pleased to see U.S. and Hungarian soldiers conducting joint training near the Hungary-Ukraine border earlier this month.

If confirmed, I will continue to work with Hungary to maintain a unified response to Putin's aggression. However, there are valid concerns among Allies that Hungary hopes to maintain strong ties to Russia, primarily due to its dependence on Russian energy. Hungary also seeks to maintain connections in other ways as well, including through the Budapest-based International Investment Bank. Furthermore, Hungary's recent reticence in adopting additional EU sanctions on Russia suggests a high degree of influence by Russia on the Hungarian government. If confirmed, I would work to tackle Russia's malign influence in Hungary and, in addition, encourage Hungary to stop impeding high-level meetings of the NATO-Ukraine Commission, to allow closer consultation between NATO and Ukrainian leaders at this critical moment.

Question. How would you describe the condition of Hungary's media sector?

Answer. I share the concerns of the leading global press freedom advocates, multilateral organizations, and Hungarian citizens, over the steady decline of media freedom in Hungary. A diversity of independent voices and opinions is essential to democracy. The diversity of the media landscape in Hungary has been negatively affected by an advertising market highly dependent on government-sponsored advertising that has facilitated the concentration of media ownership in the hands of a few government-aligned businesspersons, resulting in a lack of editorial independence for some outlets.

Independent media outlets continue to function in Budapest and online, and maintain some presence on television, but their reach has shrunk considerably. The largest independent radio station was forced off the airwaves in 2021, the largest independent daily newspaper shut down in 2016, and a government-aligned media group took over the largest online news outlet in 2020.

In March 2020, the government permanently amended the criminal code to increase the penalty for spreading a "falsehood" or "distorted truth" ("scaremongering") that could obstruct "successful protection" of the public under a declared state of emergency related to the COVID–19 pandemic to imprisonment of up to five years. Watchdog groups have also expressed concern about less access to government by independent media and delays in responding to freedom of information requests.

Question. If confirmed as Ambassador, how would you work to support independent media and strengthen freedom of the press?

Answer. I am concerned about declining media pluralism in Hungary, as are the leading international press freedom organizations and many Hungarians. A diversity of independent voices and opinions is essential to democracy, and if I am confirmed I will urge the Government of Hungary to promote an open media environment, an environment that is in line with EU law. In addition, I would support regional programs to build the capacity of independent media. Finally, I would call attention to actions that further erode the space for an independent media or that fuel disinformation, which threatens the space for accurate information in the public square. Freedom of expression and a thriving independent press are vital for the functioning of a pluralistic democracy, and the U.S. Government will continue to emphasize the importance of media freedom.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO HON. DAVID PRESSMAN BY SENATOR MARCO RUBIO

Question. How do you characterize Hungary's relations with the U.S. today?

Answer. Hungary is a long-time friend, ally, and partner. Last year marked 100 years of bilateral relations between the United States and Hungary. We greatly value our partnership with Hungary and all we have undertaken together to strengthen global security and grow our trade and investment relationship.

While we have concerns about the malign influence of Russia and China in Hungary, Hungary continues to make significant contributions to common security objectives such as combating terrorism, transnational crime, and weapons proliferation. As a NATO Ally, Hungary supports efforts to defend NATO's Eastern Flank at this critical moment and has been our partner in addressing challenges around the world, including in Afghanistan, Iraq, and the Balkans. Hungary is home to hundreds of U.S. companies and the citizens of our nations take part in rich and growing cultural, education, and scientific exchanges.

Question. Do you think lecturing Hungary on divisive progressive priorities serves U.S. interests or does it push them closer to Russia and China?

Answer. We need to pull Hungary closer to us, not push it away. As NATO Allies, the United States and Hungary are connected through our commitments to democracy, and we continue to support the Hungarian people's pursuit of a democratic future based on respect for human rights. There are threats to democracy in Hungary that merit our attention. These threats are to democratic institutions and transcend political ideology; as allies we should be candid about our concerns and collaborate to address them.

Russia and China's influence has had a corrosive effect on democratic institutions in Hungary—and around the world. Moscow and Beijing seek to reshape the international order in ways that fortify their authoritarian regimes and divide the rest of us. The United States, Europe, and democracies everywhere are stronger when

we work together to advance our shared values. Efforts to advance fair competition and transparency, and to protect fundamental rights and transatlantic values such as media freedom, rule of law, and human rights in Hungary strengthen its government and people to resist the corrosive influence of authoritarian regimes like Russia and China.

Question. How do you describe the Orban Government's view of Putin's Russia?

Answer. Prime Minister Orban has long said he pursues "pragmatic" cooperation with Russia and has held more bilateral meetings with Russian President Vladimir Putin since Russia's 2014 invasion of Ukraine than any EU leader, including a February meeting with Putin in Moscow just three weeks before Putin launched his full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Hungarian leaders have stated they still consider Russia a reliable economic partner providing cheap energy, investment opportunities, and an export market. I have a different view.

Hungary's leaders and some media outlets have also provided a platform for repeating the Kremlin's narratives on international issues while ignoring or downplaying Russia's destabilizing actions in Europe—views, I might add, at odds with the majority of Hungarians, who continue to view the United States and Europe as Hungary's most important partners.

At the same time, since February 24, Prime Minister Orban and Foreign Minister Peter Szijjarto have emphasized Hungary's commitments to NATO and the EU, going along with six successive EU sanctions packages; agreeing to the establishment of a NATO Enhanced Vigilance Activities Battle Group in Hungary; and publicly condemning Russia's aggression against Ukraine.

Question. What is your assessment of Hungary's views of the EU's sanctions against Russia?

Answer. Despite Hungary's close relationship with Russia, Hungary ultimately supported the EU's anti-Russia sanctions packages (six to date) introduced after Russia's most recent invasion of Ukraine. Hungary also agreed to and enforced earlier sanctions that followed Russia's 2014 invasion. The Government has publicly said that sanctions on Russian energy would severely harm Hungary's economy, given its dependence on Russian gas and oil, and the EU's sixth sanctions package includes significant exemptions for oil imports to landlocked countries like Hungary. The Government's public messaging on sanctions often seeks to blame sanctions, rather than Russia, for the negative economic consequences of Russia's war.

Question. To what extent does the Hungarian Government view Russia as a security threat?

Answer. As a NATO member, Hungary has supported the Alliance view on Russia, including the March 2022 Extraordinary Leaders' Statement calling Russia's aggression the gravest threat to Euro-Atlantic security in decades and condemning the full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Hungary hosts and commands a NATO Enhanced Vigilance Activities Battle Group, and it has regularly participated in other NATO activities to deter Russia, including the NATO Baltic Air Policing Mission. Our close intelligence sharing ahead of Russia's full-scale invasion has helped reveal the true nature of the Kremlin's threat to European security to Allies and the world.

However, there are valid concerns among Allies that Hungary hopes to maintain strong ties to Russia, primarily due to its dependence on Russian energy. It seeks to maintain connections in other ways as well. For example, the Budapest-based International Investment Bank (IIB) may provide the Kremlin with opportunities to evade the crippling sanctions it must now deal with as the result of its unprovoked and brutal invasion of Ukraine. We think the bank is a vulnerability for Hungary and the Alliance. I should also note that every other EU member state that had participated as a shareholder in the IIB has announced its intention to withdraw from it.

Question. How do you assess Hungary's relationship with China?

Answer. Hungary's efforts to forge closer ties with the People's Republic of China is a key element of the Orban administration's "Eastern opening" strategy that it has pursued since returning to power in 2010. Hungary was one of the first European Union countries to join China's Belt and Road Initiative, and the only European Union country to not participate in the Trump administration's "clean network" initiative. As an ally and friend, it is important that we work with Hungary to highlight the risks posed by Beijing's influence and investments.

Additionally, Hungary has taken steps to block or weaken multilateral statements about the People's Republic of China's conduct in Hong Kong and its treatment of the Uyghurs, among other issues. If confirmed, I would continue to engage with our Hungarian partners to join us in holding Beijing accountable for its actions.

Question. How does the Hungarian Government view the conflict in Ukraine?

Answer. Hungary has generally supported the Alliance view on Russia, including the March 2022 Extraordinary Leaders' Statement calling Russia's aggression the gravest threat to Euro-Atlantic security in decades and condemning the full-scale invasion of Ukraine. The Government recognizes that Russia's aggression has destabilized European security, caused enormous human suffering, and prompted the flight of hundreds of thousands of people across Hungarian territory.

Question. How do you assess Hungary's response to the war in Ukraine?

Answer. Hungary has agreed to six successive EU sanctions packages, the establishment of a NATO Enhanced Vigilance Activities Battle Group in Hungary, and EU funding for weapons for Ukraine. Hungary has provided humanitarian assistance to hundreds of thousands of refugees entering Hungary and to displaced persons in Ukraine and publicly condemned Russia's aggression against Ukraine. At the same time, Prime Minister Orban has prohibited the delivery of lethal weapons to Ukraine through Hungary; resisted stronger EU sanctions against Russia; and publicly criticized President Zelenskyy as a political adversary. Hungary cannot be neutral in this larger struggle—Hungary is a NATO Ally and EU member state. If confirmed, I will continue to work with Hungary to maintain a unified response to Putin's aggression.

Question. How do you assess Hungary's contributions to NATO and its role as a U.S. security partner?

Answer. In the security sphere, Hungary is a NATO partner making significant contributions to our shared defense. After Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine on February 24, Hungary was one of the first countries to become a framework nation for a NATO Enhanced Vigilance Activities battlegroup. The Government has reaffirmed its intention to spend at least two percent of GDP on defense by 2024. Hungary has roughly 900 troops deployed in support of NATO, EU, UN, and U.S.-led missions, including about 160 troops in Iraq. In October 2021, Hungary took command of NATO's Kosovo Force (KFOR), the country's (and NATO's) largest foreign troop deployment and a reflection of Hungary's willingness to assume responsibility in a region of critical importance to Hungary and to European security. Hungary will take over the NATO Baltic Air Policing Mission in August. Hungary also hosts the NATO Multinational Division-Center in Szekesfehervar, a Hungarian initiative led by framework nations Hungary, Croatia, and Slovakia that eventually will fit into the NATO Force. We also thank Hungary for its assistance to 540 Afghans and 61 U.S. citizens and legal residents during the August 2021 evacuation effort, in which Hungary used its own military aircraft.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO HON. GEOFFREY R. PYATT BY SENATOR ROBERT MENENDEZ

Timely Briefings

Question. It is my expectations that the State Department provides briefings to me and my staff in an expeditious manner.

- Do you commit to being responsive and expeditious in responding to requests for information from the committee and Congress as a whole?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to being responsive and expeditious in responding to requests for information from the committee and Congress as a whole.

All-of-the-Above Energy Strategy

Question. This seemingly innocuous term that is casually spoken by both Democrats and Republicans may sound simple and common sense, but in reality is highly problematic, especially with respect to foreign energy development. "All-of-the-Above" literally suggests the U.S. should continue to support (i.e. provide foreign assistance or development finance for) things like: unmitigated coal, waste incineration for energy (also without mitigating emissions), and heavy fuel oil for electricity generation. This cannot be U.S. foreign policy. In fact, I'm pretty sure it isn't, and as such I think we need to stop saying it. I have to imagine many, if not most, of my Republican colleagues if asked "do you believe the U.S. should support building highly polluting energy projects in developing countries?" would answer "NO!"

- Do you believe an "All-of-the-Above" energy strategy should include ALL sources of power production, including highly polluting and highly inefficient sources of power?

Answer. On day one President Biden took executive actions to ensure we tackle the climate crisis at home and abroad through a whole-of-government approach. I believe that an "All-of-the-Above" energy strategy takes heed of underlying climate concerns, and therefore does not include highly polluting and highly inefficient sources of power. U.S. energy security and geostrategic concerns necessitate considering all energy options, but environmental concerns should be factored in throughout. If confirmed, I will work with my ENR team and other members of the interagency to implement an energy strategy in line with Administration priorities.

Question. If "we"—members of Congress, Administration officials, talking heads in the media—are going to continue to use this term, will you commit to working with Congress to transparently clarify the term to have a socially and environmentally responsible meaning?

Answer. If I am confirmed, I commit to ensuring the term "all of the above" continues to have a socially and environmentally responsible meaning.

The Global Nature of the Energy Crisis

Question. The impact of Putin's war on Ukraine is reverberating throughout the world and is affecting global energy supplies. Yes, our allies in Europe are hurting, but the energy crisis is also impacting vulnerable populations everywhere in Haiti, The Pacific Islands, the Horn of Africa, Central America.

- What are we doing to help other countries, more vulnerable countries, weather the effects of this energy crisis?

Answer. The Department of State is committed to working with allies and partners, including the most vulnerable countries, to weather the energy crisis and meet their energy security needs. The Bureau of Energy Resources' technical assistance programs promote energy diversification and decarbonization, including adoption of clean energy sources. This work enables vulnerable countries to better mitigate the effects of this energy crisis and help meet their energy security needs. If I am confirmed, I will continue to support efforts that help countries increase their access to affordable, clean, sustainable, secure, and reliable energy, recognizing that renewable energy options will often be the surest route to address these multiple goals.

Question. Are the optics of the U.S. focus on helping Europe through the energy crisis, and its majority White populations and High-Income Countries, concerning to the Administration?

Answer. The Administration is working tirelessly with partners and allies around the world to mitigate the consequences of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. The Department of State and its partners coordinate efforts to promote energy diversification and decarbonization globally, including accelerating the adoption of clean energy sources in vulnerable countries outside of Europe to better mitigate the impacts future energy crises. If confirmed, I will support expanding the visibility of U.S.-led global energy initiatives, including ENR's work around the world to build reliable, sustainable, and transparent supply chains for the critical minerals essential to the clean energy transition.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO HON. GEOFFREY R. PYATT BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Question. Many U.S. offices have been under enormous stress over the last few years, in large part due to COVID. What is your understanding of morale throughout the Bureau of Energy Resources?

Answer. I worked closely with Bureau of Energy Resources team members during my previous assignments and during this confirmation process. I am extremely impressed by their dedication to service, their incredible level of regional and technical expertise, and their ability to perform under the adverse conditions of COVID–19. If confirmed, it will be an honor to lead such a tremendous team.

Bureau team members are working to address the difficult challenges of energy security, energy access, and decarbonization. Energy market imbalances, Putin's unjustified war in Ukraine, and his weaponization of energy, have combined to make this an unprecedented and stressful time to work in the energy space. The staff have worked tirelessly with their State Department, interagency, and international counterparts on these front-page issues, at some personal risk of illness.

While I am inspired by ENR's adaptability and ability to perform under competing pressures, I am cognizant of the morale challenges the current situation

places upon staff. If confirmed, I will work to ensure they have all the resources they need to do their jobs, and to do them safely.

Question. Many U.S. offices have been under enormous stress over the last few years, in large part due to COVID. How do you intend to improve morale at the Bureau of Energy Resources?

Answer. If confirmed, I pledge to lead the Bureau of Energy Resources (ENR) team through example, to recognize their outstanding work, and to provide these dedicated public servants the support, guidance, and resources they need so that our shared diplomatic mission succeeds. Given the depth of Civil Service expertise in the Bureau, it will be particularly important to ensure that these talented officers have opportunities for long-term career growth and advancement. If confirmed, I will prioritize communicating with all Bureau team members and strive to achieve the highest possible team spirit and morale.

The State Department is now administering the 2022 Office of Personnel Management Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey. I will work closely with team members to address any opportunities for improvement that ENR survey results identify, as well as work to further amplify ENR's strengths.

If confirmed, I will work to ensure that ENR team members have the resources to do their jobs, to ensure their viewpoints are heard and included in the policy process, and to make them full partners in the work of energy diplomacy.

Question. Many U.S. offices have been under enormous stress over the last few years, in large part due to COVID. How do you intend to create a unified mission and vision at the Bureau of Energy Resources?

Answer. A unified vision and clear communication are vital to successful diplomatic outcomes. The Administration has laid out the important policy goals of energy security, energy access, and decarbonization, and I agree that these goals are both overlapping and reinforcing. Advancing these objectives by leveraging the expertise of the staff remains the core guiding focus of the Bureau, and I would work to put specific goals into concrete lines of effort. If confirmed, I will work with State Department and international counterparts to advance these goals, and to ensure we do so in a coordinated, deliberate manner that takes into consideration all relevant information, including any underlying stressors. The cooperation of allies and partners is critical, as is fostering partnerships with international institutions.

As I said in my prepared statement, energy is front page news right now. Senator Lugar recognized, in calling attention to these issues some two decades ago, that our success requires persistent and strategically focused diplomacy to bolster our international energy partnerships. If confirmed, I would be honored to contribute to that task, in partnership with the Congress.

Question. Management is a key responsibility for senior officials. How would you describe your management style?

Answer. I think those who have worked with me would describe my leadership and management style as visionary. In my roles as Ambassador and Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary, I have aimed to empower my teams and help them advance the most ambitious possible future for themselves and for U.S. interests. In my experience, a key element of organizational leadership is translating big strategic objectives into concrete lines of effort. If confirmed, I would seek to draw on the best of ENR's exceptional team of Civil Service and Foreign Service experts to provide the strongest possible policy inputs on international energy security, strategic resource, and energy transition issues.

Question. Management is a key responsibility for senior officials. Do you believe it is ever acceptable or constructive to berate subordinates, either in public or private?

Answer. No. I believe it is always more productive and effective to deliver praise in public, and to provide constructive feedback in private, in a respectful and helpful manner so that core competencies can improve.

Question. Management is a key responsibility for senior officials. How do you envision your leadership relationship with your deputy assistant secretary?

Answer. If confirmed, I look forward to working collaboratively in full partnership with the Bureau principal deputy assistant secretary and deputy assistant secretaries (DASes). I think it is important to give specific lines of effort to the DASes, and to inspire them to achieve those goals as one team. It will be vital that we work closely together and coordinate as we represent the United States in international organizations, like the International Energy Agency, and the International Renew-

able Energy Agency, as well as at bilateral and strategic dialogues and partnerships, such as the

Minerals Security Partnership

Question. Management is a key responsibility for senior officials. If confirmed, what leadership responsibilities do you intend to entrust to your deputy assistant secretary?

Answer. I have had the opportunity to serve as a principal deputy assistant secretary (PDAS) in a regional Bureau. In that role, I was able to handle specific issues for the Bureau and am grateful I was empowered to do so. If confirmed, I will seek to empower the ENR PDAS and DASes with clear functional and regional specific responsibilities and initiatives, so that they can collectively advance overall Bureau goals as part of a team. ENR advances clean energy and climate goals while representing the United States at important international organizations, in regional and bilateral dialogues, and State-led initiatives like the Minerals Security Partnership. I will work with the ENR DASes to further U.S. goals in all these endeavors.

Question. In order to create and continue employee excellence at the Department, accurate and direct employee evaluation reports (EERs) for Foreign Service Officers are imperative, though often lacking. Do you believe that it is important to provide employees with accurate, constructive feedback on their performances in order to encourage improvement and reward those who most succeeded in their roles?

Answer. Yes. I view the EER process not as something to address on April 15, but every day. It is important to maintain a candid dialogue with rated and reviewed colleagues throughout the rating period, to have honest counseling sessions, to document them, and to inspire staff and provide them opportunities to grow their core competencies. I believe it is important to encourage staff not to be afraid of making mistakes, but to face them, correct them, and learn from them.

I believe that both the Bureau and the Department awards processes play important roles in recognizing the work of our best officers. I am a strong advocate of constructive risk taking in our diplomacy and if confirmed will seek to create a bureau culture that encourages diversity of perspectives and innovative thinking. Aside from producing better ideas, this approach is a priority for our successful economic statecraft. If confirmed, I will strive to assure that good work gets noticed, that career advancing opportunities are open to all staff, and that teammates are motivated to reach their full potential.

Question. In order to create and continue employee excellence at the Department, accurate and direct employee evaluation reports (EERs) for Foreign Service Officers are imperative, though often lacking. If confirmed, would you support and encourage clear, accurate, and direct feedback to employees in order to improve performance and reward high achievers?

Answer. If confirmed, I will encourage clear, accurate, respectful, and direct feedback. All officers can grow in their careers, and it is my responsibility as a manager to give them the tools to do so. Clear and accurate employee evaluations are also mission critical, as they enable the Department to identify and advance its most capable leaders.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO HON. GEOFFREY R. PYATT BY SENATOR BENJAMIN L. CARDIN

Economic Support Funds

Question. In both FY 2022 and FY 2023, the Biden administration requested $30.50 million in ESF funding for the Bureau of Energy Resources (ENR), intended for investment in projects or assistance efforts to bolster energy security. This amount is nearly $25 million more than the State Department allocated in FY 2021.

- In your view, will the ENR bureau be able to absorb increased foreign assistance resources and spend them effectively?

Answer. The Department's Bureau of Energy Resources can absorb the requested funds. ENR foreign assistance helps allies and partners oversee their energy and mineral sectors to strengthen energy security, transition to a net-zero emissions future, and increase energy diversification and access. This funding request is critical to achieving the Administration's climate goals and reaching the $11.4 billion annual climate finance goal laid out by the President. Ensuring energy security and combating the climate crisis necessitate increased U.S leadership and diplomacy;

they also require increased assistance resources to drive critical and timely energy sector reforms, and develop international partner capacity to accelerate the global energy transition. ENR will leverage its experience managing assistance to more than 50 countries over the past decade to advance U.S. energy and climate policy, including in-depth work in countries and regions such as Ukraine, Central America, and across the Indo-Pacific.

Question. In your view, what are the principal benefits and drawbacks to the United States of increasing its exports of LNG to Europe?

Answer. One of the consequences of Russia's invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022, is a fundamental realignment of the geopolitics of energy and global energy trade. As Europe's energy security is threatened by Russia's drastic reduction in natural gas deliveries, assisting our allies and partners with additional LNG exports is in the U.S. national interest. Global geopolitical structures are changing and new threats are emerging that require a strong and adaptable Europe. Efforts to diversify and increase LNG supplies to Europe are being executed in alignment with climate objectives and in parallel with equally important efforts to reduce overall energy demand and accelerate deployment of clean and renewable energy.

Question. How might LNG exports enhance our national security and what are the key geopolitical considerations?

Answer. As a net exporter of natural gas since 2017, the United States has greatly enhanced the flexibility of the global LNG market by reaching over 40 countries due to its contracts without destination clauses and indexing to Henry Hub instead of oil prices. Although Europe's long-term goal is to decarbonize its economy, it is facing an energy security problem that U.S. LNG can help address in the short- and medium-term. In 2021, U.S. exports to Asia increased by 51 percent driven by surging demand from top importers Republic of Korea, PRC, Japan, and India. As the third largest supplier to Asia after Australia and Qatar, the United States plays a critical role in supplying Asia's largest economies and trading partners.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO HON. GEOFFREY R. PYATT BY SENATOR MARCO RUBIO

Question. Both the Trump and Biden administrations identified critical minerals as a key component of several supply chains, including semiconductors and military hardware. However, our adversaries such as Beijing and Moscow are making strides to dominate the critical mineral market. For example, China processes approximately 90 percent of the world's rare earth elements, 55 percent of the world's lithium, and 65 percent of the world's cobalt.

- What steps could the U.S. Government take to diversify critical mineral supply chains and expand the role of U.S. firms in extraction and processing sectors outside of the United States?

Answer. Building diverse, secure critical mineral supply chains is a key focus of the Administration and a top priority of the State Department Bureau of Energy Resources (ENR). In 2019, ENR launched the Energy Resource Governance Initiative (ERGI) to improve governance in key mining countries through diplomatic engagement and technical assistance, thereby leveling the playing field for companies from the United States and likeminded countries. The Minerals Security Partnership (MSP), established on June 14, is designed to further advance global critical minerals supply chain security. Developed by the State Department in close coordination with partner countries, the MSP aims to catalyze investment from governments and the private sector for strategic critical minerals mining, processing, and recycling projects that adhere to high environmental, social, and governance standards.

Question. What additional avenues, if any, is the Biden administration exploring for multilateral cooperation on critical mineral supply chains beyond existing fora such as the EU-U.S.-Japan Trilateral Conference on Critical Minerals?

Answer. The State Department has intensified critical minerals engagement in multilateral fora and bilaterally with key countries. The Minerals Security Partnership (MSP), established on June 14, aims to bolster critical mineral supply chains. Developed by the State Department in close coordination with MSP partner countries, the MSP will help catalyze investment from governments and the private sector for strategic critical minerals mining, processing, and recycling projects that adhere to high environmental, social, and governance standards. In addition to the

United States, current MSP partners include Australia, Canada, Finland, France, Germany, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the European Commission.

In response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the U.S., UK, Canada, and Australia have announced bans on Russian oil imports. This is a positive development, but it defies logic that the Biden administration is not unleashing our own supply of energy to help assist our allies as they reorient away from Russia. Instead, this administration has sought assistance from the Maduro regime in Venezuela.

Question. What is Venezuela's excess oil production today?

Answer. Venezuela's oil production has fallen from approximately 2.8 million bpd in 2013 to an estimated 636,000 bpd in 2021, following U.S. sanctions and years of corruption and mismanagement of the oil sector.

Question. Hypothetically, what would Maduro use this new influx of U.S. dollars for?

Answer. Our overall sanctions policy on Venezuela remains unchanged, and we will continue to implement and enforce our Venezuela sanctions in support of a return to democracy in Venezuela. Sanctions targeting actors in the Venezuelan oil sector, including state-owned oil company PDVSA, have deprived Maduro of revenue that would otherwise be generated by oil trade. The U.S. Government continues to prioritize limiting revenue flows to the Maduro regime that may result from its oil related activities.

Question. What, in your view, is the Administration's objection to supporting and expanding our own domestic energy, which has been proven to be cleaner and safer than other countries?

Answer. I do not believe the Administration objects to supporting and expanding our own domestic energy, but I would defer on domestic energy policy formulation and implementation to domestic agencies. In both of my Ambassadorial postings, I have actively supported U.S. energy companies overseas, including in both the fossil fuel and renewable sectors. American companies have tripled LNG exports to Europe this year and are working towards supplying 50 billion cubic meters per year of additional LNG from the United States between now and 2030. I also welcome the steps American industry has taken to reduce its carbon footprint, through reducing flaring, carbon and methane abatement, and exploration of additional clean and renewable energy sources and decarbonizing technologies.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO HON. GEOFFRY R. PYATT BY SENATOR JOHN BARRASSO

Question. If confirmed, what would be your top three energy priorities while serving in this position?

Answer. If I am confirmed, I would deepen ENR's approach to advancing U.S. interests in three main areas: energy security, decarbonization in support of the clean energy transition, and energy access. I will continue to prioritize working closely with our allies and partners to ensure our energy security with a coordinated response to Putin's unjustified war. I will advocate for energy diversification, increased efficiencies, and accelerating the deployment of clean and renewable technologies, because the clean energy transition is key to our long-term energy security. I recognize that demand for access to energy continues to grow, particularly in Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa. I believe this growth in demand presents an economic opportunity, and I commit to continuing ENR's diplomatic and programmatic support for U.S. energy companies, particularly clean energy companies, that want to invest globally and create jobs and prosperity in the United States and overseas. Finally, if I am confirmed, I will further support ENR's work to help build secure, reliable, and transparent mineral supply chains so that no one country dominates the materials that are critical inputs to the clean energy transition.

Question. If confirmed, would you ensure that the State Department is promoting all forms of energy projects across the globe, including oil, gas, and coal?

Answer. If confirmed, I would support energy projects across the globe that are consistent with U.S. national security goals. The Administration has clearly stated that the clean energy transition will be the best solution for addressing the long-term climate crisis. In certain cases, however, and depending on the scope of the

engagement and geostrategic objectives, support for fossil fuel projects may be justified, including for national security reasons.

Question. With billions of people without power, do you believe the U.S. should be promoting fossil fuels that are affordable and reliable, such as coal and natural gas, while supporting new technologies that reduce their carbon output?

Answer. If confirmed by the Senate, I would promote a range of energy options consistent with the Administration's policy and each country's unique circumstances to help our global allies and partners meet their energy security needs, and ensure affordable and reliable access to energy. In certain cases, and depending on the scope of the engagement and geostrategic objectives, support for fossil fuel projects may be justified, including for national security reasons. In certain instances, increasing access to power by leapfrogging outdated infrastructure and technology may be a more optimal solution than fossil fuels that contribute to environmental damage and health impacts due to air pollution. In some instances, renewable sources of energy like wind and solar, supported by grid-scale battery storage, could provide reliable and more affordable power to many people who struggle to access and pay for energy from fossil fuels.

Question. How should the State Department evaluate and consider ongoing sanction programs that prohibit or discourage energy exports?

Answer. If confirmed, I would recommend that the State Department evaluate and consider ongoing energy sanctions programs that advance American interests and are consistent with broader U.S. foreign policy goals and U.S. legislation.

Question. Do you support the lifting of U.S. energy sanctions on Iran and Venezuela?

Answer. Any potential changes in our sanctions posture with respect to Iran's and Venezuela's oil sectors would be based on a consideration of the entire range of relevant foreign policy considerations.

A mutual return to full implementation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) is the best available option to constrain Iran's nuclear program and provide a platform to address Iran's other destabilizing conduct. If Iran were prepared to return to full implementation of the JCPOA's limits on its nuclear program, the United States would be prepared to lift sanctions necessary to return to full implementation of the JCPOA, including certain sanctions related to Iran's petroleum sector. However, we do not support lifting energy sanctions on Iran absent a mutual return to full implementation of the JCPOA.

While the Administration does not preview sanctions actions, we have made clear that we would review our sanctions policies in response to constructive steps by the Maduro regime and if the Venezuelan parties made meaningful progress in the Venezuelan-led negotiations in Mexico. Venezuelan-led negotiations between the Maduro regime and the Unitary Platform represent the best path to restore to Venezuelans the democracy that they deserve and to alleviate their suffering.

Question. Do you support a prohibition on uranium imports and enrichment services from Russia?

Answer. As a result of Russia's unprovoked and unjustified invasion of Ukraine, the United States has intensified its efforts to work closely with allies and partners to identify ways to reduce and ultimately eliminate energy dependence on Russia, including in nuclear energy. Several countries already have taken important steps in this direction.

At home, the State Department is working with other Departments and Agencies, including the Department of Energy, to identify domestic solutions that support our foreign policy goals.

We remain committed to working with Congress to reduce our reliance on all Russian energy sources, including those related to civil nuclear energy.

Question. The Eastern Mediterranean Pipeline can help enhance European energy security. As the U.S. Ambassador to Greece, you tweeted about the Eastern Mediterranean Pipeline deal. You stated, "Assistant Secretary @frank—fannon puts it just right—"Pleased to see Greece, Cyprus, and Israel advance #energycooperation in the region—continuing our work from the 3+1 in August—by signing the Tripartite Agreement for the East Med Energy Corridor." In January, the Biden Administration announced their opposition to the Eastern Mediterranean Pipeline. What is your position on the Eastern Mediterranean Pipeline?

Answer. My tenure as Ambassador to Greece saw important progress in U.S. engagement with the Eastern Mediterranean, including the launch of the 3+1 process now led by Secretary Blinken, securing of U.S. observer status in the East Medi-

terranean Gas Forum, and Congressional passage of the Eastern Mediterranean Security and Energy Partnership Act of 2019. Against this background, the United States remains strongly committed to physically interconnecting East Mediterranean and Middle East energy to Europe. Putin's aggression in Ukraine and subsequent actions to disrupt gas supplies to European consumers only underscores the U.S. Government's longstanding position that energy cooperation in the East Mediterranean provides a foundation for durable energy security and economic prosperity in the East Mediterranean region and the rest of Europe. Bearing in mind our climate priorities, the Administration intends to continue to focus our efforts on electricity interconnectors that can support both natural gas and renewable energy sources. A hypothetical new pipeline such as the Eastern Mediterranean Gas Pipeline (EMGP), for which no financing or business case has been identified, would not contribute to European energy security in the short or even medium term. Questions for the Record Submitted to

Question. The Eastern Mediterranean Pipeline can help enhance European energy security. As the U.S. Ambassador to Greece, you tweeted about the Eastern Mediterranean Pipeline deal. You stated, "Assistant Secretary @frank—fannon puts it just right—"Pleased to see Greece, Cyprus, and Israel advance #energycooperation in the region—continuing our work from the 3+1 in August—by signing the Tripartite Agreement for the East Med Energy Corridor." In January, the Biden Administration announced their opposition to the Eastern Mediterranean Pipeline. Given the need to help Europe diversify their routes and supplies away from Russian energy resources, what should be the Administration's stance on the Eastern Mediterranean Pipeline?

Answer. Putin's aggression in Ukraine and subsequent actions to disrupt gas supplies to European consumers only underscores our longstanding position that energy cooperation in the East Mediterranean provides a foundation for durable energy security and economic prosperity in the East Mediterranean region and the rest of Europe. We remain committed to physically interconnecting East Mediterranean and Middle East energy to Europe. The Administration's stance on the Eastern Mediterranean Gas Pipeline (EMGP) has not changed. We are continuing to shift our focus to electricity interconnectors that can support both natural gas and renewable energy sources. A new pipeline such as the EMGP, which is not even under construction, would not contribute to European energy security in the immediate or even medium term. We welcome the agreement reached June 15th among Israel, Egypt, and the EU to provide additional gas from the East Mediterranean to Europe via LNG. This agreement takes advantage of existing infrastructure and will directly improve Europe's energy security over the short term by reducing dependence on Russian energy sources.

Question. The Eastern Mediterranean Pipeline can help enhance European energy security. As the U.S. Ambassador to Greece, you tweeted about the Eastern Mediterranean Pipeline deal. You stated, "Assistant Secretary @frank—fannon puts it just right—"Pleased to see Greece, Cyprus, and Israel advance #energycooperation in the region—continuing our work from the 3+1 in August—by signing the Tripartite Agreement for the East Med Energy Corridor." In January, the Biden Administration announced their opposition to the Eastern Mediterranean Pipeline. What is the status of the Eastern Mediterranean pipeline?

Answer. The East Mediterranean Gas Pipeline (EMGP) is not under construction and no financing or business case has been identified. This is an EU project and financing this pipeline is a decision for the EU and any potential investors to make.

Question. The Eastern Mediterranean Pipeline can help enhance European energy security. As the U.S. Ambassador to Greece, you tweeted about the Eastern Mediterranean Pipeline deal. You stated, "Assistant Secretary @frank—fannon puts it just right—"Pleased to see Greece, Cyprus, and Israel advance #energycooperation in the region—continuing our work from the 3+1 in August—by signing the Tripartite Agreement for the East Med Energy Corridor." In January, the Biden Administration announced their opposition to the Eastern Mediterranean Pipeline. How would development of new natural gas discoveries in the Eastern Mediterranean or elsewhere support U.S. objectives of promoting energy security and lowering energy prices for U.S. consumers? ?

Answer. The U.S. Government has supported efforts, including by U.S. companies, to develop natural gas resources in the Eastern Mediterranean as part of our policy to support diversification of energy sources and routes in Europe and to encourage cooperation among regional friends and allies. Any new natural gas discoveries in the East Mediterranean or elsewhere will not address near-term global energy security issues nor lower current energy prices for U.S. consumers.

Question. Gazprom has been halting gas deliveries to a number of European countries. What would you suggest the US and our European allies do in response to Gazprom's actions?

Answer. The United States and the European Union are working in concert to reduce Europe's dependence on Russian fossil fuels. Through the U.S.-European Commission Joint Task Force on Energy Security, announced on March 25 by President Biden and European Commission President von der Leyen, the United States is working with the EU to diversify liquefied natural gas (LNG) supplies to Europe in alignment with climate objectives, reducing demand for natural gas, and accelerating deployment of clean and renewable energy sources. The EU is taking concrete steps separate from the task force, including through its REPowerEU plan, announced on March 8, which aims to reduce and ultimately eliminate dependence on Russian natural gas, goals the U.S. supports.

Question. Gazprom has been halting gas deliveries to a number of European countries. What countries has Russia stopped delivering natural gas to? What actions are those countries taking to mitigate the impact of being cut off from Russian natural gas?

Answer. As of June 23, 2022, Russia has halted natural gas supplies to Bulgaria, Denmark, Finland, France, the Netherlands, and Poland. The EU is taking concrete steps to reduce dependence on Russian natural gas, including through its REPowerEU plan, which aims to reduce dependence on Russian natural gas by two-thirds by the end of 2022 and to eliminate dependence on Russian fossil fuels before 2030. To mitigate the impact of Russian cutoffs, the EU is seeking additional natural gas supply globally, including from Egypt, Israel, Algeria, Azerbaijan, Nigeria, Senegal, and Angola, in addition to increased LNG imports from the United States. The EU is also setting out contingency measures in case of severe supply disruption.

Question. Gazprom has been halting gas deliveries to a number of European countries. Are European Union member states prepared and able to meet their energy needs without Russian imports?

Answer. EU Member States are working to reduce their dependence on Russian fossil fuels, but this will take time. The EU imported from Russia more than 40 percent of its total gas consumption, 27 percent of oil imports, and 46 percent of coal in 2021. The EU is taking steps to reduce this dependency and establish contingency measures in case of severe supply disruption, including phased bans on imports of Russian coal and seaborne oil, and its REPowerEU plan to make Europe independent from Russian fossil fuels by 2030. We support these efforts through regular coordination and joint initiatives, such as the U.S.-European Commission Joint Task Force to Reduce Europe's Dependence on Russian Fossil Fuels.

Question. Gazprom has been halting gas deliveries to a number of European countries. Under what circumstances and conditions could European Union member states stop receiving Russian natural gas imports from Nord Stream 1?

Answer. Gazprom has announced reduced natural gas flows through Nord Stream 1 to Germany by up to 60 percent and Russia could institute further natural gas flow decreases and cutoffs. Individual EU member states have different levels of dependencies on Russian fossil fuels and options and abilities to reduce them. These efforts involve numerous steps, including increasing LNG imports from non-Russian sources, reducing overall energy demand, and accelerating deployment of renewables and clean energy solutions. These efforts are difficult and will take time.

Question. The United States has the energy resources needed to help our allies reduce their dependence on Russian energy. Our nation should be a strategic energy supplier to Europe. American natural gas is reliable, affordable, and abundant. It is an important energy solution for those who want to keep their lights on without empowering Russia. Do you support increasing exports of U.S. liquefied natural gas (LNG) to help our allies and partners escape their dependence on Russia?

Answer. I fully support the President's commitment to helping our European allies and partners reduce their dependence on Russian gas, including through the provision of American LNG, reducing their overall demand for energy, and accelerating the clean energy transition.

Question. The United States has the energy resources needed to help our allies reduce their dependence on Russian energy. Our nation should be a strategic energy supplier to Europe. American natural gas is reliable, affordable, and abundant. It is an important energy solution for those who want to keep their lights on without empowering Russia. What are the current barriers to increasing exports of American energy resources to our allies in Europe?

Answer. Energy exports to our European allies have increased significantly since January 2021. One current logistical barrier overseas is Europe's lack of sufficient compatible import infrastructure such as LNG import terminals or Floating Storage Regasification Units (FSRUs). We are working tirelessly with the private sector, and our partners and allies to address these capacity issues. Our European allies and partners already have taken steps to address existing infrastructure constraints to increase imports of non-Russian gas.

Question. The United States has the energy resources needed to help our allies reduce their dependence on Russian energy. Our nation should be a strategic energy supplier to Europe. American natural gas is reliable, affordable, and abundant. It is an important energy solution for those who want to keep their lights on without empowering Russia. What steps is the Administration currently taking to support U.S. energy companies in increasing domestic export capacity and building the infrastructure needed to increase exports to Europe?

Answer. The Administration has already taken steps to increase U.S. LNG export capacity, including authorizing additional exports of LNG to non-free trade agreement countries from two existing facilities, one under construction and one additional approved LNG project. If confirmed, I commit to working with EU member states toward ensuring demand for approximately 50 billion cubic meters per year of additional U.S. supplies, until at least 2030, as part of the President's commitment to the U.S.-EU Task Force for Energy Security. In addition, I would ensure that ENR continues to support the work of the U.S. and the European Commission to expedite planning and approval for renewable energy projects that will facilitate exports of U.S. energy technology.

Question. I believe improvements are needed to ensure the U.S. Government is pursuing a consistent and effective energy strategy around the world. For many years, there has been no clear delineation of responsibilities and authorities on international energy policy within the Executive branch. Duplication, redundancies, and conflicting lines of authorities have created serious problems in delivering a consistent message from the United States on international energy across the globe. Numerous government agencies remain tasked with pursing U.S. energy policies across the globe, including the U.S. Department of Energy, Department of Commerce, Department of Interior, Department of Treasury, the Energy Information Administration, and the National Security Council. As a result, areas of responsibility remain confusing. This in turn allows agencies to shift decision-making responsibility and divert accountability. How are the lines of authority and responsibilities delineated between the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Energy Resources and the U.S. Department of Energy's Office of Policy and International Affairs?

Answer. By statute, the Department of State exercises primary authority for the conduct of foreign policy relating to energy. According to the DOE Organization Act, the Department of Energy implements policies regarding international energy issues that have a direct impact on research, development, and conservation of energy in the United States. State and DOE coordinate and cooperate on implementing U.S. foreign energy policy to avoid duplication and ensure that efforts are in line with broader U.S. foreign policy goals. For example, within the U.S.-EU Energy Council, ENR leads on the energy security working group, while DOE leads on the energy policy and energy technology working groups. Similarly, DOE and State participate together at international organizations, such as the International Energy Agency.

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Answer. My understanding is that the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Energy Resources collaborates closely with other bureaus and offices within the Department of State, and with other U.S. Government agencies, in advancing American energy-related goals and interests. The Department of State exercises primary

authority for the conduct of foreign policy relating to energy. The Bureau of Energy Resources uses diplomacy, advocacy, and technical assistance to contribute to the advancement of American energy-related foreign policy goals, leaning heavily on the unique access and impact of our Embassies overseas.

Question. I believe improvements are needed to ensure the U.S. Government is pursuing a consistent and effective energy strategy around the world. For many years, there has been no clear delineation of responsibilities and authorities on international energy policy within the Executive branch. Duplication, redundancies, and conflicting lines of authorities have created serious problems in delivering a consistent message from the United States on international energy across the globe. Numerous government agencies remain tasked with pursing U.S. energy policies across the globe, including the U.S. Department of Energy, Department of Commerce, Department of Interior, Department of Treasury, the Energy Information Administration, and the National Security Council. As a result, areas of responsibility remain confusing. This in turn allows agencies to shift decision-making responsibility and divert accountability. What steps do you propose to eliminate overlapping and conflicting roles?

Answer. If confirmed, I would propose continuing the Bureau's commitment to close cooperation and collaboration with other U.S. Government agencies to ensure our respective efforts are complementary and collectively advance American interests.

Question. I believe improvements are needed to ensure the U.S. Government is pursuing a consistent and effective energy strategy around the world. For many years, there has been no clear delineation of responsibilities and authorities on international energy policy within the Executive branch. Duplication, redundancies, and conflicting lines of authorities have created serious problems in delivering a consistent message from the United States on international energy across the globe. Numerous government agencies remain tasked with pursing U.S. energy policies across the globe, including the U.S. Department of Energy, Department of Commerce, Department of Interior, Department of Treasury, the Energy Information Administration, and the National Security Council. As a result, areas of responsibility remain confusing. This in turn allows agencies to shift decision-making responsibility and divert accountability. In what ways does interagency collaboration on international energy policy need to be improved?

Answer. I believe that interagency collaboration on international energy policy benefits from regular discussions and interactions among the different U.S. Government agencies involved. If confirmed, I commit to actively and constructively contribute to the interagency policy deliberation and formulation process.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO HON. ROBERT A. WOOD BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Question. What is your understanding of morale throughout your post?

Answer. It is my understanding that morale at the Mission is high in light of the Administration's robust recommitment to multilateral engagement and in spite of the corresponding workload, which at times can prove challenging.

Question. How do you intend to improve morale across all of Mission Geneva?

Answer. If confirmed, I look forward to supporting Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield and her team in efforts to guide, encourage, and recognize the exceptional community of professionals working for the U.S. Mission to the U.N. That includes a focus on team building, treating every team member with respect, and ensuring appropriate work-life balance.

Question. How do you intend to create a unified mission and vision at your post?

Answer. It is my distinct impression that Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield has created just such a vision for the Mission, and if confirmed I will invest in that vision to continue the remarkable pattern of accomplishment she has established since assuming that role.

Question. How would you describe your management style?

Answer. I consider myself an inclusive and collaborative colleague, mentor, and team leader. If confirmed, I will strive to create an environment where all members of my team feel valued for their contributions and supported in their personal goals.

I believe my record at various management levels speaks to someone who values collaboration, diversity, and shared success.

Question. Do you believe it is ever acceptable or constructive to berate subordinates, either in public or private?

Answer. Under no circumstances is this acceptable.

Question. How do you envision your leadership relationship with your deputy?

Answer. If confirmed as Alternate Representative, I will have the honor of supervising an exceptional team of Foreign and Civil Service employees, and intend to operate with transparency, trust, and respect.

Question. If confirmed, what leadership responsibilities do you intend to entrust to your deputy?

Answer. If confirmed, I will invest in the broad expertise of my team, entrusting them with the necessary autonomy to continue working with the success and confidence they demonstrate every day.

Question. If confirmed, do you support U.N. Security Council reform including any potential efforts to expand the non-permanent or permanent members of the Council?

Answer. The United States supports a U.N. Security Council that is effective and fit for the challenges of the 21st century. If confirmed, I would remain open to a modest expansion of both permanent and non-permanent Security Council members in a way that does not diminish the Security Council's effectiveness or efficiency and does not alter or expand the veto.

Question. Do you support the expansion of veto power?

Answer. If confirmed, I would remain open to a modest expansion of both permanent and non-permanent Security Council members in a way that does not alter or expand the veto.

Question. Do you believe Security Council reform is necessary? Why or why not?

Answer. A well-executed expansion of the Security Council could help modernize the body to better reflect 21st century global realities and increase its effectiveness. If confirmed, I would work with our allies to support the evolution of this institution in a manner that promotes efficiency and effectiveness, without compromising United States interests.

Question. What other efforts would you support?

Answer. If confirmed, I am open to exploring other efforts that do not diminish the Security Council's effectiveness or efficiency and do not alter or expand the veto. In April, the United States cosponsored, along with 82 other countries, a U.N. General Assembly resolution that improves Security Council transparency—a sought-after reform—by automatically convening a debate in the General Assembly in response to the use of the veto in the Security Council.

Question. What is your assessment of the U.S.'s role on the Security Council? Are we effectively using our voice and vote to influence positive change towards peace and security?

Answer. The United States is committed to using the unique authority of the U.N. Security Council, as well as the U.N. system more broadly, to advance U.S. interests and respond to threats to international peace and security. If confirmed, I will be both a defender of and advocate for U.S. standards, values, and interests at the U.N. Security Council.

Question. What is your assessment of Russia on the Security Council in light of their war on Ukraine?

Answer. Russia's egregious actions are an affront to the core mandate of the Security Council and are especially outrageous given that it is a permanent member. If confirmed and if there were a path to suspend Russia from the U.N. Security Council, I would seek to pursue it immediately, particularly in light of its violations of the U.N. principles Russia has committed to defend. Russia's status as a permanent member of the Security Council, however, is enshrined in the U.N. Charter. To change this would require renegotiating and amending the Charter, which is a treaty among all the U.N.'s 193 Member States, including Russia. All amendments to the Charter require ratification of all five Permanent Members, including Russia, in order to enter into force.

Question. The recent effort in the General Assembly to force a GA meeting upon the use of a veto was supported by the U.S. In your view, was this key to strengthening the council?

Answer. This U.N. General Assembly resolution is a significant step toward the accountability, transparency, and responsibility of all Permanent Members of the Security Council who wield the veto. We see virtue in automatically convening a General Assembly meeting when a veto is cast, to give the Permanent Member of the U.N. Security Council the opportunity to explain its veto to the full General Assembly membership, and for the Members of the General Assembly to express their views.

Question. What can be done to strengthen the U.S. position on the Security Council?

Answer. If confirmed, I am committed to driving our multilateral engagement to deliver concrete outcomes to advance our values around the world. Within the Security Council, if confirmed, I will work closely with our P3 allies, France and the UK, as well as elected UNSC members to push back on China and Russia's obstructionism and alternative authoritarian agenda.

Question. What is your view of the current state of U.N. peacekeeping?

Answer. U.N. peacekeeping operations are among the most effective mechanisms of burden-sharing to address the global challenges to international peace and security. The United States continues to evaluate peacekeeping missions with a view to making them as efficient and effective as possible, while also providing missions with the necessary resources to fully implement their mandates. If confirmed, I will commit to working with the Administration in prioritizing reforms in annual budget negotiations, increasing the efficiency of missions and minimizing the cost to U.S. taxpayers, including reducing or closing missions where appropriate and when conditions allow.

Question. Are there missions that are more challenging politically than others? If so, which ones?

Answer. Peacekeeping missions facilitate post-conflict recovery by protecting civilians, preserving security, and creating the space for political solutions. While the U.N. Secretary-General and many Member States stress the importance of peacekeeping missions supporting political solutions, these are long-term endeavors that require persistence, political will, and significant resources. The most challenging missions are those where tremendous effort and many political processes over the years have not yielded a durable, sustainable peace. If confirmed, I will ensure that U.S. engagement continues to press for both short- and long-term solutions.

Question. Do you believe any missions are no longer meeting their mandate? If so, what do you believe would be appropriate action by the Security Council?

Answer. The administration continually reviews and assesses all existing peacekeeping missions to ensure they are making a meaningful and substantive contribution to international peace and security. If confirmed, for missions where that work remains imperative, I will focus on making them as effective and efficient as possible and providing them with the resources necessary to fully implement their mandates, including well-trained and well-equipped troops and police. If confirmed, for missions in countries where conditions allow, I will work with the U.N. Secretariat and U.N. Security Council to press for early strategic planning and sustainable transitions that preserve the advances in host nation peace and security.

Question. Ongoing allegations and incidents of sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeepers and U.N. personnel (and most recently an American) continue to draw international attention. What can the U.S., and the U.N., do to prevent more incidents of sexual abuse and assault?

Answer. The Secretary-General has taken important steps to address SEA, many of which the United States has directly supported, but there is still work to be done. If confirmed, I am committed to working with the Secretary-General to hold peacekeepers accountable.

In September 2021, the Secretary-General repatriated the entire Gabonese contingent deployed to the U.N. Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Force in the CAR (MINUSCA) following repeated, credible allegations of SEA by Gabon's troops. This marked an important step forward in the implementation of U.N. Security Council Resolution 2272 (2016), drafted and championed by the United States, to provide the Secretary-General enhanced measures to deter future acts of SEA in peacekeeping and hold offenders accountable.

The United States has also discontinued peacekeeping security assistance in the form of PKO-funded Global Peace Operations Initiative (GPOI) programming to three countries—Mauritania in 2019 and Cameroon and Gabon in 2020—when they failed to prevent and/or hold their peacekeepers accountable for persistent SEA and broader conduct and discipline issues.

Question. Most recently, the Council has experienced internal conflict about holding meetings on particular humanitarian crises like Syria, Ukraine, Ethiopia, and more. What is your assessment of this issue? Should the Security Council hold more regular meetings on these topics? If no, please explain.

Answer. The monthly program of work for the Security Council is negotiated among the members, with a significant number of the meetings fixed by directives in Security Council resolutions, including discussions on humanitarian situations. The Security Council has a monthly meeting on the humanitarian situation in Syria, and the Council has met 16 times on Ukraine since February 21, 2022, though some of these meetings on Ukraine were called by Russia on farcical pretenses. If confirmed, I commit to using these engagements as opportunities to work with like-minded partners to highlight humanitarian crises, including ones caused or exacerbated by Russia's further invasion of Ukraine.

Question. Additionally, the Council has issues passing resolutions or making statements on these topics. Do you believe the U.N. Security council is broken? Why or why not?

Answer. The Security Council reflects global political dynamics and, as such, is often a challenging venue. If confirmed, I commit to working with our partners to address international crises through political missions, sanctions and embargos, and peacekeeping operations, notwithstanding Russian and PRC obstructionism. The requirement, adopted in April 2022, that the General Assembly automatically convenes a meeting following a veto in the Security Council is a significant step toward ensuring the accountability, transparency, and responsibility of all Permanent Members of the Security Council in the appropriate use of the veto.

Question. Russia and China have used their position on the Council to block formal meetings on topics they did not like, including human rights abuses in Xinjiang, Syria, and more. What is your assessment of this issue? How can the U.S. use its influence to highlight these important issues regardless of other P5 members?

Answer. Under the Security Council's rules, one Council member cannot block formal meetings of the Council. If confirmed, I will commit to working closely with our partners to ensure the Security Council discusses all threats to international peace and security. Beyond the Security Council, the United States leads efforts to ensure critical issues are addressed in the U.N. system and in other fora, including the General Assembly, Human Rights Council, OPCW, and IAEA. In those settings, the United States highlights issues like Russia's and China's oppression of their own citizens, Syria's chemical weapons use, and Iran's nuclear program.

Question. The most recent Security Council elections replaced 5 of the elected 10 members with each candidate running unopposed. Do you believe clean slates for U.N. bodies are beneficial? Why or why not?

Answer. Being elected to the U.N. Security Council is arguably the most prestigious assignment for a country in the U.N. system. It is also a major commitment of resources and requires significant preparation. Countries typically announce their candidacy years, if not decades, in advance to adequately plan. Once a country announces its candidacy, regional blocs often discourage competition to ensure diversity of representation and to avoid wasted efforts. In the wider U.N. setting, clean slate elections can be detrimental to U.N. bodies, often allowing candidates who are unqualified for, or worse, hostile to, the work of those bodies. If confirmed, I will work to actively encourage qualified candidates to participate in U.N. elections.

Question. There have been proposals put forward for U.N. peacekeeping budget to fund missions that have not been approved by the U.N. Security Council. Do you believe that the U.N. peacekeeping budget should only be put towards mission approved by the U.N. Security Council?

Answer. The Biden administration would not support the use of U.N.-assessed contributions to fund peacekeeping missions that have not been authorized by the U.N. Security Council (UNSC). U.N. Security Council oversight is one of the key preconditions of any agreement on the use of U.N.-assessed funds for non-U.N. peace support operations. If confirmed, I will work with the appropriate U.N. oversight bodies, including the UNSC through resolutions authorizing mission mandates, to oversee U.N. funds.

Question. The United States is the single largest financial contributor to U.N. peacekeeping activities. Congress authorizes and appropriates U.S. contributions, and it has an ongoing interest in ensuring such funding is used as efficiently and effectively as possible. Do you believe that any nation, including the United States, should pay more than 25 percent of the U.N. peacekeeping budget?

Answer. My firm belief is that the United States should pay its assessed contributions in full and on time, while concurrently working to reduce those contributions by maximizing efficiencies and encouraging other member states to assume more of the financial burden. In December 2021, the U.S. Mission to the United Nations achieved a reduction in the U.S. peacekeeping assessment rate from 27.9 to 26.9 percent and preserved the 22 percent ceiling for the U.N. regular budget assessment. If confirmed, I will work with counterparts to ensure that peacekeeping missions are fit for purpose, focused on results, and accountable for their resources.

Question. What is your position on U.S. repayment of U.N. peacekeeping arrears? As memorialized in the 1999 Helms-Biden agreement, the Late Ambassador Holbrooke, then-President Clinton, then-Secretary General Kofi Anan, and then-Senator Biden all believed that the United States has no obligation to pay, and thus should not pay, the roughly $500 million in "contested arrears" that were explicitly excluded from the $1.6 billion Helms-Biden agreement. However, since then, the U.N. has insisted upon keeping on its books, and the Obama administration sought to pay over Congressional objections. Do you commit not to pay these "contested arrears" per Congressional intent as outlined in the Helms-Biden agreement?

Answer. If confirmed, I would welcome the opportunity to work with Congress to determine how best to meet our financial obligations, including addressing the substantial level of arrears that have accumulated over the past five years and the 25-percent cap on peacekeeping funding.

Question. Are there any specific steps you believe the U.N. should take to reduce the overall size of the U.N. peacekeeping budget? If so, what are they?

Answer. If confirmed, I am committed to reviewing and assessing all existing peacekeeping missions to ensure they are still necessary for the promotion of international peace and security. For missions that remain necessary, I will work to ensure they are as effective and efficient as possible, while also ensuring they have the necessary resources to fully implement their mandates, including well-trained and well-equipped troops and police.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO HON. ROBERT A. WOOD BY SENATOR BENJAMIN L. CARDIN

Question. What, in your opinion, are the prospects for effective Security Council action on the situation in Ukraine?

Answer. The prospects for effective action within the Security Council itself on the situation in Ukraine are limited by Russia's veto power. However, we have seen effective action taken within other U.N. bodies, including the U.N. General Assembly, which overwhelmingly adopted three resolutions condemning Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

In one of these votes in the General Assembly, member states suspended Russia from the U.N. Human Rights Council (HRC). The HRC also adopted a resolution establishing a Commission of Inquiry into violations and abuses of human rights and violations of international humanitarian law. Secretary-General Guterres condemned Russia's violation of the U.N. Charter and offered his good offices to negotiate an end to the war, to facilitate humanitarian corridors, and to find a solution to Ukraine's inability to transport its agricultural commodities due to Russia's aggression.

The U.N. provides significant lifesaving assistance to the people of Ukraine and refugees from Ukraine through U.N. agencies, and if confirmed, I will commit to working with these partners, such as UNICEF, UNHCR, IOM, the U.N. World Food Programme (WFP), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), and the WHO, to ensure these lines of effort remain a priority. The United States has provided $688 million dollars this year to fund this work.

Question. In the absence of possibilities in the Security Council, what are other opportunities to utilize the U.N. system to assist the people and government of Ukraine?

Answer. If confirmed, I am committed to supporting Ukraine and holding Russian President Vladimir Putin and his government to account across international fora—including the United Nations—in coordination with Ukraine, allies and partners, humanitarian organizations, and other international organizations. I will support steps the United Nations has already taken to hold Russia to account such as the U.N. Human Rights Council's Commission of Inquiry (UNHRC CoI) and the U.N. Human Rights Monitoring Mechanism in Ukraine (UNHRMMU). I will continue to encourage other governments to support and increase their support to Ukraine's Humanitarian Response Plan, which is coordinated by the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) and covers critical needs for the millions of people displaced within, or outside of, Ukraine by Russia's aggression.

Question. If confirmed, how would you utilize your position to improve the effectiveness of economic sanctions?

Answer. The key to making U.N. economic sanctions effective is in promoting their full implementation by all U.N. Member States. When the U.N. Security Council adopts economic sanctions measures under Chapter VII of the U.N. Charter, all U.N. Member States are required under international law to implement them. If confirmed, I will work diligently to ensure effective implementation of these measures, including by publicly calling out any U.N. Member State that knowingly violates them. We will continue working to strengthen implementation, helping bolster countries' capacity to implement and enforce sanctions and work with the U.N. system, including the U.N. sanctions expert panels and Security Council sanctions committees, to call attention to potential sanctions violations, remind U.N. Member States of their obligations under U.N. Security Council sanctions resolutions, and reiterate the importance to international peace and security of full compliance with the U.N. Security Council's decisions. We share information with those same U.N. sanctions expert panels to enhance their investigations and offer robust capacity-building assistance to U.N. Member States on a wide range of relevant issues, including banking, maritime trade, and others. Where appropriate, we work with our partners on the U.N. Security Council to nominate individuals and entities for designation in relevant U.N. sanctions committees and may consider implementing sanctions under domestic authorities on such individuals and entities when not designated by the U.N.

Question. In your view, how effective have U.N Security Council economic sanctions been to date?

Answer. U.N. Security Council-imposed economic sanctions have a mixed record in achieving their goals. Effectiveness has depended on many factors, including the degree to which U.N. Member States have faced consequences for failing to fully implement legally binding sanctions measures, as is required under the U.N. Charter. The most expansive U.N. Security Council economic sanctions now in existence are those imposed on the DPRK for the development of its nuclear and ballistic missile programs. These measures have severely impeded the Kim regime's ability to import foreign technologies, equipment, and other materials for its unlawful WMD and ballistic missile programs. If confirmed, I will continue to prioritize strengthening sanctions on the DPRK and working towards their full implementation. In response to concerns about Iran's nuclear program, the Security Council adopted multiple rounds of sanctions from 2006-2010 that helped get Iran to consent to limits in the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). Targeted U.N. counterterrorism sanctions have made it much harder for groups like ISIS and al-Qaeda to raise, transfer or conceal funds. The United States is working hard to make sure that U.N. Security Council-imposed sanctions have clear objectives, are well integrated with broader diplomatic strategies, and are dynamic and flexible in response to relevant events. If confirmed, I will look to ensure U.N. Security Council sanctions continue to be used as a strong tool to counter threats to U.S. national security and global stability.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO HON. ROBERT A. WOOD BY SENATOR MARCO RUBIO

Question. Although the U.N. is often thought of as the guardian of world peace, it is in reality a dysfunctional, bureaucratic institution that gives our adversaries, such as the Chinese Communist Party, a forum to further their malign influence. How would you counter Beijing's efforts to abuse the U.N. Security Council to further its agenda?

Answer. As I have in other multilateral fora, if confirmed I will continue to call out the PRC for its malign behavior and actions. I will also work with likeminded partners to promote the integrity of the U.N. system based on the principles and values of the U.N. Charter. If confirmed, I will work in the U.N. Security Council to present a united front against those who seek to advance authoritarian and destabilizing agendas. This type of outreach and coordination sends a powerful message throughout the multilateral system—as it did during the several historic votes in the U.N. General Assembly condemning Russia's unprovoked and unjustified war against Ukraine. The U.N. General Assembly held a debate on June 8 and 10 following vetoes by China and Russia of a U.S.-drafted Security Council resolution that would have imposed further sanctions on the DPRK for its unlawful ballistic missile launches. The many U.N. member states that spoke during this debate calling for U.N. Security Council action underscored the isolation of China and Russia on this issue. If confirmed, I will work to widen and deepen that isolation.

Question. What steps can the U.S. take to further its influence in the U.N. and minimize that of the Chinese Communist Party?

Answer. The United States is implementing a comprehensive multilateral strategy, alongside other regional plans, to counter the harmful influence of the People's Republic of China (PRC) and strengthen the U.N. and rules-based international order. This strategy includes advancing an affirmative agenda that highlights the role and contributions of the United States in addressing global challenges; advocating against any kind of U.N. endorsement of any country's signature foreign policy platforms, such as the Belt and Road Initiative; supporting qualified candidates for elected and appointed positions in the U.N. and other international organizations who will act independently; and developing flexible coalitions with a diverse array of countries to strengthen the rules-based international system. If confirmed, I would champion our efforts aimed to create an environment resistant to the PRC's efforts to bend international organizations to their worldview.

Question. China has roughly 1,072 peacekeeping personnel deployed in South Sudan and the China National Petroleum Corporation controls a 40 percent stake—the largest of any stakeholder—in a consortium that extracts South Sudan's oil. In 2012, the Chinese Government dispatched its first combat unit to the continent to support the U.N. Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS). After civil war broke out in the country in 2013, Beijing played a significant role in increasing the UNMISS authorized troop strength and modifying UNMISS's mandate to include a broader interpretation of the U.N.'s nonintervention policy. In this expanded mandate, Beijing successfully lobbied for a provision to include the protection of workers on oil installations.

Although the provision initially encountered resistance from officials in the U.N. Department of Peacekeeping Operations, who argued the change would undermine the U.N.'s neutrality and place peacekeepers on the side of the South Sudanese Government and the oil industry, the mandate expansion was ultimately adopted unanimously by the U.N. Security Council in 2014. The new mandate aligned peacekeepers with the South Sudanese Government and the country's oil sector, and by extension, Beijing's economic interests.

- What is your assessment of this case?

Answer. If confirmed, I would ensure constant vigilance in our review of UNSC products to guard against PRC and other states exploiting multilateral fora to pursue parochial interests or national agendas.

Question. Clearly this was done against U.S. interests. How will you prevent Beijing from coopting the U.N. Security Council and U.N. Peacekeeping system to further its own interests and diminish our own in the future?

Answer. If confirmed, I will coordinate closely with State Department colleagues, other members of the Security Council, and U.N. partners in New York and in the field to ensure that we advance U.S. priorities across U.N. peacekeeping, including, for instance, by preventing changes to Security Council mandates that seek to undermine those priorities. More broadly, I will seek common ground at the Security Council with those who take their responsibilities seriously among the permanent and elected members to highlight our shared values and present a united front against those who seek to advance authoritarian and destabilizing agendas.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO HON. ROBERT A. WOOD BY SENATOR ROB PORTMAN

Question. The United Nation's bias against Israel is long-standing and well-known.

- If confirmed, what will you do to fight back against the U.N.'s bias against Israel?

Answer. I agree completely that U.N. bias against Israel is long-standing and well-known. In previous leadership positions at the U.S. Mission to the U.N. in Vienna and at the Conference on Disarmament, I worked closely with Israeli officials in lobbying member states to oppose regular Arab League resolutions at the International Atomic Energy Agency condemning Israel for not joining the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty. If confirmed, I will continue the United States' work in opposing efforts to unfairly single out or delegitimize Israel through one-sided resolutions, reports, and other actions across the United Nations, including the Security Council, the General Assembly, the Human Rights Council, and other bodies. If confirmed, I will also work with our Israeli diplomatic colleagues to promote the election of Israeli citizens to U.N. leadership posts and Israel's inclusion in U.N. working groups, as well as support qualified Israeli candidates for appointments within the U.N. system.

Question. On February 24th, the day of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, I said that the U.S. should work with our allies and partners to remove Russia from the Security Council. Their flagrant disregard for the principles of the U.N. Charter, their abuse of their veto power to worsen Syria's humanitarian situation, and other their unprovoked violence against U.N. member states make them unfit to serve on the Security Council.

- What are your thoughts on this?
- Do you believe that Russia deserves a seat on the U.N. Security Council?
- If yes, why do they deserve that honor?
- Are there any issues that you believe we can work with the Russians on in good faith?

Answer. Russia's egregious violations are an affront to the core mandate of the U.N. Security Council, and it is outrageous that a permanent member has acted in this manner, particularly in light of its violations of the U.N. principles it had committed to defend. A change in Russia's status as a permanent member of the UNSC, however, would require renegotiating and amending the U.N. Charter, which is a treaty among all 193 member states of the U.N., including Russia. All amendments to the Charter require ratification by all five Permanent Members, including Russia, in order to enter into force. Given these realities, if confirmed, my focus will be to continue working with likeminded partners across the U.N. system to further isolate Russia and impose additional consequences for its egregious violations of international law.

The nature of the U.N. Security Council working procedures requires we engage with Russia, as all other members of the Security Council, if it is in the United States' interest to do so. If confirmed, I pledge to be realistic and clear-eyed about the limits of our engagement with Russia given its violations of the U.N. Charter.

NOMINATIONS

WEDNESDAY, JULY 13, 2022

U.S. SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS,
Washington, DC.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:00 a.m., in Room SD–419, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Brian Schatz presiding.

Present: Senators Schatz [presiding], Cardin, Coons, Murphy, Kaine, Markey, Booker, Van Hollen, Romney, Young, and Hagerty.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. BRIAN SCHATZ, U.S. SENATOR FROM HAWAII

Senator SCHATZ. Good morning. The Senator Foreign Relations Committee will come to order. We are here today to consider several important nominations: Mr. Dean Thompson to be Ambassador to Nepal, Mr. Robert Godec to be the Ambassador to Thailand, Mr. Yohannes Abraham to be the Ambassador to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, Mr. Richard Buangan to be the Ambassador to Mongolia, and Marie C. Damour, to be the Ambassador to the Republics of Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, the Kingdom of Tonga, and Tuvalu.

Senator Van Hollen is here to introduce Mr. Thompson, so I will now turn it over to him to make his introduction.

STATEMENT OF HON. CHRIS VAN HOLLEN, U.S. SENATOR FROM MARYLAND

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Well thank you, Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member Romney. Let me start by congratulating all of the nominees here today and thank you for your service.

I have the special privilege, Mr. Chairman, of introducing President Biden's nominee to serve as our next United States Ambassador to Nepal, Mr. Dean R. Thompson. President Biden selected a nominee with impeccable credentials, sterling character, and a deep knowledge of U.S. diplomacy, and he has also wisely selected a Marylander who holds a master's degree from the University of Maryland and represents the very best of our state.

As a career member of the Foreign Service, Dean Thompson has served overseas in Malaysia, Romania, India, Paraguay, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka. Here at home he served in several leadership roles within the State Department, including poses as the Director of the State Department's Executive Secretariat staff, Deputy Director of the State Department Operations Center, and Director of the Operations Center Crisis Management staff. He cur-

rently serves as the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for South and Central Asian Affairs and stepped up to serve as Acting Assistant Secretary from 2020 to 2021.

I believe each of these experiences, which span over 25 years of service to our nation, have provided Mr. Thompson with a deep knowledge of U.S. foreign policy and how to connect effectively with local communities in Nepal, should this committee confirm his nomination.

Beyond this extraordinary resume, Dean Thompson is a man of exemplary character. He is regarded within the State Department as someone who not only possesses the strength to lead but also has the heart to fully invest in the well-being and success of those who work for him. He is composed and kind and equal measure, always committed to getting the job done with efficiency, respect, and decency.

He is supported in all these things by his family, and I want to salute his wife, Jane, and his mother, Linda, who are with us in the hearing room today. Thank you very much for being here. And I want to give a shout-out to his father, his children, and his new grandson, all of whom are watching online.

I grew up in a Foreign Service family. I lived in some of the countries where Dean Thompson has served, and I know the challenges and the opportunities of having a parent represent our nation overseas. I want to commend Dean Thompson, the Thompson family, and the Foreign Service Officers and families, families of Foreign Service Officers in this room, and all around the world. They are on the front lines of advancing America's priorities abroad, and those of us in the United States Congress must commit ourselves every day to honor their service and their sacrifice through our work here in the Capitol.

Also growing up in a Foreign Service family taught me how to spot a good diplomat. I know a good one when I see one, and Dean Thompson is truly a diplomat in every sense of the world. He will be ready to go on day one, and colleagues, I urge this committee to support his nomination. Thank you.

Senator SCHATZ. Thank you, Senator Van Hollen. Congratulations to all of you. You are all qualified for these positions, and we thank you for being willing to serve at this challenging time. We also especially thank your families, and when you have an opportunity to address the committee we would welcome your introduction of your family.

If confirmed, Mr. Thompson would serve during an important time in U.S.-Nepalese relations. Nepal is one of the few countries in the region to condemn Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Earlier this year, the Nepalese Parliament approved a $500 million in infrastructure grant from the Millennium Challenge Corporation, a decision met with protests from citizens who were concerned about American influence in their country, and just last month the Nepalese government cancelled its participation in the U.S. State Partnership Program. These actions followed a concerted Chinese government disinformation campaign. It is vital that the U.S. Ambassador to Nepal be able to navigate this landscape and reassure the people of Nepal that America is their ally. Mr. Thompson's depth

of experience in this region makes him well-qualified to take on this important post.

Robert Godec is a career diplomat who most recently served as Acting Assistant Secretary for the Bureau of African Affairs at the Department of State. He served as U.S. Ambassador to Kenya from 2013 to 2019, and U.S. Ambassador to Tunisia from 2006 to 2009. During his long career he has also held positions as the Assistant Office Director for Thailand and Burma in the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs and Director for Southeast Asian Affairs at the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative.

Thailand is a major non-NATO ally with the largest economy in mainland Southeast Asia. Secretary Blinken was in Bangkok this past week and signed two cooperation agreements with his Thai counterpart to deepen ties between our two nations, saying, "We are taking the partnership between us fully into the 21st century."

Thailand is also a member of the Indo-Pacific Economic Forum and a key partner in a free and open Indo-Pacific. Mr. Godec's wide breadth of experience, which includes previous work on Thailand and regional trade issues make him an excellent nominee for this position at this critical time.

Yohannes Abraham currently serves as Deputy Assistant to the President, Chief of Staff, and Executive Secretary of the National Security Council. He has worked in the Executive branch in various capacities, including as a Senior Advisor to the National Economic Council and a Deputy Assistant to the President for Intergovernmental Affairs and Public Engagement during the Obama administration.

In his current position, Mr. Abraham has cultivated valuable experience helping plan and execute the 2021 and 2022 U.S.-ASEAN Summits, the President's first trip to Asia, and the Vice President's trip to Vietnam and Singapore. The United States must continue to engage with ASEAN on issues of international significance, including climate change and infrastructure development, and Mr. Abraham is well-suited to take on this task.

Richard Buangan is a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, Class of Minister-Counselor. He most recently served as Acting Assistant Secretary in the Bureau of Global Public Affairs at the State Department and prior to that he served as Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Bureau of East Asia and Pacific Affairs. Mr. Buangan also lived in my home state of Hawaii for part of his childhood, when his dad was in the Navy, and I understand that his dad is here today. Congratulations. I am sure you are very proud.

Mongolia is a vast nation surrounded by Russia and China and a young democracy. It is more important than ever that the United States continue its friendship with the Mongolian people and find opportunities to collaborate on issues, including energy independence and economic development, and Mr. Buangan is well-qualified to do so.

Marie Damour is a career member of the Senior Foreign Service who has served as Council General in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, since 2019. She previously served as Director in the Office of Maritime Southeast Asia in the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs as well as in the Office of Policy Coordination and Public Af-

fairs in the Bureau of Consular Affairs. She was also the Deputy Chief of Mission as well as the Chargé d'Affaires at the U.S. Embassy in Wellington, New Zealand.

Ms. Damour has been nominated to represent our nation in five Pacific Island countries: Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Tonga, and Tuvalu, that cover thousands of square miles of ocean. These nations are important partners, and the United States must genuinely engage with them on issues that are of concern to the region, from IUU fishing to sea level rise threatening their very existence.

I have spoken with ambassadors from many of the countries that Ms. Damour will be working with, if confirmed, and there are urgent needs in these communities that the United States has unfortunately neglected for too long. I am encouraged by the commitments Vice President Harris made at the Pacific Island Forum leaders' meeting yesterday, including plans to establish U.S. embassies in Kiribati and Tonga, appoint an envoy to the Pacific Island Forums, bring the Peace Corps back to the Pacific, and make progress towards re-establishing a USAID regional mission for the Pacific in Suva. I am sure you will be directly involved in many of these efforts, and if confirmed, I look forward to speaking with you more about how the United States can expand its engagement in the region.

There are few jobs as important as confirming nominees to be U.S. Ambassador. It is my honor to chair this hearing, especially given that all five of these nominees, if confirmed, will represent the United States in the Indo-Pacific, a region critical to our foreign policy and national security. These positions require vast skills and experience, and you all have it.

I now yield to the Ranking Member, Senator Romney.

STATEMENT OF HON. MITT ROMNEY,
U.S. SENATOR FROM UTAH

Senator ROMNEY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for your comments, and thank you to each of the nominees for your willingness to again take on the mantle of service for our nation in a region of the world which is critical for the citizens there but also critical for the interest of the United States, given the dynamic of authoritarian promotion by the Communist Chinese Party as well as a recognition that this is a critical time in history as it relates to major global issues.

I appreciate your willingness to serve our country and to represent our interests. Our friends and allies are important in Asia, one because we value friendship and we value the relations we have with these nations, but also because of our strategic objectives in the region, and that is only going to become more necessary as China continues down its path of malign behavior.

Mr. Chairman, rather than reading through my opening comments I would ask that they be included in the record so that we can hear from the nominees and move directly to questions.

Senator SCHATZ. Without objection. Thank you, Senator Romney.

[The prepared statement of Senator Romney follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF SENATOR MITT ROMNEY

Thank you to our nominees for being here today and for your commitment to serve our country and represent our nation's interest abroad as ambassadors. Our friends and allies in Asia are not just important, but necessary for meeting U.S. strategic objectives around the world, and will only become more necessary if China continues down its path of malign behavior.

China's quest to become the world's leading power-economically, militarily, and geopolitically-is the central challenge of the 21st Century. We must link arms with our friends and allies to confront China, to push the Chinese Communist Party to abandon its predatory policies, and demand that China abide by international norms and rules. We must also the cause of freedom around the world-including holding the CCP accountable for the atrocities they commit against the Uyghur people and other ethnic minorities.

Southeast Asia is a vibrant region of growing strategic important to the future of a free and open Indo-Pacific. ASEAN nations are feeling pressure from China given its close proximity and influence-especially as China continues to make investments in energy, critical minerals, and other areas. Expanding concrete economic engagement in the region is what our partners most want to see, and it's crucial for the U.S. economy as well. Mr. Abraham, I look forward to hearing from you how, if confirmed, you will work to find ways to leverage that existing strength and partnership in the region so that we can grow them further. A persistent advocate for tangible ways to expand this economic engagement is critical in this role.

Thailand is a significant treaty ally within ASEAN-and a critical partner in the areas of energy and infrastructure. Mr. Godec, I hope to hear from you how, if confirmed as Ambassador to Thailand, you will work to not only support our close military relationship with the Thais, but prioritize ensuring the country remains a willing partner on providing opportunities for cross-border humanitarian assistance into Burma.

I'm proud that the Utah Guard was able to deliver life-saving COVID supplies and equipment to Nepal last summer. I also applaud the decision by the Federal Parliament of Nepal to ratify its Millennium Challenge Corporation compact. Mr. Thompson, if confirmed, one of your crucial tasks as our next Ambassador will be overseeing its implementation, and we have to get this right.

Mr. Buangan, as you are aware, Mongolia, a growing democracy and great partner to the U.S., is unfortunately wedged between two increasingly aggressive authoritarian powers: Russia and China. We must ensure that the U.S. remains active in the country and consider ways to expand our economic, development, and defense relationship. I'd like to hear from you on how, if confirmed as Ambassador to Mongolia, you will work to increase U.S.-Mongolia trade, and its trade with other countries, to reduce economic dependence on China and Russia.

The United States is a longstanding partner of the Pacific Islands, and given China's encroachment, it is imperative that we solidify and amplify U.S. presence in the region. Notably, Fiji recently helped the U.S. seize the yacht of a Russian oligarch. The next U.S. Ambassador to Fiji needs to come to the table with concrete ideas for strengthening our ties in area such as health, education, investment, defense, and the environment. Ms. Damour, I would like to hear from you how, if confirmed, you would work to build collaboration with allies and partners, including Taiwan.

I look forward to hearing from you all on the issues I outlined, and should you be confirmed, I urge you all to use your roles to promote the values of freedom and democracy abroad and work to dissuade China from pursuing its predatory path.

Thank you, and I will now turn it back to Senator Schatz.

Senator SCHATZ. We will now proceed to testimony and we will start with Mr. Godec.

STATEMENT OF HON. ROBERT F. GODEC, OF VIRGINIA, A CAREER MEMBER OF THE SENIOR FOREIGN SERVICE, CLASS OF CAREER MINISTER, NOMINATED TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE KINGDOM OF THAILAND

Mr. GODEC. Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you as President Biden's nominee to be the next U.S. Ambassador to the Kingdom of Thailand. I want to thank President Biden and

Secretary Blinken for their confidence in me. If confirmed, I look forward to working with Congress to advance U.S. interests in Thailand and the Indo-Pacific region.

I would like to introduce to you my wife, Lori Magnusson, who is here today. Lori has been a source of inspiration, strength, and wisdom through our years together. Lori's constant love, support, and partnership have been extraordinary, and I owe much to her. Next to Lori is Brittany Jones, who is an exceptional caregiver and provides much support to Lori. I would also like to express my profound thanks to my mother, Nancy Dietrich, for all she has done for me. She is watching online this morning.

Thailand has a rich history, remarkable culture, extraordinary beauty, and exceptional people. It has been a partner for the United States since 1833. Together, we have woven a rich tapestry of ties that are government-to-government, business-to-business, university-to-university, NGO-to-NGO, and people-to-people. We have improved security in the region, faced global public health challenges, deepened mutual prosperity, and advanced the fight against human, wildlife, and drug trafficking. Building on our shared values and our just-signed United States-Thailand Communiqué on Strategic Alliance and Partnership, we have opportunities in the days ahead to strengthen further our partnership, to renew it, and take it to a new level.

The United States and Thailand have a longstanding commitment to mutual security. Our militaries fought side by side in Korea and Vietnam. Today, Thailand is a treaty and major non-NATO ally, and we have many military engagements and training exercises, including COBRA Gold, the largest in Asia. Our alliance helps to ensure security for Thailand, the United States, and the region. If confirmed, I will seek to deepen it.

Our economic partnership is another vital part of our tapestry of ties. Our total trade is over $60 billion a year and growing. U.S. businesses are a major investor in Thailand, and Thai companies are increasingly active in the United States. If confirmed, I will work to expand further our commercial ties.

Strengthening democracy and promoting respect for human rights and the rule of law are fundamental to U.S. relations with Thailand. We have long supported multi-party democracy, freedom of expression, good governance, and respect for human rights across the world and in Thailand. We recognized that a democratically elected government took office in 2019 after the 2014 coup, but work remains to be done by Thailand. If confirmed, I will vigorously continue our efforts to advance democracy, human rights, the rule of law, and will support civil society, independent media, and human rights defenders who play a critical role in this effort.

The United States and Thailand also enjoy robust people-to-people ties. Our connections are enriched by the presence in the United States of almost 350,000 Thais and U.S. citizens of Thai heritage, and by the more than 100,000 U.S. citizens in Thailand. We are strengthened by the close ties our universities and colleges enjoy as well as the cultural exchange programs we support in Thailand. If confirmed, I will work to increase opportunities for Thais and Americans to learn together and from each other.

Thailand plays a vital role in the region. Today we work closely with Thailand in ASEAN, and in other regional mechanisms including the Mekong-U.S. Partnership. As a key ally, we welcome Thailand's decision to join the discussions on the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework, which will help build an economic partnership for the future. If confirmed, I will engage robustly with Thailand, the host of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Forum this year, to facilitate the transition into our own 2023 host year.

Across the years, we have cooperated with Thailand on regional challenges, including law enforcement, the response to natural disasters, and humanitarian relief. We welcome Thailand's commitment to address the threat of climate change; this will be a critical area for further collaboration. We appreciate Thailand's willingness to host refugees and, if confirmed, I would seek to ensure refugees and asylum seekers have all the support they need. And I would engage in Thailand to underscore our call to all countries to condemn the military coup in Burma and end the Burmese military's horrific violence, which has led to worsening human rights and humanitarian crises.

Finally, our Embassy in Bangkok and Consulate General in Chiang Mai have exceptional teams that are doing extraordinary work to advance our partnership. Ensuring they are safe and secure, and have the resources they need, will be a top priority for me, if confirmed.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and members of the committee, if confirmed, I would welcome the opportunity to serve as the next U.S. Ambassador to the Kingdom of Thailand and to lead our team of capable and committed public servants to advance the U.S.-Thai partnership.

I look forward to answering your questions. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Godec follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. ROBERT F. GODEC

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Romney, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you as President Biden's nominee to be the next U.S. Ambassador to the Kingdom of Thailand. I want to thank President Biden and Secretary Blinken for their confidence in me. If confirmed, I look forward to working with Congress to advance U.S. interests in Thailand and the Indo-Pacific region.

I would like to introduce to you my wife, Lori Magnusson, who is here today. Lori has been a source of inspiration, strength, and wisdom through our years together. Lori's constant love, support, and partnership have been extraordinary, and I owe much to her. I would also like to express my profound thanks to my mother, Nancy Dietrich, for all she has done for me.

Thailand has a rich history, remarkable culture, extraordinary beauty, and exceptional people. It has been a partner for the United States since 1833. Together, we have woven a rich tapestry of ties that are government-to-government, business-to-business, university-to-university, NGO-to-NGO, and people-to-people. We have improved security in the region, faced global public health challenges, deepened mutual prosperity, and advanced the fight against human, wildlife, and drug trafficking. Building on our shared values and our just signed United States-Thailand Communiqué on Strategic Alliance and Partnership, we have opportunities in the days ahead to strengthen further our partnership, to renew it, and take it to a new level.

The United States and Thailand have a long-standing commitment to mutual security. Our militaries fought side by side in Korea and Vietnam. Today, Thailand is a treaty and major non-NATO ally, and we have many military engagements and training exercises, including COBRA Gold, the largest in Asia. Our alliance helps

to ensure security for Thailand, the United States, and the region. If confirmed, I will seek to deepen it.

Our economic partnership is another vital part of our tapestry of ties. Our total bilateral trade is over $60 billion a year and growing. U.S. businesses are a major investor in Thailand and Thai companies are increasingly active in the United States. If confirmed, I will work to expand further our commercial ties.

Strengthening democracy and promoting respect for human rights and the rule of law are fundamental to U.S. relations with Thailand. We have long supported multi-party democracy, freedom of expression, good governance, and respect for human rights across the world and in Thailand. We recognized that a democratically elected government took office in 2019 after the 2014 coup, but work remains to be done by Thailand. If confirmed, I will vigorously continue our efforts to advance democracy, human rights, and the rule of law and will support civil society, independent media, and human rights defenders who play a critical role in this effort.

We also enjoy robust people-to-people ties. Our connections are enriched by the presence in the United States of almost 350,000 Thais and U.S. citizens of Thai heritage, and by the more than100,000 U.S. citizens in Thailand. We are strengthened by the close ties our universities and colleges enjoy as well as the cultural exchange programs we support in Thailand. If confirmed, I will work to increase opportunities for Thais and Americans to learn together and from each other.

Thailand plays a vital role in the region. Today, we work closely with Thailand in ASEAN, and in other regional mechanisms including the Mekong-U.S. Partnership. As a key ally, we welcome Thailand's decision to join the discussions on the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework, which will help build an economic partnership for the future. If confirmed, I will engage robustly with Thailand, the host of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum this year, to facilitate the transition into our own 2023 host year.

Across the years, we have cooperated with Thailand on regional challenges, including law enforcement, the response to natural disasters, and humanitarian relief. We welcome Thailand's commitment to address the threat of climate change; this will be a critical area for further collaboration. We appreciate Thailand's willingness to host refugees and, if confirmed, I would seek to ensure refugees and asylum seekers have all the support they need. And I would engage in Thailand to underscore our call to all countries to condemn the military coup in Burma and end the Burmese military's horrific violence, which has led to worsening human rights and humanitarian crises.

Finally, our Embassy in Bangkok and Consulate General in Chiang Mai have exceptional teams that are doing extraordinary work to advance our partnership. Ensuring they are safe and secure, and have the resources they need, will be a top priority for me if confirmed.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and members of the committee, if confirmed, I would welcome the opportunity to serve as the next U.S. Ambassador to the Kingdom of Thailand and to lead our team of capable and committed public servants to advance the U.S.-Thai partnership.

I look forward to answering your questions. Thank you.

Senator SCHATZ. Thank you very much. Mr. Thompson, please proceed with your testimony.

STATEMENT OF DEAN R. THOMPSON, OF MARYLAND, A CAREER MEMBER OF THE SENIOR FOREIGN SERVICE, CLASS OF MINISTER–COUNSELOR, NOMINATED TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO NEPAL

Mr. THOMPSON. Thank you, Chairman Schatz, Ranking Member Romney, and honorable members of this committee. I appreciate very much you considering my nomination to serve as the next U.S. Ambassador to Nepal. I want to thank Senator Van Hollen for his far-too-generous remarks. My mother and my wife have joined me today. He introduced them. With my mother here, someone maybe believed part of his remarks even. We will see.

I want to start by thanking my family, my wife, Jane, and my three children Marshall, Kendall, and Grace. They served with me

for more than 26 years in the Foreign Service. They have endured frequent moves, emergency evacuations, and periods of separation. But they have also shared with me the privilege of serving the American people overseas, a privilege for which we are deeply grateful.

I would also like to thank my parents—my mother is here—for instilling in me a strong sense and interest in service and international relations. My father was the Director of International Programs at the National 4–H Council in Washington for 20 years, and prior to that Director for West Africa at the outset of Peace Corps.

From my time as Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary in the South and Central Asian Affairs Bureau, as a diplomat in Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and India, and a leader in the Department's crisis management apparatus, I do feel well-prepared to serve in this capacity, if confirmed.

It has been a privilege to serve the American people and, if confirmed, I welcome the opportunity to take on this important responsibility. If confirmed, I will embrace the opportunity to lead a topflight group of American and local staff and strive to create an environment that emphasizes the American values of diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility.

We are at an important juncture in our relationship with Nepal. Nepal has been referred to as a "yam between two stones," those stones, of course, being India and China. While those countries do have important relationships with Nepal, we also share Nepal's interest in strengthening its sovereignty and partnership with the United States.

If confirmed, facilitating Nepal's economic growth and strengthening the trade ties between our countries will be key priorities. The United States' relationship with Nepal has seen recent gains that cement our 75-year partnership. Mr. Chairman, you mentioned Nepal's parliament ratified the $500 million Millennium Challenge Corporation Compact in the face of a torrid PRC disinformation campaign. This project will build electricity transmission lines to connect to Nepal's clean energy, abundant hydropower with South Asia's energy grid. It will also build high-quality roads in Nepal. These projects will increase the prosperity of both of our countries.

USAID just signed a $659 million agreement with Nepal to contribute to Nepal's development over the next 5 years. This is a new chapter in the United States government's longstanding development relationship and reflects the evolution of our partnership. Post-earthquake reconstruction is winding down, the transition to federalism is well underway, and through successful programming the United States has helped lay the foundations to support Nepal's goal of graduating to middle-income country status.

If confirmed, I will also push for the rights of all Nepali citizens and residents. This includes the Dalits, marginalized communities, and refugee communities, including Tibetan refugees. I will encourage the government of Nepal to implement policies that promote meaningful inclusion, economic opportunity, and humanitarian support.

Nepal's progress on the commitments it made during President Biden's Summit for Democracy demonstrates how important Nepal's young democracy is to its people and the importance it places on its relationship to the United States. Nepal's support for Ukraine resolutions at the U.N. General Assembly and the U.N. Human Rights Council demonstrates its dedication to the international rules-based order and the premise of territorial integrity. Nepal is a committed bilateral partner and a committed partner on the world stage.

Finally, if confirmed, I will also work to help Nepal strengthen its democratic institutions. Nepal has come a long way since its civil war only 16 years ago. Like other democracies, Nepal's politics can be contentious and messy at times, but supporting Nepal's democracy is in our interest and will remain a priority of mine if confirmed as Ambassador.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to close by saying that we have an important opportunity to strengthen the U.S. relationship with Nepal. I look forward to working with Congress to build this relationship.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Thompson follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT FOR DEAN R. THOMPSON

Chairman Schatz, Ranking Member Romney, and distinguished members of this committee; thank you for considering my nomination to serve as the next U.S. Ambassador to Nepal. It is an honor to be nominated for this position.

I would like to start by thanking my family, my wife, Jane, and my three children Marshall, Kendall, and Grace. For more than 26 years in the Foreign Service they have served with me, enduring frequent moves, emergency evacuations, and periods of separation. They have also shared with me the privilege of serving our country, a privilege for which we are deeply grateful. I would also like to thank my parents, my mother is here with us today, for instilling in me a strong interest in service and international relations. My father was the Director of International Programs at the National 4-H Council in Washington for 20 years, and prior to that a member of Peace Corps staff, including director for West Africa at the outset of Peace Corps' mission.

From my time as Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary in the South and Central Asian Affairs Bureau, as a U.S. diplomat in Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and India, and a leader in the Department's crisis management apparatus, I feel well prepared to serve in this capacity if confirmed.

Serving the American people has been a privilege and, if confirmed, I welcome the opportunity to take on this important responsibility. If confirmed, I will embrace the opportunity to lead a topflight group of American and locally employed staff and I will strive to create an environment that emphasizes the American values of diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility.

We are at an important juncture in our relationship with Nepal. Nepal has been referred to as a "yam between two stones," those stones being China and India. While those countries do have important relationships with Nepal, we also share Nepal's interest in strengthening its sovereignty and its partnership with the United States.

If confirmed, facilitating Nepal's economic growth and strengthening the trade ties between our countries will be key priorities. The United States' relationship with Nepal has seen recent gains that cement our 75-year partnership. In February Nepal's parliament ratified the $500 million Millennium Challenge Corporation Compact in the face of a torrid PRC disinformation campaign. This project will build electricity transmission lines to connect Nepal's clean, abundant hydropower with South Asia's energy grid. It will also build high-quality roads in Nepal. These projects will increase the prosperity of both of our countries.

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evolution of our partnership. Post-earthquake reconstruction is winding down, the transition to federalism is well underway, and through successful programming the United States has helped lay the foundations to support Nepal's goal of graduating to middle-income country status.

If, confirmed, I will also push for the rights of all Nepali citizens and residents. This includes the Dalits, marginalized communities, and refugee communities, including Tibetan refugees. I will encourage the Government of Nepal to implement policies that promote meaningful inclusion, economic opportunity, and humanitarian support.

Nepal's progress on the commitments it made during President Biden's Summit for Democracy demonstrates how important Nepal's young democracy is to its people, and the importance it places on its relationship to the United States. Nepal's support for Ukraine resolutions at the U.N. General Assembly and the U.N. Human Rights Council demonstrates its dedication to the international rules-based order and the premise of territorial integrity. Nepal is a committed bilateral partner and a committed partner on the world stage.

Finally, if confirmed, I will also work to help Nepal strengthen its democratic institutions. Nepal has come a long way since its civil war only sixteen years ago. Like other democracies, Nepal's politics can be contentious and messy at times, but supporting Nepal's democracy is in our interest and will remain a priority of mine if confirmed as Ambassador.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to close by saying that we have an important opportunity to strengthen the U.S. relationship with Nepal. I look forward to working with Congress to build this relationship. Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I look forward to your questions.

Senator SCHATZ. Thank you very much. Mr. Abraham, please proceed with your testimony.

STATEMENT OF YOHANNES ABRAHAM, OF VIRGINIA, NOMINATED TO BE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS, WITH THE RANK AND STATUS OF AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY

Mr. ABRAHAM. Mr. Chairman, Mr. Ranking Member, and distinguished members of the committee, I am honored to be here today. I am grateful to President Biden and Secretary Blinken for placing their confidence in me to serve as the U.S. Representative to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, and I want to thank the members of this committee for your consideration of my nomination.

I also want to thank the most important people in my life, my family. Our story is a familiar one, and it is one that is only possible in this greatest of nations. This country welcomed my parents with open arms when the country of their birth was being torn apart by the cruel ravages of a dictator. With no money and no connections, but with faith and determination, they worked all manner of jobs to put themselves through college and graduate school. They went on to become successful professionals and small-business owners, as well as active members of our community of Springfield, Virginia. They raised my sister and me to love this country that had given them so much. They are the two most incredible people I have ever known, and they are the reason I am sitting here today, and I want to thank you for giving me the opportunity to thank my parents.

The United States is a great nation. We are also a Pacific power, with deep roots and critical interests in the region. If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with Congress to realize our shared vision of a free and open Indo-Pacific, one where countries and in-

dividuals are able to make independent decisions free from coercion.

Southeast Asia's economically vibrant, youthful, and growing populations are at the heart of realizing that vision, which is why the Administration has made clear our commitment to ASEAN and its centrality. Our relationship is about collaboration to meet shared challenges and opportunities, including health security, energy and climate issues, and the economic prosperity of our combined one billion people. If confirmed, I would look to build on the recent U.S.-ASEAN Special Summit, including by continuing a whole-of-government effort to build ASEAN's own capacity to act on its interests.

Our vision for the U.S.-ASEAN relationship is a positive one; it is defined by what we are for. At the same time, I am clear-eyed about the challenge that coercive activity by the People's Republic of China poses to that vision. It is in the national security interests of the United States for ASEAN to be strong, prosperous, united, and well-equipped to set the terms of its relationship with the PRC. Nowhere is that truer than when it comes to the PRC's increasing maritime assertiveness in the South China Sea. If confirmed, I will work with ASEAN to pursue our shared interests in maintaining peace and stability, respect of international law, and freedoms of navigation and overflight in the South China Sea.

A critical component of advancing our interests is standing up for our values. As President Biden has said, human rights are a vital interest of this administration's foreign policy. If confirmed, I will not hesitate to raise issues of human rights, democracy, and rule of law with interlocutors across the region. I have been moved by the tragic and disturbing crisis in Burma, including the horrific and widespread violence perpetrated by the Burmese regime against the people of Burma. If confirmed, I will support efforts to change the regime's calculus so that we can resolve the worsening humanitarian and political crisis and return Burma to a path toward inclusive, multiparty democracy.

Above all, if the U.S.-ASEAN relationship is to continue to deliver for our peoples in the 21st century, it must be durable. The return of a Senate-confirmed Ambassador to this seat in Jakarta, which has been filled on an acting basis for more than 5 years, would be a step in that direction, sending a powerful message to ASEAN and the world of American commitment to Southeast Asia and its premier institution.

If I am confirmed to this post, I would take as my responsibility to ensure the long-term success of this vital relationship. To do so, I would draw on the most important sources of stable, long-term U.S. engagement with the region: bipartisan cooperation and people-to-people ties. If confirmed, I would look to build on already strong Congressional support for U.S. engagement with ASEAN. I would also support our thriving people-to-people programs, including the Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative, that strengthen our already-strong bonds of friendship.

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Ranking Member, and members of the committee, thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you today and your consideration of my nomination.

I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Abraham follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF YOHANNES ABRAHAM

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Ranking Member, and distinguished members of the committee:

I am honored to be here today. I am grateful to President Biden and Secretary Blinken for placing their confidence in me to serve as the U.S. Representative to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, and I want to thank the members of this committee for your consideration of my nomination.

I also want to thank the most important people in my life: my family. Our story is a familiar one, and it is one that is only possible in this greatest of nations. This country welcomed my parents with open arms when the country of their birth was being torn apart by the cruel ravages of a dictator. With no money and no connections, but with faith and determination, they worked all manner of jobs to put themselves through college and graduate school. They went on to become successful professionals and small-business owners, as well as active members of our community of Springfield, Virginia. They raised my sister and me to love this country that had given them so much. They are the two most incredible people I have ever known, and they are the reason I am sitting here today.

The United States is a great nation. We are also a Pacific power, with deep roots and critical interests in the region. If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with Congress to realize our shared vision of a free and open Indo-Pacific, one where countries and individuals are able to make independent decisions free from coercion.

Southeast Asia's economically vibrant, youthful, and growing populations are at the heart of realizing that vision, which is why the Administration has made clear our commitment to ASEAN and its centrality. Our relationship is about collaboration to meet shared challenges and opportunities, including health security, energy and climate issues, and the economic prosperity of our combined one billion people. If confirmed, I would look to build on the recent U.S.-ASEAN Special Summit, including by continuing a whole-of-government effort to build ASEAN's own capacity to act on its interests.

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A critical component of advancing our interests is standing up for our values. As President Biden has said, human rights are a vital interest of this administration's foreign policy. If confirmed, I will not hesitate to raise issues of human rights, democracy, and rule of law with interlocutors across the region. I have been moved by the tragic and disturbing crisis in Burma, including the horrific and widespread violence perpetrated by the Burmese regime against the people of Burma. If confirmed, I will support efforts to change the regime's calculus so that we can resolve the worsening humanitarian and political crisis and return Burma to a path toward inclusive, multiparty democracy.

Above all, if the U.S.-ASEAN relationship is to continue to deliver for our peoples in the 21st century, it must be durable. The return of a Senate-confirmed Ambassador to this seat in Jakarta—which has been filled on an acting basis for more than five years—would be an important step in the right direction, sending a powerful message to ASEAN and the world of American commitment to Southeast Asia and its premier institution.

If I am confirmed to this post, I would take as my responsibility to ensure the long-term success of the vital U.S.-ASEAN relationship. To do so, I would draw on the most important sources of stable, long-term U.S. engagement with the region: bipartisan cooperation and people-to-people ties. If confirmed, I would look to build on already strong Congressional support for U.S. engagement with ASEAN. I would also support our thriving people-to-people programs, including the Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative, that strengthen our already-strong bonds of friendship.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and members of the committee, thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you today and your consideration of my nomination. I look forward to your questions.

Senator SCHATZ. Thank you very much, Mr. Abraham.

Mr. Buangan, please proceed with your testimony.

STATEMENT OF RICHARD LEE BUANGAN, OF CALIFORNIA, A CAREER MEMBER OF THE SENIOR FOREIGN SERVICE, CLASS OF MINISTER COUNSELOR, NOMINATED TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO MONGOLIA

Mr. BUANGAN. Thank you very much. Chairman Schatz, Ranking Member Romney, and distinguished members of the committee, I am deeply honored to be here today as the President's nominee to serve as the United States Ambassador to Mongolia. I am grateful for the confidence of President Biden and Secretary Blinken in entrusting me with this important responsibility. If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with this committee to advance U.S. priorities in Mongolia and further strengthening our bilateral partnership. I deeply appreciate the crucial role Congress plays in the foreign policy process.

I want to take a moment to acknowledge my parents, Art and Evelyn, who are joining me all the way from San Diego, California, my brother, Jay, his wife, Joyce, my nieces Arya, Emma, and Caras, as well as my friends, family, and colleagues who are watching from around the world. They have been a source of inspiration and strength for me throughout my 23-year journey as a Foreign Service Officer. If confirmed, I look forward to working alongside our Embassy Ulaanbaatar team, my American colleagues as well as our locally engaged Mongolian staff, who have been the linchpin of our deep and abiding relationship with the Mongolian people for decades.

This year marks the 35th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations with Mongolia and 30 years since its peaceful transition to democracy. During this time, the United States has worked closely with Mongolia to strengthen its commitment to human rights and the rule of law, to promote democratic values, and to expand defense cooperation.

Mongolia continually seeks increased U.S. engagement, trade, and investment. We are proud to call Mongolia a strategic partner.

The U.S.-Mongolia relationship is built on a foundation of shared values and common interests. If confirmed, I will focus on efforts to bolster Mongolia's democratic and economic institutions. Our goal is to support the Mongolian people in building a strong, resilient, democratic system and a prosperous, private sector-driven economy that can play a constructive role in the international community.

I would like to comment on a few specific issues.

First, Mongolia is at a critical juncture in its energy transition. With abundant reserves of coal and other minerals, Mongolia is dependent on extractive industries both to meet its own energy needs and to generate foreign exchange. At the same time, Mongolia has huge potential for clean energy, ranging from hydropower to solar and wind. If confirmed, I will strive to help Mongolia begin the transition to a clean energy future.

Second, given Mongolia's ongoing economic and geostrategic challenges, U.S. development support remains critical to helping this country move forward. For example, the U.S. Government's largest

investment in Mongolia is the Millennium Challenge Corporation's $350 million Water Compact, which will redevelop Ulaanbaatar's water and wastewater system and increase the city's supply of water by 80 percent when completed in 2026. Separately, the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation manages a $38 million portfolio while USAID projects support small and medium-sized enterprises, empower women and youth, and improve energy governance.

Third, the United States and Mongolia view military-to-military cooperation as a cornerstone of our relationship. The United States is grateful for the service of Mongolian soldiers who have served alongside U.S. and NATO coalition partners in Afghanistan. Furthermore, the U.S. military provides extensive assistance and training to improve the Mongolian Armed Forces' information infrastructure, engineering capabilities, and readiness for peacekeeping operations. If confirmed, I will support efforts to continue expanding Mongolia's already impressive U.N. peacekeeping operations capability.

Finally, turning to public diplomacy, I believe it is critical to strengthen our people-to-people exchanges with Mongolians, particularly with youth, who are increasingly eager to seek opportunities to study abroad and develop closer ties with the United States and other free-market open societies.

Over the years our exchange programs have reaped dividends, fostering relations with Mongolians from all walks of life. Numerous senior military leaders, prominent persons in business and finance, and influential members of civil society and academia, as well as one-third of current parliamentarians, are alumni of U.S. exchange or training programs.

One important key to improving our people-to-people ties is supporting English language education in Mongolia. Approximately 100 Peace Corps volunteers each year taught English across the country until COVID–19 forced volunteers to return to the United States in 2020. As Ambassador, I would commit to seeing this vital program return to, and even exceed, prior levels as quickly as possible.

Chairman Schatz, Ranking Member Romney, committee members, it would be the honor of a lifetime to represent my country as a U.S. Ambassador and lead the outstanding staff of the U.S. mission to Mongolia. If confirmed, I look forward to working with Congress to continue deepening ties with our strategic partner Mongolia, while also paying tribute to the rich culture and history of the Mongolian people and helping their government meet the challenges of the 21st century.

Thank you for your time, and I look forward to answering your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Buangan follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF RICHARD LEE BUANGAN

Chairman Schatz, Ranking Member Romney, and distinguished members of the committee, I am deeply honored to be here today as the President's nominee to serve as the United States Ambassador to Mongolia. I am grateful for the confidence of President Biden and Secretary Blinken in entrusting me with this important responsibility. If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with this committee to advance U.S. priorities in Mongolia and further strengthen our bilateral partner-

ship. I deeply appreciate the crucial role Congress plays in the foreign policy process.

I want to take a moment to acknowledge my parents who are joining me today all the way from San Diego, California, as well as my family, friends, and colleagues who are watching from around the world. They have been a source of inspiration and strength for me throughout my 23-year journey as a Foreign Service Officer. If confirmed, I look forward to working alongside our Embassy Ulaanbaatar team, my American colleagues as well as our locally engaged Mongolian staff, who have been the linchpin of our deep and abiding relationship with the Mongolian people for decades.

This year marks the 35th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations with Mongolia, and 30 years since its peaceful transition to democracy. During this time, the United States has worked closely with Mongolia to strengthen its commitment to human rights and the rule of law, to promote democratic values, and to expand defense cooperation. Mongolia continually seeks increased U.S. engagement, trade, and investment. We are proud to call Mongolia a strategic partner.

The U.S.-Mongolia relationship is built on a foundation of shared values and common interests. If confirmed, I will focus on efforts to bolster Mongolia's democratic and economic institutions. Our goal is to support the Mongolian people in building a strong, resilient democratic system and a prosperous, private sector-driven economy that can play a constructive role in the international community.

I would like to comment on a few specific issues:

First, Mongolia is at a critical juncture in its energy transition. With abundant reserves of coal and other minerals, Mongolia is dependent on extractive industries both to meet its own energy needs and to generate foreign exchange. At the same time, Mongolia has huge potential for clean energy, ranging from hydropower to solar and wind. If confirmed, I will strive to help Mongolia begin the transition to a clean energy future.

Second, given Mongolia's ongoing economic and geostrategic challenges, U.S. development support remains critical to helping the country move forward. For example, the U.S. Government's largest investment in Mongolia is the Millennium Challenge Corporation's $350 million Water Compact, which will re-develop Ulaanbaatar's water and wastewater system and increase the city's supply of water by 80 percent when completed in 2026. Separately, the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation manages a $38 million portfolio, while USAID projects support small and medium-sized enterprises, empower women and youth, and improve energy governance.

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Finally, turning to public diplomacy, I believe it is critical to strengthen our people-to-people exchanges with Mongolians, particularly with youth, who are increasingly eager to seek opportunities to study abroad and develop closer ties with the United States and other free-market open societies.

Over the years we have received an excellent return on our investments in exchanges in general. Numerous senior military leaders, prominent persons in business and finance, and influential members of civil society and academia, as well as one-third of current parliamentarians, are alumni of U.S. exchange or training programs.

One important key to improving our people-to-people ties is supporting English language education in Mongolia. Approximately 100 Peace Corps volunteers each year taught English across the country until COVID–19 forced volunteers to return to the United States in 2020. As Ambassador, I would commit to seeing this vital program return to, and even exceed, prior levels as quickly as possible.

Chairman Schatz, Ranking Member Romney, committee members, it would be the honor of a lifetime to represent my country as a U.S. Ambassador and lead the outstanding staff of the U.S. Mission to Mongolia. If confirmed, I look forward to working with Congress to continue deepening ties with our strategic partner Mongolia, while also paying tribute to the rich culture and history of the Mongolian people and helping their government meet the challenges of the 21st century.

Thank you for your time and I look forward to answering your questions.

Senator SCHATZ. Thank you very much.

Ms. Damour, please proceed with your testimony.

STATEMENT OF MARIE C. DAMOUR, OF VIRGINIA, A CAREER MEMBER OF THE SENIOR FOREIGN SERVICE, CLASS OF MINISTER–COUNSELOR,NOMINATED TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE REPUBLIC OF FIJI, AND TO SERVE CONCURRENTLY AND WITHOUT ADDITIONAL COMPENSATION AS AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE REPUBLIC OF KIRIBATI, THE REPUBLIC OF NAURU, THE KINGDOM OF TONGA, AND TUVALU

Ms. DAMOUR. Chairman Schatz, Ranking Member Romney, and distinguished members of the committee, I am honored to be here today as the President's nominee to serve as the United States Ambassador to the Republics of Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, the Kingdom of Tonga, and Tuvalu. I am grateful for the confidence shown by President Biden and Secretary Blinken in entrusting me with this important responsibility and, if confirmed, I look forward to working with Congress to advance the interests of the United States by reinvigorating our ties with our Pacific neighbors.

I would like to take a few minutes to acknowledge my family, without whose support and guidance I would not be here. My father, Alfred Damour, established a model of public service for my three brothers and me throughout his career as an officer in the U.S. Army, including active duty during the war in Vietnam. My mother provided for me the best example of how a woman can and should pursue individual goals in a professional career while simultaneously caring for her family and community. Their values and the example they set guide me each and every day. While my brothers and their families could not be here today, I know they are here in spirit. I also want to thank the many Foreign Service, Civil Service, and local employee colleagues with whom I have had the honor to serve over the course of my 29-year career in the Department.

My experiences have taught me the power of our country's values-based diplomacy. If confirmed, I will draw on these lessons and my regional policy experience to advance the United States' strategic interests in the South Pacific, because the United States is a Pacific power. We share an important history with our Pacific Island neighbors. It was in the islands that Americans braved some of the hardest-fought battles of the Second World War, forging connections that are not easily forgotten. Our peoples are knit through a large Pacific Islander diaspora in the United States. If confirmed, I will work in collaboration with the five nations to which I would be accredited to ensure that our common future is one of prosperity, peace, and stability.

President Biden has made addressing the climate crisis one of his administration's top priorities for good reason: our Pacific neighbors are experiencing the most devastating impacts of climate change, particularly Kiribati and Tuvalu, two of the lowest-lying atoll nations for which this is an existential issue. As Secretary Blinken stated during his trip to Fiji this year, every defining issue of the 21st century runs through this region: the climate crisis,

global health, the future of technology, whether nations will be free to chart their own path or be subject to coercion by more powerful nations.

If confirmed, I will listen and work with our Pacific partners to advance solutions that will support Pacific communities and help them adapt to the impacts of climate change, address public health issues, support better communication, and preserve international rules and standards.

The Pacific Islands are global players. Both Fiji and Tonga have been important contributors to international Peacekeeping Operations. Fijian forces are currently participating in various United Nations missions, where they are responsible for providing security for mission personnel and facilities. Tonga was an early member of the Coalition to liberate Iraq. Kiribati, Nauru, and Tuvalu are committed to their responsibilities as U.N. members, and the United States cooperates closely with them on a wide range of issues in that forum. All five nations boldly supported Ukraine in the United Nations. If confirmed, I look forward to continuing to build this regional and global cooperation.

Success in tackling our common challenges will depend on fostering the internal strength of our Pacific Island partners that comes from strong democratic institutions, rule of law, and respect for human rights. The Pacific Islanders share our respect for democratic values but realizing those values can be challenging in practice. If confirmed, I will strive to build civil society, democracy, and good governance through all means available to us.

Embassy Suva is responsible for the United States' largest geographic consular district in the world, over two million square miles. It is challenged by almost yearly cyclones, floods, and tsunami warnings. If confirmed, I will make disaster preparedness and support for U.S. citizens a priority focus.

My career at the State Department has taught me that our people are our most precious resource. If confirmed, it will be my privilege to lead Embassy Suva's diverse and dedicated team of American and local staff and welcome the return of Peace Corps volunteers.

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Ranking Member, and distinguished members of the committee, thank you very much for your consideration and the opportunity to appear before you today. I look forward to your comments and questions.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Damour follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF MARIE C. DAMOUR

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Mr. Chairman, Mr. Ranking Member, and distinguished members of the committee, thank you for your consideration and the opportunity to appear before you today. I look forward to your comments and questions.

Senator SCHATZ. Thank you very much. Before we get into members' questions I have a few questions that speak to the importance that this committee places on responsiveness by all officials in the Executive branch and that we expect and will be seeking from you. I would ask each of you to provide just a yes or a no answer, and we will start with Ms. Damour and go down the line.

If you are confirmed, do you agree to appear before this committee and make officials from your office available to the committee and designated staff when invited?

Ms. DAMOUR. Yes.

Mr. BUANGAN. Yes.

Mr. ABRAHAM. Yes.
Mr. GODEC. Yes.
Mr. THOMPSON. Yes.
Senator SCHATZ. Do you commit to keeping this committee fully and currently informed about the activities under your purview?
Ms. DAMOUR. Yes.
Mr. BUANGAN. Yes.
Mr. ABRAHAM. Yes.
Mr. GODEC. Yes.
Mr. THOMPSON. Yes.
Senator SCHATZ. Do you commit to engaging in meaningful consultation while policies are being developed, not just providing notification after the fact?
Ms. DAMOUR. Yes.
Mr. BUANGAN. Yes.
Mr. ABRAHAM. Yes.
Mr. GODEC. Yes.
Mr. THOMPSON. Yes.
Senator SCHATZ. Do you commit to promptly responding to requests for briefings and information requested by the committee and its designated staff?
Ms. DAMOUR. Yes.
Mr. BUANGAN. Yes.
Mr. ABRAHAM. Yes.
Mr. GODEC. Yes.
Mr. THOMPSON. Yes.
Senator SCHATZ. Thank you very much. I will now turn to Ranking Member Romney for his questions.
Senator ROMNEY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Some years ago I was at the home of a man who would become president of Afghanistan, and people there were explaining to me their view as to why the Taliban had been so successful up until that point, and they said they had such a powerful message. I said, "What is that message?" and they said, "Well, infidels are on Islamic land, and the infidels must be expelled." And I said, "What is our message?" And there was a long silence, and finally one of the individuals said, "Well, our message is that before the Americans came it used to take 4 hours to get to the nearest city out of Kabul and now it only takes an hour." And I thought to myself, that is not a message to die for, and fighting for freedom is a fight that typically involves potential loss of life.
I would like to ask each of you, in turn, what you have already testified, what are messages to the people of the nation or nations that you will represent us in, what are the messages as to why America, as opposed to the alternative, which I presume in each case would be China. There is a global competition between nations that are interested in freedom and democracy and those that want to become authoritarian regimes. Why America? Why associate with us as opposed to, if you will, joining the Chinese?
Please, Mr. Thompson.
Mr. THOMPSON. Thank you, Senator.
Senator ROMNEY. Yeah, your microphone. Sorry.
Mr. THOMPSON. Is it on? Okay. Sorry about that. Yes, I would look forward to delivering a message that tells the people of Nepal

that America is standing with them is about their sovereignty, about their territorial integrity, and about their ability to make decisions for themselves about their future and the prosperity of their nation. And so I think that will stand in very sharp contrast to a lot of the messaging they hear in the region.

Senator ROMNEY. Thank you. Very helpful.

Mr. GODEC. Senator, if confirmed, I would very much bring to Thailand a message about all the values that America stands for—freedom, democracy, human rights, and so many other things. I would also listen to what the Thai want and understand where Thailand is coming from, and work to make certain that our message about the United States is both clear and offers opportunities to Thailand that the Thai people themselves are looking for.

One of the things that I believe is a great advantage of the United States is the tapestry that we have, as I mentioned. This is not just government-to-government, business-to-business, NGO-to-NGO. It is so many other things. So I think that ensuring that we are working with all of the diverse things that America brings when it forms a relationship with another country, with another people and its citizens, the citizens of that country, that there are real opportunities here, opportunities that the country, I believe, will have an interest in.

So I would very strongly seek both to bring a message about, again, our values, listen to the Thai, understand where they are coming from, and then at the same time support and bring assistance to all of the other parts of what we, as Americans bring. And I think it stands, frankly, in contrast, to what is offered by the PRC, which is a much more centrally directed, much more directive situation, and I do not think it would be nearly as attractive to the Thai. Thank you, Senator.

Senator ROMNEY. Thank you. Mr. Abraham?

Mr. ABRAHAM. Senator, thank you for the question. If confirmed, I would bring to the nations of ASEAN a message that is really centered in our shared commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific, one where countries and individuals are free to pursue their interests without fear of, or impacts of, coercion. I would bring a message of solidarity with their aspirations for sovereignty and territorial integrity, and importantly in support of those aspirations I would bring a message of durable, longstanding, and sustaining U.S. commitment to our relationship with both ASEAN and the nations of ASEAN.

Senator ROMNEY. Thank you. Mr. Buangan?

Mr. BUANGAN. Thank you very much, Senator, for that. If I am confirmed, I would tell the Mongolian people very simply that as a fellow democracy we have to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with you. Democracies work. Your democratic system works. We have a vested interest in ensuring that your democracy is strong and resilient. We want to see you prosper and secure in your own right and make sovereign decisions without fear of coercion from your neighbors. We want to help you build strong economic, open-market systems that allow you to make independent, sovereign decisions about your investment, about your prosperity, about the lives you want to lead.

And I would simply tell them that we are your friend and partner. We are far away from each other and we Mongolia and the United States could not be farther apart, but we are a lot closer than you think in terms of our shared values and our commitment to democratic institutions. Thank you.

Senator ROMNEY. Thank you. Ms. Damour.

Ms. DAMOUR. Think you, Senator. Our message to our Pacific Island neighbors is simple. As we were standing shoulder-to-shoulder 80 years ago, the United States remains committed to helping them sustain their sovereignty, maintain their territorial integrity, achieve sustainable economic development, and help them preserve their ability to make choices in the best interests of their people. We are their neighbor. We are their partner. That is our commitment. Thank you.

Senator ROMNEY. Thank you. Mr. Chairman.

Senator SCHATZ. Thank you, Ranking Member Romney. Senator Cardin.

Senator CARDIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. First let me thank all five of our nominees for their public service and their willingness to continue to serve during extremely challenging times, and we thank your families because we know it is a family sacrifice. So thank you for being willing to do this.

I want to focus on some of the human rights issues and the influence of China in the region. So first, Mr. Godec, let me talk a little bit about Thailand. Obviously, they play a key role in regard to the crisis in Burma, and you mentioned that during your testimony. I want to bring up an issue in trafficking in persons. The most recent report, they went backwards from being on Tier 2 to Tier 2 watchlist. The report spells out the challenges they have with forced labor as well as sex trafficking.

So tell me your commitment, if confirmed, as to how you will promote Thailand taking the necessary steps to end this form of modern-day slavery.

Mr. GODEC. Thank you for the question, Senator. You raised a very important issue. Thailand has had a significant problem with trafficking in persons. That was reflected in the change in its ranking, its downgrade, and its ranking.

This is a subject that we talk to the Thai about regularly, at the highest levels. It is a subject where the United States, through a number of agencies, has provided some support and assistance to try to get some improvement. We have seen some progress, but there is a lot more that remains to be done. And I would commit, if confirmed, to doing everything possible to make progress.

I would note that the Prime Minister recently did a public event, for example, where he gave recognition to a number of agencies and people who were doing some things in this area. And it is good to see high-level engagement but there is a lot that needs to be done in this area.

Senator CARDIN. We have a lot of issues with Thailand. We recognize that. We are trying to make advancements, particularly as it relates to humanitarian issues in Burma. Do we have your assurances that you will give objective observations as to the progress they are making on trafficking? We have seen, in the past, sometimes other politics enter into this. This is too fundamental of a

human rights commitment, that you will give us objective accounts as to the progress or lack of progress in that country?

Mr. GODEC. Absolutely, Senator, I will do that. I have done it in my previous positions and I would commit to doing it again.

Senator CARDIN. Thank you. Thank you very much.

Mr. Buangan, in regard to Mongolia, Mongolia is an interesting country. It is now a member of the OSCE so we deal with them in the Helsinki Commission. They believe they have two geographical neighbors in China and Russia but they consider their third neighbor to be the United States. So we have seen a significant strategic partnership with the United States that can clearly be improved.

I just really want to make the observation there is strong support here in the Senate to expand trade opportunities and other opportunities with Mongolia, because we see this as a real opportunity for America to have a strong strategic partner in the region.

Mr. BUANGAN. Thank you very much for that comment, Senator. I could not agree more. We are their third neighbor. In fact, we are their preferred third neighbor. They are also seeking to expand relationships with other open-market economies and democracies like Japan and South Korea.

But you are exactly right. We need to be able to do more to help them build strong, resilient democratic systems, open-market economies, given the challenge that they are neighbors with China and Russia and the overwhelming influence and coercion that those two countries are bearing right now on Mongolia.

Senator CARDIN. Ms. Damour, I just really want to tell you how excited we are about having a confirmed ambassador for the five countries that you refer to. I dare say that many Americans do not even know the names of some of these Pacific Island states. When we look at their influence in the United Nations and other entities it can play an important role for U.S. strategic diplomacy. The same thing is true with the Caribbean island states that are very small, and we generally do not pay much attention to.

China is paying attention to the five countries that you would be represent us at. So we do look forward to you giving us some concrete recommendations as to how we can strengthen our ties in these countries. It does not take very much. Paying a little bit of attention to them is what they really want. But we are going to need a game plan on how we can strengthen our ties with these countries and use that as a model in other areas where the United States has really been missing in action and China has been moving very aggressively.

Ms. DAMOUR. Senator, thank you very much for those comments, and I think you are right. I think a lot of Americans could not find Kiribati on a map. But everybody knows about the Battle of Tarawa. We understand our historic role in that region. And I was very pleased to see the announcement yesterday of the intent of the Biden-Harris administration, subject to notification and consultation with Congress, to open two new embassies, in Tonga and in Kiribati. If confirmed, I very much look forward to being part of the process to developing the first U.S. national strategy for the Pacific Islands.

You are absolutely right. We need to show up. We need to up our game. We need to be there in person. And I would certainly hope, if confirmed, I would be able to consult with you, the members of the committee and your staffs, on how we can ensure consistent, sustained, high-level visits to the region to demonstrate in person that we are there and we are part of their future. Thank you.

Senator CARDIN. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator SCHATZ. Thank you, Senator Cardin. Just following up on that line of questioning, Ms. Damour, the announcement yesterday was a really good start. I had a constructive conversation with several Pacific Island nation ambassadors about a month ago here in the Senate, and there were two issues that were flagged for me where they thought our presence could be very useful and it probably would not cost that much money or be an expenditure of an unusual amount of political capital. That is obviously IUU and telehealth. We have seen such an extraordinary expansion of telehealth in the United States over the last 8 or so years, particularly during the pandemic but even preceding that. They are very, very interested in what we can do in that space.

I do not need you to be an expert right now on telehealth but I would love your commitment to flesh out these two issues. IUU is pretty well articulated. We know what we need to do. We just need to be present there. I think there are opportunities in terms of utilizing technology, drones in particular, to be more present in the region, to stop pirate fishing.

But on the telehealth side, people's eyes lit up when we started to talk about the opportunities there. I would like you to comment on that.

Ms. DAMOUR. thank you very much, Senator. I agree, two of the issues that we need to be dealing with our global health issues in the region and maritime security, and if confirmed, I very much look forward to working with colleagues in the Indo-Pacific Command, with the U.S. Coast Guard. We already have shiprider agreements with all five of these nations that help them police and sustain their own resources. I would love to see if there is more we can do in that area.

And I certainly think during the COVID pandemic we have all seen an increase of telemedicine so that people, even in remote areas, could access health care. So thank you very much for raising that, sir. Our health cooperation is a very important part of our cooperation in these nations, and I would be very interested to continue that discussion, if confirmed. Thank you, sir.

Senator SCHATZ. Thank you very much. Just two comments. One on IUU. There is a tendency to think that the only way to be present is to be underway. I just really us to use technology to be present and not have to sort of multiply the number of Coast Guard vessels and Navy vessels, because at some point that becomes impractical from a financial standpoint.

The other thing is yes, everybody needs broadband and we should try to be of assistance there, but not all telehealth requires a high-speed internet connection, and we need to explore those opportunities, even as we try to help people get better broadband connection.

Mr. Abraham, what opportunities do you see for the United States to engage ASEAN on environmental issues, including combatting deforestation and managing water systems such as the Mekong?

Mr. ABRAHAM. Senator, thank you for the question. As you know, the nations of Southeast Asia are on the front lines of the impacts of climate change and issues surrounding sustainability. I mentioned the Young Southeast Asian Leaders Program in my opening testimony. One of the things that I know we hear from young leaders in the region is their deep-seated conviction that we need to act on issues of climate change together. if confirmed,, that would certainly be an area of focus in my engagement with ASEAN. It has been a part of this administration's engagement of ASEAN, including through the special ASEAN Summits. And I would look to work closely with you and with partners in the region and with Congress on where further opportunities lie.

Senator SCHATZ. Thank you. And before moving on to Senator Van Hollen for his questions I just want to point out on the deforestation side, you know, we have the Lacey Act, and we all know that illegally deforested products are impermissible from an import standpoint in the United States. But the truth is that most of the illegal deforestation is commodity driven, and so we are going to need to deal with that question, which is to say a lot of clear-cutting happens for the purpose of growing commodities that we then import, and that is not covered by the Lacey Act. So we need to do something on the statutory side, but there is also a fair amount of room to maneuver at ASEAN and through USTR.

So thank you all for your testimony and your willingness to serve. Senator Van Hollen.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and good to see you all again. Congratulations again on your nominations.

Ambassador Godec, let me start with you. As has been mentioned, the United States and Thailand recently released a communiqué on our strategic alliance and partnership. That communiqué reads, in part, that it is grounded in, quote, "our collective commitment to build resilient, inclusive democracies and advance human rights," end quote.

At the same time, the U.N. Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights, Human Rights Watch, and Amnesty International have all criticized Thailand's laws that essentially prohibit criticism of the monarchy. And, in fact, in February 2021, a U.N. Office of Human Rights panel of experts said, quote, "We have repeatedly emphasized that these laws have no place in a democratic country. Their increasingly harsh application has had the effect of chilling freedom of expression and further restricting civic space and enjoyment of fundamental freedoms in Thailand," end quote.

As you know, there are many people in prison right now in Thailand for simply criticizing the king and monarchy. Can you just talk about how you will address those issues, if confirmed as Ambassador to Thailand?

Mr. GODEC. Thank you, Senator, for the important question. The United States certainly respects the institution of the Thai monarchy. We understand the esteem with which the Thai people hold the royal family. That said, freedom of expression is critical, and

I would emphasize, both publicly and privately, the importance of allowing people to freely express their ideas without threat of arrest. I would certainly, as I have done in my previous postings, both Kenya and Tunisia, make every effort again to protect the freedom of expression.

I would also emphasize the importance that anyone who has been arrested be treated appropriately, with full respect for their fundamental rights and that they receive due process. And I would make certain to put an emphasis on that as well.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Thank you, and look, I support our partnership with Thailand, but when I see statements stating that we have sort of this collective commitment to human rights I think it is important that we make clear our differences on those issues with Thailand.

Mr. GODEC. Absolutely, Senator.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Thank you.

Mr. Buangan, with respect to Mongolia, we know that Mongolia relies on about 90 percent of their oil imports from Russia. Any thoughts on what we can do to address that issue and reduce that reliance?

Mr. BUANGAN. Thank you for that question, Senator. Mongolia does find itself in a very complex geopolitical environment given their dependency on not just Russia but also the PRC, and in addition to relying on Russian oil imports and other energy imports they are completely also dependent on coal. So I think there are two opportunities here. I see one an environmental challenge, with their commitment to climate change, to help them facilitate and expedite their transition to clean and renewable energy that can be done in Mongolia. But also I think it is incumbent on the U.S. to ensure that they have strong economic systems that would allow them to find ways to further investment outside of China and the PRC.

We have to accept the reality that they have close ties with Russia. I think that is something that many Mongolians want. But at the same time we should be able to allow them to do it in a way that respects their ability to do it, that does not threaten their sovereignty, and does not coerce them or force them to make decisions that they do not want to make.

So I think with respect to energy there is a lot of opportunity there where we can help them transition to that.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. I appreciate that. As you indicate, they are sort of in a very tough spot geographically, with both Russia and the PRC. And just with respect to climate change—and I do not have time to get into it, but Mr. Thompson, as you know, Nepal is especially vulnerable to the impact of climate change, given the Himalayan glaciers, and I look forward to continuing the conversation with you on that.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator SCHATZ. Senator Booker.

Senator BOOKER. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

First of all I just want to take a step back and say thank you to all of you for being here. I am one of these folks that walks around this place and every once in a while has to stop and just take stock of the reality that we are sitting here in the Capitol of

the greatest country on earth, all of us stepping forward to serve, make sacrifices to do so. But the work we all do is incredibly important and it can make a difference for millions and millions of people. So I celebrate you all. I thank you all for, many of you, very long careers of service and putting yourself forth again to step into often difficult situations and try, amidst the chaos of humanity, to find good, to do good, and to make for a better future. So thank you all for that.

Mr. Thompson, I really want to focus on you because I just recently came back from Nepal, as I think you know, and it was an extraordinary, eye-opening trip. It was sort of one of the last countries we tagged onto a longer codel, but when I got there I found myself thanking God that I was able to visit the country because I learned so much. And this small nation, set between two titans, India and China, has had this difficult balancing act for a very, very long time.

And maybe I want to start with China and their extraordinary influence in the nation. You have a country that in the last year or so accounts for about 78 percent of all the investment in Nepal, but at the same time, as we talk with government officials, they really want to deepen their relationship with us. You know the economic agreement that we just got signed literally with China trying to put disinformation and trying to undermine our ability to deepen these economic ties. The new prime minister there seems to be really committed to an independent relationship with America but not seem like we are just trying to exploit that relationship to counter China. They want to be understood as someone that has to stand on their own.

And I am wondering if you can give me just a brief view of how you take your mission and how to strengthen our relationship as China continues to try to expand its influence and, frankly, undermine the autonomy of the country.

Mr. THOMPSON. Thank you, Senator. It was a great privilege to brief you and the other members of the codel that traveled. We really appreciate the fact that you were able to tag Nepal on and have such a good experience. I know the Embassy there reported back very favorably about all the discussions that you had.

You are absolutely right. This is a critical issue for Nepal as they balance their interests. I had mentioned in my opening statement, you talked about two titans. They often are referred to as a yam between two boulders. And as Prime Minister Deuba seeks to develop the economy, to find a path forward for Nepal that represents the real interests of the Nepal people, this can be a challenging neighborhood in which to do it.

You are absolutely right. The Millennium Challenge Corporation Compact provides a huge game-changing opportunity for them to have greater connectivity with the electricity grid in South Asia, to build better transportation networks, to allow them to expand their trade opportunities as a nation. We are also looking at other opportunities, Senator, such as through the Development Finance Corporation and our USAID mission to help develop market-oriented opportunities with entrepreneurs, with greater business and investment climate.

And so if confirmed, I would look forward to really engaging very deeply on these fronts, because we are at a critical juncture for this type of opportunity.

Senator BOOKER. Well, I hope you see me and I imagine a lot of other members of that codel as allies in this. I am not overstating this. I think we all fell in love with Nepal and its people, and it was an extraordinary experience. And on that note let me make the last point to you. I had never seen the Himalayas before, and as we flew by them I saw people on the plane with me looking out at this incredible mountain range with tears in their eyes, getting very emotional at the majesty of the mountains. But we also were coming off of understanding that Nepal is one of the top five countries on the planet right now that are suffering the effects of climate change. And I was stunned at how devastating the growing warmth is doing to that country and really threatening—I mean, 20 percent of the water that humanity gets is coming from the Himalayas, and right now climate change is causing havoc and threatens extraordinary destruction, not to mention deprivation.

So this, I see, as an urgency. I knew it intellectually but to experience it on the ground, to talk to people who are trying to think of creative ways to deal with this. So I am hoping you see that as part of your mission as well and to help us, as policymakers and lawmakers, try to find ways to help especially these very vulnerable nations who are feeling, from island nations to many in the mountains who are going to feel the devastating effects of this, which will not only cause economic damage but it will cause political instability as well.

Mr. THOMPSON. We look forward to working with the committee, with our colleagues at the Department on this front. You are absolutely right. It is critically important. Nepal made some very ambitious pledges at the Cop26. We will continue through our assistance programs to seek ways to help them adapt and mitigate climate change. It is a high priority for us, absolutely, if confirmed.

Senator BOOKER. And again, thank you for your kindness to me before that incredible trip.

Mr. THOMPSON. Thank you.

Senator SCHATZ. Senator Hagerty.

Senator HAGERTY. Thank you, Senator Schatz and Senator Romney, for holding this hearing, and to all of the nominees here today I want to congratulate you. Should you be confirmed you are going to have the unique opportunity and responsibility to represent the most exceptional nation in the world, and you are going to a region that is very critical right now, critical to our nation's security but critical to the world's security.

And ASEAN, I think, is going to continue to play a very, very critical role to advance the vision that my good friend, former Prime Minister Abe articulated in terms of a free and open Indo-Pacific. And it was a great honor for me to work with him to deepen our alliance in that region and to expand that vision. It is a vision that I think has tremendous amount of opportunity for us and it is one that I think we should explore every opportunity to deepen.

Mr. Abraham, I would like to turn to you and talk about your view with respect to the Quad's relationship to ASEAN, and to get

your perspective in terms of how we can provide key resources. I think there is a tremendous opportunity here, whether it be infrastructure resources through the Blue Dot Network, facilitating vaccines or new technologies. But I would like to get your perspective on how we can deepen our relationship in the Quad framework in ASEAN.

Mr. ABRAHAM. Senator, thank you for the question and thank you for your leadership in the region. If confirmed, one of the things that I would be most enthusiastic about doing is trying to find ways, consistent with our views around ASEAN centrality, to create greater connectivity within the region, within the various institutional pieces of the regional framework, one of them being the Quad.

I think we have seen some progress to that end and there are some interesting areas of both common interest and potential collaboration. The one I would point to, which certainly speaks to a broader priority I would bring, if confirmed, surrounds our commitment to freedom of navigation and overflight into the maritime security of the region. During the Biden-Harris administration, the quad has announced and taken steps towards providing, as a public good, some data transparency tools around maritime domain awareness. That is a public good that would absolutely be impactful to our work with ASEAN and with ASEAN member nations, and I think it is illustrative of areas of common interest that I would hope to build upon.

You touched on health security. I also think there are great opportunities for collaboration there, as was noted at the tail end of the U.S.-ASEAN Special Summit recently.

Senator HAGERTY. Again, I encourage you to take every opportunity you can to find ways to not only deepen our relationships with ASEAN but to bring that into the framework in a constructive manner with the Quad.

Mr. ABRAHAM. Yes, sir.

Senator HAGERTY. Mr. Buangan, I would like to turn to you to talk about Mongolia. Mongolia has been regarded as an oasis of democracy within the authoritarian desert of Eurasia. Mongolia also has a rich history dating back to the times of Genghis Khan. We are also aware of the fact that the Chinese Communist Party makes very human efforts to dilute the cultures of ethnic groups such as the Uighurs in Xinjiang.

The Chinese Communist Party is attempting to do the same thing with Mongolian heritage and culture, as you know, I am certain. In 2020, the Chinese Communist Party demanded the removal of the words "Genghis Khan," the word "empire," and "Mongol" from a museum exhibition in France. The Chinese Communist Party wants to airbrush its history to minimize the important role of ethnic minorities such as the Mongols. And, in addition, the Chinese Communist Party is intensifying its pressure on ethnic Mongolians that are living in China, to suppress their local language, to suppress their culture.

Mr. Buangan, in your view what are the objectives of the Chinese Communist Party in seeking to dilute the Mongolian heritage and culture and what are your plans to help Mongolia diversify away from China and those pressures that it is feeling?

Mr. BUANGAN. Thank you so much for that question, Senator, and I appreciate your concern to that. I think the vast majority of Mongolians will agree and be pleased to hear your concern for that and particularly as it relates to the PRC's attempts to dilute the culture and religious traditions of ethnic minorities in China. It is something that we have seen. Mongolia, both its people and its Government, have been following the developments, in Inner Mongolia in particular. They are concerned about it. They are tracking it. But because of China's enormous economic leverage that they have with Mongolia it is very difficult for them to speak out.

But in that vein, what I would say is that we, at the U.S. Embassy—and this is something that I would certainly prioritize if I am confirmed—is that we have a lot of programs with Mongolians where we celebrate their culture, where we help them preserve a lot of their rich, diverse culture. I would point to a couple of examples that we do. Our Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation, for example, just awarded a grant to the National Library of Mongolia to help them preserve Tibetan ancient manuscripts and woodblock prints.

We also speak out very vocally, as you know, when we see the Chinese attempt to distort the history of the Uighurs and Tibetans, including ethnic Mongolians in Inner Mongolia. And I think the Mongolians see that, and I think they appreciate that. So I would hope to continue that conversation with my Mongolian counterparts, if confirmed, to help them, one, celebrate their rich history but, two, figure out ways where we can figure out how we can speak openly and candidly about what is going on in the PRC.

Senator HAGERTY. Excellent. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator SCHATZ. Senator Coons.

Senator COONS. Thank you, Chairman Schatz. Thank you to all of our nominees today for your long service to our nation and your dedication to foreign service. And thank you to your families for supporting you in this service and being such great partners with you.

I have a broad number of questions and very little time, so I am going to focus, if I might, on a few areas of principal concern, just for me. Ambassador Godec, it is wonderful to see you again. Across a number of trips and engagements in Kenya and Ethiopia and elsewhere I am so impressed with your skills and your engagement and your capability. Thailand is a new region for you, a new engagement, and one where your deep experience, I think, will be critical and relevant.

One of our core challenges, both in ASEAN and in Thailand and around the world in lots of different countries and contexts is balancing our interest in free expression, democracy, robust human rights in civil society, and security. How do you think we will balance our critical security relationship with Thailand with continuing to press for improvements in civil society and opening space for human rights advocates?

Mr. GODEC. Thank you, Senator Coons, and it is terrific to see you again as well.

Senator, we do have obviously a number of interests with Thailand. We have a relationship that goes back almost two centuries,

and across that time we have done a lot together, as I said in my opening statement. I do think we can do these things simultaneously. We can continue the security partnership which is so critical and at the same time be plain, privately, certainly, but public also when appropriate about things like the importance of continued progress on democracy, protection of human rights, fundamental freedoms.

We can do these things, and I would certainly be deeply committed to doing that, in a wide range of ways. It starts by showing up. It was great to see the Secretary in Thailand just on Sunday. It was great to see the recent U.S.-ASEAN Special Summit the President hosted. It was great to see the other visitors, Secretary of Defense, out there just recently. But then it goes to, again, looking at really all of the different areas of the partnership, continuing the dialogue, and continuing to really emphasize where we can move forward together and where we have differences, making plain what those differences are and explaining why what we have to offer, I think, in terms of values is a good way to go.

Senator COONS. Well, and I think sending a seasoned senior ambassador like yourself to help balance that tricky and challenging balance is exactly the right choice.

Mr. Abraham, Yohannes, if I could, great to see you here. I am excited about your nomination to ASEAN. The Indo-Pacific Economic Framework, how do you plan to engage ASEAN on this opening towards trade integration that is not overturned in TPP but is an opportunity? How would you make progress on the IPEF?

Mr. ABRAHAM. Senator, thank you, and it is great to see you as well. I think first and foremost, as you do, the Administration believes that deepening our economic ties with the region, Indo-Pacific writ large and certainly within ASEAN, is critical to not only our economic prosperity but also our national security.

If confirmed, I would look to work in close partnership with my colleagues in capitals around region to build on what we found to be a very encouraging initial set of countries who signed up to be a part of the launch of IPEF, seven members of ASEAN being amongst them.

And so right now we are in a scoping stage of the exercise. As we continue to progress to build out IPEF I would look to be a partner with my colleagues in capitals around the region as well as in Washington, D.C.

Senator COONS. Ms. Damour, I was pleased to see the initiative about new embassies in Kiribati and Tonga, the return of the Peace Corps to the region, establishment of a new USAID office in the region. If I might, with the forbearance of the Chairman, I would just like to ask each of the three remaining nominees if you might. I have particularly been interested in and supportive of the Development Finance Corporation and the Millennium Challenge Corporation. I am the Chair of the appropriating subcommittee that funds both of these.

Could you just briefly explain how they will play a key role in the Pacific Islands, in our relationships in Mongolia, and in our relationships in Nepal, and how we might strengthen and deepen our partnerships in regions and countries where they have an alter-

native and we are trying to show up, as it were, and provide a meaningful partnership?

Ms. DAMOUR. Thank you for that, Senator, and thank you for your interest in the region. We do have one country amongst the five to which I have been nominated that has started a conversation with the MCC, as well as two countries that have signed an agreement with the Development Finance Corporation. And these are going to be critical because it will allow us to establish assistance to them that can help them with their sustainable economic development needs, which are vast, particularly in the area of infrastructure.

One of the things, if confirmed, that I would look forward to doing is exploring how we can leverage those capabilities in order to demonstrate why the United States should be the preferred partner in assisting with their economic development.

Senator COONS. Thank you. Mr. Buangan, in Mongolia?

Mr. BUANGAN. Thank you, Senator, for that question. There are a couple of areas where I see the DFC and MCC helping with Mongolia, particularly through their infrastructure development. As I stated in my opening remarks, our largest investment right now is in the $350 million Millennium Challenge Corporation's grand to help Ulaanbaatar increase its water capacity. I think there is also a lot of opportunity that both of those programs are doing with respect to trade and investment, particularly improving Mongolia's investment climate, as we are seeing with DFC.

And I think given the realities that Mongolia has, particularly with rooting out corruption, with strengthening its rule of law, I think those programs are also doing a lot to help strengthen capacity-building in those areas, where I think it would help, particularly as we are focusing on Mongolia's economic infrastructure and their economic development and their energy diversification, which I mentioned earlier, I think the whole-of-government approach here, DFC, MCC, including our public diplomacy and USAID programs will help strengthen those areas. Thank you.

Senator COONS. Mr. Chairman, your call. Do we have a moment for Nepal or should we move on?

Senator SCHATZ. Sure.

Senator COONS. Mr. Thompson.

Mr. THOMPSON. Thank you, Senator. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We have talked a bit about the MCC already. It is a game-changer, I believe, for Nepal. Five hundred million dollars will lead to thousands of jobs, tremendous infrastructure, connectivity for Nepal and India and the rest of the region. Tremendous transportation infrastructure upgrades for Nepal which can have great benefit on the trade front.

DFC, a bit smaller still. It is more of a nascent stage there but a fantastic tool, we believe, to help provide the financing that is going to be necessary in so many areas, such as renewable energy, health care sector, and the growing technology sector there as well. So we look forward to seeing how we can better use that, and if confirmed, I would certainly be interested in doing that.

Senator COONS. Thank you all very much. Thank you for your forbearance, Mr. Chairman.

Senator SCHATZ. Senator Markey.

Senator MARKEY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, very much.

Mr. Abraham, in your testimony you spoke about the importance of human rights and standing up to universal values. My colleagues and I, we sent a letter to President Biden before the U.S.-ASEAN summit in May, urging the President to place democracy, good governance, and human rights as key items on the summit's agenda. I was disappointed that despite the importance the President said he will place on human rights and democracy in U.S. foreign policy these issues were marginalized during the summit.

So if confirmed, what would you do to elevate the importance of human rights and concerns about democratic backsliding amongst ASEAN member countries?

Mr. ABRAHAM. Senator, thank you for the question, and I share your concerns around human rights and democratic backsliding in the region. If confirmed, first and foremost I will not hesitate to speak with interlocuters around the region about our human rights and/or governance concerns, in public and private fora. I would also work with the mission staff to ensure that U.S.-ASEAN missions tracking and monitoring capabilities as it relates to human rights concerns remain robust, and I would hope to work in close partnership with my colleagues, my bilateral colleagues in missions around the region on individual countries' concerns.

Senator MARKEY. I am deeply concerned about the lack of progress in implementing the five-point consensus developed by ASEAN member countries, particularly with regard to engagement with all parties in Burma, including the National Unity Government. If confirmed, how would you engage with ASEAN to make progress in addressing the deteriorating human rights situation in Burma?

Mr. ABRAHAM. Senator, first and foremost, if confirmed, addressing really the horrifying and deteriorating situation in Burma would be a top priority of mine, and I would robustly push for the implementation of the five-points agenda and I would also look to work with colleagues around the government on what other tools we can bring to bear to change the regime's calculus and begin to move the country back towards a multiparty democracy. That would certainly be, and a way that has built on the Administration's use of the tools that Congress has granted them so far.

Senator MARKEY. Okay. I want to stay with Burma and go to you, Ambassador Godec. Revenue from dirty fossil fuels continues to line the Burmese military's coffers. According to Human Rights Watch, Thailand's state-owned energy company, PTT, purchased about 80 percent of Burma's exported gas, repeatedly called for the United States to take a page out of the EU's playbook, and sanctioned the Myanmar oil and gas enterprise.

Ambassador Godec, do you agree that we need to work with Thailand to reduce its reliance on natural gas from Burma and to reduce the Thai government's continued financial support of the Burmese military?

Mr. GODEC. Thank you for the question, Senator. I just want to emphasis as I did in my opening statement that the Burmese regime continues to carry out horrifying atrocities and it is critically important that this stop. We have supported ASEAN and the five-

point consensus but there is not enough progress, clearly. In fact, there is no progress at all, and it needs to happen.

We have worked with Thailand. Burma and the Burmese regime's horrifying actions have been a top issue in discussions with Thailand. Certainly the Secretary and many other officials have raised this. We are seeking ways with the Thai to increase the pressure on the Burmese regime. All options are on the table. That includes further action in the oil and gas sector. And, Senator, I would commit to working very hard on this matter, if confirmed. We appreciate some of the things that Thailand has done on the humanitarian side but clearly more pressure needs to be brought to bear and new ways——

Senator MARKEY. It is all about oil and gas, everywhere on the planet. It is about the dough——

Mr. GODEC. It is a critical issue, Senator. I agree.

Senator MARKEY.—with these authoritarian regimes, that they are able to extract from oil and gas, and then they do their evil deeds with that dough. So every time we see it we know what the answer should be, and if we take strong action then we will probably extract the results that we are looking for.

And with that I will just ask my final question, over to Ms. Damour, and Fiji and the impact climate change is having upon Fiji and what actions we should be taking to assure them that we are on their side and will be there to help them.

Ms. DAMOUR. Thank you very much for the question, Senator, and thank you for focus on that region. The question of climate change, mitigating climate change is an existential issue for these nations. They are the most vulnerable around the world given their low-lying areas. The Biden-Harris administration has made it a top priority for addressing the region, mitigating the effects of climate change, assisting them with a clean energy transition. All of those, if confirmed, would be focus for me in terms of helping them.

Senator MARKEY. Well, nothing more important because they are right in the crosshairs and we have to demonstrate that we understand their vulnerability and that we are going to take action. But we are going to show it to them specifically as well in terms of the help which we give them.

So we thank you and we thank all of you. Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Senator SCHATZ. Senator Kaine.

Senator KAINE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and congratulations to the nominees. I note that three of you are Virginians and Virginia is proud of each of you.

Mr. Godec, in particular, I want to commend you in your current role, the work that you have done with Afghan refugee resettlement at the State Department. I do not think we give it enough attention here that in 90 days the United States helped 126,000 people come out of Afghanistan, about 50,000 to other nations, 76,000 to the United States. Virtually all of them came into Virginia at Dulles Airport. They were then assigned to one of eight military bases for processing, three of which were in Virginia. As of February, all of those bases were closed and the 76,000 in the United States were now in communities, supported by families,

supported by churches and other nonprofit groups all over the United States.

I do not think that story has been told enough. I have suggested before that I think it would be a good idea for this committee to talk about the—you know, get an update on the status of these 76,000 as well as the 50,000 who we helped evacuate to third countries. We do know there are others in Afghanistan who continue to want to come to the United States, and I think that would also be an appropriate topic to delve into, what more we can do about that.

But just that number, 126,000 in 90 days, by order of comparison in the aftermath of the Vietnam War it took months and years to bring 120,000 Vietnamese to the United States. In the aftermath of World War II we brought about 65,000 displaced people from Europe, primarily Jewish Europeans, to the United States. That took 5 years to bring 75,000 European Jews to the United States in the aftermath of World War II. The fact that you and your colleagues and this administration was able to help 76,000 Afghans begin a new chapter of life here, and another 50,000 in other countries where they would be safer than Afghanistan is worthy of some attention, and I hope we might do that.

Mr. Abraham, I want to ask you a question. It is good to see you again. I want to ask you a question about ASEAN. Four of the 10 ASEAN nations have border disputes with China. So as somebody who does not consider myself an expert in the region I look at that as, that is interesting. So what does that fact say about prospects for deeper and deeper U.S. engagement with the ASEAN nations?

Mr. ABRAHAM. Senator, thank you for the question. I think my reflection on that fact is that it is a national security interest of ours to build the capacity of ASEAN as an institution to allow the nations of ASEAN to speak collectively, in a unified way, and importantly have the tools at their disposal to act on their self-interests. There are any number of those interests. You touch on territorial integrity and the issues of sovereignty. We are certainly committed to, and if confirmed, I would be committed to ensuring that ASEAN has the institutional capacity and that we are encouraging of their ability to collectively, and collectivize some of their concerns in a way that would put them in the driver's seat in dealing with bigger countries in the region like the PRC.

Senator KAINE. The border disputes are largely in the South China Sea, and the U.S. is sort of committing a self-inflicted wound by not eventually ratifying the U.N. Convention on the law of the sea. If the U.S. ratified that treaty, as every Secretary of Defense and every Secretary of State for the last decade has suggested we do, then we would have standing to help in pressing claims about border disputes in that area. We now do not have standing because of our refusal, which is amazing to me, our refusal to ratify that treaty. It is my hope that colleagues would eventually wake up to the need to do that.

Let me ask you this. Senator Markey asked you about Burma and what you might do, obviously, to deal with the very, very difficult situation there. Secretary Blinken recently had some tough words for ASEAN, feeling like ASEAN had not really done enough. They have done some. Individual leaders have done some things.

They have blocked Burmese leadership from attending ASEAN meetings on occasion.

But as you look at what ASEAN could do to be more effective in Burma, talk about that a little bit.

Mr. ABRAHAM. Senator, thank you for the question. I would view our engagement with ASEAN as part of a larger whole of trying to effect change on the situation in Burma. I think our work with ASEAN would be an important part of that. I think building on the floor that was set, to your point about the precedent that was set about nonpolitical representation of Burma at key ASEAN meetings is an important floor that we need to build on and build from.

I would view myself as part of a broader team, a multilateral component of a broader team that is really aimed at changing the regime's calculus. Some of that work will be done in bilateral context, and if I was confirmed, I would happily and enthusiastically work bilaterally or in small groupings in Jakarta with representatives from other ASEAN nations on which in which we can continue to change the regime's calculus and continue to build an echo chamber around the costs that we have exacted on the regime.

Senator KAINE. Thank you. I yield back, Mr. Chair.

Senator SCHATZ. Thank you, Senator Kaine. If there are no more questions for the witnesses the record will remain open until close of business Thursday, July 14, for questions for the record. We urge our nominees to complete those answers as rapidly and as thoroughly as possible so that we can clear for committee action your nominations. Each of you will have critical positions that we need confirmed, so we would urge you to try to complete this work as quickly as possible.

If there is no further business the committee stands adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 11:34 a.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

Additional Material Submitted for the Record

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO HON. ROBERT F. GODEC BY SENATOR ROBERT MENENDEZ

Question. How should the US balance our concerns about Thailand's democratic backsliding with our security commitments and cooperation to the country? Given the Government crackdown on protesters, do you think all military exercises, including the large-scale Cobra Gold exercises, should continue as usual?

Answer. The United States and Thailand are longstanding allies. We have extensive cooperation on security, which has been important for both our countries and the region. Promoting respect for human rights and democracy are also indispensable elements of our foreign policy that advance our strategic interests. Our security assistance programs include human rights training and associated institutional capacity building and, I believe, the more we engage with Thailand on security issues, the more we are promoting respect for human rights in the military and police.

If confirmed, I would engage with the Thai Government, civil society, and other parts of Thai society on how we can best achieve our human rights and democracy objectives and our security assistance objectives to promote the broader interests of the United States. I believe we can successfully pursue all our goals.

Question. How, if confirmed, do you plan on raising the issues of the arrested pro-democracy protest leaders with the Thai Government? What leverage does the United States have to encourage greater respect for human rights in Thailand?

Answer. If confirmed, I will prioritize with the Thai Government the importance of further progress on democracy and respect for human rights, including the rights to freedom of expression and freedom of peaceful assembly.

In the recently signed United States-Thailand Communique on Strategic Alliance and Partnership, the Thai Government affirmed strong democratic institutions, independent civil society, and free and fair elections are central to our shared vision. As I have done in my other assignments, I would engage both privately and, when appropriate, publicly on these issues. I would also encourage senior U.S. Government leaders, congressional visitors, and others to do so, as well. I believe our continued engagement with Thailand across the broad range of our shared interests will help influence and encourage further progress in Thailand.

Question. If you are confirmed, what role will Thailand's relations with Burma play in your engagement with their leadership?

Answer. The escalating crisis in Burma is horrifying, and the United States has continued to urge others to take strong actions in response to the military coup and the regime's abhorrent crackdown on the people of Burma. If confirmed, I would continue to prioritize engagement with the Thai Government on Burma. I would further press Thailand to hold the military regime accountable to the full and swift implementation of the ASEAN Five-Point consensus.

If confirmed, I would also prioritize increasing humanitarian assistance to the people of Burma. I want to work with Thailand to expand existing assistance efforts to better address the ongoing the crisis in Burma and the delivery of unhindered humanitarian aid, including through cross-border mechanisms.

Question. What are the key challenges Thailand faces in addressing trafficking in persons, including in the fishing industry and sex trafficking of women and children? How, if at all, has the COVID–19 pandemic affected the Government's anti-trafficking efforts?

Answer. The downgrade in 2021 of Thailand's Trafficking in Persons Report ranking reflected the challenges Thailand has faced in adequately addressing this serious problem. The Thai Government has prioritized making improvements in its anti-trafficking efforts and, if confirmed, I will work to find avenues of cooperation to support these efforts.

Thailand's key challenges have been in investigating and prosecuting offenders, particularly for labor trafficking. Although Thailand has made efforts to improve labor inspections, the Government still faces challenges identifying traffickers—particularly in the fishing industry. During the pandemic, the Government and NGOs saw an increase in online sexual exploitation, especially of children.

Responses to Additional Questions for the Record Submitted to Hon. Robert F. Godec by Senator James E. Risch

Question. In the State Department's 2021 Trafficking in Persons Report, Thailand was downgraded to the Tier 2 Watch List for not fully meeting the minimum standards to eliminate trafficking including by initiating fewer investigations, and prosecuting and convicting fewer traffickers. How will you work with the Thai Government to address these issues if you are confirmed as Ambassador?

Answer. Thailand's downgraded ranking in the 2021 Trafficking in Persons Report reflected the challenges the country has encountered in adequately addressing this serious problem. The Thai Government has reported it continues to prioritize making improvements in its anti-trafficking efforts and, if confirmed, I will work to find avenues of cooperation to support these efforts.

Working with our interagency team at Embassy Bangkok, I will seek specific ways to support anti-trafficking goals. For example, both publicly and privately, I will promote the improvement of the capacity of local law enforcement to investigate and prosecute offenders—especially labor traffickers. The Thai Government has publicly stated its desire to improve its anti-trafficking efforts and, if confirmed, I plan to leverage this political will and work closely with the Thai Government to achieve our shared goals of protecting victims and bringing traffickers to justice.

Question. The Office of to Monitor and Combat trafficking in persons plays a key role in assisting Ambassadors in promoting anti-trafficking work. Please describe how you can work with the office to improve Thailand's anti-trafficking work in country.

Answer. I deeply value the work done by the Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons and plan to coordinate closely with them to improve anti-trafficking efforts in Thailand. Specifically, if confirmed, I would welcome the opportunity to host officials from the TIP Office in Bangkok, in order to facilitate candid engagements with the Thai Government and civil society on ways to combat trafficking. Throughout my career, I have found that such visits foster relationships across governments and people and help build common understanding of the causes and potential solutions for issues such as trafficking in persons.

Question. What concrete steps can you, if confirmed, take with your mission to help Thailand improve its anti-trafficking efforts?

Answer. Some of Thailand's key challenges have centered around its efforts to provide adequate services to victims and to address labor trafficking. Although Thailand has made efforts to improve labor inspections, the Government still faces challenges identifying labor trafficking victims and their traffickers—including in the fishing industry. If confirmed, I will lead the mission's efforts to work with the Thai Government, civil society, and other partners to focus on areas where Thailand must improve.

I also hope to build on existing programming such as USAID's Counter Trafficking in Persons Program in Thailand to address the demands and incentives for using forced labor, among other goals. Mission Thailand includes dozens of U.S. agencies and offices and I plan to leverage that talent and expertise to bring a whole-of-mission approach to combat trafficking in Thailand.

Question. In the State Department's 2021 International Religious Freedom report, tensions between religious groups remains in Thailand, particularly in the Deep South, which has resulted in at least 86 deaths of both Muslims and Buddhists. What is your assessment of this particular issue and if confirmed, how will you work with the Ambassador-at-Large to bolster religious freedom in-country?

Answer. As Secretary Blinken has stated, the United States maintains its unwavering support to promote respect for and protect freedom of religion or belief for all. I understand that Mission Thailand regularly engages with the Thai Government, civil society, and Thais of all religious backgrounds to promote respect for the freedom of religion or belief. Mission Thailand has made outreach to the Deep South a priority, supporting projects on digital literacy, diversity and inclusion, youth engagement, and community building. If confirmed, I commit to continuing these important engagements, and I would work with the Ambassador-at-Large to explore new ways to further support religious freedom in Thailand.

Question. In the State Department's 2021 Human Rights Report, Thailand was noted as having several significant human rights abuses, including credible reports of torture, cruel and inhuman treatment by government officials and arbitrary arrests. Additionally, there are reports of serious restrictions on freedom of expression, association, and movement. If confirmed, what steps will you take to continue to address these instances with the host government?

Answer. Promoting human rights and fundamental freedoms and advancing democratic values are among my highest priorities, including as part of advancing our vision for a free and open Indo-Pacific. If confirmed, I will ensure these priorities continue to be elevated in meetings and engagements with the Thai Government at all levels and remain a central focus of the bilateral relationship. I will encourage the Thai Government to respect freedoms of expression, association, and movement and encourage Thailand to review and revise or repeal laws used to unduly restrict any of these freedoms. Thailand's continued progress to uphold democratic institutions, and human rights, including freedom of expression, is essential to our partnership as was reflected in the recently signed United States-Thailand Communique on Strategic Alliance and Partnership.

Question. How will you direct your Embassy to work with civil society organizations to improve the human rights situation on the ground?

Answer. Throughout my career, I have prioritized engagement with and support for civil society. The United States places great importance on civil society and NGOs and, if confirmed, I will continue our strong advocacy both publicly and privately in support of the critical role played by civil society in Thailand's democratic development and promotion of human rights. If confirmed, I would work to advance American values and respect for human rights in my engagements at all levels of the Thai Government and with all parts of Thai society and would ask all members of Mission Thailand to take the same approach.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to personally raising human rights issues with the Thai Government?

Answer. Yes. If confirmed, I will not hesitate to raise human rights issues with all levels of the Thai Government. As allies and partners, the United States and Thailand have a productive platform with which to engage candidly. I firmly believe that the promotion of human rights is in the interest of all people in the United States and Thailand, and I will work tirelessly in support of that goal. If confirmed, in addition to raising human rights issues with the Thai Government, I look forward to meeting regularly with human rights advocates, civil society, and other non-governmental organizations in Thailand to affirm U.S. support for human rights.

Question. Many U.S. missions have been under enormous stress over the last few years, in large part due to COVID. What is your understanding of morale throughout Mission Bangkok?

Answer. Mission Thailand is one of the largest in the world and high morale is essential to its success. Like many other missions around the world, the COVID–19 pandemic created challenges for the staff and for families. I understand the current mission leadership has worked hard and effectively to address these concerns and the recent lifting of some restrictions by the Thai Government and improvement in the overall public health situation has helped. If confirmed, I would work with the DCM and others in the mission to bolster morale further and ensure all staff and families have sense of safety and security.

Question. How do you intend to improve morale at Mission Bangkok?

Answer. If confirmed, I would place a high priority on mission morale and actively seek opportunities to improve it. As I indicated in my statement at my hearing, I would prioritize the safety and security of mission staff and families and work to ensure the team has the resources needed to succeed in advancing our goals. I would draw from my experiences at Embassy Nairobi and Embassy Tunis to improve morale and foster a strong community life, always seeking to innovate. I would work with the DCM and use an inclusive style, consulting and speaking frequently with staff to solicit ideas and share views on how to build morale. I would support staff development with an interagency mentorship program and seek staff input through regular anonymous morale surveys (to include on the performance of the Ambassador and DCM).

Question. How do you intend to create a unified mission and vision at Mission Bangkok?

Answer. As I have done in my previous service as Ambassador, if confirmed, I would start by listening to our country team and other personnel in Thailand to ensure I fully understand our current objectives and programs. I would consult with them to establish a clear vision and set of goals and objectives. I would work to communicate those goals throughout the Mission and more widely in the U.S. Government. I would also create a strong interagency working group system to monitor and facilitate implementation.

Question. Management is a key responsibility for Chiefs of Mission. How would you describe your management style?

Answer. I believe in an inclusive, open, and collaborative leadership and management style. I seek the views of the widest possible range of staff and to build a team. I work with the entire team to create a vision, set goals, and implement them. I communicate clearly and candidly and ask that everyone else do so as well. I seek to decentralize decision-making and empower employees to own and direct their work and activities consistent with U.S. law and administration policy.

Question. Do you believe it is ever acceptable or constructive to berate subordinates, either in public or private?

Answer. No. It is never acceptable or constructive to berate subordinates either in public or private.

Question. How do you envision your leadership relationship with your Deputy Chief of Mission?

Answer. If confirmed, I would ask my Deputy Chief of Mission to serve as the Embassy's chief operating officer. I would regularly seek the DCM's views on the full range of leadership, management, and policy issues the mission faces and keep the DCM informed of my actions, activities, and decisions.

Question. If confirmed, what leadership responsibilities do you intend to entrust to your Deputy Chief of Mission?

Answer. As a former ambassador, I understand that the ambassador-Deputy Chief of Mission relationship is critical to a well-functioning mission. In my previous assignments, I have empowered my DCM to serve as the Embassy's chief operating officer and would do so as well in Thailand, if confirmed. I would regularly seek the DCM's counsel to ensure effective Embassy operations to enable the team to meet our strategic objectives and implement our policies and programs. I would also ensure the DCM is fully informed of and consulted on all mission policies and activities and is prepared to become Chargé d'Affaires when necessary.

Question. In order to create and continue employee excellence at the Department, accurate and direct employee evaluation reports (EERs) for Foreign Service Officers are imperative, though often lacking. Do you believe that it is important to provide employees with accurate, constructive feedback on their performances in order to encourage improvement and reward those who most succeeded in their roles?

Answer. Yes, it is important to provide employees with accurate, constructive feedback on their performances to encourage improvement and reward those who succeed in their work. If confirmed, I commit to doing both.

Question. If confirmed, would you support and encourage clear, accurate, and direct feedback to employees in order to improve performance and reward high achievers?

Answer. Yes, I would support and encourage clear, accurate, and direct feedback to employees in order to improve performance and reward high achievers. If confirmed, I commit to doing so.

Question. It is imperative that U.S. diplomats get outside of posts abroad to meet with local actors, including host government officials, non-government organizations, and fellow foreign diplomats stationed in Thailand. In your opinion, do U.S. diplomats get outside of our Embassy walls enough to accomplish fully their missions?

Answer. In recent years, security concerns and now the COVID–19 pandemic have limited the engagement of U.S. diplomats in Thailand and other countries. As Secretary Blinken has emphasized, however, "diplomacy is a contact sport." I believe it is essential that we actively reach out to speak and engage with the Thai people in all walks of life. We must get out of the Embassy and into the communities if we are to be effective diplomats.

Question. How do you intend to improve the ability of U.S. diplomats to better access all local populations?

Answer. If confirmed, I would work with the Embassy Bangkok and Consulate General Chiang Mai Public Affairs Sections and with the full country team to find ways to engage with people across Thailand. We would do so through many channels (e.g., events, digital and traditional media, and other available mechanisms) to advance U.S. goals. I would work to ensure that all members of the Mission Thailand team are involved in this outreach and make it a priority.

Question. Public diplomacy is an important aspect of U.S. foreign policy efforts. What is the public diplomacy environment like in Thailand?

Answer. With its rich culture and traditions and 200 years of friendship with the United States, I understand Thailand is a vibrant environment for public diplomacy. Additionally, the United States and Thailand enjoy robust people-to-people connections creating the foundation for expansive public diplomacy and outreach. For many years, the United States has supported cultural exchange with Thailand through highly successful programs like the Fulbright program, Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative (YSEALI), and the United States' International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP). If confirmed, I hope to build on these programs to create lasting connections between the next generations of our countries.

Question. What public diplomacy challenges do U.S. diplomats face there?

Answer. Disinformation, competition in the information and programming space, and personnel constraints present public diplomacy challenges in Thailand. If confirmed, I commit to working to increase public diplomacy resources to expand our messaging and programmatic efforts. I will use my platform as Ambassador to accurately inform target Thai audiences about our policy priorities and range of bilateral cooperation to build support for our shared goals. I also believe in supporting local efforts to counter disinformation, including by building journalistic capacity, increasing fact-checking and providing training to combat mis- and disinformation.

Although the COVID–19 pandemic limited in-person public diplomacy programming in Thailand during the past two years, if confirmed, I hope to return to and even exceed pre-pandemic levels of in-person public diplomacy engagement across

Thailand and to continue using new virtual tools to expand our reach and strengthen people-to-people ties.

Question. How do you balance the importance of Main State versus the in-country mission when it comes to tailoring public diplomacy messages for foreign audiences?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with the talented team of diplomats and local staff at Mission Thailand to understand and support the mission's unique role in formulating public diplomacy programs and responses, especially those tailored to local audiences. I would draw on local expertise and insights, gleaned from organizations like the new Thailand-U.S. Alumni Association and the Embassy Youth Council, to ensure our public diplomacy messages are appropriately calibrated for the local audience and that they explain and advance our key foreign policy priorities. I would do this while consistently promoting the American values that underscore our public diplomacy around the world. I would also coordinate with and keep Main State informed of our messages and draw on their capabilities as appropriate.

Question. "Anomalous health incidents," commonly referred to as "Havana Syndrome," have been debilitating and sidelining U.S. diplomats around the world for years. They have caused serious, negative consequences for U.S. diplomacy, yet many believe that the Department is not doing enough to care for, protect, and communicate to its personnel. The past occurrences and ongoing threat of anomalous health incidents among Embassy personnel and their families poses a serious challenge to morale. When personnel at post fear for their safety or doubt that their case will be taken seriously if they were affected, the performance of Embassy operations can suffer.

- If confirmed, do you commit to taking this threat seriously?

Answer. Yes. I am deeply troubled by potential anomalous health incidents that have affected Embassy personnel and their family members. I agree we must take these reported incidents seriously and, if confirmed, I would absolutely do so in my role as leader of Mission Thailand. If confirmed, the health, safety, and security of Embassy staff, their family members, and all those supporting Mission Thailand will be my highest priority.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to talking as openly as you can to Mission Bangkok personnel?

Answer. If confirmed, I am committed to sharing information on this issue consistent with ensuring the integrity of ongoing investigations. If confirmed, I will do everything in my power to protect the health and safety of our mission team members and their families.

Question. Have you received a briefing on the anomalous health incidents that have occurred to U.S. Government personnel around the world, including at U.S. embassies and other diplomatic posts? If you have not, and if you are confirmed, do you commit to receiving a briefing on the incidents before you depart for your post?

Answer. If confirmed, it will be my highest priority to protect the health and safety of our mission staff and their families. I will commit to receive any available briefings, unclassified and classified, and will seek further information in meetings with the Coordinator of the State Department's Health Incident Response Task Force as well as relevant bureaus including Diplomatic Security and Intelligence and Research.

Question. In the event of an anomalous health incident among your Embassy personnel or eligible family members, do you commit to maintain detailed records of the incident, and share the information with the State Department and other embassies to contribute to the investigation of how these attacks are affecting U.S. missions and personnel around the world?

Answer. Yes. If confirmed, I commit to supporting investigations into circumstances surrounding the anomalous health incidents and to maintaining records and sharing information.

I commit to working with the State Department to ensure the safety and security of Mission Thailand staff and their families and all U.S. citizens.

Question. Whether or not anomalous health incidents occur at your Embassy, how will you work to restore and preserve morale that may be lost due to the knowledge these attacks have been occurring at posts around the world?

Answer. If confirmed, in the event of any health emergency, I would prioritize the health and safety of our diplomats and their family members and ensure that those impacted receive the proper treatment. To help preserve and restore morale, I would

communicate clearly, transparently, and honestly with my staff about this issue and more generally in my work every day.

I also commit to an open-door policy and would welcome my staff speaking with me about any issue, including those potentially affecting the health of mission members. I also commit to speaking with my staff regularly about the mission's goals to ensure they understand the role of their individual work in achieving our overall objectives on behalf of the U.S. Government and the American people.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO HON. ROBERT F. GODEC BY SENATOR MARCO RUBIO

Question. Thailand is the oldest of the United States' five treaty allies in the Indo-Pacific, with our cooperation going back to World War II and the Korean War. Despite our robust security relationship, Thailand has become closer to the CCP. The PRC is increasingly becoming Thailand's largest trading partner, and Thailand declined to join regional trade agreements sponsored by our allies, like the Trans-Pacific Partnership, that exclude the PRC. The current Thai Government, led by the same leader that overthrew a democratically elected government in 2014, also finds the CCP a more convenient partner that will not criticize its human rights abuses against protesters. This seems to indicate that Thailand will only become closer to the CCP.

- In your view, what are the prospects for reversing this apparent pro-CCP trend in Thailand's foreign policy?

Answer. The U.S.-Thailand alliance is critical for both the United States and Thailand. It is central to the security and prosperity of the region, and it is widely welcomed in Thailand. If confirmed, I would engage with the Thai Government and all parts of Thai society to build understanding of the PRC's actions to ensure that China plays by the same rules as everyone else. If confirmed, I look forward to supporting and growing this relationship.

For example, for more than two hundred years, the United States and Thailand have enjoyed a close trade relationship, and Thailand has joined the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF). The United States is also Thailand's largest export market. If confirmed, I look forward to working with Thailand to ensure the IPEF deepens our economic relations in the region and coordinates approaches to global economic challenges. I believe Thailand's engagement in the IPEF process is indicative of the deep economic ties between our nations, and its importance as a friend and ally. The depth and importance of our ties in many areas including economic, will, I believe, create opportunities for progress on the challenge posed by the PRC.

Question. Is a pro-CCP Thailand a threat to U.S. interests? Please explain.

Answer. If confirmed, I will encourage Thailand to continue to proactively raise concerns over PRC actions that undermine the rules-based international order. I will also encourage regular communication and coordination with Thailand to address common security, economic, and environmental concerns, such as the PRC's increasingly provocative activities in the South China Sea and at Ream Naval Base in Cambodia and transboundary water management along the Mekong River.

The United States and Thailand maintain strong economic relations. The United States is Thailand's largest export market and has more than double the investment in Thailand as that of the PRC.

Question. Does the Chinese Communist Party pose a threat to the United States? Please explain.

Answer. As Secretary Blinken said in May, we believe the PRC is the one country that increasingly has the economic, technological, military, and diplomatic means to advance a different vision of international order. Beijing's actions suggest PRC officials intend to do so.

Question. We are prepared to work together with Beijing where our interests intersect, where it is essential for global peace and prosperity and to keep lines of communication open. There is no reason why our great nations cannot coexist peacefully. As Secretary Blinken said, we will compete with confidence; we will cooperate wherever we can; we will contest where we must.

- If confirmed, how will you accomplish this?

Answer. If confirmed, I will continue to strengthen ties between the United States and Thailand by building on the existing links that bridge our countries across society. We have close security, economic, people-to-people, business-to-business, and

many other cultural ties that have developed during the past two centuries. The recently signed United States-Thailand Communique on Strategic Alliance and Partnership reaffirms the breadth and depth of U.S.-Thai bilateral relations and, if confirmed, I plan to work to continue to strengthen those ties.

Question. Do wedges exist between the CCP and the current Thai Government?

Answer. Thailand maintains robust relationships with both the United States and PRC. Thailand shares our concerns about the PRC's behavior in the region, yet, like the United States, also has economic ties to Beijing and areas where Thailand and PRC cooperate.

Thailand has raised concerns when PRC activities affect the well-being of Thai citizens. For example, Thailand pushed back when PRC activities on upper parts of the Mekong River—such as damming and blasting the river—threatened the livelihoods of Thai communities downstream. If confirmed, I will support Thailand when faced by provocative PRC behavior that undermines Thai and U.S. interests alike.

Question. Are there pro-American factions in the Thai Government? If so, how can we best empower them?

Answer. The United States and Thailand enjoy almost two hundred years of close ties. Over that time, we have built a rich web of relationships running through all aspects of society. In addition to our security alliance, Thailand relies on the United States economically as its top export destination. Furthermore, our connections are enriched by the presence in the United States of almost 350,000 Thais and U.S. citizens of Thai heritage, and by the more than 100,000 U.S. citizens in Thailand.

U.S. cultural exchange programs further foster good relationships between our countries and many Thai leaders have participated in those programs. If confirmed, I will continue these people-to-people exchanges and fund more programs to create these lasting connections between our two countries.

Question. If confirmed, what will you do to support Thailand in maintaining its positive relations with the U.S.?

Answer. If confirmed, I will build on the existing strong ties between the United States and Thailand and identify new areas to grow our relationship. I will foster new areas of cooperation like space, climate, and cyber security. At its foundation, the United States-Thailand relationship is built on strong people-to-people ties, and I will seek ways to further expand these ties to reach younger generations of Thai and American people.

Question. The Trump and Biden Administrations have worked towards forming new, pro-U.S. groupings in the Indo-Pacific, including the Quad and the Australia-United Kingdom-United States (AUKUS) agreement. These groupings exclude Thailand and other treaty allies, like the Philippines and Korea.

- Is there an avenue for Thailand and other treaty allies to engage with the Quad or AUKUS?

Answer. Thailand has deep and strong relationships with each of the countries in the Quad and AUKUS. These relationships span a wide range, including economic and security dimensions. I believe Thailand would be open to considering engagements with the Quad and AUKUS in areas of mutual interest. As one example, the Quad countries' Chiefs of Mission in Bangkok jointly handed over to the Thai Ministry of Health Indian produced COVID–19 vaccines as part of the Quad's Vaccine Partnership.

If confirmed, I will engage regularly with the Chiefs of Mission of these allies and partners and find ways to advance our mutual interests to the benefit of Thailand, other allies, and the Indo-Pacific as a whole.

Question. What is your view of Thailand's attitude to these new groupings? Do they see it as an opportunity to enhance relations with the U.S.?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to engaging with the countries of the Quad and AUKUS and with Thailand to effectively convey the goals of these groupings. I believe the United States would benefit from promoting the new groupings with key allies and partners in the Indo-Pacific region like Thailand.

Thailand has deep and strong relationships with each of the countries in the Quad and AUKUS. These relationships span a wide range, including economic and security dimensions. I believe Thailand would be open to considering engagements with the Quad and AUKUS in areas of mutual interest. If confirmed, I will seek opportunities to build such engagements.

Question. If confirmed, what activities would you recommend to encourage Thai engagement with the Quad or AUKUS?

Answer. Throughout my career, I have engaged with Chiefs of Mission of like-minded countries to promote U.S. interests abroad. If confirmed, I will use my position as U.S. Ambassador to convene diplomatic gatherings to explain our Indo-Pacific strategy and how groupings like the Quad or AUKUS—as well as ASEAN—share U.S. goals for prosperity, stability, and security in the region.

Question. Thailand has struggled to maintain its historical respect for universal human rights in recent years. From often violent suppressions of opposition protests to widespread allegations of forced labor in its fishing industry, the Thai Government is increasingly adopting positions that have led Congress to impose sanctions on other countries. Left unaddressed, these issues can lead the Thai population to question the legitimacy of Thai democracy—which would be a boon to the CCP, which is eager to promote its authoritarian system.

- What levers does the United States have to encourage the Thai Government to be more responsive to allegations of human rights abuses?

Answer. Strengthening democracy and promoting respect for human rights and the rule of law is fundamental to U.S. relations with Thailand. Our alliance and partnership with Thailand is foundational to the U.S. role in the Indo Pacific, and the relationship is built on shared values and principles founded upon mutual democratic aspirations. The recently signed United States-Thailand Communique on Strategic Alliance and Partnership reaffirms a mutual respect for strong democratic institutions, independent civil society, and free and fair elections as central to our shared vision. If confirmed, I will prioritize these themes in my engagement with the Thai Government and wider Thai society.

Question. In your opinion, do you see evidence that the CCP encourages or enhances these abuses?

Answer. The United States welcomes contributions by the People's Republic of China to regional development, so long as it adheres to high standards, including in areas such as transparency, the rule of law, absence of corruption, environmental protection, human rights and labor rights, sustainable financing, and respect for the autonomy of development aid recipients.

Question. If confirmed, what will you do to encourage Thailand to maintain its historic commitment to human rights and democracy?

Answer. The United States and Thailand expressed our shared respect for human rights and democracy through the United States-Thailand Communique on Strategic Alliance and Partnership. If confirmed, I will work with Thailand to uphold its commitment to human rights and democracy, the foundation of our alliance and partnership. Furthermore, I will reiterate how critical human rights and democracy are to ensuring security and prosperity for all people. To do so, I will engage with the Thai Government and with the wider Thai society, including civil society groups, independent media, and human rights activists.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO HON. ROBERT F. GODEC BY SENATOR JOHN BARRASSO

Question. Humanitarian assistance has been deteriorating in Burma since the February 2021 coup d'état. The delivery of humanitarian assistance, COVID–19 vaccines, and other aid has continued to be limited. What percentage of the population in Burma and Thailand have been vaccinated for COVID–19?

Answer. The crisis in Burma continues to worsen. While Thailand has provided humanitarian assistance to people fleeing Burma since the 2021 military coup, far more work needs to be done to meet the growing needs of the people of Burma. If confirmed, I will work closely with Thailand and other countries in the region to advocate for humanitarian access and expand humanitarian assistance and access to meet the needs of all people displaced in and from Burma, including via cross-border mechanisms.

As of July 12, more than 80 percent of Thais had received one vaccine dose and more than 76 percent of Thais had received two doses.

Question. What is the status of the effort to establish a Thai-Burma cross border program on getting coronavirus vaccines into Burma?

Answer. We continue to work with Thailand and other neighboring countries to seek additional ways to deliver critical assistance to the people of Burma, including through facilitating cross-border vaccines and other humanitarian assistance. Secretary Blinken, Deputy Secretary Sherman, U.S.-U.N. Ambassador Thomas-Greenfield, and Counselor Chollet have pressed the importance of providing assistance to the people of Burma during visits to Thailand and other parts of the region.

Thailand has also joined the COVID–19 Global Action Plan, under which countries are working together to accelerate access to vaccines in all settings, including humanitarian. In March, Thailand donated 500,000 doses of Astra-Zeneca vaccine to Burma, along with 3 million doses to other countries in the region.

Sadly, the greatest obstacle to providing life-saving vaccines to the people of Burma is the Burmese military regime. If confirmed, I will work with Thailand and other ASEAN countries to press the regime to allow for greater access to vaccines and humanitarian assistance.

Question. What are the political and diplomatic challenges in getting coronavirus vaccinations into Burma?

Answer. Since the February 2021 coup d'état, the Burmese military regime has continued to impede the delivery of humanitarian assistance, including medical aid, to the people of Burma. The United States has continued to urge ASEAN as a collective, ASEAN member states, and other partners to press the regime to allow unhindered humanitarian access and the delivery of aid, including COVID–19 vaccinations, to all those in need, including in remote areas of the country. If confirmed, I will continue to work closely with the Thai Government to in support of the equitable delivery of COVID–19 vaccine doses and other assistance to the people of Burma.

Question. If confirmed, what actions will you take to aid in getting vaccines and other humanitarian assistance into Burma?

Answer. If confirmed, I will commit to working with the Thai Government, like-minded countries, regional partners, civil society organizations, NGOs, and international organizations to provide COVID–19 vaccines and other humanitarian assistance to the people of Burma. I will encourage Thailand to increase pressure on the regime to swiftly and fully implement ASEAN's Five-Point Consensus, cease the violence, release all those unjustly detained, allow unhindered humanitarian access to those affected in Burma, and restore Burma's path to inclusive democracy.

Recognizing Thailand's long tradition of supporting Burmese refugees, if confirmed, I will seek ways to expand assistance to people from Burma in need, including those suffering as a result of the military coup and subsequent regime violence and repression. I will regularly meet with like-minded partners and ASEAN member states to advocate they speak with one voice and coordinate resources to help end the violence in Burma and return the country to the path toward democracy.

Question. During a briefing on April 26, 2021, you said, "We are very much committed to working together with Africans to overcome the COVID–19 pandemic, to promote trade and investment, to strengthen security, to tackle the climate crisis, to advance democracy, human rights, the rule of law, and to work again together on a whole range of issues that matter to both Africans and Americans."

Again, in your testimony you said, "We welcome Thailand's commitment to address the threat of climate change; this will be a critical area for further collaboration."

- As Ambassador, do you plan to focus on and promote climate change? If so, what would be your priorities?

Answer. Climate change is a major concern for both the United States and Thailand. If confirmed, it would be a top priority for me. I would continue our engagement with the Royal Thai Government on clean energy and climate, including through the Agriculture Innovation Mission for Climate, the Sustainable Partnerships for Growth, the Global Methane Pledge, the Glasgow Leaders' Declaration on Forests and Land Use, USAID's Corporate Clean Energy Alliance, and the Greening Government Initiative. We will also work with Thailand to enhance their resilience to the impacts of climate change through the President's Emergency Plan for Adaptation and Resilience.

The United States is supporting Thailand's climate ambitions through a range of engagements, including USAID's SERVIR-Mekong program, USTDA's Global Partnership for Climate Smart Infrastructure Initiative, and a number of State Department programs including the Mekong Water Data Initiative, the Water Smart Engagements program, and the Japan-U.S. Mekong Power Partnership. Thailand was

also the first country in the world to sign the U.S.-led Clean Energy Demand Initiative.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO HON. ROBERT F. GODEC BY SENATOR TODD YOUNG

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to making Thailand's response to the coup in Burma a priority of your diplomacy?

Answer. Yes. If confirmed, I would engage Thailand to underscore the importance that all countries, including Thailand, strongly condemn the military coup and violence in Burma and press the Burmese military to end its horrific violence, which has led to worsening political, human rights, and humanitarian crises. I would work closely with Thailand and other countries in the region to advocate for unhindered humanitarian access and expand humanitarian assistance to meet the needs of all people displaced in and from Burma, including via cross-border mechanisms.

Question. What steps can the United States take in our diplomacy with Thailand that would incentivize them to take a more active role in mediating a return to democracy in Burma?

Answer. If confirmed, I would work closely with Thailand, and other allies and regional partners, to strengthen diplomatic engagement, intensify the broad international response to the Burma military coup and escalating military crackdown on the people, and urge the military to cease the violence, release all those unjustly detained, allow unhindered humanitarian access, and restore Burma's path to inclusive democracy. The coup and subsequent violence perpetrated by the Burmese military regime has increased instability along Thailand's borders, as it has across the region.

I would encourage Thailand, as the leading economy and our only treaty ally in mainland Southeast Asia, to step up pressure on the regime to promote a peaceful resolution to the crisis and to hold the regime fully accountable its commitments under the ASEAN Five-Point Consensus.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO HON. ROBERT F. GODEC BY SENATOR BILL HAGERTY

Question. Do you agree that a top priority of the U.S. Department of State is to ensure the health, safety, and security of U.S. diplomats living and working abroad?

Answer. Yes, I agree that it is a top priority of the Department of State to protect the health, safety, and security of all U.S. diplomats, mission staff, and their families living and working abroad. I made this a top priority as Ambassador to Kenya and to Tunisia, as well as in the leadership positions I have held in the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs and the Bureau of African Affairs. Doing so was of particular and personal importance to me having been assigned to Embassy Nairobi when it was bombed in 1998. If confirmed, I commit to upholding this responsibility in support of all members of Mission Thailand. I also commit to keeping an open line of communication with our staff to hear about any and all concerns they may have in these areas, and to work with the Deputy Chief of Mission and all relevant offices to ensure all staff and families have a sense of safety and security.

Question. Do you agree that this is a top priority, especially when a U.S. diplomat abroad is under direct threat?

Answer. Yes. The safety, health, and security of our diplomats, mission staff, and families abroad under direct threat is a top priority and, if confirmed, I would work to ensure that it is so for Mission Thailand just as I have in all my previous assignments. If confirmed, I commit to working with all relevant security agencies and officials from the United States and Thailand to ensure protection for all mission personnel, staff, and families from any threat. In doing so, I would draw on my experience in leadership positions in which I have responded to a wide range of threats, including terrorist attacks, and kept our diplomats, staff, and families safe.

On the Departure of the Outgoing U.S. Ambassador to South Africa in January 2021–February 2021

Question. The following questions revolve around your time as Deputy Assistant Secretary of State (2020–2021) and later Acting Assistant Secretary of State/Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State (2021) in the Bureau of African Affairs.

- In September 2020, Politico reported that "[t]he Iranian government is weighing an assassination attempt against the American Ambassador to South Africa, U.S. intelligence reports say, according to a U.S. Government official familiar with the issue and another official who has seen the intelligence," adding: "U.S. officials have been aware of a general threat against the Ambassador, Lana Marks, since the spring, the officials said. But the intelligence about the threat to the Ambassador has become more specific in recent weeks. The Iranian Embassy in Pretoria is involved in the plot, the U.S. Government official said."
- Between September 2020 and February 2021, did you at any point become aware that then-U.S. Ambassador to South Africa Lana J. Marks faced a specific assassination threat from the Iranian Government—the world's biggest state sponsor of terrorism? If so, when?

Answer. I became a Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Bureau of African Affairs in August 2020 but had no responsibility for Mission South Africa or its staff or operations. I became the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Bureau of African Affairs on January 13, 2021, and on January 20, 2021, acting Assistant Secretary. Around that time, I was apprised of the threat to Ambassador Marks and that the Bureau of Diplomatic Security and Regional Security Officer in Pretoria were fully informed and engaged in ensuring Ambassador Marks' safety and security.

Question. On January 11, 2021, then-U.S. Ambassador to South Africa Lana J. Marks posted on the website of the U.S. Embassy to South Africa a statement on her ongoing recovery from a recent COVID–19 infection. She wrote:

> I started to experience shortness of breath and extreme weakness, and as my symptoms worsened, upon the advice of our medical team at the U.S. Embassy, I was admitted to the hospital to seek supplemental oxygen and therapeutic treatment. Shortly after admission on December 28, I was moved to the ICU where I remained for ten days before spending three more days in the COVID–19 unit. Late last week, I was discharged and continue to receive care at home.

She added:

> This is a tremendously serious and unpredictable illness, and it has been the most physically debilitating thing that I have ever experienced in my entire life.

- Between December 2020 and January 2021, did you at any point become aware that then-U.S. Ambassador to South Africa Lana J. Marks was recovering from a COVID–19 infection in Pretoria, South Africa? If so, when?

Answer. I became aware that Ambassador Marks was recovering from a COVID–19 infection just before I became Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Bureau of African Affairs. I was deeply concerned about her condition, and I was following her health closely through the Deputy Assistant Secretary responsible for Southern Africa and other officials. I was assured by the Office of Medical Services that Ambassador Marks was receiving the care she needed and that they would continue to engage beyond January 20. I was aware of (and agreed with) other exceptional steps taken by the Department to protect Ambassador Marks' health, including providing a special exception to allow her to remain in the Chief of Mission residence while she recovered fully. On January 11, 2021, I was grateful to see that Ambassador Marks had posted a statement on Embassy Pretoria media platforms stating, "My condition is improving and the doctors are confident that I will eventually make a full recovery."

Question. When outgoing U.S. Ambassador to South Africa Lana J. Marks—who was not only recovering from what she had publicly described as a "tremendously serious and unpredictable illness" and a "physically debilitating" case of COVID–19 infection, but also the subject of an assassination threat from the Iranian regime—beseeched you in a phone call on January 19, 2021, to assist her in remaining a U.S. Government employee until she returned to the United States, did you—in written communication—nevertheless decline to contact the transition team or take any action on her behalf? If so, when?

Answer. In January 2021, I was closely following Ambassador Marks' health condition, security, and employment status. I was in direct communication with the Office of the Director General of the Foreign Service and with the Assistant Secretary

of State for African Affairs and the Deputy Assistant Secretary responsible for Southern Africa. On January 18, 2021, Ambassador Marks also called me directly regarding her employment status in the State Department. The Bureau of African Affairs has no authority or responsibility for the employment of non-career Presidential appointees in the Department of State. These decisions are the responsibility of the White House and its office in the State Department that handles Presidential personnel, and the Director General of the Foreign Service and the Bureau of Global Talent Management, who work with incoming transition teams on personnel issues. I was also aware that the Director General and the Global Talent Management Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary were in direct communication with Ambassador Marks regarding her employment status. I also understood that the transition team was fully apprised of the concerns raised by Ambassador Marks. In light of this, I advised Ambassador Marks on January 18 that the channel for resolving her employment concerns was the Director General's office. I note that, on January 19, Ambassador Marks sent an email to the Global Talent Management Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary stating, "I just wanted to also take the opportunity to thank you and DG Perez—and everyone CCed on this email—for your very hard work on a fairly atypical situation, during atypical circumstances." I was copied on this email.

Question. Do you agree that you had the option of contacting the transition team and the Director General of the Foreign Service and advocating for Ambassador Marks to be retained as a U.S. Government employee—for example, through administrative measures such as having her temporarily appointed as a non-career Senior Executive Service (SES) appointee or a limited-term Foreign Service Officer (FSO)—until her safe and secure return to the United States?

Answer. As noted above, I was engaging with the Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs and the Director General's office about Ambassador Marks' employment status, and I understood that all possible avenues were considered. I was aware of the communication between the Director General's office and Ambassador Marks, and for employment options for a political appointee, I believed it was best for her to communicate directly with them as they were working with the transition team on personnel issues. I am not aware of any avenue that might have been available to allow her to remain a U.S. Government employee beyond January 20, 2021.

Question. What is your understanding of when and precisely how outgoing U.S. Ambassador to South Africa Lana J. Marks departed South Africa and returned to the United States?

Answer. I understand that Ambassador Marks departed South Africa on or about Sunday, February 21, 2021. Embassy Pretoria confirmed in a message to me on February 23 that she was in the United States. I was advised that she departed without informing Embassy Pretoria. I do not have information on how Ambassador Marks returned to the United States.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO DEAN R. THOMPSON BY SENATOR ROBERT MENENDEZ

Question. As we aim to strengthen our relationship by supporting the best interests of the Nepalese people and combatting Chinese influence, I am curious to hear what you believe our priorities ought to be in Nepal.

- If confirmed, what will your priorities be in Kathmandu? What would you say are the biggest challenges facing Nepal today? What do you see as the solutions to those challenges, and what can the United States do to help?

Answer. If confirmed, facilitating Nepal's economic growth would be a key priority. In February 2022 Nepal's Parliament ratified the $500 million U.S. Millennium Challenge Corporation Compact electricity-and-roads project in the face of a torrid PRC disinformation campaign. This project will build electricity transmission lines to connect Nepal's clean, abundant hydropower with South Asia's energy grid. This project will increase the prosperity of both of our countries and Nepal's resilience in the face of Chinese pressure.

If confirmed, I would advocate for the human rights of all Nepali citizens and residents. This policy priority includes marginalized communities and refugee communities, such as Tibetan refugees. I would also work to help Nepal strengthen its democratic institutions, as Nepal moved to a federal system in 2015. Stronger democratic institutions will also help Nepal complete is transitional justice plans, that

is, those efforts that brought together various parts of Nepali society after the end of the 1996-2006 civil war.

Finally, people and preparedness will be critical—taking care of our country team and their families, building our great people-to-people relationships in Nepal, and preparing for any eventuality, be it natural or other types of disasters. Taking care of our people and our relationships makes it possible to fully pursue and protect U.S. interests.

Question. Earlier this year, we saw an alarming increase in Chinese disinformation aimed at undermining the Nepalese parliament's ratification of the MCC Nepal Compact. The Compact is a $500 million grant—not loan—that will help Nepal improve its domestic infrastructure, increase electricity reliability, and facilitate cross-border energy trade.

- What are your priorities as Ambassador for deepening U.S.-Nepalese bilateral cooperation in the aftermath of the ratification of the MCC? How do you intend to counter Chinese disinformation in Nepal going forward when it comes to projects that are in the best interests of the Nepalese people?

Answer. If confirmed, I would champion the MCC electricity-roads project through every step of the implementation phase and highlight the economic benefits that Nepal will receive from the building of electricity lines and roads to export its energy to other parts of South Asia. I would also work with my Embassy team to use our foreign policy tools to show China's propaganda efforts and help Nepalis be resilient to Chinese mis- and disinformation. Our economic developmental support for Nepal, which is carried out in a transparent, collaborative partnership, helps Nepal strengthen its own foundation of national sovereignty and independent decision-making.

Question. U.S. interests in Nepal include supporting democratic institutions, promoting regional stability and security, alleviating poverty, promoting human rights, achieving sustainable economic growth, protecting the interests of Tibetan refugees, and helping build resilience to deal with climate change and natural disasters.

- How do you, if confirmed, plan on balancing these competing interests?

Answer. As you note, the United States has a broad range of interests in Nepal. The essence of an ambassador's job is to advance those U.S. interests. The MCC electricity-and-roads project will create thousands of jobs for Nepalis and millions of dollars in revenue for the country. USAID's recently signed $659 million assistance agreement will support democratic institutions and alleviate poverty while helping build resilience to climate change and natural disasters. If confirmed, I also would work across the interagency to promote the rights of all citizens and residents of Nepal, including of refugee communities.

Responses to Additional Questions for the Record Submitted to Dean R. Thompson by Senator James E. Risch

Question. In the State Department's 2021 Trafficking in Persons Report, Nepal remained on Tier 2 for its ongoing efforts to meet the minimum standards to eliminate trafficking but did not adequately do so in a few key areas, including failing to criminalize all forms of labor and sex trafficking and providing protection for trafficking victims. Additionally, government complicity in trafficking remains a serious concern.

- How will you work with the Nepalese Government to address these issues if you are confirmed as Ambassador?

Answer. Nepal has made some progress on combatting trafficking in persons in recent years but still has issues to address. If confirmed, I will engage the Government of Nepal at the highest levels and press to criminalize all forms of trafficking and to put an end to the Government's complicity in trafficking. I will employ the resources of the Department of State's Trafficking in Persons Office to train Nepali officials to prosecute and convict human traffickers.

Question. The office of to monitor and combat trafficking in persons plays a key role in assisting Ambassadors in promoting anti-trafficking work. Please describe how you can work with the office to improve Nepal's anti-trafficking work in country.

Answer. The office to monitor and combat trafficking in persons (J/TIP) at the Department of State is already doing great work in Nepal. I have worked closely with J/TIP in the past and look forward to regular consultation and continued assistance

from them, if confirmed. Just this past quarter, one of their implementers in Nepal, ECPAT Luxembourg, held coordination meetings to create awareness and build pressure to develop child protection mechanisms and to help stakeholders better understand the status of child rights. They also trained over 80 media outlets in Nepal to cover children and trafficking in persons issues. If confirmed, I will work closely with the J/TIP Office to further this work to help end human trafficking in Nepal.

Question. What concrete steps can you, if confirmed, take with your mission to help Nepal improve its anti-trafficking efforts?

Answer. If confirmed I will work closely with our Department of Justice colleagues in Nepal, who run the International Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Program (ICITAP) and the Overseas Prosecutorial Development and Assistance Training (OPDAT). These programs, funded by the Department of State's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, train local law enforcement and prosecutors to recognize, arrest, and prosecute transnational crime, such as human trafficking. If confirmed, I will continue with these programs to put the criminals guilty of human trafficking behind bars.

Working with our J/TIP Office colleagues and implementers, I will also focus on helping Nepal to assist the victims. If confirmed, I will engage directly to encourage and underscore the importance of providing victim assistance. If confirmed, as Chief of Mission, I will ensure our Embassy is forward leaning in its engagement with Nepal to meet the standards of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act.

Question. In the State Department's 2021 International Religious Freedom report, highlighted concerns regarding treatment of Christians and Tibetan communities in Nepal. In particular, concerns regarding discrimination and prohibiting conversion.

- What is your assessment of this particular issue and if confirmed, how will you work with the Ambassador-at-Large to bolster religious freedom in-country?

Answer. While Nepal is tolerant in many ways, there have been concerns in recent years regarding religious freedom. We have seen media reporting on the Government of Nepal prohibiting Tibetan refugees from celebrating cultural and religious holidays. If confirmed, I will work with the International Religious Freedom Office to stand up for religious rights for people of all faiths. I will engage with Nepali Government officials and raise concerns regarding religious intolerance. It is a universal human right for all citizens to practice one's faith.

Question. In the State Department's 2021 Human Rights Report, Nepal was noted as having several significant human rights abuses, including credible reports of torture, cruel and inhumane treatment by government officials and arbitrary arrests. Additionally, there are reports of serious restrictions on freedom of expression, association, and movement.

- If confirmed, what steps will you take to continue to address these instances with the host government?

Answer. If confirmed, I will stand for human rights in Nepal. I will work with our Human Rights Officer and with the Department of State's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL) to engage civil society, raise concerns with the Government, and advance human rights for all citizens and residents of Nepal. DRL has great programs to bring awareness to human rights, and I will work closely with our DRL Bureau to use those programs to put a stop to torture and inhumane treatment. I will work with our Department of Justice officials in charge of ICITAP to promote humane policing. In cases of gross human rights violations, I will call out such violations. In doing all these things, we can help Nepal put a stop to human rights abuses.

Question. How will you direct your Embassy to work with civil society organizations to improve the human rights situation on the ground?

Answer. Our Embassy in Nepal regularly engages with civil society and, if confirmed, I would ensure that such engagement continues. Civil society organizations (CSO) in Nepal work with the Embassy to improve human rights for Nepali citizens and residents. USAID has an annual budget of $16 million to work with NGOs and CSOs on a variety of issues, the advancement of human rights chief among them. If confirmed, I will work with USAID colleagues to continue to coordinate with CSOs that stand up for the human rights of all Nepalis.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to personally raising human rights issues with the Nepalese Government?

Answer. Yes. If confirmed, I commit to personally raising human rights issues with the Government of Nepal.

Question. Many U.S. missions have been under enormous stress over the last few years, in large part due to COVID. What is your understanding of morale throughout Mission Kathmandu?

Answer. Under its current outstanding leadership, the morale at Mission Kathmandu is high. If confirmed, I will work to keep it so.

Question. If confirmed, how do you intend to improve morale at Mission Kathmandu?

Answer. If confirmed, taking care of the staff and families at the Mission will be my highest priority. I will endeavor to create a caring, respectful environment where all feel safe and secure—both personally and professionally. We have numerous important U.S. interests to look after in Nepal, and we need our team and their families well cared for in order to achieve this mission.

Question. How do you intend to create a unified mission and vision at Mission Kathmandu?

Answer. If confirmed, I will create a unified mission and vision through diligent strategic planning, broad engagement across the mission, and inclusive leadership. I will use my experience and judgement and that of my team to focus our initiatives to produce results for the American people. I will be generous in recognizing the accomplishments of others while also being the first to take responsibility for any errors. I will create an environment of trust and respect where all can share their talents toward the goals of the mission.

Question. Management is a key responsibility for Chiefs of Mission. How would you describe your management style?

Answer. Working at an Embassy isn't just a regular job. It's part of broader family and lifestyle commitment. I care about our people and their families, and I care about their professional development. If confirmed, as Chief of Mission, I would engage our community as a whole and commit to finding ways to help everyone feel included, welcome, and part of our overall mission community. I would seek to recruit a diverse team of Americans and local staff. If confirmed, I would work closely with my DCM to ensure we have effective and proper mentoring and professional development opportunities across all grades and agencies, and I would seek feedback to evaluate our success or need for change. The American people entrust us with a mission and resources and, if confirmed, I would hold myself and our larger team accountable for our efforts.

Question. Do you believe it is ever acceptable or constructive to berate subordinates, either in public or private?

Answer. No. Never. If confirmed, I would ensure everyone working at the Embassy is treated with dignity and respect. I do not believe it is acceptable or constructive to berate subordinates ever, either in public or privately.

Question. How do you envision your leadership relationship with your Deputy Chief of Mission?

Answer. If confirmed, I expect to have close, continuing communication with my DCM about roles and responsibilities. I expect she would function as the Chief Operating Officer of the mission and also be ready to step in should I become incapacitated or am away from post. I expect to employ a consultative, collaborative leadership approach, but one in which I accept ultimate responsibility for the outcomes of our actions and policy implementation.

Question. If confirmed, what leadership responsibilities do you intend to entrust to your Deputy Chief of Mission?

Answer. If confirmed, I expect that my DCM will take on key leadership responsibilities including oversight of the Family Advocacy Committee, all post-level mentoring programs for entry-level and mid-level officers and local staff, and chair of the Emergency Action Committee. If confirmed, I would expect the DCM to remain closely engaged with our Management section to ensure proper oversight and management controls are in place and that I am fully aware of any challenges or deficiencies on that front. I would also expect that the DCM would share with me leadership on matters related to the implementation of a diverse and inclusive workforce that fosters respect, productivity and professional engagement across all sections and agencies.

Question. In order to create and continue employee excellence at the Department, accurate and direct employee evaluation reports (EERs) for Foreign Service Officers are imperative, though often lacking.

- Do you believe that it is important to provide employees with accurate, constructive feedback on their performances in order to encourage improvement and reward those who most succeeded in their roles?

Answer. I do believe it is important to provide employees with accurate and constructive feedback on their performance to encourage improvement and to reward those who succeed. I meet with direct reports and reviewed employees to ensure they get feedback on their performance. If confirmed, I would continue that practice in Kathmandu.

Question. If confirmed, would you support and encourage clear, accurate, and direct feedback to employees in order to improve performance and reward high achievers?

Answer. Yes. If confirmed, I will support and encourage clear, accurate, and direct feedback to employees to improve performance and reward high achievers.

Question. It is imperative that U.S. diplomats get outside of posts abroad to meet with local actors, including host government officials, non-government organizations, and fellow foreign diplomats stationed in Nepal.

- In your opinion, do U.S. diplomats get outside of our Embassy walls enough to accomplish fully their missions?

Answer. COVID–19 and other resource constraints have limited our engagement outside Embassy walls. As we come out of the COVID pandemic it will be particularly important to ensure U.S. diplomats re-engage across the whole of society. In my opinion, U.S. diplomats should get outside of the embassies as much as possible, in consultation with the Regional Security Office when appropriate, to fully accomplish their missions. If confirmed, I will always encourage my staff to get outside of our Embassy walls more, to better understand our host country and to deliver results for the American people.

Question. How do you intend to improve the ability of U.S. diplomats to better access all local populations?

Answer. If confirmed, I would work closely with the DCM, Regional Security Officer and individual sections to ensure they compile robust reporting and travel plans that are geared to the goals of the integrated country strategy and that provide us good contacts and insights from across the country. I will work with our management team and Washington to get the resources we need to engage and deliver our key messages to the people of Nepal.

Question. Public diplomacy is an important aspect of U.S. foreign policy efforts. What is the public diplomacy environment like in Nepal?

Answer. The public diplomacy environment in Nepal is difficult because of the mis- and disinformation that pervades social media and some elements of traditional media. If confirmed, I would work closely with our country team, likeminded embassies, the Nepali Government and civil society to broaden access to quality, accurate information and to speak truth to the people of Nepal about the United States, its interests and its intentions in its bilateral relationship with Nepal.

Question. What public diplomacy challenges do U.S. diplomats face there?

Answer. The Nepali media and social media landscape, like in so many countries, contends with mis- and disinformation. In the modern world, where so many have access to the internet, false stories are prevalent, as we saw in spades with the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) Compact. The public affairs team at the Mission did great work in contrasting the disinformation surrounding the Compact with clear explanations about what the Compact was and what it will do for Nepal and its people. If confirmed, I will work with the public affairs office in Kathmandu to continue that great work.

Question. How do you balance the importance of Main State versus the in-country mission when it comes to tailoring public diplomacy messages for foreign audiences?

Answer. I believe that the mission understands the nuances of the media and the audience in country the best while Main State has a holistic, global view. Thus, it is imperative that the mission guide the foreign policy in country while always coordinating closely with Main State to ensure consistency and accuracy with respect to our messaging. At the same time, in the information environment, speed is critical. If confirmed, I would work closely with our professionals at post and experts in DC to ensure we have sufficient agility to be proactive in our messaging, but to also respond quickly and accurately whenever required.

Question. "Anomalous health incidents," commonly referred to as "Havana Syndrome," have been debilitating and sidelining U.S. diplomats around the world for years. They have caused serious, negative consequences for U.S. diplomacy, yet many believe that the Department is not doing enough to care for, protect, and communicate to its personnel. The past occurrences and ongoing threat of anomalous health incidents among Embassy personnel and their families poses a serious challenge to morale. When personnel at post fear for their safety or doubt that their case will be taken seriously if they were affected, the performance of Embassy operations can suffer.

- If confirmed, do you commit to taking this threat seriously?

Answer. Yes. If confirmed, I will take this threat seriously and make sure our team members have all the information available to protect themselves and their families.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to talking as openly as you can to Mission Kathmandu personnel?

Answer. Yes. If confirmed, I will regularly talk as openly as possible to Mission Kathmandu personnel.

Question. Have you received a briefing on the anomalous health incidents that have occurred to U.S. Government personnel around the world, including at U.S. embassies and other diplomatic posts? If you have not, and if you are confirmed, do you commit to receiving a briefing on the incidents before you depart for your post?

Answer. I will receive a briefing on anomalous health incident (AHI) on Monday, July 18. If confirmed, I will consult specifically with AHI coordinator's office, as appropriate, about Nepal.

Question. In the event of an anomalous health incident among your Embassy personnel or eligible family members, do you commit to maintain detailed records of the incident, and share the information with the State Department and other embassies to contribute to the investigation of how these attacks are affecting U.S. missions and personnel around the world?

Answer. If confirmed, I do commit to maintaining detailed records of the incident and to share information with the State Department and other embassies to contribute to the investigation of how those attacks are affecting U.S. missions and personnel around the world. I would ensure that our Regional Security Office and Health Unit follow all appropriate protocols and engage the appropriate experts in Washington to ensure full care of our personnel.

Question. Whether or not anomalous health incidents occur at your Embassy, how will you work to restore and preserve morale that may be lost due to the knowledge these attacks have been occurring at posts around the world?

Answer. We learned a lot from the COVID experience with respect to the fear and uncertainty that can come from threats to health. If confirmed, I will always let my staff and families know that their health and security come first. When it comes to their well-being, I will have an open-door policy and foster an environment where the staff and families can share their concerns in safety.

Responses to Additional Questions for the Record Submitted to Dean R. Thompson by Senator Jeanne Shaheen

Question. New Hampshire has a strong and active community of Nepali-Americans. In my years of government service, here in the Senate and in New Hampshire, I have seen the tremendous benefits of engaging closely with diaspora communities here at home.

- If confirmed, will you commit to close engagement with the Nepali-American community in New Hampshire and in other states?

Answer. I have also found the benefits in working closely with diaspora communities during my time with the State Department. The State Department is engaged with the Nepali-American community in New Hampshire, and I can confirm that, if nominated, I would commit to close engagement with the Nepali-American community in New Hampshire and other states.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO DEAN R. THOMPSON BY SENATOR MARCO RUBIO

Question. Under current Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba, Nepal has sought to rebalance its foreign policy away from the pro-Chinese Communist Party (CCP) pursued by his predecessor, KP Sharma Oli of the Nepali Communist Party. Prime Minister Deuba has stopped progress on Nepal's Belt and Road Initiative projects and has worked with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi to repair Nepal-India relations.

- Is the CCP's engagement with Nepal a threat to U.S. interests? Please explain

Answer. The Chinese Communist Party's interests and activities in Nepal are a concern. For example, the PRC has recently used misinformation in an attempt to derail the U.S. Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) Compact in Nepal, a project that will bring thousands of jobs and millions of dollars in revenue to Nepal. If confirmed, I would build on our long-standing efforts to strengthen Nepal's sovereignty and its ability to maintain its independence both in internal and foreign policy decision-making. I would push back on misinformation and highlight the benefits of the U.S.-Nepali relationship to the Nepali people and our sincere and transparent interest in helping Nepal's development.

Question. Does the Chinese Communist Party pose a threat to the United States? Please explain.

Answer. As Secretary Blinken said, the PRC is the only country with both the intent to reshape the international order and the economic, diplomatic, military, and technological power to do it. Beijing presents a vision that would move us away from the universal values that have sustained so much of the world's progress over the past 75 years. Under President Xi, the PRC has become more aggressive abroad, and the United States must respond with strength, with the determination to defend territorial integrity, international law, and institutions that have brought prosperity to so many parts of the world.

Question. Is it in the U.S. interest to encourage positive ties between India and Nepal? If yes, how can we best encourage these ties?

Answer. India and Nepal share an important relationship. They are linked historically and culturally, and India is Nepal's largest trade partner and investor. The United States supports those strong ties, and the MCC Compact, which will promote the trade of clean Nepali hydropower energy throughout South Asia. Our MCC electricity-and-roads project is a great example of how the United States can build upon and grow those important ties. If confirmed, I would work to see the MCC Compact implemented to the benefit of both Nepal and India.

Question. What remaining divisions in the India-Nepal relationship could the CCP exploit to drive a wedge between the two countries?

Answer. India-Nepali ties run deep. In addition to their important economic ties, India-Nepali security ties are crucial. The Indo-Nepal 1950 Treaty of Peace and Friendship expressly notes neither country will "tolerate any threat to the security of the other by a foreign aggressor." In short, the CCP will have a difficult time overcoming the important historical, economic, and defense relationships that Nepal and India maintain. If confirmed, I would work to call out any PRC manipulation or aggression that may seek to do so.

Question. If confirmed, what will you do to encourage closer ties between Nepal and India?

Answer. If confirmed, I will continue to build on the important coordination established during the discussions on the MCC Compact project. One of the conditions for the project was the creation of a joint-venture company between Nepal and India, so that Nepal could sell its clean hydropower energy to India. This type of cooperation is foundational and, if confirmed, I would use it to promote similar cooperation between our three countries.

Question. Over the many decades, but especially recently under General Secretary Xi Jinping, the Himalayas have become a source of conflict between India and the CCP. This has sometimes led to violent clashes, such as in Doklam in neighboring Bhutan. The CCP, the aggressor, has deliberately forced Tibetans to move into Nepali, Bhutanese, and Indian Territory in the high Himalayas in an effort to move border markers further south.

- What is your appraisal of ongoing border tensions between the CCP and the Himalayan countries, including Nepal?

Answer. The PRC has indeed encroached on its neighbors in the Himalayas, including in Bhutan as you noted in 2017 on the Doklam Plateau. Regarding the border with Nepal, although there have been allegations reported in local media, we have found no evidence of PRC encroachment. Nevertheless, if confirmed, I would resolutely support Nepal's territorial integrity and sovereignty.

Question. What role can the U.S. play in supporting Nepal, Bhutan, and India in resisting CCP encroachment?

Answer. The United States must stand for territorial integrity throughout the world. Nepal is no exception. If confirmed, I would determinedly support its territorial integrity and sovereignty.

Question. Nepal lies directly on the border with CCP-occupied Tibet. Tibetan refugees in Nepal live under movement restrictions while there are reports of Nepali security officials engaging in sexual violence against refugees. These conditions are deplorable and support CCP propaganda.

- Are you aware of the changes to U.S. policy toward Tibetan refugees in Nepal that Congress passed in recent years, including my Tibetan Policy and Support Act?

Answer. I am aware of the Tibetan Policy and Support Act, and I thank Congress for its support of the Tibetan people. If confirmed, I would work to support the rights of Tibetan refugees in Nepal and would use all the tools at our disposal to do so.

Question. If confirmed, how do you plan to implement these policies toward Tibetan refugees?

Answer. If confirmed, consistent with the Tibetan Policy and Support Act, I would urge the Government of Nepal to provide legal documentation to long-staying Tibetan residents in Nepal. This documentation is necessary for Tibetan refugees to more fully participate in Nepali society and the Nepali economy, and I would engage the Government of Nepal to fully promote this policy. I would also make use of the generous assistance that Congress provided in the Act to promote and preserve Tibetan culture and language and to build the resilience of Tibetan communities in Nepal.

Question. If confirmed, will you raise the issue of Tibetan refugees with the Nepali Government?

Answer. If confirmed, I vow to raise the issues affecting Tibetan refugees with the Government of Nepal.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO DEAN R. THOMPSON BY SENATOR TODD YOUNG

Question. If confirmed, how would you work to counter Chinese misinformation about the MCC and U.S.-Nepalese relations more broadly?

Answer. If confirmed, I would clearly articulate that the U.S. Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) Compact is an electricity and roads project that will bring revenue to Nepal and help the Nepali people. More broadly, I would work to counter PRC disinformation and demonstrate to the Nepali people and government that the United States is a partner that operates transparently and values Nepal's sovereignty and independence.

Question. In your view, what does the MCC Compact mean for the people of Nepal? If confirmed, how would you demonstrate the value and purpose of the MCC Compact?

Answer. The MCC electricity-and-roads project will strengthen Nepal's economic and energy independence, providing thousands of jobs and millions of dollars in revenue annually to the people of Nepal. If confirmed, I would champion the MCC electricity-roads project through every step of the implementation phase and highlight the economic benefits that Nepal will receive from the building of electricity lines and roads to export its energy to other parts of South Asia.

Question. Are there ways we should respond if China were to undertake more aggressive attempts at economic coercion against Nepal?

Answer. We see China's attempts to coerce Nepal. If confirmed, I would work with my Embassy team to use our foreign policy tools to show China's propaganda efforts and help Nepalis be resilient to Chinese mis- and disinformation. Our economic de-

velopmental support for Nepal, which is carried out in a transparent, collaborative fashion, helps Nepal strengthen its own foundation of national sovereignty and independent decision-making. Our developmental support includes the $500 million MCC electricity-roads project and $659 million in USAID development assistance. We also engage the U.S. private sector—including the newly formed American Chamber of Commerce in Nepal—to increase trade with Nepal and improve the business environment.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO YOHANNES ABRAHAM BY SENATOR ROBERT MENENDEZ

Question. What will be your top priorities in Jakarta, should you be confirmed? What role does ASEAN play in the Biden administration's Indo-Pacific Strategy and in U.S. policy towards Asia broadly?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work to implement the Administration's Indo-Pacific strategy, with a focus on supporting our commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific, one where countries and individuals are able to make independent decisions free from coercion. With a commitment to a rules-based order and an economically vibrant, youthful, and growing population, ASEAN plays a critical role in the Biden administration's Indo-Pacific Strategy. A strong and independent ASEAN will be a key partner in addressing shared challenges, seizing emerging opportunities, and advancing our shared interests. If confirmed, I will look to build on ongoing, whole-of-government efforts to support ASEAN centrality and the ASEAN-led regional architecture, while building ASEAN's capacity to act on its interests and deliver meaningful solutions to the region's most pressing challenges.

Strengthening ASEAN's own capacity will increase our ability to work together on a range of critical shared opportunities and challenges, including the tragic and disturbing crisis in Burma, the PRC's increasing assertiveness in the South China Sea, health security, energy and climate issues, and the economic prosperity of our combined one billion people.

If confirmed, I will also prioritize ensuring the durability of our partnership with ASEAN, specifically by building on already-strong bipartisan Congressional support for U.S. engagement with ASEAN and supporting people-to-people programs, including the Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative.

Finally, and importantly, leading the U.S. Mission to ASEAN starts with taking care of its people. If confirmed, supporting my team and ensuring their safety and security would be my top management priority.

Indo-Pacific and Asia Strategy through ASEAN Centrality

Question. The Biden administration has repeatedly emphasized the importance of developing strong relationships in the Indo-Pacific and Asia, particularly through ASEAN, as key to American international strategy and a rules-based order.

- How do you view "ASEAN centrality" in regional diplomacy? How should the United States support ASEAN centrality and how do you plan to do that, should you be confirmed?

Answer. Given our shared commitment to the rules-based international order, I believe that a strong and independent ASEAN is essential to the regional architecture of the Indo-Pacific, and that our partnership with ASEAN is essential to maintaining a free and open Indo-Pacific. It is in the national security interests of the United States for ASEAN to be strong, prosperous, united, and well-equipped to withstand coercive activity.

If confirmed, I will work to build on ongoing, whole-of-government efforts to build ASEAN's own capacity to act on a range of shared interests. If confirmed, I will also work to ensure the United States and our interests are robustly represented in ASEAN forums, and I will ensure that we continue to work bilaterally and multilaterally to strengthen critical partnerships in the region.

Indo-Pacific Economic Framework

Question. Seven members of ASEAN have joined President Biden's Indo-Pacific Economic Framework as the U.S. works to counter the malign influence of China's economic coercion in the region.

- How will you, if confirmed, support these negotiations? How does IPEF fit into our broader economic diplomacy in the region?

Answer. Economic engagement with the Indo-Pacific broadly, and ASEAN specifically, is critical to advancing our economic prosperity and national security inter-

ests, as well as those of our allies and partners. This year, President Biden launched the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF), aimed at enabling the U.S. and our allies and partners to deepen our economic engagement, drive inclusive prosperity in the United States and throughout the Indo-Pacific, and set the rules on critical 21st century economic challenges and opportunities. The framework is the President's signature economic initiative in the region, and complements ongoing economic engagement with ASEAN, APEC, the Quad, and bilateral efforts.

If confirmed, I would work closely with Congress, my bilateral colleagues across the region, and my colleagues in Washington to achieve high-ambition outcomes in the discussions under each pillar of IPEF. I would do so by seeking to understand the perspectives of my counterparts in Jakarta and working with my interagency colleagues on ways to achieve both American and partner objectives.

Coordination with Allies on Security Initiatives

Question. The QUAD, composed of Japan, Australia, India, and many of our other allies and partners, including South Korea and European nations, are heavily focused on security in the region as we counter Chinese aggression.

- What opportunities are there for U.S. coordination with allies and partners, such as these nations, on ASEAN development and security initiatives? How, if confirmed, do you plan on working with your U.S. diplomatic colleagues in the region to pursue these opportunities?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work closely with my diplomatic colleagues in the region to promote regional connectivity amongst our allies and partners, a tenet of the United States Indo-Pacific Strategy. I believe that significant opportunities exist to advance our interests, as well as those of our allies and partners, through greater regional connectivity and cooperation. The Quad—a partnership based on values—shares our commitment to democracy, peace, security, and prosperity in the region. The Quad seeks to support and build on our longstanding multilateral partnerships and recognizes ASEAN centrality as a main pillar of regional engagement. In the Joint Vision Statement that leaders adopted at the U.S.-ASEAN Special Summit in Washington, D.C., the U.S. and ASEAN welcomed the support extended by ASEAN Dialogue Partners through various initiatives, including the Quad Vaccine Partnership. The Quad has also announced a new initiative on maritime domain awareness that will benefit ASEAN nations. If confirmed, I will look to foster and facilitate cooperation between ASEAN and the Quad, and I will also work with others, including European partners, on other areas of possible collaboration. I will do so by working closely with my counterparts in Jakarta—both those from ASEAN nations and those from other partners and allies—to see if flexible groupings can help accomplish shared objectives.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO YOHANNES ABRAHAM BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Question. If confirmed, how will you advocate for the continued promotion and protection of internationally-recognized human rights in ASEAN member countries?

Answer. As I said in my opening statement, a critical component of advancing our interests is standing up for our values. President Biden has said that human rights are a vital interest of this administration's foreign policy. If confirmed, I will not hesitate to raise issues of human rights, democracy, and the rule of law with my counterparts, including as we work to address the worsening political and humanitarian crises in Burma. If confirmed, I will support ASEAN in continuing to restrict Burma's representation at senior-level ASEAN events, and I will work with colleagues and counterparts around the region on ways to increase pressure on the regime to change its calculus.

In addition, the United States has numerous ongoing training and development programs to advance respect for human rights in Southeast Asia. For example, the Mission's public diplomacy section designed an in-person workshop for women human rights defenders from all ASEAN member states, plus Timor-Leste, that will occur in Thailand in August 2022. If confirmed, I will continue supporting the efforts of regional human rights defenders, and I will ensure that the team at our Mission continues to diligently monitor the human rights situation across Southeast Asia. I appreciate Congressional attention to this issue and look forward to close consultations.

Question. Within the ASEAN Declaration on Human Rights, there is a priority area of cooperation that says, "Take initiative with a preventive approach in ad-

dressing humanitarian issues, including public health emergencies, with regional and international humanitarian consequences and impacts on human rights." If confirmed, please detail any possible steps you could take to advance this particular tenet of the declaration within ASEAN nations.

Answer. I believe that taking a preventative approach to humanitarian issues and public health emergencies is critical to our national security and that of the ASEAN member states. If confirmed, I would ensure that the United States continues to work closely with ASEAN member states and the Secretariat's disaster response authorities to plan for, prepare for, and respond to both natural and man-made disasters. If confirmed, I will also advocate for strong U.S. humanitarian support for the peoples of ASEAN in times of crisis, and I would work closely with USAID, the coordinator for international disaster assistance efforts. If confirmed, I will look to advance programs that build the capacity of our allies and partners to prepare for the next disaster, including by strengthening the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance and supporting disaster risk reduction programs implemented by our bilateral Missions in ASEAN member states.

COVID–19 has reminded us all that pandemics know no borders, and we must work together to prevent and respond to public health emergencies. If confirmed, I would prioritize building on U.S.-ASEAN Health Futures, including by supporting the CDC's efforts to enhance pan-respiratory disease surveillance in the region and USAID's support for the ASEAN Public Health Emergency Coordination System, which will improve regional cooperation and information-sharing on public health emergencies.

State Department Manangement and Public Diplomacy

Question. Many U.S. missions have been under enormous stress over the last few years, in large part due to COVID. What is your understanding of morale throughout the U.S. mission to ASEAN?

Answer. It is my understanding that the U.S. Mission to ASEAN staff is a talented, dedicated group. I also understand that, like many workplaces around the world, pandemic-related restrictions have taken a toll on the team and their families. Strict lockdowns in Indonesia prevented in-person schooling for the children of the Mission's personnel, and other lockdown regulations altered or halted the regular rhythms of social and professional engagement.

I understand that Indonesia is beginning to lift those lockdowns and related restrictions and that travel has opened back up again. If confirmed, ensuring the health and well-being, both physical and emotional, of the Mission's personnel would be a top priority. If confirmed, I will look for creative ways to boost morale and will prioritize supporting the team and their families as they work to promote our interests.

Question. How do you intend to improve morale at the U.S. mission to ASEAN?

Answer. Morale is a critical driver of both the well-being of the USASEAN team and their ability to advance America's interests. As such, if confirmed, I would take as my duty the stewardship of the team's and their families' morale. Morale can never be too high, and I will continuously prioritize improving it.

If confirmed, I will listen to the team. I will work with the Deputy Chief of Mission to understand their perspectives, their aspirations, their ideas, and their frustrations. I would then work to build systems, structures, and norms that would help bolster and maintain the team's sense of community and devotion to our core mission.

The ASEAN Mission is co-located with Embassy Jakarta, and if confirmed, I would seek to work with, and learn from, State and USAID leadership at Embassy Jakarta to help build morale.

Question. How do you intend to create a unified mission and vision at the U.S. mission to ASEAN?

Answer. I believe it is critical for a team to have a clear sense of what they are working for and what they are working toward, and, if confirmed, I will prioritize creating a unified mission and vision at the U.S. Mission to ASEAN. If confirmed, I will start by listening to those already at the U.S. Mission to ASEAN to understand their current priorities and perspectives, and I will make sure to clearly communicate the Administration's strategic priorities and the Mission's role in furthering them.

Question. Management is a key responsibility for Chiefs of Mission. How would you describe your management style?

Answer. I believe teams operate best when leaders are willing to listen to, learn from, and empower those they are charged to guide. My management style is centered on communication, empowerment, and camaraderie. I believe my job as a manager is to set clear expectations and priorities; to remove obstacles to success; to procure and provide the tools and resources necessary for the team to succeed; and to make sure the team is operating in an environment that breeds trust, respect, and partnership.

Question. Do you believe it is ever acceptable or constructive to berate subordinates, either in public or private?

Answer. No. I do not believe it is ever acceptable to berate subordinates in any setting. If confirmed, I commit to providing a safe, respectful, and professional working environment for all Mission personnel.

Question. How do you envision your leadership relationship with your Deputy Chief of Mission?

Answer. The relationship between an ambassador and a Deputy Chief of Mission is critical to the success of the team. If confirmed, I will prioritize ensuring this relationship is rooted in trust. If confirmed, I will empower my Deputy Chief of Mission to serve as the team's chief operating officer, and I will regularly seek her counsel and look to make maximum use of her experience and expertise.

Question. If confirmed, what leadership responsibilities do you intend to entrust to your Deputy Chief of Mission?

Answer. If confirmed, I will empower my Deputy Chief of Mission to serve as the team's chief operating officer, relying on her knowledge of Department policies and procedures to ensure the smooth functioning of the U.S. Mission to ASEAN. I would also regularly seek her counsel on the full range of leadership, management, and policy issues the Mission faces.

Question. In order to create and continue employee excellence at the Department, accurate and direct employee evaluation reports (EERs) for Foreign Service Officers are imperative, though often lacking.

- Do you believe that it is important to provide employees with accurate, constructive feedback on their performances in order to encourage improvement and reward those who most succeeded in their roles?

Answer. I believe it is critical to provide employees with accurate, constructive feedback on their performance in order to recognize their good work, encourage professional development, and reward those who most successfully advance the interests of the country. Meaningful, thoughtful feedback also conveys that a manager cares for their employees. EERs are particularly important for foreign service employees, as they directly impact their career trajectory and promotions. If confirmed, I will ensure that Mission leadership prioritizes accurate, constructive feedback, including through the EER process, and I will lead by example.

Question. If confirmed, would you support and encourage clear, accurate, and direct feedback to employees in order to improve performance and reward high achievers?

Answer. Feedback is critical. It directly fuels performance and morale. Managers owe their teams regular, thoughtful feedback. If confirmed, I would support and encourage clear, accurate, and direct feedback to employees in order to recognize their good work, encourage professional development, and reward those who most successfully advance the interests of the country.

Question. It is imperative that U.S. diplomats get outside of posts abroad to meet with local actors, including host government officials, non-government organizations, and fellow foreign diplomats stationed in ASEAN nations. In your opinion, do U.S. diplomats get outside of our Embassy walls enough to accomplish fully their missions?

Answer. Diplomacy requires engagement, and in my opinion, there can never be enough engagement with the communities in which we serve, within the bounds of prudent health and security measures. If confirmed, I will encourage the U.S. Mission to ASEAN team to conduct outreach, make contacts, and spend time outside of the Mission, within the bounds of my commitment to their health and safety. If confirmed, I would do so by leading by example, making it a priority to engage outside of the Mission.

Question. How do you intend to improve the ability of U.S. diplomats to better access all local populations?

Answer. If confirmed, I would work closely with the Regional Security Officer to maximize the ability of Mission employees to spend time outside the Mission, directly interacting with local populations, within the bounds of prudent health and security measures. If confirmed, I would work closely with Ambassadors and USAID Mission Directors in our bilateral Missions in ASEAN member states to build on, and learn from, their experience reaching local populations, including traveling jointly, when possible. Better accessing local populations also means employing creative tactics. If confirmed, I would work with the public affairs team and others across the bilateral missions of each ASEAN member state to ensure we are reaching key audiences in a strategic way.

Question. Public diplomacy is an important aspect of U.S. foreign policy efforts. What is the public diplomacy environment like in ASEAN nations?

Answer. Public diplomacy is of critical importance to our strategic interests in ASEAN, and I understand the public diplomacy environment to be well suited for active U.S. engagement. While each nation is unique, the youth of Southeast Asia are overall eager to engage with America, as are the businesses of the region. If confirmed, I would work to expand and strengthen the relationship between our peoples, businesses, civil society, and governments. If confirmed, I will also be cognizant, with insight from the public affairs teams, of the challenges in certain environments. Important voices in some ASEAN member states are subject to human rights abuses; discrimination; and limitations on freedom of speech, the press, and assembly. The ease or difficulty of conducting public affairs programs ranges from country to country, and even from city to city. If confirmed, I will rely on public affairs professionals to provide me with the insights I need to be effective.

Question. What public diplomacy challenges do U.S. diplomats face there?

Answer. I understand the COVID–19 pandemic has been a challenge for public diplomacy programming across ASEAN member states, although many initiatives have continued by shifting online. As COVID–19 restrictions continue to ease, I will seek to expand our in-person public diplomacy efforts, within the bounds of my commitment to the health and safety of Mission staff.

In addition, as I understand it, U.S. spending on public diplomacy in ASEAN nations is dwarfed by that of the People's Republic of China (PRC). If confirmed, I will seek to ensure our public diplomacy resources are sufficient to successfully combat PRC disinformation, as well as Russian disinformation, while ensuring high quality programming that makes good use of those resources.

Some civil society contacts in Southeast Asia, including emerging voices and established leaders, are at risk of arrest, harassment, or imprisonment, particularly citizen journalists and human rights defenders. Each ASEAN member state has a different environment with varying degrees of challenges that affect outreach initiatives. If confirmed, I will to rely on Mission staff for the insights I need to understand the variety of challenges within the region.

Question. How do you balance the importance of Main State versus the in-country mission when it comes to tailoring public diplomacy messages for foreign audiences?

Answer. If confirmed, I will seek to learn and draw from the local expertise of the U.S. Mission to ASEAN team. The team has a crucial role in formulating public diplomacy programs and messages. I understand that the Mission public affairs team has developed relations with counterpart teams located in all ten ASEAN member states, and that they are well networked in the Department. If confirmed, I will rely on their valuable insights, and I will seek their counsel to ensure we are calibrating our efforts appropriately for regional audiences. I will do so in a way that is appropriately coordinated with the Department, under the policy direction of the Secretary, such that we can best advance our strategic interests.

Question. "Anomalous health incidents," commonly referred to as "Havana Syndrome," have been debilitating and sidelining U.S. diplomats around the world for years. They have caused serious, negative consequences for U.S. diplomacy, yet many believe that the Department is not doing enough to care for, protect, and communicate to its personnel. The past occurrences and ongoing threat of anomalous health incidents among Embassy personnel and their families poses a serious challenge to morale. When personnel at post fear for their safety or doubt that their case will be taken seriously if they were affected, the performance of Embassy operations can suffer.

- If confirmed, do you commit to taking this threat seriously?

Answer. I am deeply troubled by anomalous health incidents reported by U.S. Government personnel, including Embassy personnel and their family members. I agree we must take these reported incidents seriously and ensure that our work-

force receives the care and support they need and deserve. If confirmed, I would have no higher priority than the health, safety, and security of the U.S. Mission to ASEAN staff and their families.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to talking as openly as you can to the U.S. mission to ASEAN personnel?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to talking as openly as I can to mission personnel not only about anomalous health incidents, but other issues as well. If confirmed, I commit to regularly sharing new information on this issue, consistent with ensuring the integrity of ongoing investigations. If confirmed, I commit to doing everything in my power to protect the health and safety of our team members and their families.

Question. Have you received a briefing on the anomalous health incidents that have occurred to U.S. Government personnel around the world, including at U.S. embassies and other diplomatic posts? If you have not, and if you are confirmed, do you commit to receiving a briefing on the incidents before you depart for your post?

Answer. In my capacity as the Chief of Staff and Executive Secretary of the National Security Council (NSC) Staff, I have been and will continue to be briefed on anomalous health incidents. If confirmed, I commit to receiving additional relevant briefings, including to learn any best practices in the event Mission staff or their families report an incident.

Question. In the event of an anomalous health incident among your Embassy personnel or eligible family members, do you commit to maintain detailed records of the incident, and share the information with the State Department and other embassies to contribute to the investigation of how these attacks are affecting U.S. missions and personnel around the world?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to maintain detailed records of the incident, and share the information with the State Department and other embassies to contribute to the investigation of how these attacks are affecting U.S. missions and personnel around the world.

Question. Whether or not anomalous health incidents occur at your Embassy, how will you work to restore and preserve morale that may be lost due to the knowledge these attacks have been occurring at posts around the world?

Answer. If confirmed, my top priority would be ensuring the safety and security of U.S. Mission to ASEAN personnel. If confirmed, I will prioritize improving and maintaining the morale of the team, and I wholeheartedly commit to talking as openly as I can to mission personnel not only about anomalous health incidents, but other issues as well. I believe that transparency will have a positive impact on morale. If confirmed, I commit to doing everything in my power to protect the health and safety of our team members and their families. They will know that this is a priority of mine both from my words and my actions.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO YOHANNES ABRAHAM BY SENATOR MARCO RUBIO

Question. The CCP is fostering closer economic ties with ASEAN, and its military is seeking to negotiate access agreements with ASEAN countries. Last month, we saw an official ceremony giving the People's Liberation Army control of the Ream Naval facility in Cambodia. The PLA is continuing to increase its military-to-military relations with Thailand and Burma.

- Is CCP engagement with ASEAN a threat to the United States? Please explain.

Answer. The next 10 years will be the decisive decade in the competition between the United States and People's Republic of China (PRC). The United States has a positive, affirmative vision for ASEAN and the region, rooted in common interests, opportunities, and challenges. At the same time, I am clear-eyed that coercive and nontransparent activity by the PRC, such as its actions in the South China Sea, pose a challenge to that vision. If confirmed, I will continue to support our allies and partners in ASEAN in upholding regional stability and the rules-based international order. I will also encourage regular communication and coordination with ASEAN on addressing common security concerns, including the PRC's increasingly provocative activities in the South China Sea and the Mekong.

Question. Does the Chinese Communist Party pose a threat to the United States? Please explain.

Answer. The most serious long-term challenge to the rules-based international order, which is a source of stability and opportunity for the United States and for countries around the world, is the People's Republic of China (PRC). The next ten years will be the decisive decade in the competition between the United States and the PRC. This challenge will define the coming decades and will shape the kind of world we leave behind. If confirmed, I will help advance the Biden-Harris administration's comprehensive, whole-of-government strategy to compete responsibly with the PRC while highlighting our shared, positive, affirmative vision with allies and partners.

Question. If confirmed, how will you encourage greater military cooperation between the U.S. and ASEAN?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with the Department of Defense to deepen U.S. security engagement with ASEAN, including through the annual ASEAN Defense Ministers Meeting Plus (ADMM+). If confirmed, I will also encourage regular communication and coordination with ASEAN states on upholding freedom of navigation and promoting adherence to international law in the South China Sea. If confirmed, I will also work with the U.S. Coast Guard to support robust implementation of their announced plan to expand maritime cooperation, training, and capacity-building in Southeast Asia, including by prioritizing the transfer of decommissioned cutters to coastal ASEAN nations to increase their maritime law enforcement capacity and promote a free and open Pacific.

If confirmed, I will also support ongoing U.S. cooperation with ASEAN, the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), and member states to enhance regional and country-level resiliency against terrorist attacks; share best practices in countering terrorism and violent extremism; develop national action plans; and build capacity to counter terrorist activities, networks, and travel.

Question. If confirmed, how will you use your participation at ASEAN fora to raise concerns about the consequences of the PLA establishing a military presence in the region?

Answer. If confirmed, I will use my platform to raise concerns regarding the impact that an expanded PRC military presence in the region would have on regional security. The PRC has shown a pattern of offering opaque, nontransparent deals. If confirmed, I would raise concerns about these sorts of arrangements, including specifically raising concerns about the Ream Naval Base. I would also raise concerns, publicly and privately, about the PRC's actions in the South China Sea and how they threaten ASEAN member states' livelihoods, food security, biodiversity, and energy security. If confirmed, I will also support whole-of-government U.S. efforts to bolster effective maritime governance and security capabilities in the South China Sea, including through improving the effectiveness of defense and maritime law enforcement agencies.

Question. For most of its history, ASEAN has followed what it calls the "ASEAN way," where decisions are made by consensus and individual members refrain from commenting on the internal affairs of other members. Last year, we saw nine of ASEAN's ten members break with this tradition by signing a statement condemning the military coup in Burma. Is ASEAN's Burma statement a sign of the group's greater willingness to hold members accountable to minimum basic standards of democracy and human rights?

Answer. ASEAN continues to call for the regime to swiftly implement the Five-Point Consensus, cease violence, release all unjustly detained prisoners, and allow unhindered humanitarian access. If confirmed, I intend to continue our close consultations with ASEAN, including efforts to press Burma to implement the ASEAN Five-Point Consensus. Their continued alignment on Burma is important, as are the precedents they have set in dealing with Burma since last year's coup; if confirmed, I would look to build on both. More broadly, if confirmed, I will pursue whole-of-government efforts to build ASEAN's own capacity to take meaningful action on other human rights and humanitarian issues.

Question. On what other issues do you believe ASEAN members are willing to work together to hold individual members accountable?

Answer. ASEAN member states share a mutual interest in maintaining peace and stability, unimpeded lawful commerce, and respect for international law including freedoms of navigation and overflight, and other lawful maritime activities, including in the South China Sea. If confirmed, I will encourage ASEAN members to hold each other accountable to these and other shared interests.

If confirmed, I will also encourage ASEAN and ASEAN members to lift their voices on key global issues. In the wake of Russia's unprovoked further invasion of Ukraine, many ASEAN members supported the immediate response from the U.N. General Assembly that condemned Russia's actions. At the U.S.-ASEAN Special Summit, ASEAN leaders endorsed the principles of territorial integrity and sovereignty as they relate to Ukraine. If confirmed, I will seek to build on this foundation.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO YOHANNES ABRAHAM BY SENATOR TODD YOUNG

Question. Do you believe that ASEAN has maximized its power with regards to Burma, both in response to the genocide against the Rohingya and last year's coup?

Answer. ASEAN has taken a number of steps in the wake of last year's coup in Burma, including restricting Burma's participation in high-level meetings to a non-political representative and pressing for the regime to swiftly implement the Five-Point Consensus, cease violence, release all unjustly detained prisoners, and allow unhindered humanitarian access. That said, more can and should be done. If confirmed, I will work with colleagues and counterparts around the region on ways to increase pressure on the regime to implement the Five Point Consensus, change its calculus, and return Burma to a path to multiparty democracy.

While some ASEAN members have voiced concerns regarding the military's brutal attacks on Rohingya, it is also clear that more should be done to hold the military accountable and support Rohingya refugees in the region. If confirmed, I will encourage ASEAN members to undertake focused action to address the genocide against the Rohingya.

Question. What steps do you believe ASEAN can take, especially with Cambodia as the current chair, to exert pressure on the junta, and how will you seek to clarify U.S. policy on need to restore the duly elected government?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work closely with ASEAN to maintain their alignment around the need for swift implementation of the Five-Point Consensus, as well as the precedent they set in not seating a political representative from the regime in key leader-level meetings. If confirmed, I will encourage ASEAN members to exert further pressure on the military regime. If confirmed, I will also encourage ASEAN members to meet with the NUG and other representatives of the pro-democracy movement, and I will leverage my platform to promote accurate information about regime activities in the information space. If confirmed, I will use public and private forums to make clear that the United States condemns the military's actions and urges the military regime to reverse course; release all those unjustly detained, including democratic political leaders, labor leaders, journalists, civil society advocates, and foreign citizens; allow unhindered humanitarian access; and engage in meaningful dialogue that acknowledges the will of the people of Burma, and not the will of a handful of military leaders and those that benefit financially from them.

Question. As we face serious competition with China, our goal in the Indo-Pacific should be to bolster economic relationships, reduce the region's dependence on Chinese exports, and provide security-related commitments. How to you plan to provide the support needed to help ASEAN leaders maneuver in the face of a rising China?

Answer. We are in the decisive decade as it relates to the strategic competition with the PRC. The United States has a positive, affirmative vision for ASEAN and the region, rooted in common interests, opportunities, and challenges. At the same time, I am clear-eyed about the challenge that the PRC poses to our vision. If confirmed, I will work with ASEAN to ensure it is in the driver's seat in its relationship with the PRC.

If confirmed, I will continue orienting U.S.-ASEAN engagement around deepening our longstanding cooperation, pursuing new avenues of dialogue, investing in our countries, driving inclusive prosperity in this critical region, and upholding the rules-based international order. As an example, if confirmed, I will work with the U.S. Coast Guard to support robust implementation of their announced plan to expand maritime cooperation, training, and capacity-building in Southeast Asia, including by prioritizing the transfer of decommissioned cutters to coastal ASEAN nations to increase their maritime law enforcement capacity and promote a free and open Pacific.

Question. How do you expect to be involved in trade relations to bolster our economic commitments in the region?

Answer. Economic engagement with the Indo-Pacific broadly, and ASEAN specifically, is critical to advancing our economic prosperity and national security interests, as well as those of our allies and partners. This year, President Biden launched the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF), aimed at enabling the U.S. and our allies and partners to deepen our economic engagement, drive inclusive prosperity in the United States and throughout the Indo-Pacific, and set the rules on critical 21st century economic challenges and opportunities. If confirmed, I would work closely with Congress, my bilateral colleagues across the region, and my colleagues in D.C. to achieve high-ambition outcomes in the discussions under each pillar of IPEF.

In addition to IPEF, the United States has advanced our trade relationship with the ASEAN economic ministers through the 2006 ASEAN-United States Trade and Investment Framework Arrangement, a United States Trade Representative-led forum. Through this forum, the U.S. Government engages closely with ASEAN to advance cooperation in the areas of labor, environment, trade facilitation, intellectual property standards, the digital economy, competition, agriculture, biotechnology, transparency, and good regulatory practices, among other issues. If confirmed, I will support this forum and continue to strengthen our economic relationships with ASEAN by engaging with a broad array of stakeholders. I look forward to deepening economic engagement between the U.S. and ASEAN, if confirmed.

Question. Does the Administration envision providing greater market access to ASEAN countries? If not, what are the meaningful benefits we hope to provide ASEAN countries to counter what China is proposing, via initiatives such as RCEP?

Answer. President Biden has been clear about his commitment to deepen our economic relationships with our partners in the Indo-Pacific region. For example, through IPEF, the Administration will pursue trade facilitation and close collaboration on supply chain resilience, as well as the creation of a common set of rules, including in the digital economy. Working together to write the rules of the road in a way that is good for American workers, as well as for the people of the region, will create opportunities to deepen our economic engagement that is meaningful and beneficial for all involved. In addition to deepening our economic engagement, the Administration is partnering with ASEAN and ASEAN nations on a range of other shared interests and challenges. These mutually beneficial efforts address meaningful issues and help strengthen our partnership.

If confirmed, I would work closely with Congress, colleagues around the Administration, and my counterparts in the region to deepen our mutually beneficial partnership with ASEAN and ASEAN nations across a range of issues, including by supporting progress on IPEF negotiations and other economic initiatives.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO RICHARD LEE BUANGAN BY SENATOR ROBERT MENENDEZ

Question. If you are confirmed, what will be your priorities in Ulaanbaatar? What is the current status of the U.S. bilateral relationship with Mongolia?

Answer. Our bilateral relationship with Mongolia is strong and growing stronger. If confirmed, I will prioritize U.S. policies and initiatives that support Mongolia's democratic institutions, civil society, and open market economy, and which promote our shared values in areas such as respect for human rights and the rule of law. I will work to increase economic and trade ties between our two countries, support efforts to continue expanding Mongolia's already impressive U.N. peacekeeping operations capability, and I will strive to help Mongolia rebuild its aging infrastructure and begin the transition to a clean energy future.

Question. Corruption and human rights remain issues of significance in Mongolia. How do you plan to approach Mongolia's leadership on these key problems?

Answer. My understanding is that Mongolia generally respects human rights, but we do have concerns about criminal libel laws, governmental corruption, crimes involving violence or threats of violence targeting lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, or intersex persons, and forced child labor. If confirmed, I commit to lead the U.S. Embassy in Ulaanbaatar to consistently address these issues at all appropriate levels within Mongolia's government and civil society, and I personally will ensure frank and candid conversations with Mongolia's senior decision makers on taking steps to strengthen their commitment to addressing corruption and human rights issues.

Question. How do you plan to approach the issue of reliance on their economies and energy security, and what opportunities exist for the United States to strengthen our bilateral relationship?

Answer. I share your concern, and if confirmed, I will prioritize programs and assistance designed to help Mongolia diversify its economy and energy sources and achieve energy independence from Russia and the PRC. If confirmed, I will strive to help Mongolia strengthen its aging energy infrastructure and begin the transition to a clean energy future.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO RICHARD LEE BUANGAN BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Question. In the State Department's 2021 Trafficking in Persons Report, Mongolia remained on Tier 2 for its ongoing efforts to meet the minimum standards to eliminate trafficking but did not adequately do so in a few key areas, including failing to appropriately identify male victims and appropriately penalize child sex traffickers. How will you work with the Mongolian Government to address these issues if you are confirmed as Ambassador?

- The office of the Ambassador-at-Large to monitor and combat trafficking in persons plays a key role in assisting regional Ambassadors in promoting anti-trafficking work. Please describe, in detail and with concrete steps, how you can work with the Ambassador-at-Large to improve Mongolia's anti-trafficking work in country.

Answer. If confirmed, as Ambassador, I will be committed to working closely with the Ambassador-at-Large to improve Mongolia's anti-trafficking efforts. It is my understanding that, overall, the Mongolian Government has taken positive steps to combat trafficking. If confirmed, I will work with Mongolian officials to continue their efforts to increase investigations, prosecutions, and convictions—particularly of labor cases; create specialized trafficking prosecutor positions; and increase victim identification and protection. Furthermore, I will strive to ensure full implementation of the $5.5 million Child Protection Compact.

Question. In 2019, the U.S. and Mongolian Government entered a Child Protection Compact Partnership to increase Mongolia's anti-trafficking work. Can you please provide your assessment of the progress made thus far in this compact?

Answer. It is my understanding that the Compact has helped Mongolia improve its anti-trafficking work, including through the recent establishment of Mongolia's first anti-trafficking Multidisciplinary Task Force, the creation of child-friendly spaces in police stations, and by providing significant training to law enforcement officials.

Question. In the State Department's 2021 International Religious Freedom report, governmental and societal respect for religious freedom in Mongolia was generally lacking, including increased registration difficulties for various faith groups, negative public sentiment about "foreigners" and other behaviors. What is your assessment of this particular issue and if confirmed, how will you work with the Ambassador-at-Large to bolster religious freedom in-country?

Answer. The Governments of the United States and Mongolia share deeply rooted values, including respect for freedom of religion or belief. If confirmed, I will continue to encourage religious groups and government authorities to work together to ensure respect for religious freedom. I will ensure U.S. Embassy officials continue to discuss religious freedom concerns with the highest levels of the Mongolian Government and that we meet regularly with religious leaders.

Question. In the State Department's 2021 Human Rights Report, Mongolia was noted as having several significant human rights abuses, including serious government corruption and forced child labor. It was noted the Government did take some steps to address these issues. If confirmed, what steps will you take to continue to address these instances with the host government?

Answer. My understanding is that Mongolia generally respects human rights, but we do have concerns about criminal libel laws, governmental corruption, crimes involving violence or threats of violence targeting LGBTQI+ persons, and forced child labor. If confirmed, I commit to lead the U.S. Embassy in Ulaanbaatar to consistently address these issues at all appropriate levels within Mongolia's Government and civil society, and I personally will ensure frank and candid conversations with

Mongolia's senior decision makers on taking steps to address corruption and human rights issues.

Question. How will you direct your Embassy to work with civil society organizations to improve the human rights situation on the ground?

Answer. If confirmed, I will continue U.S. policies and initiatives that support Mongolia's democratic institutions, civil society, and open market economy, and which promote our shared values in areas such as respect for human rights and rule of law. In particular, I will work with civil society organizations to develop and foster a culture of volunteerism and philanthropy in order to encourage civic participation and strengthen the Mongolian people's faith in their democratic institutions.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to personally raising human rights issues with the Mongolian Government?

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, I will commit to personally raising human rights issues with the Mongolian Government.

State Department Manangement And Public Diplomacy

Question. Many U.S. missions have been under enormous stress over the last few years, in large part due to COVID. What is your understanding of morale throughout Mission Ulaanbaatar?

Answer. I understand that morale has been good despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and Ulaanbaatar's isolated location, traffic concerns, and high pollution. The Embassy hosts a growing number of agencies—including MCC, USAID, DoD, Treasury, and Peace Corps—and the country team maintains high levels of collaboration and teamwork.

If confirmed, I will lead Mission Mongolia by example and prioritize taking care of our people and their families.

Question. How do you intend to improve morale at Mission Ulaanbaatar?

Answer. Given the overall high morale at Mission Ulaanbaatar, specific issues remain that could be improved. For example, if confirmed, I will work with our Embassy management team and Overseas Building Operations (OBO) to support quick progress on construction of a new Embassy compound to replace the current outdated and cramped facility. Additionally, we will work with the Office of Overseas Schools to seek continuous improvement to the International School of Ulaanbaatar to ensure a widening of educational opportunities for U.S. Government dependents based in Mongolia.

If confirmed, I will prioritize taking care of our people and their families. I will personally take a strong interest in the welfare and wellbeing of our Mission colleagues and lead with purpose to inspire pride in our work. I will also ask the Embassy's senior leaders and section chiefs to prioritize work-life balance and professional development for both American and Locally Employed staff.

Question. How do you intend to create a unified mission and vision at Mission Ulaanbaatar?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to working closely with and empowering the country team to ensure we maintain high levels of collaboration and teamwork. It will be a priority for me to communicate frequently and broadly to the Embassy workforce, as well as host periodic town halls and community-wide events to synchronize our efforts. I will encourage all employees to familiarize themselves with key aspects of our vision documents, particularly the Integrated Country Strategy and Mission Resource Request.

Question. Management is a key responsibility for Chiefs of Mission. How would you describe your management style?

Answer. I believe in being an inclusive manager and encouraging everyone to perform to the best of their abilities. I integrate coaching and mentoring as part of my leadership ethos. Open communication and active listening are a central part of my management style. I encourage information sharing and collaboration, especially across the USG interagency represented at the Embassy. I also believe in fostering a diverse and inclusive working environment so everyone can feel valued as part of the community. As our work normalizes and adjusts post-pandemic, I believe in ensuring our teams have the right tools to work collaboratively, in person or virtually. If confirmed, I look forward to learning from the experiences and perspectives of the Mission Ulaanbaatar team.

Question. Do you believe it is ever acceptable or constructive to berate subordinates, either in public or private?

Answer. I am strongly opposed to berating mission employees, either in public or private. If confirmed, I will treat all members of the Mission Ulaanbaatar community with respect and dignity. When State Department performance reviews are required, I will conduct these with the goal of recognizing strong performance and helping every member of the team realize their potential. Our people are our most important asset, and if confirmed, I will do everything in my power to support and encourage our personnel to be the best they can be.

Question. How do you envision your leadership relationship with your Deputy Chief of Mission?

Answer. As an inclusive manager, if confirmed, I will strive to build a close, consultative relationship based on mutual respect that will empower my Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM) to ensure the smooth functioning of Mission Ulaanbaatar. I will hold myself accountable for ensuring my DCM has the right information and resources to do their job effectively as a senior member of the Embassy team. I will also provide appropriate professional development and growth opportunities to prepare my DCM for higher positions of responsibility in future assignments.

Question. If confirmed, what leadership responsibilities do you intend to entrust to your Deputy Chief of Mission?

Answer. If confirmed, I will rely on my DCM's knowledge of Department policies and procedures to ensure that Mission Ulaanbaatar is well-run and appropriately resourced to achieve our foreign policy priorities. I will also appropriately delegate and empower my DCM to make decisions to ensure efficient Embassy operations that prioritize results and taking care of our people.

Question. In order to create and continue employee excellence at the Department, accurate and direct employee evaluation reports (EERs) for Foreign Service Officers are imperative, though often lacking. Do you believe that it is important to provide employees with accurate, constructive feedback on their performances in order to encourage improvement and reward those who most succeeded in their roles?

Answer. I believe that accurate, constructive feedback is important at all levels, and if confirmed, I will be forthright with my staff because honesty and transparency foster strong relationships and help to establish clear performance expectations. This means recognizing and rewarding those who are succeeding in their roles, as well as providing constructive feedback to help all employees develop the skills needed to achieve their potential. I will hold myself and my team to the highest standards and ensure we are accountable at all levels.

Question. If confirmed, would you support and encourage clear, accurate, and direct feedback to employees in order to improve performance and reward high achievers?

Answer. Yes. I believe that accurate, constructive feedback is important at all levels. If confirmed, I will provide clear, accurate, and direct feedback to my staff because honesty and transparency foster strong relationships and help to establish clear performance expectations. This means recognizing and rewarding those who are succeeding in their roles, as well as providing constructive feedback to help all employees develop the skills needed to achieve their potential. I will hold myself and my team to the highest standards and ensure we are accountable at all levels.

Question. It is imperative that U.S. diplomats get outside of posts abroad to meet with local actors, including host government officials, non-government organizations, and fellow foreign diplomats stationed in Mongolia. In your opinion, do U.S. diplomats get outside of our Embassy walls enough to accomplish fully their missions?

Answer. Given the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic around the world, it has been exceptionally tough for U.S. diplomats to get outside the Embassy walls and engage with local actors. However, over the course of my foreign service career, I have continually been impressed by the way U.S. diplomats strive to develop a deep knowledge and understanding of the countries in which we serve. The most successful diplomats engage directly with the community, learn the local cultures and languages, and get to know a wide range of people. Such relationships are critical to our work advancing U.S. priorities overseas and managing bilateral ties.

Question. How do you intend to improve the ability of U.S. diplomats to better access all local populations?

Answer. If confirmed, I will encourage members of Mission community to engage with host country nationals. Mongolia is a vast country with a rich history that has undergone significant democratic and economic development over the past 30 years. It is important that we get out and meet people in all parts of the country, listen

to their stories, and understand the diverse challenges and opportunities they face, from the rapidly growing capital to the rural countryside.

Question. Public diplomacy is an important aspect of U.S. foreign policy efforts. What is the public diplomacy environment like in Mongolia?

Answer. It is my understanding that there is a vibrant and active public diplomacy environment in Mongolia. If confirmed, I will work to expand and strengthen our already very strong people-to-people ties, which are deep and form the basis of our strategic partnership.

Question. What public diplomacy challenges do U.S. diplomats face there?

Answer. It is my understanding that our public diplomacy efforts in Mongolia prioritize building media literacy and supporting efforts to counter disinformation, particularly from Russia and the PRC. The continuous stream of disinformation is a challenge to our public diplomacy efforts, but we use our programs and messages to continually demonstrate the United States' respect for Mongolian culture, identity, democracy, and independence.

Question. How do you balance the importance of Main State versus the in-country mission when it comes to tailoring public diplomacy messages for foreign audiences?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with the team at Mission Ulaanbaatar to understand and support the Mission's crucial role in formulating public diplomacy programs and responses. Our staff on the ground in Mongolia bring an incredible range of expertise and local insight to the Mission. If confirmed, I will ensure that our public diplomacy professionals in Washington and Ulaanbaatar continue to work closely together, and that we draw on that local expertise to ensure our global public diplomacy messages are relevant and effective for our Mongolian audiences.

Question. "Anomalous health incidents," commonly referred to as "Havana Syndrome," have been debilitating and sidelining U.S. diplomats around the world for years. They have caused serious, negative consequences for U.S. diplomacy, yet many believe that the Department is not doing enough to care for, protect, and communicate to its personnel. The past occurrences and ongoing threat of anomalous health incidents among Embassy personnel and their families poses a serious challenge to morale. When personnel at post fear for their safety or doubt that their case will be taken seriously if they were affected, the performance of Embassy operations can suffer.

- If confirmed, do you commit to taking this threat seriously?

Answer. I am deeply concerned by potential anomalous health incidents affecting government personnel and their family members. These incidents affect the wellbeing of U.S. personnel serving their country abroad and must be taken extremely seriously. If confirmed, the health, safety, and security of Embassy staff, their family members, and all those supporting the Mission will be my highest priority.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to talking as openly as you can to Mission Ulaanbaatar personnel?

Answer. If confirmed, I will commit to ensuring all reported incidents at Embassy Ulaanbaatar are treated seriously and quickly reported through the appropriate medical and investigatory channels, and to sharing information to the extent permitted by applicable law and investigatory procedures.

Question. Have you received a briefing on the anomalous health incidents that have occurred to U.S. Government personnel around the world, including at U.S. embassies and other diplomatic posts? If you have not, and if you are confirmed, do you commit to receiving a briefing on the incidents before you depart for your post?

Answer. I have received a briefing on the anomalous health incidents that have affected U.S. Government personnel and their family members around the world. If confirmed, I commit to seeking additional briefings at the appropriate classification levels before my departure to post and learning how I can best protect all Embassy personnel and their family members and respond to any future incidents.

Question. In the event of an anomalous health incident among your Embassy personnel or eligible family members, do you commit to maintain detailed records of the incident, and share the information with the State Department and other embassies to contribute to the investigation of how these attacks are affecting U.S. missions and personnel around the world?

Answer. Yes, I commit to sharing information to the extent permitted by the Rehabilitation Act and other applicable laws.

Question. Whether or not anomalous health incidents occur at your Embassy, how will you work to restore and preserve morale that may be lost due to the knowledge these attacks have been occurring at posts around the world?

Answer. In the event an anomalous health incident (AHI) is reported, I will do everything possible to ensure that anyone affected receives immediate and appropriate attention and care and that the incident is reported through appropriate channels. I would keep the Mission informed to the extent permitted by law. I understand there is an extensive, ongoing interagency investigation to identify the possible causes of AHIs, and I am committed to supporting this investigation.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO RICHARD LEE BUANGAN BY SENATOR MARCO RUBIO

Question. Since emerging from the shadow of communism more than 30 years ago, Mongolia's young democracy has followed a "Third Neighbor" policy, where it seeks close relations with the United States to counter the influence of its two immediate neighbors: China and Russia. If Mongolia is dominated by the CCP's influence, is that a threat to U.S. interests? Please explain.

Answer. If confirmed, my goal as Ambassador will be to strengthen Mongolia's independence, and to support the Mongolian people in building a strong, resilient democratic system and a prosperous, private sector-driven economy that can play a constructive role in the international community and withstand pressure or coercive actions from the People's Republic of China. I believe it is not in the interest of either the Mongolian people or the United States for an outside force or country to intimidate or threaten Mongolia.

Question. Does the Chinese Communist Party pose a threat to the United States? Please explain.

Answer. As Secretary Blinken said in May, the PRC is the only country with both the intent to reshape the international order and, increasingly, the economic, diplomatic, military, and technological power to do it.

We are prepared to work together with Beijing where our interests intersect, where it is essential for global peace and prosperity and to keep lines of communication open.

Question. Can Mongolia's third neighbor policy serve as a model for other countries susceptible to foreign influence from Russia and China?

Answer. It is my understanding that through its "Third Neighbor" policy, the people and Government of Mongolia seek to develop strong ties with the United States and the West while maintaining a balanced, cordial relationship with Russia and the PRC. This pragmatic foreign policy has served Mongolia for decades, and it may be a model for other countries susceptible to pressure from Russia and the PRC.

Question. If so, what should the U.S. do to be a good "third neighbor" to these countries?

Answer. Much like what we do in Mongolia, I believe the United States could pursue policies that support democracies in the Indo-Pacific by strengthening their democratic institutions, civil society, and free press as well as promote open market economies. We must also remain true to promoting fundamental values in areas such as respect for human rights, religious freedom, and rule of law.

Question. Despite this Third Neighbor Policy, Mongolia remains economically dependent on Russia and China for most of its imports and exports. I, along with other Senators on this committee, have cosponsored the Mongolia Third Neighbor Trade Act to chip away at this dominance. In your assessment, would the Mongolia Third Neighbor Trade Act reduce Mongolian dependence on the Russian and Chinese economies?

Answer. I welcome the role the Congress plays in helping to provide our Indo-Pacific allies and partners, including Mongolia, with resources and tools to diminish the dependency these countries have on Russia and the PRC. If confirmed, I would support efforts to help the Mongolian people build a prosperous economy, capable of withstanding pressure from its authoritarian neighbors.

Question. If confirmed, what will you do to support enhancing economic ties between our two countries?

Answer. If confirmed, I will prioritize enhancing economic ties between our two countries by seeking opportunities to promote foreign direct investment in Mongolia, stressing the importance of full implementation of the U.S.-Mongolia Agreement on Transparency in Matters Related to International Trade and Investment; supporting the activities and programs of Millennium Challenge Corporation, the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation and USAID; and working closely with AmCham Mongolia.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO MARIE C. DAMOUR BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Question. In the State Department's 2021 Trafficking in Persons Report, Fiji was upgraded to Tier 2 for not fully meeting the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking but making significant efforts to do so. Areas where Fiji could improve include increasing services to sex trafficking victims and increasing convictions. How will you work with the Fijian Government to address these issues if you are confirmed as Ambassador?

Answer. As I understand, U.S. Embassy Suva did significant outreach to the Fijian Government to address issues raised the Trafficking in Persons Report. If confirmed, I will continue with our outreach efforts to help Fiji improve its anti-trafficking efforts, including by helping the Government to find methods to improve the effectiveness anti-trafficking trainings provided to law enforcement, immigration, labor, and other officials, as well as ensuring effective implementation of the recently created case management mechanism to improve the provision of victim services.

Question. The office of to monitor and combat trafficking in persons plays a key role in assisting Ambassadors in promoting anti-trafficking work. Please describe how you can work with the office to improve Fiji's anti-trafficking work in country.

Answer. The Department's Trafficking in Persons Report provides concrete recommendations for improving Fiji's anti-trafficking work. If confirmed, I will ensure U.S. Embassy Suva will work with Department colleagues to find more efficient and effective methods, including reviewing successful ones used in other countries, that may be imported and replicated in Fiji.

Question. What concrete steps can you, if confirmed, take with your mission to help Fiji improve its anti-trafficking efforts?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with U.S. Embassy Suva to actively engage with the Fijian Government, civil society, and the private sector to address the concrete recommendations made in the Department's Trafficking in Persons Report and to build a more effective anti-trafficking strategy.

Question. In the State Department's 2021 International Religious Freedom report, highlighted concerns regarding strict COVID–19 restrictions on religious worship in Fiji. What is your assessment of this particular issue and if confirmed, how will you work with the Ambassador-at-Large to bolster religious freedom in-country?

Answer. The Department of State monitors reports of abuses and discrimination against all individuals based on religious identity, practice or believed, worldwide. The United States continues to support freedom of religion, including bundled rights such as freedom of expression, assembly, and association, including during the COVID–19 pandemic. If confirmed, I will continue to advocate for religious freedom and encourage government authorities to work closely with civil society, including members of religious groups, in order to ensure respect both for freedom of religion or belief as well as for public health guidelines.

Question. If confirmed, what steps will you take to continue to address these instances with the host government?

Answer. As a global policy, the U.S. Government advocates for respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. If confirmed, I commit to lead the U.S. Embassy Suva to consistently address these issues at all appropriate levels within Fiji's Government and civil society, and I personally will ensure frank and candid conversations with Fiji's senior decision makers on taking steps to strengthen their commitment to addressing freedom of expression, including for the media.

Question. How will you direct your Embassy to work with civil society organizations to improve the human rights situation on the ground?

Answer. If confirmed, I would direct U.S. Embassy Suva employees to continue to work with civil society partners in Fiji to raise awareness, highlight abuses and violations, and promote respect for human rights in Fiji.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to personally raising human rights issues with the Fijian Government?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to raising human rights issues with the Fijian Government.

Question. In the State Department's 2021 International Religious Freedom report, there were highlighted concerns regarding the lack of religious tolerance and pluralism in Kiribati. What is your assessment of this particular issue and if confirmed, how will you work with the Ambassador-at-Large to bolster religious freedom in-country?

Answer. The Kiribati constitution provides for freedom of conscience (including religion), expression, assembly, and association. If confirmed, I will regularly engage civil society, including members of religious communities, and, along with the Ambassador-at-Large, will advocate for religious freedom and respect for the rights of all with the Kiribati Government.

Question. In the State Department's 2021 Human Rights Report, Kiribati was noted as having several significant human rights abuses, including credible report of criminalization of consensual sexual activity between men, although the law was not enforced, and child labor. If confirmed, what steps will you take to continue to address these instances with the host government?

Answer. As a global policy, the U.S. Government advocates for respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. If confirmed, I commit to lead U.S. Embassy Suva to consistently address these issues at all appropriate levels with the Kiribati Government and civil society.

Question. How will you direct your Embassy to work with civil society organizations to improve the human rights situation on the ground?

Answer. If confirmed, I would direct U.S. Embassy Suva employees to continue to work with civil society partners in the Kiribati to raise awareness, highlight abuses and violations, and promote respect for human rights in Kiribati.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to personally raising human rights issues with the Government of Kiribati?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to raising human rights issues with the Kiribati Government.

Question. In the State Department's 2021 International Religious Freedom report, Nauru had no reports of societal actions affecting religious freedom but only concerns about lack of registration of some religions due to COVID–19 restrictions. What is your assessment of this particular issue and if confirmed, how will you work with the Ambassador-at-Large to bolster religious freedom in-country?

Answer. The Department of State monitors reports of abuses and discrimination against all individuals based on religious identity, practice or believed, worldwide. The United States continues to support freedom of religion, including bundled rights such as freedom of expression, assembly, and association, including during the COVID–19 pandemic. If confirmed, I will continue to advocate for religious freedom and encourage government authorities to work closely with civil society, including members of religious groups, in order to ensure respect both for freedom of religion or belief as well as for public health guidelines.

Question. In the State Department's 2021 Human Rights Report, Nauru was noted as having several significant human rights issues included credible reports of censorship and the existence of criminal libel laws. If confirmed, what steps will you take to continue to address these instances with the host government?

Answer. As a global policy, the U.S. Government advocates for respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. If confirmed, I commit to lead U.S. Embassy Suva to consistently address these issues at all appropriate levels within Nauru's Government and civil society, and I will ensure frank and candid conversations with Nauru's senior decision makers on taking steps to strengthen their commitment to addressing freedom of expression, including for the media.

Question. How will you direct your Embassy to work with civil society organizations to improve the human rights situation on the ground?

Answer. If confirmed, I would direct U.S. Embassy Suva employees to continue to work with civil society partners in the Nauru to raise awareness, highlight abuses and violations, and promote respect for human rights in Nauru.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to personally raising human rights issues with the Government of Nauru?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to raising human rights issues with the Nauru Government.

Question. In the State Department's 2021 Trafficking in Persons Report, Tonga was downgraded to Tier 2 for not fully meeting the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking but is making significant efforts to do so. Areas where Tonga could improve include developing victim identification procedures and take steps to appropriately identify victims. Particularly it is concerning that Tonga has not prosecuted or convicted any traffickers since 2011. How will you work with the Tongan Government to address these issues if you are confirmed as Ambassador?

Answer. If confirmed and once borders are open with Tonga, I plan to deploy U.S. personnel to engage in outreach efforts to help the Tongan Government understand the importance of this issue and work with them to improve gaps in their anti-trafficking efforts as identified in the Department's Trafficking in Persons Report. I understand U.S. Embassy Suva deployed a very effective outreach program to the Fijian Government in 2020 on this issue to explain the importance of this matter. I plan to replicate this successful outreach program with Tongan Government officials.

Question. The office of to monitor and combat trafficking in persons plays a key role in assisting Ambassadors in promoting anti-trafficking work. Please describe how you can work with the office to improve Tonga's anti-trafficking work in country.

Answer. The Department's Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report provides concrete recommendations for improving Tonga's anti-trafficking work. U.S. Embassy Suva will work with Department colleagues, especially from the TIP Office, to find more efficient and effective policies, including by reviewing successful methods used in other countries that may be imported and replicated in Tonga.

Question. What concrete steps can you, if confirmed, take with your mission to help Tonga improve its anti-trafficking efforts?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with U.S. Embassy Suva to actively engage with the Tongan Government, civil society, and the private sector to address the concrete recommendations made in the Department's Trafficking in Persons Report and to build a more effective anti-trafficking strategy.

Question. In the State Department's 2021 International Religious Freedom report, Tonga has a mix of religious groups but the Forum of Church Leaders only includes Christian leaders. What is your assessment of this particular issue and if confirmed, how will you work with the Ambassador-at-Large to bolster religious freedom in-country?

Answer. The Department of State monitors reports of abuses and discrimination against all individuals based on religious identity, practice or believed, worldwide. The United States continues to support freedom of religion, including bundled rights such as freedom of expression, assembly, and association, including during the COVID–19 pandemic. If confirmed, I will continue to advocate for religious freedom and encourage government authorities to work closely with civil society, including members of religious groups, in order to ensure respect both for freedom of religion or belief as well as for public health guidelines.

Question. In the State Department's 2021 Human Rights Report, Tonga was noted as having several significant human rights issues included credible reports of serious government corruption and the existence of law criminalizing consensual same-sex sexual conduct between adults. If confirmed, what steps will you take to continue to address these instances with the host government?

Answer. As a global policy, the U.S. Government advocates for respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. If confirmed, I commit to lead U.S. Embassy Suva to consistently address these issues at all appropriate levels within Tonga's Government and civil society.

Question. How will you direct your Embassy to work with civil society organizations to improve the human rights situation on the ground?

Answer. If confirmed, I would direct U.S. Embassy Suva employees to continue to work with civil society partners in the Tonga to raise awareness, highlight abuses and violations, and promote respect for human rights in Tonga.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to personally raising human rights issues with the Government of Tonga?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to raising human rights issues with the Government of Tonga.

Question. In the State Department's 2021 International Religious Freedom report, there were reports of restrictions on non-state religion and lack of religious pluralism and tolerance in Tuvalu. What is your assessment of this particular issue and if confirmed, how will you work with the Ambassador-at-Large to bolster religious freedom in-country?

Answer. The Department of State monitors reports of abuses and discrimination against all individuals based on religious identity, practice or believed, worldwide. The United States continues to support freedom of religion, including bundled rights such as freedom of expression, assembly, and association, including during the COVID–19 pandemic. If confirmed, I will continue to advocate for religious freedom and encourage government authorities to work closely with civil society, including members of religious groups, in order to ensure respect both for freedom of religion or belief as well as for public health guidelines.

Question. In the State Department's 2021 Human Rights Report, Tuvalu was noted as having several significant human rights issues including credible reports of existence of laws criminalizing consensual same-sex sexual activities between men, although the laws were not enforced. If confirmed, what steps will you take to continue to address these instances with the host government?

Answer. As a global policy, the U.S. Government advocates for respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. If confirmed, I commit to lead the U.S. Embassy Suva to consistently address these issues at all appropriate levels within Tuvalu's Government and civil society.

Question. How will you direct your Embassy to work with civil society organizations to improve the human rights situation on the ground?

Answer. If confirmed, I would direct U.S. Embassy Suva employees to continue to work with civil society partners in the Tuvalu to raise awareness, highlight abuses and violations, and promote respect for human rights in Tuvalu.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to personally raising human rights issues with the Government of Tuvalu?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to raising human rights issues with the Government of Tuvalu.

Question. Many U.S. missions have been under enormous stress over the last few years, in large part due to COVID. What is your understanding of morale throughout Mission Suva?

Answer. My understanding is morale in Fiji has been good under the leadership of Charge Greubel after U.S. Embassy Suva weathered a difficult 2020. I don't know any specifics, but like many of our missions overseas, employees in the Fiji faced the full gamut of COVID–19 mitigation protocols, quarantine requirements, and travel disruptions due to COVID–19 restrictions. If confirmed, I would prioritize the health, safety, security, and morale of all employees in the Mission.

Question. How do you intend to improve morale at Mission Suva?

Answer. If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with the senior leadership team to understand and address any issues affecting morale. I prioritize the care of my team, both American and local staff, to ensure they have the tools to succeed in the workplace. The challenges of COVID–19 over the last two years have underscored the very real need to care for our people. It is a privilege to lead such a dedicated group of individuals, and I am committed to creating an inclusive workplace environment that puts the safety and well-being of our teams first.

Question. How do you intend to create a unified mission and vision at Mission Suva?

Answer. If confirmed, I will start by listening to the experienced staff and personnel to learn from their experiences and perspectives. I will work with my senior staff to develop a shared vision of Mission priorities. I will clearly communicate the foreign policy priorities of this administration and facilitate regular conversations with both American and local staff to ensure clear communication and coordination.

Question. Management is a key responsibility for Chiefs of Mission. How would you describe your management style?

Answer. I am an inclusive manager. I find that teams work best when you take care of them. This means you actively listen to them to understand their needs and find ways to support them so they can be successful at their jobs.

Question. Do you believe it is ever acceptable or constructive to berate subordinates, either in public or private?

Answer. It is never acceptable to berate subordinates, either publicly or privately. If confirmed, I will commit to treat all members of the Mission Suva community with respect and dignity. I believe in helping my team understand their areas of development and their areas of strength. Our people are our most important asset, and if confirmed, I will do everything in my power to support and encourage our personnel to be the best they can be.

Question. How do you envision your leadership relationship with your Deputy Chief of Mission?

Answer. I have an inclusive leadership style, and I expect to have a collaborative relationship with my Deputy Chief of Mission built on mutual respect. I will look to empower my Deputy Chief of Mission to ensure Mission Suva functions smoothly.

Question. If confirmed, what leadership responsibilities do you intend to entrust to your Deputy Chief of Mission?

Answer. If confirmed, I will rely on my Deputy Chief of Mission to navigate the Department's policies and procedures to ensure we are properly resourced to achieve our foreign policy objectives.

Question. In order to create and continue employee excellence at the Department, accurate and direct employee evaluation reports (EERs) for Foreign Service Officers are imperative, though often lacking. Do you believe that it is important to provide employees with accurate, constructive feedback on their performances in order to encourage improvement and reward those who most succeeded in their roles?

Answer. It is imperative to provide employees with accurate, constructive feedback on their performance in order to encourage improvement and reward those who most succeeded in their roles. If confirmed, I will commit to fostering an open and inclusive environment where employees will receive both the support and candid feedback they deserve to help them achieve their peak performance capabilities.

Question. If confirmed, would you support and encourage clear, accurate, and direct feedback to employees in order to improve performance and reward high achievers?

Answer. To ensure all employees can achieve their highest level of performance, they must receive clear, accurate, direct, and regular feedback. If confirmed, I will strive to build strong relationships with them, which entails clear and transparent communication about expectations. High achievers should be recognized and rewarded. All employees should expect and demand the opportunity to develop the skills necessary to achieve their potential.

Question. It is imperative that U.S. diplomats get outside of posts abroad to meet with local actors, including host government officials, non-government organizations, and fellow foreign diplomats stationed in the Pacific Islands. In your opinion, do U.S. diplomats get outside of our Embassy walls enough to accomplish fully their missions?

Answer. U.S. Embassy Suva faces some unique challenges because it covers five countries from our physical location in Suva. The pandemic closed international borders and adversely impacted our ability to visit to each of the countries our mission covers. If confirmed, I will prioritize getting our people regularly back out in the field to all five of the countries covered by U.S. Embassy Suva.

Question. How do you intend to improve the ability of U.S. diplomats to better access all local populations?

Answer. Pacific islanders highly value in-person interactions. For that reason, it is imperative to get our staff out in the field as often as possible to interact with the local populations. If confirmed, I will work with mission members to get out into the field, including all five of our countries, to ensure we are reaching all of the local populations to the best of our ability.

Question. What is the public diplomacy environment like in the Pacific Islands?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work to expand and strengthen the people-to-people ties between the United States and the Pacific Island countries. While our Pacific

neighbors gravitate toward us based on common values and shared history, we cannot take those factors for granted. Younger age groups on Pacific Islands may not have the same memory of World War II as older generations do. The People's Republic of China (PRC) is actively engaging in-person in many of the countries where we are not physically present, including Kiribati and Tonga. We need to continue to strengthen our ties to the region, including the promotion of a broad range of interests based upon our shared values of democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. Diaspora ties are also highly important between the United States and Pacific Island countries.

Question. What public diplomacy challenges do U.S. diplomats face there?

Answer. Pacific societies place high value on face-to-face contacts, which has been nearly impossible for many Pacific Island countries during the pandemic. When diplomats show up in person, it not only shows U.S. commitment to engaging more with Pacific Island countries, it also builds up the personal contacts and networks that are vital for advancing American interests with Pacific partners.

Question. How do you balance the importance of Main State versus the in-country mission when it comes to tailoring public diplomacy messages for foreign audiences?

Answer. As I understand it, U.S. Embassy Suva has a crucial role in formulating public diplomacy programs and responses. The Public Affairs Section (PAS) has a staff of Americans and Pacific Islanders who provide expertise and local insight. There are many areas where PAS works directly with different offices and bureaus at Main State. For example, the PAS Press Section handles all relations between the Embassy and the local media. It also coordinates with other missions in the region and Main State on high-level visits or issues which attract international attention (such as the recent seizure of the Russian superyacht Amadea). PAS works closely with Main State on such initiatives as Fulbright, Sports Diplomacy, and the Young Pacific Leaders Program.

Question. "Anomalous health incidents," commonly referred to as "Havana Syndrome," have been debilitating and sidelining U.S. diplomats around the world for years. They have caused serious, negative consequences for U.S. diplomacy, yet many believe that the Department is not doing enough to care for, protect, and communicate to its personnel. The past occurrences and ongoing threat of anomalous health incidents among Embassy personnel and their families poses a serious challenge to morale. When personnel at post fear for their safety or doubt that their case will be taken seriously if they were affected, the performance of Embassy operations can suffer. If confirmed, do you commit to taking this threat seriously?

Answer. I am deeply concerned by potential anomalous health incidents impacting U.S. Government personnel and their family members. These incidents affect the wellbeing of U.S. personnel serving their country abroad and must be taken extremely seriously. If confirmed, the health, safety, and security of Embassy Suva staff, their family members, and all those supporting the Mission will be my highest priority.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to talking as openly as you can to Mission Suva personnel?

Answer. The health and safety of my staff is my top priority. If confirmed, I will commit to ensuring all reported incidents at U.S. Embassy Suva are treated seriously and quickly reported through the appropriate medical and investigatory channels. I will ensure that any affected individuals receive prompt access to treatment and medical care. Moreover, I will ensure that they receive our support and empathy. If confirmed, I will also commit to work closely with medical staff and the Regional Security Office at Embassy Suva to discuss any past reported incidents (if any), openly communicate with Mission personnel, and ensure that all protocols are being closely followed.

Question. Have you received a briefing on the anomalous health incidents that have occurred to U.S. Government personnel around the world, including at U.S. embassies and other diplomatic posts? If you have not, and if you are confirmed, do you commit to receiving a briefing on the incidents before you depart for your post?

Answer. Yes. We had an anomalous health incident in Vietnam and later had a Town Hall meeting with the Department. If confirmed, I commit to receiving a briefing on the incidents before departing for my post. Nothing is more important than the health and safety of our Mission personnel and, if confirmed, I will do my upmost to understand the conditions under which my Mission operates and to facilitate clear communication with Mission members.

Question. In the event of an anomalous health incident among your Embassy personnel or eligible family members, do you commit to maintain detailed records of the incident, and share the information with the State Department and other embassies to contribute to the investigation of how these attacks are affecting U.S. missions and personnel around the world?

Answer. Yes, in the event of an anomalous health incident among my Embassy personnel or eligible family members, I would commit to maintain detailed records of the incident and to the extent permitted by law share information with other offices and bureaus within the State Department to contribute to the investigation of how these attacks are affecting U.S. missions and personnel around the world. Nothing is more important than the health and safety of our Mission personnel and their families.

Question. Whether or not anomalous health incidents occur at your Embassy, how will you work to restore and preserve morale that may be lost due to the knowledge these attacks have been occurring at posts around the world?

Answer. It is incumbent upon leadership to establish and maintain trust with the Embassy community. We build trust by maintaining the lines of communication, by listening to the concerns of our community members, and addressing those concerns as openly and clearly as possible.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO MARIE C. DAMOUR BY SENATOR MARCO RUBIO

Question. This year, we saw the CCP sign a security pact with the Solomon Islands, which gives it access to deploy its military in a position that threatens U.S. and allied military facilities. In May, the PRC tried to negotiate a sweeping trade and security agreement with ten further nations. Fortunately, this broke down, but the CCP will undoubtedly try again. The reasons for this are clear—in a future confrontation with CCP, the U.S. will need facilities in the region to resupply and refit our troops, and Beijing's security pact would prevent this. Is CCP engagement in the Pacific Islands a threat to U.S. interests? Please explain.

Answer. Our vision of a free and open Indo-Pacific excludes no nation. We welcome contributions to regional development, so long as countries adhere to high standards, including in areas such as transparency, rule of law, sustainable financing, social and economic safeguards, and respect for the autonomy of development aid recipients. However, as the PRC's involvement in the region has grown, we have seen a range of increasingly problematic behaviors, including its assertion of unlawful maritime claims and the ongoing militarization of disputed features in the South China Sea, predatory economic activities including illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing, and investments that undermine good governance and promote corruption.

Question. Does the Chinese Communist Party pose a threat to the United States? Please explain.

Answer. We have profound differences with the Chinese Communist Party and the PRC Government. The PRC is the only country with both the intent to reshape the international order and, increasingly, the economic, diplomatic, military, and technological power to do it. The United States must defend and reform the rules-based international order—the system of laws, agreements, principles, and institutions that the world came together to build after two world wars to manage relations between states, to prevent conflict, to uphold the rights of all people. We want not just to sustain the international order that made so much of that progress possible but also to modernize it to make sure that it represents the interests, the values, the hopes of all nations, big and small, from every region; and furthermore, that it can meet the challenges that we face now and will face in the future.

Question. What were the reasons for the breakdown in talks between the CCP and the ten pacific islands?

Answer. PRC Foreign Minister Wang Yi did not do things the "Pacific way" and subsequently failed to secure regional buy-in for his agenda. For example, he did not consult with the 10 Pacific Island nations and build consensus for the PRC's China-Pacific Island Countries Common Development Vision and a related five-year action plan. This is a lesson we are keeping in mind as we move forward in our engagement with Pacific Island nations. To ensure we build the best foundation for

a common partnership, we have consulted and will continue to consult with our Pacific neighbors.

Question. How has the U.S. fallen behind the CCP in engaging the Pacific Island states?

Answer. For too long, the United States has relied on the goodwill and common bonds built among our countries though the World War II experience, but that common memory has waned, and the younger generation is disconnected from our shared past and too many of the younger generation have never interacted with an American. To change this narrative we must show up, listen, provide a positive alternative to the PRC and be visible in our programs and engagements with Pacific Island countries.

Question. If confirmed, what will you do to ensure that the CCP does not gain a strategic foothold in the Pacific islands?

Answer. If confirmed, I will do my part to significantly deepen our engagement in the Pacific Islands and embark on a new chapter in our partnership—a chapter with increased American presence where we will commit to work with the Pacific Islands in the short and long term to address the most pressing issues that they face. Following on Vice President Harris' speech to the Pacific Islands Forum, the United States will begin discussions with Kiribati and Tonga on our interest in establishing embassies in in those countries. If confirmed, I will work with interagency partners to return Peace Corps to the Pacific Islands and work with USAID to expand its engagement in the region.

Question. Can you give us an update on the status of the Compact States negotiations?

Answer. The Biden-Harris administration has prioritized Compact negotiations with the Freely Associated States (FAS) as a U.S. foreign policy objective. Recognizing the urgency of completing these negotiations, the Administration announced the appointment of Ambassador (retired) Joseph Yun as the Special Presidential Envoy for Compact Negotiations on March 22, 2022. Special Presidential Envoy for Compact Negotiations Joseph Yun has held in-person or virtual meetings with the presidents of all three FAS and has met separately with the lead negotiators from each nation. Negotiations with the Federated States of Micronesia continue to move forward and have recently recommenced with the Republic of Marshall Islands. Formal negotiations with Palau are scheduled to resume in early August. The Special Presidential Envoy for Compact Negotiations is leading the negotiations with the continuing support of the team composed of representatives of relevant agencies. We look forward to reaching understandings with the three FAS later this year on a shared vision for our strong and lasting relationship that benefits the entire Pacific region.

NOMINATIONS

WEDNESDAY, JULY 27, 2022

U.S. SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS,
Washington, DC.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 11:39 a.m., in Room SD–419, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Christopher A. Coons presiding.

Present: Senators Coons [presiding], Shaheen, and Young.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. CHRISTOPHER A. COONS, U.S. SENATOR FROM DELAWARE

Senator COONS. This hearing of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee will come to order.

We are here today to consider nominees for five important positions in North Africa and Central Asia: Mr. Puneet Talwar to be Ambassador to Morocco; Joey Hood to be Ambassador to Tunisia; Daniel Rosenblum to be Ambassador to Kazakhstan, Dr. Jonathan Henick to be Ambassador to Uzbekistan; and Lesslie Viguerie to be Ambassador to the Kyrgyz Republic.

Thank you, all, for your service, for your willingness to take on these roles, to your families and friends who are here supporting you.

We are about to have two votes on the floor of the Senate. So I apologize in advance that my ranking member today, Senator Young, and I will each depart in order to keep this confirmation hearing moving and yet allow us to participate in voting on a very important piece of legislation of which Senator Young was the leading Republican.

I understand Senator Shaheen will, first, be introducing nominee Joey Hood.

Senator Shaheen, please proceed.

STATEMENT OF HON. JEANNE SHAHEEN, U.S. SENATOR FROM NEW HAMPSHIRE

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member Young. I am delighted to be here this morning to introduce Joey Hood to this committee and want to congratulate all of the nominees who are here this morning and thank them all for their service to the country.

But my primary reason for being here this morning is to introduce Mr. Hood, who is a career member of the Foreign Service. He joined the State Department in 1998 and for the last 25 years he has worked diligently to advance U.S. interests around the world.

Yet, throughout his career, Mr. Hood has not shied away from hard problems. He has worked to advance human rights in Eritrea, to support our allies in Afghanistan and Iraq.

He has advocated for the Yazidis and the Iraqi Christians as they were being persecuted by ISIS. So he has been willing to take on some difficult challenges.

He has also forged strong ties with other countries and facilitated many congressional delegations in their work abroad. In fact, many on this committee, I know, as well as on the Armed Services Committee may know Mr. Hood from our foreign travel.

I had the honor of joining him at the embassy when I was in Iraq in 2019 and he put on a very nice spread for us and really filled us in on what was happening in Iraq at the time.

But not only is Mr. Hood a distinguished career Foreign Service Officer, he is a native of the great state of New Hampshire. Mr. Hood grew up in Hinsdale, New Hampshire, which is in the western part of our state. His mother drove a school bus and served as a substitute teacher and his father worked for the post office in Vermont for 40 years.

He still owns a home in Keene and his children have joined the storied New Hampshire tradition of going to summer camp at Stonewall Farm and Camp Dakota, and I am delighted to also this morning be able to welcome his wife, Anna, and his children, Fiona and Henry, so who are both staying in New Hampshire.

And as someone who has dedicated his life to serving the United States abroad, who has made the sacrifices that come with such service, I am so honored that he still considers New Hampshire his home and that he has raised a family who considers themselves Granite Staters.

I urge this committee to swiftly move his nomination forward as well as the nominations of all of those people we are hearing from this morning. I look forward to continuing to work with him in his new role as ambassador to Tunisia once we do.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Senator COONS. Thank you, Senator Shaheen.

I will make a brief opening statement regarding each of the five nominees, then turn to my ranking member, Senator Young, for his opening statement. Then we will turn to each of you in turn for your opening statements.

Mr. Talwar, it is a pleasure chairing your confirmation hearing to serve as U.S. Ambassador to Morocco. Our work together has been a highlight of my public service over many years.

Your service as Assistant Secretary of State for Political Military Affairs makes you very well suited for serving in one of our most important regional security partners, and I look forward to hearing what your priorities will be for the U.S.-Morocco relationship, if confirmed.

Mr. Hood, a Granite Stater, you have been nominated at a critical moment for Tunisia, which is facing systemic attempts to dismantle its fledgling democracy. The shuttering of the parliament, the firing of judges, and the series of constitutional changes of consolidated presidential authority gravely concern me.

You have, as Senator Shaheen just referenced, an impressive record of service including as Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary

for Near Eastern Affairs and I look forward to hearing how you will respond to democratic backsliding in Tunisia, if confirmed.

We also have three nominees before us for critical Central Asian countries at the crossroads of influence by China and Russia.

If I could, Ambassador Rosenblum, I welcome your nomination, your previous experience as ambassador to Uzbekistan. I look forward to hearing how you will help Kazakhstan, the region's largest economy, reduce its reliance on Russia.

Dr. Henick, I welcome your experience as Deputy Assistant Secretary for South and Central Asian Affairs. Uzbekistan is an important regional leader and distributor of humanitarian aid, including to Afghanistan. I look forward to hearing how you will support Uzbekistan's desired reforms and leadership on humanitarian aid.

And, finally, Mr. Viguerie, glad to see your nomination for Ambassador to the Kyrgyz Republic, which has until recently been known in Central Asia as one of the most democratic countries, and I know your experience as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Central Asia and Pakistan Affairs will be invaluable.

I look forward to hearing how each of you will address expanding PRC influence and, in your case, a faltering commitment to democracy.

I will now turn to my ranking member, Senator Young of Indiana.

STATEMENT OF HON. TODD YOUNG,
U.S. SENATOR FROM INDIANA

Senator YOUNG. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I, too, want to thank our five nominees today for their willingness and, in some cases, their continued willingness to serve the United States in these important positions.

I look forward to hearing from all our nominees today on how they will advance American leadership and interests in these countries.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine and our collective response have damaged its economy and demonstrated to its neighbors that it cannot be trusted nor depended upon.

China's domestic COVID–19 response has similarly demonstrated its unreliability as an economic partner. The weeks-long lockdown of Shanghai showcases how the Communist Party would prefer to jeopardize its own growth rather than admit failure.

Through this we have a unique opportunity to showcase the value of deepening partnerships with the United States and our allies in resisting the draw of these authoritarian regimes.

Now is a crucial moment for the United States to embrace the collective capabilities of our allies and partners as we turn our attention to strategic great power competition.

If we want to succeed in this competition we must find the best way forward to balance our interests while remaining the partner of choice for those around the globe.

Unlike in years past, these countries have options for economic and security partnerships. In the case of Morocco, we have a continued partner looking to us as we make good on our commitments. I also hope to hear how we can build upon the success of the Abra-

ham Accords and deepen ties between Morocco and Israel in addition to the United States.

In Tunisia, the world is waiting to see the path it will take as well as the impact on its people and fledgling democratic institutions. In the case of our Central Asian partners, Russia's unprovoked aggression has prompted a wholesale reassessment of each country's relationships with their neighbors and beyond.

Our task must be to enforce and uphold our standards while recognizing unattainable goals may drive our would-be partners to yield to the siren song of Chinese and Russian influence.

We cannot ignore the need to advance our diplomatic and humanitarian priorities, and if our policy actions drive our partners into the arms of Russia and China we will be undercutting these very priorities.

Our witnesses will be approaching all of these challenges from different perspectives, and I look forward to hearing their views on this conversation.

Thank you again to our nominees for their willingness to serve the United States in their respective roles. I look forward to our discussion this morning.

Mr. Chairman?

Senator COONS. Thank you, Senator Young.

We will now hear from each of today's nominees in the order in which they were noticed to this committee.

Please keep your opening remarks to no more than five minutes. Your written testimonies will be submitted in full to the record.

First up would be Mr. Puneet Talwar.

Puneet?

STATEMENT OF HON. PUNEET TALWAR OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, NOMINATED TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE KINGDOM OF MOROCCO

Mr. TALWAR. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for the kind words in your introduction. It has been a privilege to know you for so long and I cherish the time that I was able to spend in your office.

I have to say that your tenure here in the Senate has really been a model of public service and your cooperation with the ranking member, I think, has set the gold standard for bipartisan cooperation.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Young, who I know has had to leave for a vote, it has been an honor. It is an honor to return to the committee as President Biden's nominee to be the ambassador—U.S. Ambassador to the Kingdom of Morocco.

I want to thank the President and Secretary Blinken for the trust and confidence in me.

I have great respect for this committee. I have seen firsthand your strong commitment to advancing our national interests.

If confirmed, I look forward to consulting closely with you and, hopefully, welcoming you when you visit.

I am joined today by my wife, Sarosh, and my sons, Haris and Ilyas. My parents, brother, and sister are watching from home.

Mr. Chairman, Morocco is a longstanding and valued partner. Indeed, it was the first country to recognize American independence. With a strategic location, Morocco is a bridge between Europe, the Mediterranean, and Africa, regions that are critical to American national security.

Morocco is a leader on key regional and global issues. It is at the forefront of efforts to combat terrorism. It has taken bold steps on the climate crisis.

Morocco is also dedicated to economic development in Africa and last week it hosted the U.S.-Africa Business Summit.

I want to highlight Morocco's leadership on peace with Israel. The relationship between the two countries is blossoming. It now spans cooperation on investment, energy, aviation, and many other areas.

Morocco was the first Arab country to sign a defense cooperation agreement with Israel, and last week the chief of staff of the Israel Defense Forces made a landmark visit to Morocco.

In March, Morocco's foreign minister attended the inaugural meeting of the Negev Forum. The vision of a warm peace that has eluded the region for so long is finally coming into focus, thanks to the Abraham Accords and Morocco's growing ties with Israel.

If confirmed, I will support translating that vision into tangible improvements in the lives of ordinary people so that we can expand the circle of peace, something which ultimately serves American interests.

With respect to the conflict in western Sahara, last fall the United Nations Secretary General appointed a seasoned diplomat, Staffan de Mistura, as his personal envoy to work with the parties in a renewed push for peace.

He is someone I have known for many years and, if confirmed, I will support his efforts to promote a just and durable political solution.

Domestically, Morocco has an ambitious reform and development agenda that emphasizes expanding the private sector. If confirmed, I will support Morocco's reform program and I will strongly advocate for American exports. I will also support the advancement of human rights.

Mr. Chairman, I have been immersed in policy toward this region for 30 years. My formative years were spent in this very room on the benches behind you.

I have built on that experience at the National Security Council and in a senior diplomatic position as Assistant Secretary of State for Political Military Affairs. These roles have given me a reservoir of directly relevant experience to draw upon, should I be confirmed.

I would like to close with a few words about my family. I could not have made it this far were it not for the unconditional support and love of my wife, Sarosh, who steadfastly supported me through the long hours I have logged in public service. She did that even as she pursued her own career and raised the two fine gentlemen you see behind me.

This is also an especially meaningful moment for my parents. It is the culmination of a journey that began 60 years ago when they took a leap of faith and left India for America with little more than their dreams.

They sacrificed and endured a great deal so that my brother, sister, and I would have opportunities they never had. We are forever grateful to them.

Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Talwar follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. PUNEET TALWAR

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Young—it is an honor to return to the committee as President Biden's nominee to be the United States Ambassador to the Kingdom of Morocco.

I want to thank the President and Secretary Blinken for their trust and confidence in me.

I have great respect for this committee. I have seen first-hand your strong commitment to advancing our national interests. If confirmed, I look forward to consulting closely with you and hopefully welcoming you when you visit.

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Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Young, Morocco is a long-standing and valued partner. Indeed, it was the first country to recognize American independence. With its strategic location, Morocco is a bridge between Europe, the Mediterranean, and Africa—regions that are critical to American national security.

Morocco is a leader on key regional and global issues. It is at the forefront of efforts to combat terrorism. It has taken bold steps on the climate crisis. Morocco is also dedicated to economic development in Africa, and last week, it hosted the U.S.-Africa Business Summit.

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Thank you. I look forward to your questions.

Senator COONS. Thank you, Mr. Talwar.

Next, Dr. Henick?

STATEMENT OF DR. JONATHAN HENICK OF VIRGINIA, A CAREER MEMBER OF THE SENIOR FOREIGN SERVICE, CLASS OF MINISTER–COUNSELOR, NOMINATED TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY ANDPLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE REPUBLIC OF UZBEKISTAN

Dr. HENICK. Mr. Chairman, Mr. Ranking Member, and distinguished members of this committee, I, too, am deeply grateful for the confidence President Biden and Secretary Blinken have entrusted in me with this nomination.

If confirmed, I will work closely with you to strengthen bilateral relations with Uzbekistan.

I, too, would like to thank my wife and partner, Dominique Freire, as well as my son and daughter, Oskar and Carmen.

As you know, Foreign Service families make enormous sacrifices over the course of our careers, and I simply could not have served our country without their steadfast support.

I am also forever in debt to my parents, Bette and Steve, for their support and for sparking my interest in international affairs and public service.

I regret that my father, a Marine Corps helicopter pilot and Vietnam veteran before spending a career opening foreign markets to U.S. commercial products, did not live to see this day. I know that he would have been proud.

This nomination is the culmination of my lifelong interest in this region. At university I majored in Soviet area studies with a focus on Central Asia. I spent a semester abroad and traveled to Uzbekistan before its independence.

When I joined the Foreign Service, I jumped at the opportunity to do my very first overseas assignment at our newly established embassy in Tashkent. I have also spent much of my career working in and with this region, and I am beyond excited at the possibility to go back, if confirmed, in this new capacity.

Located at the heart of Central Asia, Uzbekistan is a country rich in history with a young and growing population and significant potential for a prosperous future.

A strong U.S. relationship with Uzbekistan has implications that extend beyond our bilateral agenda to the other countries of Central Asia, to Afghanistan, Turkey, and the Indo-Pacific region.

At the core of this relationship, now just over 30 years old, is the United States' steadfast support for Uzbekistan's independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity.

Uzbekistan has become an increasingly dynamic player in Central Asia since adopting a broad-based program of political, economic, and social reforms in 2016. We welcome these developments and have partnered with Uzbekistan to implement reforms that advance respect for human rights, foster democratic governance, and promote equitable economic growth.

As a career diplomat, I have seen firsthand the power of building relationships and engaging in public diplomacy, and how this can benefit individuals and civil society.

If confirmed, I will work to continue and improve upon already significant initiatives to strengthen Uzbekistan's educational system and to facilitate exchange opportunities.

These impressive efforts are a testament to the strengthening bilateral relationship between the United States and Uzbekistan.

I will also work to expand and deepen our cooperation with the Government of Uzbekistan to stay the course on reforms. I will encourage the development of accountable democratic institutions, a flourishing civil society and independent media, the strengthening of rule of law, and the protection of human rights for all, especially those who are most vulnerable and marginalized, including women, religious minorities, and LGBTQI+ persons.

Uzbekistan has also made progress modernizing its economy, aiming to rebuild the international connections that place the country at the center of historic trade routes. Uzbekistan's natural resources, as well as its manufacturing and agricultural capacity, are attracting growing interest from American companies, including those seeking alternatives to Xinjiang-sourced cotton.

Uzbekistan has also become a regional leader on green economic initiatives with its ambitious plans for renewable energy and as one of only two Central Asian countries to sign the Global Methane Pledge. A prosperous greener Uzbekistan that generates jobs for its people and diversifies its international trade is very much in the interests of the United States.

As the Government continues its preparations for accession to the World Trade Organization, I will underscore the importance of improving the investment climate and institutionalizing international labor standards.

I will also prioritize the expansion of the U.S. security partnership. Uzbekistan has long been an important partner in supporting Afghanistan stability and, if confirmed, I look forward to strengthening bilateral and regional security cooperation including on law enforcement matters, border security, and counterterrorism.

Finally, I would endeavor to foster an inclusive work environment at our embassy consistent with the Administration's and this committee's vision of a State Department workforce that values collegiality, teamwork, and respect.

The diversity of the American people is our greatest strength and it is important that U.S. embassies model that diversity, especially in places like Uzbekistan where our values are not widely understood or, worse, are actively misrepresented by malign actors.

If confirmed, I will seek to advance U.S. interests and enhance our strategic partnership with Uzbekistan by strengthening our bilateral security, people-to-people ties, economic ties, and promoting the democratic values that we share.

Thank you again for the opportunity to appear here today. I welcome your questions.

[The prepared statement of Dr. Henick follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF JONATHAN HENICK

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Ranking Member, and distinguished members of this committee, I am deeply grateful for the confidence President Biden and Secretary Blinken have entrusted in me with this nomination. If confirmed, I will work closely with you to strengthen bilateral relations with Uzbekistan.

I would like to thank my wife and partner—Dominique Freire—as well as my son and daughter, Oskar and Carmen. As you know, Foreign Service families make enormous sacrifices over the course of our careers. I simply could not have served our country without their steadfast support. I am also forever in debt to my parents,

Bette and Steve, for their support and for sparking my interest in international affairs and public service. I regret that my father—a Marine Corps helicopter pilot and Vietnam veteran before spending a career opening foreign markets to U.S. commercial products—did not live to see this day. I know that he would have been proud.

This nomination is the culmination of my lifelong interest in this region. At university, I majored in Soviet Area Studies with a focus on Central Asia. I spent a semester abroad and traveled to Uzbekistan before its independence. When I joined the Foreign Service, I jumped at the opportunity to do my very first overseas assignment at our newly established Embassy in Tashkent. I have also spent much of my career working in and with this region. I am beyond excited at the possibility to go back, if confirmed, in this new capacity.

Located at the heart of Central Asia, Uzbekistan is a country rich in history, with a young and growing population, and significant potential for a prosperous future. A strong U.S. relationship with Uzbekistan has implications that extend beyond our bilateral agenda to the other countries of Central Asia, Afghanistan, Turkey, and the Indo-Pacific region. At the core of this relationship—now just over 30 years old—is the United States' steadfast support for Uzbekistan's independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity.

Uzbekistan has become an increasingly dynamic player in Central Asia since adopting a broad-based program of political, economic, and social reforms in 2016. We welcome these developments and have partnered with Uzbekistan to implement reforms that advance respect for human rights, foster democratic governance, and promote equitable economic growth.

As a career diplomat, I have seen firsthand the power of building relationships and engaging in public diplomacy, and how this can benefit individuals and civil society. If confirmed, I will work to continue and improve upon already significant initiatives to strengthen Uzbekistan's educational system and to facilitate exchange opportunities. These impressive efforts are a testament to the strengthening bilateral relationship between the United States and Uzbekistan.

I will work to expand and deepen our cooperation with the Government of Uzbekistan to stay the course on reforms. I will encourage the development of accountable, democratic institutions; a flourishing civil society and independent media; the strengthening of rule of law; and the protection of human rights for all, especially those who are most vulnerable and marginalized, including women, religious minorities, and LGBTQI+ persons.

Uzbekistan has also made progress modernizing its economy, aiming to rebuild the international connections that placed the country at the center of historic trade routes. Uzbekistan's natural resources, as well as its manufacturing and agricultural capacity, are attracting growing interest from American companies, including those seeking alternatives to Xinjiang-sourced cotton. Uzbekistan has also become a regional leader on green economic initiatives with its ambitious plans for renewable energy and as one of only two Central Asian countries to sign the Global Methane Pledge. A prosperous, greener Uzbekistan that generates jobs for its people and diversifies its international trade is very much in the interest of the United States. As the Government continues its preparations for accession to the World Trade Organization, I will underscore the importance of improving the investment climate and institutionalizing international labor standards.

I will also prioritize the expansion of the U.S. security partnership. Uzbekistan has long been an important partner in supporting Afghanistan's stability. If confirmed, I look forward to strengthening bilateral and regional security cooperation, including on law enforcement matters, border security, and counterterrorism.

Finally, I would endeavor to foster an inclusive work environment at Embassy Tashkent, consistent with the Administration's and this committee's vision of a State Department workforce that values collegiality, teamwork, and respect. The diversity of the American people is our greatest strength, and it is important that U.S. embassies model that diversity in places like Uzbekistan, where American values are not widely understood or worse, are actively misrepresented by malign actors.

If confirmed, I will seek to advance U.S. interests and enhance our strategic partnership with Uzbekistan by strengthening our bilateral security, people to people, and economic ties, and promoting the democratic values we share.

Thank you again for the opportunity to appear here today. I welcome your questions.

Senator COONS. Thank you.

Mr. Viguerie?

STATEMENT OF LESSLIE VIGUERIE OF VIRGINIA, A CAREER MEMBER OF THE SENIOR FOREIGN SERVICE, CLASS OF MINISTER-COUNSELOR, NOMINATED TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES TO THE KYRGYZ REPUBLIC

Mr. VIGUERIE. Good morning, Chairman Coons. I am grateful to have the opportunity to speak with you today, and thank you for considering my nomination to serve as U.S. Ambassador to the Kyrgyz Republic.

I would like to start by thanking my family: my wife, Kathryn, who is here with me today, and my three children, William, George, and Clara. They have been my support through hardship posts, lengthy periods of separation, and frequent moves. They have also shared with me the honor of serving our country abroad, an honor for which I have always been deeply grateful.

I would also like to thank all the friends and colleagues who have supported me over my 30-year career in the Foreign Service. Their examples showed me the best aspects of leadership, including the importance of building strong teams and morale, valuing diversity, and mentoring the next generation of U.S. diplomats.

These values guide me today and, if confirmed, I will have no higher priority than the safety and security of the embassy community.

The United States and the Kyrgyz Republic recently marked 30 years of diplomatic relations. Much has happened in this time. The United States has been a strong partner to the Kyrgyz Republic from the beginning, providing generous support, including more than $10.4 million in COVID-related aid during the pandemic.

U.S. assistance helped Kyrgyz efforts to develop the country's democratic institutions, its vibrant civil society, and its independent media.

Since 1993, we have supported the American University of Central Asia, where tens of thousands of the region's best and brightest have received U.S. accredited degrees.

If confirmed, I will work to build on the progress of the last three decades and ensure that our relationship fulfills its potential.

The United States and the Kyrgyz Republic share many goals and a mutual interest in working together to achieve them. The Kyrgyz Republic has stated its commitment to fighting corruption and organized crime.

In this effort, it will find no better partner than the United States. We hope to strengthen security cooperation to address challenges such as disaster preparedness and countering transnational threats.

The United States is committed to supporting Kyrgyz economic resilience, connectivity, and diversification beyond its traditional partners by developing the country's knowledge economy in which a thriving IT sector drives job creation and connection to the global economy.

The Kyrgyz Republic has demonstrated environmental leadership in Central Asia as the first in the region to join the Global Methane Pledge.

The United States is also committed to supporting human rights and democratic institutions in the Kyrgyz Republic. Kyrgyzstan

has a unique record in this region. We are proud of our long-standing support for the Kyrgyz Republic's energetic civil society and its efforts to build accountable democratic institutions and strengthen the rule of law.

It is critical that Kyrgyz leadership safeguards the gains made over the last 30 years and upholds media freedom, elevates the role of civil society, protects the human rights of all its people, including members of all minority groups, and strengthens judicial independence.

If confirmed, I will advocate for Kyrgyz civil society and speak out against erosion of democratic governance, corruption, and threats to freedom of speech and association, in accordance with the values we share with the Kyrgyz people.

For 30 years the United States has stressed our support for the sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity of the Kyrgyz Republic.

If confirmed, I will emphasize the importance of holding Russia to account for its aggression in Ukraine, including the enforcement of sanctions on Russia.

I will also advocate for Kyrgyz leadership to promote accountability for the PRC's use of forced labor as well as its genocide and crimes against humanity against Uyghurs and members of other ethnic and religious minority groups, including ethnic Kyrgyz, in Xinjiang.

Mr. Chairman, there is ample potential in the U.S.-Kyrgyz bilateral relationship. If confirmed, I look forward to partnering with this committee and Congress to reinvigorate our ties and achieve mutual objectives that benefit not only our two countries but the whole of Central Asia.

Thank you again for considering my nomination and I look forward to answering any questions you might have.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Viguerie follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF LESSLIE VIGUERIE

Good morning, Chairman Coons, Ranking Member Young, and honorable members of this committee. I am grateful to have the opportunity to speak with you today and thank you for considering my nomination to serve as U.S. Ambassador to the Kyrgyz Republic.

I would like to start by thanking my family, my wife Kathryn, who is here with me today, and my three children, William, George, and Clara. They have been my support through hardship posts, lengthy periods of separation, and frequent moves. They have also shared with me the honor of serving our country abroad, an honor for which I have always been deeply grateful.

I would also like to thank all the friends and colleagues who have supported me over my 30-year career in the Foreign Service. Their examples showed me the best aspects of leadership, including the importance of building strong teams and morale, valuing diversity, and mentoring the next generation of U.S. diplomats. These values guide me today and, if confirmed, I will have no higher priority than the safety and security of the Embassy community.

The United States and the Kyrgyz Republic recently marked 30 years of diplomatic relations. Much has happened in this time. The United States has been a strong partner to the Kyrgyz Republic from the beginning, providing generous support, including more than $10.4 million in COVID-related aid during the pandemic. U.S. assistance helped Kyrgyz efforts to develop the country's democratic institutions, its vibrant civil society, and its independent media. Since 1993 we have supported the American University of Central Asia, where tens of thousands of the region's best and brightest have received U.S.-accredited degrees. If confirmed, I will work to build on the progress of the last three decades and ensure that our relationship fulfills its potential.

The United States and Kyrgyz Republic share many goals and a mutual interest in working together to achieve them. The Kyrgyz Republic has stated its commitment to fighting corruption and organized crime. In this effort it will find no better partner than the United States. We hope to strengthen security cooperation to address challenges such as disaster preparedness and countering transnational threats. The United States is committed to supporting Kyrgyz economic resilience, connectivity, and diversification beyond its traditional partners, by developing the country's knowledge economy, in which a thriving IT sector drives job creation and connection to the global economy. The Kyrgyz Republic has demonstrated environmental leadership in Central Asia as the first in the region to join the Global Methane pledge. Our countries share an interest in solving the climate crisis and can do much together to reduce emissions and build our ability to respond to the impacts of climate change.

The United States is also committed to supporting human rights and democratic institutions in the Kyrgyz Republic. The Kyrgyz Republic has a unique record in the region. We are proud of our longstanding support for the Kyrgyz Republic's energetic civil society and its efforts to build accountable, democratic institutions and strengthen the rule of law. It is critical that Kyrgyz leadership safeguards the gains made over the last 30 years and upholds media freedom, elevates the role of civil society, protects the human rights of all its people, including members of all minority groups, and strengthens judicial independence. If confirmed, I will advocate for Kyrgyz civil society and speak out against erosion of democratic governance, corruption, and threats to freedom of speech and association, in accordance with the values we share with the Kyrgyz people.

For 30 years the United States has stressed our support for the sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity of the Kyrgyz Republic. If confirmed, I will emphasize the importance of holding Russia to account for its aggression against Ukraine, including the enforcement of sanctions on Russia. I will also advocate for Kyrgyz leadership to promote accountability for the PRC's use of forced labor as well as its genocide and crimes against humanity against Uyghurs and members of other ethnic and religious minority groups—including ethnic Kyrgyz—in Xinjiang.

Mr. Chairman, there is ample potential in the U.S.-Kyrgyz bilateral relationship. If confirmed, I look forward to partnering with this committee and Congress to reinvigorate our ties and achieve mutual objectives that benefit not only our two countries, but the whole of Central Asia.

Thank you again for considering my nomination and I look forward to answering any questions you might have.

Senator COONS. Thank you, Mr. Viguerie.

STATEMENT OF HON. DANIEL N. ROSENBLUM OF MARYLAND, A CAREER MEMBER OF THE SENIOR EXECUTIVE SERVICE, NOMINATED TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE REPUBLIC OF KAZAKHSTAN

Ambassador ROSENBLUM. Thank you. Good morning, Chairman Coons.

I am honored to be here today as the President's nominee for U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Kazakhstan, and I am pleased that my wife, Sharon, and son, Jonah, are with me as well.

The journey that led me here started in the Cleveland suburb of Middleburg Heights, Ohio. My mother was a teacher who modeled the values of respect, empathy, and tolerance. My father worked for 30 years as a NASA scientist while, in his spare time, organizing a grassroots movement to advocate for the rights of Soviet Jews.

My parents' example inspired me to pursue a career in public service and international affairs. I studied Russian history, language, and literature as an undergraduate and later pursued a master's degree in Soviet studies.

In between, I worked for and was inspired by an outstanding public servant, Senator Carl Levin of Michigan. He took this chamber's oversight role seriously and in that spirit, if confirmed, I look

forward to collaborating closely with the U.S. Congress and particularly with the members of this committee to promote U.S. interests and values in our relationship with the Republic of Kazakhstan.

In my four years as Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Central Asia and currently as Ambassador to Uzbekistan, I have often been asked why the United States cares about this region. What U.S. national interests are served by devoting time, attention, and resources to these faraway countries?

My answer is straightforward. We care because what happens there directly affects the security of the United States and its citizens.

We want these countries to develop as stable, prosperous, and friendly U.S. partners because we know that if they do not we will pay the price here at home.

At the same time, it is not in our long-term security or economic interest for a single power to dominate this region. We are much better off having mutually beneficial relations with a diverse group of sovereign countries, both big and small, in Eurasia and Central Asia.

The Government and people of Kazakhstan have appreciated America's steadfast support for their independent sovereignty and territorial integrity since 1991.

My goal, if confirmed, will be to partner with the Government and people of Kazakhstan to ensure that they remain free to determine their own policies and chart their own future.

After centuries under the rule of external powers and 30-plus years now as citizens of an independent nation, the people of Kazakhstan understand full well why the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity are critical to the maintenance of a stable international order.

If confirmed, I will emphasize the importance of holding Russia accountable for its aggression against Ukraine. I will also advocate that Kazakhstan promote accountability for the PRC's atrocities against Uighurs and members of other religious and ethnic minority groups, including a million and a half ethnic Kazakhs living in Xinjiang.

Mr. Chairman, the U.S.-Kazakhstan bilateral relationship is already strong. If confirmed, I hope to deepen and broaden it even further in ways that not only benefit our two countries but the whole of Central Asia.

Kazakhstan has long been a leader in efforts to better integrate the five Central Asian nations. If confirmed, I will continue to seek new ways to promote such regional cooperation including through the C5+1 diplomatic platform.

My number-one priority, if confirmed, will be to ensure the safety and health of my embassy and consulate teams as well as any and all American citizens in Kazakhstan.

I also intend to make it a priority to, first, deepen our security and law enforcement partnership to pursue our shared goals in the region including countering terrorism and other transnational threats; second, to encourage Kazakhstan to implement the sweeping reforms it initiated in the wake of serious civil unrest in January.

It is critical that Kazakhstan's leadership live up to its pledges to uphold media freedom, elevate the role of civil society, strengthen judicial independence, and protect the fundamental rights and freedoms of all its people.

And, third, to increase people-to-people interactions and expand our economic, educational, scientific, and cultural ties. Nothing will help solidify the foundations of a U.S.-Kazakhstani partnership more than creating strong connections between the people of our two nations.

Mr. Chairman, if confirmed, I pledge to work closely with you to support America's growing strategic partnership with Kazakhstan.

[The prepared statement of Ambassador Rosenblum follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. DANIEL N. ROSENBLUM

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Ranking Member, and members of this committee, I am honored to be here today as the President's nominee for U.S Ambassador to the Republic of Kazakhstan.

The journey that led me here started in the Cleveland suburb of Middleburg Heights, Ohio. My mother was a teacher who modeled the values of respect, empathy, and tolerance. My father worked for 30 years as a NASA scientist, while, in his spare time, advocating for the rights of Soviet Jews. My parents' example inspired me to pursue a career in public service and international affairs, and taught me to embrace diversity, equity, inclusiveness, and access, because society is richer, and organizations are more effective when everyone participates.

I studied Russian history, language, and literature as an undergraduate, and later pursued a master's degree in Soviet Studies. In between, I worked for and was inspired by an outstanding public servant: Senator Carl Levin of Michigan. He took this chamber's oversight role seriously, and in that spirit, if confirmed, I look forward to collaborating closely with the U.S. Congress—and particularly with the members of this committee—to promote U.S. interests and values in our relationship with the Republic of Kazakhstan.

In my four years as Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Central Asia, and currently as U.S. Ambassador to Uzbekistan, I have often been asked why the United States cares about this region. What U.S. national interests are served by devoting time, attention, and resources to these faraway countries? My answer is straightforward: we care because what happens there directly affects the safety and security of the United States and its citizens. We want these countries to develop as stable, prosperous, and friendly U.S. partners because we know that, if they don't, we will pay the price here at home.

At the same time, it is not in our long-term security or economic interests for a single power to dominate this region. We are much better off having mutually beneficial relations with a diverse group of sovereign countries, both big and small, in Europe, Eurasia and Central Asia. The Government and people of Kazakhstan appreciate America's steadfast support for their sovereignty since 1991, when we were the first to recognize their independence. My goal, if confirmed, will be to partner with the Government and people of Kazakhstan to ensure that they remain free to determine their own policies and chart their own future.

After centuries under the rule of external powers, and thirty plus years as citizens of an independent nation, the people of Kazakhstan have a deep appreciation for the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity; they fully understand why these principles are critical to the maintenance of a stable international order. If confirmed, I will emphasize these shared values, and the importance of holding Russia accountable for its aggression against Ukraine. I will also advocate that Kazakhstan promote accountability for the PRC's atrocities against Uyghurs and members of other religious and ethnic minority groups—including ethnic Kazakhs—in Xinjiang.

The U.S.-Kazakhstan bilateral relationship is already strong. If confirmed, I hope to deepen and broaden it even further, in ways that not only benefit our two countries, but the whole of Central Asia. Kazakhstan has long been a leader in efforts to better integrate the five Central Asian nations. I will continue looking for new ways to promote such regional cooperation, including through the C5+1 diplomatic platform.

My number one priority, if confirmed, will be to ensure the safety and security of my Embassy and Consulate teams, as well as all American citizens in Kazakhstan. Beyond that, I intend to make it a priority to:

- Deepen our security and law enforcement partnership with Kazakhstan to pursue our shared goals in the region, including countering terrorism and other transnational threats.
- Encourage Kazakhstan to implement the sweeping reforms it initiated in the wake of serious civil unrest last January, and provide technical assistance and training as needed and requested. It is critical that Kazakhstan's leadership live up to its pledges to uphold media freedom, elevate the role of civil society, strengthen judicial independence, and protect the fundamental rights and freedoms of all its people. We stand ready to continue assisting the Government and people of Kazakhstan to make these pledges a reality.
- Broaden engagement between the citizens of Kazakhstan and the United States by increasing people-to-people interactions and expanding our economic and business, educational, scientific, and cultural ties. Nothing will help solidify the foundation for long-term U.S.-Kazakhstani partnership more than creating and maintaining strong connections between the people of our two nations.

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, if I am confirmed, I pledge to work closely with you to support America's growing strategic partnership with Kazakhstan. I look forward to your questions.

Senator COONS. Thank you very much, Ambassador Rosenblum. Mr. Hood?

STATEMENT OF JOEY R. HOOD OF NEW HAMPSHIRE, A CAREER MEMBER OF THE SENIOR FOREIGN SERVICE, CLASS OF MINISTER–COUNSELOR, NOMINATED TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE REPUBLIC OF TUNISIA

Mr. HOOD. Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I want to thank Senator Shaheen for that wonderful introduction.

I am honored by President Biden's and Secretary Blinken's trust in me and by the support of my wife, Anne, and children, Fiona and Henry.

If confirmed, my most important priority as ambassador would be the safety and security of Americans living in and visiting Tunisia. My next priority would be to help put Tunisia on a more stable and prosperous trajectory.

A long-standing U.S. partner and major non-NATO ally, Tunisia now finds itself suffering the global repercussions of Putin's brutal aggression in Ukraine, grappling with rising food prices and spiking energy prices.

Putin's war of choice has exacerbated Tunisia's economic crisis, and quick action is needed to reverse this trajectory.

If confirmed, I would promote a vision of inclusive and open economic growth. The Government is negotiating an agreement with the IMF and this could be a step toward reforms that would benefit all Tunisians.

Tunisia could also improve its investment in climate by focusing on infrastructure and secure technology. If confirmed, I would advocate for U.S. companies to help provide these.

As Tunisians grapple with these economic challenges they have experienced an alarming erosion of democratic norms and fundamental freedoms over the past year, reversing many hard-fought gains since they overthrew a dictator in 2011.

President Kais Saied's actions over the past year to suspend democratic governance and consolidate executive power have raised serious questions. The United States, both on our own and in coordination with our Group of Seven partners, has advocated for a swift return to democratic governance.

We have urged an inclusive democratic reform process, emphasized continued protection of fundamental freedoms, and insisted on respect for judicial independence and rule of law.

I would continue this engagement, if confirmed, and encourage Tunisia's leaders to rapidly reestablish a democratic government accountable to their people.

Tunisians have made clear that their demands for greater economic prosperity must not come at the expense of their hard-won democracy or human rights.

I agree with that and ascribe to the Administration's view that the U.S.-Tunisia bilateral relationship is strongest when there is a shared commitment to democratic values, human rights, and fundamental freedoms.

We continue to review our assistance programs to assure that they align with our values and interests. If confirmed, I would use all tools of U.S. influence to advocate for a return to democratic governance and mitigate Tunisians suffering from Putin's devastating war, economic mismanagement, and political upheaval.

Tunisian leaders' recognition that a vibrant civil society is a partner, not an adversary, has been a key reason for its democratic success. Civil society has demonstrated dynamism and resiliency in representing the aims and demands of the Tunisian people.

If confirmed, I would continue to support civil society and engage regularly with the Government to protect fundamental freedoms.

I would also urge that political reforms and parliamentary elections announced for later this year are transparent and inclusive.

Amid this political upheaval, I understand that the Tunisian military has remained an apolitical and professional force that reports to civilian leaders.

If confirmed, I would work to ensure this remains the case and look for new avenues of collaboration on U.S. security priorities, particularly against global terrorist threats, while further strengthening human rights protections.

The normalization of relations with Israel, including through the historic Abraham Accords, has led to greater peace and security in the region and deepened opportunities for expanded economic growth and productivity.

If confirmed, I would support further efforts to normalize diplomatic and economic relations with the State of Israel in the region.

Thank you, Mr. Ranking Member, members of this committee, for this opportunity.

If confirmed, I look forward to leading the team of professionals at our embassy and working with you to advance U.S. interests and strengthen our shared values in Tunisia.

I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Hood follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF JOEY R. HOOD

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Ranking Member, members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I am honored by President Biden's and Secretary Blinken's trust in me, and by the support of my wife Anne and children Fiona and Henry.

If confirmed, my most important priority as ambassador would be the safety and security of Americans living in and visiting Tunisia.

My next priority would be to help put Tunisia on a more stable and prosperous trajectory. A long-standing U.S. partner and major non-NATO Ally, Tunisia now finds itself suffering the global repercussions of Putin's brutal aggression in Ukraine, grappling with rising food insecurity and spiking energy prices. Putin's war of choice has exacerbated Tunisia's economic crisis, and quick action is needed to reverse this trajectory.

If confirmed, I would promote a vision of inclusive and open economic growth. The Government is negotiating an agreement with the IMF, and this could be a step toward reforms that would benefit all Tunisians. Tunisia could also improve its investment in climate by focusing on infrastructure, and secure technology. If confirmed, I would advocate for U.S. companies to help provide these.

As Tunisians grapple with these economic challenges, they have experienced an alarming erosion of democratic norms and fundamental freedoms over the past year, reversing many hard-fought gains since they overthrew a dictator in 2011. President Kais Saied's actions over the past year to suspend democratic governance and consolidate executive power have raised serious questions. The United States, both on our own and in coordination with our Group of Seven partners, has advocated for a swift return to democratic governance. We have urged an inclusive democratic reform process, emphasized continued protection of fundamental freedoms, insisted on respect for judicial independence and rule of law.

I would continue this engagement, if confirmed, and encourage Tunisia's leaders to rapidly re-establish a democratic government accountable to their people. Tunisians have made clear that their demands for greater economic prosperity must not come at the expense of their hard-won democracy or human rights. I agree with that and ascribe to the Administration's view that the U.S.-Tunisia bilateral relationship is strongest when there is a shared commitment to democratic values, human rights, and fundamental freedoms.

We continue to review our assistance programs to ensure they align with our policy goals and deliver value to the American taxpayer while preserving our long-term partnership and progress made through our past assistance to Tunisia. If confirmed, I would use all tools of U.S. influence to advocate for a return to democratic governance and mitigate Tunisians' suffering from Putin's devastating war, economic mismanagement, and political upheaval.

Tunisian leaders' recognition that a vibrant civil society is a partner, not an adversary, has been a key reason for its democratic success. Civil society has demonstrated dynamism and resiliency in representing the aims and demands of the Tunisian people. If confirmed, I would continue to support civil society and engage regularly with the Government to protect fundamental freedoms. I would also urge that political reforms and parliamentary elections announced for later this year are transparent and inclusive.

Amid this political upheaval, I understand that the Tunisian military has remained an apolitical and professional force that reports to civilian leaders. If confirmed, I would work to ensure this remains the case, and look for new avenues of collaboration on U.S. security priorities, particularly against global terrorist threats, while further strengthening human rights protections.

The normalization of relations with Israel, including through the historic Abraham Accords, has led to greater peace and security in the region and deepened opportunities for expanded economic growth and productivity. If confirmed, I would support further efforts to normalize diplomatic and economic relations with the State of Israel in the region.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and members of the committee for this opportunity. If confirmed, I look forward to leading the team of professionals at our Embassy and working with you to advance U.S. interests and strengthen our shared values in Tunisia. I look forward to your questions.

Senator YOUNG [presiding]. I thank all of our nominees for their statements.

Mr. Rosenblum, Kazakhstan has been a steadfast partner with the United States on a number of issues, from our use of its space

port for our astronauts to access the International Space Station to its commitment to protect our personnel and consulate during political unrest in Almaty.

However, Kazakhstan has thus far taken a neutral stance on Ukraine, declining to support either side in this war of Russian aggression.

Kazakhstan's commitment of humanitarian aid to Ukraine as well as its additional defense spending indicate anxiety about Russian geopolitical ambitions. This is despite continuing military partnership per media reporting on Kazakhstan's participation in upcoming Russian military exercises.

Sir, what steps would you take to encourage Kazakhstan to take more decisive steps to counter Russian aggression?

Ambassador ROSENBLUM. Senator Young, thank you for that question.

It will definitely be at the center of my attention, as it is for all of us now, the effects of the war in Ukraine and the region.

First of all, I want to say that our support, as I mentioned in my statement, for Kazakhstan's sovereignty, territorial integrity, and independence has been consistent and remains strong, and that will be an organizing principle of everything I do in Kazakhstan, if confirmed.

Secondly, we do recognize the reality of Kazakhstan's geographical and historical and economic position in the region. They share a 4,700-mile border with Russia. Russia is their main trading partner, main source of investment, and that is a reality that they have to deal with.

As you pointed out, Kazakhstan has remained neutral in the conflict with respect to Russia's invasion of Ukraine and, at the same time, have stated publicly and clearly that they will not recognize the independence of the so-called Luhansk and Donetsk Republics.

They have also stated publicly that they will do everything in their power to not undermine the sanctions regime against Russia and have worked very closely with us to make sure that they do not cross that line.

And they have also said that they will not support the deployment of any Kazakhstani troops through the Collective Security Treaty Organization with Russian-led alliance that they belong to—military group.

So all of those things we take as positive steps and, if confirmed, when I go I will reinforce that, the importance of them remaining, at a minimum, neutral and also reinforce what the Kazakhstani leadership itself has said, which is they recognize they are too dependent on Russia, especially for their trade and their oil exports, and need to diversify, and anything we can do to help them diversify we will.

Senator YOUNG. Sir, I think you have done a very good job of contextualizing the diplomatic and economic and other challenges the country faces on account of its geography and history and other factors. I do think that it is a positive. You laid out many positives and, perhaps, that is something we can build on as well as it relates to the situation in Ukraine.

How would you ensure further, sir, that Kazakhstan does not fall into China's sphere of influence as it seeks closer ties with other nations?

Ambassador ROSENBLUM. So, again, there are realities that Kazakhstan faces with respect to China, and China is a very important source of investment in their oil and gas sector, one of their major trading partners.

At the same time, Kazakhstan practices and they publicly declare what they call multivector diplomacy, and multivector to them means that they have to maintain important relationships and mutually beneficial relations with lots of partners, not just Russia, not just China. The United States, Europe—they want all of that to be part of the picture.

So, if confirmed, my goal would be to help them in that—in their own goal, to reach their own goal of strengthening these other vectors. We can do that in a number of ways, including by promoting a better investment climate in Kazakhstan so that more U.S. investment in business can enter and they can diversify their trading relationships.

We can also, with respect to oil, in particular—oil and gas—have them diversify from their heavy dependence on that sector of their economy because it is the oil and gas that especially ties them closely both to Russia and China, both for export routes and, in the case of China, as a customer.

There is a number of ways that we can work on that. I am committed, if confirmed, to doing so, and the important thing, I think, here is that it is the Kazakhstanis' own goal. That is, we are helping them to achieve their own goal of not being overly dependent on their neighbors.

Senator YOUNG. Thank you much, Mr. Rosenblum.

From one Stan to another, Mr. Henick, you have been nominated to be our ambassador to Uzbekistan. As it relates to the Ukraine crisis, State Department has repeatedly engaged the Central Asian governments this year to reaffirm U.S. support for Uzbek independence and territorial integrity as well as the C5+1 strategic partnership.

Secretary Blinken reiterated the Administration's position during Foreign Minister Kamilov's visit to Washington in March while also condemning Russia's unprovoked actions in Ukraine.

I note that Tashkent registered businesses have recently been hit by sanctions for engagement with Russian entities on the Treasury Department's sanctions list.

If confirmed, how would you encourage our Uzbek partners to avoid such dealings as well as take a stronger stance against Russian aggression?

Dr. HENICK. Thank you, Senator, for that question.

Uzbekistan finds itself, I think, in a very similar situation to Kazakhstan. They do not have the luxury of simply being able to cut off their relationship with Russia, which remains their largest trading partner, major investor; obviously, there are historical cultural ties.

At the same time, Uzbekistan has proven to be a strong partner of the United States and has been sensitive to the concerns that we have expressed, certainly, about Russian aggression and I

think, Senator, you—as you mentioned in your opening statement, there is a reassessment going on in the region about their relationship with Russia in light of Russia's aggression against Ukraine.

And so we have found that we are having a productive dialogue with the Government of Uzbekistan. I think the key, going forward, will be to be as cooperative and transparent as possible about the nature and the specifics of the sanctions that we are levying, to hear from the Uzbeks about which of these sanctions, if any, are very difficult or impossible for them to comply with and to, when necessary, as you have pointed out, Senator, to designate companies that are in violation of those sanctions to send a clear message to other private sector entities in Uzbekistan about the dangers of doing business with Russia.

Thank you, Senator.

Senator YOUNG. Thank you, sir.

Mr. Viguerie, COVID–19 and economic sanctions have battered the Russian economy, presenting an opportunity to encourage Central Asian countries to rethink their relationships with Moscow.

As their governments warm to the idea of greater regional integration and partnerships with the U.S., the door may also be open to exploitation by other actors, particularly China.

How would you characterize the Kyrgyz reaction to U.S. engagement on this issue, particularly as we also call on the host nation to respect human rights and freedom of expression?

Mr. VIGUERIE. Thank you for the question, Senator.

Kyrgyzstan is in an unusual position. Many of the factors that my two colleagues outlined also hold true for Kyrgyzstan. But in addition, Kyrgyzstan relies for about a third of its economy on remittances from Russia. So that has a colossal economic impact on Kyrgyzstan.

The jury is still out on how much of an influence the Russian economic situation is going to have on those remittances.

I take your point on China. China owns about a third or more of Kyrgyzstan's debt so it, too, exercises a huge amount of economic influence on the country.

The United States has been very active in engaging Kyrgyzstan to participate in regional organizations. Some, through our assistance, organize electrical transmission through Karim and CASA–1000. Others support general connectivity. There is an interest in Kyrgyzstan in pursuing these opportunities but there is a concern in Kyrgyzstan about their two big neighbors as well.

Thank you.

Senator YOUNG. Thank you.

Thank you to all the nominees who have spoken to these issues. I have learned quite a bit about that region just in your presentations today. So thank you.

I will look forward, should you be confirmed, to working with all of you on some of these challenges.

Mr. Talwar, as you know, I was one of the lead co-sponsors of the Israel Normalization Act to strengthen and expand normalization between Israel and a number of countries in the region, including Morocco.

I was encouraged to see other countries also begin taking baby steps toward fully integrating Israel into the regional framework

such as Riyadh's recent approval of Israeli use of Saudi airspace for commercial overflights.

Do you consider the Abraham Accords to be a success that we should endeavor to build upon and do you believe it is in the United States interest to see other countries pursue normalization with Israel?

Mr. TALWAR. Senator, thanks very much for the question.

I believe that the answer is yes. I believe that the Abraham Accords have put us on the cusp of a potentially historic transformation in the region.

And as it relates to Morocco and Israel, that relationship is going full bore and you have seen, literally, dozens of memorandums of understanding signed between the two countries in sectors ranging from agriculture to energy to supply chains.

Just yesterday there were two ministers in Rabat from Israel who signed an agreement on judicial and legal cooperation and, if confirmed, this is going to be one of my highest priorities.

I think working in two dimensions, first, to help buttress and support in any way we can and consistent with the law that you mentioned—the Israel Normalization Act—Israel Relations Normalization Act—to see what we can do to support the further building out and cementing of that relationship, and then second, there is the regional dimension that you referenced to connect this to the Negev Forum so that we can expand the circle of peace and so that people throughout the regions begin to see and feel the tangible benefits of peace with Israel.

Senator YOUNG. Thank you.

So just—so you will be encouraging, should you be confirmed, the Moroccan Government to, in turn, encourage other African and Middle Eastern nations to normalize relations with Israel. Is that accurate?

Mr. TALWAR. Senator, yes, that is accurate, and Morocco has a great deal of influence. It really considers itself as a North African country and that will be one of the things I will work on, if confirmed.

Senator YOUNG. Yes, sir.

Given the reality we have seen in the last two years of the implementation and expansion of the Accords, maybe you could speak with a little more specificity as—about the role they might have in the political and economic development of the region.

Mr. TALWAR. Sure, Senator.

I think the next phase here, really, is to translate the agreements that have been made into actual benefits that people can feel so that these are not just abstract agreements sitting out there which are negotiated in fancy rooms but actually translate into benefits economic, first and foremost, things that transform society and make them—improve them.

People-to-people ties, which Morocco is really a leader on, you now have tourism booming between the two countries. Of course, there is an historic and long-standing Jewish community, which is very much recognized as part of the fabric of Morocco, which stands as one of the pillars in that relationship and there are maybe half a million Israelis of Moroccan descent, perhaps more. So that is one dimension of it.

But to the extent that you can show benefits on the economic front, commercially, in terms of other standards of living that start to rise in the region because of this, I think you will have a bandwagoning effect that will just bolster moderates across the region.

Senator YOUNG. Thank you, sir.

Before I move on to Mr. Hood for a short question, I just wanted to speak to the effort to counter China through your role, Mr. Talwar. I commend the work of the embassy and consulate in partnering with Morocco to advance our security and economic priorities.

With the 15th anniversary of our free trade agreement, Morocco continues to be a strong partner in the region. Confronting economic aggression from countries such as China requires robust partnerships and a sound strategy.

How should the United States continue to engage Morocco to counter China in North Africa, sir?

Mr. TALWAR. Thanks very much for the question, Senator.

If confirmed, this will be a high priority for me. China is beginning to make inroads in that region, including in Morocco, and I think we have to keep a very close eye on that.

Morocco does not have a comprehensive strategic partnership with Morocco, which is their highest level of relationship that they will bestow upon some of the countries.

Nonetheless, China has been active, particularly in the cultural space. They have three Confucius Institutes. They have been training people through Huawei academies.

We actually do more than they do in terms of Cisco being involved. They are training a lot of Moroccans. And they have also—we have also been doing a lot of work through the—recently through the Development Finance Corporation and that is one of the most effective tools that we have to counter the Chinese approach, which, of course, is very state centric, very nontransparent and they are beginning to move into areas, for example, joint ventures they have proposed in R&D, vocational training, things of that sort.

And I think that we have to be active early on and using the tools that Congress has provided to be able to work effectively against them.

Senator YOUNG. Thank you. I am glad you mentioned the Development Finance Corporation. I, of course, am in the presence of one of the founding fathers of that effort. That would be Senator Coons, for the C–SPAN2 cameras.

And I am also glad you mentioned our private sector partners. So thank you so much.

Mr. Hood, just a final question for you, sir. Seeing many parties' boycott of the referendum on President Saied's constitutional amendment, it appears Tunisia's democratic institutions are at risk.

If confirmed, how would you urge President Saied's administration to be responsive, transparent, and accountable to the Tunisian people?

Mr. HOOD. Thank you for the question, Senator.

First, I would like to thank Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Risch, Chairman Meeks, and Ranking Member McCaul for the statement that they made yesterday, which was very helpful. I will read just part of it here.

"The United States will continue to support the Tunisian people and encourage efforts to return to a transparent and inclusive system of democratic governance. We urge President Saied to work constructively with all Tunisians and the state of emergency and take steps to restore Tunisia's separation of powers, democratic institutions, and the rule of law. "

If confirmed, I would continue these efforts, not just through private meetings but also through our public support to civil society voices. One of the things that is unique about Tunisia and the region is that it has a very vibrant civil society and I think that is thanks due, in large part, to support from the United States and from other partners, and we would continue this because the voice of the people, ultimately, in a democracy and especially in Tunisia are the biggest levers on executive power.

And so, if confirmed, that is what I would focus on.

Senator YOUNG. Thank you, sir. Thank you all for—once again, for your commitment to serving our great country. I thank your families, some of whom—some family members are present, and I will look forward to doing some good together.

I am off to cast an important vote for a China competition bill.

Mr. Chairman?

Senator COONS [presiding]. And I appreciate the ranking member's recognition of my hard work with then Chairman Corker on the DFC.

I just want to congratulate you, Senator Young, on very hard work on a critical piece of legislation that is about to be voted into law.

That is the single best thing we can do to strengthen American competitiveness and innovation, to prepare us to succeed in our global competition with China, and to make a stronger and more creative nation likely for the next generation.

So congratulations on what is a landmark piece of legislation. Thank you.

Senator YOUNG. Thank you, sir.

Senator COONS. I now look forward to one round of questions, at the conclusion of which we will likely close this hearing. So if there are staff of any members who are intending to come and question, make sure that I know now because by the agreement with the ranking member I am going to ask about five minutes of questions and we will wrap this up unless I hear otherwise from the staff of some committee member.

First, I have a series of questions which the Senate Foreign Relations Committee asks of, literally, every nominee and I note, Ambassador Rosenblum, you made reference to having served under Senator Levin.

Yes, he would be pleased to know that we continue to exercise a forceful oversight.

So a simple yes or no from each of the five nominees would suffice.

Do you agree to appear before this committee and make officials from your office available to the committee and designated staff when invited?

[All witnesses answer in the affirmative.]

Senator COONS. Do you commit to keep this committee fully and currently informed about the activities under your purview?

[All witnesses answer in the affirmative.]

Senator COONS. Do you commit to engaging in meaningful consultation while policies are being developed, not just providing notification after the fact?

[All witnesses answer in the affirmative.]

Senator COONS. And, last, do you commit to promptly responding to requests for briefings and information as requested by this committee and its designated staff?

[All witnesses answer in the affirmative.]

Senator COONS. Wonderful. Thank you, all.

Mr. Talwar, I will start with you.

I had the opportunity to speak with the President on my way back from the floor vote—he wishes you all the best—and we reminisced about how I first met you when you were in service to the then senator on, literally, this committee many years ago.

I appreciate your raising the DFC. I am a great believer in its capabilities, in particular, as an alternative pathway to development financing that allows for higher standards—labor standards, environmental standards, and transparency.

How do you imagine the DFC being helpful in your future role, if confirmed, as U.S. Ambassador to Morocco?

Mr. TALWAR. Thanks so much for the question, Senator, and, again, I do want to commend you and Senator Corker for having authored the bill that—and the act that created the DFC.

I think it is a powerful tool in terms of being able to promote development in a way that is consistent with our values, and the DFC actually is becoming more active in Morocco.

There are about three projects which have been financed valued at over $100 million in areas like climate resiliency and sustainable business environment, and there are about 10 more projects—actually more than 10—which are in the pipeline now and those will be in areas such as health care and some others as well.

And I think this is just an incredibly powerful tool and it is coming exactly at the right time in terms of this upping of our game because, as in my exchange with Senator Young, I mentioned how China is really beginning to do the same thing.

And, of course, if you put the side by side, I think our approach and the DFC approach—free markets, transparency, environmental consideration, workers' rights—stands in sharp contrast to the Chinese approach of nontransparency, state centric, et cetera.

So I think this will be a very powerful tool and, if confirmed, I will absolutely be working closely with the DFC and I look forward to consulting with you on this as well.

Senator COONS. Thank you. I look forward to that.

I have visited Morocco several times, initially principally to advocate for the Clementine exports from Morocco to the Port of Wilmington, Delaware, but then later for a more expanded conversation about our security and values partnership, and I may return

to ask about the Abraham Accords. But I need to for now keep moving, if I might.

Mr. Henick, talk to me about how you will work to promote liberalizing political and economic reforms, and whether you see room for an expanded partnership between the United States and Uzbekistan in foreign assistance.

Dr. HENICK. Yes, Senator, absolutely I do see room for us to continue to deepen that partnership.

Uzbekistan is really at a critical juncture right now. The reform program that President Mirziyoyev instituted began six years ago and some of the reforms have been incredibly successful.

But I think they are now getting to the point where it is going to be more and more difficult to stay the course as you start to approach things like really strengthening civil society, strengthening independent media, implementing rule of law.

We have had under Ambassador Rosenblum's leadership a lot of success in partnering with the Government of Uzbekistan using our assistance programs, particularly in the area of rule of law, to start to strengthen these reforms and we are starting to see real results.

If confirmed, Senator, I would certainly continue to use those tools as well as, if I may offer, I think the Development Finance Corporation also can play a critical role in Central Asia where it does not have a large profile right now but three of your nominees on this panel havebeen working over the last several years to try to work with the DFC to make it clear to other outside investors in the region that we, too, are prepared to offer our own investments and investments that bring the kind of quality and represent our values and can be a real alternative to other countries in the region.

Senator COONS. Thank you, Mr. Viguerie. I do think—excuse me, thank you, Dr. Henick.

I do think one of our key challenges—you are going to tell me how much time I have—one of our core challenges is giving the DFC the resources that it needs and deserves to be able to grow to scale—I am trying to clear an annoying budgetary scoring rule that prevents them from fully utilizing equity—and to syndicate to partner with other nations that are also open societies and want to promote more transparent, more sustainable alternatives to Chinese financing.

I would be interested, if I could, Mr. Viguerie, about how you would see our working to provide alternatives to Chinese financing in Kyrgyzstan but also how do we support a resurgence of democratic governance?

Mr. VIGUERIE. Thank you for the question, sir.

On the question of economic alternatives, I understand the U.S. Embassy has already been focused through assistance on the interesting development of a potential IT sector in Kyrgyzstan, which I think reflects—the growth of this reflects the fact it is a more open society than some of its neighbors.

The embassy also has an English language program for professionals, which will also go far to promote this new sector.

On the DFC itself, I understand that the embassy has been in contact with Kyrgyz officials. There, the challenge is to find inter-

nationally bankable projects that the DFC will be interested in and that the Kyrgyz make available. Obviously, it will become a large focus for me, if confirmed.

On democracy itself, it has definitely been a unique aspect of Kyrgyzstan. We support it through assistance through small grants. I think, as an ambassador, one of my most important—if confirmed, my most important duties is to promote the expansion of rule of law and anti-corruption in Kyrgyzstan.

Senator COONS. Thank you.

If I might, Ambassador Rosenblum, just continue on that line.

How do we use the tools, both support for civil society, advocating for democracy—how do we succeed in holding the Chinese accountable for the gross human rights violations happening in Xinjiang and how would you advance our relationship with Kazakhstan?

I was struck at their hesitancy—their refusal to publicly embrace and endorse Russia's aggression in Ukraine, Russia's annexation attempts, recognition of the so-called independent republics in the Donbas.

How would you work to advance these core goals?

Ambassador ROSENBLUM. Senator, thank you for the question.

It is an ongoing challenge for Kazakhstan to be where it is, to share these big borders with China and Russia and also to be so dependent on them for its trade, its oil exports.

I think 80 percent of Kazakhstan's oil exports transit Russian territory and the Russians have shown recently, just in recent months, the ability to sort of turn that tap off when they want to, and it sent a very strong message recognized by President Tokayev of Kazakhstan, who has publicly said, we have to do something to diversify our oil exports and not to rely just on this pipeline.

And there are ways that we can support them in these efforts to diversify, to build its relations outside of its Russia and China neighbors. DFC was already mentioned. I think that could also play a role in Kazakhstan as well. Promoting more U.S. investment coming in, encouraging U.S. companies to locate there.

Sometimes it is difficult for U.S. companies to compete on price or on the financing terms they can offer. I found this in my service in Uzbekistan repeatedly.

We have to make a case helping—working with the companies that U.S. companies bring a value that others do not. It is a long-term value and it pays off in the long term both in the products they make and the investments they make in people. We have seen this repeatedly in Uzbekistan and I expect the same would be true in Kazakhstan, if I am confirmed.

You also mentioned the situation with the human rights abuses, the atrocities in Xinjiang and Kazakhstan's position on that. I think it is important to emphasize that, again, Kazakhstan faces the reality of having this big, powerful neighbor that it depends on for so much.

At the same time, there are a million and a half Kazakhs living in Xinjiang, many of whom have also been victims of the repression there and, as a result, Kazakhstan, in my view, has done what it can to protect people, for example, who escape, who cross the bor-

der, and they have consistently followed a nonrefoulement policy. They have not sent people back.

If I am confirmed, I will continue to press for that policy to continue as well as to allow victims of Chinese repression in Kazakhstan to organize and speak out freely, to highlight the human rights abuses there.

It is not always an easy issue to deal with in the context of Kazakhstan and, yet, I think we have a strong enough partnership that we can continue to promote accountability for the horrific human rights abuses in Xinjiang.

Senator COONS. If I might, for all three of you, I am grateful for the skill and the study and the experience and the diligence you will bring to these three absolutely critical Central Asian republics.

It is a part of the world that does not get the attention that it deserves here in the Congress but that is critical to the future. They were at the crossroads of commerce for centuries. They are at the center of renewed focus and attention by China and Russia, and our ability to show what free and open societies can do and what democracy can bring—forgive me, I am getting a call from the floor.

I just—I look forward to hearing from you and supporting you in your service in these nations.

Last, if I might, Mr. Hood, I remember well a visit to Tunisia around the time that the Quartet received the Nobel Prize. It was exciting. There was a vibrancy to the democracy and civil society there.

We met with a very wide range of leaders from parliament, from the judiciary, from the executive, and the striking backsliding, the transformation back to an authoritarian state in recent days is truly alarming.

I would be interested in how you think we can best strengthen civil society, how we can push back on Putin's misinformation. There is an active and successful disinformation campaign that is leading many on the continent to believe that it is American sanctions and actions, not Russia's aggression, that are causing skyrocketing food and fertilizer and fuel prices.

So how do we counter Russian disinformation, strengthen civil society, and maintain true to our values while also maintaining this critical strategic relationship?

Mr. HOOD. Thank you for the question, Senator.

I think, in a word, I would say engagement. I hope that we can welcome you back to Tunisia along with your colleagues because I think it is critical and powerful when representatives of our legislative branch visit us at our embassies overseas and engage with our foreign interlocutors.

I think that is all the more important in a place like Tunisia where they have been going through political turbulence and where Tunisians are calling out for change. They are hungry. They are tired. They are unemployed.

They want their country to have economic prosperity while also having the Government protect their fundamental rights, and that is exactly what I am going to try to help them to do, if I am confirmed, through our engagement, through our assistance programs, that we are shifting to focus more on amplifying the voices of civil

society and institutions and organizations that can hold accountable executive power no matter what the results of the referendum or the legislative elections that are projected for December.

With regard to the misinformation, I think we still have a very powerful voice in the United States of America and so I will use it. I will ask for help from the legislative branch and from other parts of Washington as well but as well our Group of Seven partners that the Administration has been working with diligently for the past year to make clear what the world's democracies expect and hope to see in Tunisia, not just for the people but also for the Government.

Senator COONS. Thank you. Let me make a closing comment, if I might.

Every time I have the opportunity to visit one of our embassies overseas I try to visit with mid-level career Foreign Service Officers, civil servants, foreign nationals who work as part of our embassy teams, and ask for ideas and suggestions for ways that we could make the life of Foreign Service families, in particular, but the lives of all who serve with us as development and diplomacy professionals easier.

I do now chair the Subcommittee of Appropriations that funds the State Department and USAID. This committee will be considering an authorizing bill on August 3rd, and there are small but important things.

One of the things currently being debated is providing access to the internet as a utility in a way that in countries where it is incredibly expensive, to make it available without draining the household resources, ways that we can have dual career families where they work for different agencies or work in the public sector and private sector more successfully transition from post to post.

We talked in a hearing yesterday about the importance of having paid internships to promote diversity within the ranks of the Foreign Service.

All of this interests me intensely and I appreciate that several of you raised that, as an ambassador, the safety and the security and the vibrancy of the many people who serve our nation in the posts for which you will, if confirmed, be responsible encourage me because paying attention to the needs of those who dedicate their lives to representing us overseas is an important part, in my view, of your service and of mine.

Let me close by thanking Sarosh and Dominique, Kathryn, Sharon, and Anne for being here and for supporting your spouses and your families, and if I got this right and I probably did not, Haris and Ilyas, Oskar, Carmen and, I think, Fiona and Henry, William, George, and Clara.

Many of you cited your parents as inspiration for your taking this step forward—Puneet, talking about your parents taking the risk of coming to the United States—parents who served in our military overseas, parents who are not able to witness this today but who supported you, and then spouses and children who have been a part of your career of service.

Thank you all for what you do to represent our nation in difficult, distant, dangerous parts of the world and know that all of us in the Senate appreciate your service.

The record for this hearing will remain open until tomorrow, the close of business on Thursday, July 28th. So for any staff who are listening, make sure any questions for the record are submitted no later than Thursday.

And with that, this confirmation hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 12:50 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

Additional Material Submitted for the Record

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO HON. PUNEET TALWAR BY SENATOR ROBERT MENENDEZ

Bilateral Relationship

Question. As U.S. Ambassador to the Kingdom of Morocco, you will be responsible for representing not only America's strategic interests and priorities, but also American values. One of the more contentious aspects of the U.S.-Morocco relationship is the issue of human rights.

- How do you plan on engaging with the Moroccan Government regarding human rights concerns, particularly as it pertains to free speech and the rights of activists in the Western Sahara?

Answer. If confirmed, I will prioritize human rights and directly engage the Government of Morocco to raise concerns including allegations of mistreatment of detainees by security forces; restrictions on the freedoms of expression, peaceful assembly, association, and religion; and discrimination against women. This will include human concerns in Western Sahara. The United States maintains a dialogue on human rights issues with the Government of Morocco and with members of Moroccan civil society. If confirmed, I will participate in these dialogues with other colleagues in the State Department. I also will meet regularly with civil society groups and advocates for human rights and encourage my team to do the same. The President and the Secretary have been clear that our relationships with all our partners will be more sustainable with improvements on human rights. If confirmed, I will continue to work closely with Moroccan leaders to protect human rights, in line with Morocco's international commitments.

Normalization with Israel

Question. Last week, Israel Defense Forces (IDF) chief Aviv Kochavi visited Morocco, building on normalization efforts between Morocco and Israel.

- As part of the Administration's efforts to increase regional cooperation, how do you plan on working with both Moroccan and Israeli officials to enhance security integration and cooperation? How do you see relations between the two countries evolving?

Answer. Morocco-Israel ties have already created real benefits for both countries. Business relations are growing rapidly, and direct flights have started, making it easier for hundreds of thousands of Israelis of Moroccan decent to visit the land of their ancestors. Morocco became the first Arab country to sign a defense cooperation agreement with Israel and the Chief of Staff of the Israel Defense Forces recently made a landmark visit to Morocco. In March, Moroccan Foreign Minister Bourita joined with Secretary Blinken and foreign ministers from Bahrain, Egypt, and the UAE at the historic Negev Summit. The meeting launched the Negev Forum, a framework for regional integration and cooperation, including working groups on regional security, food and water security, education, health, tourism, and clean energy. If confirmed, I will look for opportunities to work with Morocco to further expand the circle of peace and cooperation with Israel in the region, including in the area of security integration and cooperation.

Food Security

Question. Many countries in the Middle East and North Africa continue to experience surging prices and the shortage of essential food supplies as a result of Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine. Increasing prices have led to widespread anger and social unrest in the region many times before, most notably during the Arab Spring.

- What is your assessment of the current global food security crisis, particularly as it pertains to Morocco, and how can the U.S. mitigate the short and long-

term effects in the region? If confirmed, what role do you see yourself playing in mitigating these effects?

Answer. Morocco is currently suffering from what may be the worst drought in 30 years and the rise in the price of wheat as a result of Putin's invasion of Ukraine. Morocco is likely to increase its wheat imports from five million tons to six million tons but at this point the Government is confident there will be no disruptions to domestic supply or a reduction in wheat subsidies. Morocco received four percent of its wheat imports from Russia and 20 percent from Ukraine in 2021. If confirmed, I will carefully monitor the situation and work with colleagues in Washington to support Morocco's food security.

Anomalous Health Incidents

Question. I am very concerned about directed energy attacks on U.S. Government personnel (so-called Anomalous Health Incidents). Ensuring the safety and security of our personnel abroad falls largely on individual Chiefs of Mission and the response of officers at post. It is imperative that any individual who reports a suspected incident be responded to promptly, equitably, and compassionately.

- Do you agree these incidents must be taken seriously, and pose a threat to the health of U.S. personnel?

Answer. Yes.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to ensuring that any reported incident is treated seriously and reported quickly through the appropriate channels, and that any affected individuals receive prompt access to medical care?

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, I will have no higher priority than the safety and well-being of Mission personnel and will work in close partnership with the Department's AHI Coordinator, the Department's Health Incident Response Task Force, and the broader government-wide effort to ensure the full resources of the U.S. Government are brought to bear to get to the bottom of these incidents and to ensure access to needed care for those affected.

Question. Do you commit to meeting with medical staff and the RSO at post to discuss any past reported incidents and ensure that all protocols are being followed?

Answer. Yes. If confirmed, I would be committed to providing Mission Morocco personnel with the most up-to-date information available, as we learn more, including guidance on how to respond if they have concerns that they might have experienced an incident and how to access medical care.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO HON. PUNEET TALWAR BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Policy Priorities

Question. Please outline your policy priorities and objectives as the United States Ambassador to Morocco.

Answer. Morocco's commitment to our strategic partnership undergirds U.S. security goals in the region and generates dividends across a range of U.S. national and regional security equities. If confirmed, ensuring the safety and security of the Embassy and Consulate teams and American citizens in Morocco, helping Morocco and Israel cement their growing relationship, support for a political solution for Western Sahara through a U.N.-led process, building on our strong security partnership, enhancing our economic ties including through advocacy for American business and exports, and increasing protection for human rights would be my policy priority areas.

Western Sahara

Question. The Trump administration reversed longstanding U.S. policy on Western Sahara in exchange for Morocco's entry into the Abraham Accords and normalization with Israel. Previously, the United States had recognized neither Morocco's claim, nor the self-declared government led by the independence-seeking Polisario Front.

- Do you consider the Trump administration's recognition of Moroccan sovereignty over Western Sahara a positive or negative development?

Answer. I believe that there is no substitute for a negotiated solution that can provide an enduring and dignified resolution for the people of Western Sahara and the region. In my judgment, it is positive that the U.N. relaunched a negotiations

process in 2021 led by U.N. Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General Staffan de Mistura; that the parties, neighboring states, and international partners have lent their full support to this political process and engaged with the Personal Envoy in good faith; and that violence that rekindled in 2020 with the suspension of the ceasefire has ebbed. The previous administration's statements are a historical fact, and if confirmed, I will place my emphasis on working in support of the U.N. and together with international partners to advance a credible political process able to garner broad international support.

Question. Do you consider the Trump administration's decision on Western Sahara as reversible?

Answer. On December 10, 2020, the previous administration issued a presidential proclamation that recognized Morocco's sovereignty over Western Sahara. While I am not in a position to offer a legal analysis, I am not aware of any restrictions that would in principle preclude the current or a future administration from evaluating a previously issued presidential proclamation. The previous administration's statements are a historical fact, and if confirmed, I would place my emphasis on fully supporting the U.N.-led diplomatic process for Western Sahara.

Question. As a consequence of the U.S. decision to grant Moroccan sovereignty over Western Sahara, what is an appropriate U.S. consulate presence? Brick and mortar, virtual or none at all?

Answer. My understanding is that Mission Morocco is able to fulfill its mission with the current posture of a U.S. Embassy in Rabat and Consulate-General in Casablanca. Personnel assigned to the Mission regularly travel to Western Sahara and directly engage with both Moroccan Government officials and non-government organizations, including civil society and human rights activists. In addition, we continue to host a virtual presence post for Western Sahara. If confirmed, I will work to ensure that the Mission is able to provide timely and accurate reporting on the full range of issues in Western Sahara.

Question. MINURSO efforts to find a political solution to Western Sahara have yielded uneven results. What is your characterization of MINURSO's effectiveness and how would you set conditions for a political solution?

Answer. As penholder at the U.N. Security Council for MINURSO and Western Sahara, the United States' focus is on ensuring that the mandate allows the U.N.-led process to advance a political solution that can deliver tangible results for the people of Western Sahara and the region. While my understanding is that the Administration strongly supports the U.N.-led process and the efforts of the U.N. Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General for Western Sahara who leads it, no solution to the dispute can be imposed. My understanding is the Administration aims to fully empower the MINURSO mission and the Personal Envoy to effectively carry out their roles in support of achieving a political solution. If confirmed, I will support the efforts of the Personal Envoy and work with the Moroccan Government to support the achievement of a political solution.

Question. What are the prospects and regional implications of a warm peace or detente between Algeria and Morocco?

Answer. The United States views Morocco and Algeria as valued partners and hopes that tensions can be reduced and diplomatic relations restored. Improving relations, while a long-term process, could eventually enable both countries to better address shared bilateral and regional issues such as terrorism, illegal migration, drug trafficking, and trade integration.

Abraham Accords

Question. Morocco's normalization with Israel has the potential to reap significant economic and security benefits.

- Please outline your thoughts on Morocco's normalization with Israel and plans to expand and strengthen this relationship.

Answer. Morocco-Israel ties have already created real benefits for both countries. Business relations are growing rapidly, and direct flights have started, making it easier for hundreds of thousands of Israelis of Moroccan decent to visit the land of their ancestors. In March, Moroccan Foreign Minister Bourita joined with Secretary Blinken and foreign ministers from Bahrain, Egypt, and the UAE at the historic Negev Summit. The meeting launched the Negev Forum, a framework for regional integration and cooperation, including working groups on regional security, food and water security, education, health, tourism, and clean energy. If confirmed, I will work to engage with Morocco, Israel, and other countries in the region to normalize

relations and look for other opportunities to expand integration and cooperation among countries in the region.

Mil-to-Mil Relationship

Question. Select members of Congress have sought to curtail the U.S.-Morocco mil-to-mil relationship over Western Sahara concerns—even as far as to reject Moroccan participation in AFRICOM's capstone exercise African Lion.

- Please provide your perspectives on the mil-to-mil relationship with Morocco and implications for limiting that relationship.

Answer. Morocco has been a steadfast security partner. Morocco's relationship with the United States encompasses nearly every U.S. security and strategic interest in the region. Morocco occupies a vital geographic strategic position, is one of AFRICOM's most capable partners on the continent, participating in over 100 military-to-military engagements yearly, and hosts AFRICAN LION—the largest military exercise on the African continent. These military exercises strengthen interoperability between AFRICOM and more than 40 partner nations and enhance our collective readiness. In addition, Morocco continues to be a major customer for new U.S. equipment, with billions of dollars in planned purchases in the coming decade. If confirmed, I will work with AFRICOM to expand upon Morocco's role as a security exporter for the region and enhance our already strong security cooperation

Economy

Question. Many U.S. companies have bemoaned Moroccan barriers to entry that create an unfavorable economic environment to include excessive bureaucracy, intellectual property issues, and pursuit of criminal litigation against American companies.

- Please outline your understanding of Morocco's economic state, barriers to entry for foreign investment, strategy to improve these conditions.

Answer. The World Bank ranked Morocco 53rd for ease of doing business in 2020. Morocco has made progress in implementing macro-economic policies, trade liberalization, investment incentives, and structural reforms to encourage foreign investment, particularly in export sectors. However, U.S. companies remain concerned about regulatory barriers, digital and intellectual property issues, and access to financing in Morocco. U.S. Government assistance supports Moroccan Government efforts to address these issues and increase transparency and accountability and Mission Morocco engages with key government and civil society actors in the field of anti-corruption. King Mohammed VI's reform plan, the New Development Model, seeks to simplify administrative regulations and encourage foreign investment. If confirmed, I will make it a priority to identify new areas to help advance economic reforms in Morocco, and advocate for U.S. business and exports.

Human Rights, Democracy, and International Organizations

Question. In the State Department's 2022 Trafficking in Persons Report, Morocco was identified to be Tier 2 for not fully meeting the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking. One key area of failure was a lack of proactive screening of migrants and other vulnerable populations and identification measures, which leave populations vulnerable to penalization for unlawful acts which traffickers compelled them to commit.

- How can you work with the host government and the Moroccan Security Forces to increase their capacity for proactive measures?

Answer. If confirmed, I will urge the Moroccan Government to increase its efforts to investigate and prosecute potential trafficking crimes, to proactively identify trafficking victims, and to provide specialized protection services catering to the needs of trafficking victims. Specifically, I will urge the Government to finalize, approve, and implement standardized victim identification procedures and a national victim referral mechanism.

Question. Both Spain and Moroccan Governments have identified trafficking groups as likely to have played an influential role in the recent border crossing incident at Melilla, what steps would you take as Ambassador to help Morocco improve its efforts to meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work to identify ways the United States can support ongoing Moroccan efforts to address the challenges of migration, human smuggling, border security, and trafficking in persons.

Question. Morocco has deepened relations with Israel after normalization in 2020 through high level official visits. As a largely Islamic state, King Mohammed VI officially recognized the Jewish community as part of Moroccan culture.

- What is your assessment of the King's recognition and prospects of religious freedoms in Morocco?

Answer. The Moroccan constitution provides for freedom of worship and freedom of conscience. Morocco has a long tradition of religious tolerance and coexistence, particularly between Muslim and historic Jewish communities. When Secretary Blinken released this year's annual religious freedom report, he highlighted Morocco as an example of progress on religious freedom. He noted that Morocco launched an initiative to renovate Jewish heritage sites and to include Jewish history in the Moroccan public-school curriculum.. If confirmed, I will support Morocco's efforts to respect the historic Jewish community in Morocco and encourage religious freedom for all faiths in the country.

Question. What actions would you take with the host government to continue to expand this opening of religious freedom in the country?

Answer. If confirmed, I will engage on this important issue in three key areas. First, I will work to identify ways the United States can support religious freedom. Second, I will engage with a wide variety of religious leaders in Morocco and maintains an active dialogue with the Moroccan Government on religious freedom issues. Third, I will stress the importance of the equal and transparent application of the laws governing religious organizations.

Question. In the State Department's 2021 Report on International Religious Freedom, only Sunni Muslims and Jews are recognized by the King. Many Shia Muslims and other minority groups fear registration for reprisals by the Sunni majority.

- If confirmed, how will you engage with the host government and civil society on strengthening the societal and governmental respect for international religious freedom?

Answer. belief for members of religious minority groups. I would meet with government officials, including from the Ministries of Interior (MOI) and Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs (MEIA), to stress the importance of religious freedom and tolerance, including the rights of minority communities. I would also hold regular meetings and discussions with members of religious minority and majority communities throughout the country and direct embassy and consulate-general representatives to highlight the importance of protecting members of religious minority groups and interfaith dialogue.

Question. In the State Department's 2021 Human Rights Report, Morocco was noted to have credible reports of significant human rights abuses such as torture or degrading treatment by security forces, serious restrictions on free expression, substantial interference of the freedom of assembly and association, and criminalization of LGBTQI conduct.

- If confirmed, what steps will you take to continue to address these concerns with the host government?

Answer. If confirmed, I will prioritize promoting human rights in my engagement, including respect for freedom of speech, assembly, and association. I will encourage legislative reforms to protect human rights, including freedom of expression, in line with Morocco's international commitments. I also will work with the Moroccan Government to address concerns regarding actions by members of the security forces and ensure it can fulfill its commitments and responsibilities to its people. The promotion of the human rights of LGBTQI+ persons will be one of my highest priorities, including the reduction of discrimination and violence against LGBTQI+ persons and working toward decriminalization of same-sex status and conduct. I would use Pride Month as an opportunity to promote LGBTQI+ rights.

Question. How will you direct your embassy to work with civil society organizations to improve the human rights situation on the ground?

Answer. If confirmed, promoting human rights will be among my highest priorities. I will meet regularly with human rights defenders, civil society activists, and other non-governmental organizations in the United States and in Morocco and I will direct members of the Embassy staff to do the same.

Question. The Office of Multilateral Strategy and Personnel (MSP) in the State Department's bureau of International Organizations is leading a whole-of-government effort to identify, recruit, and install qualified, independent personnel at the U.N., including in elections for specialized bodies like the International Tele-

communications Union (ITU). There is an American candidate, Doreen Bogdan-Martin, who if elected would be the first American and first woman to lead the ITU. She is in a tough race that will require early, consistent engagement across capitals and within the U.N. member states.

- If confirmed, do you commit to demarching the Moroccan Government and any other counterparts necessary to encourage their support of Ms. Bogdan-Martin?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to demarching the Moroccan Government in support of Ms. Bogdan-Martin and working to educate Moroccan Government interlocutors on the importance of her candidacy.

Question. If confirmed, how can you work with the International Organizations (IO) bureau and other stakeholders to identify, recruit, and install qualified Americans in positions like the Junior Program Officer (JPO) program at the U.N.?

Answer. The Junior Professional Officer program is one of the key opportunities offered by the U.N. to encourage young professionals interested in serving in international organizations, and it provides them with hands-on experience across various U.N. agencies. If confirmed, I will coordinate closely with my colleagues in the International Organization Affairs Bureau and other stakeholders to ensure we have sufficient resources, tools, and staffing to support more positions for American citizen JPOs in the U.N. system. With these resources, we can work strategically to increase the number of JPO opportunities funded by the U.S. Government into key agencies and bodies that work on U.S. priorities, expand our recruitment and outreach activities to ensure these opportunities are widely known and available to interested U.S. citizens, and provide tools and services to strengthen our competitiveness in placing qualified American citizens into the U.N. system.

Question. Morocco had a 21 percent rate of voting coincidence with the U.S. in the U.N. General Assembly and in the Security Council in 2021.

- What is your assessment of this issue?

Answer. If confirmed I will maintain close consultations with the Moroccan Government on issues at the United Nations and advocate for their support of U.S. positions. In my view, direct engagement with senior officials in capital can be an effective way to advocate for support at the United Nations.

Question. If confirmed, what concrete actions can you take to engage with the Moroccans on anticipated votes in the U.N. system that would increase their voting coincidence with the U.S.?

Answer. If confirmed, I will develop close coordination with our mission at the United Nations to enhance our direct messaging with the Moroccan Government interlocutors in Rabat and emphasize the importance of issues and votes at the United Nations.

State Department Management and Public Diplomacy

Question. Many U.S. missions have been under enormous stress over the last few years, in large part due to COVID.

- What is your understanding of morale throughout Mission Rabat?

Answer. My understanding is that morale throughout Mission Morocco is very good. Traditional indicators such as staff retention rates, support this understanding. If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with the entire Mission team to identify and resolve issues which adversely affect staff morale.

Question. How do you intend to improve morale at Mission Rabat?

Answer. If confirmed, I will stress open communication and inclusivity to ensure that we continuously identify and address the concerns of all Mission team members by utilizing every tool and resources available from the Department. Collectively, we will maintain a safe, supportive work culture that empowers and develops our colleagues.

Question. How do you intend to create a unified mission and vision at Mission Rabat?

Answer. If confirmed, I will make it a priority to create a shared vision and effort that advances U.S. interests consistent with the Integrated Country Strategy (ICS). I would engage with all components of the Mission to seek their input on priorities, and I would follow up regularly to ensure execution and to make any necessary adjustments.

Question. Management is a key responsibility for Chiefs of Mission. How would you describe your management style?

Answer. Over the course of my career in government, I have had the opportunity to lead diverse, talented, interagency teams. My style is inclusive, and I seek to impart values of respect, integrity, and collegiality while also setting high standards. I listen to team members who have expertise. I encourage fresh thinking and constructive debate. I believe in achieving outcomes, setting clear objectives, and empowering my team to accomplish our shared goals while ensuring that they understand their work is connected to the larger enterprise. I believe in recognizing team members for their work, and I believe in fostering their career development and personal growth.

Question. Do you believe it is ever acceptable or constructive to berate subordinates, either in public or private?

Answer. It is never acceptable to berate subordinates. If confirmed, I commit to building a positive and inclusive work environment that empowers employees.

Question. How do you envision your leadership relationship with your Deputy Chief of Mission?

Answer. A successful relationship between an ambassador and a Deputy Chief of Mission is critical to a successful diplomatic mission. If confirmed, I envision a relationship that features close coordination, partnership, and strong communication on the full range of mission issues, both internal and external.

Question. If confirmed, what leadership responsibilities do you intend to entrust to your Deputy Chief of Mission?

Answer. If confirmed, I will forge a close partnership with my Deputy Chief of Mission. I would empower her to be the chief operating officer of Mission Morocco. This extends beyond internal management. The Deputy Chief of Mission must play an important policy, diplomatic, and strategic role, including stepping in for the ambassador when absent from post. She must be seen as empowered in the eyes of Mission team members and the Moroccan Government so that she is seen as speaking authoritatively for the Ambassador and the United States.

Question. In order to create and continue employee excellence at the Department, accurate and direct employee evaluation reports (EERs) for Foreign Service Officers are imperative, though often lacking.

- Do you believe that it is important to provide employees with accurate, constructive feedback on their performances in order to encourage improvement and reward those who most succeeded in their roles?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to encouraging improvement in employee performance and recognizing achievement within Mission Morocco. The development of a motivated and effective workforce is critical for the effective diplomacy necessary to advance U.S. interests.

Question. If confirmed, would you support and encourage clear, accurate, and direct feedback to employees in order to improve performance and reward high achievers?

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, I will work closely with my Deputy Chief of Mission, consul general in Casablanca, and management team to recognize the success of staff and identify and develop strategies where there are opportunities for growth and improvement. Accurate, constructive feedback and rewarding success are essential tools in improving performance.

Question. It is imperative that U.S. diplomats get outside of posts abroad to meet with local actors, including host government officials, non-government organizations, and fellow foreign diplomats stationed in Morocco.

- In your opinion, do U.S. diplomats get outside of our embassy walls enough to accomplish fully their missions?

Answer. I agree that it is imperative for U.S. diplomats be visible outside of diplomatic compounds to meet with the local actors in order to advance American interests and values. This includes engagement with a wide range of interlocutors including in rural and underserved areas, women, youth, and vulnerable populations. Our ability to engage these audiences is crucial to furthering our overall foreign policy goals and essential to fully accomplishing our mission. If confirmed, I will encourage Mission Morocco team members to engage widely and often outside of diplomatic compounds.

Question. How do you intend to improve the ability of U.S. diplomats to better access all local populations?

Answer. If confirmed, I intend to lead by example and will seek every opportunity to engage with local populations throughout the country. U.S. assistance and public diplomacy programs are focused on supporting rural populations, women, youth, and underserved populations, and I pledge to publicly support those programs through visits and direct engagement with beneficiaries, local NGOs, and local governments helping to support and implement these programs. In addition, Mission Morocco boasts a robust Peace Corps program, which will welcome sixty volunteers back to Morocco in September 2022 and will be hosting one of the largest Peace Corps programs worldwide in this challenging post-pandemic era. Throughout the Mission I will encourage staff to continue their engagement with local populations and in ensuring the best possible reporting accurately which reflects a wide variety of opinions throughout the country.

Question. Public diplomacy is an important aspect of U.S. foreign policy efforts.

- What is the public diplomacy environment like in Morocco?

Answer. Morocco is a major non-NATO ally, a Free Trade Agreement partner, an ally in countering violent extremism, and provides a supportive environment for U.S. engagement. A solid majority of the Moroccan public has favorable attitudes toward the United States and strong majorities support closer economic ties and security cooperation. Moroccans hold the U.S. education system, job creation, and U.S. technology in high regard. Morocco is home to one of State Department's Near East Asia Bureau's largest Fulbright programs and benefits from an extensive alumni network. The public diplomacy environment in Morocco is rich with opportunity to engage local populations through traditional media, social media, and local programming. Dar America, the American Space in Casablanca, plus the American Space in Oujda, are key platforms for engaging youth on U.S. society, entrepreneurship, values, and policies. If confirmed, I will take an active role in public diplomacy and encourage Mission Morocco team members to do the same.

Question. What public diplomacy challenges do U.S. diplomats face there?

Answer. My understanding is that local challenges include high unemployment, political disengagement, and general pessimism among youth which affect our capacity to fully engage those audiences. While older Moroccans have positive general attitudes toward the United States, they are more skeptical when it comes to specific policy issues such as trade with the U.S. or U.S. counterterrorism efforts. U.S. public diplomacy efforts in Morocco also face competition from the People's Republic of China (PRC), who have three Confucius Institutes in Morocco and sponsor academic scholarships and academies that provide technology training and education. If confirmed, I will work to expand and highlight Mission Morocco's efforts in these areas.

Question. How do you balance the importance of Main State versus the in-country mission when it comes to tailoring public diplomacy messages for foreign audiences?

Answer. If confirmed, I would direct that Mission Morocco's public messaging campaigns remain first and foremost centered around U.S. foreign policy objectives. I would seek to deliver clear messages in such a way that our local audiences understand our perspective and policy agenda. To ensure unity of messaging, I would ensure the Mission's public diplomacy team works closely with Washington public affairs teams to ensure that our official communication is clear and relevant for local audiences.

Question. "Anomalous health incidents," commonly referred to as "Havana Syndrome," have been debilitating and sidelining U.S. diplomats around the world for years. They have caused serious, negative consequences for U.S. diplomacy, yet many believe that the Department is not doing enough to care for, protect, and communicate to its personnel.

- If confirmed, do you commit to taking this threat seriously?

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, I will have no higher priority than the safety and well-being of Mission personnel and will work in close partnership with the Department's AHI Coordinator, the Department's Health Incident Response Task Force, and the broader government-wide effort to ensure the full resources of the U.S. Government are brought to bear to get to the bottom of these incidents and to ensure access to needed care for those affected.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to talking as openly as you can to Mission Rabat personnel?

Answer. If confirmed, I would be committed to providing Mission Morocco personnel with the most up-to-date information available, as we learn more, including

guidance on how to respond if they have concerns that they might have experienced an incident and how to access medical care.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO HON. PUNEET TALWAR BY SENATOR MARCO RUBIO

Question. Whether we want it or not, the United States is currently engaged in a great power competition with the Chinese Communist Party. Officials from the past and current administrations have agreed that the CCP is the only power willing and able to challenge U.S. leadership on the global stage. In practice, this means undermining our open system here at home and undermining our alliances and credibility abroad. While CCP is most interested in becoming a regional hegemon in the Indo-Pacific, they have global aspirations. In January, Morocco became just the latest North African country to sign an agreement to join the CCP's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) through an implementation accord.

- Is the CCP a threat to the United States?

Answer. As Secretary Blinken said on May 26, we will compete with the People's Republic of China (PRC) to defend our interests and build our vision for the future. If confirmed, I will carefully monitor CCP activity and use the full range of tools provided by Congress to invest in our partnership with Morocco to ensure we remain the partner of choice on a range of economic and security issues. I will actively engage the Moroccan Government to highlight the risks associated with People's Republic of China (PRC) engagement that could impact Morocco's security and sovereignty as well as U.S. interests, and I will ensure that our vision of a positive partnership and regional security and prosperity competes successfully with the PRC.

Question. Is rising CCP influence in Morocco a threat to the United States?

Answer. The People's Republic of China (PRC) has increased efforts in recent years to deepen ties with Morocco. PRC companies are active in the technology and infrastructure sectors, and I believe these activities merit careful attention and action so that they do not undermine American interests. If confirmed, I will use the full range of tools provided by Congress such as the Development Finance Corporation to increase our engagement with Morocco to provide free-market, transparent, and sustainable solutions to Morocco's economic development needs. I will expand our efforts to promote a fair and equitable business climate for the benefit of U.S. investors and the security of our Allies and partners. I will also strive to engage and educate Moroccan public and private sector decision makers on the implications of PRC engagement in key areas such as 5G technology.

Question. Is the CCP expanding the Belt and Road Initiative to Morocco in order to be in a position to control trade flowing through the strategic Strait of Gibraltar? If so, is this concerning?

Answer. The President has made it clear the United States views the People's Republic of China (PRC) as a strategic competitor that challenges the existing rules-based international order. Current direct investment from the PRC in Morocco totals $380 million and is focused on infrastructure, communications, and fishing. This reflects an effort by the PRC to encourage large PRC companies to set up or invest in Morocco—particularly in automotive, aerospace, technology, agriculture, and technology sectors. If confirmed, I would promote a vision of inclusive, open economic growth and stronger ties with U.S. companies.

Question. If the CCP is in a position to control trade through the strait, how could that be used to strangle U.S. trade with Europe?

Answer. The Tanger-Med port, located directly in the Strait of Gibraltar, is the 27th busiest container port in the world and a major priority for growth for the Moroccan Government. The Development Finance Corporation (DFC) has recently worked with LixCap on the development of a cold storage facility at the Tangier-Med port that will have regional transportation implications. If confirmed, I will work with the DFC and others in the United States Government to advance opportunities for U.S. businesses in logistics, maritime shipping, and transportation and work to prevent the PRC from moving into a position in which they would control or significantly influence trade through the strait.

Question. Morocco is a signatory of the historic Abraham Accords, which the previous administration used to normalize relations between Israel and Muslim nations in the Middle East. Improving ties between Israel, our strongest ally in the region,

and other American partners is vital for our national security. A security coalition including Israel would be better able to take on the many counter-terrorism priorities in the Middle East and stand up to the Ayatollahs in Iran. If confirmed, how would you work to build upon the foundations of the Abraham Accords?

Answer. Building on the foundation of the Abraham Accords, the foreign ministers of Morocco, Israel, Bahrain, Egypt, the UAE, and Secretary Blinken met for the Negev summit in March. The participants agreed to form the Negev Forum, a framework for regional cooperation, including working groups on regional security, education, health, food and water security, tourism, and clean energy. If confirmed, I will prioritize Morocco's active participation in the Negev Forum and fully support the deepening ties between Morocco and Israel. Morocco became the first Arab country to sign a defense cooperation agreement with Israel and the Chief of Staff of the Israel Defense Forces recently made a landmark visit to Morocco. If confirmed, I will look for opportunities to work with Morocco to further expand the circle of peace and cooperation with Israel in the region, including in the area of security cooperation.

Question. What is the status of Morocco meeting its goals and commitments under the Abraham Accords?

Answer. Morocco-Israel ties have already created real benefits for both countries. Business relations are growing rapidly, and direct flights have started, making it easier for hundreds of thousands of Israelis of Moroccan decent to visit the land of their ancestors.

Morocco and Israel have signed dozens of memorandums of understanding in a wide range of areas including defense, tourism, investment, culture, and energy. Seven Israel cabinet level officials have visited Morocco and in March, Moroccan Foreign Minister Bourita joined with Secretary Blinken and foreign ministers from Bahrain, Egypt, and the UAE at the historic Negev Summit. If confirmed, I will prioritize support for Morocco's deepening relationship with Israel.

Question. What can Congress do to further support improving ties between Israel and Morocco?

Answer. If confirmed, I will consult with your office and other members of the committee to identify opportunities for Congressional action, whether through engagement or legislation, on improving ties between Israel and Morocco. I believe that it is critical to translate diplomatic agreements into tangible benefits that are felt by ordinary people so that we can consolidate progress and further expand the circle of peace. If confirmed, I would welcome the opportunity to host you or members for your staff in Morocco to directly work together on this critically important issue.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO HON. PUNEET TALWAR BY SENATOR TODD YOUNG

Question. How can we leverage the sustained success of the African Lion Exercise and deeper connections and interoperability with Morocco to encourage them to bring more to the counterterror fight in the Sahel and West Africa?

Answer. Morocco is a valuable partner in the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS and has contributed F–16s to the Coalition's efforts, as well as a field hospital that has treated more than one million Syrian refugees in Jordan. On May 9–11 Morocco hosted the D–ISIS Ministerial in Marrakech and is co-chair of the Africa Focus working group. Morocco is also co-chair of the Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF) and supports the efforts of other partners in Africa to build their counterterrorism capacity. Morocco is one of AFRICOM's most capable partners on the continent, participating in over 100 military-to-military engagements yearly, and hosts AFRICAN LION—the largest military exercise on the African continent. These military exercises strengthen interoperability between AFRICOM and more than 40 partner nations and enhance our collective readiness. If confirmed, I will work with AFRICOM to expand upon Morocco's role as a security exporter for the region, including amplifying and encouraging Morocco's efforts on counterterrorism and security for the Sahel and West Africa

Question. What is your view of Western Sahara and the U.N.-led political process, and how would you plan to engage on this issue, if confirmed? Who do you believe is the driver of the political impasse there?

Answer. I believe that there is no substitute for a negotiated solution that can provide an enduring and dignified resolution for the people of Western Sahara and the region. In my judgment, it is positive that the U.N. relaunched a negotiations process in 2021 led by U.N. Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General Staffan de Mistura; that the parties, neighboring states, and international partners have lent their full support to this political process and engaged with the Personal Envoy in good faith; and that violence that rekindled in 2020 with the suspension of the ceasefire has ebbed. If confirmed, I will place my emphasis on working in support of the U.N. and together with international partners to advance a credible political process able to garner broad international support.

Question. If confirmed, how would you work with the Department to move forward on establishment of diplomatic presence in the Western Sahara?

Answer. My understanding is that Mission Morocco is able to fulfill its mission with the current posture of a U.S. Embassy in Rabat and Consulate-General in Casablanca. Personnel assigned to the Mission regularly travel to Western Sahara and directly engage with both Moroccan Government officials and non-government organizations, including civil society and human rights activists. In addition, we continue to host a virtual presence post for Western Sahara. If confirmed, I will work to ensure that the Mission is able to provide timely and accurate reporting on the full range of issues in Western Sahara.

Question. A Moroccan company with connections to the royal family is attempting to criminalize a civil dispute stems from the management of the Royal Mansour Hotel in Casablanca, which could subject American executives of the corporate owners of this hotel to potential criminal liability in Morocco, if prosecution continues. How would you engage the Moroccan Government on this matter to ensure a safe environment for the conduct of private business?

Answer. If confirmed, I look forward to being a strong advocate on these issues and would be an advocate for the U.S. business community directly with the Moroccan Government. I would strongly urge Morocco to avoid counter-productive actions and to improve the country's business climate and economic legislative framework, particularly for American companies doing business in Morocco and to promote further commercial opportunities for U.S. companies.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO DR. JONATHAN HENICK BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Question. Since its invasion of Ukraine, Russia has had somewhat diminished influence in Central Asia as it focuses its diplomatic efforts elsewhere. This has opened a window of opportunity for increased U.S. involvement in Uzbekistan.

- In what ways can the United States best take advantage of this opportunity and lay a foundation for continued and permanent progress in the U.S.-Uzbekistan relationship?

Answer. Support for Uzbekistan's independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity is the foundation of U.S. policy towards Uzbekistan. The Kremlin's war in Ukraine has already resulted in terrible human costs, and if Russia does not pay a heavy price for its actions, it will put the survival of other peaceful countries at risk. We welcome the Government of Uzbekistan's refusal to recognize the independence of the so-called Luhansk and Donetsk People's Republics in Ukraine. If confirmed, I will ensure that our shared understanding of Ukraine's sovereignty remains a key issue in our bilateral relationship.

Although the Russian Federation continues to be Uzbekistan's largest trade and investment partner and an important source of remittances, it is increasingly clear that Uzbekistan's ability to secure a more prosperous future rests on its ability to diversify its economic relationships. The United States is uniquely positioned to support Uzbekistan in this effort, which presents an historic opportunity to strengthen U.S. influence in Central Asia. U.S. support for Uzbekistan's accession to the World Trade Organization is particularly important in this regard. Finally, I will also underscore to Uzbekistani authorities the importance of working together to strengthen international sanctions and export controls introduced in response to Russia's further invasion of Ukraine.

Question. How will you work with Uzbekistan's Government and private sector to increase economic ties with the United States?

Answer. The United States is committed to supporting Uzbekistan's economic reform agenda, diversification of trading partners, and connections to the international economy. If nominated, I will urge Uzbekistani officials to strengthen intellectual property protections, combat corruption, improve the investment climate, and follow through on its stated goal of acceding to the WTO. The United States is helping increase the performance of small and medium enterprises throughout the country, with particular focus on women's empowerment, building Uzbekistan's ability to deliver prosperity to its people and to attract more direct foreign investment. The Department of State has also encouraged Uzbekistan to identify private sector projects suitable for U.S. Development Finance Corporation investments, which, if approved, will help build confidence in the viability of Uzbekistan's private sector.

Question. As Ambassador, how will you work to build people-to-people ties between the U.S. and Uzbekistan, particularly to counter Russian influence?

Answer. Uzbekistan enjoys a rich cultural history and is truly the gem of Central Asia. People-to-people ties over the last 30 years have helped build mutual understanding between the people of the United States and Uzbekistan. If confirmed, I look forward to expanding these ties. Since 2018, the United States has worked closely with Uzbekistan to dramatically expand English language instruction across the country. Our American Corners throughout the country offer cultural programs, educational resources, and information on studying in the United States to tens of thousands of people per year. I also look forward, if confirmed, to further expanding English-language programming in Uzbekistan, which will help to open Uzbekistani audiences to alternatives to Russian state media..

Question. Independent journalism that helps the public hold governments and corrupted elites accountable for their actions is under threat throughout Central Asia, and impacts the work of Congressionally funded international media outlets such as RFE/RL. Throughout the region, governments do not consistently respond to requests for comments and interviews on questions of interest to RFE/RL's audiences in the region, and local journalists working for RFE/RL are regularly targeted for retaliation for their journalistic work.

In Uzbekistan, the Government has blocked access to the website of RFE/RL's Uzbek Service. The Government has yet to provide accreditation to local journalists who would like to work for RFE/RL in the country, or to grant RFE/RL permission to open a local bureau. Additionally, RFE/RL journalists (including their relatives) periodically suffer from smear and harassment campaigns, especially following impactful investigations.

- If you are confirmed as U.S. Ambassador, what will you do to support the work of RFE/RL and ensure open access for Congressionally-funded international journalists at your new post?

Answer. A free press is vital to the healthy functioning of nations in transition to more democratic forms of government. If confirmed, I will underscore to Uzbekistani officials the importance of media freedom, in line with our shared values and international commitments as participating states in the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. I will call out the Government's ongoing crackdown on freedoms of expression, including for opposition bloggers, members of civil society, and journalists. We are proud of our growing support for Uzbekistani media, including support for the work of RFE/RL, and I will commit to continuing our efforts in this space.

Question. Corruption at all levels continues to be a problem in Uzbekistan.

- Do you think that the use of the State Department's 7031(c) visa ban authorities could be a useful tool for fighting corruption in Uzbekistan? Why or why not?

Answer. Endemic corruption remains one of the most significant obstacles to the full realization of the Government of Uzbekistan's reform agenda. While many Uzbekistani officials appreciate the severity of the situation and the need for remedial action, there are many with vested interests in the status quo. If confirmed, I will ask Embassy's Country Team to keep all options on the table for combatting corruption, including 7031(c) visa restrictions, and related USAID and INL assistance programs, public messaging campaigns, as well as close interagency cooperation between the Departments of State, Treasury, and Justice.

Question. If confirmed, how will you promote democratic and anti-corruption reforms in Uzbekistan, and in what areas of government is progress most viable?

Answer. The United States continues to encourage Uzbekistani leaders to stay the course and make more substantial progress on the program of reforms that began in 2016. Over the last six years, Uzbekistan has made significant progress modernizing its economy and ending the systematic practice of forced labor in the cotton harvest. However, much remains to be done to strengthen democratic institutions, the rule of law, and expand human rights protections. If confirmed, I will work to advance the rule of law and democratic governance and speak out against corruption and the Government's crackdown on freedoms of expression and association. Continued USAID and INL assistance programming is particularly valuable to making gains in this space.

Question. On July 4, 2022, massive unrest turned violent in the autonomous region of Karakalpakstan concerning its sovereignty and right to secede. Eighteen were killed, 243 wounded, and over 500 were detained. To this day, an estimated 300 people remained detained from the incident.

- What is your assessment of this situation and how might you work with the Uzbek Government to resolve tensions in the region?

Answer. I welcome the Government of Uzbekistan's assurances of a transparent investigation under the auspices of a Parliamentary Commission led by the Office of the Ombudsman. The United States is very interested in the results of the Commission's work but also hears the concerns of civil society that it will not be impartial or fully empowered. It is important that the Commission conduct its work in a manner that is inclusive, thorough, and transparent. If confirmed, I will encourage the Government of Uzbekistan to also invite international human rights experts to review the Commission's investigation. Additionally, we have not lost sight of the fact that concerns over proposed reforms to Uzbekistan's constitution prompted the protests in Karakalpakstan in early July. Accordingly, we have urged the Government of Uzbekistan to invite an Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) Needs Assessment Mission to observe the referendum on the proposed reforms.

Question. In the State Department's 2022 Human Rights report, Uzbekistan was noted for significant human rights abuses such as unlawful or arbitrary killings, torture, politically motivated reprisals, serious restrictions of expression and assembly, inability of the people to change their government peacefully, restrictions of political participation, trafficking in persons, criminalization of same-sex conduct, and significant restrictions to workers freedom.

- If confirmed, what steps would you take with the host government to address these issues?

Answer. The United States is committed to the ongoing program of human rights-related reforms that began in Uzbekistan in 2016. If confirmed, I pledge to advocate for independent and credible investigations of human rights abuses. I will also urger greater political pluralism and space for civil society.

I agree with President Biden that everyone is entitled to dignity and equality, no matter who they are, whom they love, or how they identify. With regards to the human rights of LGBTQI+ persons, our foremost concern is to keep LGBTQI+ persons—and their allies—safe. We engage on these issues led by the "do no harm" principle—in concert with local members of the LGBTQI+ community and human rights defenders' goals.

If confirmed, I will remain committed to raising the human rights of LGBTQI+ persons in our engagements with Uzbekistani interlocutors. We will continue to engage with allies and partners to advance respect for the human rights of LGBTQI+ persons. Additionally, I will continue to press for repeal of sections of the Criminal Code that criminalize consensual sexual relations between men and under which dozens of people are currently detained.

Question. In the report, it was noted that prison conditions are, in some circumstances, harsh and life threatening due to food shortages, gross overcrowding, abuse, and inadequate sanitary conditions and medical care. Amidst the detaining of over several hundred additional prisoners, what would you do to address these conditions with the Uzbek Government?

Answer. If confirmed, I will urge the Government of Uzbekistan to address long-standing concerns about the harsh conditions of its prisons. I will urge the Government to invite in, cooperate with, and take on the recommendations of international prison monitoring experts and, to the extent resources are available, will offer U.S. technical assistance in addressing inadequate prison conditions.

Question. In the State Department's 2022 Trafficking in Persons report, Uzbekistan remained on Tier 2 for not fully meeting the minimum standards for the elimi-

nation of trafficking. One key area of failure was local officials in certain areas impose cotton quotas against the national ban of the practice. This incentivizes mobilization into cotton harvest forced labor, which is currently an administrative violation at first offense.

- If confirmed, how can you work with government officials to increase the effectiveness of laws designed to inhibit these forms of forced labor and larger anti-trafficking work in country?

Answer. Although there is more work to be done, the Government of Uzbekistan has made steady and significant progress towards eliminating the systemic forced labor issues of the Karimov era. If confirmed, I will encourage Uzbekistan's continued close cooperation with USAID and INL on U.S. technical assistance programs that combat human trafficking, including forced labor. I will also review and urge action to address the U.S. recommendations in the Department of State's annual Trafficking in Persons Report with members of Uzbekistan's National Commission to Combat Trafficking in Persons.

Question. The report also notes that a lack of a victim-centered approach or victim/witness protections capabilities severely hinders efficient cooperation by victims and witnesses in investigations and prosecutions, if confirmed, what steps would you take with the Uzbek Government to improve upon these practices?

Answer. If confirmed, I will encourage Uzbekistani officials to prioritize the implementation of the Department of State's recommendation in the annual TIP report, including the recommendation to adopt a victim-centered approach. Existing U.S.-funded technical assistance relationships with Uzbekistan provide a valuable resource in helping Uzbekistan adopt this recommended approach. If confirmed, I will stress the importance of this recommendation to Uzbekistani officials.

Question. In the State Department's 2021 International Religious Freedom report, while Uzbekistan's constitution recognizes the freedom of religion, a new version of the law on "Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations" notes that while exercise of religious freedom is permitted, the process of registration is difficult and many minority non-Muslim religious groups state they continue to face societal pressure from the majority Muslim population, particularly against members of their religious group whom converted from Islam.

- What actions would you take with the host government to encourage the streamlining of these registration processes?

Answer. Uzbekistan today is at a crossroads. Under President Mirziyoyev, the Government has taken significant steps to improve its record on religious freedom over the last several years. Based on these steps, the Department of State did not re-designate Uzbekistan as a Special Watch List country for severe violations of religious freedom in 2020. However, we have recently seen a softening of resolve to uphold the human right of religious freedom or belief in Uzbekistan. If confirmed, I will press Uzbekistani officials at the highest levels to stay the course on human rights-related reforms. I will engage directly with representatives of minority religious groups to better understand their concerns and will press Uzbekistani lawmakers and Ministry of Justice to streamline onerous registration procedures for religious groups.

Question. The current religious laws outline that individuals in possession of authors deemed 'extremist' or any literature illegally imported or produced are subject to arrest and prosecution. What is your assessment of the Government attitudes towards minority religious groups and their ability to feel secure in their practices under these types of laws?

Answer. Uzbekistan's Soviet legacy casts a long shadow over its human rights reform efforts and societal tolerance of minority religious groups. Additionally, Uzbekistani officials openly admit that they defer to pressure from the Russian Orthodox Church not to register minority religious groups. If confirmed, I will underscore to Uzbekistani authorities the importance of freedom of religion or belief and more inclusive approaches to official treatment of minority religious groups.

Question. Multiple sources in the report note excessively degrading and torturous treatment of prisoners of minority religious groups, what steps would you pursue to improve the treatment of such prisoners?

Answer. If confirmed, pursuant to the Administration's stated goals and policies, I will encourage Uzbekistani authorities to conduct credible and transparent investigations of allegations of torture and hold perpetrators accountable to ensure the practice does not continue. I will see to it that individual cases of abuse are raised with senior Uzbekistani officials and will encourage the Government of Uzbekistan's

cooperation with international human rights monitors and U.N. special rapporteurs. It is unacceptable for Uzbekistan, as a party to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, and member of the U.N. Human Rights Council, to turn a blind eye to reports of torture.

Question. The Office of Multilateral Strategy and Personnel (MSP) in the State Department's bureau of International Organizations is leading a whole-of-government effort to identify, recruit, and install qualified, independent personnel at the U.N., including in elections for specialized bodies like the International Telecommunications Union (ITU). There is an American candidate, Doreen Bogdan-Martin, who if elected would be the first American and first woman to lead the ITU. She is in a tough race that will require early, consistent engagement across capitals and within the U.N. member states.

- If confirmed, do you commit to demarching the Uzbekistan Government and any other counterparts necessary to encourage their support of Ms. Bogdan-Martin?

Answer. Yes. If confirmed, I will do all that I can to encourage Uzbekistan's support for Ms. Bogdan-Martin's candidacy.

Question. If confirmed, how can you work with the International Organizations (IO) bureau and other stakeholders to identify, recruit, and install qualified Americans in positions like the Junior Program Officer (JPO) program at the U.N.?

Answer. The United States must play a leadership role at the United Nations and other international organizations. If confirmed, I will work with the Bureau of International Organization Affairs to support the recruitment and placement of qualified U.S. candidates in the U.N.'s Junior Professional Officers program.

Question. The Uzbekistan has a low rate of voting coincidence with the U.S. in the U.N. General Assembly and in the Security Council.

- What is your assessment of this issue?

Answer. Official Uzbekistani policy is to refrain from single-country U.N. resolutions, as the country has bitter memories of being singled out for such resolutions during the Karimov era. Additionally, Uzbekistan carefully assesses its position at the U.N. with a view toward maintaining stable relations with strategic bilateral partners, including the PRC, Russia, and the United States. Accordingly, Uzbekistan frequently chooses to abstain from votes that put it in the middle of disagreements between the United States and Russia or China.

Question. If confirmed, what concrete actions can you take to engage with the Uzbeks on anticipated votes in the U.N. system that would increase their voting coincidence with the U.S.?

Answer. If confirmed, I will remind Uzbekistani diplomats of Uzbekistan's obligations under the U.N. Charter and the importance of maintaining an international order in which larger countries respect Uzbekistan's independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity. With this in mind, I will urge Uzbekistan to demonstrate solidarity with Ukraine at the U.N. and to promote accountability for the PRC's genocide and crimes against humanity against Uyghurs and members of other ethnic and religious minority groups in Xinjiang.

Question. Peace Corps was forced to leave Uzbekistan in 2005 after the Andijon Massacre. Since the change of leadership in 2016, I understand that Peace Corps has begun to move towards re-establishing its work in Uzbekistan.

- If confirmed as ambassador, do you commit to working towards the return of Peace Corps to the Republic of Uzbekistan?

Answer. I am thrilled at the prospect of the Peace Corps' possible return to Uzbekistan after more than 15 years. If confirmed, I will enthusiastically support the return of Peace Corps Volunteers to Uzbekistan.

Question. If Peace Corps is able to return to Uzbekistan, in what sectors would you like to see volunteers be assigned to work? Where do you think they could be most useful, both to development in Uzbekistan, and to the U.S.-Uzbekistan relationship overall?

Answer. The specific menu of Peace Corps programming in Uzbekistan, should the organization decide to return, will ultimately be guided by priorities mutually agreed upon by the U.S. and Uzbekistani Governments. I see tremendous potential demand for English language education in Uzbekistan and agree with the Uzbekistan Government's belief and as expressed in their invitation letter, Peace Corps Volunteers could make a significant and positive impact in supporting the Government of Uzbekistan's objective of expanding the number of fluent English speakers

in Uzbekistan. Programming in this space would be mutually beneficial, to the extent that it would provide Uzbekistanis greater access to educational and business opportunities, as well as promoting a better understanding of Americans by Uzbekistanis and a better understating of Uzbekistanis by Americans, achieving the Peace Corps' second and third goals.

Question. What is your stance on the continued application of the Jackson-Vanik amendment on Uzbekistan?

Answer. The Department of State supports legislation that would authorize the U.S. President to determine that Jackson-Vanik should no longer apply to Uzbekistan.

Question. What benefits would the repeal of this amendment and the establishment of normal trade relations have for Uzbekistan and the U.S.?

Answer. First and foremost, the repeal of Jackson-Vanik for Uzbekistan would send a strong message to the Uzbekistanis that the United States no longer views Uzbekistan through the lens of the Soviet Union. Such a signal would strengthen Uzbekistani resolve to distance itself from Russia and its war of aggression in Ukraine. Similarly, Uzbekistan remains reliant on the PRC for trade and foreign direct investment, although it is interested in enhancing economic ties with the United States. We have signaled that we see expanded economic and trade ties as a long-term regional priority. Repeal of Jackson-Vanik, and the establishment of permanent normal trade relations, would provide a tangible sign that we are taking steps to back up our words with actions, and reciprocate Central Asian interest in diversifying trade relations in the region, pushing back on PRC efforts to establish itself as the region's dominant economic partner.

Question. Many U.S. missions have been under enormous stress over the last few years, in large part due to COVID.

- What is your understanding of morale throughout Mission Tashkent?

Answer. Despite the ongoing challenges of the pandemic, morale is high at Embassy Tashkent. I have served in Uzbekistan previously and am closely familiar with the strains that the local operating environment place on U.S. personnel. If confirmed, I will have no higher priority than the health, security, and well-being of the Embassy community.

Question. How do you intend to improve morale at Mission Tashkent?

Answer. I would endeavor to sustain high morale by fostering an inclusive work environment at Embassy Tashkent, consistent with the Biden administration's vision of a State Department workforce culture that values collegiality, teamwork, and respect.

Question. How do you intend to create a unified mission and vision at Mission Tashkent?

Answer. If confirmed, I will ensure clear lines of communications between my office, section management, and the broader Embassy community. I will set a strategic vision that underscores the common purpose of all Mission personnel. I will work closely with my deputy to ensure a workplace climate that values the contributions of our staff and encourages leadership and accountability at every level of the organization.

Question. Management is a key responsibility for Chiefs of Mission. How would you describe your management style?

Answer. I provide vision and focus on communication and building trust. I demonstrate confidence in my teams and spend a lot of time keeping morale up and supporting staff development. I strive for a positive workplace culture so that my team stays motivated, even when the going gets tough. I welcome honest feedback and understand that the Mission looks to me for decisive leadership. Embassy life can be stressful for employees and their family members. I seek opportunities to recognize the sacrifices we make in support of our public service mission.

Question. Do you believe it is ever acceptable or constructive to berate subordinates, either in public or private?

Answer. It is never acceptable to berate any colleague in any situation. I address underperformance directly and strive to give subordinates the tools they need to succeed.

Question. How do you envision your leadership relationship with your Deputy Chief of Mission?

Answer. I am extremely grateful to have a highly experienced DCM at my side in Tashkent. I will look to my DCM to provide frank advice, to play devil's advocate, and to keep a finger on the pulse of Embassy operations

Question. If confirmed, what leadership responsibilities do you intend to trust to your Deputy Chief of Mission?

Answer. I expect the DCM to devote special attention the goals in the Department of State's Strategic Plan for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA). I also expect my DCM to take seriously the traditional responsibilities of mentoring first and second tour officers and ensuring the strength of institutions that serve the Embassy community, most notably the Tashkent International School.

Question. In order to create and continue employee excellence at the Department, accurate and direct employee evaluation reports (EERs) for Foreign Service Officers are imperative, though often lacking.

- Do you believe that it is important to provide employees with accurate, constructive feedback on their performances in order to encourage improvement and reward those who most succeeded in their roles?

Answer. Constructive feedback is one of a manager's most important responsibilities to the subordinate, to the State Department, and to the American taxpayer. Employees cannot reasonably be expected to improve their performance absent constructive feedback. Failing to address performance issues does a disservice both to the employee and the institution.

Question. If confirmed, would you support and encourage clear, accurate, and direct feedback to employees in order to improve performance and reward high achievers?

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, I would champion clear, accurate, and direct feedback to employees and would celebrate excellent performance.

Question. It is imperative that U.S. diplomats get outside of posts abroad to meet with local actors, including host government officials, non-government organizations, and fellow foreign diplomats stationed in Uzbekistan.

- In your opinion, do U.S. diplomats get outside of our Embassy walls enough to accomplish fully their missions?

Answer. I fully agree that, as diplomats, we cannot fully succeed in our mission if we spend the majority of our time behind the walls of our Embassy. If confirmed, I will encourage my team to make every effort to build relationships with Uzbekistani interlocutors from all walks of life so that we can better understand the local context and, additionally, better craft our messages to local audiences. I will also encourage them to spend time visiting programs and grantees the Embassy supports and get to know alumni of our USG exchange programs.

Question. How do you intend to improve the ability of U.S. diplomats to better access all local populations?

Answer. Regional travel is a regular component of Embassy Tashkent operations and, if confirmed, I will continue to support such trips. I will encourage Embassy Officers to make use of our network of American Corners, as a platform for engaging populations outside of Tashkent, as well as to visit our Embassy supported English Language programs and Democracy Commission grantees. I will also urge them to build relationships with alumni of our USG exchange programs, who reside across the country.

Question. Public diplomacy is an important aspect of U.S. foreign policy efforts.

- What is the public diplomacy environment like in Uzbekistan?

Answer. Public diplomacy efforts in Uzbekistan are robust. In recent years we have seen a significant increase in applications to USG exchange programs, with total applications doubling, and in some cases tripling. English language programming continues to be an area of enthusiastic cooperation. Uzbekistan remains a welcoming environment for U.S. English teachers, and the network of American Corners and associated cultural programming continue to be exceedingly popular educational resources.

Question. What public diplomacy challenges do U.S. diplomats face there?

Answer. While many of the Embassy's programs operate smoothly, bureaucratic hurdles and slow responses continue to present challenges to public diplomacy programming. Additionally, Russian disinformation is prevalent in Uzbekistan, and staff are forced to dedicate significant time to refuting and countering these false narratives.

Question. How do you balance the importance of Main State versus the in-country mission when it comes to tailoring public diplomacy messages for foreign audiences?

Answer. The Public Diplomacy Section has open communication with Main State on messaging guidance. Our diplomats overseas are experts on the local environment and are best placed to tailor messaging to Uzbekistani audiences.

Question. "Anomalous health incidents," commonly referred to as "Havana Syndrome," have been debilitating and sidelining U.S. diplomats around the world for years. They have caused serious, negative consequences for U.S. diplomacy, yet many believe that the Department is not doing enough to care for, protect, and communicate to its personnel.

• If confirmed, do you commit to taking this threat seriously?

Answer. Yes. If confirmed, I will have no higher priority than the security and safety of the Mission community. I will do everything possible to ensure that employees who report a possible AHI receive immediate and appropriate attention and care and the incident is reported through appropriate channels.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to talking as openly as you can to Mission Tashkent personnel?

Answer. Yes. If confirmed, I will work to build a culture of trust, respect, and transparency at the Mission, and talk as openly as I can to our Mission community

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RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO DR. JONATHAN HENICK BY SENATOR MARCO RUBIO

Question. Uzbekistan is, by many measures, the most populous and economically significant country in Central Asia. As it has for much of its history, it sits at the crossroads of trade between Europe, Asia, and the Middle East. For the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), Uzbekistan is critical in achieving the goal of binding the rest of Asia and Europe closer to China. In 2017, Uzbekistan's relatively reformist president Shavkat Mirziyoyev signed 115 investment agreements worth more than $23 billion.

• Is the CCP a threat to the United States?

Answer. As Secretary Blinken has noted, the ruling Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has become more repressive at home and more aggressive abroad, making the PRC the most serious long-term challenge to the international order. The PRC's manipulative economic practices have cost American workers jobs and robbed American companies of their intellectual property. Beijing's coercive tactics—from Lithuania to Taiwan—are deeply destabilizing and threaten U.S. interests across the globe.

The United States will counter the threat posed by the CCP by standing by our allies and partners against PRC intimidation. We will boost the resilience of U.S. supply chains by reshoring production and diversifying suppliers in sensitive sectors of the economy. And we will continue to support the sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity of our partners, including Uzbekistan.

Question. Does Uzbekistan's increasing integration into BRI threaten the United States?

Answer. While the PRC has indeed made significant investments in Uzbekistan, especially in infrastructure, Uzbekistan has adopted policies to limit its external debt and requires the majority of workers on foreign-financed projects to be Uzbekistani nationals. Moreover, Uzbekistan is keenly interested in enhancing economic ties with the United States. We have signaled publicly and privately that we see expanded economic and trade ties as a long-term regional priority. Reciprocating the Government of Uzbekistan's interest in diversifying its trade relationships will help support Uzbekistan and other Central Asian countries' ability to pursue relationships with a variety of partners of its own choosing, in line with its own national interests.

Question. When President Mirziyoyev assumed power in 2016, many people assumed that he would be more reform-minded than his dictatorial predecessor, Islam Karimov, but still maintain Uzbekistan's neutral foreign policy. Do you see ties between Uzbekistan and the PRC improving during his tenure?

Answer. Uzbekistani President Mirziyoyev's signature foreign policy, referred to as "neighbors first" or "good neighbors," reversed the tense relations between Uzbekistan and its Central Asian neighbors that characterized the Karimov regime. President Mirziyoyev has paid state visits to every neighboring country except Afghani-

stan, and every Central Asian leader has made official visits to Tashkent. Under Mirziyoyev's watch, Uzbekistan has resolved many tough and long-standing border and water resource-related disputes with its neighbors, particularly the Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan. The United States welcomes Uzbekistan's aspirations to serve as a champion of regional autonomy in Central Asia.

Uzbekistan's relationship with the PRC spans political, economic, cultural, and security assistance. This includes a number of scholarship and internship opportunities for Uzbekistani students in the PRC and, more recently, an aggressive vaccine diplomacy campaign. While relations between Tashkent and Beijing are good under President Mirziyoyev, Uzbekistan continues to demonstrate considerable skill in managing a multi-vector foreign policy, including with the United States, that ensures it is not overly dependent on a single outside power.

Question. What options are available to the United States to resist increasing CCP influence in Uzbekistan and Central Asia?

Answer. As Secretary Blinken has said, our diplomacy is based on partnership and respect for each other's interests. We will continue to support the sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity of our partners, including Uzbekistan. In addition to U.S. bilateral support to Uzbekistan's reform agenda, the United States contributes to international development finance institutions, which are making major investments Uzbekistan's infrastructure needs.

We know that many countries—including the United States—have vital economic or people-to-people ties with the PRC that they want to preserve. This is not about forcing countries to choose. It is about giving them a choice so that, for example, the only option is not an opaque investment that leaves countries in debt, stokes corruption, harms the environment, fails to create local jobs or growth, and compromises countries' sovereignty.

The PRC is an important trading partner and continues to make investments in Uzbekistan, especially in infrastructure linked to President Xi Jinping's signature Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Nonetheless, Uzbekistan's Government makes subtle efforts to manage PRC-led investment and market dominance, as has occurred in neighboring countries.

Uzbekistan's successful eradication of systemic forced labor in the cotton harvest—and the subsequent lifting of the boycott against Uzbek cotton—presents an opportunity for U.S. and European apparel companies to divest away from cotton sourced in Xinjiang. At a minimum, the Uzbek experience can serve as an example of how countries like the PRC can take steps to improve labor practices and open opportunities for trade and investment.

Question. We've seen increased chaos in the region following President Biden's haphazard withdrawal from Afghanistan. Countries in the region, including Uzbekistan, will have to contend with the threat of Islamic terrorism for years to come. Uzbekistan, which had increased its security cooperation with us to counter the threat of terrorism, now likely does not see us as a reliable partner. Did President Biden's decision to force a haphazard and disorganized withdrawal from Afghanistan endanger American security? Why or why not?

Answer. As President Biden has said, the United States will maintain the fight against terrorism in Afghanistan and in other countries. To that end, we will use our military capabilities and alliances, diplomatic tools, and unrivaled network of international intelligence and law enforcement partners. The United States has demonstrated that it does not require a protracted military footprint in Afghanistan to sustain these capabilities.

Question. What is the current security threat posed by the Taliban and Islamic State-Khorasan to Uzbekistan?

Answer. The Islamic State-Khorasan (ISIS-K) poses a security threat to Uzbekistan and other Central Asian countries bordering Afghanistan, as illustrated by recent cross-border attacks on Uzbekistan. ISIS-K claimed responsibility for an April rocket attack against an Uzbek military base in Termez, Uzbekistan from Balkh Province. Although the attacks caused little damage, ISIS-K media released videos of each attack, in an effort to boost the morale of the group's fighters and increase its appeal to potential Central Asian supporters.

Uzbekistani Government sources reported a second rocket attack against Termez in July, that resulted in damage to property, but no casualties. Although no one has claimed responsibility for the July attack, the frequency of the incidents underscores the determination of violent extremists from Afghanistan to launch attacks on Uzbekistan. The Government of Uzbekistan maintains high-level ties with the Taliban and works with the Taliban to address the security threat to Uzbekistan from Afghanistan.

Question. If confirmed, what will you do to support maintaining security ties between Uzbekistan and the United States?

Answer. The Government of Uzbekistan remains interested in a broad-based security partnership with the United States. Law enforcement is a particularly promising area of cooperation, as highlighted by the first-ever bilateral Law Enforcement Working Group meeting in April. Uzbekistan has also continued to increase cooperation with the United States on counterterrorism and border security, to include the non-proliferation of nuclear materials.

If confirmed, I will seek to expand our security cooperation with Uzbekistan, with particular attention to building a shared understanding of terrorist threat from Afghanistan. To that end, I will work to ensure we are closely cooperating on information sharing and handling of classified information. I will encourage Uzbekistan's continued close cooperation with the Mississippi National Guard through the State Partnership Program. I will also emphasize the importance of Uzbekistan diversifying away from Russian defense articles for its own sovereignty and to avoid the risks of U.S. actions under the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO LESSLIE VIGUERIE BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Question. Since its invasion of Ukraine, Russia has had somewhat diminished influence in Central Asia as it focuses its diplomatic efforts elsewhere. This has opened a window of opportunity for increased U.S. involvement in the Kyrgyz Republic.

- In what ways can the United States best take advantage of this opportunity and lay a foundation for continued and permanent progress in the U.S.-Kyrgyz relationship?

Answer. The United States and Kyrgyz Republic share many goals and a mutual interest in working together to achieve them. The Kyrgyz Republic has stated its commitment to fighting corruption and organized crime. In this effort it will find no better partner than the United States. We hope to strengthen security cooperation to address challenges such as disaster preparedness and countering transnational threats. The United States is committed to supporting Kyrgyz economic resilience, connectivity, and diversification beyond its traditional partners, by developing the country's knowledge economy, in which a thriving IT sector drives job creation and connection to the global economy. Our countries share an interest in solving the climate crisis and can do much together to reduce emissions and build our ability to respond to the impacts of climate change. We have continuously stressed that we support the Kyrgyz Republic's sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity and, if confirmed, I will continue to do so.

Question. How will you work with Kyrgyz Government and private sector to increase economic ties with the United States?

Answer. The United States is committed to supporting the new Kyrgyz economy with job creation and diversification of trading partners and increased exports, driven by a thriving IT sector, opportunities for increased access to credit such as venture capital, public-private partnerships, and connections to the international economy through the English language. The Kyrgyz IT sector in particular has tremendous potential, and the United States is a main market for Kyrgyz IT services. The United States is helping increase the performance of small and medium enterprises throughout the country, building their ability to become part of the international economy and absorb more direct foreign investment.

The United States is committed to helping build the English skills of Kyrgyz children, university students, and professionals.

Question. As Ambassador, how will you work to build people-to-people ties between the U.S. and Kyrgyz citizens, particularly to counter Russian influence?

Answer. People-to-people ties have developed considerably over the last 30 years and, if confirmed, I look forward to expanding them. Since 1993, we have supported the American University of Central Asia, where tens of thousands of the region's best and brightest have received U.S.-accredited degrees. Our American Center and seven American Corners throughout the country offer cultural programs, educational resources, and information on studying in the United States to tens of thousands of people per year. I also look forward, if confirmed, to working to expand ties between our private sectors to strengthen our economic ties.

Question. Independent journalism that helps the public hold governments and corrupted elites accountable for their actions is under threat throughout Central Asia, and impacts the work of Congressionally-funded international media outlets such as RFE/RL. Throughout the region, governments do not consistently respond to requests for comments and interviews on questions of interest to RFE/RL's audiences in the region, and local journalists working for RFE/RL are regularly targeted for retaliation for their journalistic work.

In Kyrgyz Republic, while RFE/RL has an active bureau and generally good relations with the government that extends to RFE/RL requests to open new bureaus focused on migrant issues and coverage of developments in the Ferghana Valley, RFE/RL journalists have also been targeted threats, harassment, and smear campaigns for their impactful investigative reporting involving both government officials and corrupt elites, such as its award-winning expose of a large-scale, cross-border money-laundering network centered in the country.

- If you are confirmed as U.S. Ambassador, what will you do to support the work of RFE/RL and ensure open access for Congressionally-funded international journalists at your new post?

Answer. If confirmed, I will never hesitate to call out threats to freedom of the press, in accordance with the values we share with the Kyrgyz people and our support for human rights. We are proud of our longstanding support for the Kyrgyz press, including support for the work of RFE/RL, and I will commit to continuing to do so.

Question. After two years, Kyrgyz authorities have failed to conclude an investigation into the death of human rights defender Azimjon Askarov, raising concerns over mistreatment and neglect in Kyrgyz prisons.

- If confirmed, how will you work with Kyrgyz officials to address detainment center conditions and facilitate a conclusion to the investigation into the death of Askarov?

Answer. Mr. Askarov dedicated his life to the defense of human rights and reconciliation and understanding between all peoples. If confirmed, I will continue to emphasize to Kyrgyz authorities the importance of upholding human rights and accountability, including a thorough, fair investigation into the death of Mr. Askarov.

Question. The 2022 State Department Report on Human Rights notes use of torture and harsh and life-threatening conditions in prison facilities as significant human rights issues. What steps would you take with the Kyrgyz Government to address these concerns?

Answer. The United States is committed to supporting the Kyrgyz Republic's democratic system of government, rule of law, and the human rights and freedoms the Kyrgyz people have won since independence. If confirmed, I pledge to regularly advocate for the Kyrgyz Government to improve conditions in prison facilities and will offer the Embassy's assistance to achieve this goal.

Question. In the State Department's 2022 Report on Human Rights, other significant issues involved restrictions of freedom of expression, violent threats to journalists over censorship, overly restrictive laws against NGO's or other civil society groups, and serious acts of government corruption. While the Government has taken steps to investigate and prosecute officials having committed human rights violations, official impunity has remained a problem.

- If confirmed, how will you work with Kyrgyz officials to reduce governmental corruption and increase individual freedoms?

Answer. President Japarov has publicly and repeatedly committed to combatting corruption, and we encourage his stated commitment, as anti-corruption is a priority we wholeheartedly support, including through programming in partnership with Kyrgyz law enforcement bodies and relevant local community stakeholders. Through this engagement, we seek to ensure that Kyrgyz anti-corruption initiatives are both effective and observant of the rule of law.

Question. In the State Department's 2022 Trafficking in Persons Report, Kyrgyz Republic remained Tier 2, largely through the Government's decreased investigations and prosecutions of trafficking cases, not securing any convictions of traffickers—including cases involving complicit officials.

What is your assessment of this situation and if confirmed, what would you do to assist in the improvement of the legal system to convict traffickers, including complicit officials?

Answer. Although there is more to be done, we are encouraged by the Kyrgyz Republic's upgrade in the 2021 Trafficking in Persons Report to Tier 2 after three

years on the Tier 2 watchlist. If confirmed, I will offer the Embassy's full support for the Kyrgyz Republic's efforts to combat human trafficking, including assistance to initiate investigations into potential cases of official complicity, and develop and disseminate anti-trafficking training materials for police and prosecutors.

Question. The report additionally indicates a heavy reliance on international organizations for victim identification, what steps would you take as Ambassador to improve the Kyrgyz Government's ability to independently identify trafficking victims?

Answer. If confirmed, I will encourage and offer to help the Kyrgyz Republic to implement the prioritized recommendations as noted in the 2022 TIP report. We will work with our Kyrgyz partners to increase their capacity to investigate, prosecute, and convict persons complicit in human trafficking, including government officials, while respecting due process. We will also offer cooperation to increase Kyrgyz efforts to proactively identify and protect victims.

Question. In the State Department's 2021 Report on International Religious Freedom, the report indicates that the Kyrgyz Government claims Jehovah Witness texts as 'extremist,' that it has opened up a criminal case against them, and has conducted raids of the offices of Jehovah's Witnesses.

- If confirmed, what actions would you take to urge the Government to respect religious freedom and peacefully conclude the criminal allegations against Jehovah's Witnesses in the state?

Answer. The Kyrgyz Republic has a proud tradition of religious tolerance. If confirmed, I will emphasize the importance of the Kyrgyz Government upholding religious freedom for all, including religious minorities like the Jehovah's Witnesses.

Question. The Office of Multilateral Strategy and Personnel (MSP) in the State Department's bureau of International Organizations is leading a whole-of-government effort to identify, recruit, and install qualified, independent personnel at the U.N., including in elections for specialized bodies like the International Telecommunications Union (ITU). There is an American candidate, Doreen Bogdan-Martin, who if elected would be the first American and first woman to lead the ITU. She is in a tough race that will require early, consistent engagement across capitals and within the U.N. member states.

- If confirmed, do you commit to demarching the Kyrgyz Government and any other counterparts necessary to encourage their support of Ms. Bogdan-Martin?

Answer. Yes. If confirmed, I will do all that I can to encourage Kyrgyz support for Ms. Bogdan-Martin's candidacy.

Question. If confirmed, how can you work with the International Organizations (IO) bureau and other stakeholders to identify, recruit, and install qualified Americans in positions like the Junior Program Officer (JPO) program at the U.N.?

Answer. believe a strong U.S. role at the United Nations and other international organizations is vital. If confirmed, I will work with the International Organizations Bureau to advance this objective however I can, including by identifying qualified U.S. candidates for the Junior Program Officer and other programs.

Question. Kyrgyzstan has a low rate of voting coincidence with the U.S. in the U.N. General Assembly and in the Security Council.

- What is your assessment of this issue?

Answer. The Kyrgyz Republic has longstanding ties with its regional partners. If confirmed, I will call on Kyrgyz leadership to uphold the U.N. Charter and condemn the Russian Federation's further invasion of Ukraine and gross violations of international law. I will also continue to encourage the Kyrgyz Government to promote accountability for the PRC Government's use of forced labor as well as its genocide and crimes against humanity against Uyghurs and members of other ethnic and religious minority groups in Xinjiang, including ethnic Kyrgyz.

Question. If confirmed, what concrete actions can you take to engage with the Kyrgyz Government on anticipated votes in the U.N. system that would increase their voting coincidence with the U.S.?

Answer. If confirmed, I will ensure Kyrgyz leaders that they will find no better and fairer partner than the United States to help them achieve their goals. I will note our support for Kyrgyz environmental initiatives at the United Nations and offer further support in addressing the climate crisis. I will also reiterate our belief that all countries have a vital interest in defending the principles and values that keep us all safe, including the principle that no country may seize the territory of a sovereign state and no country has a veto over another's security partners or political path.

Question. If confirmed, how will you promote democratic and anti-corruption reforms in Kyrgyz Republic, and in what areas of government is progress most viable?

Answer. President Japarov has publicly and repeatedly committed to combatting corruption, and, if confirmed, I will offer full U.S. support in this campaign, including through Embassy programming in partnership with Kyrgyz law enforcement bodies and relevant local community stakeholders. Through this engagement, we will seek to ensure that Kyrgyz anti-corruption initiatives are both effective and observant of the rule of law.

In 2021, we designated former customs official Raimbek Matraimov under Global Magnitsky sanctions and raised the Transnational Organized Crime Rewards Program amount on known drug trafficker Kamchybek Kolbaev to $5 million. In 2019, our law enforcement personnel cooperated to return $4.6 million stolen by the former President's son, Maksim Bakiyev, to the Kyrgyz people. These efforts demonstrate our commitment to working with Kyrgyz authorities to combat these criminal networks and their corrupt influence in Kyrgyz society.

Question. Corruption at all levels continues to be a problem in Kyrgyz Republic. Do you think that the use of the State Department's 7031(c) visa ban authorities could be a useful tool for fighting corruption in Kyrgyz Republic? Why or why not?

Answer. If confirmed, I will support all actions to hold corrupt officials to account, including through 7031(c) visa bans. I believe measures like this are vital in order to show that we are backing up our words with actions.

Question. What is your stance on the continued application of the Jackson-Vanik amendment on the Kyrgyz Republic?

Answer. The Kyrgyz Republic is not subject to the Jackson-Vanik amendment.

Question. What benefits would the repeal of this amendment and the establishment of normal trade relations have for the Kyrgyz Republic and the U.S.?

Answer. The United States enjoys normal trade relations with the Kyrgyz Republic.

Question. Many U.S. missions have been under enormous stress over the last few years, in large part due to COVID. What is your understanding of morale throughout Mission Bishkek?

Answer. I understand morale is high at the Embassy, largely due to its outstanding leadership. I know from experience how important that is and will do my utmost to ensure it continues. If confirmed, the health, security, and well-being of the Embassy community will be my highest priority.

Question. How do you intend to improve morale at Mission Bishkek?

Answer. Over my 30 years in the Foreign Service, I have seen some of the best aspects of leadership, including the importance of building strong teams, valuing diversity, and mentoring the next generation of U.S. diplomats. These are the values that guide me. I will prioritize the safety and security of the Embassy community above all else and maintain a culture of respect and trust at the Embassy.

Question. How do you intend to create a unified mission and vision at Mission Bishkek?

Answer. If confirmed, I will focus on inclusivity to ensure that all Mission personnel know that I value their views and expertise. I will seek to instill a culture of trust that recognizes the unique talents of our staff members and encourages them to take ownership of their work. As the chief of mission, I will share credit for our successes but accept the blame for our setbacks. I believe in the importance of "one team" and, if confirmed, will emphasize this value as Ambassador.

Question. Management is a key responsibility for Chiefs of Mission. How would you describe your management style?

Answer. I always endeavor to build strong teams with high morale. Accomplishing this requires a commitment to inclusion, focus on professional development, and culture of trust and respect for all colleagues. As a leader, I convey to my team that all opinions and ideas are welcome. I see mentoring as an obligation so that staff not only thrive in their current assignments but are prepared to succeed in future positions as well. I seek to recognize others' accomplishments as often as possible and will assume responsibility when things go wrong. I also understand well that the Ambassador's responsibilities are not limited to within the Embassy's walls. Mission staff sacrifice much in this line of work and they expect—and deserve—leadership that cares as much about the personal as the professional side. To that end, I will always prioritize the well-being of the Embassy community above all else.

Question. Do you believe it is ever acceptable or constructive to berate subordinates, either in public or private?

Answer. Never. As a leader it is one's responsibility to put staff in a position to succeed and offer counseling and instruction when they do not. I believe in addressing poor performance promptly, but always in a respectful manner.

Question. How do you envision your leadership relationship with your Deputy Chief of Mission?

Answer. Good leaders utilize the talent around them and I expect to have a close, collaborative relationship with my DCM. In Bishkek, I will be serving with a DCM who served as chief of mission for over a year. I expect we will divide responsibilities in a way that sees the DCM focus more on internal Embassy matters, but of course I will rely on their expertise and experience in all that I do.

Question. If confirmed, what leadership responsibilities do you intend to entrust to your Deputy Chief of Mission?

Answer. If confirmed, I expect we will divide responsibilities in a way that sees the DCM focus more on internal Embassy matters, though of course I will rely on their expertise and experience in all that I do. Specifically, I will rely on the DCM to chair the Emergency Action Committee and further DEIA efforts at Post, especially with regards to recruitment of new officers.

Question. In order to create and continue employee excellence at the Department, accurate and direct employee evaluation reports (EERs) for Foreign Service Officers are imperative, though often lacking. Do you believe that it is important to provide employees with accurate, constructive feedback on their performances in order to encourage improvement and reward those who most succeeded in their roles?

Answer. I believe providing constructive feedback and mentoring is one of the most important roles a leader can play. This should happen throughout the year—not just when EERs are due—to give the employee time and opportunity to learn and develop. If confirmed, I will emphasize the importance of developing our staff and providing timely feedback at all levels of the Mission.

Question. If confirmed, would you support and encourage clear, accurate, and direct feedback to employees in order to improve performance and reward high achievers?

Answer. Yes. I believe providing clear, accurate, and direct feedback is one of the most important roles a leader can play.

Question. It is imperative that U.S. diplomats get outside of posts abroad to meet with local actors, including host government officials, non-government organizations, and fellow foreign diplomats stationed in Kyrgyz Republic. In your opinion, do U.S. diplomats get outside of our embassy walls enough to accomplish fully their missions?

Answer. Staff at our Mission in Bishkek routinely leave the Embassy to meet with Kyrgyz Government, private sector, and civil society interlocutors. If confirmed, I will encourage this practice, as there is no substitute for face-to-face diplomacy. I will regularly review procedures with our Regional Security Office to ensure that our staff can do their jobs safely.

Question. How do you intend to improve the ability of U.S. diplomats to better access all local populations?

Answer. Officers at Embassy Bishkek regularly travel throughout the country and, if confirmed, I will continue to support such trips as we cannot understand a country only from its capital. Our network of American Corners act as a vital bridge between the Embassy and local communities and I will encourage—and seek appropriate funding for—regular Embassy visits to these centers. I will also advocate for more Kyrgyz-language training at the Foreign Service Institute given the increasing prominence of Kyrgyz across the breadth of society.

Question. Public diplomacy is an important aspect of U.S. foreign policy efforts. What is the public diplomacy environment like in the Kyrgyz Republic?

Answer. Public diplomacy programming in the Kyrgyz Republic is among the most robust in Central Asia. Our Embassy disseminates messages—in English, Kyrgyz, and Russian—through a range of social media platforms that highlight our shared values and the breadth and impact of U.S. efforts, countering Russian disinformation. Our programming supports civil society that bolsters democratic development, economic development, good governance, inclusive education and opportunities, and tolerance.

Additionally, our Mission hosts large-scale regional programs, including the Central Asia Design Hub and multiple programs at the American University of Central Asia. Our American Center and seven American Corners throughout the country offer cultural programs, educational resources, and information on studying in the United States to tens of thousands of people per year.

Question. What public diplomacy challenges do U.S. diplomats face there?

Answer. Russian disinformation is ubiquitous in the Kyrgyz Republic, flooding the press and social media with anti-U.S. propaganda. Staff are forced to dedicate significant time to refuting and countering these lies. Our Embassy Public Diplomacy Section has done a great job of highlighting the positive role the United States plays in the Kyrgyz Republic and, if confirmed, I will offer them all the support I can in these efforts.

Question. How do you balance the importance of Main State versus the in-country mission when it comes to tailoring public diplomacy messages for foreign audiences?

Answer. Our diplomats overseas are experts on the local environment and are best placed to tailor messages to Kyrgyz audiences. Having served as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Central Asia, I saw firsthand the excellent cooperation between Mission Bishkek's Public Diplomacy team and their counterparts here in Washington. If confirmed, I will seek to maintain that level of collaboration.

Question. "Anomalous health incidents," commonly referred to as "Havana Syndrome," have been debilitating and sidelining U.S. diplomats around the world for years. They have caused serious, negative consequences for U.S. diplomacy, yet many believe that the Department is not doing enough to care for, protect, and communicate to its personnel. If confirmed, do you commit to taking this threat seriously?

Answer. Yes. If confirmed, I will have no higher priority than the security and safety of the Mission community. I will commit to taking all anomalous health incident reports seriously and to investigate them in a transparent manner.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to talking as openly as you can to Mission Bishkek personnel?

Answer. Yes. If confirmed, I will work to build a culture of trust, respect, and transparency at the Mission, and talk as openly as I can to our Mission community.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO LESSLIE VIGUERIE BY SENATOR MARCO RUBIO

Question. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP), like all communist parties, views all capitalist systems as a threat to their existence. Anywhere people are allowed to decide for themselves how to live their lives, protect their families and achieve their dreams undermines the CCP's narrative that only it is the arbiter of truth. It should be no surprise that the CCP has worked to undermine Kyrgyzstan, once called the "island of democracy" in Central Asia. Current Kyrgyz President Sadyr Japarov, with the support of the CCP and Vladimir Putin, has overseen a political transition that has concentrated his power and gone after opposition leaders, journalists, and activists.

- Is the CCP a threat to the United States?

Answer. As Secretary Blinken has noted, the ruling Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has become more repressive at home and more aggressive abroad, making the PRC the most serious long-term challenge to the international order. If confirmed, I will continue to support the sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity of the Kyrgyz Republic as we have for the last 30 years

Question. Does the increasing influence of the CCP in Kyrgyzstan threaten American interests?

Answer. We are concerned about the fact that the Kyrgyz Republic has a large debt burden to China. In many areas, Beijing's leaders seek unfair advantages; behave aggressively, non-transparently, and coercively; and undermine the rules and values at the heart of an open and stable international system. We will continue to support the sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity of the Kyrgyz Republic, and seek to expand cooperation, including to support the country's economic growth and resilience.

Question. Kyrgyzstan has been among the region's largest recipients of U.S. democracy assistance. How does the erosion of democracy there support CCP narratives that democracy is not a better model than its totalitarian system?

Answer. The Kyrgyz people are proud of their democracy. If confirmed, I will continue to emphasize our commitment to supporting the Kyrgyz Republic's democratic system of government, rule of law, and the human rights and freedoms the Kyrgyz people have won since independence.

Question. If confirmed, what will you do to support pro-democracy groups and sectors in Kyrgyzstani society?

Answer. If confirmed, I will advocate for Kyrgyz civil society and speak out against erosion of democratic governance, corruption, and threats to freedom of speech and association, in accordance with the values we share with the Kyrgyz people. It is critical that Kyrgyz leadership safeguards the gains made over the last 30 years and upholds media freedom, elevates the role of civil society, protects the human rights of all its people, including members of all minority groups, and strengthens judicial independence.

Question. The Chinese Communist Party is orchestrating nothing less than a genocide of Turkic Muslims in Xinjiang. We all know of the Uyghurs' plight, but this genocide has also ensnared ethnic Kyrgyz and Kazakhs. Despite this, the Kyrgyzstani Government has been remarkably silent about the systematic killings, detentions and abuse levied against ethnic Kyrgyz in Xinjiang. Even more shocking, there are indications that CCP efforts to convince the Kyrgyzstani Government to forcibly repatriate ethnic Kyrgyz back to Xinjiang are gaining ground. Earlier this year, Representative Chris Smith and I helped Ovalbek Turdakan, a Christian Kyrgyz resident of Xinjiang who had fled to Kyrgyzstan to escape the CCP, to seek asylum in the United States.

- Why do you think the Kyrgyzstani Government is unwilling to stand up to the CCP and call out its genocide of ethnic Kyrgyz in Xinjiang?

Answer. We will continue to encourage the Kyrgyz Government to promote accountability for the PRC Government's use of forced labor, as well as its genocide and crimes against humanity against Uyghurs and members of other ethnic and religious minority groups in Xinjiang, including ethnic Kyrgyz. We respect the Kyrgyz Republic's desire to have peaceful and constructive relations with all its neighbors, including the PRC, but believe all countries must join together in calling for an immediate end to the PRC's atrocities and for justice for the many victims. We will strongly advocate that the Kyrgyz Government respect its international obligations regarding non-refoulment of refugees and asylum-seekers.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to using your position to assist and protect ethnic Kyrgyz who flee to Kyrgyzstan to escape the ongoing genocide in Xinjiang?

Answer. Yes, I commit to assisting and protecting ethnic Kyrgyz who flee to the Kyrgyz Republic to escape the ongoing genocide in Xinjiang. I will also advocate for Kyrgyz leadership to promote accountability for the PRC's use of forced labor as well as its genocide and crimes against humanity against Uyghurs and members of other ethnic and religious minority groups—including ethnic Kyrgyz—in Xinjiang.

Question. In 2010, Chinese security services used Shanghai Cooperation Organization Channels to solicit the Kyrgyz Government to interrupt a film festival in Kyrgyzstan that a Chinese Uyghur human rights activist was planning to attend. At Beijing's request, Kyrgyz authorities subsequently stopped the screening of a film made by the Uyghur activist. How can we best combat the long arm of Beijing in Kyrgyzstan?

Answer. If confirmed, I will continually emphasize that the Kyrgyz Republic will find no better partner to achieve its development objectives than the United States. We recently celebrated 30 years of bilateral relations, during which the United States has provided over $2 billion in assistance to the Kyrgyz Republic; by contrast, China has provided unfair, non-transparent loans. In addition to U.S. bilateral support to the Kyrgyz Republic's development goals, the United States contributes to international development finance institutions which are making major investments into the Kyrgyz Republic's infrastructure needs.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO HON. DANIEL N. ROSENBLUM BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

U.S.-Kazakhstan Relations

Question. Since its invasion of Ukraine, Russia has had a somewhat diminished influence in Central Asia, notably in Kazakhstan, as it focuses its diplomatic efforts elsewhere. This has opened a window of opportunity for increased U.S. involvement in the country.

- In what ways can the United States best take advantage of this opportunity and lay the foundation for more permanent progress in the U.S.-Kazakhstan relationship?

Answer. Since Kazakhstan's independence in 1991, the United States has invested in building strong and broad-based ties with the Government and people of Kazakhstan, from educational and cultural exchanges to foreign trade and military-to-military cooperation. Today, Kazakhstan continues to seek U.S. engagement as part of its "multi-vector" foreign policy, which aims to maintain positive relations with all global powers. Since the 1990s, U.S. companies have been some of the largest investors in Kazakhstan, and even more U.S. companies may choose to move regional offices to Kazakhstan following Russia's further invasion of Ukraine. In the security sector, there are new opportunities to help Kazakhstan diversify away from Russian training, doctrine, and equipment, in ways that meet Kazakhstan's fiscal constraints and defense priorities. If confirmed, I will continue and expand upon our work to strengthen bilateral people-to-people ties, level the playing field for U.S. companies wanting to do business in Kazakhstan and promote U.S. alternatives for Kazakhstan's security needs.

Question. Kazakhstan has publicly stated they will abide by western sanctions, but has not formally make a commitment to do so. Should the United States seek a formal sanctions commitment from Kazakhstan? Why or why not?

Answer. The United States should not seek a formal sanctions commitment from Kazakhstan, as doing so could be counterproductive and, additionally, provoke Russia to apply even greater pressure against Kazakhstan not to abide by U.S. and partner-country sanctions. The Kazakhstani Government already is actively engaging with the United States to ensure not only that it supports U.S. sanctions, but that Russia does not use Kazakhstan to evade these sanctions. For example, the Kazakhstani Government has created a website to help local companies keep track of international sanctions against Russia and Belarus, and the Government has facilitated the exit from Kazakhstan's financial sector of sanctioned Russian's banks. If confirmed, I will work to ensure that Kazakhstan's Government and business community continue to abide by western sanctions and that Kazakhstan's economy is not used to evade these sanctions.

Question. How will you work with Kazakhstan's Government and private sector to increase economic ties with the United States?

Answer. If confirmed, I will continue and expand upon outreach with Kazakhstan's businesses, both public and private, to encourage business opportunities for U.S. companies. There already are strong U.S.-Kazakhstan business ties in the hydrocarbon sector, and at least one U.S. bank has had offices in Kazakhstan for over 20 years. Sectors like agriculture; renewable energy; and tourism all show great promise for U.S. business. The U.S. —Kazakhstan Business Council, the Department of Agriculture's Foreign Agricultural Service, and the Department of Commerce's Foreign Commercial Service provide services to build business relationships and help U.S. exporters. If confirmed, I will also continue to support the Kazakhstani Government's efforts to improve the business and investment climate to ensure a level playing field for U.S. companies.

Question. As Ambassador, how will you work to build people-to-people ties between the U.S. and Kazakhstan, particularly to counter Russian influence?

Answer. Russian influence and disinformation remain extremely prevalent in Central Asia and in Kazakhstan. If confirmed, I will use all the tools of our robust Public Diplomacy Section to engage the Kazakhstani people. In-person engagements, social media, and participation in local festivals and holidays all play a role. Our Embassy also has significant journalist training and countering disinformation programs that we will continue to utilize and hope to expand. The Government of Kazakhstan has also expressed interest in continued and increased collaboration in academic and professional exchanges and higher education partnerships and if confirmed, I would work to find mutually beneficial areas to expand in this sphere.

Energy and Critical Minerals

Question. Kazakhstan is a significant producer and exporter of crude oil and natural gas and has a significant amount of uranium resources that can be used for nuclear fuel.

- Could Kazakhstan be a viable alternative to Russia for energy exports to Europe?

Answer. Kazakhstan accounts for about 2 percent of the global oil market, but 90 percent of exported oil currently uses pipelines which transit Russia and thus are vulnerable to Russian interference. More than 50 percent of these exports is destined for European markets. Kazakhstan is actively seeking alternative export routes, especially across the Caspian Sea. In the longer term these routes may allow Kazakhstan's oil to become a viable alternative for Europe to Russia's oil, but Kazakhstan's exports are very unlikely to replace Russia's exports to Europe entirely, especially in the short term.

Question. What challenges stand in the way of Kazakhstan increasing its energy exports to Europe?

Answer. The biggest challenge is geography. Kazakhstan exports 80 percent of its oil via the Caspian Pipeline Consortium which transits Russia and thus is vulnerable to Russian interference. Another 10 percent goes through other Russian pipelines. The only other viable option to Europe is the trans-Caspian Sea route; issues there include a limited number of tankers to transport oil from Kazakhstan's ports to facilities in Azerbaijan and limits on available capacity. Kazakhstan's export options are further limited by the fact that the closest ports on the western Caspian are in Iran and Russia.

Question. How could the U.S. help solve challenges that stand in the way of Kazakhstan increasing its energy exports to Europe?

Answer. The biggest short-term challenge is lack of shipping capacity in the Caspian Sea to transport oil from Kazakhstan's ports to Azerbaijan. Another option is moving oil by rail to other ports, such as in Georgia, although these routes would also transit Russia. On routes, the United States should use a scatter approach. Allowing Kazakhstan to deliver energy exports to multiple ports takes full advantage of available capacity. Longer term, encouraging cooperation on expanded trans-Caspian pipeline capacity is the best way to supply energy to Europe without involving Russia.

Question. Could Kazakhstan be a viable alternative to Russia for uranium exports?

Answer. Kazakhstan is the world's largest exporter of natural uranium, which it exports in the form of yellow cake to other countries, including Russia, which then convert and enrich the uranium into a form that can be used to fabricate fuel for nuclear reactors. Currently Russia owns roughly 40 percent of the world's conversion and enrichment infrastructure. Kazakhstan has categorically stated it will not enrich uranium. Therefore, while Kazakhstan will continue to be a strong exporter of natural uranium, it cannot provide an alternative to Russia's converted and enriched uranium exports.

Question. How could the U.S. help Kazakhstan develop its capacity to export uranium?

Answer. Kazakhstan is the world's largest exporter of natural uranium, which it exports in the form of yellow cake to other countries, including Russia, which then convert and enrich the uranium into a form that can be used to fabricate fuel for nuclear reactors. Kazakhstan has categorically stated it will not enrich uranium. This is a decision made in part due to the role Kazakhstan played as the site of the Soviet Union's nuclear testing program, which left a legacy of nuclear contamination, environmental degradation, and health problems for the people of Kazakhstan. If confirmed, I will work to continue the United States' cooperation with Kazakhstan to remediate its Soviet era nuclear legacy, strengthen our collaboration on nuclear nonproliferation, and explore cooperation and research on the peaceful use of nuclear energy, where U.S. technology can play an important role.

Question. Should the U.S. help Kazakhstan develop its capacity to export uranium?

Answer. Kazakhstan is already a major global exporter of natural uranium, including to the United States. Although most of these exports go through Russia, since 2018 Kazakhstan has shipped a portion of its uranium by sea through the Caspian to Azerbaijan. Kazakhstan is also a potential source of valuable rare earth

elements. It is in the strategic economic interests of the United States that Kazakhstan brings these commodities to the global market, so they are not monopolized by other countries such as the PRC. If confirmed, I will encourage Kazakhstan's Government to diversify the country's trade routes and reduce trade barriers.

Question. Could Kazakhstan be a viable alternative to Russia for critical minerals or other commodities?

Answer. Kazakhstan is also a potential source of valuable rare earth elements. It is in the strategic economic interests of the United States that Kazakhstan brings these commodities to the global market, so they are not monopolized by other countries such as the PRC, and steps already are underway to improve Kazakhstan's ability to identify mineral resources. If confirmed, I will encourage Kazakhstan's Government to diversify the country's trade routes and reduce trade barriers.

Question. Kazakhstan is landlocked and relies on trade routes through neighboring countries to conduct international trade.

- What challenges does Kazakhstan face in exporting energy because of this, and how can the U.S. help protect Kazakhstan's ability to export oil and gas (and other goods) from political pressure by its neighbors?

Answer. The biggest challenge is geography. Kazakhstan exports 80 percent of its oil—its largest product which accounts for nearly one quarter of its GDP—via the Caspian Pipeline Consortium which transits Russia and thus is vulnerable to Russian interference. The only other currently viable option to export oil to world markets is the trans-Caspian Sea route. The United States should use a scatter approach here. Allowing Kazakhstan to deliver oil to multiple ports takes full advantage of available capacity. Longer term, encouraging cooperation on expanded trans-Caspian pipeline capacity is the best way to supply energy to Europe without involving Russia. For other goods, Kazakhstan mostly is a transit country for PRC goods heading to Europe rather than a major exporter itself.

Question. How can the U.S. help Kazakhstan lessen its reliance on the sale of its energy resources and diversify its economy?

Answer. The United States supports Kazakhstani Government efforts to diversify its economy, including by improving the education of its citizens so they can better compete in the global, knowledge-based economy. Kazakhstan already has taken important steps, such as sending thousands of students overseas for to receive higher education, and beginning to implement the goal of tri-lingual (Kazakh, Russian and English) public education to make the workforce more competitive. Kazakhstan has great potential for renewable energy, especially wind and solar. The U.S. Agency for International Development has done significant work in this area, including helping the Government set up renewable energy auctions and strengthening regional electricity grids throughout Central Asia. The Embassy recently supported thousands of women entrepreneurs to expand their networks and utilize e-commerce. U.S. companies are also investing hundreds of millions of dollars to support health, education, and entrepreneurship in Kazakhstan. If confirmed, I would build on existing efforts to encourage Kazakhstan to train its workforce and diversify its economy with an eye to the future, and advocate for Kazakhstan to use U.S. educational institutions, businesses, and technologies to do so.

Press Freedom

Question. Independent journalism that helps the public hold governments and corrupted elites accountable for their actions is under threat throughout Central Asia, and impacts the work of Congressionally-funded international media outlets such as RFE/RL. Throughout the region, governments do not consistently respond to requests for comments and interviews on questions of interest to RFE/RL's audiences in the region, and local journalists working for RFE/RL are regularly targeted for retaliation for their journalistic work.

In Kazakhstan, RFE/RL journalists have been routinely harassed by security agents as they carry out their journalistic duties to cover major events such as the violent, nationwide protests of January 2022 and other recent expressions of popular discontent, and government officials have often ignored RFE/RL requests for comment on issues of importance to our audiences in the country, including alleged high-level corruption among Kazakhstan's ruling elites.

- If you are confirmed as U.S. Ambassador, what will you do to support the work of RFE/RL and ensure open access for Congressionally-funded international journalists at your new post?

Answer. Our Mission is in contact with RFE/RL on a regular basis and monitors the situation closely. Creating meaningful opportunities for media and civil society, including RFE/RL's Kazakh service, to provide independent commentary and input on pending laws and policies is a crucial component of the democratic process. If confirmed, I will encourage the Ministry of Information to uphold constitutional protections for freedom of the press, while urging the Government to be more transparent in its decision-making processes, budgetary matters, and other operations of public interest.

Peace Corps

Question. Peace Corps left Kazakhstan in 2011. Do you believe that Peace Corps should aim to return to the Republic of Kazakhstan? Why or why not?

Answer. Peace Corps is a valuable program that expands U.S. outreach and in so doing pays long-term dividends. The Kazakhstani Government has expressed interest in partnering with the U.S. Mission to Kazakhstan to expand on many of the services that the Peace Corps used to provide in country, such as English teaching. Therefore, if confirmed, I will focus on expanding and seeking increased funding for the multiple academic and professional exchange programs offered by our Public Diplomacy section.

Corruption and Reform

Question. If confirmed, how will you promote democratic and corruption reforms in Kazakhstan?

Answer. President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev announced a raft of political, economic, and security reforms and condemned high-level corruption in Kazakhstan, following the serious unrest of last January, which began with peaceful protests that were rooted in socioeconomic concerns. If confirmed, I will urge Kazakhstan's leadership to make good on these promised reforms, which are ostensibly aimed at strengthening representative democracy and reducing corruption. To this end, I also will support development of relevant programming and assistance, funding permitting, to build on past bilateral cooperation related to rule of law and good governance.

Question. In what areas of government do you consider progress on democratic and corruption reforms to be most viable for Kazakhstan?

Answer. Kazakhstan is a young, dynamic, and well-educated country. Government reform efforts to increase the political participation of women, youth, and persons with disabilities, and, separately, to strengthen rural self-government have the potential to transform Kazakhstan's political system and improve accountability on issues like public finance and corruption. If confirmed, I will work to expand the U.S. Government's contacts with reform-minded members of these groups in parliament, government, and Kazakhstan's rural areas and work to ensure they have the skills to succeed in building a more democratic, stable, and prosperous Kazakhstan.

Question. Corruption at all levels continues to be a problem in Kazakhstan. Do you think that the use of the State Department's 7031(c) visa ban authorities could be a useful tool for fighting corruption in Kazakhstan? Why or why not?

Answer. I believe measures like 7031(c) visa restrictions are vital in order to show that we are backing up our words with actions. If confirmed, I will support all actions to hold corrupt officials to account, including through 7031(c) visa restrictions.

Jackson-Vanik

Question. What is your stance on the continued application of the Jackson-Vanik amendment on Kazakhstan?

Answer. Jackson-Vanik is an economic tool originally designed by Congress to address restrictions on emigration. The conditions which made Jackson-Vanik necessary no longer exist in Kazakhstan. We have more effective tools to address [remaining] human rights concerns, as appropriate, including sanctions authorities and the Trafficking in Persons, and human rights and international religious freedom reports.

Central Asia is looking very differently at Russia, and the United States should be looking differently at Central Asia. At this pivotal moment in history, we should be doing everything in our power to shore up these states as they rebuff Russia's constant pressure and entreaties to support its unprovoked war in Ukraine.

Every step we take to bring these countries closer to the West will reduce Russia's ability to pressure them to support its war in Ukraine. We should grant Kazakhstan

Permanent Normal Trade Relations not only to demonstrate our solidarity with the people of Kazakhstan, but also as a measure to weaken Russia's grip on the region. Although ultimately this is a decision for Congress, the Department of State supports graduating Kazakhstan from the Jackson-Vanik Amendment.

Question. What benefits would the repeal of this amendment and the establishment of normal trade relations have for Kazakhstan and the U.S.?

Answer. Lack of Permanent Normal Trade Relations due to Jackson-Vanik remains an irritant in bilateral relations, one that is raised in nearly every encounter with Kazakhstani officials. Graduating Kazakhstan from the Jackson-Vanik amendment would send a strong signal that we view Kazakhstan as a reliable partner that has over 30 years of independence and has left behind its Soviet past, and eliminating the need for an annual waiver process would provide assurances of stability for investors.

Human Rights and International Organizations

Question. In the State Department's 2021 Human Rights Report, human rights advocates asserted that the domestic definition of torture does not meet the definition in the U.N. Convention against Torture, and there were reports of more than 200 incidents of torture throughout the year.

- If confirmed, how will you work with the Kazakh Government in moving away from torture, including by meeting the definition's international standard?

Answer. If confirmed I will continue to use vehicles such as the Human Rights Report toengage Kazakhstan's leaders on the need to come into line fully with Kazakhstan's international obligations. I will also explore opportunities to strengthen cooperation on anti-torture training, investigations, and oversight within Kazakhstan's justice sector and security sector in light of President Tokayev and other Kazakhstani leaders openly acknowledging and condemning torture following the January events.

Question. What actions would you take to hold those officers committing human rights abuses of torture accountable?

Answer. If confirmed, I will urge Kazakhstan's Government to pursue credible and transparent investigations into allegations of torture and other human rights violations and prosecute offenders where appropriate. Provided sufficient information is available, I will also support actions to hold these officials to account through mechanisms like visa restrictions under Section 7031(c) of the State appropriations act and financial sanctions under the Global Magnitsky sanctions program, as applicable.

Question. The report also indicates that prison facilities conditions are harsh and life-threatening, with prison authorities rarely conducting proper investigation into mistreatment, not publishing statistics such as deaths in detention facilities, and failing to adequately improve conditions to meet international health standards.

- If confirmed, how would you work with government authorities and international organizations to increase the transparency of prison facilities and improve conditions?

Answer. If confirmed, I will review available cooperative assistance opportunities with the aim to increase transparency and improve conditions in prison facilities and strengthen cooperation on anti-torture training, investigations, and oversight within Kazakhstan's justice sector and security sector.

Question. What steps can you take, if confirmed, to bolster human rights in country and within civil society?

Answer. If confirmed, I will make the protection of human rights and the strengthening of an independent, vibrant civil society one of my main priorities in Kazakhstan. I will regularly raise these issues in all my government and non-government meetings, as human rights are fundamental to a prosperous and stable society and will direct my staff to do the same. I will make use of all available tools, including the annual human rights report, international religious freedom report, trafficking in persons report, and child labor report, as well as bilateral assistance opportunities, to engage the Government and civil society on these issues.

Question. In the State Department's 2022 Trafficking in Persons Report, Kazakhstan remained on Tier 2, showing efforts to improve on meeting minimum requirements to eliminate trafficking. However, the Government is lacking in key areas such as identification of victims and traffickers, insufficient legislative efforts, and maintenance of obstacles for foreign victims to access protection services unless a criminal case had been initiated against the traffickers.

- If confirmed, how will you work with Kazakh officials to improve their practices at identification of victims and traffickers?

Answer. Identifying victims and gaining their support to assist with the investigation and prosecution of traffickers is key to effectively combating human trafficking in Kazakhstan. Identifying victims is a critical first step in ensuring their ability to receive the support and resources they need. If confirmed, I will ensure trafficking in persons programming at the Embassy continues to support training for law enforcement and other first responders, and government agencies whose work puts them in contact with possible trafficking victims. Recent changes in the law requiring that services be provided to foreign trafficking victims is a demonstration of Kazakhstan's willingness to improve its reputation on trafficking in persons.

Question. If confirmed, what steps could you take along with the host government to minimize the obstacles currently presented to victims of human trafficking?

Answer. The annual Department of State Trafficking in Persons Report is an effective diplomatic tool to engage foreign governments on human trafficking, and serves as a reminder to the Government of Kazakhstan of its need to increase its efforts in combating human trafficking and protecting the victims. Recent amendments to Kazakhstani law that now instruct agencies to provide services to foreign trafficking victims demonstrate the Government's intent to make changes that support victims. Additionally, work on a standalone law on trafficking in persons, which is a recommendation in the annual report, has begun and is expected to be released for public comment this year. The law will codify roles and responsibilities of various government agencies for trafficking victims. If confirmed, I will capitalize on this momentum to press for more conformity to international standards.

Question. Kazakhstan is constitutionally a secular state, however in the 2021 International Religious Freedom report, many minority religious groups, particularly those cited as 'non-traditional', faced arrest, detention, and imprisonment for their religious beliefs.

- What is your assessment of this issue and how would you assess the effects of U.S. efforts to urge greater governmental and societal respect for international religious freedom?

Answer. Kazakhstan's constitution defines the country as a secular state and provides for freedom of religion and belief as well as the freedom to decline religious affiliation; however, according to local and international observers, authorities continued to impose restrictions on and conduct additional scrutiny of what the Government considered "nontraditional" religious groups. If confirmed, I will ensure embassy officials continue outreach to a wide range of religious communities, their leaders, and religious freedom advocates, and encourage reform of relevant laws and guidelines so all citizens can conduct peaceful religious activities freely.

Question. If confirmed, how would you build upon past USG efforts to promote further religious freedom?

Answer. If confirmed, I and all my staff will continue to urge respect for religious freedom, both in general public outreach opportunities and regarding specific cases. I will advocate for more changes to the country's law regulating religious practice and raise the U.S. Government's concerns about Kazakhstan's current restrictive laws on religious freedom, especially those related to censorship of religious literature, as well those imposing criminal penalties for peaceful religious speech or praying without registration. If confirmed, I intend to meet with representatives of all faiths and will instruct my staff to do the same, to demonstrate how the United States respects and values religious freedom.

Question. The Office of Multilateral Strategy and Personnel (MSP) in the State Department's bureau of International Organizations is leading a whole-of-government effort to identify, recruit, and install qualified, independent personnel at the U.N., including in elections for specialized bodies like the International Telecommunications Union (ITU). There is an American candidate, Doreen Bogdan-Martin, who if elected would be the first American and first woman to lead the ITU. She is in a tough race that will require early, consistent engagement across capitals and within the U.N. member states.

- If confirmed, do you commit to demarching the Kazakh Government and any other counterparts necessary to encourage their support of Ms. Bogdan-Martin?

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, I commit to demarching all necessary parties to encourage support for Ms. Bogdan-Martin.

Question. If confirmed, how can you work with the International Organizations (IO) bureau and other stakeholders to identify, recruit, and install qualified Americans in positions like the Junior Program Officer (JPO) program at the U.N.?

Answer. If confirmed, I will regularly discuss the importance of qualified, independent personnel at the U.N. with Kazakhstani Government counterparts and instruct my staff to do the same. I will engage on behalf of American candidates consistently and to the best of my abilities work with the International Organizations (IO) bureau and other stakeholders to identify, recruit, and install qualified Americans in U.N. specialized bodies.

Question. Kazakhstan has one of the lowest rates of voting coincidence with the U.S. in the U.N. General Assembly and in the Security Council.

• What is your assessment of this issue?

Answer. Kazakhstan has pursued since its independence in 1991 a "multi-vector" foreign policy, which aims to maintain positive relations with all global powers, taking into account its geographic location and borders with both Russia and the PRC. If confirmed, I will engage the Kazakhstani Government early and regularly on votes in the U.N. system and ensure my staff does the same, to encourage voting with the United States and on behalf of the rules-based international order, on issues presented in the U.N. General Assembly.

Question. If confirmed, what concrete actions can you take to engage with the Kazakhs on anticipated votes in the U.N. system that would increase their voting coincidence with the U.S.?

Answer. If confirmed, I will engage the Kazakhstani Government early and regularly on votes in the U.N. system and ensure my staff does the same, to encourage voting with the United States on issues presented in the U.N. General Assembly.

State Department Manangement and Public Diplomacy

Question. Many U.S. missions have been under enormous stress over the last few years, in large part due to COVID.

• What is your understanding of morale throughout Mission Nur-Sultan?

Answer. Morale at Embassy Nur-Sultan and Consulate General Almaty remains strong. I was heartened to hear about the Mission community's resilience as they recovered from the double hit of unrest in Almaty and the Omicron wave in January this year. I credit the strong leadership of our current Chargé d'Affaires as well as the professionalism and sense of purpose that is shared across both the American and local staff. If confirmed, I will work to ensure morale remains high, by fostering an inclusive workplace, recognizing and rewarding employee excellence, making sure people have the tools, and training (and vaccines) to do their jobs, and prioritizing work-life balance.

Question. How do you intend to improve morale at Mission Sur-Sultan?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work to maintain good morale at Mission Kazakhstan by modeling and creating a workplace environment that values respect, empathy, integrity, teamwork, and work-life balance. I also believe it is essential to recognize and reward employee excellence, and to make sure people have the tools, and training (and vaccines) to do their jobs.

Question. How do you intend to create a unified mission and vision at Mission Nur-Sultan?

Answer. I believe fervently in the concept of "one team, one mission" and have tried to apply it throughout my State Department career, including in a number of U.S. Government interagency settings. If confirmed, I will try to instill this approach at Mission Kazakhstan by facilitating an open and collaborative interagency coordination process, and by asking the country team to organize its work around the goals and objectives of our Integrated Country Strategy (ICS). I have found the best way to get "buy-in" to this approach is to model and encourage an inclusive and transparent leadership style, to deemphasize the differences among various agencies, and to stress what we share in common as a single country team with a single mission.

Question. Management is a key responsibility for Chiefs of Mission. How would you describe your management style?

Answer. I would describe my management style as focused on empowering my team to do their jobs well. I try to achieve this by: 1. Setting clear goals and priorities; 2. Communicating early, often and transparently; 3. Being a good listener; 4. Being empathetic and emotionally intelligent; 5. Showing that I value good work

and hard effort; and 6. Prioritizing work-life balance by encouraging attention to family and activities outside of the workplace. I try to avoid micromanaging those to whom I have delegated responsibility or picking favorites among the different elements of the team—everyone's contribution is essential to success.

Question. Do you believe it is ever acceptable or constructive to berate subordinates, either in public or private?

Answer. No, this is not acceptable behavior. If confirmed, I pledge to treat staff at all levels with the respect they deserve. My approach is: "Praise publicly; when necessary, provide constructive criticism promptly but privately."

Question. How do you envision your leadership relationship with your Deputy Chief of Mission?

Answer. I plan to have a close, collaborative relationship with my DCM. I am fortunate to have a DCM who will have served as Charge D'Affaires for over a year prior to my arrival, and who therefore is familiar with all Embassy operations. I see her as the Mission's Chief Operating Officer, and as my "alter ego," capable of stepping in to assume Mission leadership when necessary.

Question. If confirmed, what leadership responsibilities do you intend to entrust to your Deputy Chief of Mission?

Answer. I see her as the Mission's Chief Operating Officer and expect she will focus somewhat more on internal Embassy matters and somewhat less on external outreach than I. But I will rely on her advice and counsel in all matters. I expect she will take on key leadership responsibilities within the Mission, including all post-level mentoring programs for entry-level and mid-level officers and local staff, and chair of the Emergency Action Committee. I would also expect that the DCM would share with me, if I am confirmed, leadership on matters related to the promotion of a diverse and inclusive workforce that fosters respect, productivity, and professional engagement across all sections and agencies. And I also see her as a force multiplier for both our government-to-government and public diplomacy efforts. By fully utilizing the DCM's skills and experience—which have been proven during her past year serving as Chargé d'Affaires—we will better achieve our agenda vis-à-vis the Government of Kazakhstan and reach a broader range of the Kazakhstani public with our messaging and outreach.

Question. In order to create and continue employee excellence at the Department, accurate and direct employee evaluation reports (EERs) for Foreign Service Officers are imperative, though often lacking.

- Do you believe it is important to provide employees with accurate, constructive feedback on their performances in order to encourage improvement and reward those who most succeeded in their roles?

Answer. Yes. Accurate and timely feedback is important throughout the year, not just when evaluations are due. Productive development of staff is a continuous process and, if confirmed, I will emphasize the importance of this.

Question. If confirmed, would you support and encourage clear, accurate, and direct feedback to employees in order to improve performance and reward high achievers?

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, I pledge to encourage direct, accurate feedback to improve performance and reward high achievers. This is one of a leader's most important tasks.

Question. It is imperative that U.S. diplomats get outside of posts abroad to meet with local actors, including host government officials, non-government organizations, and fellow foreign diplomats stationed in Kazakhstan.

- In your opinion, do U.S. diplomats get outside of our embassy walls enough to accomplish fully their missions?

Answer. Mission Kazakhstan staff regularly leave the office to engage with host government officials, other diplomats, and private persons. Face-to-face contact is vital for diplomacy. If confirmed, I will continue this practice and will consult regularly with our security personnel about whether it remains safe for staff to do so.

Question. How do you intend to improve the ability of U.S. diplomats to better access all local populations?

Answer. Officers at Mission Kazakhstan—both the Embassy in Nur-Sultan and the Consulate in Almaty—regularly travel within the country and, if confirmed, I will strongly encourage such trips. We cannot understand a country only from its capital and large cities. Our network of American Corners act as a vital bridge be-

tween the Embassy and local communities and I will encourage—and support appropriate funding for—regular Embassy visits to these centers.

Question. Public diplomacy is an important aspect of U.S. foreign policy efforts.

• What is the public diplomacy environment like in Kazakhstan?

Answer. Interest in U.S. culture, learning English, studying in, or traveling to the United States, and forming connections with U.S. businesses remains high. While technically free, the media environment in Kazakhstan is characterized by a lack of a professional journalist corps, a high degree of self-censorship, and periodic government blocking of websites allegedly propagating extremism or anti-government criticism. Russian-language media continues to be extremely influential in shaping Kazakhstanis' understanding of the world. If confirmed, I commit to ensuring our PD programs continue to counter disinformation through engaging journalists, encouraging English language learning and media literacy; engaging civil society to support human rights and democratic processes; and promoting the importance of inclusive, diversified economic growth.

Question. What public diplomacy challenges do U.S. diplomats face there?

Answer. While there is much interest in and many opportunities for collaboration, some U.S. policy priorities are still considered sensitive and controversial in Kazakhstan, especially outside large cities. There is also a vocal online group which claims some of the programs run by the U.S. Embassy in Kazakhstan are antithetical to traditional Kazakh values. If confirmed, I will support our Public Diplomacy Section's efforts to address these challenges and raise concerns with appropriate government authorities.

Question. How do you balance the importance of Main State versus the in-country mission when it comes to tailoring public diplomacy messages for foreign audiences?

Answer. Mission Kazakhstan maintains effective lines of communication with relevant offices at Main State to craft appropriate messaging and alleviate any discrepancies. If confirmed, I will make sure these lines of communication remain open.

Question. "Anomalous health incidents," commonly referred to as "Havana Syndrome," have been debilitating and sidelining U.S. diplomats around the world for years. They have caused serious, negative consequences for U.S. diplomacy, yet many believe that the Department is not doing enough to care for, protect, and communicate to its personnel.

• If confirmed, do you commit to taking this threat seriously?

Answer. Yes. If confirmed, I will have no higher priority than the security and safety of the Mission community. I have already had to deal with several AHIs over the past three years in Tashkent. If confirmed, I will do everything possible at Mission Kazakhstan to ensure that employees who report a possible AHI receive immediate and appropriate attention and care and the incident is reported through appropriate channels.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to talking as openly as you can to Mission Nur-Sultan personnel?

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, I will be as open as possible with Mission Kazakhstan personnel to build a culture of trust and respect, as I have done at Mission Uzbekistan over the past three years.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO HON. DANIEL N. ROSENBLUM BY SENATOR MARCO RUBIO

Question. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is orchestrating nothing less than a genocide of Turkic Muslims in Xinjiang. We all know of the Uyghurs plight, but this genocide has also ensnared ethnic Kyrgyz and Kazakhs. In Kazakhstan, we have seen signs that the Kazakh state has served as an extension of the CCP's transnational system of surveillance and repression. Ethnic Kazakhs who flee Xinjiang are denied permission to enter the country, civil society groups raising awareness of the genocide find their profiles on social media and YouTube blocked and removed. Several individuals may have even been forcibly repatriated to Xinjiang.

• Is the CCP a threat to the United States?

Answer. As Secretary Blinken has noted, the ruling Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is the most serious long-term challenge to the international order. Beijing's

coercive tactics—from Lithuania to Taiwan—are deeply destabilizing and threaten U.S. interests across the globe. PRC authorities have committed genocide and crimes against humanity against Uyghurs and members of other ethnic and religious minority groups in Xinjiang. Secretary Blinken has made clear that the United States stands with countries and people around the world in condemning the atrocities happening in Xinjiang, and if confirmed, I will advocate that Kazakhstan promote accountability for the PRC's atrocities against Uyghurs and members of other religious and ethnic minority groups—including ethnic Kazakhs—in Xinjiang.

Question. Is the CCP's increasing control over the Kazakh state threatening ethnic Kazakhs?

Answer. With an 1,100-mile shared border and deep historical, political, and economic links, Kazakhstan approaches its relationship with the PRC with great caution. If confirmed, I will work to support Kazakhstan's freedom to pursue a multivector foreign policy within which it can advance its national interests through cooperation with a variety of partners. That national interest includes promoting and protecting Kazakhstan's unique cultural identity, and the rights of members of all Kazakhstan's ethnic groups, including ethnic Kazakhs. If confirmed, I will also advocate that Kazakhstan's Government continue to uphold its international obligations regarding non-refoulement of refugees, and that it allows victims of PRC atrocities, their relatives, and NGOs advocating on their behalf to speak and organize freely.

Question. Is Kazakhstan a possible template for how the CCP will go after its opponents who have fled overseas to other countries?

Answer. Kazakhstan offers benefits, including a simplified pathway to citizenship, for ethnic Kazakhs from abroad, including individuals from the PRC. As a party to the 1951 Refugee Convention, 1967 Refugee Protocol, and 1984 Convention Against Torture, Kazakhstan has an obligation to refrain from forcibly returning noncitizens to a country where they would be persecuted or tortured, and thus far has granted temporary refugee status to four individuals fleeing the PRC. If confirmed as Ambassador, I will continue to work with Kazakhstan and international organizations like the U.N. to ensure the safety of refugees, including those from Xinjiang, and encourage full compliance with the terms of the 1951 Refugee Convention, 1967 Refugee Protocol, and 1984 Convention Against Torture.

Question. If confirmed, how will you press the Kazakh Government to recognize the genocide of ethnic Kazakhs in Xinjiang?

Answer. If confirmed, I will continue to advocate that Kazakhstan publicly condemn the PRC's atrocities against Uyghurs and members of other religious and ethnic minority groups—including ethnic Kazakhs—in Xinjiang. I will also advocate on behalf of freedom of expression and peaceful assembly, including for Xinjiang advocates, and for full protection of refugees, including those from Xinjiang, consistent with the 1951 Refugee Convention and 1967 Refugee Protocol.

Question. Earlier this year, Kazakhstan experienced the most significant anti-government protests in its history. It's clear from independent media that these initially peaceful protests expressed frustration with increasing prices, a stagnant economy, and rampant government corruption. The Government's crackdown on these protests, supported by Russian special forces, was so violent that many Kazakhs call the protests "bloody January."

- Are you aware of U.S. efforts to hold Kazakh officials accountable for human rights abuses against peaceful protesters in Kazakhstan? If so, please describe.

Answer. Violent organized groups co-opted initially peaceful January protests and fomented violence on the streets of multiple Kazakhstani cities in an effort to weaken President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev or remove him from power. Violent rioters attacked and burned government buildings, looted commercial buildings, and killed 19 members of Kazakhstan's security forces. In the face of the sudden violence and political uncertainty, President Tokayev called on the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) to provide perimeter security around critical infrastructure and thereby help restore order.

During the Government's response to the violence there were credible reports of abuse and excessive use of force by security forces, including credible allegations of torture and deaths of individuals in detention. More than six months after these events, the Government continues to investigate these credible allegations of abuses of power, killings, and torture. Nine members of security forces have been detained and another 15 have been identified as suspects and are reportedly under investigation. The Government has also detained senior members of the security forces on

charges of treason and abuse of power for allegedly organizing or allowing the violence.

The United States is actively working with civil society to encourage the Government of Kazakhstan to ensure that these investigations are credible and independent, and that victims and their families receive the accountability and justice they deserve. If confirmed, I will continue to press the Government of Kazakhstan to hold its security forces accountable for their actions in January and will ensure that my embassy team does the same.

Question. What is your assessment of claims made by the Kazakh opposition that agents of the Kazakh Government embedded themselves in protests to spark violence and thereby justify a violent crackdown?

Answer. The State Department's current understanding of the events is that violent organized groups co-opted initially peaceful January protests and fomented violence on the streets of multiple Kazakhstani cities in an effort to weaken President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev or remove him from power. Violent rioters attacked and burned government buildings, looted commercial buildings, and killed 19 members of Kazakhstan's security forces. In the face of the sudden violence and political uncertainty, President Tokayev called on the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) to provide perimeter security around critical infrastructure and thereby help restore order.

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Question. If confirmed, what will you do to support democracy activists and civil society in Kazakhstan?

Answer. If confirmed, I will continue efforts to encourage and strengthen civil society and citizens' participation in Kazakhstan's governance and political process. I will explore ways to further build capacity and skills for more inclusive participation in all levels of Kazakhstani Government. I will also advocate on behalf of freedom of expression, peaceful assembly, and association, so that all those who so choose can peacefully express their political views and contribute to Kazakhstan's future.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO JOEY R. HOOD BY SENATOR ROBERT MENENDEZ

Economic Concerns

Question. As you know, Tunisian authorities have been in consultation with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) regarding a $4 billion loan to address Tunisia's economic concerns. The sharp rises in grain and energy prices caused by Russia's invasion of Ukraine are exacerbating inflation and widening the Government's budget deficit, leading to delays in state salaries and difficulties in paying for wheat imports.

- How can the U.S. work with other donor nations to encourage a return to a transparent and inclusive system of democratic governance?

Answer. In tandem with our G7 and other international partners, if confirmed, I would continue to publicly and privately advocate for implementation of measures to return to democratic governance. I would also coordinate with international partners to align assistance programs to ensure they are encouraging a return to democratic governance and supporting economic stability through robust assistance to civil society, relief to citizens, and bolstering the private sector.

Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC)

Question. Following President Saied's dismissal of parliament, the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) suspended its nearly $500 million compact with the Tunisian Government. This compact includes projects to strengthen Tunisia's transportation, trade, and water sectors.

- Given that the signing of a compact hinges on Tunisia having a democratically elected parliament, what is the current outlook for the compact?

Answer. Although the compact is ready for signing and implementation, MCC eligibility criteria requires partner countries to demonstrate a commitment to democratic governance. If confirmed, I would seek every opportunity to engage with Tunisia's leaders, civil society, media, political parties, unions, and other stakeholders advocate for the re-establishment of a democratic government accountable to their people. Until that occurs, the compact is unable to move forward.

Question. How, if it all, should American security engagement with Tunisia change if Saied continues to consolidate power? Do you believe that threatening to curtail or suspend U.S. aid and security assistance to Tunisia would effectively pressure Saied to change course?

Answer. The Tunisian military remains an apolitical and professional force that reports to civilian leadership. Tunisia continues to face a threat from ISIS and other U.S.-designated terrorist organizations as well as from instability in the region, especially in neighboring Libya. U.S. security assistance is critical in supporting Tunisian-led efforts to secure its borders, counter terrorism, and provide a safe and stable environment in the region.

Anomalous Health Incidents

Question. I am very concerned about directed energy attacks on U.S. Government personnel (so-called Anomalous Health Incidents). Ensuring the safety and security of our personnel abroad falls largely on individual Chiefs of Mission and the response of officers at post. It is imperative that any individual who reports a suspected incident be responded to promptly, equitably, and compassionately.

- Do you agree these incidents must be taken seriously, and pose a threat to the health of U.S. personnel?

Answer. Yes, I fully agree this must be taken seriously.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to ensuring that any reported incident is treated seriously and reported quickly through the appropriate channels, and that any affected individuals receive prompt access to medical care?

Answer. If confirmed, I will be committed to the safety and well-being of Mission personnel and to working in close partnership with the President's AHI Interagency Coordinator, the Department's Health Incident Response Task Force, and the broader government-wide effort to ensure the full resources of the U.S. Government are brought to bear to get to the bottom of these incidents and to ensure access to needed care for those affected.

Question. Do you commit to meeting with medical staff and the RSO at post to discuss any past reported incidents and ensure that all protocols are being followed?

Answer. Yes. If confirmed, I would be committed to providing Mission Tunisia personnel with the most up-to-date information available, as we learn more, including guidance on how to respond if they have concerns that they might have experienced an incident and how to access medical care.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO JOEY R. HOOD BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

Policy Priorities

Question. Please outline U.S. national security interests and your policy priorities as the United States Ambassador to Tunisia.

Answer. If confirmed, my most important priority as ambassador would be the safety and security of Americans living in and visiting Tunisia. My next priority would be to help put Tunisia on a more stable and prosperous trajectory through inclusive and open economic growth. The country must enact necessary economic reforms that foster inclusive growth. Tunisia should return to a democratic system of checks and balances, with an effective and accountable government that protects human rights and fundamental freedoms. I would continue engagement with Tunisia's leaders, civil society, media, political parties, unions, and other stakeholders to re-establish a democratic government accountable to its people. Tunisia will continue to face persistent security threats caused by regional instability, the return of Tunisians from foreign conflict zones, and domestic terrorism. We will ad-

vocate for prioritization of Tunisian security forces' partnerships with the United States and avoidance of partnerships that undermine Tunisia's sovereignty and regional stability. Counterterrorism and military support will seek to focus continued Tunisian attention to the dismantling of domestic violent extremist organizations, securing Tunisia's land and sea borders, and participating in regional and U.N. security missions.

Democratic Backsliding

Question. Initially a Democratic success story after the Arab Spring and Jasmine Revolutions, Tunisia's President Kais Saied is unilaterally dismantling Tunisia's democratic institutions. Further, Saied has been seemingly immune to international pressure to change course.

- Please outline your strategy for creating leverage with President Saied and the prospects for halting Tunisia's democratic backsliding and restoring the balance of power and rule of law.

Answer. An independent and strong civil society is integral to an effective democracy, helping promote accountability, human rights, and fundamental freedoms. If confirmed, I would continue to support Tunisia's vibrant civil society while reiterating the need for the Government of Tunisia to respect human rights, including freedom of expression and association. U.S. support to civil society has been and will continue to be a critical component of our assistance to Tunisia. I would seek every opportunity to also urge the Government to see civil society as a partner in advancing democratic principles, public health, education, and human rights. With legislative elections scheduled in December, this is a crucial moment for the Government to demonstrate inclusivity and transparency in the new electoral law, taking into consideration the perspectives of civil society and political parties, which will be essential for the legitimacy and representativeness of the future Parliament.

Question. What are your takeaways from Tunisia's constitutional referendum and the resulting constitution?

Answer. I acknowledge Tunisians' overwhelming concerns about corruption, economic mismanagement, and the ineffectiveness of past governments. I also note the concerns of many Tunisians regarding the lack of an inclusive and transparent process for the drafting of the new constitution, and concerns over the constitution's weakened checks that could threaten their democracy and human rights. If confirmed, I will encourage Tunisia's leaders to develop an effective, democratic government that protects human rights, freedom of expression and association, rule of law, and judicial independence, and promotes long-term economic prosperity based on a system of checks and balances, a critical component for the health of all democracies.

Question. Is U.S. assistance an effective lever to influence Saied's conduct?

Answer. We continuously review our assistance programs to ensure they align with our policy goals and values. Reductions in the Administration's FY 23/FY 23 budget request, in comparison to prior year requests, reflect our significant concerns over democratic backsliding. U.S. assistance that addresses the pressing needs facing the Tunisian people will continue, including our support for civil society and efforts to promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth.

Question. Would a unified message and coordinated assistance reductions tied to democratic benchmarks across the G7 better influence Tunisia's trajectory?

Answer. Our work with partners including unified messaging from the G7 has been an important element in of our efforts to set democratic benchmarks that Tunisia should meet to preserve democratic institutions. In tandem with international partners, I would, if confirmed, continue publicly and privately to advocate for a swift return to democratic governance. I would also coordinate with international partners to align assistance programs to ensure they are encouraging a return to democratic governance and supporting economic stability through robust assistance to civil society, relief to citizens, and bolstering the private sector.

Mil-to-Mil Relationship

Question. Elsewhere in North Africa, select members of Congress have sought to curtail the U.S.-Morocco mil-to-mil relationship over Western Sahara concerns—even as far as to reject Moroccan participation in AFRICOM's capstone exercise African Lion.

- Should the United States consider revoking Tunisian participation in African Lion as a consequence of democratic backsliding? Why or why not?

Answer. The Tunisian military remains an apolitical and professional force that reports to civilian leadership. Tunisia continues to face a threat from ISIS and other U.S.-designated terrorist organizations as well as from instability in the region, especially in neighboring Libya. Military trainings and exercises, including African Lion, are critical in supporting Tunisian-led efforts to secure its borders, counter terrorism, provide safety and foster stability in the region.

Economy

Question. According to the World Bank, the Tunisian economy has grown on average by a meager 1 percent annually. The Tunisian Government has tried to maintain social peace through extensive subsidies and expanding Tunisia's civil service—now among the largest in the world.

- What are the most effective tools to spur Tunisia's economic recovery?

Answer. The Government is negotiating a potential agreement with the IMF, and this could help support reforms that would benefit all Tunisians. One key aspect of the proposed reforms involves the development of the private sector, which would expand investment potential, reduce the influence of monopolies, and support local entrepreneurship. If confirmed, I would promote a vision of inclusive, open economic growth and stronger ties with U.S. companies.

Question. Are Kais Saied's "anti-corruption" reforms effectively addressing Tunisia's economic woes? How would you advise him to change course?

Answer. If confirmed, I would work with our G7 partners to reinforce the message that many of Tunisia's corruption challenges can be addressed through an economic reform agenda. By reducing the nation's dependence on subsidies, supporting the private sector, and better managing government spending, including on public wages and state-owned enterprises, the President has the best chance of stabilizing his nation's economy while addressing corruption.

Question. How do you strike the balance between Tunisia's austerity measures (subsidies, expansion of civil service etc.) and necessary IMF reforms?

Answer. A potential IMF program would be designed to support and enable core reforms that Tunisia needs to undertake urgently. These are reforms outlined in the Government's own economic reform agenda. Stakeholders, including the Government of Tunisia, the IMF, international donors, trade unions, and private sector representatives, broadly share an understanding of the reforms needed to address the economic crisis, although they differ on the details of how reforms should be carried out. Ultimately, only the Government of Tunisia can ensure reforms are implemented.

Question. How does Tunisia implement IMF reforms and prevent instability and unrest?

Answer. Reforms are critical to Tunisia's political and economic stability. President Saied has a crucial role to play in explaining to the public his economic reform priorities as well as their urgency and necessity. He will also need to help Tunisians understand his government's plans to mitigate the impact of reforms on vulnerable citizens. If confirmed, in collaboration with our G7 partners, I would encourage President Saied to increase his communication with the Tunisian people about the importance of implementing proposed reforms.

Chinese Influence

Question. What are the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) goals in Tunisia?

Answer. The People's Republic of China (PRC) has increased efforts in recent years to deepen ties with Tunisia. PRC companies are active in the technology and infrastructure sectors. If confirmed, I would highlight the risks associated with PRC engagement that could impact Tunisia's security and sovereignty, as well as U.S. interests.

Question. Given Tunisia's strategic location, how does the United States plan to compete with China—particularly given cuts to U.S. assistance?

Answer. Increased engagement with the Tunisian people, civil society, and government officials will be vital to mitigate the influence of the PRC Government. The United States will continue to advance our strategic interests in the region through diplomatic engagement, public outreach, and judicious use of foreign assistance and other funding. We will also coordinate with like-minded partners to put forward alternatives to PRC offerings of concern. We will at times need to collaborate with Tunisian Government agencies and entities to counter PRC messaging, influence,

and funding. This is particularly important given the dominance of state-owned monopolies in a number of key sectors, including all major critical infrastructure.

Question. How do you strike the appropriate balance between pushing Tunisia to adopt democratic reforms and competing with China's 'no strings attached' approach?

Answer. The PRC has sought to expand its influence where countries face significant economic challenges and/or lack deliberative democratic processes. If confirmed, I would highlight those democratic values—the free exchange of ideas, respect for the rule of law, transparency, and accountability—would best position Tunisia to safeguard its security, sovereignty, and future prosperity against unwanted outside influence.

Ukraine Invasion and Food Insecurity

Question. Tunisia is among the most vulnerable countries, relying on Ukraine and Russia for 56 percent of its annual wheat imports. Many on the Tunisian "street" have argued that food insecurity will set conditions for a potential "revolution" on your watch.

- What are the most effective methods to address Tunisia's food security and mitigate the impacts of Russian aggression in Ukraine?

Answer. Russia's invasion of Ukraine has worsened inflation and increased food insecurity everywhere, so the international community must redouble diplomatic pressure on Russia to end Putin's war of choice. If confirmed, I would focus on working with international partners to mitigate the impact of Russia's aggression on food security in Tunisia and would encourage Tunisian efforts to increase domestic food production and implement economic reforms. I would speak out, publicly and privately, against any Russian misinformation and disinformation that Putin and his acts of aggression against Ukraine are responsible for energy price increases and food insecurity in Tunisia.

Abraham Accords and Normalization with Israel

Question. What are the prospects and associated benefits/pitfalls for Tunisian normalization with Israel?

Answer. The normalization of relations with Israel, including through the historic Abraham Accords, has led to greater peace and security in the region and deepened opportunities for expanded economic growth and cooperation. Administration officials regularly discuss with our partners in the region the benefits of improved regional cooperation, including with Israel, and I would plan to do so with Tunisian officials and citizens, as well, if confirmed.

Question. With the constitutional referendum placing consolidated power in President Saied's hands, the slide towards authoritarianism fails to provide institutional guarantees for human rights. This has left many human rights groups concerned over the undermining of the judicial system and other post-revolutionary gains.

- What is your assessment of the current situation on democratic backsliding in Tunisia and the possible implications on human rights in the country?

Answer. The Tunisian people have experienced an alarming erosion of democratic norms over the past year. Since July 25, 2021, the suspension of constitutional governance, consolidation of executive power, and weakening of independent institutions have raised deep questions about Tunisia's democratic path, both in Tunisia and internationally. Together with international partners, we have urged an inclusive democratic reform process, emphasized continued protection of fundamental freedoms, and insisted on respect for judicial independence, as well as the rule of law. The U.S.-Tunisia bilateral relationship is strongest when there is a shared commitment to democratic values, human rights, and fundamental freedoms.

Question. If confirmed, how would you work with the host government to bolster human rights amid backsliding?

Answer. If confirmed, I would continue to engage with the Tunisian Government at the highest levels to advocate for democratic institutions. In tandem with international partners, the Administration will continue to urge the Government to return to democratic governance—including separation of powers via a functioning legislature and an independent judiciary—by conducting reforms in a transparent and inclusive way.

Question. The State Department's 2021 Human Rights Report on Tunisia noted significant human abuses of torture by government agents, arbitrary arrests, mili-

tary prosecution of civilian cases, restrictions of freedoms of expression, corruption, and violent threats and criminalization against LGBTQI+ communities.

- If confirmed, what actions with civil society groups and the host government would you take to address these violations?

Answer. If confirmed, I will continue to prioritize programming that reinforces rule of law, protects human rights, and empowers civil society. The administration has shifted our planned activities to bolster civil society oversight of the judiciary and law enforcement, increase access to justice, promote judicial independence, and strengthen accountability mechanisms. The Department requires vetting for Tunisian military and law enforcement personnel and units and conducts end use monitoring of transferred equipment.

Question. In the State Department's 2022 Trafficking in Persons Report, Tunisia remained on Tier 2, showing some efforts to improve on meeting minimum requirements to eliminate trafficking but continued to stymie progress in a few key areas. The Government failed to appropriately identify victims and traffickers, and lacked training to sufficiently understand and address trafficking cases, leading to some victims being penalized for acts traffickers compelled them to commit.

- If confirmed, how will you work with Tunisian officials to increase their efficiency at identification of trafficking victims and traffickers?

Answer. Although the Government of Tunisia demonstrated significant and increasing efforts to combat human trafficking in 2022, including by convicting sex and labor traffickers for the first time in three years and significantly increasing investigations and prosecutions of traffickers, more can be done. If confirmed, I will continue to urge the Government to hold sex and labor traffickers criminally accountable using Tunisia's 2016 anti-trafficking law, which does meet international standards.

Question. If confirmed, what concrete steps could you take in your mission and with the host government to assist Tunisia to better meet the minimum standards and promote anti-trafficking work?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work closely with the Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons (TIP Office) to continue to implement anti-trafficking programming, in addition to engaging with the Government to make progress on the priority recommendations noted in the 2022 Trafficking in Persons Report in order to meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking. I would support the TIP Office's goal of measurably reducing human trafficking by building the capacity of government and justice sector officials to investigate and prosecute trafficking cases, as well as more effectively identify and protect trafficking victims through adequate care and legal representation.

Question. Previously, Tunisia was a country with Islam as its official religion, and a 99 percent Sunni Muslim majority. In the new constitution, Tunisia is no longer an Islamic State.

- What is your assessment of the implications for religious minorities following the removal of Islam as the country's religion from Article I of the constitution?

Answer. It remains too early to tell what the implications for religious minorities will be following the removal from the constitution of the mention of Islam as the religion of the state. The constitution still notes that Tunisia is part of the Islamic community. If confirmed, I would continue to speak out against laws and policies that impede or threaten freedom of religion and would continue to stress with the Government the need to respect religious freedom for all, including members of Tunisia's religious minority groups.

Question. Prior to referendum, the 2021 International Religious Freedom report from the State Department notes that some religious minorities feel societal pressure to hide their beliefs and are not given full recognition of their religious rights. If confirmed, what actions would you take with the Tunisian Government to improve recognition of religious freedoms for all religions?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to working with others in the Department, including the Office of International Religious Freedom, to advance freedom of religion for all people, including members of religious minority groups. I would also hold regular meetings and discussions with members of religious minority and majority communities throughout the country and lead the mission in highlighting the importance of protecting members of religious minority groups and promoting interfaith dialogue.

Question. The Office of Multilateral Strategy and Personnel (MSP) in the State Department's bureau of International Organizations is leading a whole-of-government effort to identify, recruit, and install qualified, independent personnel at the U.N., including in elections for specialized bodies like the International Telecommunications Union (ITU). There is an American candidate, Doreen Bogdan-Martin, who if elected would be the first American and first woman to lead the ITU. She is in a tough race that will require early, consistent engagement across capitals and within the U.N. member states.

- If confirmed, do you commit to démarche the Tunisian Government and any other counterparts necessary to encourage their support of Ms. Bogdan-Martin?

Answer. Yes.

Question. If confirmed, how can you work with the International Organizations (IO) bureau and other stakeholders to identify, recruit, and install qualified Americans in positions like the Junior Program Officer (JPO) program at the U.N.?

Answer. The Junior Professional Officer program is one of the key opportunities offered by the U.N. to encourage young professionals interested in serving in international organizations, and it provides them with hands-on experience across various U.N. agencies. If confirmed, I will work with the IO Bureau to identify qualified and diverse candidates for the JPO program.

Question. Tunisia has one of the lowest rates of voting coincidence with the U.S. in the U.N. General Assembly and in the Security Council.

- What is your assessment of this issue?

Answer. Tunisia supported two significant U.N. votes on Ukraine. If confirmed, I would continue to lobby Tunisia in support of other U.S. policy priorities at the U.N.

Question. If confirmed, what concrete actions can you take to engage with the [Tunisians] on anticipated votes in the U.N. system that would increase their voting coincidence with the U.S.?

Answer. Tunisia voted in favor of U.S.-sponsored U.N. General Assembly resolutions on Ukraine on March 25 (humanitarian resolution) and March 2 (resolution condemning Russia's invasion). If confirmed, I will continue to lobby Tunisia to support U.S. policy priorities at the U.N.

STATE DEPARTMENT MANAGEMENT AND PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

Question. Many U.S. missions have been under enormous stress over the last few years, in large part due to COVID.

- What is your understanding of morale throughout Mission Tunis?

Answer. Mission Tunis, including the co-located Libya External Office, includes a high number of families and has strong morale, in part because Mission Tunis offers a number of job opportunities for qualified family members. The biggest issue affecting our locally employed staff's morale is wages. Their salaries remain roughly 65 percent of people doing comparable work in the local labor market and are not keeping up with inflation. The Embassy has established a Mission-wide wage working group to analyze wage and inflation trends. If confirmed, I would work diligently to ensure that mission moral remains high for all employees, in part by ensuring that all colleagues feel valued, supported, and respected.

Question. How do you intend to improve morale at Mission Tunis?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to working closely with my leadership team to promote an environment that recruits for diversity and hires for merit, while also promoting inclusion on a daily basis. I would also continue focusing on the professional development of all employees and find creative ways to foster a good work-life balance despite high work demands. I am also committed to working closely with our locally employed staff to understand their concerns regarding their wages and would advocate for them where appropriate to ensure Mission Tunis can retain and continue to recruit strong talent.

Question. How do you intend to create a unified mission and vision at Mission Tunis?

Answer. If confirmed, I would meet early and regularly with colleagues throughout the Mission, and work with my interagency team to formulate, disseminate, and implement our unified mission vision.

Question. Management is a key responsibility for Chiefs of Mission. How would you describe your management style?

Answer. I rely on an inclusive management vision, inviting colleagues of all backgrounds to share ideas and concerns as we formulate ways to advance U.S. interests. Once our vision is set, I consult regularly with people from across the organization to ensure they have the support and tools they need to fulfill their roles, and when they do not, I direct or advocate for change.

Question. Do you believe it is ever acceptable or constructive to berate subordinates, either in public or private?

Answer. No. It is never acceptable to berate subordinates.

Question. How do you envision your leadership relationship with your Deputy Chief of Mission?

Answer. I would entrust my Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM) with being my "alter ego," able to step in and lead any aspect of the mission at a moment's notice. To empower the DCM to be success in that role, I would ensure that they are privy to all appropriate information and included in all substantial decisions before they are made. I would also ensure that they have a public role and meaningful relationships with government officials to complement my efforts or stand in for me as needed.

Question. If confirmed, what leadership responsibilities do you intend to entrust to your Deputy Chief of Mission?

Answer. In addition to the responsibilities described above, I would entrust my DCM with mentoring and guiding our more junior colleagues, playing the role of chief of staff for agency and section heads, presiding over the emergency action and family advocacy committees, and working closely with our Community Liaison Officer and others to ensure high mission morale.

Question. In order to create and continue employee excellence at the Department, accurate and direct employee evaluation reports (EERs) for Foreign Service Officers are imperative, though often lacking.

- Do you believe that it is important to provide employees with accurate, constructive feedback on their performances in order to encourage improvement and reward those who most succeeded in their roles?

Answer. I firmly believe that providing employees with timely, accurate and constructive feedback is not only important but a key responsibility of all managers to ensure we can address any potential issues before they turn into serious problems. It is also a key way of recognizing and encouraging high performing employees and to inspire others to do the same. For our locally employed staff, I am very happy that Embassy Tunis will be one of the first posts in the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs to implement Merit Based Compensation which I believe can be an effective tool to provide accurate and constructive feedback coupled with training plans focused on professional development.

Question. If confirmed, would you support and encourage clear, accurate, and direct feedback to employees in order to improve performance and reward high achievers?

Answer. Yes.

Question. It is imperative that U.S. diplomats get outside of posts abroad to meet with local actors, including host government officials, non-government organizations, and fellow foreign diplomats stationed in Tunisia.

- T1 In your opinion, do U.S. diplomats get outside of our embassy walls enough to accomplish fully their missions?

Answer. U.S. diplomats are consistently in the field with grantees, implementing partners, and beneficiaries of economic assistance and public diplomacy programs, as well as local politicians, religious leaders, civil society activists, and businesspeople. We conduct robust outreach for educational, cultural, and exchange initiatives, as well as to correct the record of misinformation about the United States. If confirmed, I would continue these activities and seek ways to expand them, not just for myself but for all my colleagues.

Question. How do you intend to improve the ability of U.S. diplomats to better access all local populations?

Answer. Host country engagement is a critical component of diplomacy. If confirmed, I will work closely with my Regional Security Office to ensure that our diplomats able to safely accomplish our mission. Mission Tunis has a range of projects funded by the U.S. Government that are creating new job opportunities and providing relief to small businesses hardest hit by COVID. Those are important to

highlight, celebrate, and build upon. There are also 73 American companies operating in Tunisia. If confirmed, I would encourage diplomats to visit these sites and partners to gain a deeper understanding of the economic needs facing average Tunisians and to highlight the economic investments that the United States is making in support of the people of both our countries.

Question. Public diplomacy is an important aspect of U.S. foreign policy efforts. What is the public diplomacy environment like in Tunisia?

Answer. Most Tunisians are enthusiastic consumers of American culture, so there is a great appetite for our educational, cultural and exchange programs. We have been able to reach our audience both in person and through a highly engaged social media environment. Many young Tunisians prefer to learn English and eagerly participate in our English language programs. The opportunities for our public engagement, especially in underserved areas outside of the large cities, are nearly endless. Our public diplomacy programs are making a real difference in the quality of life for thousands of young Tunisians through enhanced educational opportunities and, skills development.

If confirmed, I would both participate in and strongly encourage outreach throughout Tunisia, particularly to historically underserved regions. and communities, in order to connect with a diverse range of Tunisian voices and U.S. voices. Public diplomacy is an important aspect of U.S. foreign policy efforts.

Question. What public diplomacy challenges do U.S. diplomats face there?

Answer. Tunisia is marked by a sometimes-slow bureaucracy, and security restrictions that preclude U.S. diplomats, some of our visiting experts, and cultural performers from traveling to some parts of the country. The growing but limited use of English can also present challenges. Russian and PRC misinformation and disinformation also pose challenges.

Question. How do you balance the importance of Main State versus the in-country mission when it comes to tailoring public diplomacy messages for foreign audiences?

Answer. Main State provides guidance and support to our public diplomacy colleagues at Embassy Tunis for all our programs. The Public Affairs Section, on the other hand, provides insights on in-country developments, which helps them to appropriately match public diplomacy resources and programs with mission goals. This balance is crucial to achieving our policy objectives.

Question. "Anomalous health incidents," commonly referred to as "Havana Syndrome," have been debilitating and sidelining U.S. diplomats around the world for years. They have caused serious, negative consequences for U.S. diplomacy, yet many believe that the Department is not doing enough to care for, protect, and communicate to its personnel.

• If confirmed, do you commit to taking this threat seriously?

Answer. Yes. If confirmed, I would have no higher priority than the security and safety of Americans in Tunisia. I will commit to taking all anomalous health incident reports seriously and to investigate them in a transparent manner.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to talking as openly as you can to Mission Tunis personnel?

Answer. Yes.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO JOEY R. HOOD BY SENATOR MARCO RUBIO

Question. Over the last several years, Tunisia and the People's Republic of China (PRC) have signed a series of agreements to develop closer economic, cultural, and technology ties. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is filling a vacuum left by the lack of investment from Europe, the United States, and the Gulf States, who have all prioritized other countries.

• Is the CCP a threat to the United States?

Answer. We are proud to be Tunisia's security partner of choice and we continue to share deep economic and cultural ties with Tunisia. If confirmed, I would seek to maintain those relationships, in part by highlighting the risks associated with PRC engagement that could weaken Tunisia's security and sovereignty, and damage U.S. interests. Increased engagement with the Tunisian people, civil society, and

government officials will be vital to mitigate concerning PRC efforts to influence Tunisia.

Question. Does growing CCP influence in Tunisia threaten U.S. interests?

Answer. The PRC has increased efforts in recent years to deepen ties with Tunisia. PRC companies are active in the technology and infrastructure sectors. If confirmed, I would seek to expand our efforts to promote a fair and equitable business climate for the benefit of U.S. investors and the security of our allies and partners. I would also strive to engage and educate decision makers in the Tunisian public and private sectors on the implications of PRC engagement in key areas such as smart cities and 5G technology.

Question. If confirmed, what will you do to further encourage stronger ties between Tunisia, the United States, and its allies?

Answer. The United States and Tunisia share deep economic, cultural, and military ties. If confirmed, I would promote a vision of inclusive, open economic growth, and stronger ties with U.S. companies. I would seek every opportunity to engage Tunisian civil society and urge the Government to see civil society as a partner in advancing democratic principles, public health, education, and human rights. If confirmed, I would help strengthen our robust security partnership for the benefit of both the United States and Tunisia. In tandem with international partners, I would continue to publicly and privately advocate for a swift return to democratic governance.

Question. What are the prospects of incorporating Tunisia into the Abraham Accords?

Answer. The normalization of relations with Israel, including through the historic Abraham Accords, has led to greater peace and security in the region, and has deepened opportunities for expanded economic growth and cooperation. Administration officials regularly discuss the benefits of improved regional cooperation, including with Israel, with our partners in the region, and I would seek every opportunity to do so with Tunisian officials and citizens.

Question. Over the last year, President Kais Saied has dismantled the hard-fought gains of Tunisia's Arab spring. From dissolving the parliament to pushing through constitutional reforms to strengthen his power, President Saied is increasingly emulating his authoritarian predecessors. What is your assessment of the erosion of Tunisian democracy?

Answer. The Tunisian people have experienced an alarming erosion of democratic norms over the past year. Since July 25, 2021, the suspension of constitutional governance, consolidation of executive power, and weakening of independent institutions have raised deep questions about Tunisia's democratic path, both in Tunisia and internationally. Together with international partners, the Administration has urged an inclusive democratic reform process, emphasized continued protection of fundamental freedoms, and insisted on respect for judicial independence and the rule of law. The U.S.-Tunisia bilateral relationship is strongest when there is a shared commitment to democratic values, human rights, and fundamental freedoms.

Question. Does this erosion of democracy present an opening for the CCP to increase its influence in Tunisia and North Africa?

Answer. The PRC has increased efforts in recent years to deepen ties with Tunisia. In other contexts, the PRC has sought to expand its influence where countries face significant economic challenges or lack deliberative democratic processes. Increased engagement with the Tunisian people, civil society, and government officials will be vital to mitigate PRC influence of concern.

Question. If confirmed, what will you do to reverse this erosion?

Answer. The United States and international partners continue to call for an inclusive and transparent dialogue on Tunisia's political future. We acknowledge the concerns of many Tunisians regarding the lack of such a process, as well as the erosion of democratic institutions that could threaten Tunisia's democracy and respect for human rights. If confirmed, I would encourage Tunisia's leaders to forge an inclusive and accountable government that preserves the space for free debate and dissent, promotes long-term economic prosperity, and establishes the checks and balances critical to the health of all democracies. I would also seek every opportunity to engage Tunisian civil society and urge the Government to see civil society as a partner.

RESPONSES TO AN ADDITIONAL QUESTION FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO JOEY R. HOOD BY SENATOR TODD YOUNG

Question. Noting Tunisia's support for U.N. resolutions on the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine, how do you plan to urge Tunisia to maintain solidarity with the Ukrainian people, as well as mitigate the negative impact of Russia's invasion on international food security?

Answer. Tunisia imports over half of its wheat from the Black Sea region. The Russian attack against Ukraine has worsened inflation and increased food insecurity, including in Tunisia. We must all redouble diplomatic pressure on Russia to end this invasion. If confirmed, I would focus on working with international partners to mitigate the impact of Russia's aggression on food security in Tunisia and would encourage Tunisian efforts to increase domestic food production. I would also speak out, publicly and privately, against any Russian misinformation to make sure people in Tunisia understand that Putin and his acts of aggression against Ukraine are responsible for energy price increases and food insecurity.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO JOEY R. HOOD BY SENATOR TED CRUZ

Question. On April 16, 2022 you sent an e-mail to NEA saying "over the past several months, a number of people have reported comments that certain candidates could not be hired because they are straight white men, they are not of the 'right' religion." On July 26, State Dept. Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer Abercrombie-Winstanley testified that she had never seen or cleared that email. Chairman Menendez stated immediately after her testimony that "if there is an attribution then that person should come forward and it should be fully investigated what he has to say."

- Please clarify the circumstances surrounding you sending that email.
- Please list all State Department officials who cleared that email and/or the guidance in that email.
- How many comments of that nature were reported to you?
- For each comment that was conveyed to you, please describe it.
- For each comment that was conveyed to you, who made those comments?
- For each comment that was conveyed to you, when were they made?
- Please provide all documents and materials related to the comments, including emails, memos, cables, notes, decision memos, briefing papers, instructions, etc. These should include any documents or materials related to the comments themselves, as well as to the drafting, clearing, and publishing of the email.
- Regarding the comment that people could not be hired because they are not of the 'right' religion: what religion was being referenced?
- Sen. Menendez called on the author of that email to come forward and have the circumstances surrounding the email fully investigated. Why have you not come forward?

Answer. The functions and duties of a Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary at the Department of State routinely include carrying out a variety of managerial roles, including recruitment of personnel from inside the Department to fill the Bureau's domestic and overseas positions. That personnel role includes ensuring that all Bureau personnel are aware that all personnel actions are taken in compliance with applicable rules and regulations, including Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) laws that prohibit employment discrimination on the basis of (in relevant part) race, sex, religion, and disability. As Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, I was reminding our Bureau colleagues to follow EEO laws during the upcoming Foreign Service assignment season, as is done each year during assignment cycles. The email represented a restatement of longstanding Department polices and reflected review by the NEA front office and Department officials responsible for diversity, equity, and inclusion policy.

All of the hearsay discussions mentioned in the notice e-mail came to my attention during the approximate time period of January to April 2022 in the prelude to assignment season. Because these were all multiple hearsay examples of "water cooler chatter," there was not a basis for specific action and the appropriate course was to remind the Bureau to adhere to EEO laws, as I did in the email, using these hearsay comments as illustrative examples of colloquial things colleagues may have heard but cannot be a factor in our assignments process

Question. On January 7, 2022, the State Department issued a cable with guidance for overseas engagement with Iranian opposition groups. The guidance limited and, in many cases, prohibited officials from meeting with any such groups, and it described several specific ones. The guidance was reversed within a week. You are the official who approved the cable.

- Please clarify the circumstances surrounding you approving that cable. Why did you approve it?

Answer. When I reviewed that cable, it had already been reviewed by both career and political appointee professionals in the office of the Special Envoy for Iran, which indicated that the guidance in the cable was consistent with the then-Special Envoy's policy on Iran. My review of the cable, as Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for NEA, was part of an institutional process to ensure coordination and deconfliction on issues not covered by the Special Envoy. My review did not reveal anything in other areas of USG policy that prohibited the content or intent of the cable.

Question. Do you believe that the cable and guidance accurately reflected the Trump administration's policy?

- If so, please explain why you believe it was reversed within a week.

Answer. For decades, including during the Trump administration, the Department has managed and tracked contact between U.S. personnel, Iranian officials, and Iranian opposition groups. I understand the initial cable providing guidance on contact between U.S. personnel and Iranian opposition groups went into unnecessary detail about these groups and buried the main message, which was made explicit in the cable that superseded it the following week. That message stated that standing with the Iranian people was a cornerstone of the Trump administration's policy, and U.S. diplomats should engage actively with the Iranian diaspora but contact headquarters for specific guidance before engaging with representatives of opposition groups, since not all of them share objectives and interests that align with U.S. policy.

Question. Please list all State Department officials who cleared that cable and/or the guidance in that cable.

Answer. Both career and political officials in all relevant offices of the Department reviewed the cable, including the Secretary's Iran Action Group (which at that time included the Special Envoy for Iran), the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, the Office of the Legal Advisor, the Office of the Under Secretary for Political Affairs, the Office of the Deputy Secretary of State, the Secretary's Policy Planning Staff, the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, the Counter Terrorism Bureau, the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs, the Bureau of European Affairs, the Bureau of African Affairs, and the Bureau of East Asia and Pacific Affairs.

Question. The cable stated that engagement with opposition groups would be counterproductive to pressuring Iran into a comprehensive deal with Iran. Do you still agree with this assessment?

Answer. I believe that the second cable stated administration policy much more clearly than the first one did: not all Iranian opposition groups' interests and priorities align with U.S. policy priorities. I agree with that assessment.

Question. Do you believe that American overseas posts should limit their engagement with Iranian opposition groups?

Answer. I am a firm believer in outreach to the Iranian people, both inside and outside Iran, which is why I led efforts in 2012 to create the first U.S. Government website dedicated to engaging with them. Recognizing the danger efforts like this represented to their rule, the regime blocked the site the day after it was launched and intensified its crackdown on Internet freedom. I believe that U.S. diplomats should use good judgment and seek guidance from the Department in engaging with representatives of Iranian opposition groups with which Department officials are not already in regular contact.

Question. In early 2021 the State Department distributed internal guidance through emails about how to refer to the normalization between Israel and other countries. In the emails, staffers were instructed that the State Dept. would no longer refer to the normalization as the "Abraham Accords," and the use of "normalization agreements" instead was indicated, according to a June 4 report by the *Washington Free Beacon*. You told me that in our interview that you do not remember any memo relating to that guidance.

• Did you know the guidance was being issued?

Answer. No. I do not recall seeing such guidance.

Question. Did you clear any such guidance, as described in the emails revealed by the *Washington Free Beacon*?

Answer. I do not recall clearing any such guidance.

Question. Do you agree that State Department officials should not use the phrase "Abraham Accords?"

Answer. No. I believe that Department officials should celebrate the historic achievement represented by the Abraham Accords, which is why I fully supported prominent public statements by administration officials on the one-year anniversary of their signing. In addition, I worked diligently to help the Accords bear fruit for the United States, our partner Israel, and the United Arab Emirates by helping to lead efforts within the Department to establish the Israel-India-United States-United Arab Emirates grouping (I2U2) and recommending that senior officials support the initiative. Secretary Blinken participated in an inaugural meeting of the I2U2 foreign ministers in October 2021, and on July 14, President Biden participated in an I2U2 summit meeting to announce major joint investment projects. In their joint statement, the leaders said, "We reaffirm our support for the Abraham Accords and other peace and normalization arrangements with Israel. We welcome the economic opportunities that flow from these historic developments." I also strongly supported senior Department officials engaging in the U.S.-Israel-UAE Religious Co-Existence Working Group, including approving the following quote from an Under Secretary of State for the joint statement: "The Abraham Accords represent one of the most significant strategic shifts over my three decades of diplomacy in this region and bring clear-cut benefits not just to the countries and peoples concerned, but to the rest of the world as well."

Question. Please transmit copies of those emails. The *Washington Free Beacon* reviewed at least two of them.

Answer. I do not recall seeing any such emails and any such e-mails are records of the State Department, which I do not control.

Question. Please transmit any other internal guidance—emails, memos, cables, notes, decision memos, briefing papers, instructions, etc.—that instructed staffers not to use the phrase "Abraham Accords."

Answer. I do not recall seeing any such internal guidance and any such documents are records of the State Department, which I do not control.

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FOLLOW UP QUESTIONS SUBMITTED TO
JOEY R. HOOD BY SENATOR CRUZ—NUMBER 1

Question. In the QFRs submitted pursuant to your nomination,, I asked you about guidance distributed within the State Department in early 2021 which instructed staffers to no longer refer to the Abraham Accords as "Abraham Accords," but instead to call them "normalization agreements." The existence of the guidance was revealed by the *Washington Free Beacon* (*WFB*) in a June 4 article. I asked you whether you cleared that guidance, and asked that you transmit copies of that or any other "internal guidance . . . that instructed staffers not to use the phrase 'Abraham Accords.'" You repeatedly stated that you don't recall clearing or seeing any such guidance.

On June 27, 2021 you and other senior administration officials held a briefing for journalists in Rome, Italy. Secretary Blinken and Israeli PM Yair Lapid had just met. State Department Spokesperson Ned Price also participated in that briefing. The briefing was held on deep background. The *WFB* article about the "Abraham Accords" guidance had been published earlier that month. In that briefing, you told journalists that you had been involved in clearing the guidance.

• Do you recall saying that or anything similar in the briefing, and if not do you recall discussing the guidance at all in the briefing?

Answer. I do not recall discussing any Department guidance in that briefing, but I recall responding to questions on this matter by saying effectively to "blame the misunderstanding on me as the Acting Assistant Secretary for the Near Eastern Affairs Bureau." In doing so, I sought to put an end to media speculation that there had been such guidance and instead to explain that there

had been working-level discussion about how to focus on widening and deepening not just the historic Abraham Accords, but also the peace treaties, and other agreements between our partner Israel and its neighbors, as well as Israel and non-Muslim majority countries. At no time did the Secretary stop referring to the Abraham Accords as "the Abraham Accords," and the Department, with the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, released statements celebrating their one-year anniversary shortly after that briefing, referring to them as the Abraham Accords. The Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs also organized remarks and an event the Secretary co-hosted with then-Foreign Minister Yair Lapid (a virtual ministerial) in honor of the Abraham Accords' first anniversary.

Question. Hady Amr, who currently serves as the Special Representative for Palestinian Affairs within the Department's Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, has consistently been involved in producing press guidance relating to Israel. For example, on July 6 and 7, he generated guidance in response to a story published in the *WFB* alleging that the State Department had misled Congress about Palestinian terrorism. Mr. Arm was involved in generating that guidance starting July 6 after the story was flagged for him by Spokesperson Price and he cleared that guidance on July 7 for NEA/FO, the Bureau's front office. The guidance was then collected and distributed. The email thread was titled "GC on response to *Free Beacon* Article on Pal Congressional Report and Response to question on Abraham Fund."

- Please described any role played by Mr. Amr in also generating the early 2021 guidance instructing staffers not to use the phrase "Abraham Accords" but to use "normalization agreements" instead.

Answer. I do not recall any guidance generated by Mr. Amr of this nature.

Question. Did you clear any such guidance, as described in the emails revealed by the *Washington Free Beacon* and as you discussed with journalists on June 27 in Rome?

Answer. I do not recall clearing any such guidance and I have provided my recollection of the June 27 press backgrounder in Rome on this issue.

Question. Are you aware of anyone else at the State Department who cleared such guidance?

Answer. I am not aware of anyone else at the Department who cleared any such guidance.

Question. In the QFRs submitted pursuant to your nomination, I asked you to list all State Department officials who cleared the email that you sent on April 16, 2022, in which you stated that a number of people had reported comments that certain candidates could not be hired because of race, gender, and religious considerations. I noted that State Dept. Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer Abercrombie-Winstanley separately testified that she had never seen or cleared that email. I also asked you "Regarding the comment that people could not be hired because they are not of the 'right' religion: what religion was being referenced?" In your answer you did [not] clarify any aspect of these circumstances or questions.

- Did you report or refer any of the comments described in your April 16, 2022 to the Office of Diversity and Inclusion, or discuss any of those comments with anyone in the Office of Diversity and Inclusion? If so, which officials? If not, why not?

Answer. I reported, referred, and discussed the relevant comments with the relevant offices of the Department, which included the Office of Diversity and Inclusion.

Question. Regarding the comment that people could not be hired because they are not of the 'right' religion: what religion was being referenced?

Answer. The Department does not take into account a person's religious faith in hiring decisions. This comment came in the context of someone wondering whether a non-Muslim could prove as effective as a Muslim engaging on issues related to Muslim-majority countries. No hiring decision was made on the basis of this comment.

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FOLLOW UP QUESTIONS SUBMITTED TO
JOEY R. HOOD BY SENATOR CRUZ—NUMBER 2

Question. In the QFRs submitted pursuant to your nomination, and again in follow up questions, I asked you about guidance distributed within the State Department in early 2021 which instructed staffers to no longer refer to the Abraham Accords as "Abraham Accords," but instead to call them "normalization agreements." In follow up questions, I asked you about a briefing for journalists that took place on June 27 in which you participated, and specifically about any comments you made related to that early 2021 "Abraham Accords" guidance. You said that you told reporters "effectively to 'blame the misunderstanding on [you] as the Acting Assistant Secretary for the Near Eastern Affairs Bureau.'" I also asked you about any role played by then-Deputy Assistant Secretary (DAS) for Israel and Palestinian Affairs Hady Amr in generating or clearing the guidance about not using "Abraham Accords." You said you did "not recall any guidance generated by Mr. Amr of this nature."

On Feb 4, 2021 Rachel Rubin, the press officer for Israel and Palestinian Affairs in the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs (NEA), emailed Meghan Dean, another press officer, saying "we are no longer using 'Abraham Accords' to refer to the normalization of relations between Israel and other countries." The email instructed staffers that further language would be sent when the language was "cleared" and that no references should be made to Abraham Accords in the meantime. Hady Amr was then DAS for Israel and Palestinian Affairs. The email thread was about Mr. Amr's calls to counterparts and public affairs guidance about those calls.

- Were you aware of this specific email or the instructions referenced in the email?

Answer. No.

Question. Did you clear this specific email or the instructions referenced in the email?

Answer. I do not recall clearing this specific email or the instructions referenced in them.

Question. The email instructed staffers to wait for new language that would not include "Abraham Accords." Did you clear such new language on or after Feb 4, i.e. not the guidance but new language written in line with that guidance?

Answer. I do not recall clearing new language on or after February 4. I recall a number of working-level conversations, stretching back into the Trump administration, about how to refer to Israel's past and potential future agreements with its Arab neighbors in a way that would maximize the chances of deepening existing agreements and reaching new agreements. In those conversations, it was noted that the Kingdom of Morocco declined to join the Abraham Accords, pursuing instead an agreement under its own terms, and that other governments wanted their treaties with Israel recognized in public as such. There was broad consensus at the working level that other Arab countries seeking to establish diplomatic relations with our partner Israel would likely do so not by joining the Abraham Accords, but by forging their own understandings. All of these factors gave rise to working-level discussions about how to refer to present and future agreements in the most inclusive fashion possible, but they did not, to my knowledge, result in a written policy not to refer to Israel's agreements with the UAE and Bahrain as the "Abraham Accords." This is why many U.S. officials, including our Chargés d'Affaires in Abu Dhabi, Manama, and Jerusalem, as well as the Secretary of State and others, never stopped using the term in public discourse, and it is also why I cleared on the concept proposal and the remarks used when the Secretary hosted a ministerial and issued statements celebrating the one-year anniversary of the Abraham Accords. I also supported the Bureau's work to take advantage of the historic nature of the Abraham Accords to foster investment agreements between the Abraham Accords signatories and India.

Question. These instructions reversed a core priority of the previous administration. They were generated in reference to calls made by Mr. Amr, in a policy area overseen by Mr. Amr, and sent by the press staffer responsible for public affairs in that policy.

- In your experience in NEA, what would be the role of the DAS of the relevant office in generating such instructions?

Answer. In general, the bureau's press officers draft language that is then cleared by a desk officer, office director and/or the DAS, among others.

Question. In your experience in NEA, what would be the role of the DAS of the relevant office in clearing such instructions?

Answer. In general, press guidance is cleared by a desk officer, office director, or DAS.

Question. Would be it unusual for those instructions to be generated without input from that DAS?

Answer. No.

Question. Would be it unusual for those instructions to be distributed without being cleared by that DAS?

Answer. No.

Question. Would it be unusual for those instructions to be generated without input from the subject of the guidance, i.e. Mr. Amr?

Answer. No.

Question. Would it be unusual for those instructions to be distributed without input from the subject of the guidance, i.e. Mr. Amr?

Answer. No.

Question. Please describe any role played by Mr. Amr in formulating these instructions or having them distributed, including asking for them to be generated or clearing them.

Answer. I am not aware of any role played by Mr. Amr in formulating, generating, or clearing these instructions or having them distributed.

Question. In the QFRs submitted pursuant to your nomination, and again in follow up questions, I asked you about an email that you sent on April 16, 2022, in which you stated that a number of people had reported comments that certain candidates could not be hired because of race, gender, and religious considerations. I noted that State Dept. Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer Abercrombie-Winstanley separately testified that she had never seen or cleared that email. In your response to follow up questions, you said that you "reported, referred, and discussed the relevant comments with the relevant offices of the Department, which included the Office of Diversity and Inclusion."

- Did you ever report, refer, or discuss these comments with Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer Abercrombie-Winstanley? If so, please describe the nature of the discussion, if not, why not?

Answer. I reported these general comments and sentiments to Ambassador Abercrombie-Winstanley, and discussed that hiring decisions should never be made on the basis of gender, race, religion, and disability. I sent that guidance email in order to stress that such comments and sentiments do not comport with Department policy, and would be prohibited if part of a hiring decision. I am not aware of any hiring decisions made on the basis of these comments.

Question. Are you aware of anyone else who reported, referred, or discussed these comments with Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer Abercrombie-Winstanley?

Answer. No.

Question. Do you consider the comments to have been sufficiently acute that they should have been elevated to Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer Abercrombie-Winstanley?

Answer. Yes, as a policy matter, which is why I sought the Ambassador's input, though the CDIO has no operational role in the day-to-day EEO law administration.

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FOLLOW UP QUESTIONS SUBMITTED TO
JOEY R. HOOD BY SENATOR CRUZ—NUMBER 3

Question. In the QFRs submitted pursuant to your nomination, and again in follow up questions, I asked about guidance distributed within the State De-

partment in early 2021 which instructed staffers to no longer refer to the Abraham Accords as "Abraham Accords," but instead to call them "normalization agreements." The guidance was distributed on Feb 4 in an email between press staffers with the instruction "we are no longer using 'Abraham Accords' to refer to the normalization of relations between Israel and other countries."

On June 27 you told reporters in Rome, Italy "effectively to 'blame the misunderstanding on [you] as the Acting Assistant Secretary for the Near Eastern Affairs Bureau.'" Nevertheless you have said that you were not aware of the Feb 4 email or the instructions to use "normalization agreements" instead of "Abraham Accords." I am seeking to clarify the degree to which you knew about the existence of this policy and any actions you took regarding it, or whether the policy had been set from within your bureau and for the State Department without your knowledge.

On April 1, 2021, Spokesperson Ned Price told reporters that he was capable of saying the words "Abraham Accords" but that the State Department "call[s] them normalization agreements." The full exchange was extensive and received broad coverage—

> "QUESTION: Okay. And then just as an aside, what does this—what do you call these agreements between—
>
> "MR. PRICE: They're normalization agreements.
>
> "QUESTION: Yeah, but what are the—what is the name for them?
>
> "MR. PRICE: Normalization agreements.
>
> "QUESTION: No, there's a specific name that they all signed onto. I believe you know what it is.
>
> "MR. PRICE: Look, we call them—we call them normalization agreements. That's—
>
> "QUESTION: Why do you not—
>
> "MR. PRICE: That's precisely what they are.
>
> "QUESTION: —use the name that the leaders of these countries signed onto—
>
> "MR. PRICE: We're—
>
> "QUESTION: —which is the Abraham Accords? Why is that—
>
> "MR. PRICE: I'm not averse to using that. I'm describing what these are. These are normalization—
>
> "QUESTION: Well, then can you say it for me, please?
>
> "MR. PRICE: Of course I can say the term "Abraham Accords," Matt.
>
> "QUESTION: Thank you.
>
> "MR. PRICE: But we call them normalization agreements."

Question. On June 4 the *Washington Free Beacon* reported the existence of the policy, citing "one source with direct knowledge" and "two internal State Department emails" reviewed by the outlet. The State Department did not deny the details of the story, and indeed it is now clear that they could not deny it.

- Did you ever become aware of the existence of the State Department policy instructing inter alia public affairs staffers to only refer to the "Abraham Accords" as "normalization agreements?" If so, please describe when and how you became aware of the policy, and whether you sought to have it reversed.

Answer. I do not recall becoming aware of any such Department policy instructing anyone to refer to the Abraham Accords exclusively as "normalization agreements."

Question. Regarding Spokesperson Price's April 1 press briefing in which he said that the State Department "call[s] them normalization agreements" not "Abraham Accords": did you discuss that statement with him after the briefing in any way (e.g. personally, phone, email, text, chat, etc.)? For example, did you ask him whether that was actually the State Department's policy, why it was the policy, who set it, when it was set, and so on? If you did not, why not? If so, please describe the exchanges.

Answer. I recall that there were working-level discussions, stretching back into the Trump administration, about how to refer to Israel's past and potential future agreements with its Arab neighbors in a way that would maximize the chances of deepening existing agreements and reaching new agreements, because it was clear that other governments may not wish to join the Accords but

to forge their own normalization agreements with Israel. I do not recall asking Mr. Price if it was Department policy not to refer to the Abraham Accords as such because I do not recall believing that this was Department policy, having witnessed the Secretary, our Chargés d'Affaires in Jerusalem, Abu Dhabi, and Manama, as well as other senior U.S. officials, refer to the Abraham Accords as such on a regular basis. I recall discussing with Mr. Price and others, however, that it was becoming clear—as evidenced by the April 1 press briefing and the *Washington Free Beacon* article—that there was some public misperception about the Biden administration's appreciation for the Abraham Accords because of the use of the term "normalization agreements" to refer to the varied agreements Israel has concluded with its neighbors. I recall discussing with colleagues the need to correct that misperception in our public remarks. That was reflected in the language used in a series of statements, op-ed pieces in Washington and in the region, and events celebrating the one-year anniversary of the Abraham Accords, as well as working on projects that could widen and deepen the Abraham Accords.

Question. Regarding Spokesperson Price's April 1 press briefing in which he said that the State Department "call[s] them normalization agreements" not "Abraham Accords": did you discuss that statement with anyone after the briefing in any way (e.g. personally, phone, email, text, chat, etc.)? For example, did you seek to determine whether that was actually the State Department's policy, why it was the policy, who set it, when it was set, and so on? If you did not, why not? If so, please describe the exchanges.

Answer. I recall engaging with colleagues around that time about the need to correct the misperception that the Administration did not support the Abraham Accords or wish to refer to them as such.

Question. Regarding Spokesperson Price's April 1 press briefing in which he said that the State Department "call[s] them normalization agreements" not "Abraham Accords": please transmit any email or text threads in which you participated about his statement.

Answer. My search of my records has not produced any such communications, though you would need to make requests for Department records to the Department.

Question. Regarding the *Free Beacon* June 4 story that cited two emails instructing staffers to use "normalization agreements" not "Abraham Accords": did you attempt to determine whether the story was accurate? For example, did you inquire if the emails existed, why they were sent, who sent them, when they were sent, and so on? If you did not, why not? If so, please describe the exchanges.

Answer. I recall urging colleagues to find ways to correct the misperception that the Administration did not appreciate the Abraham Accords or wish to refer to them as such. I recall pursuing if anyone had seen the emails referenced by the *Free Beacon*, and I recall being told no. I also recall engaging with staff about finding ways to widen and deepen the Abraham Accords so that the signatories' relationships did not settle into a "cold peace," as had been the case for some of Israel's other relationships. That effort to deepen and broaden substantive cooperation included support for the "I2U2" project between one of the Abraham Accords signatories—the UAE—and Israel, India, and the United States. When Secretary Blinken launched that effort, the Department's public statement noted that, "The Secretary reiterated the Biden administration's support for the Abraham Accords and normalization agreements and discussed future opportunities for collaboration in the region and globally."

Question. Regarding the *Free Beacon* June 4 story that cited two emails instructing staffers to use "normalization agreements" not "Abraham Accords": did you ever attempt to acquire or read the cited emails? If you did not, why not? If so, please describe the steps you took to acquire or read the cited emails.

Answer. I recall pursuing at the time if anyone had seen emails of this nature, and I recall colleagues saying that they had not.

Question. Regarding the *Free Beacon* June 4 story that cited two emails instructing staffers to use "normalization agreements" not "Abraham Accords": please transmit any email or text threads in which you participated about the story.

Answer. I have not found any emails or texts in my records with regard to this story, and any request for Department records will need to be addressed to the Department.

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FOLLOW UP QUESTIONS SUBMITTED TO
JOEY R. HOOD BY SENATOR CRUZ—NUMBER 4

Question. In the QFRs submitted pursuant to your nomination, and again in follow up questions, I asked you about guidance distributed within the State Department in early 2021 which instructed staffers to no longer refer to the Abraham Accords as "Abraham Accords," but instead to call them "normalization agreements." The guidance was distributed on February 4 in an email between press staffers with the instruction "we are no longer using 'Abraham Accords' to refer to the normalization of relations between Israel and other countries." On April 1 Spokesperson Ned Price told reporters that the policy of the State Department was to call "call them normalization agreements." On June 4 the *Washington Free Beacon* (*WFB*) confirmed the existence of the policy, citing "two internal State Department emails" reviewed by the outlet.

During this time period, i.e. February 4 to June 4, you were Acting Assistant Secretary for the Near Eastern Affairs Bureau (NEA). I am seeking to clarify the degree to which you knew about the existence of this policy and any actions you took regarding it, or whether the policy had been set from within your bureau and for the State Department without your knowledge.

You have confirmed that you eventually took responsibility for the public controversy over the issue: you told reporters in a non-public briefing on June 24 "effectively to 'blame the misunderstanding on me as the Acting Assistant Secretary for [NEA].'" Nevertheless, you have also replied that you were not aware the guidance was issued on February 4, that you did not ask Mr. Price specifically about his comments on April 1, and that when you asked others whether they had seen the emails referenced in the June 4 *WFB* story they told you no. You have also said that you searched your digital records and found no communications on these issues.

Finally, you cited a statement by Sec. Blinken using the phrase "Abraham Accords" from October 2021, well after the policy had been publicly confirmed by the *WFB* and the State Dept. moved to reverse it.

More broadly, these statements are difficult to align with the full public record.

By March 11 Mr. Price was already referring to the Abraham Accords as normalization agreements. Even the section in the State Dept.'s official transcript for that day's press briefing is labeled "ISRAEL/NORMALIZATION AGREEMENTS"—

> "QUESTION: My question is: What concretely are you guys doing to expand the Abraham Accords? Are you talking to Saudi Arabia, for example, about them recognizing Israel? Could you tell us a little bit about what concretely you're doing? Thank you.
>
> "MR. PRICE. Absolutely. Well, when it comes to Prime Minister Netanyahu's travel, we'd refer you to the Government of Israel regarding his travel. As we have said, as the Secretary said yesterday, we welcome, we support the normalization agreements between Israel and countries in the broader Muslim world. It is something that we will seek to build on. It is something that we have welcomed from the previous administration and something, again, we will seek to build on going forward. We have discussed it in the bilateral context with some of our partners in the Arab and Muslim world. It is something that we have discussed with the Israelis. I wouldn't want to get ahead of where—of private conversations at this point, but I expect before too long, you will—we'll be in a position to say more and you'll be in a position to see more about how we are going to build on that."

On May 10 Mr. Price again pointedly and exclusively referred to the Abraham Accords as normalization agreements—

> "QUESTION: Right. Okay. So then let me ask something on the Abraham Accords. Do you think it might actually be counterproductive in that they make it easier for the Israeli Government not to meet the aspirations of Palestinian people for an independent state?

"MR. PRICE: The normalization agreements, and—is something that we support. It is something that we think is not only good for Israel, it is good for the region. Improved ties between Israel and its Arab neighbors is something that we will continue to support in our diplomacy and engagement, both with the Israelis and Arab states.

"QUESTION: But could it be counterproductive because it doesn't actually give any leverage or any benefit to the Palestinians?

"MR. PRICE: The normalization agreements are one element of our engagement in the region. Of course, we continue to engage in the context of a two-state solution, and I think if you saw Jake Sullivan's readout, if you've seen our recent statements, if you were provided with call transcripts—most of which we read out—you would see our emphasis on a two-state solution. So we can do both. We can work to see improved ties between Israel and its neighbors, just as we work to forge some advance in the prospects of a two-state solution."

On May 18, White House Spokesperson Jen Psaki said "Aside from putting forward a peace proposal that was dead on arrival, we don't think they did anything constructive, really, to bring an end to the longstanding conflict in the Middle East."

In a previous question, I asked you whether you discussed with Mr. Price his April 1 statement about the Abraham Accords, i.e. that the State Dept. "call[s] them normalization agreements." You said: "I do not recall asking Mr. Price if it was Department policy not to refer to the Abraham Accords as such because I do not recall believing that this was Department policy." You also said "I recall discussing with Mr. Price and others, however, that it was becoming clear—as evidenced by the April 1 press briefing and the *Washington Free Beacon* article—that there was some public misperception about the Biden administration's appreciation for the Abraham Accords because of the use of the term 'normalization agreements'. I recall discussing with colleagues the need to correct that misperception in our public remarks."

I also asked you about any role played by then-Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Israel and Palestinian Affairs Hady Amr in generating or clearing the guidance. Mr. Amr's office oversaw this policy area and the State Dept. official who issued the guidance was the press officer for Israel and Palestinian Affairs. You suggested you have no knowledge of any role he played.

- Was Mr. Amr one of the colleagues with whom you spoke regarding what you describe as the need to correct misperceptions "because of the use of the term 'normalization agreements'"? If so, please describe the nature of that discussion: when did it happen, what was the topic, what was Mr. Amr's reaction. If you did not discuss this topic with him, why not?

Answer. Yes, DAS Amr was one of the colleagues with whom I spoke regarding the need to correct misperceptions about the Administration's support of the Abraham Accords. I do not recall the precise date of these discussions, as they would have been part of our daily consultations, but I recall that DAS Amr agreed with this need.

Question. You replied to a previous question by saying you discussed with Mr. Price the "public misperception" about the Biden administration's stance on the Abraham Accords "as evidenced [inter alia] by the April 1 press briefing." Did that discussion take place before or after his May 10 press briefing, in which he again pointedly emphasized that the State Dept. calls them "normalization agreements"? If the conversation happened before, why do you believe he nevertheless reemphasized the position despite your concerns, including in your capacity as Acting Assistant Secretary for NEA? If the conversation happened was after the May 10 press briefing, why did you wait as long as you did to have the conversation?

Answer. To the best of my recollection, this discussion took place after the June 4 press briefing in Rome identified in previous questions for the record. I regret that I did not act faster and more decisively to help dispel the notion that the Biden administration did not support the Abraham Accords.

Question. You have testified that you did not know about the February 4 email instructing public affairs staffers to call the Abraham Accords "normalization agreements." Do you believe that it was inappropriate to clear or implement that guidance without your awareness, in your capacity as Acting Assistant Secretary for NEA?

Answer. Yes. I believe such proposed guidance should also have been discussed with our Chargés d'Affaires in Abu Dhabi, Manama, and Jerusalem, who told me that they never received instructions not to refer to the Abraham Accords in public exclusively as "normalization agreements."

Question. Do you believe that the policy outlined in the February 4 email, i.e. to refer to the Abraham Accords as "normalization agreements," was in the national security interests of the United States? Please also describe any effects that you believe it had on U.S. diplomacy more broadly.

Answer. I do not believe it was Department policy to refer to the Abraham Accords exclusively as "normalization agreements," although I am now aware that the aforementioned press guidance shared between press officers existed. I do not believe that press guidance constituted a policy decision, nor do I believe that it was in the national security interests of the United States because it contributed to confusion in some quarters of the public regarding the Administration's support for the Abraham Accords specifically.

Question. It would have been relatively straightforward for you to trace Mr. Price's public statements and comments. There would have been language in his briefing book, email threads in which State Dept. officials from your bureau cleared that language, at least one specific list of officials clearing on behalf of specific offices in your bureau, etc. Did you try to obtain any of these materials? If you did not, why not? If you did, did you succeed and if so please describe the materials.

Answer. I did not seek these materials. Then-candidate Biden expressed his support for the Abraham Accords when they were signed and Secretary Blinken, as a nominee testifying before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, also expressed the new administration's support for the Abraham Accords (by name). For me, those were the clearest expressions of Biden administration policy with regard to the Abraham Accords. Once I became aware of the public misperception of the Administration's support for the Abraham Accords, I began discussing with colleagues the need to address it, not only through public statements but also through activities and initiatives that would provide a "warm peace" for the people of the signatory countries. I believed that this public misperception stemmed largely from the fact that administration officials had stated that they were conducting a review of the Abraham Accords, along with most other policies in their first months in office. I recognize and take responsibility for the confusion these discussions may have contributed to in the early months of the Biden administration; as Acting Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern Affairs, I regret that I did not take more decisive action earlier to clarify the Administration's support for the Abraham Accords specifically, along with Israel's other current and potential future diplomatic relationships.

Question. Mr. Price pointedly and exclusively used "normalization agreements" in his March 11 press briefing and explicitly told reporters in his April 1 press briefing that the State Dept. refers to the Abraham Accords as normalization agreements. You have said that you did not believe that was the State Dept.'s policy. What was the basis for your belief, i.e. that he had repeatedly mischaracterized State Dept. policy? In previous answers you have gestured toward presumably contradictory statements made by other State Dept. officials. To the extent that you believe they are relevant, please cite them specifically.

Answer. Among other public statements were the following: On January 27, 2021 at a press availability, Secretary Blinken said, "First, as we've said, we very much support the Abraham Accords. We think that Israel normalizing relations with its neighbors and other countries in the region is a very positive development, and so we applauded them, and we hope that there may be an opportunity to build on them in the months and years ahead." In a March 11, 2021 press briefing, the White House Spokesperson referred to the Abraham Accords as such, noting that the Administration was reviewing them. A June 9, 2021 joint statement on the eighth U.S.-UAE Economic Policy Dialogue, in which I participated, noted that the two delegations "commended the historic signing of the Abraham Accords in September 2020."

Question. At any time—after March 11, April 1, or May 10—what was your understanding regarding why Mr. Price kept publicly telling journalists the opposite of what you understood to be the State Dept.'s policy?

Answer. My understanding is that Mr. Price was following guidance offered by press officers that had not been reviewed by me and that sought to be as

inclusive as possible in discussing Israel's past and potential future diplomatic agreements with its Arab neighbors.

Question. Regarding Mr. Price's May 10 press briefing, in which he pointedly emphasized that the State Dept. refers to the Abraham Accords as "normalization agreements": did you discuss that statement with him after the briefing in any way (e.g. personally, phone, email, text, chat, etc.)? For example, did you ask him whether that was actually the State Department's policy, why it was the policy, who set it, when it was set, and so on? If you did not, why not? If so, please describe the exchanges.

Answer. I would note that on May 10, I was on a trip that included stops in the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Egypt, and Iraq. I do not recall watching this press briefing or hearing about it from my staff. I do not recall asking Mr. Price if it was Department policy not to refer to the Abraham Accords as such because I do not recall believing that this was Department policy, having witnessed the President, the Secretary, our Chargés d'Affaires in Jerusalem, Abu Dhabi, and Manama, as well as other senior U.S. officials, refer to the Abraham Accords as such. While I do not recall the date, I recall discussing with Mr. Price and others that it was becoming clear—as evidenced by the press briefing exchanges and the *Washington Free Beacon* article—that there was some public misperception about the Biden administration's appreciation for the Abraham Accords because of the use of the term "normalization agreements" to refer to the varied agreements Israel has concluded with its neighbors. I recall discussing with colleagues the need to correct that misperception in our public remarks and actions. That was reflected in the language used in a series of statements, op-ed pieces in Washington and in the region, and events celebrating the one-year anniversary of the Abraham Accords, as well as working on projects that could widen and deepen the Abraham Accords. I certainly regret that I did not act faster to help correct that public misperception, believing as I did that initiatives to deepen the Abraham Accords, such as the "I2U2" Ministerial and investment projects would send powerful messages of support.

Question. In your assessment, did Ms. Psaki's May 18 statement, i.e. "Aside from putting forward a peace proposal that was dead on arrival, we don't think [the Trump administration] did anything constructive, really, to bring an end to the longstanding conflict in the Middle East," contribute to what you describe as the "public misperception about the Biden administration's appreciation for the Abraham Accords."

Answer. Yes.

Question. In your own assessment, is it accurate to assess that aside from putting forward a peace proposal that was dead on arrival the Trump administration didn't do anything constructive to bring an end to the longstanding conflict in the Middle East?

Answer. As a member of the Foreign Service, I have served under Democratic and Republican administrations. I proudly served in the Trump administration as Deputy Chief of Mission in Kuwait, as Deputy Chief of Mission and Chargé d'Affaires in Iraq, and as Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State under Assistant Secretary David Schenker in the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs. I believe that the Administration accomplished a great deal in trying to bring an end to the longstanding conflicts in the Middle East, including—*inter alia*—supporting and facilitating the signing of the Abraham Accords, as well as Morocco's re-establishment of diplomatic relations with Israel and efforts to resolve the conflict over the region known as the Western Sahara. I believe the Trump administration also exerted constructive efforts in supporting the Iraqi Security Forces, including the Iraqi Kurdistan Region's Peshmerga forces, in liberating Iraqi territory from ISIS, as well as helping communities targeted for genocide to recover. These included Yezidis, Christians, and Muslims, both Sunni and Shia. In my time under the last administration, I regularly represented and defended the Trump administration's policies in the Middle East, including on Capitol Hill. Thank you for the opportunity to address this question.

* * *

FOLLOW UP QUESTIONS SUBMITTED TO
JOEY R. HOOD BY SENATOR CRUZ—NUMBER 5

Question. In QFRs submitted pursuant to your nomination, and again in follow up questions, I have been asking you about a policy distributed by the Near

Eastern Affairs Bureau (NEA) in which State Dept. staffers were instructed not to refer to the Abraham Accords as "Abraham Accords," but instead to call them "normalization agreements." During the period this guidance was in place you were Acting Assistant Secretary for NEA. You have confirmed that on June 24 you told journalists, not for publication, "effectively to 'blame the misunderstanding on me as the Acting Assistant Secretary for [NEA].'"

The policy was set around February 4, 2021, when instructions to that effect were distributed. The policy lasted roughly through June 4, when the *Washington Free Beacon* (*WFB*) confirmed the instructions, citing "two internal State Department emails" reviewed by the outlet. In between, Spokesperson Ned Price publicly confirmed and followed the guidance: he referred to the Abraham Accords as "normalization agreements" in press briefings on March 11, April 1, and May 10, and during his April 1 briefing he said the State Dept.'s policy regarding the Abraham Accords was to "call them normalization agreements."

As discussed in previous questions, this policy was both consistently implemented and went through NEA. The February 4 email was distributed by Rachel Rubin, the press officer for Israel and Palestinian Affairs. Language used by Mr. Price in his press briefings would have been discussed over email threads with NEA officials, and there would have been a list of officials who cleared on behalf of NEA offices. Canned public affairs guidance about the Middle East generated by NEA followed the guidance. Other public affairs products regularly cleared by NEA officials, including on behalf of NEA/FO, exclusively used "normalization agreements." The *WFB* story indicated that the outlet asked for comments, and any response would have been discussed with and cleared by NEA officials.

Nevertheless—you have said you did not know any such policy was in place. More specifically, you have said that you did not know NEA distributed the email, that you don't recall seeing or clearing any such guidance, that you asked staffers for details about the relevant emails but they denied knowing about them, that you did not call for any materials related to the language Mr. Price was publicly using, that you did not ask him about that language, that you did not watch or hear about at least one of his press briefings about the issue, that you are not aware of any role played by then-Deputy Assistant Secretary for Israel and Palestinian Affairs Hady Amr in formulating or clearing the instructions, and that you have no digital communications about this controversy or about the guidance or about the *WFB* story.

You have said that you didn't ask for further details because you didn't believe the guidance reflected the Biden administration's policy toward the Abraham Accords, which you have characterized as supportive. You have cited four statements on this question. Three were outside the time the guidance was seemingly in place, i.e. February 4 to June 4, and a fourth was by White House Spokesperson Jen Psaki criticizing the Accords. None are tenable examples of relevant supportive language.

You have also said that it was inappropriate to implement the guidance without you clearing it, in your capacity as Acting Assistant Secretary for NEA, and that the "misunderstanding" undermined the perception of America's commitment to our Middle East allies.

I am deeply troubled by this breakdown in process and substance, both because of what it suggests about the Biden administration's policymaking regarding our Israeli allies, and the degree to which it speaks to your nomination for Ambassador to Tunisia, an extremely challenging post.

- In retrospect, what specific steps do you believe you should have taken to avoid the breakdown, and why?

Answer. I regret that I did not establish an internal policy of reviewing all new press guidance to ensure that it fully and accurately reflected the President's stated policy positions, including support for the Abraham Accords, along with Israel's agreements with its other Arab neighbors.

Question. To what extent do you believe the breakdown is relevant to broader organizational challenges within NEA, both domestically and abroad at American embassies? What specific steps do you believe need to be taken to avoid similar incidents in the future?

Answer. It is not unusual for press officers to offer guidance that is not cleared at the highest levels of the Bureau due to the need to respond to media inquiries quickly. Having learned from this experience, in any future leadership position in Washington or overseas, I will establish with my staff an internal policy of personally reviewing any changes in press guidance.

Question. Please assess the damage to American national interests caused by the belief that the Biden administration had prohibited the use of "Abraham Accords" to refer to the Abraham Accords?

Answer. I do not assess there to have been damage to U.S. national interests due to this misperception, primarily because, fortunately, the President himself and the Secretary of State were on record commending the historic nature of the Abraham Accords and expressing the Biden administration's support for them.

Question. Do you believe that Ms. Rubin distributed the guidance to use "normalization agreements" in place of "Abraham Accords" without being instructed to do so, i.e. 'on her own"? If so, please explain why she did so. If not, to the best of your current knowledge—

- Who instructed Ms. Rubin to distribute the guidance?

Answer. To the best of my current knowledge and recollection, and after conferring with colleagues in the NEA front office at the time, I am not aware that anyone in the NEA front office sent any instruction with regard to this press guidance.

Question. Who cleared on Ms. Rubin distributing the guidance to use "normalization agreements" in place of "Abraham Accords?"

Answer. After conferring with colleagues in the NEA front office at that time, I am not aware that anyone in the NEA front office cleared on such guidance. NEA's press officers do their best to provide press guidance as quickly as possible.

Question. To the best of your current knowledge, who cleared on the language that Mr. Price used in his press briefings, and specifically his statement on April 1 that regarding the Abraham Accords the State Dept. "call[s] them normalization agreements?"

Answer. To the best of my knowledge, Spokesman Price's press guidance relevant to countries in the NEA region is normally drafted and sent to the spokesman by NEA press officers.

Question. You have said that you spoke to Mr. Amr in broad terms about the controversy and about emphasizing that the Biden administration supported the Abraham Accords, and that he was supportive. The stance is in tension with statements he made before entering the Administration, in which he expressed hostility toward the Trump administration's Middle East peacemaking. It is also in tension with the contents of a memo he drafted in late February, The U.S. Palestinian Reset and the Path Forward, in which he called for re-centering the Israeli-Palestinian issue in the context of "normalized relations" between our Israeli and Arab allies. Please describe the extent to which Mr. Amr was supportive of the Abraham Accords.

Answer. In all my conversations with DAS Amr, he expressed support for strengthening the Abraham Accords, as well as Israel's other agreements with Arab governments, and support for negotiating new agreements between Israel and governments of Muslim-majority countries.

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NOMINATIONS

THURSDAY, JULY 28, 2022—a.m.

U.S. SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS,
Washington, DC.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:04 a.m., in Room SD–419, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Tim Kaine presiding.

Present: Senators Kaine [presiding], Menendez, Booker, Rubio, Portman, and Hagerty.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. TIM KAINE, U.S. SENATOR FROM VIRGINIA

Senator KAINE. Good morning to all. This hearing of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee will come to order.

We are here to consider important ambassadorial nominees: William Duncan to be Ambassador to El Salvador; Hugo Rodriguez to be Ambassador to Nicaragua; Candace Bond to me Ambassador to Trinidad and Tobago; Heide Fulton to be Ambassador to Uruguay; and Robert Faucher—did I get that right, Robert?

Mr. FAUCHER. That is correct.

Senator KAINE. Robert Faucher to be Ambassador to Suriname.

I want to congratulate all of you on your nominations and provide thanks to you and your—for your willingness to serve and thanks especially to members of your family because you cannot do one of these posts without them sacrificing.

I will, first, introduce the nominees. Then I will offer opening remarks and turn to Ranking Member Rubio for opening remarks, and then we will then have opening statements from each of the nominees before proceeding to questions.

William Duncan is senior inspector in the Office of the Inspector General at the Department of State, previously served as consul general in Monterrey and before that as DCM at the U.S. Embassy in Mexico City.

Foreign Service Officer since 1992. Happy 20th anniversary. He also served in Asuncion, Madrid, Baghdad, Mexico City, Bogota, San Salvador, and Matamoros. A native of Louisiana, Mr. Duncan has a bachelor's degree and a juris doctorate from the University of Arkansas and is fluent in Spanish.

Hugo Rodriguez, Jr., is a senior advisor in the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs at State. He most recently served as Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemispheres, focused on Central America and Mexico. Previously, Mr. Rodriguez served as

the DCM at the U.S. Embassy in Asuncion, Paraguay, and as consul general at the U.S. Embassy in Mexico City.

Other overseas assignments include Lima, Peru, Rome, Italy. He is a native of Pennsylvania but, to my liking he holds an MBA from the Darden School of Business at the University of Virginia and a bachelor's degree from Hampden-Sydney College. He is fluent in Italian and Spanish.

Candace Bond currently serves as the president and CEO of AESA, Inc., a Los Angeles-based real estate and community development business advisory services company. She is also a board member of California Head Start, the chair elect of the board of the Greater L.A. Education Foundation, and chair of the MLK Health and Wellness Community Development Corporation.

She served on the board of the L.A. County Office of Education, the nation's largest regional educational agency. Ms. Bond also serves on the California State Treasurer's Housing, Economic Development, Jobs, and Opportunity Zone Committee. She graduated with both a bachelor's degree and an MBA from Harvard.

Heide Fulton is the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Programs in the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement.

She previously served as the director of the Office of Mexican Affairs, led the U.S. Embassy in Honduras as DCM and Chargé d'Affaires. She served overseas in Kabul, Quito, Phnom Penh, and Manila and is a former Pearson Fellow, which is a prestigious fellowship of members of the State Department and Senate offices where she had the fortune to serve in the office of Senator Menendez.

Ms. Fulton was also an active duty Army officer as a quartermaster with the U.S. Army in Virginia, Germany, Luxembourg, Netherlands, and Italy. She retired from the U.S. Army Reserve in June of 2020 after 28 years of service. She was born in Buffalo, a graduate of Boston College and Troy State University, and is fluent in Spanish.

Finally, Robert Faucher most recently served as the principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for the Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations. Prior, he was director of the Office of Western European Affairs in the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, and has held positions in the offices of U.N. Political Affairs and U.N. Specialized and Technical Agencies in the Bureau of International Organizational Affairs.

Faucher has served as the DCM at U.S. embassies in Belgium, Ireland, Suriname, and Luxembourg. He grew up in Arizona, holds degrees from Arizona State University, Edinburg University, and the National War College, and he is fluent in Dutch and French.

Very, very talented panel. So my remarks, I want to congratulate all of you on the nominations. Representing the U.S. and the American people in any capacity is an honor.

To represent with the title of ambassador is a true, true distinction and I am sure, based on each of your impressive professional backgrounds, you will serve with real distinction in these roles.

I am pleased to chair the nomination hearing for these five important posts throughout the Western Hemisphere—El Salvador, Nicaragua, Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay, and Suriname.

I always talk about the importance of this region to the United States. Not only do we share deep and important cultural, historical, and economic ties, but we also have interests in addressing the shared challenges together with countries throughout the region. Having our best team in the field is absolutely critical to advancing those interests as well as our values in the Western Hemisphere.

Our relations with Salvador are fragile. We have watched with growing concern as El Salvador's government has taken an increasingly authoritarian turn after a somewhat promising beginning with a government that was not connected with sort of past challenges in El Salvador.

Having an ambassador in place to advance values and interests in El Salvador and continue our support for the Salvadoran people will be critical.

In Nicaragua, the Ortega regime sham elections last year, including the imprisoning of many, many presidential candidates and their intensifying attacks against opposition figures or other critics including religious leaders—the order connected with Mother Teresa just got kicked out of Nicaragua by President Ortega—these are significant concerns.

We need to continue pressing for the restoration of democratic rights in Nicaragua and work with regional and international partners to support the Nicaraguan people in finding a way forward.

So, Mr. Rodriguez, you will have your work cut out for you and we look forward to hearing about your approach in Managua, should you be confirmed.

In the Caribbean, Trinidad and Tobago share a commitment to democracy. They have remained a steadfast partner of the United States in the Caribbean. We have strong cultural ties, a vibrant diaspora community in the United States, and this August, Trinidad and Tobago will be celebrating 60 years of independence.

Having a confirmed ambassador will send an important signal reaffirming our partnership with Trinidad and Tobago and, in particular, I will ask questions in this regard with respect to the ability of Trinidad and Tobago to be a force for energy security in a world where there is significant energy insecurity.

Uruguay is considered one of the strongest democracies in the world and that fact deserves a lot more recognition in Washington and elsewhere. Uruguay seeks greater cooperation with the U.S.

My view is that we should support that cooperation and I look forward to hearing from Ms. Fulton about how we can strengthen ties with this very important partner.

Finally, Suriname's 2020 election of President Santokhi offers the potential to a new chapter in U.S. relations with Suriname following President Bouterse's decades-long rule which included his and his son's separate convictions as drug traffickers and his own conviction for the 1982 December murders in Suriname.

Suriname, like Trinidad and Tobago and Guyana, also offer prospects for advancing energy security in the world and I would like to direct questions to Mr. Faucher about how we can work on that.

So we look forward to hearing from each of you today. I look forward to working with you.

And now I am proud to introduce the ranking member, Senator Rubio, who has been such a strong champion for U.S. relations in the Americas. I am very, very glad we have a chance to work together.

Senator Rubio?

STATEMENT OF HON. MARCO RUBIO,
U.S. SENATOR FROM FLORIDA

Senator RUBIO. Mr. Chairman, thank you for scheduling this hearing, and you have been a great partner to work with on this and I appreciate and look forward to working with you on this.

Again, I want to congratulate each of you for your willingness to serve. Thank you for your willingness to serve and congratulate you on your appointments and your nominations.

And I guess I do not really have an opening statement. I do have sort of a mini rant to open, and it is not about any of you individually. It has more to do with our region.

When I hear people talk about we need to care more about the Western Hemisphere, it is reminiscent of, like they say, you also need to eat more fresh fruits and vegetables. It is a good thing for you, it is good for your health, and you should really do it. But most of us never get around to it. Well, speaking for myself anyway.

So the point being is this is not just a nice thing to do. It is critical to our national security and our national economic interests. Geography matters. It matters for a lot of different reasons and—but it matters because proximity matters.

Because we see it firsthand. There is economic—look at the migrant crisis that we face on the border today. Those are all people coming from places where life is not good, and at the cornerstone of why life is not good in those countries—the violence, the economic deprivations, whatever it may be—is poor governance and bad decisions made over a sustained period of time.

That alone is a national interest. But then not to mention we do have near peer adversaries. We did not 25 years ago. The United States lived in a unipolar world where we were the only show in town.

Now there are at least one unprecedented near peer adversary. The Chinese Communist Party is a challenge to the United States, unlike—greater even though what the Soviet Union was because they are a commercial rival, a technological rival, a geopolitical rival, a diplomatic rival, and a commercial one.

And in addition to all of that, they are also a military threat to the country as they continue to develop and have an interest in the region. They want to extract minerals and have mineral rights, certainly.

But they also want leverage. They want control over countries so that they will vote with them in international fora and, ultimately, so they could potentially position themselves either on a rotational basis or permanently all over the world militarily and the like.

In essence, they would love nothing more than to encircle the United States and to have—put themselves in a position in each of the countries, for example, that all of you have been nominated to serve in but, more broadly, in the region.

They want to be in a position one day to, no matter who gets elected in those countries, do whatever they want because that country owes them too much money and they own too many things in that country to break away from it.

And so that is the fundamental challenge that all of you are walking into, and in the context of that is how I think we need to guide our foreign policy and so I hope we will have a chance to talk about that today.

If you go through some of the countries highlighted here in today's hearing, in Uruguay we have a president who has been trying to work with the United States on things like reducing barriers to trade.

But, unfortunately, because we do not have a strategic approach to that relationship—this is not a partisan attack. I think you can say that of virtually any administration in the last 30 years.

Because we do not have a well thought out and executed a strategic approach to the region you have someone who, basically, feels like his only options for development are to cut a deal with the Chinese Communist Party—do a deal with the devil in that regard.

In Suriname, you have a president who is struggling to manage more than a billion dollars in Chinese debt that he—that his predecessor took on, and we have this administration that has the single-minded focus on climate change and, therefore, does not seem interested in helping them develop markets and/or their capabilities because it happens to be oil and gas.

And in El Salvador we have a very interesting situation. On the one hand, we have seen some of the—obviously, there has been economic chaos, some of the internal political things.

I am not a big fan of everything that has been done there. But I am—I also think it is a relationship that it is important for us to manage appropriately, and, you know, our charge, I believe, has left post and sort of announced some strategic pause in efforts to reach out to them.

So as we talk about going there, Mr. Duncan, you are—it is a very, very challenging situation and one that I would love to hear your thoughts as to what the road forward is because I am hoping that we can still have a relationship in El Salvador that is pragmatic.

We do not have to clap or celebrate all the stuff people do that we do not necessarily think is good. But I also think we have a national interest concern there that needs to be balanced.

In Trinidad and Tobago, the prime minister, unfortunately, continues to be a supporter of the Maduro regime and it is signing agreements to join the Belt and Road Initiative of the Communist Party.

Nicaragua is a horrific disaster. I think it is the second poorest country in the hemisphere. But more importantly and just as important is the—I mean, this is a country where the president arrested every one of his political opponents. If you ran for president you went to jail.

I mean, that is—I mean, not even Putin, everybody. He at least has an official opposition. Here, this is—it is pretty stunning the direction that has taken, and even more troubling is they have now

rolled out the red carpet. It is an open invitation for both Chinese and Russian military stationing in the region.

I think the Russians have their hands full right now but you could see a presence there. But the Chinese may one day take them up on it and that would be—I mean, if we wake up in a world where the Chinese have a military basing arrangement in our own hemisphere it would be a very troubling turn in regional affairs and one that, I think, is a threat that we cannot overlook.

So all of these places we are facing some real challenges and I am hopeful that we will be able to talk about those today.

Again, I am grateful for your willingness to serve. But we have got big problems on our hands in this region and we better start taking it seriously or we are going to wake up in less than a decade living in a very different world than the one we live in now and the one we grew up in.

Thank you.

Senator KAINE. Thank you, Senator.

So there is an embarrassment of riches. I have already done introductions, but for Ms. Bond you have got a second introducer that is even better and that is Senator Booker.

After he does an introduction of you we will go, beginning with Mr. Duncan and move from my right to left, and each of you will do your opening statements, if you could.

Senator Booker?

STATEMENT OF HON. CORY A. BOOKER,
U.S. SENATOR FROM NEW JERSEY

Senator BOOKER. Mr. President, I cannot tell you how great——

Senator KAINE [continuing]. Mr. President? I really love that.

[Laughter.]

Senator BOOKER. You will always be my president, sir.

Senator KAINE. Because I was Lieutenant Governor of Virginia and president of the Senate. That has been a title that has been applied to me in that August.

Senator RUBIO. But you were referred to as Your Excellency in that role.

Senator KAINE. No. As Governor I was your Excellency. As Lieutenant Governor I was Mr. President.

Senator BOOKER. Mr. Grand——

Senator KAINE [continuing]. Virginia does things differently.

Senator BOOKER. Mr. Grand Poobah.

[Laughter.]

Senator BOOKER. I cannot tell you how thrilled I am that I get this privilege to introduce somebody that I have known for some years now, and I wonder, Mr. President, if you know what an Alaskan sled dog, a worker bee in the spring, and an Olympic athlete all have in common. They are all jealous of Ms. Bond's work ethic.

She is an extraordinary person and, in fact, if James Brown was the hardest person—working person in show business, she is one of the hardest working people I have ever met in public service.

She brings a long and distinguished record of leadership to this position. She is chair of the Malibu Foundation, board member of the Women's Founders Network and a member of the Southern California Edison Clean Energy Access Working Group.

She also serves on the California State Treasurer's Housing, Economic Development, Jobs, and Opportunity Zones Ad Hoc Committee. Earlier in her career, she was president—a title that has eluded us, all of us here—and CEO of Infusion Media Partners and serves as both VP and general manager of Essence Entertainment, which is—has biblical importance to the Black community.

Her wide-ranging business background, her commitment to effecting meaningful, substantive, thorough social change is just awesome. She has experience addressing a host of critical issues for the larger American community from health, housing, education, workforce development, and is, for all of those reasons, an extraordinarily well qualified person to be Ambassador of Trinidad and Tobago.

If there is any criticism I have, and I should lay that plain on the table, is that her education is one of two safety schools. She has her BA from Harvard and her MBA from Harvard Business School.

But despite that blemish, she is a recipient of numerous awards of leadership from her peers, awards of leadership and service, including the Women Leaders of Los Angeles 2021 award selected by the Los Angeles County Office of Education, the Women of Distinction award by the Special Network of Needs, just to name a few.

Presently, she serves as a board member of California Head Start, a program and organization very dear to me. She is chair elect of the board of the Greater LA Education Foundation and chair of the MLK Health and Wellness Community Development Foundation.

Ms. Bond also served on the board of the Los Angeles County Office of Education, the nation's largest regional education agency.

Look, I am confident that her distinguished record of leadership, of service, of love of country and patriotism demonstrated by action will make her a great Ambassador to Trinidad and Tobago.

And then, finally, I will say all my Trinidadian friends have told me throughout the years that the best carnival all throughout the Caribbean is in Trinidad.

Well, I do not know what kind of celebration they will have in the future but I know that when this incredible person is confirmed as Ambassador, we, in the Senate, should have a carnival to celebrate that good and wise choice.

Thank you.

Senator KAINE. Thank you, Senator Booker.

Ms. Bond, he set a pretty high bar. You better be good.

[Laughter.]

Senator KAINE. But now what we will do is we will begin with Mr. Duncan. Your full statements are in the record. We would ask you to keep your verbal statement to less than five minutes. We are glad to hear from all of you and we will just move right to left—from my right to left across the dais.

Mr. Duncan, welcome.

STATEMENT OF WILLIAM H. DUNCAN OF TEXAS, A CAREER MEMBER OF THE SENIOR FOREIGN SERVICE, CLASS OF MINISTER–COUNSELOR, NOMINATED TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE REPUBLIC OF EL SALVADOR

Mr. DUNCAN. Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and distinguished members of the committee, it is an honor to appear before you today as the President's nominee to be the next United States Ambassador to the Republic of El Salvador.

I deeply appreciate the privilege and responsibility it is to be considered for confirmation as Ambassador. I deeply respect the role of the Senate and the work of ensuring that our nation has a foreign policy that reflects our values.

Please allow me to recognize my wife, Nora, who is with me today, and our daughters, Clare, Irma Nora, and Laura, and our grandson, Ace.

Let me also thank President Biden and Secretary Blinken for this opportunity and for their confidence in me.

My 30-year Foreign Service career has taken me to many countries, including El Salvador, also Mexico, Colombia, Paraguay, among others, as well as many domestic assignments working on Western Hemisphere affairs.

It has also given me the opportunity to work in service of U.S. policy supporting democracy, human rights, and the rule of law.

The relationship between El Salvador and the United States has been very close for the last four decades, through a terrible civil war, a complex peace process, and into today's challenges such as fighting transnational organized crime and promoting prosperity.

The United States has stood with El Salvador, and over those years many Salvadorans have become our fellow citizens. Two and a half million Salvadorans now live here. They make an enormous contribution to our national story through their extraordinary creativity and work ethic, and to El Salvador through billions of dollars in remittances returned each year.

I started my Foreign Service career at a consulate on the U.S.-Mexico border. I learned there that there is no higher duty for us than the protection of American citizens. If confirmed, that would be my number-one priority.

We face a serious challenge from irregular migration from northern Central America, some of it from El Salvador. During many years in Mexico, I had the opportunity to learn what it means to make that trek.

One thing is clear to me. It is a dangerous journey undertaken by desperate people. I know from living there that Salvadorans are proud. If they could make a better, safer, and more stable life in El Salvador, I believe most would choose to stay.

If confirmed, I would do everything in my power to see that the assistance provided by Congress to address the root causes of irregular migration is spent effectively, and while we are not the only country offering assistance, we are notable for supporting and promoting the long-term well-being of our partners as opposed to seeking our own short-term advantage.

El Salvador has no better friend than the United States of America. I recognize there are concerns about the strength and direction

of El Salvador's democracy, and while I will always act with respect for the sovereignty and dignity of the government of El Salvador, if confirmed, I would be an advocate for democracy, human rights, and combating corruption and impunity.

These are not only moral imperatives, they are the best guarantee for the long-term stability and prosperity of any country. No country in the Western Hemisphere can alone successfully confront transnational organized crime. We must work together.

Strengthening the rule of law in El Salvador is essential if we are going to discourage irregular migration. Without the rule of law, El Salvador will never have the economic growth it needs nor will it be able to prevent human rights abuses and attacks on civil liberties, reduce gender-based violence, or defeat the threat from criminal gangs, all drivers of irregular migration.

Promoting the interest of U.S. businesses in El Salvador would also be a priority if I am confirmed. It is important to prosperity here at home, but I am also convinced U.S. businesses at their best set an example of transparency and fair dealing that will be emulated.

I have had the honor to serve in challenging leadership positions such as Deputy Chief of Mission in Mexico City. In that tour of duty and others, I was fortunate to work with the representatives of many U.S. Government agencies.

If confirmed, I would dedicate myself to the success of each U.S. agency's mission in El Salvador.

I have also had the honor to work with fellow Americans and foreign national employees from a wide variety of backgrounds. We are a diverse nation and should have an overseas presence that proudly respects that diversity.

I look forward to this opportunity to advance America's interest in El Salvador, if confirmed, and I stand ready to answer any questions you may have today and in the future.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Duncan follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF WILLIAM H. DUNCAN

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Rubio, and distinguished members of the committee, it is an honor to appear before you today as the President's nominee to be the next United States Ambassador to the Republic of El Salvador.

I appreciate the privilege and responsibility to be considered for confirmation as ambassador. I deeply respect the role of the Senate in the work of ensuring that our nation has a foreign policy that reflects our values.

Please allow me to recognize my wife Nora and our daughters Clare, Irma Nora, and Laura and our grandson Ace. Let me also thank President Biden and Secretary Blinken for this opportunity and their confidence in me.

My 30-year Foreign Service career has taken me to many countries, including El Salvador, Mexico, Colombia, and Paraguay, among others, and myriad domestic assignments. It has also given me the opportunity to work in service of U.S. policies supporting democracy, human rights, and the rule of law.

The relationship between the United States and El Salvador has been very close for the last four decades. Through a terrible civil war, a complex peace process, and into today's challenges such as fighting transnational organized crime and promoting prosperity, the United States has stood with El Salvador. And over those years, many Salvadorans have become our fellow citizens. Two and a half million Salvadorans now live here. They make an enormous contribution to our national story through their extraordinary creativity and work ethic and to El Salvador through billions of dollars in remittances returned each year.

I started my Foreign Service career at a small consulate on the U.S.-Mexico border. I learned there that there is no higher duty for us than the protection of U.S. citizens. If confirmed, that would be my number one priority.

We face a serious challenge from irregular migration from northern Central America, some of it from El Salvador. During many years in Mexico, I had the opportunity to learn what it means to make that trek. One thing is clear to me: it is a dangerous journey undertaken by desperate people. I know from living there that Salvadorans are proud. If they could make a better, safer, and more stable life in El Salvador, I believe most would choose to stay. If confirmed, I would do everything in my power to see that the assistance provided by Congress to address the root causes of irregular migration is spent effectively.

And while we are not the only country offering assistance, we are notable for supporting and promoting the long-term well-being of our partners, as opposed to seeking our own short-term advantage. El Salvador has no better friend than the United States of America.

I know there are concerns about the strength and direction of El Salvador's democracy. While I will always act with respect for the sovereignty and dignity of the Government of El Salvador, if confirmed, I would be an advocate for democracy, human rights, and combating corruption and impunity. These are not only moral imperatives: they are the best guarantee for the long-term stability and prosperity of any country.

No country in the Western Hemisphere can alone successfully confront transnational organized crime. We must work together. Strengthening the rule of law in El Salvador is essential if we are going to discourage irregular migration. Without the rule of law, El Salvador will never have the economic growth it needs, nor will it be able to prevent human rights abuses and attacks on civil liberties, reduce gender-based violence, or defeat the threat from criminal gangs, all drivers of irregular migration.

Promoting the interests of U.S. businesses in El Salvador would also be a priority if I am confirmed. It is important to prosperity here at home, but I am also convinced U.S. businesses at their best set an example of transparency and fair dealing that will be emulated.

I have had the honor to serve in challenging leadership positions such as Deputy Chief of Mission in Mexico City. In that tour of duty and others, I was fortunate to work with the representatives of many U.S. Government agencies. If confirmed, I would dedicate myself to the success of each U.S. agency's mission in El Salvador. I have also had the honor to work with fellow Americans and foreign national employees from a wide variety of backgrounds. We are a diverse nation and should have an overseas presence that proudly displays that diversity.

I look forward to this opportunity to advance America's interests in El Salvador if confirmed, and I stand ready to answer any questions you might have now and in the future. Thank you.

Senator KAINE. Thank you so much.

Mr. Rodriguez?

STATEMENT OF HUGO F. RODRIGUEZ, JR., OF PENNSYLVANIA, A CAREER MEMBER OF THE SENIOR FOREIGN SERVICE, CLASS OF MINISTER–COUNSELOR, NOMINATED TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE REPUBLIC OF NICARAGUA

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. Good morning.

Chairman Kaine, Ranking Member Rubio, distinguished members of the committee, it is an honor to appear before you today as President Biden's nominee to serve as the next United States Ambassador to Nicaragua.

I am grateful to President Biden and Secretary Blinken for their trust and confidence in me and, if confirmed, I look forward to working with you and your colleagues in Congress to advance the interests of the United States in Nicaragua.

Before I begin, I would like to take a moment to thank my parents, Gail and Hugo Rodriguez, Sr., my five brothers and sisters,

my teachers and professors, and my State Department colleagues. I have learned from them all the value of hard work, especially in service to others, and the importance of listening deeply before speaking.

I want to thank my daughters, Alison and Annalia, for making our peripatetic life richer and more meaningful, hardly ever complaining about our many moves and long working hours.

And most of all, I want to thank my wife and fellow Foreign Service Officer, Karen Rodriguez. This career has been a team effort and I owe anything I have achieved to Karen's enthusiastic support, her wise counsel, and her enduring willingness to shoulder more than her share of the home burden in addition to her day job. She inspires me every day.

In 1958, my father left the Dominican Republic, fleeing a dictatorship that allowed average Dominicans no space for freedom and no hope of achieving their dreams.

Unfortunately, Nicaraguans now face a similar situation since last November's election when Daniel Ortega and Rosario Murillo deprived Nicaraguans of any real choice and Nicaraguans' hopes for democracy and prosperity were dashed.

More than 180 political prisoners, including political opposition figures, human rights defenders, student leaders, journalists, religious groups, and civil society representatives remain behind bars, deprived of their human rights.

The Nicaraguan government also closed civic space at an alarming rate, shuttering more than 700 associations, universities, foundations, and other nonprofits in 2022 alone.

As a result of the escalating climate of repression, fear, and hopelessness, along with the Ortega-Murillo government's failure to address people's basic needs, hundreds of thousands of Nicaraguans are now refugees, asylum seekers, and migrants throughout the region.

The United States has spoken out against these abuses and, if confirmed, I will continue to do so, not because we have any intention of meddling in Nicaragua's internal affairs but because it is our commitment under the Inter-American Democratic Charter, which both the United States and Nicaragua signed in 2001.

As President Biden has stated, the Inter-American Democratic Charter obligates the hemisphere to stand up for the democratic rights of the Nicaraguan people.

If confirmed, I commit to working with Congress, interagency colleagues, and international partners to press for a return to democracy, respect for human rights, and the immediate release of all political prisoners in Nicaragua.

While we fundamentally disagree with the actions of the Ortega-Murillo government, the relationship between our two countries goes much deeper than political leadership.

More than 400,000 people of Nicaraguan descent live in the United States. Around 6,000 Americans visit Nicaragua each year and another 20,000 reside there.

The United States has long supported economic development throughout Central America and a prosperous, stable, and democratic Central America is, clearly, in our interest.

That is why, if confirmed, I will engage with voices across Nicaraguan society to share our vision of inclusive economic growth, as stated by the President at the recent Summit of the Americas in Los Angeles.

We will look to support civil society groups that provide essential services in the areas of health care, education, and poverty relief, including organizations the Nicaraguan government has targeted.

We will do what we can to offer the Nicaraguan people a better future in their own country. We know that addressing the root causes of irregular migration and forced displacement throughout Central America and including Nicaragua involves ensuring respect for human rights, generating economic opportunity, and improving citizen security. These improvements require governments to uphold the rule of law and combat corruption.

If confirmed, I will advocate for a change of course so that the Nicaraguan people may work to recover their democracy, provide for their families, and regain hope for their future.

Mr. Chair, Ranking Member, and committee members, I thank you again for your consideration of my nomination and I welcome your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Rodriguez follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HUGO F. RODRIGUEZ, JR.

Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Risch, distinguished members of the committee, it is an honor to appear before you today as President Biden's nominee to serve as the next United States Ambassador to Nicaragua.

I am grateful to President Biden and Secretary Blinken for their trust and confidence in me, and, if confirmed, I look forward to working with you and your colleagues in Congress to advance the interests of the United States in Nicaragua.

Before I begin, I'd like to take a moment to thank my parents, Gail and Hugo Rodriguez Sr., my five brothers and sisters, my teachers and professors, and my State Department colleagues. I have learned from them all the value of hard work, especially in service to others, and the importance of listening deeply, before speaking. I want to thank my daughters, Alison and Annalia, for making our peripatetic life richer and more meaningful, hardly ever complaining about our many moves and long working hours. And most of all, I want to thank my wife, and fellow Foreign Service officer, Karen Rodriguez. This career has been a team effort, and I owe anything I have achieved to Karen's enthusiastic support, her wise counsel, and her enduring willingness to shoulder more than her share of the home burden in addition to her day job. She inspires me every day.

In 1952, my father left the Dominican Republic, fleeing a dictatorship that allowed average Dominicans no space for freedom and no hope of achieving their dreams. Unfortunately, Nicaraguans now face a similar situation since last November's election, when Daniel Ortega and Rosario Murillo deprived Nicaraguans of any real choice, and Nicaraguans' hopes for democracy and prosperity were dashed. More than 180 political prisoners on unfounded charges, including political opposition figures, human rights defenders, student leaders, journalists, and civil society representatives, remain deprived of their human rights. The Nicaraguan Government also closed civic space at an alarming rate, shuttering more than 700 associations, universities, foundations, and other nonprofits in 2022 alone, and more than 800 since 2018. As a result of the escalating climate of repression, fear, and hopelessness, along with the Ortega-Murillo Government's failure to address people's basic needs, hundreds of thousands of Nicaraguans are now refugees, asylum seekers, and migrants throughout the region.

The United States has spoken out against these abuses, and, if confirmed, I will continue to do so, not because we have any intention to determine Nicaragua's internal affairs, but because it is our commitment under the Inter-American Charter, which both the United States and Nicaragua signed in 2001. As President Biden has stated, "the Inter-American Democratic Charter obligates the hemisphere to stand up for the democratic rights of the Nicaraguan people." If confirmed, I commit to working with Congress, interagency colleagues, and international partners to press

for a return to democracy, respect for human rights, and the freedom of political prisoners in Nicaragua.

While we fundamentally disagree with the actions of the Ortega-Murillo Government, the relationship between our two countries goes much deeper than the political leadership. More than 400 thousand people of Nicaraguan descent live in the United States, around 6,000 Americans visit Nicaragua each year, and another 20,000 reside there. The United States has long supported economic development throughout Central America, and prosperous, stable, and democratic Central America is clearly in our interest. That is why, if confirmed, I will engage with voices across Nicaraguan society to share our vision of inclusive economic growth, as stated by the President at the recent Summit of the Americas in Los Angeles. We will look to support civil society groups that provide essential services in the areas of healthcare, education, and poverty relief, including organizations the Nicaraguan Government has targeted. We will do what we can to offer the Nicaraguan people a better future in their own country. We know that addressing the root causes of irregular migration and forced displacement—throughout Central America and including Nicaragua—involves ensuring respect for human rights, generating economic opportunity, and improving citizen security. These improvements require governments to uphold the rule of law, respect human rights, and combat corruption. If confirmed, I will advocate for a change of course so that the Nicaraguan people may work to recover their democracy, provide for their families, and regain hope for their future.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, committee members, I thank you again for your consideration of my nomination, and I welcome your questions.

Senator KAINE. Thank you so much.

Ms. Bond?

STATEMENT OF CANDACE A. BOND OF MISSOURI, NOMINATED TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

Ms. BOND. Good morning, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Rubio, and distinguished members of the committee. It is my honor to appear as President Biden's nominee for U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

I am proud to have my husband, Steve McKeever, our daughter, Maddox, and my brother, Les Bond, Jr., here today. They have been constantly supportive through this process. I am also thankful for the love and support of my son, mother, and many family members who are watching this hearing.

Our family represents a proud line of Black educators, professionals, and community leaders. Descended from slaves, our family has made meaningful contributions to the fabric of our nation. Ours is a very American story.

My mother, Anita Bond, was the first Black female graduate from St. Louis University. She graduated magna cum laude and she recently received her honorary doctorate. She also served as president of the St. Louis School Board and on President Lyndon Johnson's Civil Rights Commission.

My late father, Dr. Les Bond, was a prominent physician, surgeon, and community leader and was appointed to the St. Louis Board of Police Commissioners.

Other prominent members of our family, including Julian Bond, former NAACP chairman, were passionate about improving the quality of life for their communities. Theirs are the shoulders on which I proudly stand. I have sought to apply my abilities to devise solutions that lift people up, strengthen communities, and inspire sustainable change.

After completing my graduate education, I held senior executive positions at leading cultural, media, and entertainment companies. At AESA, Inc., I advised public and private entities in areas of social impact, community and business development.

I played a key role in advancing transformational infrastructure and commercial projects that served my community. I also worked to improve our public education system for over 2 million families as an official for the Los Angeles County Office of Education.

As chair of the MLK Community Development Corporation, I am working to improve health equity and access to care for underserved populations.

Additionally, I have fought to ensure that no community is left out of our clean energy future, representing small businesses and environmental groups on California's utility consumer advisory panel.

The values instilled in me by my family and my experiences as a business and community leader have equipped me to advance the common interests of the United States in Trinidad and Tobago as Ambassador.

As a specialist in building strong public-private partnerships, I understand the value of good governance and promoting equitable economic prosperity and ensuring that democracies can meet the needs of and deliver for their people.

If confirmed as an ambassador, I will work to promote accountability and transparency and combat corruption, which not only helps improve overall climate for foreign direct investment and trade but also enables inclusive and sustainable economic growth for all citizens.

As the U.S. looks to partner with countries to reduce climate impacts and bolster energy security, Trinidad and Tobago is well positioned to help speed the development of clean energy infrastructure and climate adaptation projects in the region.

While natural gas remains a cornerstone of Trinidad and Tobago's economy, it is looking ahead towards diversifying its energy resources. Through support for improved access to financing and technical assistance, the U.S. can help spur Trinidad and Tobago's transition to a sustainable and resilient economy.

Of course, my greatest responsibility, if confirmed, will be ensuring the safety and security of the 13,000 American citizens living in Trinidad and Tobago, and the thousands more who visit each year for business and tourism.

Keeping Americans safe also requires the diligent implementation of Caribbean Basin Security Initiative-funded citizen security programs that work to prevent gang violence, reduce violent crime, and strengthen Trinidad and Tobago's judicial system.

Trinidad and Tobago is a regional leader on security and a partner in the fight against transnational organized crime. I look forward to working with the government of Trinidad and Tobago and international partners to help better support vulnerable populations, including victims of human trafficking as well as Venezuelan migrants and refugees.

I hope to work together with this committee to address pressing diplomatic matters in Trinidad and Tobago and the broader region.

I am humbled by the honorable mission President Biden, Vice President Harris, and Secretary Blinken have asked me to take on as Ambassador to Trinidad and Tobago, and if confirmed, I pledge to dedicate my skills and energy to strengthen our diplomatic and economic ties to Trinidad and Tobago to advance U.S. interests in the world and to promote American democratic values.

I am happy to answer any questions that the committee may have and I look forward to working with you, if confirmed.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Bond follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF CANDACE A. BOND

Good morning, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and distinguished members of the committee. It is my honor to appear as President Biden's nominee for U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

I am proud to have my husband, Steve McKeever, our daughter, Maddox and my brother, Les Bond Jr. here today. They have been constantly supportive through this process, and I am thankful for the love and support of my son, mother, and many family members who are watching this hearing.

Our family represents a proud line of Black educators, professionals, and community leaders. Descended from slaves, our family has made meaningful contributions to the fabric of our nation. Ours is a very American story.

My mother Anita Bond was the first Black female student to graduate magna cum laude from Saint Louis University where she recently received her honorary doctorate. She also served as president of the St. Louis School Board and on President Lyndon Johnson's Civil Rights Commission. My late father Dr. Les Bond was a prominent physician, surgeon, and community leader and was appointed to the St. Louis Board of Police Commissioners. Other prominent members of our family, including Julian Bond, former NAACP Chairman, were passionate about improving the quality of life for their communities. Theirs are the shoulders on which I proudly stand. I have sought to apply my abilities to devise solutions that lift people up, strengthen communities, and inspire sustainable change.

After completing my graduate education, I held senior executive positions at leading cultural media and entertainment companies. At AESA, Inc. I advised public and private entities in the areas of social impact, community, and business development. I played a key role in advancing transformational infrastructure and commercial projects that served my community. I also worked to improve our public education system for over two million families as an official for the Los Angeles County Office of Education. As chair of the MLK Community Development Corporation, I am working to improve health equity, access to care for underserved populations. Additionally, I have fought to ensure that no community is left out of our clean energy future, representing small businesses and environmental groups on California's utility consumer advisory panel. The values instilled in me by my family and my experiences as a business and community leader have equipped me to advance the common interests of the United States and Trinidad and Tobago as ambassador.

As a specialist in building strong public-private partnerships, I understand the value of good governance in promoting equitable economic prosperity and ensuring that democracies can meet the needs of and deliver for their people. If confirmed as ambassador, I will work to promote accountability and transparency, and combat corruption, which not only helps improve the overall climate for foreign direct investment and trade but also enables inclusive and sustainable economic growth for all citizens.

As the United States looks to partner with countries to reduce climate impacts and bolster energy security, Trinidad and Tobago is well-positioned to help speed the development of clean energy infrastructure and climate adaptation projects in the region. While natural gas remains a cornerstone of Trinidad and Tobago's economy, it is looking ahead toward diversifying its energy resources. Through support for improved access to financing and technical assistance, the United States can help spur Trinidad and Tobago's transition to a sustainable and resilient economy.

Of course, my greatest responsibility if confirmed will be ensuring the safety and security of the 13,000 American citizens living in Trinidad and Tobago and the thousands more who visit each year for business and tourism. Keeping Americans safe also requires the diligent implementation of Caribbean Basin Security Initiative-funded citizen safety programs that work to prevent gang violence, reduce violent crime, and strengthen Trinidad and Tobago's judicial system.

Trinidad and Tobago is a regional leader on security and a partner in the fight against transnational organized crime. I look forward to working with the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and international partners to help better support vulnerable populations, including victims of human trafficking as well as Venezuelan migrants and refugees. I hope to work together with this committee to address pressing diplomatic matters in Trinidad and Tobago and the broader region.

I am humbled by the honorable mission President Biden, Vice President Harris, and Secretary Blinken have asked me to take on as Ambassador to Trinidad and Tobago. If confirmed, I pledge to dedicate my skills and energy to strengthen our diplomatic and economic ties to Trinidad and Tobago, to advance U.S. interests in the world, and to promote American democratic values. I am happy to answer any questions the committee may have.

Senator KAINE. Thanks so much.

Ms. Fulton?

STATEMENT OF HEIDE B. FULTON OF WEST VIRGINIA, A CAREER MEMBER OF THE SENIOR FOREIGN SERVICE, CLASS OF MINISTER–COUNSELOR, NOMINATED TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE ORIENTAL REPUBLIC OF URUGUAY

Ms. FULTON. Chairman Kaine, Ranking Member Rubio, members of the committee, it is an honor to be here today as President Biden's nominee to serve as the next U.S. Ambassador to the Oriental Republic of Uruguay.

I am humbled by the trust and confidence that President Biden and Secretary of State Blinken have shown by putting my name forward for consideration at this pivotal moment in our bilateral relationship and, if confirmed, look forward to working with you and your teams to enhance the opportunities presented before us.

I am grateful for the support of my family, including my husband, James Fulton, a Foreign Service specialist and retired Army Special Forces Officer, and our two children, Anam-Cara and Cormac Fulton.

I would also like to thank my parents, Bob and Gretchen Bronke, who have instilled in me the values of hard work, dedication, and integrity, which they have modeled throughout their lives. I regret that travel and work commitments have prevented any of them from joining me but I am very happy to have the support of a longtime friend and Senate staffer, Barbara Prior, with me today.

Throughout my career at the State Department, I have led complex organizations and negotiated large-scale initiatives. This includes my present position as the Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement where I oversee Western Hemisphere programs and our aviation portfolio.

In this capacity, I oversee more than $2 billion of programming in 28 countries. I have hands-on experience combating corruption, strengthening the civilian law enforcement capacity of our partners, shaping our rule of law programs throughout the hemisphere, and fighting to stem the flow of synthetic drugs and other narcotics that have killed more than 100,000 Americans over this past year.

I helped to shape the Bicentennial Framework with Mexico, which reset and rejuvenated our security cooperation with this key partner.

I led the U.S. mission in Honduras during a tumultuous period of contested 2017 national elections where I protected U.S. interests and preserved our strategic objectives.

I have drawn on my formation of 28 years as an Army officer and 25 years as a public diplomacy practitioner to forge strong relationships based on open communication and mutual understanding. These have been hallmarks of my career.

If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with you and this committee and others in Congress to use these skills to enhance our robust bilateral relationship with Uruguay and to advance the interests and security of the American people.

This will include significant focus in three areas: enhancing economic ties between our nations, working with Uruguay as a democratic leader in the hemisphere, and strengthening the position of the United States as one of Uruguay's key diplomatic partners.

Uruguay is a valued partner in the Western Hemisphere. With its large middle class, strong history of democratic values, and dedicated engagement in multilateral organizations, Uruguay is one of the most economically and politically stable countries in Latin America.

Uruguay has spoken out strongly against Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine and democratic backsliding in the region, in addition to welcoming more than 20,000 refugees fleeing the dictatorship in Venezuela.

Uruguay has historically played a key role in global peacekeeping efforts as one of the world's top troop contributing nations per capita.

Uruguay is recognized as a global leader in its use of renewable energy sources, and we are expanding our joint efforts towards more sustainable agriculture.

If confirmed as Ambassador, I will work diligently to strengthen cooperation with the government of Uruguay and international organizations to combat transnational criminal organizations and all forms of trafficking.

The United States is one of Uruguay's largest trading partners and an important investor. If confirmed, I will seek to deepen economic ties and develop new business opportunities in Uruguay on behalf of U.S. companies.

As Uruguay prepares to implement its 5G networks, I will also, if confirmed, encourage Uruguay to embrace the principles of competition and technology neutrality while prioritizing security, resilience, and innovation.

In closing, I look forward to working closely with you and your teams and other relevant stakeholders to advance our national security interests, to maintain a strong relationship with Uruguay, and to support continued cooperation on defending democratic institutions in the region.

I think that we have tremendous opportunities with the Oriental Republic of Uruguay, a country with an outsized influence in the region.

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Ranking Member, members of the committee, it is an honor to be here before you and I look forward to your questions.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Fulton follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HEIDE B. FULTON

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and members of the committee, it is an honor to appear before you today as President Biden's nominee to serve as the next U.S. Ambassador of the United States to the Oriental Republic of Uruguay.

I'm humbled by the trust and confidence President Biden and Secretary of State Blinken have shown by sending my name to the Senate for consideration at this pivotal moment in the bilateral relationship. I'm also grateful for the support of my family, including my husband James Fulton, a Foreign Service Specialist and retired Army Special Forces officer, and two children, Anam-Cara and Cormac Fulton. I also want to thank my parents, Bob and Gretchen Bronke, who instilled in me the values of hard work, dedication, and integrity, which they have modeled in all aspects of their lives.

Throughout my career at the State Department, I have led complex organizations and negotiated large-scale initiatives. This includes my present position serving as Deputy Assistant Secretary for the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement's Offices of Western Hemisphere Programs and Aviation. In this capacity, I oversee more than $2 billion in programs in 28 countries in the Western Hemisphere. I have hands-on experience combatting corruption, strengthening the civilian law enforcement capacity of our partners, shaping our rule of law programs throughout the hemisphere, and fighting to stem the flow of synthetic drugs and other narcotics that killed over 100,000 Americans last year. I shaped the Bicentennial Framework with Mexico, which has reset and rejuvenated our security cooperation with this key partner. I led the U.S. Mission in Honduras during the tumultuous period of the contested 2017 elections, where I protected U.S. interests and preserved our strategic objectives. I have drawn on my formation as an Army officer and public diplomacy practitioner to forge strong partnerships based on open communication and mutual understanding. These have been hallmarks of my career.

If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with this committee and others in Congress as I use these skills to continue to enhance our robust bilateral relationship with Uruguay and advance the interests and security of the American people. This will include significant focus on three areas: expanding economic ties between our two nations, working with Uruguay as a democratic leader in the hemisphere, and strengthening the position of the United States as one of Uruguay's key diplomatic partners.

Uruguay is a valued partner in the Western Hemisphere. With its large middle class, strong history of democratic values, and dedicated engagement in multilateral organizations, Uruguay is one of the most economically and politically stable countries in Latin America. Uruguay has spoken out strongly against Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine and democratic backsliding in the region and welcomed more than 20,000 refugees fleeing the dictatorship in Venezuela. Uruguay has historically played a key role in global peacekeeping efforts, as one of the world's top troop-contributing countries per capita. With U.S. support, Uruguay's peacekeepers help protect civilians, support political processes, and achieve lasting peace. Uruguay is also recognized as a global leader in its use of renewable energy sources, and we are expanding our joint efforts toward more sustainable agriculture. If confirmed as Ambassador, I will work diligently to strengthen cooperation with the government of Uruguay and international organizations to combat transnational criminal organizations and all forms of trafficking.

The United States is one of Uruguay's largest trading partners and an important investor. The United States buys over 70 percent of Uruguay's services exports, estimated at a value of $1 billion. The IT and software sector is booming, creating increased opportunity for U.S. investment, which is mutually beneficial. If confirmed, I will seek to deepen economic ties and develop new business opportunities in Uruguay on behalf of U.S. companies. As Uruguay prepares to implement its 5G networks, I will also, if confirmed, encourage Uruguay to embrace the principles of competition and technology neutrality, while prioritizing security, resilience, and innovation.

In closing, if confirmed, I look forward to working closely with this committee and other relevant stakeholders to advance our national interests, maintain a strong relationship with Uruguay, and support continued cooperation on defending democratic institutions in the region with the Oriental Republic of Uruguay, a country with an outsized influence in the region.

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Ranking Member, and members of the committee, it is an honor to be here, and I look forward to your questions. Thank you.

Senator KAINE. Thank you so much.

And, finally, Mr. Faucher?

STATEMENT OF ROBERT J. FAUCHER OF ARIZONA, A CAREER MEMBER OF THE SENIOR FOREIGN SERVICE, CLASS OF MINISTER–COUNSELOR, NOMINATED TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE REPUBLIC OF SURINAME

Mr. FAUCHER. Thank you. Good morning.

Chairman Kaine, Ranking Member Rubio, distinguished members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you as President Biden's nominee to be the next U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Suriname.

I want to thank President Biden and Secretary Blinken for their confidence in me and I look forward, if I am confirmed, to working with Congress to advance U.S. interests in Suriname and the Caribbean region.

Before I start, I would like to introduce today my wife, Noraly, who is here with me today. Noraly has been a source of inspiration, strength, and wisdom throughout our years together and I owe much to her.

I would also like to express my profound thanks to my daughters, Stephanie and Melissa, who cannot be here but are watching from Rotterdam. I would like to recognize them for their repeated personal sacrifices as they, too, have proudly served our nation as representatives abroad.

Suriname is a peaceful young democracy that is among the most ethnically and religiously diverse countries in the world. Although not well known in the United States, Suriname's roots are intertwined with our nation's founding through English colonization in the early 17th century.

With the 1667 Peace of Breda, the Netherlands traded its New York colonies, including Manhattan, for the English colony of Suriname. This was later followed by the establishment of Maroon communities in Suriname's interior alongside indigenous Amerindian communities.

In addition, enslaved Africans were freed in 1863 and contract laborers were recruited from China, India, and Java. As a result, Suriname enjoys a rich ethnic mosaic. It is a nation where Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, and indigenous religions live peacefully and productively together.

Since independence in 1975, Suriname has strengthened its democratic institutions and traditions. Reinforcing democracy and promoting respect for human rights and the rule of law are fundamental to U.S. relations with Suriname.

If confirmed, I will vigorously continue these efforts and will support civil society and independent media and human rights defenders, who play a critical role in these efforts.

Suriname was once one of the more isolated countries in the Western Hemisphere. It increasingly serves as a crucial nexus among South America, the Caribbean, and the transatlantic world. Suriname is a key U.S. partner in the region and the well-being of the United States is connected to Suriname through ties of commerce and geography.

Decades of diplomatic relations between our two countries have developed strong economic and security partnerships. If confirmed, I commit to deepen our mutually beneficial economic, security, and democracy partnerships.

Suriname also has tremendous development potential and, if confirmed, I will work with the Surinamese government to develop opportunities for economic growth and increased trade and assist its economic recovery following the COVID–19 pandemic.

As the biggest exporter to Suriname and its third largest importer, the United States provides critical high value materials for Suriname's economy.

Our partnership looks likely to expand as major offshore oil reserves have been discovered, explored, and secured by American companies. The massive new oil wealth will transform Suriname and, if confirmed, I will deepen our economic and commercial relationship to advance both Surinamese and American prosperity and equitable economic growth, mindful of the threat of corruption.

Suriname is also emerging as a global leader on the climate crisis response. More than 93 percent of the land surface in Suriname is covered by protected native forests. It is one of the few carbon negative countries in the world.

Yet, problems persist. The gold fields of Suriname have drawn U.S. companies and the U.S. Government is supporting efforts to curb illicit mining and deforestation and the use of mercury, all of which gravely damage Suriname's environment.

If confirmed, I look forward to partnering with Suriname to support its efforts to expand its positive environmental record.

Suriname seeks greater military and law enforcement cooperation with the United States. It is a key member of the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative and partners with us in combating narcotics and human trafficking, and if confirmed, I will work to bolster Suriname's security capabilities, fight corruption, and strengthen our security and law enforcement cooperation.

Finally, our embassy in Paramaribo has an exceptional team that works hard to advance bilateral relations, protect U.S. citizens abroad, and work with the government of Suriname to accomplish our foreign policy goals. Ensuring it is safe, secure, and well-resourced will be a top priority for me if I am confirmed.

Thank you for your consideration of my nomination and I look forward to answering your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Faucher follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF ROBERT J. FAUCHER

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Ranking Member, and distinguished members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you as President Biden's nominee for U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Suriname. I want to thank President Biden and Secretary Blinken for their confidence in me. If confirmed, I look forward to working with Congress to advance U.S. interests in Suriname and the Caribbean region.

I would like to introduce to you my wife, Noraly, who is here today. Noraly has been a source of inspiration, strength, and wisdom through our years together. I would also like to express my profound thanks to our daughters Stephanie and Melissa, who cannot be here but are watching from Rotterdam. I would like to recognize their repeated personal sacrifices as they too have proudly served our nation as representatives abroad.

Suriname is a peaceful, young democracy that is among the most ethnically and religiously diverse in the world. Suriname's roots are intertwined with our nation's founding through English colonization in the early 17th century. With the 1667 Peace of Breda, the Netherlands traded its New York colonies including Manhattan for the English colony of Suriname. This was followed by the establishment of maroon societies in Suriname's interior alongside the indigenous Amerindians. In addition, enslaved Africans were freed in 1863, and contract laborers were recruited from China, India, and Java. As a result, Suriname enjoys a rich ethnic mosaic. It is a nation where Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, and indigenous religions live peacefully and productively together.

Since independence in 1975, Suriname has strengthened its democratic institutions and traditions. Reinforcing democracy and promoting respect for human rights and the rule of law are fundamental to U.S. relations with Suriname. If confirmed, I will vigorously continue our efforts to advance democracy, human rights, and the rule of law and will support civil society, independent media, and human rights defenders who play a critical role in this effort.

Suriname serves as a crucial nexus among South America, the Caribbean, and the transatlantic world. Suriname is a key U.S. partner in the region, and the United States is connected to Suriname through ties of commerce and geography. Decades of diplomatic relations between our two nations have developed strong economic and security partnerships. Suriname currently holds the chair of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), a regional body vitally important to regional development and security. Suriname has tremendous development potential, and if confirmed, I will work with Suriname's Government to develop opportunities for economic growth and increased trade and assist its economic recovery following the COVID–19 pandemic. As the biggest exporter to Suriname and its third-largest importer, the United States provides critical, high-value materials for Suriname's economy. Our partnership looks likely to expand as Suriname's economy continues to grow in the coming decades. If confirmed, I will deepen our economic and commercial relationship to advance both Surinamese and American prosperity and equitable economic growth, mindful of the threat of corruption.

Suriname is emerging as a global leader on the climate crisis response. More than 93 percent of its land surface is covered by protected native forests. It is one of a few carbon-negative countries in the world. Yet, problems persist. If confirmed, I look forward to supporting U.S. Government efforts to curb illicit mining and deforestation and partnering with Suriname to support its efforts to expand its positive environmental record.

Suriname seeks greater military and law enforcement cooperation with the United States. A key member in the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative, Suriname partners to combat narcotics and human trafficking. If confirmed, I will work to bolster security capabilities, fight corruption, and strengthen our security and law enforcement cooperation.

Finally, our Embassy in Paramaribo has an exceptional team that works to advance bilateral relations, protect U.S. citizens abroad, and work with the Government of Suriname to accomplish our foreign policy goals in the region. Ensuring it is safe, secure, and well-resourced, will be a top priority for me if confirmed.

Thank you for your consideration of my nomination. I look forward to answering your questions.

Senator KAINE. Thank you so much to all the witnesses.

Before we begin five-minute rounds of questions, I do have a few questions to ask each of you. This is an important part of the hearing and it is designed to make sure that you will all be responsive to this committee, should you be confirmed.

In these questions I am going to ask I would ask each of you to provide just a yes or no answer.

First, do you each agree to appear before this committee and make officials from your office available to the committee and designated staff when invited?

[All witnesses answer in the affirmative.]

Senator KAINE. Do you commit to keep this committee fully and currently informed about the activities under your purview?

[All witnesses answer in the affirmative.]

Senator KAINE. Do you commit to engaging in meaningful consultation while policies are being developed, not just providing notification after the fact?

[All witnesses answer in the affirmative.]

Senator KAINE. Do you commit to promptly responding to requests for briefing and information requested by the committee and its designated staff?

[All witnesses answer in the affirmative.]

Senator KAINE. Thank you very much.

We will now begin five-minute rounds of questions.

I will start with you, Mr. Rodriguez.

What a difficult time in Nicaragua and what a difficult post to which you have been nominated. I attended the Summit of the Americas in Los Angeles in June and it was interesting.

There was quite a flap, as you know, about who should be invited to the summit, and a number of the nations in the Americas were critical of the United States for not having a full invitation of all countries in the hemisphere.

As I was speaking to some of those leaders who were critical—some chose not to attend, some attended and were critical—it was interesting, they complained to me about the fact that Cuba and Venezuela had not been invited. No one complained that Nicaragua had not been invited, and I found that interesting.

And when I asked them, hey, you have talked about Cuba and Venezuela but you have not mentioned Nicaragua, even those who strongly believe that Cuba and Venezuela should have been invited pretty much said Nicaragua was a disaster.

We have got no—we cannot, with a straight face, make an argument that a president who imprisoned all of his rivals and has installed his wife as vice president and is throwing Mother Teresa and other—Mother Teresa's organization and others out of the country—we cannot with a straight face claim that they should have been invited to the summit.

So what a difficult, difficult time. What space for U.S. sort of pro-democracy pro-human rights activity or support for organizations that are engaged in pro-human rights activity, what space exists within Nicaragua that you could promote, should you be confirmed?

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. Thank you, Senator.

You are exactly right. It has really been a really lamentable turn of events, really, since 2018 in Nicaragua.

The space has been increasingly limited. However, we still maintain a strong and well-led USAID contingent in country, working with those human rights defenders and other NGOs that continue to operate in country and increasingly working with those who are operating or directing operations from outside of the country.

So those spaces still exist and, if confirmed, I look forward to redoubling our efforts to make sure that those voices are able to be heard across Nicaragua and across the region.

You mentioned the opinion that our neighboring countries across the region have for Daniel Ortega and for the, really, terrible undemocratic turn the country has taken.

That is a huge opportunity for us. Bringing that opinion forward from our neighbors in the region, elevating that sentiment, ele-

vating those voices, has a big effect, not just across Nicaragua but also on the government of Nicaragua.

They are increasingly becoming a pariah state within the region and I think we need to focus on bringing along that regional support to help raise that additional voice and those additional pressures on the government of Nicaragua.

Senator KAINE. Thank you very much.

I want to turn now to Mr. Faucher and Ms. Bond.

Three nations in the region the democracy trend is in the right direction and they have significant energy resources at a time when there is global energy insecurity—Guyana, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago.

Senator Rubio and I just had a meeting with the president of Guyana, President Ali, right before this hearing began. He was in our office and it was a productive visit.

Guyana had a proposal on the table for an IDB loan to develop their natural resources. The U.S. vetoed the loan in March. The IDB would not provide the $180 billion loan to allow Guyana to develop their energy resources and it was the U.S. that vetoed it.

I am really struck by an incoherence in this administration's sort of energy policy. So there is three goals. We want to battle climate change. We want to help nations who are allies wean themselves away from dictators in terms of getting energy supply.

We also have an interest in any country with whom we have an alliance to help them develop their economies in a positive way to produce economic activity that can help their people.

I am very confused at the message that the Administration is sending on energy policy. Vetoing an IDB loan for Guyana but encouraging Saudi Arabia to pump more oil to help our allies, often canceling U.S. domestic oil leases at the same time as we are trying to help our allies wean themselves away from Russian energy.

I do not expect you to solve these three goals and harmonize them. But what I have been waiting for is the Administration putting some policy on the table that expresses how they are trying to harmonize these goals.

In particular, what might you do, should you be confirmed—and I will begin with you, Mr. Faucher—what might you do to help Suriname or Trinidad and Tobago appropriately develop their energy resources, guarding against corruption and some of the other issues?

Because, look, if we are going to veto loans to nations like Guyana, China is just going to step in and do those loans—I mean, let us not kid ourselves here—and then we end up losing influence with nations that would rather partner with the United States.

What can you do, should you be confirmed, to help advance appropriate development of these nations' economies?

Mr. FAUCHER. Mr. Senator, thank you very much for that question.

This is really one of the critical issues in front of us right now as we look for Suriname's continued forward development of its democracy, its human rights structures, as well as its economy.

Suriname is sitting on vast oil reserves, as we understand it, off its coast and American companies have been involved in developing

and extracting that oil wealth. They have done this without support from the United States government.

They have not asked for our support, as I understand it, nor has, if I am aware of it, Suriname asked for any kind of loans through the IDB or other organizations of that nature.

My role, if I am confirmed as Ambassador, is to ensure that American companies can continue to compete for those oil licenses and contracts in the region and make sure that there is a fair and level playing field for that form of competition so that they do not lose out to countries like the PRC and others who might then be able to influence Suriname in negative ways.

I would note, however, that Suriname's move toward democracy predates the discovery of oil off its shores and it has been making the right steps in that.

And if I am confirmed as Ambassador, I will continue to support and work with the Surinamese government to ensure that it continues its economic and development as a democracy.

Thank you.

Senator KAINE. With the sufferance of my colleagues, I am over time but I would like to give Ms. Bond the chance to briefly answer the question as well.

Ms. BOND. Yes. This is an important issue that came up in the Summit of the Americas, and the Vice President brought forth a new U.S.-Caribbean initiative that would really look at energy security and the development of three specific areas and taking a regional approach as opposed to an individualized country approach focused on energy security, focused on food security as well as finance.

What we are really looking for is to leverage that opportunity and to look at long-term sustainable growth and focus in these areas, working on a regional basis as opposed to an individual basis.

Senator KAINE. Thank you so much.

Senator Rubio?

Senator RUBIO. Thank you, again, all for coming in.

Let me start with you, Mr. Faucher. I am just going to go down the row here, if I can, in the time I am allotted.

We have talked about energy, the role that it plays, its development when it comes to Suriname, its importance, and so I did want to ask, there is a—the President has an executive order and it tasks the Treasury and the State Department to develop a strategy to only support financing programs and stimulus packages and debt relief initiatives that are aligned with and support the goals of the Paris Agreement.

And, I mean, it has already had an impact on an IDB decision with regards to Guyana, but I am real concerned about how that would impact the ability of U.S. companies and us to continue to encourage the development, even as we want them to diversify in their economy and we want to support them in that.

I mean, why—are we here—does that executive order hold the potential of being viewed as us telling the people of Suriname that they cannot develop an advanced and modern economy because it clashes with our support of the Paris Agreement?

Mr. FAUCHER. Thank you, Mr. Senator, for that question. It is a very important issue that we talked a little bit about this morning.

I would say if American companies come to me, if I am confirmed as Ambassador, and ask for assistance in dealing with the Surinamese government on oil issues or oil commercial contracts, I will have to look at each case individually to make sure that the assistance I am able to give them conforms with any executive order that is delivered by the President.

I am unaware of any kind of a push at all or statements by us that we do not want Suriname to develop its oil reserves or move forward and improve its economy. I think there is a recognition that there will be a need for oil for the decades ahead even though we are trying to diversify energy resources throughout the world.

Suriname, as I stated in my statement, is a carbon negative country. It is meeting its requirements under the Paris Accord at this time and I think it is committed to continuing to do so.

And so I will work with Suriname to make sure it also meets its environmental——

Senator RUBIO. Again, and when you have an executive order that, basically, asks Treasury and the State Department to structure financing programs and stimulus work and debt relief initiatives to be aligned to the climate agreement, there is the real concern—I think, the legitimate concern—that that would impact our ability to be of assistance in anything that has to do with oil and natural gas exploration, and we will see how that plays out. I hope that is not the case because I think that would negatively impact our relationship.

Ms. Fulton, on Uruguay, I have talked about a couple—I think it is the first in the ranking by Freedom House and the World Justice Project in terms of democracy and rule of law, and as they are looking to revise the Trade and Investment Framework Agreement with the U.S.—I am sorry, in their new trade protocols that mirror what we have done with Brazil and Ecuador—it is clear that they are eager to establish even more transparency measures and anticorruption measures.

So I have outlined a couple things, I think, we can do to really strengthen this relationship. We have a willing partner and a stable country. There are a lot of good news coming out.

Unfortunately, I will tell you, for a while, they think we are not—we do not care, like we are not paying attention to them and that we are not—we are ignoring. It is one of those countries that says, we are doing everything right. We are everything you say that you want countries in the region to be but we are not getting the attention we want.

I have talked about a couple things that we should do. The first is expanding the Development Finance Corporation's role in facilitating investment there. The problem we have is they are classified by the World Bank as a high-tech country, and so the World Bank sort of prevents us.

But I think that is one of those things that requires us to go back and reexamine how that is used and I really hope that we will look for ways to restructure that program so that countries like this, the country that JPMorgan, by the way, says is the least risky country

in Latin America for investment, that the existence—that we are not prevented to DFC's facilitating programs there.

And then the other thing, I think there is a real opportunity to expand cooperation on security space and counternarcotics, and cooperation with them on space and satellite data sharing, for example, would help us crack down on the black market that now exists in data.

Are those two things that you would commit to exploring and, perhaps, pushing forward?

Ms. FULTON. Absolutely. Thank you, Senator.

I agree with what you are saying and would be, if confirmed, looking forward to finding opportunities to working with you and your team to see how we can rethink some of the impediments that currently prevent us from expanding our cooperation and seeking additional tools to enhance these areas of opportunity.

Senator RUBIO. Before I run out of time here, Mr. Rodriguez, the CAFTA is an agreement—preferential trade arrangement—among free nations.

Is Nicaragua a free nation? And if they are not then what is the—should we continue to provide the preferential trade benefits that CAFTA provides to free nations?

I mean, the point of it was to encourage the opposite of everything that Ortega and his crazy wife, who is the vice president, are doing.

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. Thank you, Senator Rubio.

Let me just say, if confirmed, I would support using all economic and diplomatic tools to bring about a change in direction in Nicaragua.

Removing Nicaragua from CAFTA–DR is a, potentially, very powerful tool and something we have to seriously consider. I know we currently exclude Nicaragua from supporting functions under CAFTA–DR—trade development capacity[CE3] building activities, and the like.

But if confirmed, I commit to working with USTR and other agencies within the U.S. Government to evaluate all possible means for bringing that pressure to bear on Nicaragua.

Senator RUBIO. Mr. Duncan, real quick. I am already over time by a minute, but I did want to touch on El Salvador. It is a difficult puzzle to unpack.

Certainly, the trend lines there in terms of President Bukele's view of the United States deteriorated rapidly in the last couple of years to the point now where it is now a really troubling situation.

I am very troubled by it, and he did not seem to care a lot about what U.S. foreign policy is with regards to the country, very openly criticizes and mocks the U.S. and other Western institutions.

And the reality of it is that, despite all this, we have to contend with the fact that his popularity remains pretty high and his party has enjoyed electoral gains as a result.

So for whatever reason he is tapping into some populist sentiment in the country that is converting itself into political support and that, I think, gives him license, at least domestically, to continue down this trend line.

But there is an interesting dynamic. On the one hand, we are carrying out this name and shame campaign from Washington

where we are sanctioning individuals and calling them out for their alleged corruption and behavior and the like, and on the other hand you see them negotiating with the IMF where we are the leading contributor towards, and it seems like the—our administration is holding open the possibility that there would still be an IMF arrangement, I would imagine, because the understanding that if we did not there could be a mass migration event that would impact neighboring countries and/or they could turn to alternative means of financing outside of the structured system that the United States has influence over.

How do we balance our national interest and desire to have not just stability there but some relationship with this campaign that is being carried out to—that, I think, has led to pretty open diplomatic hostility?

Mr. DUNCAN. Thank you for the question, Senator.

I think, first and foremost, we have to approach the Salvadoran government as we should most governments, from a position of respect and acknowledge, as you said, that they choose their own leaders and it appears that their current president is, indeed, at this point, very popular. That is a reality and we must recognize that.

However, I think it is also true, as you indicated in your opening statement, that there have been some developments in El Salvador that do not seem to be conducive to strengthening Salvadoran democracy and there have also been some economic trends that are somewhat concerning.

With respect to the sanctions you referenced, I think it is important for us to use the tools Congress has given us, whether that is Global Magnitsky or the Section 353 list or Section 7031(c)—to use those tools appropriately to target individuals who have been involved in acts of corruption or acts that undermine democracy or the rule of law, and I think we can do that while continuing to maintain a respectful relationship with the government of El Salvador. I do not see any inconsistency there.

With respect to the IMF negotiations, which you mentioned, I am not up to date on exactly where those negotiations are. I believe they are still talking to the IMF.

I know the IMF has publicly expressed some concerns that they, as I understand it, want to see satisfied before they move forward with that loan. So as far as I know, no final decision on that has been made.

Senator KAINE. Thank you so much.

Senator Menendez?

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I want to thank you and the ranking member for holding this hearing.

As the chairman of the full committee, I appreciate that chairs and rankings who preside over nomination hearings is one of the fundamental responsibilities that we have to move nominees forward and I appreciate those of my colleagues who have fulfilled that duty during this work period.

Congratulations to all the nominees and your families who are with you. This hearing comes at a time when human rights and fundamental freedoms face numerous challenges in our hemi-

sphere, and champions of democracy are needed now more than ever.

In Nicaragua, Daniel Ortega has become what he once fought to overthrow—a ruthless dictator. His disdain for democracy and decency are a test to the international community as we confront the rising global tide of authoritarianism.

In El Salvador, President Bukele is wielding populism and new digital tools to perpetuate a cult of personality even as he undermines El Salvador's democratic institutions at an alarming rate.

If confirmed, the leadership of each of the nominees here today will be indispensable to confronting the challenges in forging new opportunities for the United States and Latin America and the Caribbean.

Let me take a point of personal privilege to briefly recognize Deputy Assistant Secretary Heide Fulton.

Ms. Fulton was a Pearson Fellow in my office from 2009 to 2010. The contributions she made during her time with us, including helping draft the first version of what would later become the OAS Revitalization and Reform Act of 2013 that came into law, were a testament to her decades of experience in Latin America and the Caribbean.

I would like to take credit that all of the successes she has had since then as a result of her time with me, but it is her incredible abilities and we are glad to see her being considered for the Ambassador to Uruguay.

Mr. Rodriguez, Nicaragua has been in a state of crisis since April 18th of 2018. That was the day the anti-government protests triggered a years-long wave of repression that has killed 329 people, injured thousands, and condemned 190 political prisoners to arbitrary detention in conditions amounting to torture.

The Ortega regime has no shame. They have jailed, expelled, harassed political opponents, former lawyers, business partners, representatives of the Catholic Church.

They have shuttered organizations that feed and shelter Nicaraguans. They have closed eight of the country's universities. They have attempted to withdraw from the Organization of American States all while cozying up to Russia. They have even kicked out Mother Teresa's Missionaries of Charity.

Nicaragua is on the path to becoming a totalitarian dictatorship. We often talk about how to respond to crises instead of investing more in prevention. Our RENACER Act, which was signed into law last year, lays out a framework for U.S. policy, but we need to act now.

So if you are confirmed, what steps would you take to mobilize a robust international strategy to prevent the onset of a deeper humanitarian crisis in Nicaragua?

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. Thank you, Senator.

If confirmed, as you point out, we really need to mobilize voices from across the region and around the world to call out the human rights abuses, to call out the undemocratic actions that the government of Daniel Ortega is taking, and we need to call for the immediate release of the 190 political prisoners that you mentioned.

If confirmed, I commit to working with U.N. Human Rights Council, OAS—excuse me—our partners in Europe and Canada, to

seek their voice and their action in the form of sanctions, to join our efforts to highlight the abuses, and to isolate the regime of Daniel Ortega.

The CHAIRMAN. Let me follow up with something that Senator Rubio raised. Our RENACER Act lays out congressional guidance on suspending Nicaragua from the CAFTA–DR trade agreement, and I know it is a powerful tool. Same thing with El Salvador.

But we entered into these agreements with a universal concept of who we were entering into. Nicaragua, certainly, does not fall in that category at this point in time.

What steps will you take to implement what the law says and do you commit to keeping this committee informed on a quarterly basis on the nature of Russia's deepening cooperation with Nicaragua?

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. Yes, Senator.

I commit to keeping the committee informed. In addition, if confirmed, sir, I commit to adding my weight to the full implementation of the RENACER Act, as I mentioned, working with USTR and others on the CAFTA–DR question, continuing to implement the Act in terms of holding officials in Nicaragua accountable for the human rights abuses.

We recently sanctioned another 23 individuals under Section 353 thanks to the RENACER Act. That is a new capacity that we have and we are taking full advantage of it.

Again, Senator, if confirmed, I will work with our interagency colleagues to maximize the pressure both through RENACER and all of the tools that the Senate can——

The CHAIRMAN. I look forward to that. We need a strong voice there.

Mr. Chairman, may I have the indulgence of the chair for another minute?

Senator KAINE. Yes, you may.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Duncan, I was a little surprised at your response to Senator Rubio about President Bukele's popularity. Hitler was popular. Putin is popular in Russia. It does not mean that because a person is popular in their country that, in fact, we do not press extremely hard on violations of human rights and democracy.

Are we agreed on that?

Mr. DUNCAN. We are, indeed, agreed on that, Senator.

The CHAIRMAN. Okay. So we have an increasing challenging situation in El Salvador, one that threatens both the future of democracy in the country and bilateral relations with the United States.

Over the last two years, President Bukele has presided over a number of alarming setbacks for democratic governance: undermining judicial independence, intimidating opposition lawmakers by using security forces to occupy the legislature, negotiating political pacts with gangs, regularly attacking journalists and media outlets.

And in addition to these actions, Bukele has also repeatedly used his network of Twitter trolls to attack and threaten not only government critics within El Salvador but also United States officials, including my colleague in the House of Representatives, Congresswoman Norma Torres.

It is amazing what he is doing, directing against a member of the United States Congress and former Ambassador Jean Manes.

So I want to hear from you. Do you commit to prioritizing these issues in discussions with President Bukele and senior officials within his government?

Mr. DUNCAN. Yes, Senator, I do make that commitment to you, and I must tell you that I think the exchange with—regarding Representative Torres was absolutely unacceptable and I would, certainly, be happy to make that clear to the Salvadoran government.

The CHAIRMAN. What other steps do you believe the United States needs to take to prevent further democratic backsliding in El Salvador?

Mr. DUNCAN. Senator, I think, first of all, I agree with you. There have been a number of developments in El Salvador over the last two years that are concerning when it comes to the strength and the health of El Salvador's democracy.

I think we have made judicious use of the various sanctions tools that Congress has given us to highlight some of those problems, whether it is the removal of the supreme court magistrates in the constitutional chamber, the gang truce that you referred to, or other acts of either corruption or acts that tend to undermine democracy, and I think we need to continue using those tools appropriately, judiciously. But we need to keep using them to send the message that El Salvador's best future lies on the path of democracy.

The CHAIRMAN. All right.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for your indulgence and I will have a series of questions for the record. I do not want the rest of you to think I have no issues for you. I do.

But in deference to my colleagues who are still here, I would like substantive—substantive underlined here—responses to them before I consider putting you on a business meeting agenda.

Thank you very much.

Senator KAINE. Thank you so much.

Senator Portman?

Senator PORTMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Look, it is a complicated political environment and I really appreciate all of you being willing to step up and serve your country. For all of you but one you have been serving your country through Foreign Service and have accomplished a great deal to get to the level that that you are as ambassadors.

But we need your help. I mean, this is discouraging what is going on, Uruguay being the exception, and to the comments by Senator Rubio, I think we do not take advantage of these relatively pro-democracy pro-U.S. center and center right governments enough and do not show them enough love and support, and that is one reason we end up with more difficult situations, as we see in pretty much every other country represented, even with regard to Suriname with regard to their opening to China, which concerns me greatly, and the Belt and Road Initiative.

So that would be—I would echo those concerns and I think we need to redouble our efforts to demonstrate our support for those

countries that are standing up for democracy, human rights, and allied with us.

With regard to El Salvador, I am going to come at this a little differently. On the U.S. border, we are experiencing something unparalleled. We have never seen it before.

We have record levels of people, drugs, coming across the border. We have got three months left in the fiscal year until we know what the final numbers are. Already we are at record levels in the year in the history of our country, and this is based on so-called encounters.

But it is true that El Salvador has been sending people to the United States for a long time, legally and illegally. In fact, I am told that $7 billion in remittances went to El Salvador last year. That is the World Bank figure. That is a quarter of the GDP of El Salvador.

And yet, you have Bukele treating the United States relationship in a way that would indicate that he does not want to cooperate or work with us and yet there is this strong connection. I do not know quite how to use that leverage. But $7 billion in remittances.

One question I would have for you, Mr. Duncan, because you have been at this a while—you have got a lot of experience in Latin America—Title 42 is about to be revoked if the Administration has its way and, roughly, half of the people who are stopped at the border and turn back are turned back because of Title 42. And yet, we have record levels of illegal migration.

So without Title 42 being in place it would be a flood and that is because of our asylum policy, in my view, primarily but it is also other changes that the Administration made.

What do you think about that? Do you think human smugglers and drug cartels will in come from Salvador in increased numbers if Title 42 is revoked at the border?

Mr. DUNCAN. Thank you for the question, Senator.

I am afraid I cannot speak to what the effect of a revocation of Title 42 would be.

Senator PORTMAN. I think you can.

Mr. DUNCAN. Nor can I tell you because I am not involved in the conversations about Title 42. What I can say is that, as you correctly pointed out, we have been seeing irregular migration from Central America.

El Salvador is a part of that. I think they, in the last year or so, have been in fourth place, about 6 percent of the total behind Mexico, Honduras, and Guatemala.

I think if I were confirmed I would be very focused on implementing the Administration's strategy with regard to the root causes of migration. I think democracy needs to be strengthened in El Salvador because I think that is critical to prosperity.

I think we need to keep working with the Salvadorans to strengthen the rule of law and try and reduce crime and violence.

Senator PORTMAN. Yeah, I am just talking—let me interrupt you if I could.

I mean, that is fine. We have spent, I do not know, $3.6 billion in the last five years in Central America with regard to the root causes and the migration has increased, not decreased.

So I am not against dealing with the root causes. But that is not the issue. The issue is the pull factor. We went to Latin America, some of us here, including the chairman recently, and the presidents of the countries we visited—four of them—in Latin America and Central America all said the same thing, basically, which is you guys are pulling our people north with your policies.

So you have a role to play there. You say you cannot speak to it. I hope you will speak to it because I think our own policies are, largely, the reason that you see this pull for the region. And the illicit drugs are not produced in El Salvador but, boy, it is a major transit country for cocaine and heroin, in particular.

So I hope that, if confirmed, you will get involved in these issues and not just the root causes, as important as they are.

The Salvadoran cooperation on counterdrug and anti-gang efforts, I assume you are aware that we do not get the cooperation that we would like to have.

Do you commit that you will work on increasing our level of cooperation in that area?

Mr. DUNCAN. Thank you, Senator. Yes, absolutely.

Counternarcotics has been one of the areas where we have had some success in our collaboration with the Salvadorans and, if confirmed, I would seek to do everything in my power to increase that collaboration.

We have also worked with them and are working with them, I should say, on border intelligence, on alien smuggling. I think those are areas that can even be expanded and that is what I would seek to do, if confirmed.

Senator PORTMAN. I will have other questions in writing for your other colleagues. But, again, thank you all for your willingness to serve.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator KAINE. Thank you, Senator Portman.

Senator Hagerty?

Senator HAGERTY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and congratulations to all of our nominees who are here today. I can think of no greater honor than to represent the greatest nation in the world in the countries that you are seeking to represent the United States of America.

I would like to start with you, Ms. Bond, on the first question to talk about the Chinese Communist Party and its interference, its malign influence, in the Western Hemisphere has grown significantly. Clearly, it has become more visible in the past decade.

Beijing is using its predatory economic behavior to target the region for its commodities and its raw materials. That is the target. I believe we should be doing everything we can to reshore our supply chains back to the United States from China and, as appropriate, to near shore supply chains to friendly countries like those in the Caribbean and in Latin America.

Efforts to support private sector investments in emerging markets are especially critical at this time of strategic global competition with China, and as the United States reshores its supply chains this will create big near shoring opportunities for our friends in this hemisphere.

So I wanted to get your perspective, Ms. Bond, on China's diplomatic and economic engagement in Trinidad and Tobago and how you see that unfolding and the posture you might adopt there.

Ms. BOND. Thank you, Senator, for that question.

Indeed, PRC incursions are happening all over the world and the Caribbean is no exception, nor is Trinidad and Tobago. They were one of the first to join the Road and Belt Initiative.

However, if confirmed as Ambassador, I will do everything in my power to ensure that we are positioned to be the partner of choice to Trinidad and Tobago.

I would be a strong advocate for private sector investment and continue our strong working relationship with Trinidad and Tobago, particularly in safety and security and creating a more level playing field for private investment and U.S. investment in the country.

The United States has been and continues to be one of Trinidad and Tobago's largest markets for LNG exports. It is seventh in the world in terms of LNG exports and it has one of the largest gas liquefaction facilities in the Western Hemisphere with a great deal of institutional knowledge, which I think they can share regionally.

It is also one of the top exporters of urea ammonium nitrate fertilizer and just last week the U.S. International Trade Commission approved the import of this fertilizer, which you know will address issues of agricultural production——

Senator HAGERTY. Certainly.

Ms. BOND.—as well as assist with global food supplies.

So, if confirmed, these are areas that I would continue to work on and continue to bolster trade with the United States and our partners.

Senator HAGERTY. I encourage you to continue to support stronger energy production here in this hemisphere. We are doing everything in this country to reduce energy production right now, much to my chagrin, but I see the opportunity there and I am very pleased to see that you see it as well.

In my home state agriculture is a big industry and pharmaceutical—I am sorry, fertilizer prices are a huge issue as well, compressing margins for farmers and leading to what I think will be a food crisis not only here in America but around the world.

So thank you for your diligence there and I will encourage you to cooperate and coordinate with us here as we begin to deepen our reshoring efforts because I do believe this is a big opportunity in the country that you seek to represent.

Mr. Rodriguez, can I turn to you? If you are confirmed, you are going to be taking on a challenging assignment in the Western Hemisphere.

Both the Trump administration and the Biden administration have imposed numerous financial sanctions against members of the Nicaraguan government, their legislature, their judiciary, and President Ortega's family.

In December of 2021, Nicaragua reestablished diplomatic ties with China and seized control of Taiwan's embassy and diplomatic offices, saying that they belong to China.

The Ortega regime provided Taiwanese diplomats only two weeks to leave Nicaragua. Subsequently, the Nicaraguan govern-

ment signed a cooperation agreement for China's Belt and Road Initiative. That took place in January of 2022.

In June of 2022, the Ortega regime and his rubber stamp congress authorized a limited number of Russian troops, Russian aircraft and ships and weapons to operate on Nicaraguan soil.

This seems to be a renewal and an expansion of the November 2021 authorization for Russian forces to operate there in the country.

Mr. Rodriguez, in your view, what is the most concerning aspect of Nicaragua as it relates to U.S. national security?

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. Thank you, Senator.

Their relationships with both of the countries you mentioned are deeply, deeply concerning. The decision by the government of Nicaragua to leave off recognition of Taiwan in favor of the PRC was deeply lamentable.

The government is depriving the Nicaraguan citizens of a reliably democratic partner in favor of opacity and self-dealing, which is entirely in line with what the government of Nicaragua has been about since 2018.

Their slide towards authoritarianism and away from transparency and rule of law are deeply concerning.

With respect to Russia, Senator, they are, clearly, following the Russian playbook, and with support and guidance from Russia they are drafting and implementing laws. In fact, the foreign agents law in Nicaragua is known locally as Putin's Law. So there is, clearly, deep influence from Russia.

If confirmed, I believe we need to very loudly stand with the Nicaraguan people against anyone who is aligned with Russia or China in stifling the democratic aspirations of the people of Nicaragua and abusing and taking from them their human rights.

Senator HAGERTY. Well said.

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. Thank you.

Senator HAGERTY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will submit the rest of my questions for the record.

Senator KAINE. Thank you, Senator Hagerty.

I have one additional question that I want to direct to Ms. Fulton—an Uruguay question—and it is really more of a kind of a topic than a question, and since you are pro with long experience in the region, I just kind of want to grapple with it.

We are talking an awful lot about problems in the region and there are problems by the boatload, but there is also some real success stories. So Panama, the Dominican Republic, Costa Rica, and Ecuador have come together with the Alliance for Democracy and Development. They have said at a time of democratic backsliding we want to be forward leaning.

But in my conversations with them they have not yet been, I think, impressed with the degree to which the United States want to work with them to succeed. I will say this. There was an agreement signed in the last couple of days focusing on near shoring in the ADD. That can be great.

So Ecuador—we met with the president of Ecuador, President Lasso, a pro-U.S. president, about a year ago, and he said, look, the one thing that can really help us succeed is if the U.S. would con-

template a trade agreement with Ecuador, possibly including Ecuador in the existing trade agreement with Colombia.

We had a hearing yesterday about economic statecraft with State Department witnesses. I asked has there—are we doing anything to follow up on that, and I got a diplomatic answer but I think the answer, really, was no because I am not sure that the Administration really likes trade agreements.

And then we have got this situation where Guyana, which has come through this very difficult time, and I know Guyana is not on the panel today, but they really wanted this IDB loan to develop their energy resources and it was the U.S. that vetoed the loan, which hurts their own economic development and probably also hurts an ability for Guyana to be an important and more stable energy partner in a world marked by too many unstable authoritarian energy partners.

So Uruguay is a model in so many ways. Uruguay is now doing trade agreement—free trade agreements with Turkey and China, and the president has indicated—the president of Uruguay—that it would very much like to do a trade agreement with the U.S. and also with the U.K. but the quote from the president is the U.S. Government, quote, "is not looking south."

It seems to me in a part of the world where we have got a lot of challenges the best thing we could do is take the nations that are favorably inclined to us, that want deeper relationships with us, where the trend lines for democracy are green rather than red—they are going in the right direction—and why not really invest in these nations because they can become examples for others, and if with their entreaties we are not investing in these nations that also sends a message that can be a very debilitating one.

So, I guess, should you be confirmed in Uruguay with the experience you have, with the positive track record that Uruguay has put together, what can we do to really spotlight this relationship and do it in a way that is not only good for Uruguay but sends the message in the region that if you are doing things right the United States is going to be a great partner with you?

Ms. FULTON. Thank you, Senator. I think you have touched on a question that I have, certainly, grappled with and, if confirmed, would look forward to working with you and your staff and other members of this committee to try to find better answers to exactly that question.

I think that if confirmed being an Ambassador not only means representing U.S. policies to the partner to whom I am accredited but it also means representing back the importance and the opportunity—Senator Rubio touched on the importance of thinking strategically about the investments and decisions that we make—we have tremendous challenges in this hemisphere, and I know from my current position we prioritize those with our funding and our resources based on some of the problems that are closer to home and more immediately on fire in front of us.

I, if confirmed, would look forward to being a loud proponent to arguing for strategic investments and seeking additional opportunities, seeking ways to rethink some of the impediments that we have in place and seeking new tools to strengthen a relationship that is with a partner whom, as you have noted, genuinely wants

to work with us and I think the importance of this opportunity should not be understated and it should not be lost.

Senator KAINE. I appreciate that testimony. I think you are right on sort of the human psychology. We tend to focus on the problems and that is natural. But our ability to solve problems in countries with deep problems we have to be very humble about it.

I mean, these are, ultimately, problems that need to be solved within and we can be assets. We can be helpful. But in a region where there are plenty of problems there is also plenty of good that is going on and I just feel like we are, in some instances, kind of ignoring the good or under investing our time where there is good or, in some instances, even taking steps that are counterproductive to allies that are trying to do it the right way.

I just hope we will focus more on some bright spots and try to make them even brighter. That would be my hope, and I think you are very, very well equipped to carry that mission.

Senator Rubio, do you have any additional questions?

Senator Hagerty, additional questions?

[No response.]

Senator KAINE. Listen, I really appreciate this opportunity. It has been a great discussion. Committee members are very, very interested in these countries. We will do all we can to be prompt in moving forward from this point.

I would asked members of the committee should they have questions that they want to submit in writing—a number have indicated that they would—they should submit them by the close of business on July 29th, and I would also ask that each of you, should questions be submitted for you individually, that you try to respond promptly and comprehensively.

And with that, this hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 11:34 a.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

Additional Material Submitted for the Record

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO WILLIAM H. DUNCAN BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Question. In the State Department's 2022 Human Rights report, El Salvador was noted for significant human rights abuses such as unlawful killings, forced disappearances by military personnel, torture or cruel and degrading treatment by security forces, arbitrary arrest and detention, serious problems with the independence of the judiciary, serious restrictions of expression and assembly, inability of the people to change their government peacefully, serious acts of official corruption, criminalization of same-sex conduct, and impunity persisted in the security forces, executive branch, and the justice system.

- What is your assessment of the persistence of these violations?

Answer. I am deeply concerned by the persistent trend of democratic backsliding and growing human rights abuses in El Salvador. Consolidation of power in the executive stymies free expression of ideas and checks-and-balances vital to the democratic process. Preserving civic space and protecting freedom of expression remain imperative tasks for the preservation of democracy and the promotion of human rights.

Question. If confirmed, what actions would you take with host government to address these issues? Do you commit to raising these issues directly with the host government?

Answer. I commit to continually raising these issues directly with the Government of El Salvador, highlighting the importance of respecting democracy and human rights and holding those who commit abuses accountable for their actions. If confirmed, I will work diligently to ensure that journalists and civil society have the space to operate without undue influence from the Government. If confirmed, I will continue to support the appropriate use of all congressionally mandated sanctions authority to combat corruption and undemocratic actions in El Salvador.

Question. In the report, it was noted that while there are no reports of politically motivated killings, there were reports of security forces engaged in extrajudicial killings of suspected gang members. What steps would you take with security forces officials to increase respect of the legal system and limit extrajudicial punishment by security forces?

Answer. If confirmed, I will continue to raise concerns with the central government over the increasing use of military in police operations, as well as concerns over the lack of due process during the State of Exception. I will also continue interagency efforts to train a competent and professional cohort of law enforcement that respects human rights, including through ethics and use of force training. I commit to engaging with central government and municipal authorities to impress upon them the importance of adherence to rule of law. Finally, if confirmed, I will continue to support the appropriate use of all congressionally mandated sanctions and visa restrictions tools to counter corruption and impunity in El Salvador.

Question. The report additionally states that prison conditions remain harsh and threatening due to gross overcrowding, unhygienic conditions, and gang activity as well as a lack of the right to a fair trial through judicial authorities being subject to political, economic, or other corrupting influences.

- How would you encourage the host government on prison authorities to improve prison conditions and reduce gang violence in detention centers?

Answer. If confirmed, I will engage willing and able security and penal sector partners and evaluate where the United States can provide direct support or assistance. I will continue to underscore the unsustainability of the State of Exception and champion adherence to due process and humane prison conditions.

Question. What steps would you take with the host government regarding the judicial system to reduce the level of corruption amongst trial judges?

Answer. Impunity, corruption, and lack of independence among judges are unacceptable. I will engage the Government of El Salvador to underscore the importance of adherence to rule of law from both a human rights and economic growth perspective. If confirmed, I will continue to support the use of congressionally mandated sanctions and visa restrictions authorities to combat corruption within the ranks of trial judges.

Question. Please describe how you would work with various interagency entities like the new Anti-Corruption coordinator to combat corruption in country.

Answer. Corruption remains a top threat to efficacy of democratic governance. The President has made clear that corruption is also a threat to U.S. national security. The U.S. Strategy on Countering Corruption identifies a range of activities that the Administration will undertake around the world and highlights tools that can be utilized, specifically in El Salvador. If confirmed, I will tap into the expertise of all my interagency colleagues, including the Department of the Treasury, Department of Justice, and the State Department's new Coordinator on Global Anti-Corruption to identify corrupt actors and hold them accountable for their actions.

- Working with partners like USAID, I will continue to fight for the preservation of civic space, providing non-governmental organizations and civil society representatives needed opportunities and open dialogue to identify corruption and promote democracy. This must be an interagency effort, and I commit to treating it as such through interagency collaboration and communication.

Question. In the State Department's 2022 Trafficking in Persons report, El Salvador was downgraded to the Tier 2 watch list for not fully meeting the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking. Fewer than half of identified victims received government services, the Government implemented no procedures to identify potential victims or traffickers and did not initiate any investigations, prosecutions, or convictions of officials allegedly complicit in human trafficking crimes. The anti-trafficking council was inactive and did not draft a national anti-trafficking plan, publish a report on government efforts, or compile any data across governmental agencies.

- If confirmed, how could you work with government officials to increase the frequency of providing government services to trafficking victims and number of investigations against traffickers?

Answer. If confirmed, I will encourage the Government of El Salvador to increase specialized services for trafficking victims; implement procedures to proactively identify and refer to service providers victims from at-risk groups—including individuals in commercial sex, children apprehended for illicit gang-related activities, forcibly displaced persons, and irregular migrants returning to El Salvador; strengthen the specialized anti-trafficking prosecution unit; develop a mechanism to enforce payment of court-ordered restitution to victims; allow authorities and the public to refer potential victims directly to government or NGO service providers, without first referring to police or prosecutors; provide reintegration and livelihood support services for victims and extend witness protection services beyond the duration of a trial, particularly for victims who testify against members of organized criminal groups; amend the 2014 anti-trafficking law to include a definition of human trafficking consistent with international law, draft, resource, and implement a new National Action Plan to combat trafficking; develop a case management system to improve data collection, sharing, security, and analysis related to trafficking cases; expand prevention measures, including through raising awareness of fraudulent recruitment for employment in El Salvador and abroad and by holding accountable employers or recruiters who commit fraudulent practices that facilitate trafficking.

Question. How would you engage with the anti-trafficking council to urge it into action in providing a national anti-trafficking plan and reports on governmental efforts?

Answer. If confirmed, I will encourage all relevant authorities to continue to make progress against trafficking in persons in the areas of prosecution, protection, and prevention, including by drafting, allocating resources for, and implementing a new National Action Plan and reporting on government efforts.

Question. In the State Department's 2021 International Religious Freedom report, El Salvador's constitution provides for freedom of religion, many areas are controlled by gangs limiting access religious registration, freedom of movement, and are subject to being engaged by violent acts.

- What actions would you take with the host government to promote government officials carrying out their official duties, primarily in areas most affected by gang violence?

Answer. As Secretary Blinken has said, respect for religious freedom is one of our deepest held values, a fundamental right, and a vital foreign policy priority. If confirmed, I would communicate to the Government, and publicly, our deeply held belief in the importance of religious freedom. I would support efforts to improve the ability of the Salvadoran police to provide citizen security in a climate of respect for the due process of law. If confirmed, I would also work closely with the Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom to develop a plan for constructive engagement with the Government of El Salvador.

Question. US officials in the embassy have attempted to promote religious freedoms and reach followers in gang-controlled territories. What actions would you take to further promote these efforts?

Answer. If confirmed, I would communicate to the Government and publicly that promoting respect for religious freedom is a core part of our foreign policy. I would also support Embassy engagement with faith-based and secular communities throughout El Salvador to ensure we have a comprehensive understanding of the challenges these groups face and how best we can support their right to freedom of religion or belief. In the context of the State of Exception gang crackdown that began in March 2022, a worrying trend has emerged of government officials targeting faith-based institutions, including rehabilitation centers, to arrest former gang members. If confirmed, I will encourage the Government to refrain from such activities which may constrain religious practice and may discourage other gang members from seeking rehabilitative services in order to exit gang life.

Question. The Office of Multilateral Strategy and Personnel (MSP) in the State Department's bureau of International Organizations is leading a whole-of-government effort to identify, recruit, and install qualified, independent personnel at the U.N., including in elections for specialized bodies like the International Telecommunications Union (ITU). There is an American candidate, Doreen Bogdan-Martin, who if elected would be the first American and first woman to lead the ITU.

She is in a tough race that will require early, consistent engagement across capitals and within the U.N. member states.

- If confirmed, do you commit to demarching the El Salvador Government and any other counterparts necessary to encourage their support of Ms. Bogdan-Martin?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to demarching the Government of El Salvador to encourage their support of Ms. Bogdan-Martin.

Question. If confirmed, how can you work with the International Organizations (IO) bureau and other stakeholders to identify, recruit, and install qualified Americans in positions like the Junior Program Officer (JPO) program at the U.N.?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to working closely with the International Organizations (IO) bureau, the Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) bureau, and other stakeholders to identify ways to support qualified Americans in international organizations. I understand PRM funding varies from year to year to sponsor new Junior Program Officer positions with the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), typically in the range of 6 to 10 new posts, and with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), usually one new JPO position annually. If confirmed, I will work with our colleagues inside the U.S. Government and through external partners to explore ways to contribute to this important program.

Question. El Salvador has a low rate of voting coincidence with the U.S. in the U.N. General Assembly and in the Security Council.

- What is your assessment of this issue?

Answer. El Salvador under the Bukele administration has moved farther away from voting coincidence with the United States and many of our key fellow democracies in the Hemisphere and beyond. It perhaps reflects diverging views on issues such as democracy and separation of powers. If confirmed, an important part of my duties will be trying to redress this situation and engage the Government of El Salvador with a perspective that its interests, its crucial relationship with the United States of America, and the interests of the international community are best served by a return to the constructive dialogue and frequent congruence of views the two countries used to enjoy.

Question. If confirmed, what concrete actions can you take to engage with the El Salvadorans on anticipated votes in the U.N. system that would increase their voting coincidence with the U.S.?

Answer. If confirmed, I will engage the Salvadoran Government to impress upon them U.S. views regarding anticipated votes in the U.N. system. This includes ensuring they understand both the substantive reasons underlying U.S. positions and the value the United States places on cooperation with likeminded countries in U.N. fora. The United States is El Salvador's most important international partner, and the two countries should be better aligned in international organizations.

Question. Many U.S. missions have been under enormous stress over the last few years, in large part due to COVID.

- What is your understanding of morale throughout Mission San Salvador?

Answer. My understanding is that morale is high in San Salvador. The interim leaders who have taken the helm since Chargé d'Affaires Manes' departure last year have done a fantastic job at fostering an environment of inclusiveness within the Mission. If confirmed, I will build on my predecessors' work to develop a healthy, happy, and effective community in Mission San Salvador.

Question. How do you intend to improve morale at Mission San Salvador?

Answer. There are several ways to improve morale at our overseas Missions. If confirmed, I will focus on putting people first and encouraging healthy work/life balance. I will work diligently with Deputy Chief of Mission Dueholm to ensure foundational needs, such as healthcare, childcare, and pay issues are met so our community can focus on fulfilling the mission at hand. I will ensure mentoring and professional development opportunities for all staff so they can develop their skills and achieve their individual professional development goals. I will also ensure my colleagues understand their importance in the work we do and why that work matters. People who know they are engaged in meaningful work and understand their leaders care about them as individuals can do amazing things together and enjoy a sense of fulfillment that fosters high morale.

Question. How do you intend to create a unified mission and vision at Mission San Salvador?

Answer. A unified mission and vision can only be achieved when each member of the team knows what they are working toward and knows how their individual role supports the Mission's ultimate goal. If confirmed, I will ensure each member of Mission San Salvador knows our objectives and the actions we will take to reach them. I will foster an environment of openness and acceptance that promotes teamwork and collaboration.

Question. Management is a key responsibility for Chiefs of Mission. How would you describe your management style?

Answer. My management style is collaborative and collegial. I work to ensure the overall goals of the Mission are well understood, and that I in turn understand the individual mission of each agency at post. I actively seek ideas from staff on how we can best accomplish our goals and engage staff in a continuous effort to monitor, evaluate, and learn from what we are doing. I ensure rules regarding ethics, equal employment opportunity, and workplace behavior are understood and enforced. I engage continuously with different offices and agencies to ensure that I am effectively supporting their work. I also seek to mentor and develop subordinates to ensure they can achieve their personal goals and to develop the next generation of senior leaders. I keep a close eye on morale and work to improve it. Finally, I encourage personnel to take time to care for themselves, their families, and their loved ones.

Question. Do you believe it is ever acceptable or constructive to berate subordinates, either in public or private?

Answer. No. Belittling or bullying subordinates is abhorrent to me, and few things are more destructive to individuals or organizations. My colleagues are invaluable to our success in advancing the shared interests of the United States with foreign partners. I am dedicated to mentoring and developing the leadership and operational skills needed on our team to help each individual contribute their maximum potential to advancing our mission.

Question. How do you envision your leadership relationship with your Deputy Chief of Mission?

Answer. As a former DCM, I can attest to the enormous responsibility a deputy carries in their role and the indispensable value of working in tandem with the Chief of Mission to execute U.S. policy. If confirmed, I will forge a joint leadership team with the DCM as my full partner in all our work. The DCM is vital to successful development of U.S. policy, strategy, outreach, management of U.S. taxpayer resources, and our workforce—the lifeblood of diplomacy and U.S. relationships with sovereign nations. A strong partnership between the Chief and Deputy Chief of Mission is essential to advancing a common vision across the entire Country Team.

Question. If confirmed, what leadership responsibilities do you intend to entrust to your Deputy Chief of Mission?

Answer. The DCMs are our first line of response to all section heads and agency leaders at our posts. If confirmed, I will entrust my deputy to advise our leaders across the mission, develop our newest employees' talents, and help our team rise to the challenges they face daily in their work for the American people. I would depend on the DCM's wise counsel in managing the Embassy team, U.S. resources, and executing policy objectives. Ultimate responsibility for the mission and all its work will fall to me, if confirmed, but I will rely on the DCM to ensure our team is empowered to present the best advice, analysis, and proposed courses of action possible.

Question. In order to create and continue employee excellence at the Department, accurate and direct employee evaluation reports (EERs) for Foreign Service Officers are imperative, though often lacking.

- Do you believe that it is important to provide employees with accurate, constructive feedback on their performances in order to encourage improvement and reward those who most succeeded in their roles?

Answer. Yes. As a Deputy Chief of Mission and Principal Officer, my most important work in developing the U.S. mission was investing in the capabilities and capacities of our team. I met regularly with our local staff, our newest officers and specialists, our mid-level professionals, and our senior leaders to share lessons I have accumulated over a career in challenging environments. From time to time, all of us need constructive feedback to meet our full potential. Providing this guidance is an essential duty of mission leaders. Recognizing and rewarding our outstanding employees' work is a powerful means of boosting morale in difficult circumstances, showing our team the value of the work we do and of the people who do it. If con-

firmed, I will ensure employees have the guidance they need to succeed in their work and recognition for their dedicated work.

Question. If confirmed, would you support and encourage clear, accurate, and direct feedback to employees in order to improve performance and reward high achievers?

Answer. Yes. In addition to providing accurate, timely, and constructive feedback to employees on their performance and encouraging other supervisors in the Mission to do likewise, the Department of State awards program is an important tool to recognize top performers and to highlight the sort of work we should all strive to emulate.

Question. It is imperative that U.S. diplomats get outside of posts abroad to meet with local actors, including host government officials, non-government organizations, and fellow foreign diplomats stationed in El Salvador.

- In your opinion, do U.S. diplomats get outside of our embassy walls enough to accomplish fully their missions?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to working with our professional Diplomatic Security colleagues, our Emergency Action Committee, and the Country Team to appropriately balance our safety and security obligations while meeting the full spectrum of our duties to meet with our counterparts and the people of El Salvador and develop meaningful ties across the country.

Question. How do you intend to improve the ability of U.S. diplomats to better access all local populations?

Answer. I will ensure our diplomats understand the importance of accessing all local populations and are given the time and tools to get out of their offices and conduct that engagement regularly. I will also set a personal example by engaging the broadest possible range of Salvadoran society. I will work with our Diplomatic Security experts to ensure we are fully aware of risks and are managing and mitigating those risks prudently. This will facilitate our diplomats' engagement with local populations.

Question. Public diplomacy is an important aspect of U.S. foreign policy efforts.

- What is the public diplomacy environment like in El Salvador?

Answer. Public diplomacy is a unique challenge in El Salvador. The Bukele administration's recently enacted law criminalizing reporting on gang activities has had a noticeable chilling effect on the local independent media. Additionally, several journalists have reported their phones being hacked, confirmed by Citizen Lab researchers as Pegasus attacks. These specific events, along with the Administration's vast network of disinformation experts, has created an austere environment for public diplomacy.

Question. What public diplomacy challenges do U.S. diplomats face there?

Answer. U.S. diplomats face myriad unique public diplomacy challenges in El Salvador. Two of the top challenges are combatting the spread of official disinformation through conventional reporting or on social media and addressing fears of reprisal for speaking negatively of the Administration.

Mission San Salvador's Public Affairs Section advances U.S. foreign policy priorities by polling the local populace and developing pointed messaging campaigns. With strong ties between the two nations, including roughly 2.5 million Salvadorans living in the United States, Salvadorans hold a generally favorable view of the United States and are receptive to Mission San Salvador messaging.

Question. How do you balance the importance of Main State versus the in-country mission when it comes to tailoring public diplomacy messages for foreign audiences?

Answer. Public messaging takes a coordinated effort from Washington and our foreign missions. Main State policy objectives must be tailored to host-nation contexts. If confirmed, I will provide Main State with a comprehensive ground-level view of the situation in El Salvador and provide recommendations for nuanced messaging that best reaches the local population.

If confirmed, I will work closely with interagency counterparts and Main State to use the proper tools and channels to promote a unified voice.

Question. "Anomalous health incidents," commonly referred to as "Havana Syndrome," have been debilitating and sidelining U.S. diplomats around the world for years. They have caused serious, negative consequences for U.S. diplomacy, yet many believe that the Department is not doing enough to care for, protect, and communicate to its personnel.

• If confirmed, do you commit to taking this threat seriously?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to taking the "Havana Syndrome" threat seriously. I have already attended classified and unclassified briefings on AHI, including a briefing from the Coordinator of the Department of State's Health Incident Response Task Force (HIRTF). I have no higher priority than the health and security of the people with whom I serve. Secretary Blinken prioritizes the Department's response to AHIs, setting clear goals for the HIRTF to strengthen the Department's communication with its workforce and providing care for affected employees and family members.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to talking as openly as you can to Mission San Salvador personnel?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to engaging Mission San Salvador personnel regularly, frequently, and openly both individually and collectively. Effective communication is key to successful leadership.

* * *

FOLLOW UP QUESTION SUBMITTED TO
WILLIAM H. DUNCAN BY SENATOR RISCH

Question. Please provide an assessment of whether the regulatory framework applicable to the use of Bitcoin as legal tender in El Salvador meets the requirements of the Financial Action Task Force with respect to virtual-asset transactions.

Answer. While a country's adoption of private digital assets, including cryptocurrencies, as legal tender is a sovereign decision, we encourage governments exploring the adoption or promotion of these assets to abide by applicable legal and regulatory recommendations and international standards, such as those set out by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF). Such compliance and adherence to international standards is critical to maintaining public trust in the financial system and ensuring safety and stability, transparency, integrity, operational efficiency, and equitable access while mitigating illicit financing risks. All completed FATF mutual evaluations are publicly available on the FATF's website; however, the FATF has not yet reviewed the regulatory framework regarding El Salvador's adoption of bitcoin. I would also refer you to the Department of Treasury as head of delegation to the FATF and FATF-style regional bodies for specifics.

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RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO WILLIAM H. DUNCAN BY SENATOR MARCO RUBIO

Question. It should be clear to everyone in this administration that the Chinese Communist Party is the most comprehensive military, economic and political threat our nation faces today. Right now, in Latin America and the Caribbean, it is working to undermine our interests and our allies, whether that's by supplying the fentanyl smuggled across our open border or assisting dictators that continue to drive people to emigrate to the U.S.

• Is the Chinese Communist Party a threat to the United States?

Answer. The President has made it clear the United States views the People's Republic of China (PRC) as a strategic competitor that challenges the existing rules-based international order. PRC and Chinese Communist Party activities represent a challenge to U.S. interests in the region, particularly in terms of investments in critical infrastructure and sensitive sectors such as transportation facilities and telecommunication projects.

As Secretary Blinken said on May 26, we will invest, align, and compete with the PRC to defend our interests and build our vision for the future. If confirmed, I will invest in our partnership with El Salvador; highlight the risks associated with PRC engagement that could impact El Salvador's security, sovereignty, international standing, and U.S. interests; and ensure that our vision of a partnership that promotes human rights, regional security, and prosperity competes successfully with the PRC.

Question. If confirmed, what will you do to stop the expansion of the CCP's influence in El Salvador?

Answer. If confirmed, I will invest in our partnership with El Salvador; highlight the risks associated with PRC engagement that could impact El Salvador's security, sovereignty, international standing, and U.S. interests; and ensure that our vision of a partnership that promotes human rights, regional security, and prosperity competes successfully with the PRC. If confirmed, I will raise with Government of El Salvador and private sector interlocutors concerns over PRC infrastructure projects with inadequate labor and environmental standards, which undermine workers' rights under domestic law and, more generally, international labor standards. I will also stress to the Salvadoran Government and communicate to the Salvadoran people the problematic tactics used by the PRC in international engagements, as witnessed in other countries in the Hemisphere.

Question. For years, the United States has developed regional strategies that guide our policy towards Central America, including El Salvador. Although our relations remain with El Salvador, they aren't as strong as at the beginning of Bukele's Administration. Over the years, President Bukele has increasingly embraced Russia and the Chinese Communist Party. For example, in the last several United Nations votes condemning Putin's invasion of Ukraine, El Salvador has abstained rather than vote with the U.S. and its allies.

- What are the reasons for this breakdown in relations with El Salvador?

Answer. Continued instances of democratic backsliding and challenges to the rule of law by the Government of El Salvador over the past few years, including entering the Legislative Assembly with armed police and soldiers, the removal of the top five justices of the Supreme Court, and actions taken under the State of Exception, have strained our bilateral relationship. If confirmed, I commit to engaging the Government of El Salvador from a place of respect for their sovereignty, while maintaining a firm condemnation of antidemocratic actions, impunity, and attacks on civil liberties and human rights. I will continue to support the appropriate use of congressionally mandated sanction authorities to discourage corruption in El Salvador.

Despite these difficulties in our bilateral relationship, if confirmed, I will continue to cooperate with El Salvador where possible and appropriate on security issues, working for instance to strengthen and professionalize police services. At the same time, I would strive to identify opportunities for economic investment, combatting corruption and impunity, and growing the economy to benefit Salvadorans and address the root causes of migration.

Question. Can you provide the committee with a general view of El Salvador's existing relations with China? How about with Russia?

Answer. El Salvador deepened its ties with the PRC since officially recognizing Beijing in 2018, including through agreements to develop various infrastructure projects. Through the Confucius Institute, the PRC has taken aim at developing cultural ties with Latin America. While not as economically influential as the PRC, Russia's influence in the region has revealed itself through authoritarian tendencies, such as the currently shelved Foreign Agent's law. Additionally, El Salvador's failure to join resolutions on Ukraine in the OAS and U.N. show a potential sympathetic approach to Russian policy. Central America's geographic proximity to the United States offers an enticing location for nefarious Russian and PRC intelligence actors and activities.

Question. Mr. Duncan, if confirmed, part of your job will consist of reinforcing our current ties with the Bukele administration. What are your top three priorities, if confirmed?

Answer. If confirmed, in addition to protecting U.S. citizens, I will prioritize our engagement with El Salvador on fighting corruption and impunity, strengthening democratic institutions that protect civil liberties, and promoting inclusive economic growth and opportunities for all Salvadorans to address the root causes of irregular migration.

Question. El Salvador has historically been both a major source and transit point of illegal immigration to the United States. During the Trump administration, the U.S. Government reduced assistance to Bukele's Government until they demonstrated that they were enforcing El Salvador's laws on immigration. The Biden administration is taking a different approach by requesting increased funding for foreign assistance to El Salvador under its "Strategy to Address the Root Causes of Migration."

- Is the Bukele Government enforcing its own national laws to prevent pass-through migration and prevent illegal immigration?

Answer. The Bukele administration has routinely supported U.S. efforts to reduce irregular migration in the region. While DHS reports record numbers of Salvadoran encounters in FY 2022, the Government of El Salvador continues to accept three repatriation flights per week, meeting current DHS needs. Additionally, the Government of El Salvador remains a staunch supporter and participant in the Biden administration's robust H-2 visa program, providing Salvadorans a legal alternative to irregular migration.

As the host of the Grupo Conjunto Inteligencia Fronteriza (GCIF), a regional border intelligence and collaboration center, the Government of El Salvador plays a role in improving regional awareness of cross-border criminal elements, including human smuggling, to help inform law enforcement responses. Furthermore, through INL-supported law enforcement vetted units, including the HSI-supported Transnational Criminal Investigative Unit (TCIU), El Salvador successfully investigates and disrupts transnational human smuggling and trafficking networks with assistance from the United States and other nations.

If confirmed, I will continue to work with the Government of El Salvador to address the root causes of irregular migration.

Question. How is the Biden administration's strategy not simply rewarding the bad behavior of a government that continues to not work with the U.S. in preventing illegal immigration?

Answer. The U.S. Strategy to Address the Root Causes of Migration prioritizes expanding broad-based economic growth, strengthening democratic governance and the rule of law, promoting human rights, improving citizen security, and reducing gender-based violence. Through diplomatic engagement, we seek to have El Salvador undertake reforms necessary to improve conditions such that Salvadorans can build the futures they want in their communities. Our foreign assistance programs support those efforts. If confirmed, I would continue to push for the Salvadoran Government to implement necessary reforms in support of these efforts.

U.S. Government foreign assistance funding is not handed over to partner governments to use as they see fit. The Department of State and USAID work with a variety of implementing partners beyond the governments, including civil society and international organizations, to implement assistance programs focused on anticorruption, transparency, responsive governance, and respect for human rights.

Question. Given the Bukele Government's decision to adopt bitcoin as a national currency and other questionable fiscal decisions, are you confident that his Government can manage U.S. foreign assistance it receives in an accountable way?

Answer. U.S. Government foreign assistance funding does not go to the Salvadoran Government to manage. The Department of State and USAID work with a variety of implementing partners beyond the Government, including civil society and international organizations, to implement assistance programs focused on anticorruption, transparency, responsive governance, and respect for human rights. When we do partner with the Government of El Salvador, a great part of such assistance is non-monetary and provided through technical assistance to government institutions to improve their capacity and effectiveness.

If confirmed, I will ensure we maintain strict oversight of our programs and report regularly on our efforts to Congress.

Question. I believe it is important that our regional approach continues to include respect for democratic institutions, the rule of law, and the defense of human rights. El Salvador's democracy faces a number of challenges from irregular migration, the recovery from the COVID pandemic, and corruption.

- If confirmed, how will you work to address these challenges?

Answer. If confirmed, I would advocate for stronger democratic institutions, respect for human rights, and adherence to the rule of law emphasizing the need for comprehensive solutions to systemic problems. A strong and vibrant democracy lays the foundation for long-term stability and economic opportunity necessary to reduce irregular migration. I would use the full scope of diplomatic and foreign assistance tools to work with Salvadorans to strengthen democratic institutions, increase respect for the rule of law, defend human rights, with a focus on protecting civil society and freedom of expression.

Question. Do you agree with the decision made by the Biden administration to reprogram USAID's assistance for the Salvadorian Attorney General's office to civil society groups? Why?

Answer. Recent decisions by the Bukele administration have undermined the legitimacy and reliability of certain institutions, including the office of the Attorney General. If confirmed, I would support actions that shift assistance to civil society as a more efficient and effective use of taxpayer dollars, and that send a signal that legitimacy is a crucial element of success in strengthening institutions.

Question. Some members of Congress have called for the removal of El Salvador from the CAFTA-DR agreement in order to compel greater respect for democracy and human rights.

- What are your views on the consequences of that action if it was to happen?

Answer. CAFTA-DR remains critical to creating a stable economic environment in Central America and opportunities for the people of the region. The agreement has benefited U.S. businesses and Salvadorans.

If confirmed, I will work to encourage greater respect for democracy and human rights in El Salvador and to promote the rule of law and an improved investment climate in line with CAFTA-DR.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO HUGO F. RODRIGUEZ, JR. BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Question. In the State Department's 2022 Human Rights report, Nicaragua is noted for numerous human abuses. The Ortega regime has taken no steps to identify, investigate, prosecute, or punish officials who committed these violations. There was no action to address widespread government corruption, and President Ortega actively strengthened impunity among human rights abusers who demonstrated loyalty to him. Corruption and flagrant human rights abuse remains pervasive among government entities. If confirmed, what actions would you take with host government to address these issues?

Answer. President Ortega and Vice President Murillo and their collaborators continue to commit human rights abuses against the people of Nicaragua. The United States remains open to frank discussions on steps to return to democracy and respect for human rights in Nicaragua, but the Ortega-Murillo regime has not shown interest in a genuine dialogue. If confirmed, I would work with relevant stakeholders to use the economic and diplomatic tools at our disposal, including bilateral and multilateral engagement, sanctions, and visa restrictions, as appropriate, to support Nicaraguans' calls for democracy and justice and to promote accountability for those who carry out or are complicit in abuses. I would also work with international partners, to include in the OAS and the U.N. Human Rights Council, to support resolutions and statements on the situation in Nicaragua, addressing attacks on democracy and human rights and supporting those who protect and defend those principles. I would facilitate the work of the group of human rights experts on Nicaragua, established by the March 2022 U.N. Human Rights Council resolution on the promotion and protection of human rights in Nicaragua.

Question. What steps would you take amongst civil society groups and international organizations to help bolster civil society of Nicaragua from the Ortega regime?

Answer. If confirmed, I would support the Nicaraguan people in their efforts to recover their democracy, support a free and independent press, and promote the rule of law and respect for human rights. I would ensure that U.S. assistance programs effectively support Nicaraguan partners, including civil society groups, human rights defenders, faith-based organizations, journalists, and social movements working within and outside of Nicaragua. If confirmed, I would also work with the U.N. Human Rights Council, the European Union, Canada, the United Kingdom, the Organization of American States, and other international partners to continue to speak out clearly in defense of democracy and human rights in Nicaragua.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to raising these serious issues directly with the Ortega regime?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to maintaining communication with the regime on a range of issues of importance to the United States and to seek out new opportunities for dialogue. So far, the Ortega-Murillo regime has not shown interest in a genuine dialogue on human rights, democracy, or other U.S. priorities. Nevertheless, I commit to continuing to raise these issues directly with the regime.

Question. In the State Department's 2022 Trafficking in Persons report, Nicaragua remained Tier 3 for not fully meeting the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking and is not making any significant efforts to do so. The Government continues to downplay the severity of the trafficking problem and contradicts civil society reports of an increase in cases throughout the pandemic. If confirmed, how could you work with civil society and government entities to improve reporting, victim services, and overall anti-trafficking work?

Answer. If confirmed, I would urge the Nicaraguan Government to work towards completing the prioritized recommendations as laid out in the 2022 Trafficking in Persons Report, including to increase efforts to identify trafficking victims. I would also support NGO partners seeking to provide trafficking victims with care and reintegration services, as well as those civil society groups that call on the Nicaraguan Government to respect the rule of law and human rights and to return to democracy.

Question. In the State Department's 2021 International Religious Freedom report, while Nicaragua's constitution prohibits discrimination on basis of religion, the president threatens, harasses, and routinely violates religious freedoms against any religious organizations not demonstrating loyalty to his regime. Attempts by embassy officials to reach out to the Government have been unsuccessful. If confirmed, what actions could you take to encourage the host government to bring government officials to engage with US officials to promote religious freedoms?

Answer. The Nicaraguan Government continues to undermine religious freedom, and we remain concerned about individuals and groups closely associated with the Government, as well as government officials themselves, continuing to harass, insult, and make death threats against Catholic clergy. If confirmed, I would call on the Nicaraguan Government to promote and guarantee the safety of religious leaders and worshippers along with the security of all places of worship in Nicaragua. I would also work closely with the office of the Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom to strongly press the Nicaraguan Government to engage in constructive dialogue on promoting respect for religious freedom.

Question. US officials have been able to engage with a variety of religious leaders in the country, how would you further these efforts to facilitate discussion on religious tolerance and freedom?

Answer. If confirmed, I would continue to engage with a variety of religious leaders in Nicaragua to better understand their concerns and the threats against them. Given the threats by the Ortega-Murillo regime and its supporters against the Catholic Church, if confirmed, I would take steps to ensure that any discussion with religious leaders on religious tolerance and freedom were carried out in a way that does not put them at greater risk of government harassment and repression.

Question. The Office of Multilateral Strategy and Personnel (MSP) in the State Department's bureau of International Organizations is leading a whole-of-government effort to identify, recruit, and install qualified, independent personnel at the U.N., including in elections for specialized bodies like the International Telecommunications Union (ITU). There is an American candidate, Doreen Bogdan-Martin, who if elected would be the first American and first woman to lead the ITU. She is in a tough race that will require early, consistent engagement across capitals and within the U.N. member states. If confirmed, do you commit to demarching the Nicaraguan Government and any other counterparts necessary to encourage their support of Ms. Bogdan-Martin?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to demarching the Nicaraguan Government to encourage their support of Ms. Bogdan-Martin.

Question. If confirmed, how can you work with the International Organizations (IO) bureau and other stakeholders to identify, recruit, and install qualified Americans in positions like the Junior Program Officer (JPO) program at the U.N.?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to working closely with the International Organizations (IO) bureau, the Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) bureau, and other stakeholders to identify ways to support qualified Americans in international organizations. I understand PRM funding varies from year to year to sponsor new Junior Program Officer (JPO) positions with the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), typically in the range of 6 to 10 new posts, and with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), usually 1 new JPO position annually. If confirmed, I will work with our colleagues inside the U.S. Government and through external partners to explore ways to contribute to this important program.

Question. Nicaragua has one of the lowest rates of voting coincidence with the U.S. in the U.N. General Assembly and in the Security Council. What is your assessment of this issue?

Answer. While we maintain a range of bilateral communication with the Ortega-Murillo regime, it has repeatedly taken actions inconsistent with our hemisphere's commitment to democracy and has chosen to isolate itself. The Ortega-Murillo regime has gone to great length to align itself with authoritarian leaders in countries such as Russia and the PRC to stifle the democratic aspirations of its people, which accounts for its low rate of voting coincidence with the United States.

Question. If confirmed, what concrete actions can you take to engage with the Nicaraguans on anticipated votes in the U.N. system that would increase their voting coincidence with the U.S.?

Answer. If confirmed, I would work with the International Organizations (IO) bureau to identify opportunities to demarche the Nicaraguan Government when appropriate and to identify interlocutors with credibility within the regime we can enlist to persuade the Government to vote with the United States in the U.N. system.

Question. Many U.S. missions have been under enormous stress over the last few years, in large part due to COVID. What is your understanding of morale throughout Mission Managua?

Answer. Mission Managua operates under a variety of constraints due to tension in our bilateral relationship over democracy and human rights issues. Due to ongoing repression, many Nicaraguans who would normally welcome engagement with the Embassy are afraid to meet with U.S. officials. Travel in and out of Nicaragua has been expensive and especially cumbersome due to unusual requirements established for airlines by the Nicaraguan Government. The Nicaraguan government's decision to not reveal real statistics regarding the pandemic's trends and impacts made managing COVID especially challenging for Mission Managua. Nonetheless, Mission morale remains high and thanks to the deep commitment of our staff to promoting peaceful, democratic change, to protecting American citizens, and to defending other essential U.S. interests. Post management has worked with the Community Liaison Office to create opportunities for our Mission personnel and their families to manage stress and build a strong community.

Question. How do you intend to improve morale at Mission Managua?

Answer. If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with each member of the Embassy Managua team—to understand the skills they bring to our mission and ensure they understand how their role supports our strategic objectives. In previous postings, I have had considerable success building trust and strong connections with my team members, and teaching supervisors how to do the same with their direct reports. Through active listening and constant communication, we have been able to empower employees to achieve great outcomes, while also establishing a solid sense of how people are doing—an early-warning system for potential morale challenges. Working with my Deputy Chief of Mission, I intend to prioritize morale throughout the Mission: a happy team is a creative, energized, and productive team. I will also work with Bureau and Department leadership to convey their support for Embassy Managua's hard work in difficult circumstances.

Question. How do you intend to create a unified mission and vision at Mission Managua?

Answer. If confirmed, I intend to ensure every team member at Embassy Managua understands how his or her work connects to our mission: promoting accountability for the regime and its enablers who have undermined democracy and violated the human rights of Nicaraguans. I will communicate our operational priorities and our strategic vision continuously, in individual meetings with team members, in Country Team meetings and town halls, and in my policy speeches. Further, if confirmed I will ensure the Embassy Managua team understands the broader goals of the Biden-Harris Administration and the Department, and how their work contributes to that effort.

Question. Management is a key responsibility for Chiefs of Mission. How would you describe your management style?

Answer. My management style closely aligns with the Servant Leadership model, and I am a trained executive coach and long-time mentor. I start by building trust through regular one-on-one meetings with individual team members, aimed at opening communications, reducing barriers, and getting to know employees' strengths and aspirations. With these connections and understanding, I can offer support as my employees tackle challenges, and I can target professional development opportu-

nities where they will have the greatest impact. Trust also creates space for empowerment and an atmosphere of candor, generally allowing me to recognize and address performance or personnel issues early, when they are easier to solve with simple course corrections. I teach my supervisors and team leaders this model and hold them accountable for building the same trust-based atmosphere with their direct reports.

Question. Do you believe it is ever acceptable or constructive to berate subordinates, either in public or private?

Answer. No, it is never acceptable or constructive to berate subordinates, either in public or private. If confirmed, I would treat all colleagues with respect and civility, as I have done throughout my professional career.

Question. How do you envision your leadership relationship with your Deputy Chief of Mission?

Answer. Over the last several years, I have had the honor of being involved in the selection of the DCMs and Principal Officers chosen to serve across the Western Hemisphere. These men and women bring a wealth of experience and talents to these leadership jobs. If confirmed, my leadership relationship with my Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM) would be close, collegial, and collaborative, based on trust and continuous communication. As a one-time DCM myself, I valued the Ambassador's trust and the benefit of his experience in my own professional development. With respect to my DCM, I hope to work closely to understand her strengths and then divide up responsibilities with an eye to preparing her to lead her own Mission as an Ambassador in the not-too-distant future.

Question. If confirmed, what leadership responsibilities do you intend to entrust to your Deputy Chief of Mission?

Answer. Embassy Managua will be blessed to have a DCM with deep previous experience in operations and talent management, as well as significant time as Acting DCM in two previous postings. If confirmed, I currently envision my DCM taking the lead in the day-to-day management of the Mission, but I also hope to keep her involved in policy-making decisions. She is a gifted diplomat, and in my absence, I want her to be prepared and empowered to run the Mission (and run her own Embassy in the future).

Question. In order to create and continue employee excellence at the Department, accurate and direct employee evaluation reports (EERs) for Foreign Service Officers are imperative, though often lacking. Do you believe that it is important to provide employees with accurate, constructive feedback on their performances in order to encourage improvement and reward those who most succeeded in their roles?

Answer. Yes. I believe it is critical to provide employees with accurate, constructive, and timely feedback on their performance, including but beyond the EER process. This empowers employees to take action in areas in which they need to develop and to continue practices at which they excel. Professional development, along with recognizing and rewarding employee successes, also contributes to morale and retention efforts.

Question. If confirmed, would you support and encourage clear, accurate, and direct feedback to employees in order to improve performance and reward high achievers?

Answer. If confirmed, I would support and encourage clear, accurate, and direct feedback to employees to improve performance and reward high achievers. If confirmed, I would adopt this approach with those I supervise and set this expectation for all managers throughout the Embassy.

Question. It is imperative that U.S. diplomats get outside of posts abroad to meet with local actors, including host government officials, non-government organizations, and fellow foreign diplomats stationed in Nicaragua. In your opinion, do U.S. diplomats get outside of our embassy walls enough to accomplish fully their missions?

Answer. U.S. diplomats in Nicaragua actively engage with actors across Nicaraguan society and with international partners to advance U.S. priorities in Nicaragua. They face unique challenges given the Ortega-Murillo regime's rapid closure of civic space, repression of any dissenting voices, and surveillance and harassment of key civil society activists and political and business leaders. The Embassy must balance the benefits of in-person meetings with contacts and the risks such meetings pose to the contacts themselves. But our officers have found ways to overcome these challenges to maintain key relationships and keep their fingers on the pulse of the country.

Question. How do you intend to improve the ability of U.S. diplomats to better access all local populations?

Answer. If confirmed, I would support Embassy staff in their efforts to access all local populations in ways that do not pose a threat to the Nicaraguans with whom they are in contact. I would encourage my staff to communicate with Nicaraguan contacts who still reside in the country as well as those in exile, and to find creative ways to build contact bases.

Question. Public diplomacy is an important aspect of U.S. foreign policy efforts. What is the public diplomacy environment like in the Nicaragua?

Answer. The public diplomacy environment in Nicaragua presents a significant challenge to our Mission, given the regime continues to close the few remaining democratic spaces. Nicaragua's Foreign Agents Law limits regular foreign assistance funding to local civil society organizations. The Nicaraguan regime closed more than 1,000 NGOs in 2022 alone, which includes some of our implementing partners on the ground. Despite these challenges, U.S. Embassy Managua manages robust public diplomacy efforts to maintain engagement with the Nicaraguan public, build strong relationships with civil society, and support the Nicaraguan people through active English language programs, support for independent journalists, and professional exchange programs.

Question. What public diplomacy challenges do U.S. diplomats face there?

Answer. U.S. diplomats in Nicaragua face challenges in combatting Ortega-Murillo regime disinformation. The Ortega-Murillo regime attempts to consolidate its control over Nicaraguan media and civil society by imprisoning journalists, forcing them into exile, and shutting down most of the independent media outlets. In 2020, the Nicaraguan regime passed a Foreign Agents Act, sometimes referred to as "Putin's Law," which actively prevents local civil society from receiving foreign assistance, a standard and critical role of Public Affairs Sections in the field. Finally, harassment of U.S. exchange program participants continues. Participants risk bullying at the airport and even confiscation of their passports.

Question. How do you balance the importance of Main State versus the in-country mission when it comes to tailoring public diplomacy messages for foreign audiences?

Answer. Through constant discussion and collaboration, we speak with a unified voice across all levels of the Department—from Washington to the field. If confirmed, I will continue to advocate in support of human rights, democracy, and those who courageously work to protect and defend these principles. The Embassy makes great efforts to protect the identity and wellbeing of the victims of human rights abuses, as well as to preserve the ability to continue its work to promote human rights and fundamental freedoms. The Department also coordinates closely with Embassy Managua to ensure unified messages that advance U.S. public diplomacy goals in Nicaragua.

Question. "Anomalous health incidents," commonly referred to as "Havana Syndrome," have been debilitating and sidelining U.S. diplomats around the world for years. They have caused serious, negative consequences for U.S. diplomacy, yet many believe that the Department is not doing enough to care for, protect, and communicate to its personnel. If confirmed, do you commit to taking this threat seriously?

Answer. Yes. I take nothing more seriously than the well-being and security of the people who work with me. The interagency community continues its examination of a range of hypotheses. Secretary Blinken has prioritized the Department's response to AHIs, setting clear goals for the Health Incident Response Task Force to strengthen the Department's communication with its workforce and providing care for affected employees and family members.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to talking as openly as you can to Mission Managua personnel?

Answer. Yes. If confirmed, I will take nothing more seriously than the health and security of the people working at U.S. Embassy Managua and commit to regularly talking as openly as possible to Mission personnel.

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FOLLOW UP QUESTIONS SUBMITTED TO
HUGO F.RODRIGUEZ, JR. BY SENATOR RISCH

Question. In November, the Ortega regime lifted visa requirements for Cuban nationals, in what appears to be an effort to weaponize illegal migration into the United States. In your opinion, do such measures present a national security risk for the United States?

Answer. The United States is deeply concerned about increased irregular Cuban migration via Nicaragua following the Ortega-Murillo regime's elimination of visa requirements for Cuban citizens. We have seen a dramatic increase in the numbers of Cuban irregular migrants crossing the border from Nicaragua to Honduras with the intention of continuing to and irregularly entering the United States. This land route is a dangerous path for migrants seeking a better life. Irregular migration and forced exile put migrants in dire humanitarian situations and affect our entire hemisphere. The United States and the broader region all share an interest in sustainable solutions that humanely reduce irregular migration and forced exile in, from, and through the region.

Question. Is it in the interest of the United States for Nicaragua to continue to receive benefits under the Dominican Republic-Central America-United States Free Trade Agreement? Please explain.

Answer. The CAFTA-DR remains critical to creating a stable economic environment in Central America and opportunities for the people of the region. The Nicaraguan people have endured significant hardships under Ortega and Murillo, including deteriorating economic and social conditions since the regime began its crackdown in April 2018. In light of the dramatic deterioration of respect for democratic principles in Nicaragua, the United States has taken a number of actions, including withholding support for Nicaraguan government participation in trade capacity-building and technical assistance initiatives and not allocating Nicaragua a sugar tariff-rate quota for 2023. If confirmed, I would support efforts to review the implications of Nicaragua's continued participation in CAFTA-DR.

Question. If confirmed, would you support a detailed investigation of the assets and holdings of the Nicaraguan Armed Forces in the United States and consider appropriate actions to hold it accountable for gross violations of human rights?

Answer. If confirmed, I would support a detailed investigation of the assets and holdings of the Nicaraguan Armed Forces in the United States, consistent with applicable law. The United States has already taken steps to promote accountability for the Nicaraguan Armed Forces' role in the Ortega-Murillo regime's repression, imposing sanctions on key members of the Nicaraguan military. On January 10, the U.S. Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) designated six individuals pursuant to Executive Order 13851, three of whom are associated with the Nicaraguan Army and the Military Social Welfare Institute (IPSM), the Nicaraguan Army's public investment fund. OFAC's press release accompanying these sanctions recognized that the Nicaraguan Army not only refused to order the dismantling of paramilitary or "parapolice" forces during and after political uprisings, but the military also provided weapons to the parapolice who carried out numerous acts of violence against the Nicaraguan people.

Question. If confirmed, would you support using the tools available under Section 5 of the Nicaragua Human Rights and Anticorruption Act of 2018 (NHRAA) and Executive Order 13851 to target Ortega's Ministry of Governance (Ministerio de Gobernacion) and the National Penitentiary System as institutions directly involved in violations of internationally-recognized human rights in Nicaragua?

Answer. If confirmed, I would support using the diplomatic and economic tools at our disposal to promote accountability for the Ortega-Murillo regime's repression and human rights abuses. I would work with the embassy team, staff in Washington, and interagency colleagues to consider the appropriateness of applying the tools in the law formerly known as the Nicaragua Human Rights and Anticorruption Act of 2018 and Executive Order 13851 to the abuses of the Ministry of Governance and the National Penitentiary System.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO CANDACE A. BOND BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Democracy and Human Rights

Question. In the State Department's 2022 Human Rights report, Trinidad and Tobago are noted for human rights issues of unlawful killings, refoulement of refugees, corruption, and human trafficking. The Government took steps to identify, investigate, and prosecute these abuses but the persistence of open-ended investigations and the slow pace of the justice system left impunity to be an issue.

- What is your assessment of the persistence of these violations?

Answer. My understanding is that the Government of Trinidad and Tobago (GoTT) has yet to convict a single individual under its 2011 anti-trafficking law. Corruption and official complicity in trafficking crimes remain significant concerns, inhibiting law enforcement action. Courts are deeply backlogged, often taking five to 10 years to resolve cases, including trafficking cases, despite adopting justice system reforms in 2019 to address the problem. The judiciary's broad discretion and inconsistency in granting bail, as well as reports of fraud and corruption within the bail process, engender concomitant recidivism, victim re-traumatization, and a perception of impunity.

Question. If confirmed, what actions would you take with host government to address these issues and help the Government become more efficient in investigations?

Answer. If confirmed, I will encourage the GoTT to undertake concrete steps to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of investigations to ensure accountability for human trafficking and other related human rights issues. With regard to human trafficking, these include efforts to: investigate, prosecute, and convict traffickers, including complicit officials and staff; ensure victims are not penalized for unlawful acts traffickers compelled them to commit; strengthen rules and regulations to ensure immigration enforcement does not hinder human trafficking detection, criminal law enforcement, or victim protections; ensure trafficking is investigated and prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law; provide adequate funding for robust trafficking investigations and victim services; train law enforcement and prosecutors in proactively identifying, obtaining, preserving, and corroborating evidence of trafficking; and improve cooperation between the Counter Trafficking Unit , prosecutors, the judiciary, and NGOs to increase the number of cases that proceed to trial. If confirmed, I will also explore programmatic responses to assist the GoTT in improving efficiency in investigations such as through the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative (CBSI).

Question. In regards to refugees, many international agencies expressed alarm at the response to Venezuelan refugees. How could you work with the Trinidad Government to improve the standards of treatment for refugees?

Answer. If confirmed, I will encourage the GoTT to prosecute human traffickers, and provide regularization and documentation of Venezuelan refugees and migrants living in the country so they may access their basic rights and services and reduce their vulnerability to human trafficking. I will underscore the importance of humane treatment of migrants and refugees, in line with international protection standards.

I will work with the Government of Trinidad and Tobago to promote greater security cooperation and training opportunities for their Coast Guard and other border security agencies.

Finally, if confirmed, I will encourage the GoTT to regularly screen this population for human trafficking indicators and refer identified victims for adequate services.

Question. In the State Department's 2022 Trafficking in Persons report, Trinidad and Tobago remained on the Tier 2 watch list for not fully meeting the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking, but is making significant efforts to do so. The Government has not convicted a trafficker under its 2011 anti-trafficking law, corruption and official complicity remain concerning in inhibiting law enforcement action, and victim identification services have been weak.

- If confirmed, how could you work with the host government to stymie corruption and support law enforcement to take action against traffickers?

Answer. If confirmed, I will encourage the Government of Trinidad and Tobago to increase efforts to investigate, prosecute, and convict traffickers—including complicit officials and staff—and ensure trafficking is investigated and prosecuted using the anti-trafficking law and not as other or lesser crimes.

Question. What steps would you take to encourage the host government to improve victim identification procedures and services?

Answer. As noted in the 2022 TIP Report, victim identification and services in Trinidad and Tobago remains weak. If confirmed, I will encourage the Government to: increase proactive victim identification, screening, and protection among vulnerable communities, including migrants, asylum-seekers, and refugees, especially Venezuelans; ensure victims are not penalized for unlawful acts traffickers compelled them to commit; strengthen rules and regulations to ensure immigration enforcement does not hinder human trafficking detection, criminal law enforcement, or victim protections; implement a formalized protocol and a functioning and active coordinating committee for victim care; improve the quality of victim care—especially for children—and increase bilingual services; approve, fund, and implement the anti-trafficking NAP for 2021-2023; and provide adequate funding for robust trafficking investigations and victim services, including accommodations; and increase trauma-informed training on trafficking for NGO, shelter, social services, and law enforcement staff to improve their ability to identify and care for potential trafficking victims.

Question. The Government did not formally adopt a National Action Plan for 2021-2023, if confirmed, how could you urge the Government to adopt a NAP?

Answer. National Action Plans are an important component of the fight against human trafficking. If confirmed, I will encourage the Government to approve, fund, and implement the anti-trafficking NAP for 2021-2023.

Question. In the State Department's 2021 International Religious Freedom report, Trinidad's constitution provides for freedom of conscience and religious belief or practice. US officials have engaged the Government on the importance of religious freedom and tolerance and funded programs in support of interfaith communication and cooperation.

- What is your assessment of these efforts?

Answer. Trinidad and Tobago is a stable multi-cultural and multi-religious democracy. The U.S. Embassy in Trinidad and Tobago works to advance religious freedom and tolerance for religious diversity through engagement with multi-faith communities, individual faith leaders, and religious groups. This work helps strengthen interfaith understanding of religious freedom and ensures that citizens continue to coexist peacefully as they have since Trinidad and Tobago's independence. If confirmed, I will stand by the Trinbagonian peoples' right to freedom of religion or belief and ensure the Embassy continues to work to address issues related to the discrimination of religious minorities and other disenfranchised communities.

Question. If confirmed, how could you build upon these engagements and programs to continue to improve the standing of religious freedom and tolerance in the country?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with my Embassy team, the Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom (IRF), and other stakeholders to ensure robust engagement with all faith communities and credible inter-faith groups to advance religious freedom and tolerance. Proper monitoring and evaluation of existing programs will guide needed adjustments or changes to existing programming.

International Organizations

Question. The Office of Multilateral Strategy and Personnel (MSP) in the State Department's bureau of International Organizations is leading a whole-of-government effort to identify, recruit, and install qualified, independent personnel at the U.N., including in elections for specialized bodies like the International Telecommunications Union (ITU). There is an American candidate, Doreen Bogdan-Martin, who if elected would be the first American and first woman to lead the ITU. She is in a tough race that will require early, consistent engagement across capitals and within the U.N. member states.

- If confirmed, do you commit to demarching the Trinidad Government and any other counterparts necessary to encourage their support of Ms. Bogdan-Martin?

Answer. Yes.

Question. If confirmed, how can you work with the International Organizations (IO) bureau and other stakeholders to identify, recruit, and install qualified Americans in positions like the Junior Program Officer (JPO) program at the U.N.?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with the State Department's Bureau for International Organizations to identify qualified candidates for the program by engaging civil society organizations and government officers on issues of great importance in

Trinidad and Tobago, including but not limited to human rights, climate change, and drugs and crime.

Question. Trinidad and Tobago has a low rate of voting coincidence with the U.S. in the U.N. General Assembly and in the Security Council.

• What is your assessment of this issue?

Answer. In 2020, Trinidad and Tobago had a 24 percent voting coincidence with the United States, reflecting the views of many Caribbean Community (CARICOM) member states, which tend to vote as a block. If confirmed, I will engage the highest level of the GoTT to explain U.S. multilateral positions and strive to improve voting coincidence, better reflecting our shared values.

Question. If confirmed, what concrete actions can you take to engage with the Trinidad Government on anticipated votes in the U.N. system that would increase their voting coincidence with the U.S.?

Answer. If confirmed, I will engage the Government on shared values and interests to try to seek alignment in the U.N. system. I will lobby the GoTT regularly in advance of critical votes and work to ensure coordination in the U.N. and other multilateral fora.

State Department Manangement and Public Diplomacy

Question. Many U.S. missions have been under enormous stress over the last few years, in large part due to COVID.

• What is your understanding of morale throughout Mission Port of Spain?

Answer. I understand that COVID–19 has caused considerable stress for U.S. Embassy personnel—both Americans and locally employed staff, and their families. In many instances, the pandemic has exacerbated preexisting challenges such as staffing shortages. COVID–19 continues to pose significant concerns for U.S. Embassy staff and their families as less than 52 percent of Trinidad and Tobago's population is fully vaccinated and the country is dealing with new variants that increase susceptibility to the pandemic. Notwithstanding these challenges, I understand that Embassy staff continue to work diligently to advance U.S. foreign policy goals. If confirmed, I will make taking care of our employees my first priority, while ensuring they have the necessary resources and support to efficiently and effectively perform their jobs.

Question. How do you intend to improve morale at Mission Port of Spain?

Answer. If confirmed, I will improve morale at U.S. Embassy Port of Spain by implementing a collaborative leadership approach in which I actively listen to the views and analyses of my staff on foreign policy and workplace issues, provide training to all employees on cross-cultural communication and leadership, and engage the Government of Trinidad and Tobago to advance progress on issues that most affect employee morale, such as timely receipt of value added tax reimbursements and the establishment of a diplomatic post office.

One of my priorities will be to finalize the process to start construction on a new embassy compound (NEC). U.S. Mission Port of Spain has one of the oldest embassies in the region as it was built and opened in the 1960s. A NEC would significantly improve staff morale. If confirmed, I will work diligently to ensure that vacant positions in the Embassy are filled, and our staffing reflects our bilateral priorities. I will also continue to advocate with the Government of Trinidad and Tobago to accredit same-sex spouses of U.S. diplomats and administrative and technical staff to ensure the Embassy is able to attract the best and brightest U.S. Government employees who are currently excluded from serving in Trinidad and Tobago with their families.

Question. How do you intend to create a unified mission and vision at Mission Port of Spain?

Answer. The morale, well-being, and safety of all mission employees will be one of my top priorities as Ambassador, if confirmed. I intend to create a unified mission and vision for U.S. Embassy Port of Spain by clearly and consistently articulating the priority U.S. foreign policy goals that our post will work diligently to accomplish, empower my staff to lead and take ownership of accomplishing those goals, frequently review our progress in advancing U.S. foreign policy goals in Trinidad and Tobago, and when necessary, amend and modify our strategies and tactics to ensure we implement innovative, coherent, and sensible approaches commensurate with Embassy resources to achieve U.S. foreign policy goals.

Question. Management is a key responsibility for Chiefs of Mission. How would you describe your management style?

Answer. I would describe my management style as consultative with open communication. I believe good leadership is rooted in collaboration and I am committed to the ongoing development of my staff. If confirmed, I will seek to identify what motivates each employee so as to identify their strengths and weaknesses and help them to become better professionals.

Question. Do you believe it is ever acceptable or constructive to berate subordinates, either in public or private?

Answer. No. It is never acceptable or constructive to berate a subordinate, in public or in private. I believe such conduct is antithetical to creating a positive and productive workplace.

Question. How do you envision your leadership relationship with your Deputy Chief of Mission?

Answer. If confirmed, I will implement and sustain a collaborative leadership relationship with the Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM). I will ensure that I work closely with my DCM to explain and share my vision with staff to advance U.S. foreign policy goals, maintain strong workplace morale, and provide the necessary resources and support so that our employees efficiently and effectively perform their jobs. The key to the close, collaborative leadership relationship that I will sustain with my DCM, if confirmed, will be constant and consistent communication. I will hold regular and frequent meetings to make sure the DCM understands my vision and goals, and we articulate and execute our leadership and management of the embassy based on the values of a united, collaborative, one-mission/one-team effort.

Question. If confirmed, what leadership responsibilities do you intend to entrust to your Deputy Chief of Mission?

Answer. If confirmed, I will entrust my Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM) to be responsible for managing the daily operations of the embassy, while I serve as the U.S. Government's lead interlocutor with the people and Government of Trinidad and Tobago to advance U.S. foreign policy and public diplomacy goals. I will clearly articulate my leadership and management vision and goals for the embassy to the DCM and she/he will make sure to execute them in close collaboration with the managers of sections and U.S. interagency offices working in Trinidad and Tobago. Throughout my professional career, I have maintained an open-door policy with my staff. I will continue to do so with the DCM and Embassy employees. Finally, if confirmed, I will consistently remind the DCM that taking care of our employees should always be our first priority, while ensuring they have the necessary resources and support to efficiently and effectively perform their jobs.

Question. In order to create and continue employee excellence at the Department, accurate and direct employee evaluation reports (EERs) for Foreign Service Officers are imperative, though often lacking.

- Do you believe that it is important to provide employees with accurate, constructive feedback on their performances in order to encourage improvement and reward those who most succeeded in their roles?

Answer. Yes. I believe it is important to provide all employees with accurate and constructive feedback. It is essential to their professional development, and I am committed to making that a hallmark of my service in Trinidad and Tobago, if confirmed.

Question. If confirmed, would you support and encourage clear, accurate, and direct feedback to employees in order to improve performance and reward high achievers?

Answer. Yes. I believe clear, accurate, and direct feedback is essential to the management of all employees. I want to ensure everyone on our team is contributing to our success. That is only possible if everyone receives the feedback they require.

Question. It is imperative that U.S. diplomats get outside of posts abroad to meet with local actors, including host government officials, non-government organizations, and fellow foreign diplomats stationed in Trinidad and Tobago.

- In your opinion, do U.S. diplomats get outside of our embassy walls enough to accomplish fully their missions?

Answer. I understand U.S. diplomats meet contacts outside the embassy and assess local conditions despite the difficulties associated with the pandemic. If confirmed, I will encourage Embassy staff to continue to get beyond the walls as often as we can, within the bounds of safety.

Question. How do you intend to improve the ability of U.S. diplomats to better access all local populations?

Answer. If confirmed, I plan to get out as much as possible, to share U.S. views and listen to concerns, and to highlight the great programs that the U.S. Government is conducting in Trinidad and Tobago. If confirmed, I will encourage embassy staff to interact with local populations from all walks of life.

Question. Public diplomacy is an important aspect of U.S. foreign policy efforts. What is the public diplomacy environment like in Trinidad and Tobago?

Answer. The law of Trinidad and Tobago provides for a high degree of freedom of expression, including for members of the press and other media. An independent press, an effective judiciary, and a functioning democratic political system combine to promote freedom of expression, including for members of the media. Advertising supports the news outlets in Trinidad and Tobago, and, with the exception of Trinidad and Tobago Television (TTT), all claim to be politically independent. TTT Limited is a state-owned enterprise launched in August 2018 by Prime Minister Dr. Keith Rowley. Trinbagonians enjoy a high degree of literacy and the public regularly engages in robust political debate. The Embassy maintains a social media presence on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, with content on each tailored to specific audiences that follow each platform.

The Embassy provides grants to NGOs in support of the Mission's Integrated Country Strategy (ICS) goals, including to support education, at-risk youth, marginalized populations, and persons with disabilities. The Embassy's Public Affairs Section encourages Trinbagonian students to pursue higher education in the United States through EducationUSA and an American Center that offers resources for standardized testing, college selection, and pursuing scholarships.

Question. What public diplomacy challenges do U.S. diplomats face there?

Answer. The local press is free but tends to favor sensational journalism. Journalists are sometimes sloppy in pursuit of being the first to write a story. This makes it more challenging for the U.S. Embassy to control its narrative in the press as journalists occasionally misquote or misrepresent the United States' position. However, the United States and the bilateral relationship enjoy a high degree of attention among Trinbagonians and the media, and many U.S. policies receive positive press coverage. In addition, combatting the misinformation campaign currently undertaken by the PRC remains an issue of paramount importance.

Question. How do you balance the importance of Main State versus the in-country mission when it comes to tailoring public diplomacy messages for foreign audiences?

Answer. I understand the State Department's bureaus and overseas missions work hand-in-hand on public diplomacy. In doing so, they create messaging about key policy priorities that resonate with the local audience and design educational and cultural programs that further U.S. goals of economic growth, respect for human rights, strengthening civil society, protecting the environment, and embracing diversity.

Question. "Anomalous health incidents," commonly referred to as "Havana Syndrome," have been debilitating and sidelining U.S. diplomats around the world for years. They have caused serious, negative consequences for U.S. diplomacy, yet many believe that the Department is not doing enough to care for, protect, and communicate to its personnel.

- If confirmed, do you commit to taking this threat seriously?

Answer. Yes. If confirmed, I will take nothing more seriously than the health and security of the people who will work with me.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to talking as openly as you can to Mission Port of Spain personnel?

Answer. Yes. If confirmed, I commit to speaking as openly as possible to mission personnel and working with health and security officials as recommended to establish and maintain appropriate protocols and ensure a healthy working environment for both Americans and local staff.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO CANDACE A. BOND BY SENATOR MARCO RUBIO

Question. It should be clear to everyone in this administration that the Chinese Communist Party is the most comprehensive military, economic and political threat

our nation faces today. Right now, in Latin America and the Caribbean, it is working to undermine our interests and our allies, whether that's by supplying the fentanyl smuggled across our open border or assisting dictators that continue to drive people to emigrate to the U.S.

• Is the Chinese Communist Party a threat to the United States?

Answer. Certain People's Republic of China (PRC) and Chinese Communist Party activities represent a threat to U.S. interests in the region, particularly in terms of investments in critical infrastructure and sensitive sectors such as transportation facilities and telecommunication projects.

As Secretary Blinken said on May 26, the United States must invest, align, and compete with the PRC to defend our interests and build our vision for the future. If confirmed, I will invest in our partnership with Trinidad and Tobago, highlight the risks associated with PRC engagement that could impact Trinidad and Tobago's security and sovereignty and U.S. interests, and ensure that our vision of a positive partnership and regional security and prosperity competes successfully with the PRC.

Question. If confirmed, what will you do to stop the expansion of the CCP's influence in Trinidad and Tobago?

Answer. Trinidad and Tobago exports seven times more to the United States than China. In addition to our significant trade relationship, Trinidad and Tobago cooperates bilaterally with the United States on counter-narcotics trafficking, by way of intelligence sharing of origin, transit, and destination information. These are the strong foundations on which our bilateral relationship is built. If confirmed, I will continue to encourage bilateral cooperation on trade and drug trafficking and will continue to promote shared democratic values.

Question. Crime is one of the major problems facing Trinidad and Tobago. Last year, the homicide rate in Trinidad and Tobago was the 4th highest in Latin America and the Caribbean, and the homicide rate actually increased by 12 percent last year. If we truly want to help the people of Trinidad and Tobago deal with the scourge of violent crime, we need a U.S. Ambassador that fully committed to commonsense solutions.

• Do you now, or have you ever, supported the Defund the Police movement?

Answer. No. I share your concern regarding rising violence and insecurity in Trinidad and Tobago. If confirmed, I will work to strengthen the partnership between the United States and the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service through the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative (CBSI). Strengthening law enforcement and the justice system, through activities like incorporating forensic evidence and case management, remains crucial to Trinidad and Tobago's ability to interdict narcotics and manage evidence to prosecute crimes, which supports U.S. national interests.

Question. Do you believe Trinidad and Tobago's crime rates can be solved with less police and less law enforcement assistance from the United States?

Answer. No. Through CBSI, the United States provides critical support to Trinidad and Tobago to fight corruption and strengthen police services screening. Technical assistance from the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement (INL), in addition to critical support from the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) and the Department of Defense, help disrupt the flow of narcotics to the United States and have resulted in the seizure of large amounts of illicit narcotics, especially cocaine. Combined with INL's community policing efforts, and the recent deployment of U.S. Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (ATF) personnel to T&T, our assistance is making a decisive difference in helping combat crime in Trinidad and Tobago.

Question. If confirmed, what will you do to support Trinidadian efforts to counter violent crime?

Answer. In addition to the aforementioned CBSI programming, I understand that the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) implements essential programming to assist at-risk youth and reforming the juvenile justice in Trinidad and Tobago as part of CBSI. If confirmed, I will continue to support CBSI assistance, and work to expand this programming.

Question. Due to its location just off the coast of Venezuela, Trinidad and Tobago are one of the few countries that did not break relations with the despotic regime of Nicolas Maduro. Some of this is practical—there are issues that Trinidad and Tobago simply have to work with Maduro on, like a shared maritime border—but the Rowley Government has called for lifting sanctions and joint development of oil and gas with the regime.

- Is it still the policy of the U.S. Government not to recognize Nicolas Maduro as the President of Venezuela?

Answer. The United States continues to recognize Juan Guaid? as Interim President and the 2015 National Assembly as the last national democratic institution in Venezuela.

Question. Is it still the policy of the United States to hold Maduro accountable for his crimes against the people of Venezuela?

Answer. If confirmed, I will support holding accountable actors that engage in corruption, violate U.S. laws, or abuse human rights in connection with Venezuela. Free and fair elections are paramount to stability in the region.

Question. If confirmed, what will you do to encourage Trinidad and Tobago to align with the U.S. stance towards Nicolas Maduro?

Answer. The United States will continue to work with the international community to promote substantive, credible advancements to restore democratic processes and institutions in Venezuela. If confirmed, I will work with Trinidad and Tobago to continue seeking opportunities to engage in spaces that focus on improving the lives of Venezuelans.

Question. Trinidad and Tobago is currently struggling to revitalize its economy as it emerges from the COVID–19 pandemic. You ended your written testimony by "pledging to dedicate your skills and energy to strengthen our diplomatic and economic ties to Trinidad and Tobago, advance U.S. interests in the world and to promote American democratic values." Many Trinidadians reside in New York and Florida and have links to families back home. If confirmed, what's your message to these Trinidadian-Americans?

Answer. The Department of State has no greater priority than the protection of the lives and interests of U.S. citizens abroad. My message to Trinbagonian-Americans is that I value the deep and extensive cultural and familial ties between the United States and the twin islands. If confirmed, I will continue to encourage participation for Trinidad and Tobago's civil society, government, and military leaders in Department of State-sponsored professional development exchanges to share best practices and build closer ties with U.S. counterparts and institutions. I will also advocate on behalf of American businesses, including those with linkages to the diaspora, to compete for opportunities in Trinidad and Tobago.

Question. How will you strengthen our existing relations with Trinidad and Tobago?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work to increase public-private partnerships and investment in Trinidad and Tobago. A strong economic relationship is a hallmark of strong relations, and I will encourage U.S. investment. If confirmed, I will also seek to strengthen institutions and policies that help us achieve common goals of economic and political partnerships.

Question. What is Trinidad and Tobago's post-recovery plan?

Answer. Trinidad and Tobago experienced record numbers of new infections and deaths in 2021 and declining economic activity due to public health restrictions and global conditions during the COVID–19 pandemic. Trinidad and Tobago's Ministry of Planning and Development created the "Roadmap for Trinidad and Tobago Post-COVID–19 Pandemic," which defines priority actions to address and mitigate the pandemic's economic impact, restart the economy, and lay a foundation for sustained economic recovery. While the Government continues to implement these recommendations, current record global energy prices indicate Trinidad and Tobago should experience economic growth in 2022 for the first time since 2015.

Question. How has the United States assisted in this recovery?

Answer. The United States donated nearly 685,000 doses of the Pfizer vaccine to Trinidad and Tobago. The United States also donated field hospitals, ventilators, and other medical supplies. The United States remains Trinidad and Tobago's top trading partner and number one destination for its energy exports, which generates most of the country's export revenue. U.S. private sector technology, services, and machinery power Trinidad and Tobago's industrial base.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO HEIDE B. FULTON BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Question. In the State Department's 2022 Human Rights report, Uruguay was noted for having harsh and potentially life-threatening conditions in its prison and detention facilities across the country. Despite that, the Government has taken steps to identify and punish officials who commit human rights abuses, and there were no reports of impunity.

- What is your assessment of the effectiveness of these efforts by the Government?

Answer. Uruguay enjoys an overall positive human rights record and has a strong international reputation as a leader on international law and democracy. The country has an independent press, an effective judiciary, low levels of corruption, and a functioning democratic political system. Uruguay established the National Institution for Human Rights (INDDHH) in 2008 to defend, protect, and promote human rights.

The Human Rights Report identifies prison conditions as an area of concern, with approximately one-third of Uruguay's prison facilities considered substandard, and the overall prison population high and growing. The Government of Uruguay recognizes the improvements needed in prisons and detention facilities and is taking steps to build new prisons and renovate existing facilities. Uruguay has a special rapporteur on the prison system, who advises parliament on compliance with prison legislation and international standards, monitors prison conditions, and provides in-depth, independent analysis of the prison situation. Embassy Montevideo works closely with that rapporteur and entities throughout the Government to support their efforts to improve prison conditions. In July, a group of officials traveled to the United States to learn from U.S. prison reform experiences. Uruguay's strong institutions, efficient and independent justice system, and low levels of corruption help prevent impunity for human rights violations within prisons.

Question. If confirmed, what actions would you take with the host government to address the conditions in prison facilities?

Answer. The State Department has engaged with the Government and parliament on prison reform, including a program over the past two years to connect Uruguayan officials with experts in the United States for virtual exchanges on justice issues, including prison reform. If confirmed, I look forward to bringing my experience as the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Programs in the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs to further our work on this important issue. If confirmed, I will also support the ongoing efforts to support the Government of Uruguay's efforts to improve prison conditions and outcomes and will raise this issue in my interactions with Uruguayan Government officials.

Question. How could you work with the Government to continue to build on and improve the country's human rights record?

Answer. If confirmed, I will look for ways to address the issues raised in the Human Rights Report, including prison conditions as well as gender-based violence and discrimination against vulnerable groups such as afro-descendants, persons with disabilities, women, and the LGBTQI+ population. Uruguay has a historically strong, democratic governance structure and a positive record of upholding political rights and civil liberties, and our work on these issues are respectful exchanges between two countries striving to perfect the promise of democracy and rule of law for their entire populations. Embassy Montevideo also engages frequently with civil society organizations on a broad range of issues, especially human rights. If confirmed, I will work to support those civil society organizations working on human rights, including through exchanges with the United States. Given Uruguay's strong human rights record, if confirmed I will also encourage Uruguay to serve as a model in the hemisphere and to share its experiences with other countries in the region.

Question. In the State Department's 2022 Trafficking in Persons report, Uruguay remained a Tier 2 country for not fully meeting the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking, but is making significant efforts to do so. However, the Government has failed to provide adequate victim services or consistent access to shelters, law enforcement did not proactively and systematically identify victims, and the country's National Action Plan expired without replacement.

- If confirmed, how could you encourage the host government to improve upon victim services and access to shelters?

Answer. Uruguay remains a source, transit, and destination country for men, women, and children subjected to forced labor and sex trafficking. Uruguay has been designated as a Tier 2 country in the Trafficking in Persons Report since 2015. Civil society organizations have expressed concern about the suitability of the facilities where the Government of Uruguay lodges trafficking victims and reported challenges finding shelter for some trafficking victims. If confirmed, I and my team will engage with Uruguayan officials to encourage the Government to make provision for adequate shelter and services, including daytime programming, whether directly or through partnerships with civil society organizations.

Question. What steps would you take to help enhance law enforcement's ability to identify victims?

Answer. If confirmed, I will actively engage the Government of Uruguay on victims' identification, prosecution of perpetrators, and comprehensive victims' assistance. In my interactions with government officials, if confirmed, I will highlight the recommendations from the Trafficking in Persons report, including increased efforts to identify victims of forced labor and sex trafficking; proactive screening to detect trafficking indicators among vulnerable populations; providing specialized services and shelter for all victims; and increasing training for law enforcement officials, labor inspectors, coast guard officers, prosecutors, judges, and social workers to understand human trafficking.

Question. How could you urge the Government to replace its expired NAP?

Answer. The Government has not renewed or replaced its national action plan to combat trafficking since its expiration at the end of 2020. If confirmed, I will continue Embassy Montevideo's engagement with Uruguayan officials to encourage the Government to approve and implement a new national action plan to combat trafficking in persons. The Embassy has promoted engagement between U.S. and Uruguayan authorities that helped improve communication and understanding between our governments on this issue, and if confirmed I will work to increase these kinds of exchanges. If confirmed, I will also look for opportunities to bring non-governmental experts from the United States to Uruguay to increase awareness of TIP and share best practices among government and civil society experts.

Question. In the State Department's 2021 International Religious Freedom report, Uruguay's constitution provides for freedom of religion and affirms the state does not endorse any specific religion. The commitment to secularism has created some controversy between religious and political leaders. US officials have engaged the Government on its interpretation of secularism, and worked on creating a Uruguayan Government counterpart for religious issues.

- What is your assessment of these efforts?

Answer. Uruguay's strong human rights record and international reputation as a leader on human rights also extends to religious freedom. Uruguay's constitution provides for religious freedom and discrimination based on religion is prohibited. The International Religious Freedom report for Uruguay raises some issues around the interpretation of secularism, however, as some religious groups said government authorities sometimes interpreted secularism as the absence of religion, rather than as the coexistence of multiple religions and the independence of religion from the state. Religious organizations also encourage the establishment of more channels of communication with the Government to discuss issues related to religious freedom.

Question. If confirmed, how could you work with political and religious leaders to increase cooperation amongst the groups?

Answer. Embassy Montevideo has taken important steps to bring together a range of religious leaders, as well as academics, lawyers, and human rights experts, to discuss interfaith collaboration and to hear concerns about faith-related issues. These conversations help bring attention to the importance of religious coexistence and interfaith dialogue in Uruguay, and if confirmed I will continue these dialogues.

Question. What steps could you take to help the country establish a governmental counterpart to take responsibility of religious issues?

Answer. Embassy Montevideo officials have raised with government officials the issues highlighted in the International Religious Freedom report, including the Government's interpretation of secularism, and establishing a government counterpart for religious issues, and encouraged government representatives to engage in dialogue with religious groups. If confirmed, I will continue to raise these issues in my conversations with government officials to reinforce their importance.

Question. The Office of Multilateral Strategy and Personnel (MSP) in the State Department's bureau of International Organizations is leading a whole-of-government effort to identify, recruit, and install qualified, independent personnel at the U.N., including in elections for specialized bodies like the International Telecommunications Union (ITU). There is an American candidate, Doreen Bogdan-Martin, who if elected would be the first American and first woman to lead the ITU. She is in a tough race that will require early, consistent engagement across capitals and within the U.N. member states.

- If confirmed, do you commit to demarching the Uruguayan Government and any other counterparts necessary to encourage their support of Ms. Bogdan-Martin?

Answer. Yes, I commit to demarching the Uruguayan Government to encourage support for Ms. Bogdan's candidacy, if confirmed. Secretary Blinken publicly endorsed Ms. Bogdan-Martin's candidacy in March 2021. If confirmed, I will work closely with the Bureau of International Organization Affairs to support Ms. Bogdan-Martin's candidacy and encourage Uruguay to vote for her for ITU Secretary-General, as well as the candidacies of other U.S. candidates endorsed by the Department to fill critical positions at the U.N. and its specialized bodies. Embassy Montevideo has engaged Government of Uruguay counterparts in support of Ms. Bogdan-Martin, including both demarches and facilitating conversations with the candidate, and if confirmed I will continue that engagement as the vote approaches.

Question. If confirmed, how can you work with the International Organizations (IO) bureau and other stakeholders to identify, recruit, and install qualified Americans in positions like the Junior Program Officer (JPO) program at the U.N.?

Answer. I am committed to increasing the representation of independent, qualified U.S. citizens in international organizations. If confirmed, I will work actively with the IO bureau and other stakeholders to assist in identifying, recruiting, and installing more U.S. officials in positions at the U.N., including Junior Professional Officer (JPO) positions.

Question. Uruguay has a low rate of voting coincidence with the U.S. in the U.N. General Assembly and in the Security Council.

- What is your assessment of this issue?

Answer. Uruguay is a respected member of many international organizations and cooperates with the United States on issues such as strengthening international peacekeeping and promoting human rights. Uruguay strongly believes in multilateralism and dialogue to achieve international peace and security and is among the world's top troop contributing countries to U.N. peacekeeping operations per capita and is the top in Latin America.

Uruguay has a lower voting coincidence with the United States in the U.N. General Assembly than the global average, similar to the voting coincidence of other countries in Latin America. In 2020, however, Uruguay's voting coincidence rose significantly and was above the region's average. Uruguay has voted repeatedly to condemn Russia's invasion of Ukraine and voted to suspend Russia from the U.N. Human Rights Council. If confirmed, I will work to build on this positive trend and further align our positions in the U.N. and other multilateral bodies.

Question. If confirmed, what concrete actions can you take to engage with the Uruguayan Government on anticipated votes in the U.N. system that would increase their voting coincidence with the U.S.?

Answer. If confirmed, I will strive for early, consistent, and high-level engagement with Government of Uruguay officials on critical votes in U.N. bodies, to convey the U.S. position and encourage alignment with Uruguay.

Question. Many U.S. missions have been under enormous stress over the last few years, in large part due to COVID.

- What is your understanding of morale throughout Mission Montevideo?

Answer. Like all our missions around the world, Embassy Montevideo faced challenges in 2020 and 2021 in responding to the COVID–19 pandemic. Through its policy of "responsible liberty," the Government of Uruguay did not impose the strict lockdowns seen in other countries and was largely successful in navigating the pandemic. I understand that Embassy morale has been resilient through these challenges and remains strong.

I understand that Embassy Montevideo has been undergoing a major renovation since 2018 that has had an impact on morale. Embassy employees were not relocated to a new work site and are working in the Chancery during the continued con-

struction, leading to loud noise, odors, dust, and other construction-related issues for staff.

Question. How do you intend to improve morale at Mission Montevideo?

Answer. If confirmed, I will solicit feedback from Embassy Montevideo personnel directly on factors that are having an impact on morale and take steps to address them. I also plan, if confirmed, to hold town hall forums and one-on-one meetings to listen to and engage with our employees, including our Locally Employed Staff. If confirmed, I look forward to building on the work of my predecessors to celebrate and reward the accomplishments of our Embassy Montevideo team and to support and strengthen the important work of our Community Liaison Office.

Related to the rehabilitation project, if confirmed I will work with the Overseas Building Operations and Diplomatic Security to explore ways to minimize the impact on Embassy morale of the ongoing construction work, including alternative work sites to allow work to proceed free of the construction-related noise, odors, and dust.

Question. How do you intend to create a unified mission and vision at Mission Montevideo?

Answer. My leadership and management style are informed by my formation as an Army officer. I believe in setting a clear direction in our priorities, establishing left and right limits, and then providing the resources my team needs to achieve our goals. I support this approach through my style of frequent, open communication to ensure understanding about the intent of our objectives and to work through challenges as they arise. In my experience, clear direction, support, and open communication forge strong teams.

I will also reinforce the integrated country strategy (ICS) objectives for Embassy Montevideo, which incorporate the input of the sections and agencies present in Uruguay, to align and unify our objectives across the entire mission.

Question. Management is a key responsibility for Chiefs of Mission. How would you describe your management style?

Answer. I take management seriously and carry out my management style outlined above: set a clear direction, establish parameters, and provide necessary resources, complemented by frequent, open communication. If confirmed, I will treat all Embassy Montevideo team members with respect and will help reinforce respectful workplace culture.

Question. Do you believe it is ever acceptable or constructive to berate subordinates, either in public or private?

Answer. No, I do not believe it is acceptable or constructive to berate subordinates, either publicly or privately.

Question. How do you envision your leadership relationship with your Deputy Chief of Mission?

Answer. The relationship between the Chief of Mission and Deputy Chief of Mission is the most important in the Mission, one that sets the tenor for the work and ultimate success of the mission. If confirmed, I would work closely with my DCM to ensure that together we are articulating a clear vision and that we are effectively monitoring and addressing challenges that our team faces, either internally or externally.

Question. If confirmed, what leadership responsibilities do you intend to entrust to your Deputy Chief of Mission?

Answer. If confirmed, I anticipate my DCM will function as the chief operating officer of the Mission, charged with leading the implementation of the vision that we have articulated in coordination with Washington through the ICS and beyond. One of the most important responsibilities of the DCM is the professional development and mentorship of Embassy personnel, and if confirmed I will reaffirm the importance of that work and actively engage in that process. If confirmed, I will ask my DCM to lead a robust development program to ensure our more junior team members have the tools and skills needed to succeed and I would work closely with my DCM to support professional development at all levels. If confirmed, I will also ask the DCM to join me in strongly supporting the efforts of the Community Liaison Office to maintain the well-being and morale of the embassy community, including family members.

Question. In order to create and continue employee excellence at the Department, accurate and direct employee evaluation reports (EERs) for Foreign Service Officers are imperative, though often lacking.

- Do you believe that it is important to provide employees with accurate, constructive feedback on their performances in order to encourage improvement and reward those who most succeeded in their roles?

Answer. Yes, I believe that it is imperative to provide all employees with accurate, constructive feedback in order to encourage improvement and achieve peak performance. I view performance feedback as a mechanism to enhance the functioning of the broader Mission, in addition to supporting the personal growth, professional development, and retention of our personnel. I also believe it is important to recognize and celebrate the positive performance of team members who succeed.

Question. If confirmed, would you support and encourage clear, accurate, and direct feedback to employees in order to improve performance and reward high achievers?

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, I would support and encourage clear, accurate, and direct feedback at all levels, and would begin by modeling this behavior.

Question. It is imperative that U.S. diplomats get outside of posts abroad to meet with local actors, including host government officials, non-government organizations, and fellow foreign diplomats stationed in Uruguay.

- In your opinion, do U.S. diplomats get outside of our embassy walls enough to accomplish fully their missions?

Answer. As a Public Diplomacy-coned Foreign Service Officer with experience in a range of public diplomacy positions around the world throughout my career, I understand firsthand that U.S. diplomats abroad are uniquely positioned to engage directly with representatives across government and civil society to track and understand trends and developments abroad. It is vital to engage directly with a range of populations and hear a diverse range of voices, which requires a dedicated commitment to engagement. If confirmed, I would seek to support a robust outreach and travel schedule for myself and encourage it from the full Embassy Montevideo team, while taking into account all relevant health and security considerations. I understand that Embassy Montevideo has been generally able to travel safely throughout Uruguay, and if confirmed I will make it a priority to find ways for our team to safely engage in outreach across the country and with a range of interlocutors to support our objectives.

Question. How do you intend to improve the ability of U.S. diplomats to better access all local populations?

Answer. The COVID–19 pandemic has challenged the fundamental engagement and outreach aspect of our work, requiring us to adapt and modernize. In addition to traditional in-person meetings and travel, which have been ongoing in Uruguay since mid-2020, if confirmed, I will leverage the new telecommunications technologies developed and adopted during the pandemic to connect with new and wider audiences.

Question. Public diplomacy is an important aspect of U.S. foreign policy efforts.

- What is the public diplomacy environment like in the Uruguay?

Answer. Exchange programs such as Fulbright build connections between our countries, especially future Uruguayan leaders who pursue postgraduate study in the United States. In addition, professional exchange programs play an important role in addressing issues related to Uruguay's economic development, including promoting the value of entrepreneurship among historically risk-averse Uruguayans.

Uruguayans have an affinity for the United States and are receptive in general to U.S. points of view. In an October 2021 State Department-led survey, Uruguayans expressed broadly positive views of the United States and admiration for its economic power and strong educational system. In explaining their positive views, Uruguayans pointed to the United States' status as a world power, the benefit to Uruguay from bilateral economic ties, family and friends living in the United States, past U.S. help to Uruguay, the new U.S. administration or U.S. democracy, and the high U.S. standard of living.

Uruguay has one of the oldest Fulbright Commissions in the region, and the Uruguayan Government provides in-kind and monetary support annually to support Fulbright and other exchange opportunities. There are 39 American Spaces embedded in public spaces throughout the country, which are supported by the Uruguayan Government. Programming in these spaces reaches more than 15,000 individuals a year.

Question. What public diplomacy challenges do U.S. diplomats face there?

Answer. While public opinion of the United States is positive in Uruguay, there is a strong tradition of anti-Americanism among some leftist political groups. These groups are often enthusiastic to serve as amplifiers of rival messaging, including that of non-democratic states such as Cuba, Venezuela, Russia, and the People's Republic of China (PRC).

In addition, the PRC continues efforts to increase its soft power in Uruguay. The PRC Embassy in Uruguay is active, with significant social media outreach by the ambassador and a robust media campaign including paid advertising. As in other countries in the region, the PRC has concluded numerous sister cities agreements and opened a Confucius Institute.

Although fully free to operate under Uruguayan law, Uruguay's civil society sector is less developed than other sectors of society. Civil society organizations are frequently small and are often volunteer-led. While this has created challenges for partnering with a diverse range of well-established NGOs, it has also provided an opportunity for partnership and capacity building in our public diplomacy efforts. Uruguay's status as a high-income country also means there are limited resources to provide direct assistance and support to Uruguay, a restriction that other countries do not face and have taken advantage of to bolster their soft power.

Question. How do you balance the importance of Main State versus the in-country mission when it comes to tailoring public diplomacy messages for foreign audiences?

Answer. As a Public Diplomacy-coned officer, I understand the importance of coordinating a unified message. It is vital that the in-country mission tailors the goals and messaging from Washington in a way that reflects and references our many shared values with Uruguay. The Embassy Montevideo Public Affairs team uses their expertise in the media environment in Uruguay to convey U.S. policy objectives in a way that maximizes the messaging impact with the Uruguayan public, ensuring that our messaging is respectful of the historically strong bilateral relationship. On the other hand, based on the topic and target audience, some messages are more effective coming from Washington voices. If confirmed, I will work closely with colleagues in Washington to craft effective messages and serve as an effective messenger to further U.S. objectives.

Question. "Anomalous health incidents," commonly referred to as "Havana Syndrome," have been debilitating and sidelining U.S. diplomats around the world for years. They have caused serious, negative consequences for U.S. diplomacy, yet many believe that the Department is not doing enough to care for, protect, and communicate to its personnel.

- If confirmed, do you commit to taking this threat seriously?

Answer. Yes, I take nothing more seriously than the health and security of the people who work with me, and I commit to taking the threat of Anomalous Health Incidents (AHI) seriously. The interagency community continues its examination of a range of hypotheses. Secretary Blinken prioritizes the Department's response to AHI, setting clear goals for the Health Incident Response Task Force to strengthen the Department's communication with its workforce, and providing care for affected employees and family members.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to talking as openly as you can to Mission Montevideo personnel?

Answer. Yes. If confirmed, I commit to talking as openly as possible to Embassy Montevideo personnel about AHI, among other issues.

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FOLLOW-UP QUESTION SUBMITTED TO
HEIDE B. FULTON BY SENATOR RISCH

Question. In your view, what steps can the United States take to deepen law enforcement cooperation with Uruguay?

Answer. If confirmed, I look forward to applying the expertise I have developed leading security cooperation in the region as the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Western Hemisphere Programs in the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL). Uruguay has prioritized citizen security and has taken steps to counter transnational criminal organizations that are trying to make inroads across its borders. If confirmed, preventing transnational organized crime from using Uruguay as a bridge to transport drugs to Europe, and the resulting violence in Uruguay, will be one of my highest priorities. In response to Uruguay's recent requests for capacity building,

INL incorporated Uruguay in regional programs that address our shared security priorities, such as U.N. Office on Drugs and Crime's Container Control Program, which established Uruguay's first inter-agency Port Control Unit in Montevideo to address the increase in cocaine seizures there in recent years. Additionally, we are including Uruguay in regional anti-money laundering and cybercrime programs, to strengthen Uruguay's capabilities to address these increasing threats. At the same time, the Department of Defense has increased military-military collaboration with Uruguay's armed forces, including donations of badly needed patrol boats to the Navy through the Excess Defense Articles program to support increased patrols and interdiction efforts. With INL support, DEA is cross-training Uruguayan officials with counterparts in neighboring countries. DEA's Buenos Aires-based team spends a good deal of time in Uruguay collaborating on counternarcotics investigations. If confirmed, I will make the case for the DEA to increase its resources dedicated to Uruguay.

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RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO HEIDE B. FULTON BY SENATOR MARCO RUBIO

Question. It should be clear to everyone in this administration that the Chinese Communist Party is the most comprehensive military, economic and political threat our nation faces today. Right now, in Latin America and the Caribbean, it is working to undermine our interests and our allies, whether that's by supplying the fentanyl smuggled across our open border or assisting dictators that continue to drive people to emigrate to the U.S.

- Is the Chinese Communist Party a threat to the United States?

Answer. The President has made it clear the United States views the People's Republic of China (PRC) as a strategic competitor that challenges the existing rules-based international order. Certain PRC activities represent a challenge to U.S. interests in the region, particularly investments in critical infrastructure and sensitive sectors such as transportation facilities and telecommunication projects. As Secretary Blinken noted, we will invest, align, and compete with the PRC to defend our interests and build our vision for the future. If confirmed, I will invest in our partnership with Uruguay, highlight the risks associated with aspects of PRC engagement that could impact Uruguay's security and sovereignty and U.S. interests, and work to ensure that our vision of a positive bilateral partnership in support of regional security and prosperity competes successfully with the PRC.

Question. If confirmed, what will you do to stop the expansion of the CCP's influence in Uruguay?

Answer. If confirmed, I will lead the effort to advance our positive agenda for Uruguay, seeking out ways to remove impediments to cooperation and to find new tools for deepening our support. If confirmed, I will also work to ensure that we understand the People's Republic of China's (PRC) initiatives and can effectively respond to any threats to our interests. If confirmed, I will also raise concerns about the potential long-term negative impact of risky PRC critical infrastructure projects and investment.

In contrast to PRC economic entities, which have a limited presence in Uruguay, U.S. companies represent some of the biggest sources of foreign direct investment in Uruguay and have been for decades. American farm machinery and biotechnology drive Uruguay's agricultural industry, and if confirmed, I will work to ensure U.S. companies are well placed to take advantage of traditional and emerging opportunities. If confirmed, I will also support high-quality investment in infrastructure that meets international standards.

Question. Uruguay is a strong partner and supporter of democratic values and human rights in our hemisphere. Uruguay has also denounced the Russian invasion of Ukraine as a "grave and unjustifiable violation of international law." It has also supported the OAS condemning the Maduro regime for its human rights violations. If confirmed, will you continue to advocate for strong relations between the United States and Uruguay in support of democracy and respect for the rule of law?

Answer. I believe that Uruguay's strategic importance in the region is clear, and that supporting Uruguay is and should be a priority for the United States. If confirmed, I will work to deepen our relationship. The United States and Uruguay have

a strong and long-standing relationship with over more than 150 years of uninterrupted diplomatic ties. The strength of our historic relationship is based on shared commitments to democracy, human rights, economic prosperity, the rule of law, and security. Uruguay continues to serve as a global model of democracy and has spoken out against autocratic leaders that threaten freedom and democratic stability.

We have an important opportunity now to further strengthen our extensive cooperation with Uruguay. I understand that we will launch the first U.S.-Uruguay Annual Bilateral Inter-Ministerial Dialogue later this year. Our governments will work together to identify time-bound deliverables in areas of the bilateral relationship such as the economy, climate, science and technology, democracy and human rights, security, and education. If confirmed, I will use this new platform to support Uruguay as a vital partner of the United States.

Question. In April, I wrote an op-ed making the case for why it is important to continue to have closer relations with Uruguay in areas such as trade, security, space, and counter-narcotics. I think it is very important that we strengthen our bilateral relations with a partner like Uruguay. If confirmed, what will be your main priorities as Ambassador to Uruguay?

Answer. Trade, security and counter-narcotics, and space all represent areas of potential additional bilateral cooperation. If confirmed, I look forward to applying the expertise I have developed leading security cooperation in the region as the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Western Hemisphere Programs in the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL). Uruguay has prioritized citizen security and has taken steps to combat transnational criminal organizations that are trying to make inroads across its borders. We are actively incorporating Uruguay into U.S.-funded cross-training with neighboring countries in order to strengthen our collective efforts to counter criminal networks. In response to Uruguayan requests for capacity building, INL launched programs tailored to Uruguay, including the U.N. Office on Drugs and Crime's Container Control Program, which enabled the establishment of Uruguay's first inter-agency task force at the Port of Montevideo to address the increase in cocaine seizures there in recent years. We are including Uruguay in regional anti-money laundering and cybercrime programs, the Department of Defense has increased its collaboration with their military counterparts, and DEA is cross-training Uruguayan officials with counterparts in neighboring countries. I understand that Uruguay is in the early stages of building a national space program and a satellite launch capability, and if confirmed, I will support Department of Defense and State Department efforts to promote international rules-based space cooperation and security.

Question. It is my understanding that Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) is under negotiation with Uruguay. What can you tell me about the status of that agreement?

Answer. The United States has a robust and dynamic agenda in Uruguay, including continuing to expand our strong trade relationship. I understand the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) and the Uruguayan Government are currently negotiating updates to modernize the Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA). The updates promote sustainable and inclusive trade policies that benefit the widest number of people, and we are eager to see the negotiations successfully conclude. The updates support competitiveness and economic recovery, specifically focusing on the areas of trade facilitation, good regulatory practices, anti-corruption, and digital trade. In his April 12 meeting with Uruguay's Foreign Minister Bustillo in Washington, Secretary Blinken called on the Government of Uruguay to use the final agreement on the protocols to celebrate the U.S.-Uruguay trade relationship.

Question. What do you think that agreement should include addressing both America's and Uruguay's priorities for our bilateral trade?

Answer. I understand that at the most recent TIFA meeting, topics for discussion included a decision to renegotiate the trade facilitation protocol, as well as tax discussions, statements on environmental issues such as illegal fishing and fishing subsidies, forced labor, services, customs cooperation, and intellectual property, especially geographical indications, and biotechnology. I believe that updating the TIFA to include additional topics could bring benefits to both the United States and Uruguay by increasing opportunities for U.S. investors and small businesses, potentially bolstering our already significant investment stock in Uruguay. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the USTR and the Department of Commerce to help successfully conclude the TIFA negotiations and further strengthen our trade ties with Uruguay.

Question. Do you think this agreement will be sufficient to dissuade Uruguay from negotiating a free trade agreement with China?

Answer. Uruguay will pursue relationships and partnerships in the best interests of Uruguay, just as the United States does. The administration of President Luis Lacalle Pou has sought to sign and expand free trade agreements with many countries across the world, including in Asia, the Middle East, and Europe. We want to be at the table as a partner and friend of Uruguay, expanding on our shared principles and values for the mutual benefit of both the United States and Uruguay. Uruguay's strong institutions help drive trade and investment, and we will encourage Uruguay to avoid taking any steps through trade negotiations that would weaken the institutional strength that has served it well. I believe that concluding TIFA negotiations would be a positive next step in our trade relationship, as they promote sustainable and inclusive trade policies that benefit a wide swath of people. The updates to the TIFA support competitiveness and economic recovery, specifically focusing on the areas of trade facilitation, good regulatory practices, anti-corruption, and digital trade.

Question. What is your proposal to counter China's investments in Uruguay and make the United States the preferred partner of choice for Uruguay?

Answer. In addition to conveying our concerns about the risks of problematic PRC investment in sensitive sectors, if confirmed, I would build on the existing advantages the United States has in the Uruguayan market. While the PRC is Uruguay's top trading partner and a major destination for goods exports, it is not a major investor in Uruguay. Uruguay is keenly interested in the U.S. market and attracting U.S. investment. The United States is Uruguay's third largest trading partner in goods, after China, Brazil, and level with Argentina. There is even more significant bilateral trade in services, particularly in the IT sector, where Uruguayan IT exports to the U.S. are estimated at over $1 billion. Accounting for trade in services would dramatically impact the calculus on economic contributions to the Uruguayan economy and could position the United States as Uruguay's largest trading partner or a close second. Supporting Uruguay's sustainable economic growth is strategic objective for the United States, and if confirmed, I will continue to make that a priority.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO ROBERT J. FAUCHER BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Democracy and Human Rights

Question. In the State Department's 2022 Human Rights report, Suriname was noted for cruel and degrading treatment of individuals by police, widespread acts of corruption, and the existence of some of the worst forms of child labor.

- What is your assessment of the effectiveness of these efforts by the Government?

Answer. The Republic of Suriname has taken steps to investigate, prosecute, and punish officials who committed human rights abuses, whether in the security forces or elsewhere in the Government. For example, authorities prosecuted three police officers for suspected complicity in child sex trafficking. However, resource and capacity issues continue to pose challenges to the effectiveness of these efforts. The Government has investigated cases of corruption and implemented the laws on corruption unevenly. While the country lacks inspectors solely dedicated to child labor, the Government has trained all inspectors to identify child labor and instructed them how to handle suspected cases. Half of inspectors received training on child trafficking in previous reporting periods.

Question. If confirmed, what actions would you take with host government to address the conditions in prison facilities?

Answer. If confirmed, I would encourage the Government of Suriname to address the conditions in prison facilities, which fall well short of international standards. Resources permitting, I would work to assist their government in gaining training and professionalization assistance for its prison officials so that Suriname upgrades the conditions of its prison facilities.

Question. How could you work with the Government to continue to build on and improve the country's human rights record?

Answer. The Santokhi administration has made repeated public commitments to upholding human rights and has taken concrete steps to reduce its reporting back-

log with the InterAmerican Court on Human Rights. The Government assigned a former Attorney General to update its required reporting (Suriname's last updates were made in 2017) and move investigations forward on some longstanding cases such as the Moiwana Massacre. If confirmed, I will work with the Government of Suriname to build on and improve Suriname's human rights record, particularly by focusing attention on decades-long human rights cases such as the December 8 murders and the killings in Tamanredjo. I will also maintain Embassy Paramaribo's close collaboration with human rights organizations and other civil society organizations concerned with Suriname's human rights record.

Question. If confirmed, how can you direct your mission to better support civil society actors to improve the human rights situation on the ground?

Answer. If confirmed, I would reinforce post's long-standing commitment to supporting civil society actors on human rights issues, as well as ensure that all embassy staff, regardless of position, consider human rights a mission priority. I would require all personnel to complete the State Department's atrocities prevention training and other human rights training, as appropriate. I would encourage U.S. and local staff to communicate their concerns about human rights issues occurring in Suriname, and I would ensure that our grant programming supports human rights defenders and other relevant civil society actors.

Question. In the State Department's 2022 Trafficking in Persons report, Suriname remained a Tier 2 country for not fully meeting the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking, but is making significant efforts to do so. However, the Government did not convict any traffickers during the year of the report, did not provide adequate services for victims, and did not sufficiently fund anti-trafficking efforts.

- If confirmed, how could you work with the host government to improve victims' services and overall anti-trafficking efforts?

Answer. If confirmed, I will encourage the Government of Suriname to continue to make progress against human trafficking in the areas of prosecution, protection, and prevention by: increasing efforts to convict traffickers, following due process, and sentencing convicted traffickers to significant prison terms; increasing efforts to investigate and prosecute alleged traffickers, including officials complicit in trafficking crimes; providing vulnerable individuals with trauma-informed assistance, reintegration support, and interpretation in their language prior to, during, and after screening for trafficking; providing adequate and dedicated funding for the National Action Plan and government departments carrying out anti-trafficking activities; prosecuting child sex and labor trafficking cases under the trafficking statute and provide specialized child protection services with trained providers; fully implementing the victim identification and referral protocol and training officials in its use to identify trafficking victims, especially among at-risk groups; training judges at all levels of the judiciary in human trafficking and the trafficking law and sensitizing judges and prosecutors to the issue of secondary trauma; supporting NGOs and foreign embassies on victim identification and service provision; incorporating survivor input into anti-trafficking policies, developing and executing a robust monitoring and evaluation framework, and publishing the results; and referring to care victims identified through the hotline and reporting on the hotline's effectiveness.

Question. In the State Department's 2021 International Religious Freedom report, Suriname's constitution provides for freedom of religion and the constitution and law prohibit discrimination based on religion. U.S. officials have continued to highlight U.S. Government policy on the importance of protecting religious freedom and tolerance.

- What is your assessment of these efforts?

Answer. Suriname is proud of its rich multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, multi-religious heritage. In 2022, President Santokhi held events at the Presidential Palace marking days sacred to each of the major religions, including a first-ever Iftar dinner held at the Palace. The Government of Suriname remains strongly committed to ensuring religious freedom. If confirmed, I will ensure the U.S. mission in Paramaribo reinforces the importance of tolerance and religious freedom with the Government of Suriname, religious leaders, and appropriate civil society organizations.

Question. If confirmed, how could you work with political and religious leaders to continue to build upon religious freedoms?

Answer. If confirmed, I would utilize the U.S.-Suriname Bilateral Dialogue and personal engagement with government and religious leaders to continue to build upon religious freedoms. I would ensure that all stakeholders were aware of the im-

portance that the United States places on religious freedom and our continued collaboration to build upon Suriname's firm foundation in this arena.

Question. The Office of Multilateral Strategy and Personnel (MSP) in the State Department's bureau of International Organizations is leading a whole-of-government effort to identify, recruit, and install qualified, independent personnel at the U.N., including in elections for specialized bodies like the International Telecommunications Union (ITU). There is an American candidate, Doreen Bogdan-Martin, who if elected would be the first American and first woman to lead the ITU. She is in a tough race that will require early, consistent engagement across capitals and within the U.N. member states.

- If confirmed, do you commit to demarching the Suriname Government and any other counterparts necessary to encourage their support of Ms. Bogdan-Martin?

Answer. Yes, if confirmed I commit to demarching the Suriname Government and any other counterparts necessary to encourage support of Ms. Bogdan-Martin. As Director of the Office of Specialized and Technical Agencies in the State Department's Bureau of International Organizations (2013–2015), I led efforts to support Doreen Bogdan-Martin's leadership of the ITU's Strategic Planning and Membership Department. Ms. Bogdan-Martin is a global leader in the information and communication technologies sector and would be an outstanding Secretary-General of the International Telecommunications Union.

Question. If confirmed, how can you work with the International Organizations (IO) bureau and other stakeholders to identify, recruit, and install qualified Americans in positions like the Junior Program Officer (JPO) program at the U.N.?

Answer. If confirmed, I would coordinate with the IO bureau to assist it in casting as wide a net as possible to identify and recruit appropriate qualified American candidates for positions at the U.N. like the Junior Program Officer (JPO) program. I would also encourage the American staff at Embassy Paramaribo and qualified Americans in Suriname to consider such opportunities.

Question. Suriname has a low rate of voting coincidence with the U.S. in the U.N. General Assembly and in the Security Council.

- What is your assessment of this issue?

Answer. In 2020 Suriname voted with the United States 22 percent of the time. In 2021, the Suriname-U.S. voting coincidence improved on some key votes such as on Nicaragua-related matters. Suriname was an early, strong voice condemning the Russian invasion of Ukraine. At the same time, Suriname tends to follow or coordinate its votes with Caribbean Community (CARICOM) member states in this regard and often abstains on critical votes. If confirmed, I will work assiduously to improve Suriname's voting coincidence with the United States in the U.N. General Assembly.

Question. If confirmed, what concrete actions can you take to engage with the Suriname Government on anticipated votes in the U.N. system that would increase their voting coincidence with the U.S.?

Answer. Suriname is a CARICOM member and coordinates its votes with its fellow member states. Suriname currently holds the chair of CARICOM, and if confirmed, I would work closely with the Bureau of International Organizations, the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs, and my fellow U.S. Ambassadors to CARICOM and CARICOM countries to provide persuasive arguments to move individual members, such as Suriname, to be reasoned, persuasive voices within the CARICOM internal discussions.

State Department Manangement and Public Diplomacy

Question. Many U.S. missions have been under enormous stress over the last few years, in large part due to COVID.

- What is your understanding of morale throughout Mission Paramaribo?

Answer. I understand that the stress of the COVID–19 pandemic has had a profound impact on Mission Paramaribo. Global U.S. staffing shortages have placed additional stress on this already small post. Nevertheless, the Mission staff, both direct hire and local staff, have lived up to the highest standards of the Department by continuing to perform at the very highest level, advocating for U.S. interests and bilateral cooperation related to political and economic issues, managing development programs, and providing routine and emergency American citizen services in both Suriname and French Guiana. I applaud what they have done and continue to do. If confirmed, it will be my honor to lead such an outstanding group of public servants.

Question. How do you intend to improve morale at Mission Paramaribo?

Answer. The morale, well-being, and safety of all mission employees will be one of my top priorities as Ambassador, if confirmed. I will work with Embassy leadership to ensure there are proper resources in place for all employees to contribute to the Mission's success. I will also make every effort to ensure that all employees are aware that I care about them, that I want to hear from them, and that it is my duty to work with them to address their concerns.

Question. How do you intend to create a unified mission and vision at Mission Paramaribo?

Answer. If confirmed, I will utilize the annual Suriname-U.S. Bilateral Dialogue, as well as the Embassy's Integrated Country Strategy and other guiding strategic documents to ensure that our staff know and understand our mission. I will utilize regular meetings of the Embassy's country team to empower the staff to carry out the vision of these foundational strategic documents.

Question. Management is a key responsibility for Chiefs of Mission. How would you describe your management style?

Answer. I would describe my management style as empowering staff while holding them accountable for performance and results. I seek to foster open, frank communications among staff members, while providing strategic leadership regarding mission goals and objectives.

Question. Do you believe it is ever acceptable or constructive to berate subordinates, either in public or private?

Answer. No, I do not believe it is ever acceptable or constructive to berate subordinates, either in public or private.

Question. How do you envision your leadership relationship with your Deputy Chief of Mission?

Answer. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the Deputy Chief of Mission and establishing a relationship that will prove to be mutually beneficial and provide the Embassy the leadership structure required for success. An effective Embassy requires a strong, complementary relationship between the Ambassador and the Deputy Chief of Mission. I recognize that it will be my responsibility to work with the DCM in a way that takes advantage of their talents and experience, while continuing to support their professional development so that they are prepared to assume roles of greater responsibility later in their career. I envision my relationship with the Deputy Chief of Mission as including strong elements of mentoring for continued professional development, delegation of responsibly for oversight of executive operations, and reliance as an "alter ego."

Question. If confirmed, what leadership responsibilities do you intend to entrust to your Deputy Chief of Mission?

Answer. If confirmed, I anticipate the Deputy Chief of Mission to play a key role on three Mission priorities: the effective implementation of the Integrated Country Strategy by the Country Team; advocating for U.S. interests and enhanced bilateral cooperation; and serving as my principal counsel on matters relating to our staff and their welfare. My DCM will also have responsibility for mentoring any first or second tour officers and specialists at Embassy Paramaribo.

Question. In order to create and continue employee excellence at the Department, accurate and direct employee evaluation reports (EERs) for Foreign Service Officers are imperative, though often lacking.

- Do you believe that it is important to provide employees with accurate, constructive feedback on their performances in order to encourage improvement and reward those who most succeeded in their roles?

Answer. Yes, I believe it is important to provide employees with accurate, constructive feedback on their performance in order to encourage improvement, professional development, and reward those who most succeeded in their roles. To that end, accurate and direct employee evaluation reports for Foreign Service Officers are imperative, and if confirmed, I will ensure the timely and accurate completion of all employee evaluation processes at Embassy Paramaribo.

Question. If confirmed, would you support and encourage clear, accurate, and direct feedback to employees in order to improve performance and reward high achievers?

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, I would support and encourage clear, accurate, and direct feedback to employees in order to improve performance and reward high achievers.

Question. It is imperative that U.S. diplomats get outside of posts abroad to meet with local actors, including host government officials, non-government organizations, and fellow foreign diplomats stationed in Suriname.

- In your opinion, do U.S. diplomats get outside of our embassy walls enough to accomplish fully their missions?

Answer. Yes, now that pandemic domestic restrictions have largely lifted, I understand that our diplomats in Suriname do engage outside the Embassy to great effect to accomplish their mission. Admittedly, critical U.S. personnel staffing gaps limit the capacity to do so, and the inaccessibility of some areas of the country except by small aircraft or boat also pose challenges.

Question. How do you intend to improve the ability of U.S. diplomats to better access all local populations?

Answer. The COVID–19 pandemic has challenged the fundamental engagement and outreach aspect of our work, encouraging us to adapt and modernize. In addition to traditional in-person meetings and travel, which have been ongoing in Suriname since mid-2020, if confirmed, I will leverage the new telecommunications technologies developed and adopted during the pandemic to connect with new and wider audiences.

Question. Public diplomacy is an important aspect of U.S. foreign policy efforts. What is the public diplomacy environment like in the Suriname?

Answer. Facebook remains the largest platform for social media in Suriname and therefore remains a high priority area for public diplomacy efforts while also engaging with the much smaller audiences on other services as warranted. Surinamers are largely receptive to the United States and our messaging. Pre-pandemic, Embassy Paramaribo's film festivals and events were well attended and well received. I understand that the Embassy continued its work in those arenas in alternate manners during the pandemic and has plans in place to return to these popular programs in-person this fall as the country returns to pre-COVID–19 levels of activity.

Question. What public diplomacy challenges do U.S. diplomats face there?

Answer. Language difficulties, particularly outside of Paramaribo, pose a challenge as knowledge of Dutch and English is not universal. Several other local and regional languages proliferate in the interior and require interpretation for public diplomacy efforts.

Question. How do you balance the importance of Main State versus the in-country mission when it comes to tailoring public diplomacy messages for foreign audiences?

Answer. When it comes to tailoring public diplomacy messages in Suriname, the key is to find the intersections between the global messaging and the importance of that issue for the Surinamese public and then express that importance in a manner that emphasizes the relevance clearly and directly.

Question. "Anomalous health incidents," commonly referred to as "Havana Syndrome," have been debilitating and sidelining U.S. diplomats around the world for years. They have caused serious, negative consequences for U.S. diplomacy, yet many believe that the Department is not doing enough to care for, protect, and communicate to its personnel.

- If confirmed, do you commit to taking this threat seriously?

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, I commit to take seriously the threat of "anomalous health incidents," commonly referred to as "Havana Syndrome." In preparation for assuming the position of Chief of Mission Suriname, I have received several briefings concerning this threat and the importance of providing care for, protecting, and communicating with personnel under my authority about "anomalous health incidents."

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to talking as openly as you can to Mission Paramaribo personnel?

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, I commit to talking as openly as practicable to Mission Paramaribo personnel and their families concerning the threat of "anomalous health incidents" and all other matters.

NOMINATIONS

THURSDAY, JULY 28, 2022—p.m.

U.S. SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS,
Washington, DC.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 2:00 p.m., in Room SD–419, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. James Cardin presiding.

Present: Senators Cardin [presiding], Coons, Kaine, and Hagerty.

Also present: Senator Cornyn

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. BENJAMIN L. CARDIN, U.S. SENATOR FROM MARYLAND

Senator CARDIN. This Senate Foreign Relations Committee will come to order. I want to thank the leadership of our committee for entrusting to Senator Hagerty and myself the honor of chairing and ranking on this particular nomination hearing. I want to thank all of our nominees.

We are going to defer to Senator Cornyn who wants to do an introduction.

Senator CORNYN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It is great to be with you and colleagues here for a very important introduction of Carrin Patman, nominated to serve as the Ambassador to the Republic of Iceland.

I have known Carrin longer than either one of us would care to admit. Our paths first crossed in Bear County, Texas, my hometown, San Antonio, when I was a baby district judge, pretty new to the bench, and Carrin was a young lawyer. She had just finished law school at the University of Texas and was at the starting line of what would be a long and distinguished career as a litigator, a trial lawyer. Carrin spent three decades practicing with international law firm Bracewell and became the first women elected to the firm's seven-member management committee.

After retiring from Bracewell in 2016, Carrin was appointed to serve as the chair of the Board of the Metropolitan Transit Authority of Houston, or Harris County, as we know it, called METRO. Houston is the fourth-largest city in the country, and Harris County is the third-largest county. METRO has a $1.3 billion budget, 4,100 employees, and it covers 1,300 square miles. That is a long way of saying that chairing METRO is no easy task. It requires diplomatic skills and an ability to bring competing constituencies together.

Fortunately, Carrin has mastered those skills. She turned them into an artform as the chair of Metro, and should the Senate con-

firm her for this position I know she will use those skills well and those experiences well to serve our country and fight for our interests abroad.

In just a moment you will hear directly from Carrin about her career, civic involvement, and her deep love for America. You will see the passion, the skill, and the sound judgment that has guided her throughout her career. And I hope you will reach the same conclusion that I have, that Carrin Patman will be an outstanding ambassador.

Four nearly four decades I have had the—I guess I disclosed it—for nearly four decades I have had the pleasure of knowing Carrin, as well as her husband Jim, who is here with us today, and I have full confidence in her ability to serve the American people as the ambassador to Iceland.

So thank you again, Chairman Cardin and Ranking Member Hagerty, for giving me the opportunity to make this introduction today, and thank you to all of my colleagues, Senator Kaine, I saw Senator Coons earlier, for considering this nominee. I look forward to supporting this nomination and I hope you will too. Thanks so much.

Senator CARDIN. Senator Cornyn, we appreciate you taking the time to make these introductions. I know Senator Coons had the pleasure of being with the nominee on a plane flight to Washington, I was told. I do not know if that strategic planning that you decided to check his flight schedule to do that, but it was pretty good strategy.

Senator CORNYN. I told you she was good.

[Laughter.]

Senator CARDIN. Thank you, Senator.

Today, as I said, we are going to have hearings on nominees for some critically important ambassadors, ambassadors to the Netherland, Iceland, Slovak Republic, North Macedonia, and Namibia. Each one of these positions are critically important to our national security. These are extremely challenging times to be in global diplomacy and to represent the United States, and we appreciate each of you making that decision to help our country and to serve our nation. So first and foremost, I want to thank you for your willingness to step forward in these critically important roles.

And secondly, I want to acknowledge your families. I see many sitting behind you today. You cannot do this without a supportive family, and there are certainly a lot of sacrifices that they make. So we thank them as well for sharing you with our country and the important work that you are going to be doing.

Let me just talk very briefly about each of you and then I will let Senator Hagerty make his opening statements, and then we will hear directly from you.

Shefali Razdan Duggal is a political activist, a women's rights advocate, and a human rights campaigner. In 2014, President Obama appointed her to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Council, which I am also a member of that council, so thank you very much.

Carrin Patman, as we heard from Senator Cornyn, is the chair of the Metropolitan Transit Authority of Harris County, Texas. She currently works as a partner at Bracewell LLP and worked as a

trial lawyer, handling litigation for commercial disputes, antitrust, competition issues, and regulatory compliance. Earlier commitments to public service include her role as a founding board member of the Center for Women in Law and as executive committee member of Girls Inc. of Greater Houston, and Sheltering Arms Senior Services.

Gautam Rana currently serves as the Deputy Chief of Mission at the U.S. Embassy in Algeria and was the embassy's Chargé d'Affaires from August 2020 to February 2022. Mr. Rana was previously the Deputy Chief of Mission and also Chargé d'Affaires ad interim at the U.S. Embassy in Slovenia. Among other positions, he was Director of Afghanistan and Pakistan on the National Security Council staff and the Deputy Minister Council for Political Affairs at the U.S. Embassy in New Delhi.

Ms. Angela Price Aggeler is a career member of the Senior Foreign Service with the rank of Minister-Council. She served as the Deputy Chief of Mission at the U.S. Embassy in Islamabad, Pakistan, as well as its Chargé d'Affaires. She formerly served as Minister-Council for Public Affairs at the U.S. Embassy in Paris, Acting Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Press and Public Diplomacy in the Bureau of Press and Public Diplomacy.

She has held other diplomatic posts in Pakistan, North Macedonia, Vietnam, France, and India.

And then Randy Berry, to be Ambassador of Namibia. Mr. Berry served as U.S. Ambassador to Nepal. Prior of that he was Deputy Assistant Secretary in the State Department of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, and before that the State Department's first Special Envoy for Human Rights of the LGBTI Persons.

I understand that Senator Kaine will make an introduction for Ms. Duggal, but first let me turn it over to the ranking member, and then we will go Senator Kaine.

Senator Haggerty.

STATEMENT OF HON. BILL HAGERTY,
U.S. SENATOR FROM TENNESSEE

Senator HAGERTY. Thank you, Chairman Cardin, and I want to thank all the nominees for appearing here today. I also appreciate your willingness to serve this great nation. I cannot tell you what an honor it is to represent the most exceptional nation in the world to any country, and you have been nominated to do just that. So just being here is quite an accomplishment, to have gotten to this point, and I hope that we have a good hearing today to move you along the path.

I would like to start with the nominee to be the U.S. Ambassador to the Netherlands. The United States and the Netherlands share a long history of friendship and coordination that goes back to the American Revolution. I look forward to hearing from the nominee about how we can maintain a strong partnership and work to counter China's malign influence in Europe.

With respect to the nominee to be Ambassador to Iceland, Iceland is a strategically important country, and both President Trump and President Biden have pushed hard for enhanced en-

gagement on Arctic issues in light of concerns about Russian and Chinese activities in the region. I look forward to hearing from the nominee on this subject.

Next I would like to turn to the nomination to be the Ambassador to the Slovak Republic. The U.S. and Slovakia share a commitment to freedom and human rights, and I believe Slovakia's experience can be a model for other emerging democracies. I hope our next Ambassador can continue to build our strong diplomatic ties and aid in fulfilling our commitments to this ally.

For the nominee to be Ambassador to North Macedonia, the U.S. and North Macedonia have good relations, and recently held a Strategic Dialogue to take stock of the bilateral relationship and outline areas for enhanced cooperation. I am interested to know your thoughts on further areas of cooperation between the U.S. and this Western Balkan country.

Last but certainly not least, I would like to focus on the nomination to be Ambassador to Namibia. The United States and Namibia share a friendly relationship, and I look forward to hearing from the nominee about how we can strengthen the U.S. partnership with Namibia in light of their close ties with China.

And to all five nominees, again, thank you for serving our nation and for answering the questions of the committee today. I look forward to hearing your testimony.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back my time.

Senator CARDIN. Thank you, Senator Hagerty.

Senator Kaine for an introduction.

Senator KAINE. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and to Senator Hagerty. It is real treat to be with a panel and Carrin, it is so good to see you as well. I do want to say just a few words of introduction about my longtime friend, Shefali Duggal, and I am really, really excited that she has been nominated for the Ambassador position in the Netherlands.

Being in politics is tough. The travel is hard and sometimes you wonder whether the T-account, does the plus and minus come out on the right side. But one of the things that I have certainly enjoyed from 28 years at the local, state, and now Federal level is I have just met wonderful people that I might not have met otherwise, and I put Shefali and her family in that category.

In the early 2010s I met Shefali on the West Coast, and came to know her. She is an immigrant to the United States from Kashmir, India. She is an experienced political activist, women's rights advocate, human rights campaigner, with a wonderful family. She is a former presidential appointee to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Council, where she acquitted herself in a very, very honorable way. She continues to serve as a Western Regional Advisor for that important American institution.

On the West Coast she is a San Francisco Committee member on Human Rights Watch, passionate about human rights issues, a member of the Wake Forest University Leadership and Character Council, and she is has also served on the National Board of Directors for Emily's List. Shefali has received numerous awards from the Holocaust Museum, a Community Hero from the California State Assembly, one of the Most Powerful Women in California by the National Diversity Council.

Shefali is just the kind of a person who is able to be passionate in her pride for this country. She will be a great Ambassador. She is also a great diplomat. She believes there is no challenge in life that a few Ghirardelli chocolate squares will not make go much better.

[Laughter.]

Senator KAINE. And I think there is some wisdom there that we could all learn from.

But I am going to stay and ask questions as a member of the committee, but I just wanted to introduce Shefali to my friends on this side of the dais and recommend her highly.

Senator CARDIN. Senator Kaine, thank you for this very fine introduction. We now know her a lot better.

We are going to now hear from all of our witnesses. We would ask that you try to summarize your statements in about 5 minutes. Your entire statement will be made part of the record.

So we will start with Mrs. Duggal.

STATEMENT OF SHEFALI RAZDAN DUGGAL OF CALIFORNIA, NOMINATED TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE KINGDOM OF THE NETHERLANDS

Ms. DUGGAL. Thank you. Thank you, Senator Kaine. That was so lovely. I appreciate it.

Chairman Cardin, Ranking Member Hagerty, and distinguished committee members, it is a genuine honor to be with you today. Senator Kaine, thank you so very much for the incredibly kind introduction.

I am deeply appreciative to President Biden and Secretary Blinken for the nomination and confidence in my ability to serve as Ambassador to the Kingdom of the Netherlands. If confirmed, I look forward to enthusiastically representing and serving the American people as a force multiplier for good to advance key U.S. foreign policy priorities.

If I may, I would also like to also thank my husband of 24 years, Rajat; my precious children, Tarak and Arya; my lifelong friends who have always been a protective shield of love and support; and the most resilient human I know, my mother, Veena Razdan. I would also like to thank the talented team at U.S. Embassy The Hague and Consulate General Amsterdam, who perform vital diplomatic work every day. If confirmed, I look forward to working with all of you closely.

As an immigrant, I represent the diverse face of the United States and the generations of people throughout our history who found opportunity in our great country. I was raised by a single mom in Cincinnati, who worked two minimum-wage jobs to support us. My father left us when I was very young, and this profoundly and permanently affected the direction of my life. Rather than dwell upon what I did not have, I embraced the boundless opportunities that we are given here in the United States. I attended college and graduate school with the help of loans, grants, and scholarships.

As I faced some of my own challenges of being a minority woman with limited resources, I became attuned to the values of diversity

and inclusion that continue to inspire me today. I also focused on the rights of minorities and the critical importance of being a voice of the oppressed. This motivated me to pursue my years of work with Human Rights Watch and to serve as a member of the United States Holocaust Memorial Council.

While my life was often not easy, I was always saved by the Grace of God and the promise of the United States. I have full confidence that kindness, empathy, honesty, and sweat equity mean something in our country. It is the reason why people from all over the world see us as a beacon of hope and freedom. While my story is not unique, it is one that represents the infinite possibilities of the American Spirit and the American Dream.

The Netherlands was the second country to formally recognize the new American republic, making the U.S.-Dutch connection one of our longest, unbroken, peaceful friendships. If confirmed, I will work, along with the talented mission team, to deepen our bilateral relationship, and advance the following three priorities.

First, deepen bilateral and global security. If confirmed, my highest priority will always be the safety and security of the over 47,000 Americans in the Netherlands, including the 300-plus mission personnel and their families, along with the 1.5 million Americans who annually visit the Netherlands. The Netherlands has been a strong military ally of the United States. I will build on decades of close bilateral and multilateral relationships to face the global security challenges of today and potentially those of the future.

Second, deepen our economic ties. The U.S.-Netherlands economic relationship is one of our deepest and most important trade relationships. The Netherlands is one of the largest foreign investors in the United States, and Dutch investment supports over 800,000 American jobs. If confirmed, I will work to deepen our economic ties, promote American business, encourage further Dutch investment in the United States, and promote our shared prosperity.

Third, promote and defend our shared values of democracy and human rights. Throughout our 240-year friendship, our shared commitment to a rules-based international order forms our enduring foundation, especially in promoting and defending human rights, protecting democratic institutions, and strengthening the rule of law. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the Netherlands to meet ever-evolving new challenges.

If confirmed, I will come to this position with humility and commitment. I would serve as the first person of color as the United States Ambassador to the Kingdom of the Netherlands. I am a grateful and loyal American who loves this country deeply. I was born in India, but I was made in the United States.

It would be an honor to follow in the footsteps of our first ambassadorial envoy, John Adams. I wholeheartedly commit to being available to members of this committee, members of Congress, and staff, to work in partnership.

Thank you so very much for your time. I look forward to answering your questions.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Duggal follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF SHEFALI RAZDAN DUGGAL

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Ranking Member, and distinguished committee members, it is a genuine honor to be with you today. Senator Kaine, thank you so very much for the incredibly kind introduction.

I am deeply appreciative to President Biden and Secretary Blinken for the nomination and confidence in my ability to serve as Ambassador to the Kingdom of the Netherlands. If confirmed, I look forward to enthusiastically representing and serving the American people as a force multiplier for good to advance key U.S. foreign policy priorities.

If I may, I would also like to thank my husband of 24 years, Rajat; my precious children Tarak and Arya; my lifelong friends who have always been a protective shield of love and support; and the most resilient human I know, my mother, Veena Razdan. I would also like to thank the talented team at U.S. Embassy The Hague and Consulate General Amsterdam, who perform vital diplomatic work every day. If confirmed, I look forward to working with all of you closely.

As an immigrant, I represent the diverse face of the United States and the generations of people throughout our history who found opportunity in our great country. I was raised by a single mom in Cincinnati, who worked two minimum wage jobs to support us. My father left us when I was very young, and this profoundly and permanently affected the direction of my life. Rather than dwell upon what I did not have, I embraced the boundless opportunities that we are given here in the United States. I attended college and graduate school with the help of loans, grants, and scholarships. As I faced some of my own challenges of being a minority woman with limited resources, I became attuned to the values of diversity and inclusion that continue to inspire me today. I also focused on the rights of minorities and the critical importance of being a voice of the oppressed. This motivated me to pursue my years of work with Human Rights Watch and to serve as a member of the United States Holocaust Memorial Council. While my life was often not easy, I was always saved by the grace of God and the promise of the United States. I have full confidence that kindness, empathy, honesty, and sweat equity mean something in our country. It is the reason why people from all over the world see us as a beacon of hope and freedom. While my story is not unique, it is one that represents the infinite possibilities of the American spirit and the American dream.

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If confirmed, I will come to this position with humility and commitment. I would serve as the first person of color as the U.S. Ambassador to the Kingdom of the Netherlands. I am a grateful and loyal American who loves this country deeply. I was born in India, but I was made in the United States.

It would be an honor to follow in the footsteps of our first Ambassadorial envoy, John Adams. I wholeheartedly commit to being available to members of this committee, members of Congress (and staff) to work in partnership. Thank you so very much for your time. I look forward to answering your questions.

Senator CARDIN. Thank you very much for your comments.

We will now go to Ms. Patman.

STATEMENT OF CARRIN F. PATMAN OF TEXAS, NOMINATED TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE REPUBLIC OF ICELAND

Ms. PATMAN. Chairman Cardin, Ranking Member Hagerty, and distinguished committee members, it is the deepest honor to appear before you today as the President's nominee for the United States Ambassador to Iceland. I am honored and profoundly grateful to President Biden and Secretary Blinken for their confidence, and of course I am also deeply appreciative for the support of my home state Senators, Senator Cornyn, for his so very gracious introduction, and Senator Cruz as well.

I am joined today by my husband, Jim Derrick, without whose love and support I would not be before you.

This nomination is particularly special to me because I grew up in a family of public servants. My dad, Bill Patman, and my grandfather, Wright Patman, served in the United States House for a total of 51 years, so I completely understand that this role will require me to work in partnership with Congress on the issues that I will face. In fact, both my dad and granddad were in the audience when President Roosevelt delivered his Day of Infamy speech, my grandfather as a Congressman and my dad as a page.

My maternal grandfather, Fred Mauritz, whose parents immigrated from Iceland's fellow Arctic country, Sweden, was a Texas state senator also, and in honor of our Scandinavian heritage my mother's Scandinavian heritage was so important to her that she raised the money to establish the Swedish Excellence Endowment at the University of Texas to be established, for which she was awarded the Royal Order of the Polar Star by the King of Sweden. So being nominated for this public service role, and in a country representing my own Nordic heritage, is deeply special.

As Senators Cardin and Hagerty have noted, it is a critical time to serve in this role, and in Iceland. Iceland has long been our highly valued ally, a strong democracy whose bedrock values mirror our own, a founding member of NATO, a 70-year security partner, a fellow Arctic nation, and a country of enormous strategic importance as we all face threats from other powers.

I have been blessed with opportunities that have prepared me to be a Chief of Mission and to build consensus among diverse stakeholders. And I will not repeat those from my statement here because Senator Cornyn kindly set those forth in his introduction.

But if confirmed, the following are top priorities I would seek to advance. First, of course, to protect the safety and security of U.S. citizens in Iceland, including those under Chief of Mission authority, Embassy personnel and their families, and U.S. tourists. More tourists visit Iceland from the United States than from any other country, and I look forward to welcoming all of you on codels, I hope.

Second, to advance our shared security interests. Iceland's key location, between North America and Europe, and at the center of two critical maritime passageways is even more important as melting Arctic ice increases maritime traffic. Russia and the People's Republic of China fully understand the economic and military importance of Iceland, and if confirmed, I will seek to deepen our se-

curity cooperation and support Iceland in managing these challenges. Ranking Member Hagerty had specifically discussed China, and yes, they, in fact, are increasing their presence in the Arctic, and I look forward to further discussing it in Iceland as well, if you want to question me about it.

Third, if confirmed, I would seek to strengthen our economic relationship. The United States is already Iceland's most important single-country trading partner, with great opportunities for additional trade and investment. I would work with Iceland with respect to its vital role in sustaining our planet and as a world leader in renewable energy and a pioneer in carbon storage.

Fifth, we are both members of the Arctic Council, so I would look forward to working with Iceland on Arctic issues.

Additionally, of course, I would prioritize people-to-people ties through exchange programs, robust public diplomacy efforts, and one-on-one contact with me and my husband, Jim. I am blessed that it is a country relatively small in population, so I hope to get to meet a lot of people in Iceland.

It would be a privilege and honor of a lifetime to serve as the U.S. Ambassador to Iceland. Thank you for your time and consideration, and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Patman follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF CARRIN F. PATMAN

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and distinguished members of the committee, thank you for the privilege of appearing before you today as the President's nominee for the United States Ambassador to Iceland. I am honored and deeply grateful to President Biden and Secretary Blinken for their confidence in me.

I'm also deeply appreciative for the support of my home state Senators, Senator Cornyn and Senator Cruz.

And I'm joined today by my husband, Jim Derrick, without whose love and support I would not be before you.

This nomination is particularly meaningful to me because I grew up in a family of public servants. My dad, Bill Patman, and my paternal grandfather, Wright Patman, both served in the United States House of Representatives. My maternal grandfather, Fred Mauritz, whose parents immigrated from Iceland's fellow Arctic country, Sweden, was a Texas State Senator. My mother's Scandinavian heritage was so important to her that she raised the money to establish the Swedish Excellence Endowment at the University of Texas and was awarded the Royal Order of the Polar Star by the King of Sweden. So being nominated for this public service role, and to a country representing my own Nordic heritage, is deeply special.

Moreover, it is a critical time in which to serve in this role, and in Iceland. Iceland has long been an important and highly valued ally. It is a strong democracy whose bedrock values mirror our own, a founding member of NATO, and a security partner with the United States for over 70 years. Iceland is a fellow Arctic nation with whom we have long cooperated on Arctic issues, and a country of great geostrategic importance to us and the world, as we collectively face concerning threats from other powers.

I have been blessed with opportunities that have prepared me to be a chief of mission, and to build consensus among diverse stakeholders. Most recently, I led the Houston region's $1 billion transit agency serving almost 4 million people, bringing together the public and private sectors to develop and then secure overwhelming voter approval of a multi-billion-dollar plan to expand service, including to traditionally underserved constituencies. During several decades as a trial lawyer, I mastered complex and challenging cases, persuaded decision makers and often resolved disputes out-of-court even among antagonistic parties—one of my first cases was in then Judge Cornyn's court!—and was elected to multiple terms on our international law firm's management committee. And of course, I've had a lifelong involvement in public service through my family's service as well as my own.

I'm thrilled to be nominated to serve in Iceland. The United States and Iceland cooperate on many important issues, from transatlantic security, to protecting fun-

damental human rights, tocombating climate change, to sustainably developing the Arctic. If confirmed, the following are top priorities I would seek to advance:

First, to protect the safety and security of U.S. citizens in Iceland, including those under Chief of Mission authority, Embassy personnel and their families, and U.S. tourists. More tourists visit Iceland from the United States than from any other country.

Second, to advance our shared security interests. Iceland's key location right between North America and Europe, and at the center of the critical maritime Greenland-Iceland-United Kingdom Gap, is now even more important as melting ice increases maritime traffic in the Arctic. Russia and the People's Republic of China understand the strategic importance of Iceland, both economically and militarily, and if confirmed, I will seek to deepen our security cooperation with Iceland and support Iceland in managing these challenges.

Third, if confirmed, I would seek to strengthen our economic relationship. The United States is Iceland's most important single-country trading partner, with great opportunities for additional trade and investment.

Fourth, Iceland plays a vital role in sustaining our planet, not only as an important site for research and understanding of climate developments, but also as a world leader in renewable hydropower and geothermal energy, and a pioneer in carbon storage.

Fifth, as a fellow member of the Arctic Council, Iceland is an instrumental partner in shaping Arctic policy, and if confirmed I will work closely with Iceland on Arctic issues.

Additionally, if confirmed, I will promote and strengthen people-to-people ties with Iceland through exchange programs and robust public diplomacy efforts.

I also look forward to working with Congress to further U.S. priorities in Iceland.

It would be a privilege and honor of a lifetime to serve as the U.S. Ambassador to Iceland. Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to your questions.

Senator CARDIN. Thank you very much for your comments.

We will now hear from Ms. Aggeler.

STATEMENT OF ANGELA PRICE AGGELER OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, A CAREER MEMBER OF THE SENIOR FOREIGN SERVICE, CLASS OF MINISTER–COUNSELOR, NOMINATED TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA

Ms. AGGELER. Chairman Cardin, Ranking Member Hagerty, and distinguished members of the committee, it is the honor of my Foreign Service career to appear before you today as President Biden's nominee to be the next U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of North Macedonia. I am humbled by and grateful for the trust President Biden and Secretary Blinken have placed in me to represent the United States in Skopje. I hope to also earn your trust, and if confirmed, would work closely with you to advance U.S. foreign policy priorities in North Macedonia.

I would like to use this opportunity to recognize my husband, Brian, also a career member of the Senior Foreign Service and the Deputy Chief of Mission at our embassy in Paris. I would not be here today were it not for his continuous support. I would also like to thank my daughter, Madeleine, who has come from Austin, Texas, to have my back today, as always.

I began my foreign service career in 1998, and have served in Pakistan, Vietnam, France, and India. I am also no stranger to North Macedonia. I served as Counselor for Public Affairs in Skopje, where I focused on educating and empowering youth and minority communities, good governance, and building a stronger economy and more tolerant society. I would be deeply honored to

return to Skopje to serve as the U.S. Ambassador and to advance our priorities with this important strategic partner.

NATO's newest ally, North Macedonia, will also assume the chairmanship of the OSCE in 2023. We must continue to work closely with North Macedonia in responding to the threats posed to our security and the international order, most immediately Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. The urgency of this moment underscores the importance of deeper political, economic, cultural, security cooperation, and people-to-people ties with North Macedonia and other Western Balkan countries as they work to realize their strategic goals of European integration.

The United States has supported North Macedonia's longstanding goal of EU accession. We stand firmly behind the EU enlargement process because it has advanced democratic development and promoted peace, stability, and prosperity on the European continent, building stronger strategic partners for the United States. North Macedonia has overcome difficult challenges and made tough choices to take historic steps forward on its accession path. If confirmed, I will build on these successes to secure that path forward.

The United States and North Macedonia have many shared priorities, including fighting corruption, improving the rule of law, and strengthening good governance. If confirmed, I will encourage judicial reforms and urge the institutions of North Macedonia to promote transparency, investigate allegations of abuse, and decisively counter corruption to bolster public confidence in governance. I will work with interagency partners to help North Macedonia develop a national strategy that effectively holds corrupt actors accountable.

If confirmed, I will work to support North Macedonia's economic future through policies to bolster its investment climate, strengthen infrastructure, improve energy diversity and security, and build resistance to malign external influence, including from Russia and China. I will work to advance the country's integration into regional economic growth initiatives based on EU standards, such as Open Balkan and Common Regional Market. I will support American companies exploring opportunities in North Macedonia.

North Macedonia needs to diversify energy sources and routes and develop competitive, transparent, and efficient energy markets. If confirmed, I will champion the country's transition from coal towards cleaner alternatives and create the market conditions that attract American investment that will spur North Macedonia to become a regional energy hub.

Finally, if confirmed, I will build on the positive momentum of June's bilateral Strategic Dialogue, which you mentioned, Senator Hagerty, which touched on a range of issues, including deepening military-to-military cooperation.

It would be an honor to lead our Embassy Skopje team and work with the Government, citizens, and our international partners on these priorities. Thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you, and I welcome your questions.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Aggeler follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF ANGELA PRICE AGGELER

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Ranking Member, and distinguished members of the committee, it is the honor of my Foreign Service career to appear before you today as President Biden's nominee to be the next U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of North Macedonia. I am humbled by and grateful for the trust President Biden and Secretary Blinken have placed in me to represent the United States in Skopje. I hope to also earn your trust, and if confirmed, would work closely with you to advance U.S. foreign policy priorities in North Macedonia.

I would like to use this opportunity to recognize my husband, Brian, also a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, and the Deputy Chief of Mission at our embassy in Paris. I would not be here today were it not for his continuous support. I would also like to thank my daughter, Madeleine, who has come from Austin, Texas, to have my back today, as always. I began my foreign service career in 1998 and have served in Pakistan, Vietnam, France, and India. I am also no stranger to North Macedonia. I served as Counselor for Public Affairs in Skopje, where I focused on educating and empowering youth and minority communities, good governance, and building a stronger economy and more tolerant society. I would be deeply honored to return to Skopje to serve as the U.S. Ambassador to North Macedonia and to advance our priorities with this important strategic partner.

NATO's newest ally, North Macedonia, will also assume the chairmanship of the OSCE in 2023. We must continue to work closely with North Macedonia in responding to the threats posed to our security and the international order, most immediately Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. The urgency of this moment underscores the importance of deeper political, economic, cultural, security cooperation, and people-to-people ties with North Macedonia and other Western Balkan countries as they work to realize their strategic goals of Western integration.

The United States has supported North Macedonia's longstanding goal of EU accession. We stand firmly behind the EU enlargement process because it has advanced democratic development and promoted peace, stability, and prosperity on the European continent, building stronger strategic partners for the United States. North Macedonia has overcome difficult challenges and made tough choices to take historic steps forward on its accession path. If confirmed, I will build on these successes to secure the EU accession path of North Macedonia.

The United States and North Macedonia have many shared priorities, including fighting corruption, improving the rule of law, and strengthening good governance. If confirmed, I will encourage judicial reforms and urge the institutions of North Macedonia to promote transparency, investigate allegations of abuse, and decisively counter corruption to bolster public confidence in governance. I will work with interagency partners to help North Macedonia develop a national strategy that effectively holds corrupt actors accountable.

If confirmed, I will work to support North Macedonia's economic future through policies to bolster its investment climate, strengthen infrastructure, improve energy diversity and security, and build resilience to malign external influence, including from Russia and China. I will work to advance the country's integration into regional economic growth initiatives based on EU standards, such as Open Balkan and Common Regional Market. I will support American companies exploring opportunities in North Macedonia.

North Macedonia needs to diversify energy sources and routes and develop competitive, transparent, and efficient energy markets. If confirmed, I will champion the country's transition from coal towards cleaner alternatives and create the market conditions that attract American investment that will and spur North Macedonia to become a regional energy hub.

Finally, if confirmed, I will build on the positive momentum of June's bilateral strategic dialogue, which touched on a range of issues, including deepening military-to-military cooperation.

It would be an honor to lead our Embassy Skopje team and work with the Government, citizens, and our international partners on these priorities. Thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you. I welcome your questions.

Senator CARDIN. Thank you for your testimony.

Mr. Rana.

STATEMENT OF GAUTAM A. RANA OF NEW JERSEY, A CAREER MEMBER OF THE SENIOR FOREIGN SERVICE, CLASS OF COUNSELOR, NOMINATED TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

Mr. RANA. Chairman Cardin, Ranking Member Hagerty, Senator Kaine, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I am honored to be President Biden's nominee for the position of Ambassador to the Slovak Republic. I am grateful for the trust and confidence the President and Secretary Blinken have placed in me. If confirmed, I pledge to work with you to advance our nation's interests in the Slovak Republic.

I first want to thank my wife, Alexsa Alonzo, and my sons Rohan and Arjun. Alexsa and Rohan are here with me today, and my younger son, Arjun, is watching from home with my wonderful sister-in-law, Alicia Alonzo. I am so proud of them all, and I am here before you today because of their love, sacrifice, and support. As part of a diplomatic family that moves every few years, I want to thank them for their own service to our country.

My family and I are the embodiment of the American Dream, thanks to the courage, vision, and sacrifice of my parents, Amrat and Nirmala Rana. When I was only a year old, my father departed his native India and arrived at JFK Airport with $20 dollars in his pocket. For 3 years, he worked a succession of minimum-wage jobs before his wife and three children joined him in New Jersey. My mother and father made tremendous sacrifices for me, my sisters, and their extended family, believing in their hearts that America truly was the land of opportunity and that their hard work would be rewarded. They stressed to my sisters and me the importance of education and how it could liberate us to pursue our dreams. Thanks to my parents' sacrifices and hard work, and my own journey as an immigrant, I am deeply conscious of how privileged I am to be an American citizen, and I am honored to have served and represented my country as a diplomat for the last 20 years.

As a person with a disability, I am also immensely grateful for the opportunities and freedom I have had as an American. I contracted polio as a child in India and need to use a leg brace and forearm crutches to walk. Between my time in the Peace Corps and Foreign Service, I have lived and worked in eight foreign countries on four continents. Though we still have much to do in the United States to ensure all disabled people can live full and dignified lives, I believe from my own lived experience that we are doing much better than many other countries. I sit before you today as an ambassador-nominee only because my parents had the wisdom and foresight to come to the United States.

As a Foreign Service Officer, I have advanced U.S. interests all over the globe, including in Europe. Next year marks the 30th anniversary of Slovakia's independence, and if confirmed, I hope to continue strengthening our already close relationship with the Slovak Republic.

If confirmed, I will have no greater priority than the protection of my Embassy team and our citizens, from ensuring the safety of

individual American travelers to bolstering homeland security through bilateral law enforcement cooperation.

If confirmed, I will focus the Embassy on three priorities. First, supporting Slovakia's capacity to become a more active and capable partner in strengthening regional and global security and stability. I will also prioritize supporting Slovakia as it stands with Ukraine against Russia's aggression. Slovakia has already provided more that 159 million euros in humanitarian and military aid to Ukraine, including donating an S–300 air defense system at a crucial time. Slovakia remains one of the largest donors to Ukraine measured by aid as a share of GDP, and since 2014, Slovakia has provided a critical link for Ukraine to import natural gas from Europe.

Second, if confirmed, I will also focus on strengthening bilateral trade and investment, including by increasing opportunities for U.S. companies in the Slovak market and for Slovak companies that want to invest in the United States. I will promote U.S. exports, fight for transparency and the rule of law as Slovakia improves its business environment, and press for greater energy diversity and efficiency that will enhance Slovak and European energy security while advancing their climate change goals.

Third, if confirmed, as you noted, Senator Hagerty, I will also focus on reinforcing Slovakia's commitment to the West and on actively engaging the Slovak public to build support for our shared commitment to democracy and human rights. This includes working with our Slovak partners in addressing disinformation.

As demonstrated by the First Lady's visit to Slovakia in May, the United States continues to deepen our partnership with the Slovak Republic. If confirmed, it would be the honor of my life to lead our outstanding team in Bratislava to advance our country's interests there and across the region.

Mr. Chair, Ranking Member, Senator Kaine, thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you today. I welcome your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Rana follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF GAUTAM A. RANA

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, distinguished members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I am honored to be President Biden's nominee for the position of Ambassador to the Slovak Republic. I am grateful for the trust and confidence the President and Secretary Blinken have placed in me. If confirmed, I pledge to work with you to advance our nation's interests in the Slovak Republic.

I first want to thank my wife, Alexsa Alonzo, and my sons Rohan and Arjun. Alexsa and Rohan are here with me today, and Arjun is watching from home with my wonderful sister-in-law Alicia Alonzo. I am so proud of them all, and I am here before you today because of their love, sacrifice, and support. As part of a diplomatic family that moves every few years, I want to thank them for their own service to our country.

My family and I are the embodiment of the American Dream, thanks to the courage, vision, and sacrifice of my parents, Amrat and Nirmala Rana. When I was only a year old, my father departed his native India and arrived at JFK Airport with $20 dollars in his pocket. For three years, he worked a succession of minimum wage jobs before his wife and three children joined him in New Jersey. My mother and father made tremendous sacrifices for me, my sisters, and their extended family, believing in their hearts that America truly was the land of opportunity and that their hard work would be rewarded. They stressed to my sisters and me the importance of education and how it could liberate us to pursue our dreams. Thanks to my par-

ents' sacrifices and hard work, and my own journey as an immigrant, I am deeply conscious of how privileged I am to be an American citizen and I am honored to have served and represented my country as a diplomat for the last twenty years.

As a person with a disability, I am also immensely grateful for the opportunities and freedom I have had as an American. I contracted polio as an infant in India and need to use a leg brace and forearm crutches to walk. Between my time in the Peace Corps and Foreign Service, I have lived and worked in eight foreign countries on four continents. Though we still have much to do in the United States to ensure all disabled people can live full and dignified lives, I believe from my own lived experience that we are doing much better than many other countries. I sit before you today as an ambassador-nominee only because my parents had the wisdom and foresight to come to the United States.

As a Foreign Service Officer, I have advanced U.S. interests all over the globe, including in Europe. Next year marks the thirtieth anniversary of Slovakia's independence, and if confirmed, I hope to continue strengthening our already close relationship with the Slovak Republic.

If confirmed, I will have no greater priority than the protection of my Embassy team and our citizens—from ensuring the safety of individual American travelers, to bolstering homeland security through bilateral law enforcement cooperation.

If confirmed, I will also focus the Embassy on three priorities: first, supporting Slovakia's capacity to become a more active and capable partner in strengthening regional and global security and stability. I will also prioritize supporting Slovakia as it stands with Ukraine against Russia's aggression. Slovakia has already provided more that 159 million euros in humanitarian and military aid to Ukraine, including donating an S-300 air defense system at a crucial time. Slovakia remains one of the largest donors to Ukraine measured by aid as a share of GDP, and since 2014, Slovakia has provided a critical link for Ukraine to import natural gas from Europe.

Second, if confirmed, I will also focus on strengthening bilateral trade and investment, including by increasing opportunities for U.S. companies in the Slovak market and for Slovak companies that want to invest in the United States. I will promote U.S. exports, fight for transparency and the rule of law as Slovakia improves its business environment, and press for greater energy diversity and efficiency that will enhance Slovak and European energy security while advancing their climate change goals.

Third, if confirmed, I will also focus on reinforcing Slovakia's commitment to the West and on actively engaging the Slovak public to build support for our shared commitment to democracy and human rights. This includes working with our Slovak partners in addressing disinformation.

As demonstrated by the First Lady's visit to the Slovak Republic in May, the United States continues to deepen our partnership with Slovakia. If confirmed, it would be the honor of my life to lead our outstanding team in Bratislava to advance our country's interests there and across the region.

Mr. Chair, Ranking Member, and members of the committee, thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you today. I welcome your questions.

Senator CARDIN. Thank you for your testimony.

We will now hear from Ambassador Berry.

STATEMENT OF HON. RANDY W. BERRY OF COLORADO, A CAREER MEMBER OF THE SENIOR FOREIGN SERVICE, CLASS OF CAREER MINISTER, NOMINATED TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

Ambassador BERRY. Chairman Cardin, Ranking Member Hagerty, and members of the committee, I am deeply honored to appear before you this afternoon as President Biden's nominee to be the next U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Namibia. I thank President Biden and Secretary Blinken for their confidence and trust in this nomination, and if confirmed, look forward to continuing my nearly 30 years of service to the United States Government, this time to advance our relationship with the Namibian Government and the Namibian people.

I am a proud sixth-generation son of the soil of the great state of Colorado. My Foreign Service career has taken me from a childhood on horseback on my family-run cattle ranch in the shadow of the Rockies to my current office in Kathmandu, in the shadow of the Himalayas, where I am now concluding 4-year tenure as Ambassador soon. I have had the great opportunity, however, to live and work on the African continent for nearly a decade over my career, advancing U.S. interests and relationships there.

As you are aware, and mentioned, Senator Cardin, the Foreign Service life demands a full buy-in from our families and those who love us, I want to acknowledge the enduring love and support of my family in this career and really in all things: my husband Pravesh Singh, who is seated behind me, and my children Arya and Xander, who are also joining me today.

For the past 30 years, Namibia has been a stable, democratic country and a model of U.S.-Africa partnership. It has continued to build strong institutions and an independent judiciary, and typically ranks right at the top in Africa for press freedom. Namibia's Government and citizens share many of the United States' priorities, including strengthening democratic institutions, increasing free trade and investment to grow an inclusive economy, promoting human rights, and addressing global threats such as climate change. If confirmed, I look forward to leading our dynamic team in Windhoek to deepen our partnership and further our common interests and values.

I would like to share with you the priorities that, if confirmed, I would work hard every day to advance as U.S. Ambassador. First and foremost, the welfare of U.S. mission colleagues and American citizens is my paramount priority, and I will work every day to ensure that our people are serving in a workplace that is healthy, is inclusive, and is marked by respect. I am excited also for the chance to move our team into a new Chancery next year that will provide a better physical work environment for all. Also, relationships of trust are a key part of diplomacy, I believe, both inside and outside the walls of an embassy, and I will invest heavily in building up relationships based on respect that produce results for our goals.

My mission team and I will support Namibia as it builds on its tradition of good governance. Anti-corruption messaging and assistance to fortify Namibia's democracy is a priority for both for their government and for ours. Through advocacy and partnerships, we will encourage Namibia to fully implement laws and policies that respect human rights.

Namibia also faces threats to its abundant natural resources, which are, like our own, vulnerable, in this case to exploitation by transnational criminal organizations and foreign powers due to insufficient social and legal protections. We will partner with Namibia to minimize opportunities for corruption and nature crimes and ensure that Namibia's ambitions to become a regional transport hub via the Walvis Bay Port include strong safeguards against illicit activity.

Both the United States and Namibia seek increased bilateral trade and investment. The U.S.-Namibia commercial relationship is a growing one, and recent successes show that fostering increased

trade and investment through mechanisms like the African Growth and Opportunity Act, Prosper Africa, Power Africa, and other infrastructure and economic initiatives are critical components of our efforts to accelerate economic development in Namibia. If confirmed, I will facilitate commercial relationships and call for a pro-business and pro-innovation policy for U.S. and Namibian businesses and accelerate equitable and inclusive development. Creating opportunities for planning and security partnerships will allow us to advance our priorities as Namibia grows in strategic importance as an anchor for activity in the south Atlantic Ocean.

Finally, if confirmed, I will focus on our continued investment in people. Once facing one of the world's highest HIV/AIDS prevalence rates, Namibia became a flagship country for the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, or PEPFAR, and it is now one of the few highly affected countries in the world nearing epidemic control of HIV/AIDS. Our investment of over USD $1 billion in PEPFAR funds to Namibia since 2004 has saved lives of thousands and been a force multiplier for our bilateral relationship, fostering cooperation in many areas in addition to health.

The next chapter in our partnership with Namibia must ensure a resilient, well-equipped, and civically engaged population, especially among Namibia's youth. If confirmed, I will use our resources to empower current and future generations to partner with us to respond to global threats and opportunities and to adapt to longer-term economic, social, and environmental challenges.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, I thank you again aid I look forward to answering your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Berry follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. RANDY W. BERRY

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Ranking Member, and members of the committee, I am honored to appear before you as President Biden's nominee to be U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Namibia. I thank President Biden and Secretary Blinken for their confidence and trust, and if confirmed, look forward to continuing my nearly thirty years of service to the United States Government to advance our relationship with the Namibian Government and people.

I am a proud sixth-generation son of the great state of Colorado, though my Foreign Service career has taken me from a childhood on horseback on my family-run cattle ranch in the shadow of the Rockies to the Himalayas, where I am concluding my service as Ambassador to Nepal. I have had the opportunity to live and work on the African continent for nearly a decade advancing U.S. interests and relationships. As you are aware, the Foreign Service life demands a full family commitment. I want to acknowledge the enduring love and support of my family in this career and in all things: my husband Pravesh Singh, and my children Arya and Xander, who are joining me today.

For the past 30 years, Namibia has been a stable, democratic country and a model of U.S.-Africa partnership. It has built strong institutions and an independent judiciary, and typically ranks at the top in Africa for press freedom. Namibia's Government and citizens share many of the United States' priorities, including strengthening democratic institutions, increasing free trade and investment to grow an inclusive economy, promoting human rights, and addressing global threats such as climate change. If confirmed, I look forward to leading our dynamic team to deepen our partnership and further our common interests and values.

I would like to share with you the priorities that, if confirmed, I would work to advance as U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Namibia. First and foremost, the welfare of U.S. Mission colleagues is my paramount priority, and I will work to ensure that our people are serving in a workplace that is healthy, inclusive, and marked by respect. I am excited to move us into a new Chancery that will provide a better physical work environment for all. Relationships of trust are a key part of

diplomacy, both inside and outside the Embassy, and I will invest heavily in building relationships based on respect that produce results on mutual goals.

My Mission team and I will support Namibia as it builds on its tradition of good governance. Anti-corruption messaging and assistance to fortify Namibia's democracy is a priority for both our government and theirs. Through advocacy and partnerships, we will encourage Namibia to fully implement laws and policies that respect human rights. Namibia also faces threats to its abundant natural resources, which are, like our own, vulnerable to exploitation by transnational criminal organizations and foreign powers due to insufficient social and legal protections. We will partner with Namibia to minimize opportunities for corruption and nature crimes and ensure that Namibia's ambitions to become a regional transport hub via the Walvis Bay Port include strong safeguards against illicit activity.

Both the United States and Namibia seek increased bilateral trade and investment. The U.S.-Namibia commercial relationship is growing, and recent successes show that fostering increased trade and investment through mechanisms like the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), Prosper Africa, Power Africa, and other infrastructure and economic initiatives are critical components of our efforts to accelerate economic development in Namibia. If confirmed, I will facilitate commercial relationships and call for a pro-business and pro-innovation policy environment. We will expand opportunities for U.S. and Namibian businesses and accelerate equitable and inclusive development. Creating opportunities for planning and security partnerships will allow us to advance our priorities as Namibia grows in strategic importance as an anchor for activity in the south Atlantic.

Finally, if confirmed, I will focus on our continued investment in people. Once facing one of the world's highest HIV/AIDS prevalence rates, Namibia became a flagship country for the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) program. It is now one of the few highly affected countries in the world nearing epidemic control of HIV/AIDS. Our investment of over USD $1 billion in PEPFAR funds to Namibia since 2004 has saved thousands of lives and been a force multiplier for our bilateral relationship, fostering cooperation in areas other than health. The next chapter in our partnership with Namibia must ensure a resilient, well-equipped, civically engaged population—especially among Namibia's youth. If confirmed, I will use our resources to empower current and future generations to partner with us to respond to global threats and opportunities and to adapt to longer-term economic, social, and environmental challenges.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, I thank you again for this opportunity and look forward to answering your questions.

Senator CARDIN. We thank all of you for your comments and your observations. We appreciate that very much.

This committee has a tradition of asking all nominees questions about their availability. Some of you have already answered this in your presentations. You must have anticipated these questions were going to be asked. That is good staff work. But I am going to ask each of you to answer yes or no individually on the four questions that are asked about responsiveness to our committee.

Do you agree to appear before this committee and make officials from your office available to the committee and designated staff when invited?

Ms. DUGGAL. Yes.

Ms. PATMAN. Yes.

Ms. AGGELER. Yes.

Mr. RANA. Yes.

Ambassador BERRY. Yes.

Senator CARDIN. Do you commit to keep this committee fully and currently informed about the activities under your purview?

Ms. DUGGAL. Yes.

Ms. PATMAN. Yes.

Ms. AGGELER. Yes.

Mr. RANA. Yes.

Ambassador BERRY. Yes.

Senator CARDIN. Do you commit to engaging in meaningful consultation with policies that are being developed, not just providing notification after the fact?

Ms. DUGGAL. Yes.

Ms. PATMAN. Yes.

Ms. AGGELER. Yes.

Mr. RANA. Yes.

Ambassador BERRY. Yes.

Senator CARDIN. Do you commit to promptly responding to requests for briefings and information requested by the committee and its designated staff?

Ms. DUGGAL. Yes.

Ms. PATMAN. Yes.

Ms. AGGELER. Yes.

Mr. RANA. Yes.

Ambassador BERRY. Yes.

Senator CARDIN. You all passed. Congratulations.

As I think has been observed, the five countries that you have been nominated to be our representatives are all democratic states. So we are dealing with countries that are naturally allies of the United States but they have certain challenges.

There are a couple of common concerns that we have. One is the dependency on Russian oil, which is today a very important consideration. As we know, Russia has weaponized the use of energy, and these countries remain very dependent upon Russian energy sources. It makes it more challenging for us to have the type of leverage to keep unity in our support for Ukraine. In the Slovak Republic, I understand 100 percent of their oil is imported, and 85 percent of their natural gas. We know in North Macedonia it is a large percentage, and in the Netherlands.

So let me start first with Mr. Rana. How would you go about urging the importance of removing that dependency from the point of view of the national security not only of the Slovak Republic but also of our allies in Europe?

Mr. RANA. Thank you very much for that question, Senator Cardin. You are absolutely right—100 percent of Slovakia's oil and nuclear energy, or the fuel, is derived from Russia, and 85 percent of its natural gas. The most important thing that I would do, if confirmed as Ambassador would be to encourage Slovakia to integrate within the European Union's own internal energy market and diversify fuel types, supply source countries, and delivery routes.

What do we mean by that? One, with the nuclear fuel, try to find new suppliers. Right now they are completely dependent on the Russians. With natural gas Slovakia has already built interconnectors with all of its neighbors. They have contracted with the Norwegians to supply natural gas. They have also brought in LNG, including from U.S. suppliers. So these are the types of activities that we would continue to encourage Slovakia and, frankly, all of the European allies, to continue doing. Thank you.

Senator CARDIN. Thank you. Ms. Aggeler, there is a similar problem in North Macedonia, not quite as great, and as you point out, North Macedonia is taking on a leadership within the OSCE, which we are very pleased to see. But it also gives us a chance for who-

ever assumes leadership in that organization to demonstrate, by action, their commitment to the Helsinki principles.

In North Macedonia the energy issue is one, but also they have had some challenges in the rule of law and building that capacity. Tell me how you could utilize our position in that country, through our mission, particularly as North Macedonia ascends in the OSCE.

Ms. AGGELER. Thank you so much for the question, Chairman Cardin, and they are both critical important right now, particularly as we look at the fact that just 12 days ago the Parliament of North Macedonia passed the required motions to begin its EU accession, to accept the French proposals for that accession, and as we look to this country and to Albania moving forward in the EU.

First of all, you are absolutely right about the energy crisis. North Macedonia is on the verge of declaring an energy crisis as of August because of their dependence largely on Russian gas. We have already seen efforts throughout our mission in Greece, for example, on a Greece-North Macedonia interconnector LNG that would not only benefit North Macedonia but also many of its neighbors. And there are a number of initiatives on clean energy that would assist them to move away from the dependency on Russia.

But your point also about not only OSCE leadership but also their EU accession aspirations are critically important and I believe offer us an opportunity. And if confirmed, I will do everything in my power, Senator, to help them make so many of the reforms in rule of law, for example, that will assist that country in overall governance, which they so desperately need.

I was very pleased to read today that the Embassy in Skopje announced $4.3 million in additional funding for rule-of-law programs across North Macedonia that were a direct result of the Strategic Dialogue that we had in June. So those reforms, those necessary reforms, I would do everything I could to support them. Thank you.

Senator CARDIN. Ms. Duggal, let me complete the issue in regard to Russian dependency. There is a similar problem in regard to Netherlands. Tell us how you would address that as our Ambassador.

Ms. DUGGAL. Thank you for the question, Chairman Cardin. That is absolutely such a critical thought, and Russia does use energy as a weapon to attempt to weaken Europe. The Netherlands is, in fact, less dependent on Russian energy than other European countries, and the Netherlands does hope to cut Russian oil and fossil fuels by the end of the year and aims to halt coal imports by August 11th and expand wind and solar.

The steps they have already taken in the Netherlands, if I could list a few, the EU has reached a plan, actually just very recently, to cut natural gas by 15 percent between now and spring of 2023. They are also using coal-fired stations to operate at 35 percent maximum capacity. And there is an emergency option in the Netherlands to tap into the Groningen gas field, which is the largest in Europe, and reopen, if need. And if confirmed, I would be helpful in that conversation.

Senator CARDIN. And we are going to follow up on all these issues.

One of the areas, and particularly as a Senator from Maryland, we have an LNG export facility located in our state. We know that

American LNG is part of the solution of Europe to remove their dependency on Russian energy sources, particularly natural gas. So these are all areas that are going to have to be put into fast gear because some of these issues take a while to implement. And it could be a very cold winter in Europe this year.

Senator Hagerty.

Senator HAGERTY. Thank you, Chairman Cardin, and I want to stay with you, Ms. Duggal, just to continue my concerns of what is happening in the Netherlands. The Netherlands has proven to be a significant swing vote in our technological competition with the Chinese Communist Party and with China. There is a tool company there called ASML. Are you familiar with is?

Ms. DUGGAL. Yes.

Senator HAGERTY. ASML produces a special tool known as an extreme ultraviolet lithography system. It basically cuts the thinnest lines in the world on silicon wafers. These tools—I think they cost $150 million a copy—Communist China would love to get their hands on these tools. Huawei would like to decrease its dependence on other countries because they would like to have this capability internalized in China.

Thankfully, ASML has worked with us, and the Government of the Netherlands has worked with us, and Communist China has not received a single one of these machines. And that is because the Government of the Netherlands has withheld export licenses for this to China.

The Trump administration began this sort of coordination between the United States and the Netherlands to persuade them on national security grounds not to grant such an export license, and the Biden administration has continued this policy, which I am very pleased to see. And I would like to know, if confirmed, Ms. Duggal, would you commit to fully support our efforts to encourage in the Netherlands, and other key countries for that matter, to adopt export controls on national security grounds that will prevent Chinese companies from obtaining and acquiring such critical tools and technologies?

Ms. DUGGAL. Thank you for the question, sir. Yes, I actually am aware of, in the Trump administration, the efforts that were made and that were successful, and I also am aware that in July of this year there has been lobbying for the older DUV systems, and if confirmed, yes, I do commit to that, sir.

Senator HAGERTY. I think it is going to be absolutely critical to take every step that we can because the predatory posture of China is becoming more and more evident to everyone around the globe. But our technology competition is absolutely vital. And if you have the opportunity to be confirmed, I think your recognition of the national security threat that Communist China poses and the fact that you will be representing us to a nation that could play a critical role in denying Communist China with that capability I think would be vitally important.

If I could turn my next question to Ms. Patman. As you know, Iceland has no armed forces and it depends on the United States and NATO for its defense. I am very concerned about Russia's increased naval presence in the North Atlantic and I am concerned

about the frequency of their naval patrols. They are levels that we have not seen since the Cold War.

In 2016, the United States and Iceland agreed on a new Joint Defense Declaration. It was aimed at bolstering security cooperation, and the United States has been upgrading its facilities at Iceland's Keflavik military base. Although Iceland's Government has been cooperating with U.S. authorities and activities at Keflavik, some Icelandic officials and parliamentarians are cautious about our increased presence there.

So if confirmed, how would you work to strengthen the defense relationship between the United States and Iceland?

Ms. PATMAN. Thank you so much for the question, Senator. I would work at the highest levels of the Icelandic Government to continue that cooperation and make sure that Iceland understood how valued they are and have been for over 70 years as a strategic partner. As I am sure you know, their location is so pivotal that in World War II we had a base there with troops, which we ultimately, thinking that the Cold War was over, prematurely as it turns out, withdrew in 2006. But subsequent to that time Keflavik, as you are obviously aware, has served as a really critical military base for surveillance.

And in fact, on either side of Iceland are the two maritime passages, collectively known as the Greenland-Iceland-UK Gap, that are essential be used for NATO surveillance of Russian submarines before they drop off into the North Atlantic and become untraceable.

So I am very aware of the aggressions of Russia in that region, of their recognition not only that the Arctic is of critical importance to them economically, given their oilfields and other interests, but they, along with China, are hoping to open up the northern sea route and shorten shipping times, and the northern sea route goes directly through the Greenland-Iceland-UK Gap, which makes that surveillance so important and makes allied control of that location so very important.

So I too have become extremely aware of all the different Russian aggressions, military and economic, involving Iceland, and I do commit to work very faithfully with the Icelandic Government to manage those aggressions and make sure they do not jeopardize either Icelandic or American security.

Senator HAGERTY. Thank you for that response.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator CARDIN. Mr. Berry, I want to talk a little bit about Namibia. It is a bright spot on the African continent, so let me start by acknowledging that. They are ranked 58 out of 180 in the ranking on the 2021 Corruption Index, which is the sixth-best score in Africa. But as I assume you are aware, they recently had a major scandal in their fishing quotas, dubbed the "Fishrot," in which government officials were engaged in corruption.

We recognize that corruption is one of the major ways in which democratic states become very vulnerable. So how can you use the resources of our mission to help strengthen their commitment for anti-corruption activities within their country?

Ambassador BERRY. Thank you, Senator Cardin, for that question. I think there is no doubt that corrupt practices, particularly

when they involve government officials who are betraying the trust of the people, poses one of the greatest threats to democracy, and I think the Fishrot scandal obviously has laid bare some of the vulnerabilities that Namibia's young democracy faces here.

I think there are a couple of things that I would point to as encouraging signs there. First of all, the corruption was largely uncovered through a free and independent media. Second of all, the Government took positive action in sacking those who were responsible or accused through that process and have moved them to trial.

I think that as the United States Government we have a grave and solemn commitment to help support them in those efforts. I think through training, through our regional hub for the International Law Enforcement Academy, through other types of assistance to help ensure that sunshine and daylight, transparency and accountability is really the coin of the realm.

I think that by emphasizing in personal relationships and engagements through our programmatic involvement as well, emphasizing that which binds us most closely, these elements of a democratic society, will be the best guarantee that we have in helping them combat this scourge.

Senator CARDIN. Thank you for that answer.

Ms. Patman, I want to follow up on the issue of Arctic security because I really do think Senator Hagerty's point is one that is of critical importance. Russia is anything but predictable, other than we know that they want to bring down democratic states and they want to expand their influence. That we know. The Arctic is an area of major interest for Russia, and Iceland depends upon NATO. They do not have a capacity themselves, in armed forces. They do have some capacity on the coast.

So how do you sort of help develop the strategies, recognizing Russia's brazen aggression now, that nothing is off the table? How do we strengthen that alliance so that we have a greater Arctic defense than we currently have, recognizing that Russia feels rather emboldened in that area?

Ms. PATMAN. Thank you for the question, and I certainly am ready to meet that challenge, if confirmed as Ambassador to Iceland. Iceland, as we talked earlier, does play a critical geostrategic role, and the whole attitude toward Russia, in my understanding in Iceland, has completely changed in light of the aggression in Ukraine. I think the Foreign Minister spoke at the Wilson Institute here in Washington recently, and talked about how it has changed everything. They are absolutely on red alert about the threat Russia poses and they are ready to engage in all measures necessary to thwart that kind of aggression. Not only have they have been totally supportive of the sanctions, giving humanitarian aid, accepting refugees, and a number of other ways to help in Ukraine, they also recognize, and have actually acknowledged, the possible need for enhanced security presence with respect to NATO security.

Now I will say that Iceland plays above its weight. Iceland really does contribute to NATO in many incredibly valuable ways. The Icelandic Coast Guard operates the Keflavik Air Base. We have a number of installations in Iceland, including a radio transmitter facility at Grindavik that the United States has there, and there are

military exercises in the Arctic to ensure interoperability should there be a problem there, just to name a few examples of how Iceland does contribute handsomely to NATO.

So I would say that yes, it is true that under their security agreement with the United States and under their agreement with NATO we are responsible for their security, but they also contribute to ours as well, and I always like to recognize that.

Senator CARDIN. Thank you. Senator Hagerty?

Senator HAGERTY. If I might just add one more question. This is for Mr. Berry, and again a concern about China's predatory presence in Africa, broadly speaking. They have aggressively used their debt trap diplomacy to move into Africa, and I am very concerned about the posture they are adopting with regard to lithium. And China is on track, if nothing is done about it, to control 75 percent of the world's lithium supply in just a few more years, by 2030.

In Namibia, all the active uranium mines are majority Chinese owned, and China has invested $4.7 billion in a uranium mining project that is one of the largest investments that China has in Africa. So I would love to hear what your perspective is on the Chinese Communist Party's activities in Namibia and what you would foresee, if you are confirmed, what you would foresee as your response to that.

Ambassador BERRY. Thank you, Senator, for that question. You know, for the last 4 years I have been leading a team in a country that shares a border with China so I have become acutely familiar with many of the Chinese predatory policies, its use of disinformation, for example, to target the relationships through the predatory lending that I think has troubled so many states around the world.

I think what I have learned from that is that the best vaccination against those kinds of predatory or unhelpful interventions in any country, Namibia included, is for full transparency and full visibility on arrangements around deals on the extractive industries, on any kind of investment. I think that we lean very heavily into our shared role as democracies around the world. I believe that, if confirmed, what the United States can bring into looking at investment in the extractive industries or bringing greater scrutiny and greater clarity on the arrangements of those deals really is at the core of what we can do there.

I believe that in Nepal we have seen the Chinese Government really attack U.S. programming by the deployment of misinformation, and if confirmed, I will work every day to promote private sector engagement, to provide greater clarity on these deals, and to engage in the common-sense and, I think, extremely useful engagement of building up relationships. I think that an investment of our time, our energy, our focus, and working on the fundamentals of the extractive industries there will give us some new insight on how we can compete. It is, obviously, a great concern to me.

Senator HAGERTY. To be clear, Ambassador, you would be supportive them of U.S. private sector involvement in the extractive industries there, in Namibia?

Ambassador BERRY. Absolutely, Senator. I think whether you look at Namibia's potential in developing its green power sources, the rare earth minerals, the lithium, uranium that you mentioned,

or even to develop the potential of petroleum discoveries, I would sure as heck rather see American companies develop those resources, because I think that we can do it better, I think the technology supports it, and I think we can do it in a way that is environmentally sensitive, which is also a high priority for the Namibian Government.

Senator HAGERTY. Thank you.

Senator CARDIN. And I would just urge you, in the extractive industries, to recognize that it is utilized too often for corruption. And I have been to Namibia and I think they are committed to an honest system, but the more transparency that we have in the process, the stronger that is going to be as these relationships are developed.

Ambassador BERRY. Thank you, Senator. I agree.

Senator CARDIN. The committee record will remain open until close of business on Friday, July 29, for members of the committee that may have ask questions for the record. We would urge you all to try to answer those questions as promptly and as completely as possible because until that process is completed the committee cannot schedule the next step in the confirmation process. So we would ask that you cooperate with the committee, and again we thank you very much for your willingness to put up with this process and to serve our nation.

And with that the committee stands adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 3:12 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

Additional Material Submitted for the Record

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO SHEFALI RAZDAN DUGGAL BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Democracy, and Human Rights

Question. In the State Department's 2022 Human Rights report, the Netherlands was noted for violence or threats of violence against journalists, crimes and threats motivated by anti-Semitism, threats of racial violence, and threats of violence against LGBT communities. Authorities of the kingdom identified, investigated, prosecuted, and punished officials who committed abuses.

- What is your assessment of the efficacy of the Government in identifying and punishing officials committing human rights abuses?

Answer. The Government of the Netherlands has demonstrated efficacy and a strong commitment to promoting and protecting human rights, including as a member state in the U.N. Human Rights Council (HRC). The Netherlands has also worked hard to identify and punish officials who commit human rights abuses. If confirmed, I intend to work with the Government of Netherlands to keep the issues of human rights and religious freedoms at the forefront of our bilateral agenda. I would call upon the Government to hold accountable perpetrators of such threats. I would also encourage the Dutch Government to continue to support community-based initiatives promoting tolerance and inclusivity.

Question. If confirmed, what actions would you take with host government to address violations?

Answer. If confirmed, I would call upon the Government to hold accountable perpetrators of human rights abuses. I would also encourage the Dutch Government to continue to support community-based initiatives promoting tolerance and inclusivity.

Question. If confirmed, how would you direct your mission to bolster civil society and respect for human rights in country?

Answer. As President Biden has said, the United States is ready to work with partners and allies to help lead the world toward a more peaceful, prosperous future grounded in respect for human dignity. I have been a long-time committee member of Human Rights Watch and defending human rights has been a key priority of mine. If confirmed, I would work with the relevant offices in the U.S. Mission, including with the Public Affairs Section, to work with civil society organizations that advocate for human rights. I would utilize our many public diplomacy tools, such as exchanges, cultural programs, and media engagement, to highlight and share best practices.

Question. In the State Department's 2022 Trafficking in Persons report, the Netherlands remained a Tier 1 country for meeting the standards for the elimination of trafficking, maintaining significant efforts to do so. However, the Government's efforts on the Dutch Caribbean islands remained weak, and the Government did not report complete victim statistics for the reporting.

- If confirmed, how could you work with the host government improve efforts in the Dutch Caribbean islands?

Answer. Embassy The Hague works closely with the Dutch Government to share our concerns about trafficking in persons in the Dutch Caribbean, and the Embassy contributes to our Congressionally mandated reporting on conditions there. If confirmed, I would coordinate with U.S. Embassy leadership in the Caribbean, the Dutch Government, senior State and Justice Department officials, and Congressional leadership to encourage increased efforts against trafficking in the Dutch Caribbean.

Question. What steps could you take to encourage the host government to increase the level of victim statistics reported?

Answer. If confirmed, I would encourage the Government of the Netherlands to provide accurate and comprehensive reporting and statistics of their work to address trafficking problems. I would also lead the U.S. Mission in the Netherlands to work with journalists, civil society, advocates, academics, and survivors, who are vital contributors to our understanding of this terrible crime.

Question. In the State Department's 2021 International Religious Freedom report, the Netherlands constitution prohibits religious discrimination and protects the freedom of individuals to profess their religion or beliefs. However, some local politicians have made anti-Islamic and antisemitic statements. Some Jewish groups have expressed concern over rising anti-Semitism through vandalism of Jewish monuments, antisemitic chants at soccer matches, and vandalism involving text sprayed with swastikas.

- What is your assessment of anti-Semitism in the country?

Answer. The Dutch constitution prohibits religious discrimination and protects the freedom of individuals to profess their religion or belief. Dutch ministers have spoken out against antisemitism and have appointed a National Coordinator for Countering Antisemitism. However, there is still more to be done to address religious intolerance and discrimination, including antisemitism. As a former member of the United States Holocaust Museum Memorial Council, for which I continue to serve as a Regional Western Advisor, confronting antisemitism and defending human rights has been a primary focus and, if confirmed, would be one of my highest priorities. If confirmed, I commit to working closely with the Office of International Religious Freedom and Special Envoys for Monitoring and Combating Antisemitism and for Holocaust Issues to push back effectively on antisemitism.

Question. If confirmed, how could you work with the host government to address these concerns?

Answer. Officials from U.S. Embassy The Hague and Consulate General Amsterdam engage in interfaith dialogue, formally and informally, with government officials, religious leaders, youth activists, and other civil society groups to highlight the need for religious tolerance. If confirmed, I pledge to work closely with these stakeholders and in coordination with colleagues in Washington to highlight the need for religious tolerance.

International Organizations

Question. The Office of Multilateral Strategy and Personnel (MSP) in the State Department's bureau of International Organizations is leading a whole-of-government effort to identify, recruit, and install qualified, independent personnel at the U.N., including in elections for specialized bodies like the International Telecommunications Union (ITU). There is an American candidate, Doreen Bogdan-Mar-

tin, who if elected would be the first American and first woman to lead the ITU. She is in a tough race that will require early, consistent engagement across capitals and within the U.N. member states.

- If confirmed, do you commit to demarching the Netherlands Government and any other counterparts necessary to encourage their support of Ms. Bogdan-Martin?

Answer. Absolutely. If confirmed, I would encourage the Netherlands to support Doreen Bogdan-Martin. It is vitally important that key international organizations like the International Telecommunications Union are led by capable individuals committed to upholding the integrity of the rules-based international order. Ms. Bogdan-Martin is clearly the most qualified candidate for Secretary-General of the ITU. I will encourage the Netherlands not only to vote for Ms. Bogdan-Martin at the upcoming ITU Plenipotentiary Conference in September, but to encourage other ITU member states to do the same.

Question. If confirmed, how can you work with the International Organizations (IO) bureau and other stakeholders to identify, recruit, and install qualified Americans in positions like the Junior Program Officer (JPO) program at the U.N.?

Answer. Ensuring that the United States and our like-minded allies and partners do not cede influence in the U.N. system to those who do not share our values and are not committed to the foundational principles of the U.N. is of vital importance to U.S. foreign policy and national security interests. If confirmed, I will work hand-in-glove with the International Organizations Bureau, the Government of the Netherlands, and other stakeholders to augment the number of Americans while encouraging citizens of likeminded nations to work throughout the U.N. system. I would also work with the Embassy's Public Affairs Section to identify, recruit, and install qualified Americans to the U.N.

Europe and Eurasia

Question. The Netherlands has a high rate of voting coincidence with the U.S. in the U.N. General Assembly and in the Security Council.

- If confirmed, what concrete actions can you take to engage with the Netherlands Government on anticipated votes in the U.N. system that would continue to build upon this record with the U.S.?

Answer. The Netherlands is closely aligned with the United States across the spectrum of foreign policy, national security, and economic issues, and we should take full advantage of this close alignment to advance U.S. interests. If confirmed, I would ensure that my team and I maintain regular contact with Dutch counterparts to ensure maximum coordination on upcoming votes and other actions in the U.N. and other multilateral bodies, including actions to stand with Ukraine and further isolate Russia in the international system.

Question. The Netherlands hosts the International Criminal Court, the main body that implements the Rome Statute. The United States is not a party to the Rome Statute.

- If confirmed, do you commit to working with the Ambassador for Global Criminal Justice Van Schaak and Under Secretary Zeya to protect American interests in the context of the ICC?

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, I would absolutely work closely with Ambassador Van Schaack and Under Secretary Zeya to protect our interests in the context of the ICC. The Dutch are proud hosts of the ICC and led efforts to hold Russia to account for human rights abuses in Ukraine during a recent Accountability Conference. As a court of last resort, the ICC has a critical role to play in the international system of justice and the USG supports constructive engagement aimed at supporting the Court's mandate, which is a key priority for the President.

Question. If confirmed, how will you engage with Congress on ICC issues, including any new or rumored investigations of the U.S., Israel, or other allies who are also not a party to the Rome Statue?

Answer. If confirmed, I would work closely with Washington colleagues, Global Criminal Justice Ambassador-at-Large Van Schaack, Under Secretary Zeya, and with Embassy The Hague's Office of Legal Counselor (OLC) to address any concerns related to the ICC. The United States continues to maintain its longstanding objection to efforts by the Court to assert jurisdiction over personnel of non-States, Parties such as the United States and Israel, but believes that any concerns are best addressed through engagement with all stakeholders.

State Department Management and Public Diplomacy

Question. Many U.S. missions have been under enormous stress over the last few years, in large part due to COVID. What is your understanding of morale throughout Mission Amsterdam?

Answer. Mission the Netherlands comprises our Embassy in The Hague and the Consulate General in Amsterdam. My understanding is that our Mission faces staffing shortages among our locally employed hires. Our Consulate General in Amsterdam provides consular services for the country including non-immigrant and immigrant visas and American Citizen Services for both tourists and more than 45,000 Americans citizens who reside in The Netherlands. If confirmed, I would make every effort to regularly meet with the staff to understand any concerns they may have and address any morale issues that may arise.

Question. How do you intend to improve morale at Mission Amsterdam?

Answer. Mission Netherlands has very high morale. If confirmed, the welfare of all Americans and my staff would be my top priority; I would do my utmost to keep morale high at both posts, including by addressing staffing gaps. I would seek frank input and feedback from the staff at Consulate General Amsterdam, enthusiastically recognize their contributions and accomplishments, and work assiduously with my Consul General and my management team to address any concerns they may have.

Question. How do you intend to create a unified mission and vision at Mission Amsterdam?

Answer. If confirmed, I would use my experience building bridges to maintain close communication among staff at the Embassy and Consulate General. In addition to the established, regular meetings between the Embassy and Consulate General, I would work to communicate a unified mission and vision, be inclusive and open, and encourage more frequent interactions among staff. The Consulate General in Amsterdam is uniquely located on Museumplein—the heart of a world-class city. We have an opportunity to leverage this presence as a strategic platform to advance Mission priorities.

Question. Management is a key responsibility for Chiefs of Mission. How would you describe your management style?

Answer. I have always striven to forge inclusive, open environments where individuals feel empowered and develop a shared sense of responsibility. When conflicts arise, I work to resolve them professionally and with respect for all parties involved. I look to delegate authority, but not responsibility, as often as possible. If confirmed, I would bring my optimistic attitude along with a collaborative and team-focused management style to the mission.

Question. Do you believe it is ever acceptable or constructive to berate subordinates, either in public or private?

Answer. No, this type of behavior is not acceptable. If confirmed, I will work to resolve issues professionally and with respect for all parties involved.

Question. How do you envision your leadership relationship with your Deputy Chief of Mission?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work to build a relationship of trust and respect with the Deputy Chief of Mission, delegating when appropriate and ensuring the individual can cover for me in the event I am not available.

Question. If confirmed, what leadership responsibilities do you intend to entrust to your Deputy Chief of Mission?

Answer. If confirmed, I plan to let my Deputy Chief of Mission serve as the Embassy's chief management officer, responsible for the day-to-day functions of the Mission. If confirmed and after I arrive at post, I will work out the details with the Deputy Chief of Mission of our respective portfolios to form the basis of a collaborative, productive relationship.

Question. In order to create and continue employee excellence at the Department, accurate and direct employee evaluation reports (EERs) for Foreign Service Officers are imperative, though often lacking.

- Do you believe that it is important to provide employees with accurate, constructive feedback on their performances in order to encourage improvement and reward those who most succeeded in their roles?

Answer. Yes. Candid and comprehensive performance reviews are essential for employees to know where they stand and for them to understand where they need

to improve. Beyond the annual reviews, it is also important for supervisors to set clear expectations and provide continuous feedback.

Question. If confirmed, would you support and encourage clear, accurate, and direct feedback to employees in order to improve performance and reward high achievers?

Answer. Yes. Ensuring clear, accurate, and direct feedback for employees will raise their overall performance. I will enthusiastically recognize the accomplishments of high-performing employees.

Question. It is imperative that U.S. diplomats get outside of posts abroad to meet with local actors, including host government officials, non-government organizations, and fellow foreign diplomats stationed in the Netherlands.

- In your opinion, do U.S. diplomats get outside of our embassy walls enough to accomplish fully their missions?

Answer. Yes. Diplomats in Embassy The Hague enjoy a free range of movement throughout the country to establish a breadth of contacts and complete their work. If confirmed, I would commit to continue this practice of getting outside of the Embassy to meet with local actors, including host government officials, non-government organizations and fellow foreign diplomats stationed in the Netherlands.

Question. How do you intend to improve the ability of U.S. diplomats to better access all local populations?

Answer. Diplomats working in Embassy The Hague already enjoy a free range of movement throughout the country. If confirmed, I will work to ensure they continue to leave the Embassy to meet with Dutch officials and other citizens throughout the country as often as possible. I will also work closely with Diplomatic Security to monitor the security situation in case there are any changes to the permissive security environment that allows Mission staff to travel throughout the Netherlands. If confirmed, one of my key priorities will be to visit each of the 12 provinces and substantively engage with the local Dutch population to convey and exemplify our American ideals.

Question. Public diplomacy is an important aspect of U.S. foreign policy efforts. What is the public diplomacy environment like in the Netherlands?

Answer. Embassy The Hague uses the full array of public diplomacy tools to engage with the Dutch public across all facets of society, including educational and professional exchanges, cultural and sports diplomacy programs, and grants to local non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

Question. What public diplomacy challenges do U.S. diplomats face there?

Answer. Working in a country such as the Netherlands, with an open media environment, freedom of the press, and freedom of expression, U.S. diplomats face few constraints. If confirmed, I will work to help ensure that this trend continues and will work energetically with my Public Diplomacy Section to ensure that our public diplomacy efforts deepen our bilateral people-to-people ties and advance U.S. strategic priorities in and with the Netherlands.

Question. How do you balance the importance of Main State versus the in-country mission when it comes to tailoring public diplomacy messages for foreign audiences?

Answer. If confirmed, I will direct my public diplomacy officers to continue to shape and advance U.S. messages in country in a smart, balanced manner, which will require them to coordinate and collaborate closely with colleagues in Main State.

Question. "Anomalous health incidents," commonly referred to as "Havana Syndrome," have been debilitating and sidelining U.S. diplomats around the world for years. They have caused serious, negative consequences for U.S. diplomacy, yet many believe that the Department is not doing enough to care for, protect, and communicate to its personnel.

- If confirmed, do you commit to taking this threat seriously?

Answer. Absolutely. The issue of Anomalous Health Incidents—including the interagency effort to protect and care for our personnel and uncover the cause of these incidents—is an absolute priority for the Department. AHIs have been a top priority for Secretary Blinken, who set clear goals for the Health Incident Response Task Force to strengthen the Department's communication with the workforce, provide care for affected employees and family members, and better protect against these events in the future as we work to uncover the cause. If confirmed, I would

have no higher priority than the safety of the members of my Embassy team and their families.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to talking as openly as you can to Mission Amsterdam personnel?

Answer. Yes. If confirmed, I commit to talking openly with Embassy The Hague and Consulate General Amsterdam. I believe that we will be better suited to advance our goals through frequent, honest, and transparent communication.

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FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS SUBMITTED TO
SHEFALI RAZDAN DUGGAL BY SENATOR RISCH

Question. The Netherlands is a major hub for natural gas trade, and has significant stores in the Groningen field that could be used to alleviate gas shortages in Europe. If confirmed to be ambassador, how will you work with the Government of the Netherlands as it, and its European Union partners, navigates the burgeoning European energy crisis?

Answer. The Netherlands has taken many important actions to enhance European energy security and support diversification of energy supplies. Raising production at the Groningen gas fields is challenging because operations there trigger earthquakes. If confirmed, I will work closely with the Government of the Netherlands and colleagues in Washington to support bilateral and multilateral efforts to improve European energy security and reduce European dependence on Russian fossil fuels. I will also support other bilateral and multilateral efforts to reduce the use of fossil fuels in the long-term.

Question. How will you work with the Dutch Government to modernize and diversify its gas and energy industry away from Russia?

Answer. The Government of the Netherlands has been proactive in seeking alternative energy sources to those supplied by Russia, including by speeding up their transition to sustainable sources of energy; increasing the use of hydrogen and responsibly-sourced gas; installing additional wind turbines in the North Sea; and securing additional infrastructure to support diversification of natural gas supplies. If confirmed, I will work closely with the Dutch Government to further those important efforts.

Question. How will you work with the Netherlands' Government and private sector to increase economic ties with the United States?

Answer. The United States and the Netherlands have a robust bilateral commercial and economic relationship, and in 2021 the United States had an $18 billion trade surplus with the Netherlands. The Netherlands is also one of the largest foreign investors in the United States, supporting over 800,000 direct and indirect American jobs. The Netherlands has invested in many sectors of the U.S. economy, including electronics/high-tech, life sciences and health, transportation, logistics, financial services, petrochemicals, agriculture, horticulture, energy, and water management. If confirmed, I will engage with the Dutch Government and private sector to strengthen existing relationships and identify new opportunities for trade and investment.

Question. As Ambassador, how will you work to build people-to-people ties between the U.S. and the Netherlands?

Answer. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the Public Diplomacy Section to strengthen the already deep and enduring people-to-people ties between the United States and the Netherlands. I believe deepening these ties will help to advance the four priorities that the United States shares with the Netherlands: 1) to enhance Transatlantic security cooperation; 2) to promote our shared economic prosperity; 3) to highlight the U.S.-Netherlands climate partnership; and 4) to safeguard our shared democratic values, promote diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility, and protect human rights. If confirmed, one of my key priorities will be to visit each of the 12 provinces and substantively engage with the local Dutch population to convey and exemplify our American ideals.

Question. If confirmed, how will you work with the Dutch Government to protect critical industry, such as semiconductor development and manufacturing, from foreign espionage and intellectual property theft, especially from China?

Answer. The Netherlands is one of the most technologically-advanced countries in Europe and one of the United States' most like-minded partners on digital governance and cyber security. If confirmed, I will continue our cooperation with the Netherlands to promote and protect critical and emerging technologies, such as semiconductor technology, in which the Netherlands is a world leader.

Question. If confirmed, how will you work with the Government of the Netherlands to coordinate and implement sanctions on Russia and support aid to Ukraine? To ensure sanctions compliance and crack down on any attempts to evade sanctions?

Answer. The Netherlands has emerged as a leader within Europe to hold Russia to account for its war against Ukraine, supporting several rounds of EU sanctions against the Kremlin, supplying security and humanitarian assistance to Ukraine, and continuing to shape and mold a strong EU response to Russia's aggression. Prime Minister Rutte has been a strong leader within the EU, as well as in the region. If confirmed, I plan to build upon sound U.S.-EU-Dutch coordination to deter Russian malign influence globally, including through the provision of security assistance to Ukraine, development of further economic sanctions, and coordination in multilateral organizations to hold Russia to account.

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RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO SHEFALI RAZDAN DUGGAL BY SENATOR MARCO RUBIO

Question. Our European allies and NATO members must recognize the need to take the lead to counter Russia's aggression on their doorstep. Officials from the past and current administrations have agreed that the CCP is the only power willing and able to challenge U.S. leadership on the global stage. In practice, this means undermining our open system here at home and undermining our alliances and credibility abroad. While CCP is most interested in becoming a regional hegemon in the Indo-Pacific, they have global and European aspirations. In July 2019, the Dutch government decided to add additional vetting requirements to their telecommunications companies regarding equipment suppliers to fifth generation (5G) mobile networks.

- Is the CCP a threat to the United States?

Answer. The President has made it clear the United States views the PRC as a strategic competitor that challenges the existing rules-based international order. The Netherlands shares U.S. concerns with PRC behavior that undermines international norms and European security. The Netherlands does not allow untrusted vendors in their 5G network and its parliament was the first to pass a resolution labeling the situation in Xinjiang as a "genocide." If confirmed, I will work with the Netherlands to address the risks that could impact U.S. and Dutch interests, so that we can better compete with the PRC.

Question. How have Dutch views of the CCP changed in recent years given the significant trade between the two nations?

Answer. Dutch views increasingly reflect the threats posed by the PRC to our economic security, regional stability, shared values, and the international rules-based order. While the Dutch pursue cooperation with the PRC where they have shared interests, they do so while remaining mindful of security and economic concerns. They share our concerns over the PRC's unfair trade practices, especially the use of forced labor, and recognize the threat of strategic dependency on the PRC.

Question. U.S. relations with the Netherlands are generally regarded positively. How do you assess the current state of the bilateral relationship and how can the U.S. utilize the Dutch historical relationships in the Indo-Pacific region to counter CCP further expansion?

Answer. The U.S.-Netherlands bilateral relationship is strong, based on shared values and excellent people-to-people ties. The Dutch share many of our views about the challenge the PRC poses to our vision of a free, open and prosperous Indo Pacific as evidenced by their China policy and their engagement in shaping the European Union's approach to the region. If confirmed, I would work with the Netherlands to advance our shared interests in the Indo-Pacific.

Question. The Netherlands strongly supports NATO and transatlantic relations. Dutch forces continue to participate in NATO operations and supported NATO efforts to support Ukraine's defense against Putin's war by providing both lethal and non-lethal weapons. The Dutch are well aware of the abuses that Russia is capable of given the downing of flight MH17 over eastern Ukraine by pro-Russian separatists killing close to 300 Dutch citizens. To what extent has Putin's aggression in Ukraine boosted political momentum in the Netherlands toward meeting NATO's requirement for members to spend at least 2 percent of their GDP on defense spending?

Answer. The current Dutch governing coalition has already announced that the Netherlands will meet the Wales Defense Investment pledge of spending two percent of GDP on defense by 2024. If confirmed, I will work with the Government of the Netherlands to sustain this commitment and ensure that the Dutch continue to contribute substantially to transatlantic security.

Question. Will you press the Netherlands to meet the 2 percent requirement and sustain it over time?

Answer. The current Dutch governing coalition has already announced that the Netherlands will meet the Wales Defense Investment pledge of spending two percent of GDP on defense by 2024. If confirmed, I will work with the Government of the Netherlands to sustain this commitment and ensure that the Dutch continue to be a major contributor to transatlantic security.

Question. If so, how will you be effective in this endeavor?

Answer. The United States continues to enjoy a close relationship with the Netherlands, based on shared values and a shared vision for the future. Like the United States, they are deeply committed to NATO. If confirmed, I plan to rely on this incredibly close relationship to advance U.S. goals and priorities with respect to the Netherlands.

Question. To what degree does the Netherlands support cooperation with the United States, including at NATO and with the EU, to address the strategic and economic challenges posed by CCP?

Answer. The Netherlands strongly supports cooperation with the United States in NATO and with the EU to address strategic and economic challenges posed by the PRC. They are a capable NATO ally and a strong contributor to maritime security. They are also a strong voice in shaping the EU's more critical approach to the PRC. They work closely with the United States to promote and protect leading edge technologies, and their parliament was the first in Europe to label the situation in Xinjiang a genocide. If confirmed, I will work to deepen this cooperation with the Dutch.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO CARRIN F. PATMAN BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Democracy and Human Rights

Question. In the State Department's 2022 Human Rights report, Iceland did not report any significant issues of human rights abuses. The Government had mechanisms in place in order to prosecute and punish officials who carried out these abuses or engaged in corruption.

- How could you work with Icelandic Government to maintain their human rights record?

Answer. If confirmed, I would regularly engage with the Icelandic Government to maintain its strong human rights record, through meetings and outreach with counterparts in the Government and throughout civil society. I would also ensure the Embassy regularly engages on this issue.

Question. If confirmed, what steps would you take with the host government to help spread these practices to neighboring countries and around the world?

Answer. Iceland is a strong advocate for addressing global issues in multilateral fora. If confirmed, I will work to leverage our strong bilateral relationship and shared values to help share Iceland's strong human rights practices with neighboring countries and around the world, including through cooperation during the Summit for Democracy's Year of Action. If confirmed, I would utilize public diplomacy tools to promote the international rules-based order and bolster human rights.

Question. In the State Department's 2022 Trafficking in Persons report, Iceland remained a Tier 1 country for meeting the standards for the elimination of trafficking, maintaining significant efforts to do so. However, the Government continued to charge suspected traffickers under non-trafficking statutes such as smuggling, which carry more lenient penalties and did not have a formal process for identifying victims of child-trafficking.

- If confirmed, how could you work with the host government to continue to improve these efforts to eliminate trafficking?

Answer. From reviewing this year's TIP report, I understand that the Government of Iceland fully meets the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking. According to the report, the Government made key achievements during the reporting period, considering the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Government prosecuted and convicted one trafficker, marking the Government's first prosecution and conviction in 12 years, and established a law enforcement advisory panel. In addition, the Government identified and assisted more potential trafficking victims and funded a new counseling and support center for victims of gender-based violence, including trafficking victims. The Government also funded and published a new online emergency services portal with information on trafficking indicators and assistance, developed standard operating procedures for emergency services operators responding to suspected trafficking cases, and financed production of educational videos to help workplace inspectors detect potential incidents of human trafficking. If confirmed, I look forward to working with Iceland to continue efforts on this important issue.

Question. What steps could you take to increase the rate of traffickers being charged under trafficking statutes?

Answer. Iceland has made key achievements in this past reporting period, which if confirmed, I look forward to building on. As noted in this year's TIP report, the Icelandic Government prosecuted and convicted one trafficker, marking the Government's first prosecution and conviction in 12 years. The Government also established a law enforcement advisory panel that worked with foreign law enforcement agencies and anti-trafficking organizations and cooperated with international organizations on data collection regarding trafficking trends and responses. If confirmed, I would leverage the TIP Report as the primary guide for U.S. anti-trafficking policy and encourage the Icelandic Government to implement the TIP Report's prioritized recommendations, including to significantly increase efforts to convict suspected traffickers and sentence them to significant prison terms, investigate and prosecute trafficking cases under the trafficking statute, and enhance training for investigating cases and collecting evidence against suspected traffickers.

Question. How could you work with the Icelandic Government to establish formal processes for identifying child-trafficking victims?

Answer. Although Iceland made key achievements in this past reporting period, the Icelandic Government did not have a formal identification and referral process for child trafficking victims. If confirmed, I will engage with the Icelandic Government, civil society organizations, and the State Department's Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons to encourage cooperation to establish formal processes for Iceland to identify child-trafficking victims.

Question. In the State Department's 2021 International Religious Freedom report, Iceland provides for freedom of religion. Religious report generally good relations with the Government and society at large, however Jewish community leaders have noticed an uptick in antisemitic rhetoric on social media.

- What is your assessment of anti-Semitism in the country?

Answer. As you note, according to the State Department's most recent International Religious Freedom report, religious groups in Iceland reported generally good relations with the Government and society at large. However, Jewish community leaders noted a slight uptick in antisemitic rhetoric on social media, and one incident involving a verbal confrontation. If confirmed, I plan to meet with community leaders of all faiths, civil society organizations, and government officials in Iceland to discuss religious equality and religious tolerance in Iceland, and I plan to utilize social media to highlight the importance of religious freedom.

Question. If confirmed, how could you work with the host government to address these concerns?

Answer. If confirmed, I would regularly engage with the Icelandic Government to address any crimes against religious minorities, through meetings and outreach

with counterparts in the Government and throughout society. I would also ensure the Embassy regularly engages on this issue.

International Organizations

Question. The Office of Multilateral Strategy and Personnel (MSP) in the State Department's bureau of International Organizations is leading a whole-of-government effort to identify, recruit, and install qualified, independent personnel at the U.S., including in elections for specialized bodies like the International Telecommunications Union (ITU). There is an American candidate, Doreen Bogdan-Martin, who if elected would be the first American and first woman to lead the ITU. She is in a tough race that will require early, consistent engagement across capitals and within the U.S. member states.

- If confirmed, do you commit to demarching the Iceland Government and any other counterparts necessary to encourage their support of Ms. Bogdan-Martin?

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, I commit to demarching the Icelandic Government and any other counterparts necessary to communicate U.S. support of Doreen Bogdan-Martin.

Question. If confirmed, how can you work with the International Organizations (IO) bureau and other stakeholders to identify, recruit, and install qualified Americans in positions like the Junior Program Officer (JPO) program at the U.S.?

Answer. If confirmed, I would coordinate closely with and engage the International Organizations bureau at the Department of State to ensure that the United States is readily able to identify, recruit, and install qualified Americans at the U.S. and in other specialized international bodies. I believe in continued open communication and if confirmed, I commit to meeting IO officials at the Department to discuss ways I can be helpful in this regard.

Europe and Eurasia

Question. Iceland has a high rate of voting coincidence with the U.S. in the U.S. General Assembly and in the Security Council.

- If confirmed, what concrete actions can you take to engage with the Iceland Government on anticipated votes in the U.S. system that would continue to build upon this record with the U.S.?

Answer. Iceland is a U.S. ally that shares many values and priorities, and is a stable and democratic country with longstanding close ties to the United States. Iceland is also a strong advocate for addressing global issues in multilateral fora. If confirmed, I commit to continuously engaging with the Icelandic Government and will work to leverage the strong bilateral relationship and shared values to continue to build upon this record.

State Department Management and Public Diplomacy

Question. Many U.S. missions have been under enormous stress over the last few years, in large part due to COVID. What is your understanding of morale throughout Mission Reykjavik?

Answer. Mission Reykjavik has faced challenges posed by COVID-19, and I am thankful for the staff's resilience and continued service. If confirmed, the health and safety of the personnel and family members of Mission Reykjavik will be my top priority, and I look forward to working with the talented team of U.S. Direct Hires, locally employed staff, and their families, and ensuring that everyone on my team understands they are valued and has my support.

Question. How do you intend to improve morale at Mission Reykjavik?

Answer. If confirmed, I will ensure everyone on my team is treated professionally, their rights are respected, they are safe and secure, and they have the resources necessary to perform their jobs. We are all one team working for the good of the U.S.-Icelandic relationship and the interests of the United States and the American people.

Question. How do you intend to create a unified mission and vision at Mission Reykjavik?

Answer. If confirmed, I look forward to ensuring open and continuous communication throughout the Mission. We are all one team working together to advance the U.S.-Icelandic relationship and the interests of the American people, so I will ensure this collaborative service focus is central to our work. Furthermore, I am committed to supporting a diverse and inclusive workforce at U.S. Embassy Reykjavik. Diversity makes the Mission strong by bringing different perspectives and enhancing cre-

ativity and if confirmed, I look forward to working with the team to maximize innovation and effectiveness.

Question. Management is a key responsibility for Chiefs of Mission. How would you describe your management style?

Answer. I have been blessed with opportunities that have prepared me to be a chief of mission, and to build consensus among diverse stakeholders. I have demonstrated an ability to work with colleagues of all backgrounds and if confirmed, I will regularly engage with members of my team and always seek to create a space for open dialogue and diversity of thought. I also believe in leading by example. If confirmed, I will work hard to foster an environment of respect as Embassy Reykjavik carries out important work on behalf of the American people.

Question. Do you believe it is ever acceptable or constructive to berate subordinates, either in public or private?

Answer. No, it is never acceptable or constructive to berate subordinates, either in public or private.

Question. How do you envision your leadership relationship with your Deputy Chief of Mission?

Answer. If confirmed, I look forward to a close and productive relationship with the Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM). If confirmed, I will work closely with the DCM to advance U.S. priorities in Iceland, including protecting the safety and security of Americans, expanding our economic relationship, and advancing shared priorities.

Question. If confirmed, what leadership responsibilities do you intend to entrust to your Deputy Chief of Mission?

Answer. If confirmed, I will entrust the Deputy Chief of Mission with responsibility for the day-to-day operations of the Mission and serve as Chargé d'Affaires in my absence. If confirmed, I will consult closely with the Deputy Chief of Mission on a range of issues and I will value the institutional knowledge that career Foreign Service officers provide.

Question. In order to create and continue employee excellence at the Department, accurate and direct employee evaluation reports (EERs) for Foreign Service Officers are imperative, though often lacking.

- Do you believe that it is important to provide employees with accurate, constructive feedback on their performances in order to encourage improvement and reward those who most succeeded in their roles?

Answer. Yes, I believe it is important to provide employees with accurate, constructive feedback on their performance to encourage improvement and reward those who most succeed in their roles. If confirmed, I hope to be an inspiring leader with an open-door policy to discuss constructive and timely feedback to enhance and lift the performance of the entire team.

Question. If confirmed, would you support and encourage clear, accurate, and direct feedback to employees in order to improve performance and reward high achievers?

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, I would support and encourage clear, accurate, and direct feedback to employees to improve performance and reward high achievers.

Question. It is imperative that U.S. diplomats get outside of posts abroad to meet with local actors, including host government officials, non-government organizations, and fellow foreign diplomats stationed in Iceland.

- In your opinion, do U.S. diplomats get outside of our embassy walls enough to accomplish fully their missions?

Answer. I firmly believe it is imperative that U.S. diplomats get outside of the Embassy to meet with local citizens, including host government officials and non-governmental organizations. The COVID-19 pandemic has been a challenge for U.S. diplomats to travel and fully engage face-to-face with host country nationals, but as conditions improve, I understand that U.S. diplomats have resumed in-person engagements and programs again, as appropriate.

Question. How do you intend to improve the ability of U.S. diplomats to better access all local populations?

Answer. If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with the Embassy public diplomacy section to use both social and traditional media to reach people across Iceland. Diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility are also an important part of public diplomacy outreach to ensure efforts reflect the diversity of U.S. society and

societies abroad and encourage the involvement of people from traditionally underrepresented audiences. If confirmed, I will work with the Embassy team to leverage engagements with the media, cultural and educational exchange organizations, and individual interactions to expand the people-to-people bonds that are the foundation of our strong bilateral relationship.

Question. Public diplomacy is an important aspect of U.S. foreign policy efforts. What is the public diplomacy environment like in the Iceland?

Answer. The United States has strong academic, cultural, and professional exchanges with the people of Iceland. As I understand it, many government leaders are alumni of U.S. exchange programs with Iceland. If confirmed, I will work with the Embassy team to leverage relationships with the media, cultural and educational exchange organizations, and individuals to expand the people-to-people bonds that are the foundation of our strong bilateral relationship.

Question. What public diplomacy challenges do U.S. diplomats face there?

Answer. The COVID-19 pandemic has been a challenge for U.S. diplomats to travel and fully engage face-to-face with host country nationals. As conditions improve, U.S. diplomats have started in-person engagements and programs again. If confirmed, I look forward to utilizing both traditional and social media to engage with the Icelandic public, in addition to in-person programs.

Question. How do you balance the importance of Main State versus the in-country mission when it comes to tailoring public diplomacy messages for foreign audiences?

Answer. We are all one team working to advance the bilateral relationship and the interests of the United States and the American people and if confirmed, I look forward to working with the offices at Main State to advance U.S. foreign policy goals in Iceland. If confirmed, I will leverage public diplomacy tools to enhance security cooperation, strengthen collaboration on Arctic and climate issues, expand economic and trade relations, defend democratic values, and deepen people-to-people ties. I will work to counter adverse influence and mis- and disinformation through engagements with traditional media, communication via social media, institutional outreach, and personal interactions, and through a variety of public diplomacy programming. Working with the public diplomacy team, we will tailor our messaging in a way that is most appropriate for Icelandic audiences.

Question. "Anomalous health incidents," commonly referred to as "Havana Syndrome." have been debilitating and sidelining U.S. diplomats around the world for years. They have caused serious, negative consequences for U.S. diplomacy, yet many believe that the Department is not doing enough to care for, protect, and communicate to its personnel.

- If confirmed, do you commit to taking this threat seriously?

Answer. Yes. If confirmed, there is nothing I will take more seriously than the health and security of the people who will be working with me.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to talking as openly as you can to Mission Reykjavik personnel?

Answer. Yes. If confirmed, I commit to sharing what information I can within the bounds of privacy and security concerns with Mission Reykjavik personnel.

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FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS SUBMITTED TO
CARRIN F. PATMAN BY SENATOR RISCH

Bilateral Defense Relationship/Arctic

Question. The Arctic is becoming increasingly important to global security. Russia and China have both stated interest in the region, and through its invasion of Ukraine, Russia has shown a new willingness to use its military to achieve its geostrategic goals.

- If confirmed, how will you work to strengthen the U.S.-Icelandic security relationship, both bilaterally and with a mind to our mutual security relationships with the other Arctic nations?

Answer. Iceland considers its membership in NATO and its defense agreement with the United States as the two main pillars of its security policy. I understand that the United States plans to maintain its presence on a rotational basis to support its obligations to NATO and Iceland. The United States works closely with the Government of Iceland on NATO and U.S. activities, and U.S.

military forces have received great support at Keflavik Air Base in Iceland. This invaluable cooperation is crucial to the defense of Iceland and the broader North Atlantic region, especially given increased tensions in the region. If confirmed, I will work to maintain Icelandic contributions to transatlantic security and the broader North Atlantic region, which is directly in the interest of the United States and our Allies and partners.

Question. How will you work to counter Russian or Chinese influence that may seek to undermine the United States' Arctic interests in Iceland?

Answer. Iceland seeks to maintain commitment to the rules-based international order and low tensions in the High North and works with other NATO Allies to ensure the Alliance has a credible deterrence and defense posture in the region. Iceland, together with the United States and other likeminded Arctic States, immediately and strongly condemned Putin's premeditated, unprovoked, and unjustified war in Ukraine. I understand that Iceland is keenly aware of Russia's increased military activities in the Arctic. Iceland is also taking concrete steps to protect its critical infrastructure including through the recent passage of a telecommunications law. If confirmed, I will work with the Icelandic Government to ensure Iceland and NATO's continued attention to security challenges in the High North and share best practices on reducing vulnerabilities and protecting critical infrastructure. Further, if confirmed, I look forward to consulting with Congress and the Department of Defense and the Department of Treasury on this issue.

Question. Do you believe that Finland and Sweden's accession to NATO will fundamentally change the security environment in the Arctic? If so, please explain how?

Answer. The accession of Finland and Sweden would introduce two new, highly capable Allies with deep Arctic expertise into the Alliance. I believe this will contribute to greater predictability and stability in the region. Iceland is a founding member of NATO and has strongly welcomed Finland and Sweden's decisions to apply for NATO membership. Iceland was among the first group of countries to ratify Finland and Sweden's applications. Page Break

Nuclear

Question. Public support for the Treaty of the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) in Iceland is high.

- If confirmed, how will you engage with the Icelandic Government to express the importance NATO's nuclear arsenal holds in our collective defense and how joining the TPNW could undermine our nuclear security?

Answer. As a member of the NATO Alliance, Iceland has committed to ensuring that NATO's nuclear deterrent aligns with the realities of the current security environment and remains safe, secure, and effective. If confirmed, I will regularly engage with the Icelandic Government on tangible, verifiable measures to reduce strategic risk and enable progress on nuclear disarmament.

Question. While Iceland is a member of NATO, it has refused to store nuclear weapons within its territory.

- Given a paradigm shift in the NATO's security with regard to renewed Russian aggression, do you believe the conversation about nuclear weapons in Iceland should be revisited, and that the U.S. should have a role in that conversation?

Answer. Iceland has a longstanding policy against nuclear weapons on Icelandic territory. However, as a member of the NATO Alliance, Iceland is committed to ensuring NATO's nuclear deterrent remains safe, secure, and effective. Nuclear weapons are a core component of NATO's overall capabilities for deterrence and defense and are the supreme guarantee of the security of the Alliance. If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with Iceland to maintain nuclear deterrence.

Economic Relations

Question. If confirmed, how will you work with the Government and private sector of Iceland to increase and improve economic ties with the United States?

Answer. The United States enjoys an active trade and investment partnership with Iceland and is Iceland's largest trading partner. The United States and Iceland signed a Trade and Investment Framework Agreement in 2009. If confirmed, I will continue our promotion of U.S. exports to Iceland and encourage

Icelandic investment in U.S. companies by engaging regularly with both the Government and the private sector in Iceland.

Question. In what sectors do you believe exist the best opportunities for increased U.S.-Iceland trade?

Answer. Key U.S. exports to Iceland include fuels and lubricants, food and beverages, capital goods, and transportation equipment. Key U.S. imports from Iceland include fish and fish products, orthopedic equipment, and food and beverages. The United States has an important opportunity to work with Iceland in deploying innovative green technologies that can help in our shared fight against climate change. Iceland has been a leader in developing green technologies and if confirmed, I look forward to continuing our cooperation in this important field, including commercial opportunities for U.S. firms.

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RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO CARRIN F. PATMAN BY SENATOR MARCO RUBIO

Question. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has sought to expand its influence in Iceland and offered to develop a deep-sea port to gain a larger footing in the Artic and North Atlantic, all while the U.S. provides military defense for Iceland through NATO.

- Is the CCP a threat to the United States?

Answer. The President has made it clear the United States views the People's Republic of China (PRC) as a strategic competitor that challenges the existing rules-based international order. As Secretary Blinken said on May 26, we will invest in America, align with our Allies, and compete with the PRC to defend our interests and build our vision for the future. If confirmed, I will strengthen our partnership with Iceland, including working with Iceland to implement investment screening mechanisms to protect ports and other critical infrastructure.

Question. How does Iceland view Moscow's and Beijing's activities in the Arctic?

Answer. Iceland seeks to maintain commitment to the rules-based international order and low tensions in the High North and works with other NATO Allies to ensure the Alliance has a credible deterrence and defense posture in the region. Iceland, together with the United States and other likeminded Arctic States, immediately and strongly condemned Putin's premeditated, unprovoked, and unjustified war in Ukraine. I understand that Iceland is keenly aware of Russia's increased military activities in the Arctic. Climate change has increased strategic competition in the Arctic region. Melting sea ice has created new opportunities for the PRC and Russia to exploit the region—both economically and militarily. Iceland is taking proactive steps to protect its critical infrastructure, including by passing a recent telecommunications bill to establish a new legal framework governing a broad range of telecommunications issues, including national security. At the NATO Summit in June 2021, all thirty Allies agreed to a Summit Communique that referenced the High North for the first time, demonstrating a commitment to bolstering NATO's deterrence and defense in the region. NATO's new Strategic Concept reaffirms this commitment. If confirmed, I will work with the Icelandic Government to ensure Iceland and NATO's continued attention to security challenges in the High North. Further, if confirmed, I look forward to consulting with Congress and the Department of Defense on this issue.

Question. Since the 1951 signing of the U.S.-Iceland Defense Agreement, Iceland has no armed forces and the United States, on behalf of NATO, is responsible for its defense. In return, the U.S. military possesses basing rights in Iceland, which it has not used since 2006. In 2016, the United States and Iceland agreed on a new joint defense declaration aimed at bolstering security cooperation, and the United States has been upgrading its facilities at Iceland's Keflavik military base. Should the 1951 Treaty be revised so Iceland can build up its own capabilities and contribute to NATO's collective defense? Why or why not?

Answer. Iceland is the only NATO ally without a standing military; however, even without a military it provides invaluable contributions to NATO's collective defense and transatlantic security. Iceland provides 24/7 air surveillance through its four remote radar and communication sites and hosts NATO Air Policing Missions, helping to maintain NATO's crucial readiness in the Arctic and North Atlantic. Further-

more, the United States and Iceland consult and cooperate regularly on defense-related matters, including through an annual Strategic Dialogue, regular consultations with U.S. European Command (USEUCOM), and various joint exercises. I understand that under the auspices of the annual Strategic Dialogue, security-related issues can be discussed in a mutually beneficial manner, so while I cannot speak to hypotheticals regarding the 1951 Treaty, the United States and Iceland maintain an open dialogue on these issues. If confirmed, I will work to maintain Icelandic contributions to transatlantic security, which is directly in the interest of the United States and our Allies and partners.

Question. In what ways are such measures contributing to the defense of Iceland and the broader North Atlantic region, especially given increased tensions between Russia, the West, and countering CCP aspirations in the region?

Answer. Iceland lies in a key geostrategic location in the Greenland-Iceland-UK (GIUK) Gap, and due to climate change opening maritime routes through the Arctic, the North Atlantic is becoming more critical in the realm of defense and security. The U.S. Department of Defense maintains a rotational presence at Keflavik Air Base in Iceland to support theater and anti-submarine warfare (ASW) and maritime domain awareness. The U.S. Navy deploys P-8A aircraft and crews to Iceland to support the ASW mission. Icelandic Coast Guard personnel also maintain a central hub for the four radar stations around Iceland that provide data to NATO and the North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD), providing a complete listing of all aircraft in the North Atlantic to NATO and NORAD. This invaluable cooperation is crucial to the defense of Iceland and the broader North Atlantic region, especially given increased tensions in the region. If confirmed, I will work to maintain Icelandic contributions to transatlantic security and the broader North Atlantic region, which is directly in the interest of the United States and our Allies and partners.

Question. Would Iceland welcome the U.S. deploying forces to Iceland to help deter Chinese and Russian military activity in the Arctic?

Answer. While I cannot speak to hypotheticals or on behalf of the Icelandic Government, I understand that Iceland considers its membership in NATO and the defense agreement with the United States as the two main pillars of its security policy. I understand that the United States plans to maintain its presence on a rotational basis to support its obligations to NATO and Iceland. The United States works closely with the Government of Iceland on NATO and U.S. activities, and U.S. military forces have received great support at Keflavik Air Base in Iceland. If confirmed, I look forward to continuing this close cooperation.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO ANGELA PRICE AGGELER BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Democracy and Human Rights

Question. In the State Department's 2022 Human Rights report, North Macedonia is noted for inhuman and degrading conditions in prisons, violence and threats against journalists, serious government corruption, lack of accountability for gender based and family violence, and more.

- How could you work with the North Macedonian government to address issues of government corruption?

Answer. The United States recognizes and welcomes the steps the current government has taken to fight corruption and impunity. There is more work to be done, and anyone that has abused the public's trust must be held to account no matter his or her party, background, or position. If confirmed, I will continue to urge the government of North Macedonia to hold its officials accountable, to thoroughly investigate allegations of abuse of office, and to address corruption swiftly and thoroughly. I will work to strengthen state institutions and bolster public confidence in the government and the rule of law.

Question. If confirmed, what steps would you take with the host government to mitigate the levels of violence or threats of violence against journalists, and increase the accountability of family and gender based violence?

Answer. If confirmed, I will promote the values of freedom, democracy, individual liberty, and human dignity. U.S. assistance includes grants to local groups that promote the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms of members of vulnerable or targeted populations, including members of minority groups and journal-

ists. If confirmed, I will reinforce the importance of a free media with North Macedonia's political leaders and public and will speak out publicly and privately in defense of targeted journalists and media organizations.. A free and independent media is critical for any democratic society. I would also work with the Ministry of Justice to increase accountability for acts of violence against journalists and gender-based violence.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to personally raising these issues with the host government?

Answer. Absolutely. The U.S. closely follows the state of North Macedonia's democratic institutions and rule of law, as we do with all countries. If confirmed, I will continue to work with North Macedonia to uphold transatlantic values, including personally raising the issues of violence against journalists and gender-based violence with the government.

Question. In the State Department's 2022 Trafficking in Persons report, North Macedonia remained a Tier 2 country for not fully meeting the standards for the elimination of trafficking but maintaining significant efforts to do so. However, the police maintain a lack of funding and equipment to conduct proactive investigations, and local teams and border security lack the ability to properly screen for trafficking indicators.

- If confirmed, how could you work with the host government to increase the funding provided to properly conduct proactive trafficking investigations?

Answer. The Embassy maintains close relationships with anti-trafficking civil society groups and actively engages the government of North Macedonia to address priority recommendations highlighted in the 2022 TIP Report, including investigating, prosecuting, and convicting traffickers—including complicit officials—imposing adequate penalties, and allocating sufficient resources to this important work. If confirmed, I will encourage the government of North Macedonia to increase assistance for victims, particularly among vulnerable groups, and to allocate consistent and sufficient funding for victim services and investigations.

Question. What steps could you take to improve the level of training to better identify trafficking indicators?

Answer. The United States supports the government of North Macedonia's work with international humanitarian organizations and has contributed border security equipment and training for anti-trafficking officials. If confirmed, I will continue to encourage the government to seek additional training opportunities for its officials and to work closely with the United States as well as non-governmental organizations to better identify trafficking indicators. I would also work with the interagency to identify opportunities for American experts to engage, train, and mentor the government on anti-trafficking work, border security, resilience, information sharing, and prosecution of traffickers.

Question. In the State Department's 2021 International Religious Freedom report, North Macedonia's constitution prohibits religious discrimination and provides for freedom of religion and expression. However, some members of religious communities such as the Orthodox Archbishopric of Ohrid say their clergy and family members are targets of insult and physical attack by individuals close to the Macedonian Orthodox Church—Ohrid Archbishopric, which is considered to be a governmental favorite of religious organizations.

- What is your assessment of the level of religious tolerance in the country?

Answer. North Macedonia's constitution guarantees equal rights for all citizens regardless of national origin, and the country has an active, independent ombudsman to protect human rights and freedoms of individuals and groups of citizens. Smaller religious groups report unequal government treatment compared with the five religious groups named in the constitution, which automatically receive tax exemptions and other benefits. Several communities have expressed concerns about the religious property restitution process.

Question. If confirmed, how could you work with the host government to address these concerns?

Answer. The Embassy in Skopje regularly meets with religious groups and government representatives to discuss religious freedom issues, including perceived government favoritism toward certain religious groups and religious property restitution. If confirmed, I would continue vigorous outreach efforts and work with the government to address such concerns.

International Organizations

Question. The Office of Multilateral Strategy and Personnel (MSP) in the State Department's bureau of International Organizations is leading a whole-of-government effort to identify, recruit, and install qualified, independent personnel at the UN, including in elections for specialized bodies like the International Telecommunications Union (ITU). There is an American candidate, Doreen Bogdan-Martin, who if elected would be the first American and first woman to lead the ITU. She is in a tough race that will require early, consistent engagement across capitals and within the U.N. member states.

- If confirmed, do you commit to demarching the North Macedonian government and any other counterparts necessary to encourage their support of Ms. Bogdan-Martin?

Answer. Yes. I would continue to engage the Government of North Macedonia to encourage support for American candidates at the UN, including Doreen Bogdan-Martin who is seeking election as Secretary-General of the ITU. This is an important election for leadership of a U.N. agency that plays a critical role in technology and digital policy, cybersecurity, internet governance, radio spectrum management, telecommunication standards, and critical development initiatives to close the digital divides.

Question. If confirmed, how can you work with the International Organizations (IO) bureau and other stakeholders to identify, recruit, and install qualified Americans in positions like the Junior Program Officer (JPO) program at the UN?

Answer. Embassy Skopje has a vibrant public affairs section. If confirmed, I will work with IO, but also through public-facing Embassy outreach, to identify and recruit qualified Americans to the UN, including for the JPO Program. I would maintain close communication with Washington to identify upcoming opportunities and amplify these through Embassy channels.

Europe and Eurasia

Question. North Macedonia has a high rate of voting coincidence with the U.S. in the U.N. General Assembly and in the Security Council.

- If confirmed, what concrete actions can you take to engage with North Macedonians on anticipated votes in the U.N. system that would continue to build upon this record with the U.S.?

Answer. The Embassy regularly engages the government in Skopje on important issues, including but not limited to votes in the U.N. system. If confirmed, I would uphold this practice and pursue open and transparent conversations on our voting posture and its import for democracy, security, economic growth, and human rights around the world. Page Break

State Department Management and Public Diplomacy

Question. Many U.S. missions have been under enormous stress over the last few years, in large part due to COVID. What is your understanding of morale throughout Mission Skopje?

Answer. The American and local employees at Embassy Skopje have dealt with significant challenges posed by COVID-19. I am grateful for their tremendous service in overcoming these challenges. If confirmed, the health and safety of the personnel and family members of Embassy Skopje will be my first priority. I will prioritize meeting with and supporting Embassy employees to understand and mitigate the impact of the pandemic on the mission. I look forward to working with the incredibly talented team of locally employed staff, U.S. Direct Hires, and their families, and to ensuring that everyone on my team understands they are valued and have my support.

Question. How do you intend to improve morale at Mission Skopje?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with my Deputy Chief of Mission and senior staff to foster an atmosphere in which all employees know that they can bring serious issues to us and are being heard at the highest levels. If confirmed, I will work to ensure everyone on my team, including our ethnically diverse local staff, is treated professionally, their rights are respected, and they are safe and secure. I will conduct personal outreach to Embassy staff when I arrive. If confirmed, I will promote training and professional development, and work to ensure that all staff members are aware of the employee and family support resources that the Department offers to assist employees.

Question. How do you intend to create a unified mission and vision at Mission Skopje?

Answer. Having served as Chargé d'Affaires of Mission Pakistan for two years, I understand the imperative of a unified team with a shared strategic vision to meeting policy priorities. If confirmed, I will foster a strong team with a clear understanding of our goals and objectives; maintain clear and transparent communications throughout the Mission through regular information sharing; promote diversity and inclusion; seek ways to build and sustain morale; and support and ensure the safety and community of the Mission community—including both American and local staff. I will treat the team with the respect and professionalism they deserve and work to provide them the tools they need to do their jobs. We are all one team, working together to advance U.S. policy goals and the U.S.-North Macedonia relationship, in the interests of the American people; I will ensure this collaborative service focus is central to our work.

Question. Management is a key responsibility for Chiefs of Mission. How would you describe your management style?

Answer. I value respect, professionalism, open communication, and creative thinking. I welcome divergent points of view. I strive to provide clear decisions and guidance as needed. I am committed to fostering a diverse and inclusive workforce that fully represents and supports many different cultures, backgrounds, and perspectives to provide a productive and effective workplace for all that advances U.S. policy goals.

Question. Do you believe it is ever acceptable or constructive to berate subordinates, either in public or private?

Answer. No, never. Berating subordinates is offensive, counterproductive, and unacceptable. If confirmed, I will treat all my employees with the utmost respect and professionalism that each one deserves.

Question. How do you envision your leadership relationship with your Deputy Chief of Mission?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work to build a relationship of mutual trust and respect with the Deputy Chief of Mission, delegating when appropriate and ensuring he or she can step in for me in the event I am not available.

Question. If confirmed, what leadership responsibilities do you intend to entrust to your Deputy Chief of Mission?

Answer. I see the role of the Deputy Chief of Mission as both a chief operating officer and the alter-ego of the ambassador. If confirmed and after I arrive at post, I will work out with the Deputy Chief of Mission which responsibilities rest with whom.

Question. In order to create and continue employee excellence at the Department, accurate and direct employee evaluation reports (EERs) for Foreign Service Officers are imperative, though often lacking.

- Do you believe that it is important to provide employees with accurate, constructive feedback on their performances in order to encourage improvement and reward those who most succeeded in their roles?

Answer. Yes. Candid, constructive, and comprehensive performance reviews are essential for employees to know where they stand and understand where they need to improve. In between formal annual reviews, it is also important for supervisors to clearly communicate what expectations are and to provide regular feedback to employees on meeting these goals.

Question. If confirmed, would you support and encourage clear, accurate, and direct feedback to employees in order to improve performance and reward high achievers?

Answer. Absolutely. Ensuring clear, accurate, and direct feedback will help improve mission performance, and I will recognize the accomplishments of high-performing employees as deserved.

Question. It is imperative that U.S. diplomats get outside of posts abroad to meet with local actors, including host government officials, non-government organizations, and fellow foreign diplomats stationed in North Macedonia. In your opinion, do U.S. diplomats get outside of our embassy walls enough to accomplish fully their missions?

Answer. In my time as Chargé at the U.S. Embassy in Pakistan, I encouraged our diplomats to engage as security situations allowed. If confirmed, I hope to ex-

change ideas with people from all parts of North Macedonia's society to hear their views, promote our shared goals, and expand the people-to-people bonds that are the foundation of our strong bilateral partnership. I will encourage colleagues and official visitors to do the same.

Question. How do you intend to improve the ability of U.S. diplomats to better access all local populations?

Answer. If confirmed, I will ensure that the U.S. diplomats under my authority can travel and meet the people they need to accomplish their jobs. My understanding is that in North Macedonia this has not been an issue.

Question. Public diplomacy is an important aspect of U.S. foreign policy efforts. What is the public diplomacy environment like in North Macedonia?

Answer. Embassy Skopje's Public Diplomacy Section uses the full array of public diplomacy tools to engage with citizens of North Macedonia across all facets of society, including media engagement; the U.S. Speaker Program; English language instruction; educational and professional exchanges; alumni outreach; cultural and sports diplomacy programs; grants to local non-governmental organizations (NGOs); and educational advising.

Question. What public diplomacy challenges do U.S. diplomats face there?

Answer. Disinformation, malign foreign influence, and the COVID-19 pandemic pose challenges to public diplomacy outreach in North Macedonia, as it has globally. If confirmed, I look forward to using traditional and social media, in addition to in-person programs, to engage with the public in North Macedonia and push back on disinformation from malign actors and a shrinking space for independent media.

Question. How do you balance the importance of Main State versus the in-country mission when it comes to tailoring public diplomacy messages for foreign audiences?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with the Public Diplomacy Section to closely coordinate the efforts of public diplomacy professionals in both Washington and Skopje to ensure that there is a unified approach to highlighting key U.S. messages and policies in North Macedonia. I will leverage public diplomacy tools to engage on a variety of different social media platforms in English, Macedonian, and Albanian to deliver tailored messages on U.S. foreign policy; promote Embassy activities and events; provide information on security, economy, voting, and other topics of interest to U.S. citizens; and communicate with the public in North Macedonia in an impactful way that advances U.S. priorities out of Washington.

Question. "Anomalous health incidents," commonly referred to as "Havana Syndrome," have been debilitating and sidelining U.S. diplomats around the world for years. They have caused serious, negative consequences for U.S. diplomacy, yet many believe that the Department is not doing enough to care for, protect, and communicate to its personnel.

- If confirmed, do you commit to taking this threat seriously?

Answer. Absolutely. The issue of Anomalous Health Incidents—including the interagency effort to protect and care for our personnel and uncover the cause of these incidents—is an absolute priority for the Department. AHIs have been a top priority for Secretary Blinken, who set clear goals for the Health Incident Response Task Force to strengthen the Department's communication with the workforce, provide care for affected employees and family members, and better protect against these events in the future as we work to uncover the cause. I have no higher priority than the safety of the members of my embassy team and their families.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to talking as openly as you can to Mission Skopje personnel?

Answer. Absolutely. I believe open and transparent communication is critical for a workplace to function well, and leadership should set the example for that within the bounds of privacy and security concerns.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO ANGELA PRICE AGGELER BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Europe and Eurasia

Question. If confirmed to be Ambassador, how will you work with the Government of North Macedonia on key domestic issues like legal reform and education as they move toward EU accession?

Answer. For 18 years, the United States has supported North Macedonia as it has worked to achieve the democratic and economic reforms necessary to join the European Union. The EU has been clear that in addition to making required legal changes, it expects strong implementation of reforms across the board. U.S. Government programs focus on helping to create and sustain an enabling environment for the Government of North Macedonia to address EU recommendations. The State Department also focuses on improving basic competencies and the efficiency, transparency, and accountability of justice sector and law enforcement institutions, in line with North Macedonia's goals of integration into Euro-Atlantic institutions. If confirmed, I will continue to advocate for reforms and their full implementation.

Question. Should the U.S. play a role in helping negotiate North Macedonia's prospective EU membership with its neighbors? How can the U.S. contribute to regional stability?

Answer. Although not a member state, the United States continues to strongly support the EU accession process and related reforms for all Western Balkan countries, which will contribute to the long-term stability and prosperity of the region. As part of this, we are supporting continued, constructive dialogue between North Macedonia, EU institutions, and EU member states, including Bulgaria. If confirmed, I would urge flexibility and cooperation by both Skopje and Sofia as they work on resolving their bilateral issues. The United States contributes further to regional stability through its support for robust and inclusive regional initiatives based on EU rules and regulations, such as Open Balkan and Common Regional Market. Initiatives like these are energizing Western Balkan economies, moving the region closer to the EU single market, and promoting peace and stability through implementation of the EU Four Freedoms: goods, capital, services, and people.

Question. 100 percent of North Macedonia's natural gas imports come from Russia. What vulnerabilities does this monopoly place on North Macedonia, and how can the U.S. help reduce them?

Answer. North Macedonia has been hit hard by the energy crisis in Europe this spring. For example, the city of Skopje relies on Russian natural gas to power the central heating system, and Gazprom took advantage of its monopoly to quadruple its prices last winter. Additionally, energy prices have risen by 10-20 percent since the Russian invasion of Ukraine, leading the Government to temporarily reduce value-added tax (VAT) and excise duties on fuels to lessen the hardship on citizens. We are encouraging diversification of energy sources to address these vulnerabilities. North Macedonia is determined to move forward on a gas interconnector with Greece, currently awaiting final loan financing, which would diversify North Macedonia's supply, introduce competition, and potentially open the market to U.S. LNG suppliers. The Government's focus on renewable energy sources also brings opportunities for U.S. investment.

Question. How will you work with North Macedonia's Government and private sector to increase economic ties with the United States?

Answer. North Macedonia's legal framework for foreign investors is generally in line with international standards. U.S. Embassy Skopje works to defend the rights of U.S. exporters, suppliers, and investors doing business in North Macedonia, including protecting intellectual property rights and identifying and addressing trade barriers that interfere with the growth of U.S. exports, including agriculture commodities. If confirmed, I will continue to support American companies exploring opportunities in North Macedonia; protect the rights of U.S. exporters, suppliers, and investors; and identify and work with the Government to address trade barriers that interfere with U.S. exports.

Question. As Ambassador, how will you work to build people-to-people ties between the U.S. and North Macedonia, particularly to counter Russian influence?

Answer. During June's bilateral strategic dialogue in Washington, DC, North Macedonia's Minister of Culture Stojcevska identified protection of cultural heritage and youth engagement as her Ministry's top two priorities for bilateral people-to-people engagement. People-to-people relationships are essential to strengthening cooperation on global challenges, especially with respect to disinformation and foreign malign influence. Between 2018 and 2022, five Fulbright English Teaching Assistants received "Countering State Disinformation and Pressure" funding from Congress and are promoting media literacy and critical thinking in schools and universities throughout North Macedonia. If confirmed, I will focus on raising media standards, bolstering public education about disinformation, especially among youth, and encouraging capacity-building to improve the Government of North Macedonia's communications capabilities.

If confirmed, I would also continue efforts to deter illicit trafficking of antiquities and encourage bilateral cultural, scientific, and educational exchanges, and work to preserve North Macedonia's cultural heritage, including through the U.S. Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation.

Question. If confirmed, how will you promote democratic and anti-corruption reforms in North Macedonia, and in what areas of government is progress most viable?

Answer. The U.S. recognizes and welcomes the steps the current government has taken to fight corruption and impunity. There is more work to be done. Anyone that has abused the public's trust must be held to account, no matter his or her party, background, or position. If confirmed, I will urge North Macedonia's Government to hold officials accountable, thoroughly investigate allegations of abuse of office, and combat corruption vigorously, to strengthen government institutions and bolster public confidence in the Government and the rule of law. The current government is making strides on good governance reforms. In January 2021, it appointed a new Deputy Prime Minister for Good Governance Policies to focus on structural and procedural reforms that reduce opportunities for corruption.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO ANGELA PRICE AGGELER BY SENATOR MARCO RUBIO

Question. North Macedonia is very reliant upon energy imports, including Russian natural gas. They have been very supportive of U.S. and NATO responses to Russia's war in Ukraine, but have been added to a list of Moscow's "enemy states."

- Is the CCP a threat to the United States?

Answer. The President has made it clear the United States views the People's Republic of China (PRC) as a strategic competitor that challenges the existing rules-based international order. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) presents itself in the Western Balkan region as an alternative to EU financing and other international financial and development organizations. It is a threat not only to solid economic and democratic practices and international standards, but also to U.S. companies seeking fair entry into the market. If confirmed, I would bolster U.S. ability to respond to the economic and political threats the CCP and other malign actors pose in the region.

Question. North Macedonia does not currently meet the 2 percent GDP goal but is heading in the right direction. What will you do to press North Macedonia to meet the 2 percent requirement and sustain it over time?

Answer. As NATO's newest ally, North Macedonia has been responsive and is implementing its plan to reach 2 percent by 2024. The country intends to spend more than $750 million through 2028 toward military modernization to meet its NATO capability target requirements and actively seeks U.S. assistance and training. If confirmed, I will champion strong military to military cooperation to help North Macedonia to meet its 2 percent commitment.

Question. How has Putin's war on Ukraine impacted North Macedonia's energy security and economy?

Answer. The Balkans energy sector has long been plagued by chronic underinvestment, over-dependence on Russian supply, structural weaknesses, heavy subsidization of coal and electricity, and inefficient market mechanisms. Putin's war against Ukraine has exacerbated North Macedonia's energy security and economic challenges, including food security. North Macedonia already faced inflation in energy costs. The Government's clear alignment with EU sanctions packages led Russia to label North Macedonia an "unfriendly state," and this spring Moscow shut off supply to Bulgaria—through which North Macedonia receive its gas—further elevating gas prices. The Government expects key commodity and energy prices to continue rising and investments to be delayed.

Question. In what ways can the United States support diversification of their energy imports?

Answer. North Macedonia needs to further diversify its energy sources and routes; develop competitive, transparent, and efficient energy markets; and better integrate its domestic energy market with regional energy markets. North Macedonia currently relies on one pipeline for its limited quantities of natural gas, which come from Russia. A proposed gas interconnector connecting North Macedonia with

Greece could help diversify gas routes and supplies and allow gasification of other parts of the country. In the long term, the proposed interconnector could also provide alternatives to Kosovo and Serbia and help turn North Macedonia into a regional energy hub. If confirmed, I will work to facilitate private sector participation in renewable energy policymaking and encourage U.S. companies to bid on renewable energy projects.

Question. Would this include construction of the proposed East Mediterranean Pipeline?

Answer. Energy sector diversification in this heavily coal-reliant region will require more rapid implementation of renewable and clean energy technologies and the optimized application of lower-carbon fuel alternatives, including potential natural gas applications. If confirmed, I would work to help North Macedonia diversify away from Russian gas and support economically viable projects that connect North Macedonia with non-Russian energy supplies.

Question. To what extent does the Chinese Communist Party wield economic or political influence in North Macedonia?

Answer. The PRC presents itself in the Western Balkan region as an alternative to EU financing and other international financial and development organizations. In North Macedonia, PRC investments are primarily focused on road construction and other infrastructure projects. Two major PRC road construction projects are currently underway, funded by the PRC's ExIm Bank. Not surprisingly, the largest of these projects has been plagued by delays, design flaws, quality control problems, and additional expenses. This, along with disappointing results from procurement contracts for city buses, rail cars, and computers for school children, have made the Government appropriately wary of pursuing future PRC contracts. If confirmed, I would work with the current government to raise awareness of the risks associated with such projects and encourage other private and government financing options.

Question. As Ambassador, how would you help North Macedonia build resilience to external authoritarian influence?

Answer. Our goals align with the aspirations of the people of North Macedonia and their Government for a stable, prosperous, and democratic future. External authoritarian elements actively seek to undermine the democratic and Euro-Atlantic integration aspirations of the country, by stoking tensions, spreading disinformation, and sowing corruption. If confirmed, I would champion strong, democratic institutions, a vibrant and independent media environment, and work to crack down on external influences seeking to corrupt government actors. Embassy Skopje is also pressing the Government to create a national security investment screening mechanism to protect key assets from malign external influence. If confirmed, I would press forward ongoing technical consultations to see that these measures are put in place.

Responses to Additional Questions for the Record Submitted to Gautam A. Rana by Senator James E. Risch

Europe and Eurasia

Question. If confirmed, how will you work with the Slovakian Government to navigate the impending European energy crisis? What elements of this impending crisis concern you most vis-à-vis Slovakia?

Answer. Obstacles to greater Slovak energy independence include geography, a legacy of dependence on cheap Russian energy and associated infrastructure, and a need to increase and accelerate programs to enhance renewable energy sources. To their credit, the Slovak leadership has the high-level political will to take difficult decisions to advance energy security. The United States is committed to advancing European energy security through an integrated European energy market and through diversification—of fuel types, supply source countries, and delivery routes. We continue to encourage Slovakia to work within EU structures to promote greater integration within the EU's own internal energy market. If confirmed, I will work with my counterparts across the region to promote this type of regional collaboration. My intent would be to urge the Slovak Government to remain on its pathway to energy diversification, prioritizing reliable and politically stable partners across fuel types.

Question. If confirmed, how will you work with the Government of Slovakia to continue to coordinate and implement sanctions on Russia? How will you work with

the Government of Slovakia to help them foil attempts at evasion of U.S. and EU sanctions on Russia?

Answer. Following Russia's unprovoked further invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, Slovakia's government has been unequivocal in condemning the Russian Federation and supporting U.S. and EU sanctions against it. Slovakia also significantly reduced the size of the Russian embassy in Bratislava by imposing a cap on the number of Russians with diplomatic status allowed in the country. I understand that Slovakia's leaders have strongly advocated for the implementation and coordination of strong sanctions on Russia. If confirmed, I will work with the Slovak government to diminish Russia's capacity to foil U.S. and EU sanctions, including through the sharing of U.S. knowhow.

Question. Slovakia has been a significant provider of military aid to Ukraine. If confirmed, how will you ensure Slovakia receives proper support from the U.S., most particularly on the question of assistance to backfill the equipment they donated to Ukraine?

Answer. I understand that, to date, the Slovak government has provided more than ?159 million in both humanitarian and military aid to Ukraine, including its S-300 air defense system, valued by the government at ?68 million. Slovakia remains one of the largest donors to Ukraine measured by aid as a share of GDP. Russia's unprovoked, full-scale invasion of Ukraine has stretched Slovakia's resources, as it has the resources of many countries in the region. Slovakia would benefit from U.S. assistance, above all to support Foreign Military Financing. Assistance would also be useful to address disinformation, bolster civil society, and fight corruption. If confirmed as Ambassador, I would advocate for appropriate U.S. support for Slovakia, and I will ensure that any U.S. assistance is impactful and spent well.

Question. Slovakia has housed over 85,000 Ukrainian refugees since the Russian invasion in February. If confirmed, how will you assist the Slovakia government in their efforts provide for these refugees and their security?

Answer. Following Russia's February 2022 further invasion of Ukraine, I understand that Slovakia was among the first EU member states to create a temporary protective status for Ukrainian refugees, providing them immediate access to critical services, support, and the right to work in Slovakia. The outpouring of support by Slovaks for their Ukrainian neighbors has been inspiring. Slovaks have opened their hearts and their homes to Ukrainians. Through the State Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, the United States has provided nearly $22 million to international humanitarian organizations in Slovakia supporting refugees from Ukraine. If confirmed as Ambassador, I will continue to prioritize these and other avenues of support and ensure that any U.S. assistance is impactful and spent well.

Question. How will you work with Slovakia's government and private sector to increase economic ties with the United States?

Answer. Slovakia presents significant opportunities for U.S. business, such as suppliers in the automotive parts industry. Slovakia is also focusing on supporting innovative small and medium-sized enterprises that are an attractive segment for U.S. investors, especially venture capitalists, private equity, and pension funds. If confirmed, I will work closely with the U.S. Department of Commerce to ensure that the full resources of the U.S. Government are used to advocate for U.S. businesses exporting to Slovakia and promote opportunities for Slovak firms seeking to invest in the United States. I will also partner with the local American Chamber of Commerce, if confirmed, to keep a pulse on the health of Slovakia's business climate, with a focus on continuing to improve transparency, predictability, stability, and the transfer of best practices from the United States.

Question. As Ambassador, how will you work to build people-to-people ties between the U.S. and Slovakia?

Answer. I understand that one of the Embassy's key goals is expanding people-to-people ties in order to build support for shared values and reinforce Slovakia's commitment to the West and our common transatlantic goals. If confirmed, I will prioritize sending Embassy and visiting speakers out to engage Slovak audiences on the full range of Mission priorities, and by organizing regular, creative public outreach engagements designed for a variety of audiences that allow us to engage with a wide range of Slovaks across the country. The Embassy is working to strengthen education in Slovakia through its small grants program and by providing support to English-language teachers. The Embassy has given small grants to support a variety of initiatives that help build critical thinking skills, support the integration of

minorities, and encourage the greater participation of girls in science, technology, engineering and math. The Embassy also supports English-language education through teacher training courses and workshops, and by providing resources, materials, online course opportunities, and strong support for teachers.

Often once someone has had the chance to experience the United States in person, the United States has a supporter and ally for life. One of the challenges with a smaller country like Slovakia is that it is not always offered the number of positions commensurate with demand. If confirmed, I will explore how to increase space for Slovaks in U.S. programs so we can offer more of them a first-hand introduction to the United States.

State Department Manangement and Public Diplomacy

Question. Many U.S. missions have been under enormous stress over the last few years, in large part due to COVID.

- What is your understanding of morale throughout Mission Bratislava?

Answer. My understanding from the State Department is that morale is strong and the mission is well-run. Following Russia's invasion of neighboring Ukraine, I understand the mission has been called upon to do much more and has met the challenge. One area to which I will give attention is the salaries of the Locally Employed staff. If confirmed, I will work with Washington colleagues to ensure that Locally Employed staff salaries keep up with the labor market. I would also work to ensure that the mission has the personnel and tools necessary to carry out its expanded responsibilities, if confirmed.

Question. How do you intend to improve morale at Mission Bratislava?

Answer. Having served as Deputy Chief of Mission and Chargé d'Affaires, a.i., in two posts, ensuring high morale was one of my chief priorities. I worked closely with the Community Liaison Officer (CLO), Management Team, and senior staff to instill a "One Team" culture where everyone's voice was heard and valued. If confirmed, I would utilize similar management techniques in Bratislava and seek to foster a workplace of empowerment and open, transparent communication. I pledge to hold regular Town Hall meetings, consult with all staff (Americans and Locally Employed staff), and convey to them my appreciation for the work they do to advance U.S. foreign policy goals.

Question. How do you intend to create a unified mission and vision at Mission Bratislava?

Answer. In my two assignments as Deputy Chief of Mission and Chargé d'Affaires, a.i., I emphasized that two of my management principles were respect and One Team. In regard to the first, I expected all staff to treat everyone in the Mission—no matter their nationality or job—with respect. The latter, that all staff members—no matter their agency or section—were part of "One Team" working on behalf of the American people to further U.S. national interests. I stated these principles on my first day in the job, reiterated them to the Country Team, and repeated them to every new staff member who joined my embassies. If confirmed, I will begin my first speech to the Mission Bratislava workforce emphasizing these values, and I will work hard to ensure Mission Bratislava's workforce is cohesive, respectful of each other, and working as One Team towards our goals and priorities.

Question. Management is a key responsibility for Chiefs of Mission. How would you describe your management style?

Answer. As a manager, I value open communication, empowering my team, and holding staff members to high standards. As we work for the American people, we have a responsibility to produce on their behalf. As a manager, I have a responsibility to my team to create the optimal work environment so that we can successfully execute our mission.

Question. Do you believe it is ever acceptable or constructive to berate subordinates, either in public or private?

Answer. It is never appropriate to berate subordinates, either in public or private. Such behavior undermines morale, reduces productivity, and is never acceptable from any manger. In multiple embassies where I have served as a manager, I have always treated subordinates (and all colleagues) with respect. If confirmed, I pledge to treat all staff at Mission Bratislava with the utmost respect.

Question. How do you envision your leadership relationship with your Deputy Chief of Mission?

Answer. Having served as Deputy Chief of Mission at two embassies with three different ambassadors, I know firsthand that it is the most important relationship

to ensuring an effective and productive embassy. If confirmed, I will work closely with the Deputy Chief of Mission to ensure the effective management of Mission Bratislava. I would work to develop a relationship of trust and respect, empowering the deputy to serve as the Mission's chief operating officer, delegating when appropriate, and ensuring he or she can step in for me if I am not available. If confirmed, I will work closely with my Deputy Chief of Mission to ensure his or her success.

Question. If confirmed, what leadership responsibilities do you intend to entrust to your Deputy Chief of Mission?

Answer. Having served as Deputy Chief of Mission at two different embassies, I believe the role of the Deputy Chief of Mission is to serve as the embassy's chief operating officer and as the alter-ego of the ambassador. An effective Deputy Chief of Mission ensures the smooth operations of the embassy, while also serving as the ambassador's senior policy advisor. If confirmed, I will work closely with my Deputy Chief of Mission to ensure his or her success.

Question. In order to create and continue employee excellence at the Department, accurate and direct employee evaluation reports (EERs) for Foreign Service Officers are imperative, though often lacking.

- Do you believe that it is important to provide employees with accurate, constructive feedback on their performances in order to encourage improvement and reward those who most succeeded in their roles?

Answer. As a manager, I have always prioritized providing constructive feedback to my team and working closely with them to write effective evaluations. In my last two assignments as Deputy Chief of Mission, I have led numerous workshops on EER writing, bidding strategies, and other career development issues. In my last post, I provided feedback on every State Department employee's EER. If confirmed, I will continue to place a high priority in proactively managing my team and providing them accurate, constructive feedback.

Question. If confirmed, would you support and encourage clear, accurate, and direct feedback to employees in order to improve performance and reward high achievers?

Answer. I fully support these principles and if confirmed, I pledge to provide my employees clear, accurate, and direct feedback. I have done so in my previous Foreign Service assignments as a manager, including when I served as Deputy Chief of Mission and Chargé d'Affaires.

Question. It is imperative that U.S. diplomats get outside of posts abroad to meet with local actors, including host government officials, non-government organizations, and fellow foreign diplomats stationed in Slovakia.

- In your opinion, do U.S. diplomats get outside of our embassy walls enough to accomplish fully their missions?

Answer. I have served in some of the most dangerous places in the world including Mosul, Iraq, Peshawar, Pakistan, and Khost, Afghanistan. My experiences taught me it was imperative to balance risk with the necessity to engage local populations and authorities to advance U.S. national security interests. In these posts, and all of my other assignments in the United Arab Emirates, India, Algeria, and Slovenia, I have regularly gone outside of the Embassy walls and strongly encouraged my teams to do so also.

My sense from Mission Slovakia is that diplomats are encouraged to get out and meet as many people as possible. In fact, my understanding is that one of the Embassy themes for the post-COVID era is "Back to the Regions," focused specifically on getting out from behind desks and our embassy walls and into regions outside the capital of Bratislava. If confirmed, I pledge to interact with a wide array of Slovaks across the country, and I will encourage the Embassy team to follow my example.

Question. How do you intend to improve the ability of U.S. diplomats to better access all local populations?

Answer. In all of my previous assignments, I have encouraged my teams to learn as much as possible about the local populations, including their history, culture, religion, and at a minimum, a few words of the local language. Most importantly, I have always instructed them that it is imperative they learn about local issues from the local population, and not just our government interlocutors and other elites. If confirmed, I will emphasize these same points to the Mission Bratislava team to ensure that the U.S. diplomats under my authority travel and meet a wide range of people so they can effectively do their jobs. My understanding is that the team in Slovakia regularly travels throughout the country, which assisted their efforts to

serve U.S. citizens and refugees from Ukraine on the border after Putin's invasion of Ukraine.

Question. Public diplomacy is an important aspect of U.S. foreign policy efforts. What is the public diplomacy environment like in Slovakia?

Answer. I am told that Slovakia is home to a thriving, professional journalist community, and the U.S. Embassy is able to connect and reach audiences. Public diplomacy is a core component of our efforts to advance U.S. foreign policy priorities in Slovakia, and if I am confirmed, that focus will continue. While there is considerable interest in the United States across the country and great willingness among our partners to support outreach, I understand that polls show many Slovaks remain skeptical of the United States and the Transatlantic relationship. If confirmed, I pledge to meet regularly with a wide range of Slovaks across all fora—in person, on social media, via the traditional press—to improve their views of the United States and the importance of the transatlantic relationship.

Question. What public diplomacy challenges do U.S. diplomats face there?

Answer. I understand that COVID-19 has been a significant challenge and has impacted in-person public diplomacy and exchange programming in Slovakia, as it has everywhere. I am told other challenges to U.S. public diplomacy in Slovakia include widespread disinformation from malign actors and a public skeptical of the United States and the Transatlantic relationship. If confirmed, I pledge to work with the Mission's public diplomacy team to increase our outreach to all Slovaks, and improve their views of the United States and the transatlantic relationship.

Question. How do you balance the importance of Main State versus the in-country mission when it comes to tailoring public diplomacy messages for foreign audiences?

Answer. As a long-term Chargé d'Affaires at my last two posts in Slovenia and Algeria, I worked regularly with colleagues at Main State and the embassies' public diplomacy teams to tailor our messages to foreign audiences. In Algeria, I led the Near Eastern Affairs Bureau's top-ranked public diplomacy team that had 75 percent of all social media interactions for the entire bureau (across 19 countries, and over 25 posts). If confirmed, Mission Bratislava's messaging and engagement will be aligned with State Department policy priorities, including support for the Transatlantic relationship, strong person-to-person outreach and engagement, robust anti-corruption programming, countering disinformation and extremism, maintaining and supporting defense cooperation, and growing U.S. businesses. As I did in Slovenia and Algeria, I will work with the Mission Bratislava team to tailor our messages to most effectively reach the local audience.

Question. "Anomalous health incidents," commonly referred to as "Havana Syndrome," have been debilitating and sidelining U.S. diplomats around the world for years. They have caused serious, negative consequences for U.S. diplomacy, yet many believe that the Department is not doing enough to care for, protect, and communicate to its personnel.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to taking this threat seriously?

Answer. I have previously received classified and unclassified briefings on the issue of Anomalous Health Incidents—including the interagency effort to protect and care for our personnel and uncover the cause of these incidents. These Incidents are an absolute priority for the Department, and it would be an absolute priority for me if I am confirmed.

As the President has said, the health and well-being of American public servants is of paramount importance to the Administration. On a personal level, I have no higher priority than the safety of the members of my Embassy team and their family members.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to talking as openly as you can to Mission Bratislava personnel?

Answer. Absolutely. In my recent assignments as Deputy Chief of Mission and Chargé d'Affaires, I regularly held Town Halls and executed a "management by walking around" approach. I believe open and transparent communication is critical for a workplace to function well, and leadership should set the example for that. If confirmed, I pledge to bring the same approach to Mission Bratislava.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO GAUTAM A. RANA BY SENATOR MARCO RUBIO

Question. Whether we want it or not, the United States is currently engaged in a great power competition with the Chinese Communist Party. Our European allies and NATO members must recognize the need to take the lead to counter Russia's aggression on their doorstep. While Slovakia does not yet meet NATO's requirement for members to spend at least 2 percent of their GDP on defense spending, it has drastically increased its defense spending, including a 40 percent increase in 2019. Earlier this year, Slovakia's Defense Minister announced that Slovakia would treat the 2 percent requirement as a floor and that even spending 3 percent of GDP would be necessary. The United States needs more NATO members to meet, or exceed, this requirement for their own defense to deter Russian aggression.

- Is the CCP a threat to the United States?

Answer. The President has made it clear the United States views the People's Republic of China (PRC) as a strategic competitor that challenges the existing rules-based international order. As Secretary Blinken said on May 26, we will invest at home, align our efforts with partners and allies, and compete with the PRC to defend our interests and build our vision for the future. The United States, our Allies, and partners have been clear-eyed on the threat the PRC poses, and Slovakia is no exception. For example, Slovakia's Parliament approved a National Security Strategy identifying potential challenges posed by China. If confirmed, I would work to deepen ties between Washington and Bratislava and ensure we leverage the inherent advantages of our democracies to ensure the international system remains rooted in democratic values, not authoritarian ones.

Question. How would you describe the role and contributions of Slovakia as a NATO ally and how will you press Slovakia to reach the 2 percent goal and sustain it over time?

Answer. The United States and Slovakia have a strong defense and security relationship that continues to deepen. Slovakia is a stalwart NATO ally and has been since joining the Alliance in 2004. Slovakia has a strong record of participation in NATO missions within Europe and throughout the world, and the Slovak contingent was the last ally on the ground in Afghanistan. Following Russia's unprovoked full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Slovakia agreed to host a NATO Enhanced Vigilance Activities (eVA) battlegroup, within which U.S. troops are currently participating. Slovakia takes its burden sharing commitments seriously and is in the process of a historic defense modernization effort. Slovak leaders have committed to reaching their two percent spending goal ahead of 2024—Slovakia's Defense Minister announced earlier this year that Slovakia would treat the 2 percent requirement as a floor—and, if confirmed, I will advocate for sustaining this commitment over time.

Question. While the 2 percent spending goal is a good target, it's not the whole story. NATO does not need its members to increase spending on pensions, or increasing salaries—we need member states to develop new and modern capabilities to keep pace with the threats presented by Putin's and the CCP's military.

- To what extent has Putin's invasion of Ukraine bolstered public support for NATO in Slovakia?

Answer. Russia's February 2022 full-scale invasion of Ukraine has underscored for all allies the importance of the NATO Alliance. Even before the invasion of neighboring Ukraine, Slovakia had embarked upon a historic military modernization project, including purchasing F-16 fighter jets for $1.8 billion and Blackhawk helicopters. Slovakia is hosting a NATO Enhanced Vigilance Activities (eVA) battlegroup, in which the United States is participating and could result in up to 3,000 NATO troops eventually deploying to the Slovak Republic. Most public polling in Slovakia shows that public support for NATO has been increasing. I understand that shortly after Putin's invasion of Ukraine, 80 percent of Slovaks support the Government's response to the invasion, and a comprehensive poll released in May showed that 72 percent of Slovaks perceive Slovakia's membership in NATO positively, an almost ten percent increase from the year before. This is Slovakia's highest level of support for NATO since at least 2018.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO HON. RANDY W. BERRY BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Question. In November 2020, I published a Senate Foreign Relations Committee majority report entitled "The United States and Europe: A Concrete Agenda for Transatlantic Cooperation on China." The report gave several recommendations for increased transatlantic cooperation, including on Africa, to counter malign Chinese influence more effectively.

- In what ways should the United States partner with European countries to build on likeminded interests in Namibia and counter the influence of China and other malign actors?

Answer. The United States has a number of opportunities to partner with European countries to build on likeminded interests, particularly in support of democratic principles and practices, the international rules-based order, accountability and transparency, and the trade and investment sectors. Namibia has vast natural resources from world class mineral riches such as diamonds, uranium, and rare earths to high value timber and endangered wildlife species. Namibia's mining industry is largely undeveloped and would benefit from international investment. Namibia also has bold ambitions to develop renewable energy and green hydrogen that could advance decarbonization and energy security goals in the region and of likeminded partners, notably those in Europe. If confirmed, I would work closely with my counterparts from these countries to promote trade and investment between Namibia and the United States and European countries, thus filling a gap often filled by malign actors.

Human Rights

Question. In the State Department's 2022 Trafficking in Persons Report (TIP), Namibia remained the only sub-Saharan African country ranked Tier 1 for meeting minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking. Although the Government met minimum standards, it prosecuted fewer victims and initiated fewer investigations through the reporting year and did not provide specialized training to law enforcement for human trafficking practices.

- How will you work with the Namibians to maintain progress as a Tier 1 country and to serve as an example among peers in the Southern Africa region if you are confirmed as Ambassador?

Answer. Maintaining its Tier 1 ranking on the annual trafficking in persons (TIP) report is a serious policy priority for the Government of Namibia. Youth unemployment, extraordinary socioeconomic disparities exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, and the influx of Angolan climate migrants into Namibia have increased TIP vulnerabilities. However, Namibia is taking proactive steps to address many of the concerns, as encapsulated in the Government of Namibia's revised draft National Trafficking in Persons Strategy (2021-2026) and demonstrated by recent efforts to repatriate TIP victims from Oman. If confirmed, I will leverage USG resources to support the continued development of Namibia's judiciary and law enforcement mechanisms to strengthen its ability to protect vulnerable persons.

Question. If confirmed, what concrete steps could you take to help Namibia operationalize the prioritized recommendations contained in the TIP report?

Answer. If confirmed, I will leverage available USG resources to continue support for training law enforcement and other front-line responders to identify and respond to TIP cases. This includes training and exchange programs, such as those offered by the International Law Enforcement Academy (ILEA), identifying foreign assistance mechanisms to bolster Namibia's home-grown efforts to prosecute traffickers, protect TIP victims, and prevent TIP altogether. My team and I will also amplify messages that aim to raise awareness about TIP and encourage accountability—both in private meetings and on public platforms.

Question. In the State Department's 2021 Human Rights Report, Namibia was identified as having credible reports of serious government corruption and poor prison conditions, including overcrowding from lengthy pre-trail detentions. The Government has taken steps to prosecute or punish officials who committed abuses, but some officials engaged in corrupt practices with impunity.

- Do you commit to raising the issue of corruption with the host government?

Answer. Yes. Corruption is increasingly a threat to the stability of Namibia's democratic institutions, the vitality of its economy, and the ability of the U.S. Government (USG) to safeguard our investments and achieve our strategic goals in Namibia. Though President Geingob has strongly messaged the importance of demo-

cratic institutions and systems and the need for leaders to combat corruption and tribalism, recent polls in Namibia indicate shaken faith in democratic leadership and serious corruption concerns.

In line with the anti-corruption call in President Biden's National Security Study Memorandum, Embassy Windhoek created an anti-corruption plan of action targeting both the public and government to simultaneously empower, equip, and advocate to combat corruption. Embassy Windhoek has already partnered with civil society to set up a National Anti-Corruption Network and online whistleblower portal; supported anti-corruption trainings for law enforcement; mentored investigative journalists; [designated under section 7031(c) of the annual appropriations act and] imposed visa restrictions on officials implicated in corruption scandals; and highlighted budgetary loopholes for corruption through a fiscal transparency study. If confirmed, I plan to build on this foundation, including through frank conversations with the host government.

Question. If confirmed, how will you work with the Namibian Government on prison conditions and improving the efficiency of the legal system to reduce the length of pre-trial detentions?

Answer. If confirmed, I will leverage available USG resources to continue support for rule of law and human rights in Namibia. This includes training and exchange programs, such as those offered by the International Law Enforcement Academy (ILEA), as well as identifying foreign assistance mechanisms to bolster Namibia's home-grown efforts to build a more efficient and equitable legal system. My team and I will, if confirmed, also encourage progress in private meetings with government officials and empower civil society advocates to continue to hold Namibia, a member of the U.N Human Rights Council, to a high standard in this area.

Question. In the State Department's 2021 International Religious Freedom report, Namibia's constitution provides for freedom of belief and right to practice, profess, and promote any religion. The nongovernmental Interfaith Council consisting of members of various Christian and Muslims groups regularly met to discuss and coordinate their approach to the Government to address the needs of their respective congregations.

- What actions would you take with the host government to continue to promote religious tolerance and freedom?

Answer. If confirmed, I will encourage the Namibian Government, both publicly and privately, to build on the provisions in its constitution that prohibit religious discrimination and provide for freedom of belief and the right to practice, profess, and promote any religion. I will meet with religious leaders of all faiths, and I will also work with members of civil society on this issue.

Question. How could you engage with the Interfaith Council and government to further understand the country's religious environment to best prevent possible areas of religious discrimination?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to meeting regularly and developing strong relationships with all members of the nongovernmental Interfaith Council to discuss what actions the United States can take to support the provisions in Namibia's constitution that provide for freedom of belief and the right to practice, profess, and promote any religion.

Namibia in the United Nations

Question. The Office of Multilateral Strategy and Personnel (MSP) in the State Department's Bureau of International Organizations is leading a whole-of-government effort to identify, recruit, and install qualified, independent personnel at the United Nations (UN), including in elections for specialized bodies like the International Telecommunications Union (ITU). There is an American candidate, Doreen Bodgan-Martin, who if elected would be the first American and first woman to lead the ITU. She is in a tough race that will require early, consistent engagement across capital and within the U.N member states.

- If confirmed, do you commit to demarching the Namibian Government and any other counterparts necessary to encourage their support of Ms. Bogdan-Martin?

Answer. Yes, I commit to continuing to build on previous discussions that have already been held between U.S. Embassy Windhoek and members of the Namibian Government on Ms. Bogdan-Martin's candidacy for Secretary-General of the International Telecommunication Union.

Question. If confirmed, how can you work with the Bureau of International Organizations and other stakeholders to identify, recruit, and install qualified Americans in positions like the Junior Program Officer (JPO) program at the U.N?

Answer. The U.N's Junior Professional Officer program supports young professionals interested in serving in international organizations by providing them with hands-on experience across various U.N agencies. If confirmed, I will work closely with the Bureau of International Organizations to identify qualified and diverse candidates for the JPO program. I will advise and support the work of Washington-based colleagues in the Bureau of African Affairs in efforts to use their engagements with Namibian officials in Washington, New York, Geneva, and elsewhere to advance these goals.

Question. Namibia has a low rate of voting coincidence with the U.S. in the U.N General Assembly and in the Security Council.

- What is your assessment of this issue?

Answer. Thirty-two years after independence, many top government positions are filled with SWAPO's liberation-era fighters who continue to harbor Cold War-era suspicions about U.S. intentions in Namibia. These suspicions—and in some instances antipathy—are rooted in resentment for the United States' previous friendly relations with apartheid South Africa and a belief that the United States' negotiating posture in the 1980s unnecessarily delayed Namibia's independence by a decade.

In multilateral fora, the Government of Namibia advocates for conflict resolution through peaceful dialogue and democratic process "anchored on respect of the territorial integrity and sovereignty of nations." President Geingob has stressed that "Namibia does not want to be put in an awkward position between two competing superpowers." While Namibia's rhetoric still favors liberation struggle allies, in practice the Government is slowly adjusting its policies to be in line with international standards and often U.S. interests.

Question. If confirmed, what concrete actions can you take to engage with the Namibians on anticipated votes in the U.N.system that would increase their voting coincidence with the U.S.?

Answer. Namibian leaders stress that the country fought hard for its independence and places high value on the ability of Namibia to shape its own policy. If confirmed, I would work with my team and interagency partners to build a true partnership with Namibia that advances our common interests and allows the United States to be viewed as a reliable partner. On this foundation, we can build a relationship in which our shared values are also reflected in our U.N voting records. My team and I will engage with Namibian officials to place increased value on taking positions and voting in a manner that benefits Namibia. We will also continue to encourage Namibia's foreign affairs officials to vote for human rights resolutions, even if they are single-country resolutions, in line with Namibia's principles—rather than abstaining.

State Department Manangement and Public Diplomacy

Question. Many U.S. missions have been under enormous stress over the last few years, in large part due to COVID. What is your understanding of morale throughout Mission Windhoek?

Answer. Morale at Mission Windhoek, despite the global challenges posed by the global COVID-19 pandemic, remains high. Dedication to the Mission, strong and consultative leadership by the Chargé d'Affaires, and good communication have been key, and if confirmed, I look forward to using my own leadership to advance positive morale.

Question. How do you intend to improve morale at Mission Windhoek?

Answer. I believe that positive morale and the well-being and productivity of staff stems from the creation of a respectful, consultative environment that allows for the best ideas, concepts, and innovations to emerge. Promoting and maintaining a Mission where open communication, the free expression of alternative ideas and dissent, and community-based initiatives and activities flourish are all key elements. The most vital among these principles is treating the team of professionals that make up our Mission with respect and trust, and to ensure their viewpoints, ideas, and concerns are heard and acted upon.

Question. How do you intend to create a unified mission and vision at Mission Windhoek?

Answer. Common purpose and a unified team are critical, and effective communication is the vital foundation. I intend to create this environment of "One Mission, One Team" by consulting and drawing upon four key elements essential to my conception and demonstration of leadership. First, adopting a jointly understood vision of USG goals and targets is vital, and that is a team effort, produced through ongoing and effective communication. Second, a consistent articulation of that vision ensures the team remains on a unified track—in Country Team meetings, in Town Hall formats, and in our vital planning documents. Third, ensuring our team understands how program and external engagement supports underlying policy and goals—essentially how we turn aspiration into results—is vital. And finally, focusing on implementation and achievement built upon that foundation is key. Our greatest asset in our Missions overseas are our people, and effective communication at all levels is the greatest imperative.

Question. Management is a key responsibility for Chiefs of Mission. How would you describe your management style?

Answer. Over the course of my career, I have relied heavily on the components of consultative and servant leadership, and I believe this approach to be the most beneficial in delivering a positive work environment and tangible achievements for the Mission team, for USG policy priorities and for the American people. I believe leaders carry the mantle of outlining a vision, based on consultation, and in the creation of a management environment that values and rewards innovation, bold thinking, and achievement. I believe strongly that accessibility, approachability, and understanding that effective communication doesn't simply lie in speaking well, but in listening well, are the key components of success.

Question. Do you believe it is ever acceptable or constructive to berate subordinates, either in public or private?

Answer. No. It is never acceptable or constructive to berate subordinates in any setting, public or private.

Question. How do you envision your leadership relationship with your Deputy Chief of Mission?

Answer. Leadership is a true team effort, and the relationship between a Chief of Mission and Deputy Chief of Mission, the most vital in the Mission, depends heavily on trust, open communication, and a shared approach and vision. Collaborative and consultative leadership requires the DCM to speak openly and honestly on issues facing the Mission, both in policy and operational terms. I will invest my support and trust to my DCM and ensure that our Mission team understands we speak with one voice on issues facing the community and our policy priorities. Essential for the success of that approach is a professional relationship where honest and open dialogue forms the foundation.

Question. If confirmed, what leadership responsibilities do you intend to entrust to your Deputy Chief of Mission?

Answer. Though the ultimate responsibility for defining leadership rests on the shoulders of the Chief of Mission, the most generous sharing of responsibilities is vital as we look to develop the next generation of Foreign Service Officers. I intend to partner fully with my DCM to define and deliver the type of collaborative leadership that creates the type of professional environment most conducive to professional growth and achievement. Leadership at its core is a team sport, and effective communication is vital.

Question. In order to create and continue employee excellence at the Department, accurate and direct employee evaluation reports (EERs) for Foreign Service Officers are imperative, though often lacking.

- Do you believe that it is important to provide employees with accurate, constructive feedback on their performances in order to encourage improvement and reward those who most succeeded in their roles?

Answer. Not only do I believe it is important; I believe it is absolutely critical to do so to achieve our common Mission goals, and also to shape and prepare the next generation of Foreign Service professionals to lead and succeed. Over many years of service, I have used constructive and clear feedback and discussion with employees at all levels to improve performance, establish new targets for achievement, and create opportunity. Vital in that is also the ability to identify, cite, and recognize achievement through awards, promotions, and recognition.

Question. If confirmed, would you support and encourage clear, accurate, and direct feedback to employees in order to improve performance and reward high achievers?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit fully to supporting and encouraging clear, accurate and direct feedback. I have found this to be a critically important skill as I have assumed roles of greater responsibility throughout my nearly 30-year career with the State Department.

Question. It is imperative that U.S. diplomats get outside of posts abroad to meet with local actors, including host government officials, non-government organizations, and fellow foreign diplomats stationed in Namibia.

- In your opinion, do U.S. diplomats get outside of our embassy walls enough to accomplish fully their missions?

Answer. I firmly believe that the key imperative for our diplomats posted overseas is to get to know the country of assignment as thoroughly as possible, and that cannot be done adequately by remaining in the office. Engagement, relationship-building, and understanding is only possible through personal contact and experience. Diplomacy is a full-contact sport, and if confirmed, I will make this approach a priority for myself and my team, so that we can most faithfully execute on our goals—because we know and understand our environment.

Question. How do you intend to improve the ability of U.S. diplomats to better access all local populations?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work closely with the Regional Security Officer and team at Post to ensure that the staff at Embassy Windhoek have the means and resources to safely travel and access all local populations in order to further USG priorities. I will always seek to balance the importance of person-to-person engagements with the safety of my staff.

Question. Public diplomacy is an important aspect of U.S. foreign policy efforts. What is the public diplomacy environment like in Namibia?

Answer. Historically, suspicion of the United States for the role it played during the liberation struggle dominated public sentiment. With a new generation, that narrative is starting to fade, but Namibians are wary of dueling U.S.-China relationships in their country. However, in a country with 50 percent youth unemployment and one of the world's highest levels of inequality, economic and social concerns far outweigh political ideology for young people. Young Namibians increasingly want to go to the United States, not to immigrate, but to create professional and social opportunities for themselves. American freedom, lifestyles, and culture are very compelling for the new generation of Namibians. There is renewed interest in participating in U.S. exchange programs, and, if confirmed I will strive to utilize the full gambit of public diplomacy tools, including though social media outreach, cultural and social diplomacy, and new media.

Question. What public diplomacy challenges do U.S. diplomats face there?

Answer. Namibians are somewhat skeptical of our message, and there is some sentiment that the U.S.-Namibia relationship is in effect more about countering China than building a genuine partnership with Namibia. Exchange programs, as well as continued investment in people—whether in the health or education sectors, among others—will continue to move the needle with the Namibian public. High-level meetings and visits also matter; they demonstrate that our stated commitment to U.S.-Africa collaboration on shared global priorities, including ending the COVID–19 pandemic and building back to a more inclusive global economy, combatting the climate crisis, revitalizing our democracies, and advancing peace and security is more than just words.

Question. How do you balance the importance of Main State versus the in-country mission when it comes to tailoring public diplomacy messages for foreign audiences?

Answer. Public diplomacy messages should have an objective and an intended audience. Determining the source, content, or method of delivering those messages, requires a nuanced assessment of the audience(s), their orientation, how to influence them, and potential unintended reactions by primary or other audiences. The issue, circumstance, and audience should inform whether the in-country Mission or Main State is better positioned to achieve the objective. Often, messaging from Post/in-country Mission has the benefit of more targeted, time-responsive messaging, and is met with greater authenticity, as long as it is coordinated and within Department of State guidance. Accessibility, engagement, and authenticity enhance our ability to connect and inform, and if confirmed, I intend to engage substantially across our

platforms and using all our tools, to communicate America's story, and our USG priorities.

Question. "Anomalous health incidents," commonly referred to as "Havana Syndrome," have been debilitating and sidelining U.S. diplomats around the world for years. They have caused serious, negative consequences for U.S. diplomacy, yet many believe that the Department is not doing enough to care for, protect, and communicate to its personnel.

• If confirmed, do you commit to taking this threat seriously?

Answer. I am deeply concerned by potential anomalous health incidents impacting U.S. Government personnel and their family members. These incidents affect the wellbeing of U.S. personnel serving their country abroad and must be taken extremely seriously. If confirmed, I will make the health and safety of my staff my top priority, including contributing to the extensive, ongoing interagency investigation into the cause of these incidents and how we can best protect our people. Reported cases will be taken seriously, and proper treatment and support from the USG will be provided. If confirmed, the health, safety, and security of Embassy Windhoek staff and all those supporting the Mission will be my highest priority.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to talking as openly as you can to Mission Windhoek personnel?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit fully to leading our team in Mission Windhoek through effective and frequent communication, driven by honest and clear discussions.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO HON. RANDY W. BERRY BY SENATOR MARCO RUBIO

Question. Namibia and the People's Republic of China maintain close trade ties and warm relations. The CCP enjoys a prominent role in Namibia's mining sector and have financed major infrastructure, to include a major shipping port. Namibia's president Geingob has praised Beijing and signed a number of agreements to increase bilateral partnerships. Namibia's ruling party has particularly strong relations with the CCP, conducting regular party-to-party trainings. The CCP is filling a vacuum left by the United States' indifference as a partner. Reportedly, Beijing has been in discussion with Namibia to open a naval base in Walvis Bay, which would significantly increase the PLA Navy's power projection capabilities.

• Is the CCP a threat to the United States?

Answer. Certain activities by the People's Republic of China (PRC) and Chinese Communist Party (CCP) represent significant challenges to U.S. economic, political, and security interests globally and in the Africa region. The PRC has used its influence abroad in ways that undermine laws, agreements, and institutions which has the effect of undermining rule of law and democratic principles. The port of Walvis Bay is a significant nexus for southern Atlantic security and could be an important opportunity for partnership with the United States. As Secretary Blinken said on May 26, we will invest, align, and compete with the PRC to defend our interests and build our vision for the future. If confirmed, I will invest in our partnership with Namibia, align our concerns highlighting the risks associated with PRC engagement that could impact Namibia's security, democratic principles, sovereignty, and U.S. interests, and ensure that our vision of a positive partnership and regional security and prosperity competes successfully with the PRC.

Question. What is the nature and extent of CCP ties with Namibia and what are their implications for U.S. interests?

Answer. The People's Republic of China (PRC) maintains strong and rapidly growing economic ties to Namibia; in 2021, the PRC was Namibia's second largest export destination and second largest source of imports. Additionally, Namibia is home to vast amounts of natural resources and mineral wealth; in addition to uranium, diamonds, gold, copper, and zinc, Namibia has rich deposits of critical minerals, all of which are of great interest to the PRC. While Namibia recognizes U.S. global engagement and appreciates U.S. support in the health and conservation fields, Namibia sees its relationship to the PRC through the lens of "friend to all, enemy to none," particularly given historic support from the PRC in the struggle for Namibia's independence. Namibia values its hard-built democracy and independent institutions, and our common commitment to democratic principles, transparency, and the fundamental freedoms should guide our efforts. If confirmed, I commit to build-

ing key relationships with senior leadership and others to emphasize the values, interests, and commitment of the USG to act as a key partner for the Namibian Government and people.

Question. What can the U.S. do to counter the CCP's influence in Namibia?

Answer. There are a number of opportunities for the United States to counter the PRC's influence in Namibia. First and foremost, being a present and active partner is key, guided by foundational democratic principles and fundamental freedoms. While the United States and Namibia currently have a limited commercial relationship, largely due to Namibia's small market, there are growing possibilities for U.S. businesses to invest in renewable energy, green hydrogen, critical minerals, transportation infrastructure, specialized business services, and tourism. Continued investment in Namibia's conservation and health sectors could also play a significant role as the United States seeks to counter the PRC's influence in Namibia.

It is vital, as well, to articulate U.S. engagement and values through effective public outreach, and to ensure that transparency and accountability are key standards defining any democracy's external engagements. A free and independent media, and environment in which public tenders and contracts are fully examined and visible to the press and public are vital. That environment also creates opportunities for the power of the U.S. private sector to engage more fully and engage in economic activities that benefit inclusive development with respect for the environment, a key interest for the country. If Namibia is to succeed in the development of its economy, that development should come with support to her democratic institutions and practices, to her people through expanded training and employment, and support her sovereignty.

Question. Please assess the Namibian Government's record on human rights. How free and fair are elections in Namibia?

Answer. Since independence, the Namibian Government has maintained a strong record on human rights, though some challenges obviously remain, as outlined in the State Department's historical human rights reports. Namibia has made combatting trafficking in persons a key policy priority and has maintained its Tier 1 ranking on the USG annual trafficking in persons (TIP) report. Namibia also ranks at the very top consistently in terms of press freedoms—an essential component for the health of a democracy and a force for transparency, accountability, and anti-corruption efforts. Religious freedoms are also generally respected and valued.

Namibia has been a stable democracy since independence from South Africa in 1990, and its elections since independence have met international standards for free and fair administration. It has a democratically elected parliament, an independent judiciary, free media, and a military that is fully subordinate to civilian leadership. President Hage Geingob was re-elected to his second and final five-year term in free and fair elections held peacefully in November 2019. His party, SWAPO, is the only political party to lead Namibia in its 32-year history.

NOMINATIONS

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 3, 2022

U.S. SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS,
Washington, DC.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:04 a.m., in Room SD–419, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Cory A. Booker presiding.

Present: Senators Booker [presiding], Menendez, Cardin, Murphy, Kaine, Van Hollen, Portman, Young, and Rounds.

Also Present: Senator King and Representative Norton.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. CORY A. BOOKER, U.S. SENATOR FROM NEW JERSEY

Senator BOOKER. The Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing will come to order now.

I cannot tell you how excited I am. We have an extraordinary group of people who have dedicated their lives to public service, folks who are so talented they have many other options.

Each and every one of you sitting before me and the ranking member right now are defining patriotism in the sense of your willingness to sacrifice in the name of service to country, and I greet you in that spirit and I am very excited.

This is not just a perfunctory process. This is a celebration of what we are about as a country, a country run by our citizens who step forward to serve in difficult times.

I am honored to be here today next to Senator Rounds, a ranking member who gives me great confidence and hope for our Senate to be able to actually function and I am sure this is going to be a very functional hearing.

I want to just jump right in. The five people before us right now are Nathaniel Fick, who is to be the Ambassador-at-Large for Cyberspace and Digital Policy. I am so happy that we are looking at cyberspace and digital policy and having someone up to lead that. We thank the President for that nomination.

We also have Mr. Michael Schiffer to be Assistant Administrator for Asia and U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and we are very excited about that.

Perhaps at this point there should be a hush in the crowd because we are about to introduce someone from New Jersey. I want to introduce Ms. Rachna Korhonen, who is from, of course, the Garden State to be Ambassador to the Republic of Mali.

And then we have Lucy—Ms. Lucy Tamlyn to be Ambassador to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and, finally, Ms. Jessica Davis Ba to be Ambassador to the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire.

And I am very happy to see—some of you have already seen one of my favorite people in the United States Senate, Senator Angus King from Maine. He is going to be introducing the man to his right, Mr. Nathaniel Fick.

Senator King, you are recognized. You can give your remarks. I know that we are in one of the most demanding weeks in the United States Senate. So after your remarks, no one will look askance at you if you leave and duck out.

You are recognized.

STATEMENT OF HON. ANGUS KING,
U.S. SENATOR FROM MAINE

Senator KING. Senator, thank you very much.

I was excited when you said I was one of your favorite people. But then you qualified by saying, in the United States Senate.

[Laughter.]

Senator KING. So that narrowed it somewhat substantially.

I am delighted to be with you this morning and to introduce Nate Fick. But I want to begin by a little bit of a description of the office that he is going to be taking and how important it is.

As you and the Vice Chair know, I worked for several years on cybersecurity policy for this country as part of the Cyberspace Solarium Commission.

One of our principal recommendations was the creation of an office or a bureau in the State Department to deal with international issues relating to cyber and they can be anything from coordinating international response to a cyber attack to establishing norms and standards in cyberspace—a kind of Geneva Convention of cyber—and also participating in international panels that set standards for the internet that, frankly, this country has not been as active in as we should be.

This recommendation has been turned into something called the Cyber Diplomacy Act, which has passed the House and is going to be considered in the near future by this committee.

I commend it to you as an urgent piece of legislation. What it does is codify the concept of an office within the office of the State Department to confront and deal with these issues.

The idea is we want someone who gets up every morning thinking about the international ramifications of cyber and that is what this office will do.

Mr. Fick has been appointed to head a bureau of cyber policy in the State Department. But this is a creation of the Administration.

I commend the Administration for taking the initiative to create this office within the State Department. But I believe we also need legislation to codify the existence of the office so it is not something that may come and go with the whim of a particular Administration.

So you are going to be seeing the Cyber Diplomacy Act. I believe it was scheduled originally for today. It has been postponed because of the NATO activity this afternoon.

But I hope that you will give prompt consideration to that bill. It has been—has a lot of work gone into it and I look forward to working with you on it, hopefully, prompt enactment.

Let me introduce Nate Fick. He is from Maine.

[Laughter.]

Senator KING. Oh, sorry. Oh, yeah, there are some other things.

Actually, if you took a blank sheet of paper and tried to design a person to fit this new position, you would have come up with someone of Nate Fick's extraordinary qualifications and background.

A Marine—I made the mistake once of calling Senator Roberts a former Marine. He informed me there is no such thing as a former Marine. If you are a Marine, you are a Marine.

And he served in Iraq and Afghanistan, later served as the CEO of a nonprofit, Center for New American Security, at which time he dealt with issues of cyber and international ramifications of cyber.

He then has worked in the private sector as the CEO of a software company—again, involved in issues of cyber. He has a degree in policy from the Kennedy School and also business from the Harvard Business School. Immensely well qualified, very thoughtful, engaged in this issue, and I think, as I said, I cannot imagine a better candidate to fulfill this position and the fact that he is from the state of Maine is simply gravy.

But, Mr. Chairman, I commend Nathan Fick to you, and I apologize, I do have to go off to a hearing of the Rules Committee on the Electoral Count Act, which is a matter of some concern to all of us.

I appreciate your courtesy this morning and I look forward to working with the committee to advance this nomination.

Thank you.

Senator BOOKER. We are honored that you are here. The spirit of Joshua Chamberlain, one of the greatest American heroes who happens to be from Maine, is looking down upon the two of you with pride.

I now want to move on to a person of the 535 of us that serve in the United States Senate and Congress. This is one of the handful that when they walk in the room people take note.

We are very fortunate to have Representative Eleanor Holmes Norton here and she will be introducing—and forgive me, I have been sitting on the dock of the bay too long but Ms. Jessica Davis Ba, forgive me right now.

Ms. Norton, you are recognized.

STATEMENT OF HON. ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON, U.S. DELEGATE FROM WASHINGTON, DC.

Ms. NORTON. Thank you. Can you hear me?

Senator BOOKER. I can. I am not sure if the microphone is on. Yes. You are good to go.

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Chairman, Mr. Ranking Member, I appreciate the opportunity to introduce my constituent, Jessica Davis Ba, to be the U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire.

She brings the experience and credentials to be an excellent ambassador. A fifth-generation Washingtonian who grew up in the

Shepherd Park neighborhood of the District of Columbia, Ms. Davis Ba has worked for the last 20 years in the State Department.

She currently serves as the senior adviser to the Bureau of African Affairs where she focuses on recruitment, selection, and retention of Foreign Service officers, in particular, officers of color.

Prior to this assignment, she served in Nigeria, Guinea, Kenya, Somalia, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Ethiopia, and Chad. She also worked in the office of Vice President Kamala Harris as her special advisor for Africa and senior coordinator of the National Security Affairs team where she coordinated the work of advisers on national security and global issues and engaged on the Vice President's behalf with the National Security Council to develop U.S. foreign policy.

Ms. Davis Ba has been awarded numerous academic fellowships and State Department awards, including the One Team award and was named a, quote, "top 50 among 50", a U.S. national security and foreign affairs leader by the Center for Strategic and International Studies and the Diversity in National Security Network in 2021.

A graduate of the University of Pennsylvania, Ms. Davis Ba received a bachelor's degree in international relations and environmental studies and a master's degree in communications, specializing in the use of media to empower underrepresented people to make their own image and have their voices heard.

I very much appreciate the committee for moving on Mr. Davis Ba's nomination.

Senator BOOKER. Congresswoman, we, again, appreciate your presence here before us. We all take note of that and we thank you for that eloquent introduction.

You may take your leave at any time. I know there are a lot of demands on your time in a very busy day. So thank you very much for being here.

I would like to proceed now with the remainder of the introductions, if I may. The first, it is an absolute pleasure to introduce a particularly special nominee to every member and staffer on this committee today and that is Michael Schiffer, the President's nominee to be the assistant administrator for the Asia Bureau of USAID.

I would like to think that we on this committee taught him every single thing that he knows. But really, unfortunately, I must confess publicly it is probably the other way around. He has been an extraordinary staffer. He has been a senior advisor and counselor on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee staff coordinating Asia-related policy.

Mr. Schiffer brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to his job, where he has shown an extraordinary commitment to this committee, its mission, and to ensuring that U.S. foreign policy represents the best of our collective shared American values.

No matter how many rounds of text negotiations we put him through, he somehow has survived and is better for it.

Senator CARDIN. Mr. Chairman, could I ask you to just yield for one moment?

Senator BOOKER. I will yield to you at any time, Senator Cardin.

Senator CARDIN. I just want to add my appreciation to Mike Schiffer.

I chaired the East Asia and Pacific Subcommittee and he was the principal staff person. And you are right, it was just the reverse. We have learned so much from his experience. He is such a dedicated public servant.

I know he will do well in the executive branch. We are going to miss him in the legislative branch. I just really want to thank him for his service on this committee and to the members of our committee.

Senator BOOKER. I thank you for that added hallelujah and amen we would call it in my church. I appreciate that testifying.

I just want to continue and say Mr. Schiffer served as the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for East Asia and worked for the Honorable Dianne Feinstein, senator from California, as senior national security adviser and legislative director.

Prior to working for the Department of Defense, Mr. Schiffer worked for the Stanley Foundation where he was a program officer responsible for Asia programs. He was a Council on Foreign Relations Hitachi International Affairs Fellow in Japan, and he served as director of the International Securities Program at New York University's Center for War, Peace, and News Media.

In addition to his public service, Mr. Schiffer has also had some colorful life experiences, including managing a bed and breakfast in—I do not know why not New Jersey but in Hawaii. I look forward to quizzing the nominee on the best bagel spots for this New Jersey boy if I visit the island.

Mr. Schiffer's regional experience and intricate knowledge of Congress make him an excellent candidate to oversee the Asia Bureau's development assistance program's budget and allocation of resources.

As the U.S. grapples with complex challenges, immense opportunities in the Indo-Pacific region from strategic competition with China to the current global food crisis, from mitigating the impact of climate change to combating emerging infectious diseases, from preventing democratic backsliding to protecting the human rights of minority communities, there is a lot to do.

I look forward to hearing from him on the importance of U.S. engagement in the region and how USAID can foster sustainable, resilient, and innovative development.

I want to congratulate you on your nomination, and before I move on to the next nominee you should know that usually the tradition is that Chris Murphy on his birthday usually runs a marathon, but instead of doing the 27 miles today he is here to be here for you. So that is a particular honor.

All right. We now move to the great—we put her in the center to mark her importance—from New Jersey, I want to—again, Rachna Sachdeva Korhonen, I want to thank you for being here.

You hale from Hunterdon County, the mighty Hunterdon County, and you are joined today by your beautiful family, who I had a chance to briefly meet—your husband, Juha, your mother, Meena, and your two sons. I am grateful for them being here.

You are a career member of the Senior Foreign Service. You are currently serving as the executive director of the combined executive offices of the State Department's Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs and Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs.

Previously, you were the counsel general and principal officer for the U.S. Consulate to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Your experience is vast. You led the management section of the U.S. Embassy in Sri Lanka and in Washington you served as a special assistant to the Undersecretary for Management.

Among your other assignments you served in various capacities at embassies all across the Middle East. Before joining the State Department you worked in multiple leadership positions in the private sector and you bring that rare combination of private and public center experience at the highest of levels.

Now that I have listed your resume, let me say this. Once confirmed, you will bring leadership, experience, character, and a dedication and passion to this nation's security and economic success.

It is so valuable that you are before us right now, and Mali especially was once seen as a democratic leader. It has now become the epicenter of conflict and instability over the past decade, exemplifying the challenges we are having in the Sahel region.

Military officers we have seen have led to the overthrow of an elected president just as recently as August of 2020, which seemed, unfortunately, to be that part of a trend really fueling governance challenges in that entire region.

We know the crisis that we are seeing in the Sahel region and we know that in May of 2021 soldiers overthrew the civilian transitional leaders whom they had put in place and put in a transition president in 2021.

We know that Islamist insurgents affiliated with al-Qaeda and the Islamic State are active in much of central and northern Mali.

Further, the conflict has affected parts of the country and parts of the country are experiencing serious crisis level food insecurity.

Mali has one of the world's highest rates of acute malnutrition. It is clear that the U.N. peacekeeping mission in Mali is not enough to prevent mass suffering, instability, and death and, potentially, the spread of greater and greater terrorist activities.

It is clear that the U.S. must do more and we must have the most talented people possible serving in our efforts in Mali.

So I want to congratulate you on your nomination. I am sobered by the challenges before you but I am looking forward to hearing from you on how you will assess the United States' priorities in Mali, how you will meet the challenges and bring your inner Jersey to bear on a difficult situation.

I now am grateful to have a privilege of introducing another person going to another very challenging region, Ms. Lucy Tamlyn.

Ms. Tamlyn is the nominee to be the Ambassador to the Democratic Republic of Congo. She is a career member of the Senior Foreign Service and is currently the Chargé d'Affaires for the U.S. Embassy in Sudan. We are very, very grateful for your work there currently.

Previously, she served as the U.S. Ambassador to the Central Africa Republic, U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Benin, and as Deputy Chief of Mission in the U.S. embassies in Portugal and in Chad.

In addition, she has experience at U.S. missions to the United States—to the United Nations and its specialized agencies as economic counselor at the U.S. mission to the Organization for Eco-

nomic Cooperation and Development and as a provincial reconstruction team leader in Erbil.

I will spare the committee this incredible resume I, literally, could read for another 10 more minutes. You have an extensive degree of service under presidents of both parties. You are a testimony, in my opinion, to what it means to dedicate your life to this nation's well being, its safety, and relationships around the world.

We know the challenges in the DRC. Under former President Kabila they were characterized by human rights abuses, corruptions, and impunity.

The new president vowed to address these issues. Yet, three years later, several senior military officers responsible for gross, gross violations of human rights remain at their posts and cooperation, again, appears—corruption, again, appears rampant.

I am looking forward to hearing your thoughts on how the U.S. can compete strategically in this incredibly important nation because we know that China is the largest consumer of DRC-mined cobalt and copper and the DRC's largest trading partner.

China firms reportedly control the majority of the DRC copper and cobalt mining projects and output. DRC is a critical supplier of rare earth metals and other materials for things like batteries for electric cars.

And so I am confident that Ms. Tamlyn's extensive experience as part of the Foreign Service make her eminently qualified, make you a great asset and an excellent choice by the President of the United States for this role.

Congratulations on your nomination. I look forward to hearing from you as well.

And, again, I am honored to be sitting next to my Ranking Member Rounds. I would like to turn to him for his thoughtful opening statement as well.

STATEMENT OF HON. MIKE ROUNDS,
U.S. SENATOR FROM SOUTH DAKOTA

Senator ROUNDS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to all of our nominees and to your families for your service to our country.

All of you have served our nation as either a service member, senior political appointee, or a career diplomat. You have made sacrifices in the service of your country and, in some cases, with much of your lives and sometimes those of your families spent away from home. I thank you for your service to our nation.

Mr. Fick, thank you for your service in the Marine Corps and your eagerness to continue to serve as our first ever Ambassador-at-Large for Cyberspace and Digital Policy. Thank you for the opportunity to visit yesterday. It was very enlightening.

Cyberspace presents myriad opportunities and challenges for our national security, economy, and foreign policy. The United States, our allies, and partners face an increasingly complex and interconnected global security environment with threats in cyberspace posed by state actors, most notably Russia and the People's Republic of China, as well as nonstate actors.

We need to take a hard look at our foreign policy as it relates to cyberspace and how we can be proactively engaged to defend

U.S. interests. I appreciate your willingness to serve as the first leader of the State Department's newly created Bureau of Cyberspace and Digital Policy, a very challenging assignment.

Mr. Schiffer, thank you for your service in the Department of Defense and your long service as a congressional staff member. I am glad to see an experienced senior advisor like you as the nominee for Assistant Administrator for Asia in USAID.

Across Asia, USAID plays an important role in helping countries achieve sustainable long-term growth and success. Through development partnerships such as the Quad between Australia, India, Japan, and the United States and with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, USAID supports developing countries in Asia to realize their development goals and contribute to a more prosperous and, hopefully, peaceful world.

USAID is a critical pillar of the U.S. foreign policy and I look forward to hearing how you plan to further U.S.-Asian relationships and provide development assistance to developing countries in Asia.

Ms. Korhonen, Mali, like other nations in the Sahel, faces the rise of Islamist militancy and other troubling trends. The eighth largest country in Africa, Mali, over the last few years, has had two coups, persistent insecurity, significant challenges in implementing the Algiers Accords, and the intervention of malign actors including the Wagner Group.

Mali will remain central to the Administration's strategy for the Sahel and to broader U.S. interests in the region. Beyond engagement with the current military junta in Mali and the other domestic challenges that Mali faces, the U.S. must also balance complex regional and multilateral interests related to the U.N. peacekeeping mission, counterterrorism operations, and the role of France as it draws down its presence, along with other Western partners.

So you have your work cut out for you, and I thank you, Ms. Korhonen, for being willing to serve the United States in Mali. I look forward to hearing how you will approach the complex issues you will face as a U.S. Ambassador, if confirmed.

Ambassador Tamlyn, you have served the United States in a number of challenging posts, including several in Africa. Your next post in the Democratic Republic of Congo, if confirmed, will be no less challenging.

I thank you for being willing to serve in the places we most need experienced ambassadors who understand Africa as well as the U.S. priorities and challenges on the continent.

In the DRC, the United States has been a strong partner to the Administration of President Tshisekedi since the controversial elections in 2018 that saw the end to more than two decades of rule by the Kabila family.

While there have been some efforts at reform, progress has been slow to deeply entrenched interests and power dynamics in the DRC as well as ongoing insecurity in eastern Congo that has become even more worrying in recent weeks with the resurgence of M–23.

Ambassador Tamlyn, I look forward to hearing from you and how you plan to pursue U.S. priorities in the DRC, if confirmed, par-

ticularly with the elections expected late next year and, once again, I most certainly appreciated your visit yesterday and look forward to your discussion with us today.

Ms. Davis Ba, you have had a long career serving the United States in some of the most challenging posts on the African continent. Your experience serving in both Chad and Nigeria, both important players in the continent, will serve us well in your new role as the U.S. Ambassador to Côte d'Ivoire, if confirmed.

If confirmed, you will need to engage our Ivoirian partners on a number of important issues to include preventing and countering violent extremism, trade and investment, global health, and the implementation of the Millennium Challenge Corporation compact.

I thank you, Ms. Davis Ba, for your willingness to continue to serve the United States in Africa in a country that is important to U.S. policy objectives for the entire region.

I am delighted to meet with all of you today and look forward to your comments.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator BOOKER. Thank you to my ranking member.

We are going to now proceed through your introductory comments. We are going to go from my left, actually, to my right, starting with Ms. Ba, ending with Mr. Fick.

A pro tip, though, as you prepare to go. Please introduce your family and friends behind you. If there is anything I know about getting on the good side of Tim Kaine there are three things he likes. In fact, there is three things he loves: family, friends, and big bald senators from New Jersey.

[Laughter.]

Senator BOOKER. Ms. Ba, please proceed with your opening statement.

STATEMENT OF JESSICA DAVIS BA OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, A CAREER MEMBER OF THE SENIOR FOREIGN SERVICE, CLASS OF COUNSELOR, NOMINATED TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE REPUBLIC OF COTE D'IVOIRE

Ms. BA. Thank you so much, Senator.

Well, first, then I would like to introduce my family. I am joined with me today by my husband, Amadu Mahtar Ba, by my son, Alioune—he is the oldest of my five sons representing all of the Ba boys here today—and my mom, Janice Davis.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, distinguished members of this committee, it is the greatest honor of my diplomatic career to appear before you this morning as President Biden's nominee to be the next U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire.

I appreciate the confidence of the President and Secretary Blinken for entrusting me with this opportunity of a lifetime. If confirmed, I will advance our bilateral relationship and build upon our enduring partnership for the benefit of all Americans and all Ivoirians.

I am here today to continue my family's legacy of service. We are Washingtonians. We are educators, public servants, and veterans.

We are patriots who have chosen life in our nation's capital dedicated to improving our country and our global community.

I made my first solo trip overseas in high school to volunteer with Operation Crossroads Africa and decided then to pursue life in the international community.

If confirmed, I will serve and lead to empower all people to achieve their greatest potential and make a difference in our world. I recognize the enormity of this moment that I share with my family, who support me every step of this journey. I have introduced to you already my husband, Mahtar, and our five sons, and if confirmed they will accompany me to Abidjan.

We have served to advance common values in the interests of the United States in Nigeria, Guinea, Somalia, Kenya, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Ethiopia, and Chad. My late grandmother, Doris Haynes, a retired D.C. public school principal, accompanied us, celebrating her 90th birthday in Nairobi.

Through our service, my parents, Janice and Joseph Davis, my brother, Jay, and his family and our friends discover the world through our lived experience.

This is an important moment for the people of Côte d'Ivoire. They have taken bold strides to strengthen democracy through political dialogue and reconciliation. With its national development plan, the country is building the foundation for a prosperous future.

Ivoirians are investing to reap democratic dividends and, if confirmed, I will prioritize partnerships to achieve our common goals, aspirations, and vision for the future.

I will encourage Côte d'Ivoire's political leaders to continue on the path towards peace, fortifying democratic institutions with every single step. Through our embassy programs we are prioritizing freedom of expression, political competition, and universal human rights. We will emphasize greater participation of women in the economic, political, and social fabric of the nation.

The partnership between the United States and Côte d'Ivoire is vital to meet the unprecedented global and regional challenges of this moment. Terrorist activity is on the rise in west Africa as violent extremist organizations in the Sahel seek to expand their influence into coastal states.

Côte d'Ivoire's neighbors are besieged by extraconstitutional changes in power and disinformation is prevalent in Ivoirian social media. The unjustifiable war in Ukraine has increased food and fuel prices for the people of Côte d'Ivoire and around the world.

Yet, through all these challenges, our partnerships remain strong. Together, we strengthen democracy, expand economic prosperity, and increase security.

Côte d'Ivoire's economic performance is extraordinary, with enormous potential for increased trade and U.S. commercial investment and, if confirmed, I will expand opportunities for American companies to unleash innovation and contribute to a private sector that encourages transparency, entrepreneurship, and inclusive growth.

A country is strongest when its citizens experience safety and security. If confirmed, I will work closely with you, members of this committee, and colleagues across the U.S. Government to increase

health security, enhance Ivoirian military capabilities, and strengthen community resilience.

I will capitalize on new opportunities provided by the Global Fragility Act, landmark legislation made possible through bipartisan congressional support.

If confirmed, I will lead our mission to strengthen democratic institutions, deepen economic and cultural ties, and expand partnerships based on mutual respect between the United States and Côte d'Ivoire.

Thank you so much for your consideration, and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Ba follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF JESSICA DAVIS BA

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, distinguished members of the committee, it is the greatest honor of my diplomatic career to appear before you today as President Biden's nominee to be the next U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire. I appreciate the confidence of the President and Secretary Blinken for entrusting me with this opportunity of a lifetime. If confirmed, I will advance our bilateral relationship and build upon our enduring partnership for the benefit of all Americans and all Ivoirians.

I am here today to continue my family's legacy of service. We are Washingtonians. We are educators, public servants, and veterans. We are patriots who have chosen a life in our nation's capital dedicated to improving our country and our global community. I made my first solo trip overseas in high school to volunteer with Operation Crossroads Africa and decided then to pursue life in the international community.

If confirmed, I will serve—and lead—to empower all people to achieve their greatest potential and make a difference in our world.

I recognize the enormity of this moment that I share with my family who support me on this journey. My husband Mahtar and our five sons—Alioune, Ibrahim, Omar, Ismael and Soulayman. We have served to advance common values and the interests of the United States in Nigeria, Guinea, Somalia, Kenya, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Ethiopia, and Chad. My late grandmother, Doris Haynes, a retired D.C. public school principal joined us, celebrating her 90th birthday in Nairobi. Through our service, my parents—Janice and Joseph Davis, my brother Jay and his family, and our friends discover the world through our lived experience.

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Côte d'Ivoire's economic performance is extraordinary with enormous potential for increased trade and U.S. commercial investment. If confirmed, I will expand opportunities for American companies to unleash innovation and contribute to a private sector that encourages transparency, entrepreneurship, and inclusive growth.

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increase health security, enhance Ivoirian military capabilities, and strengthen community resilience. I will capitalize on new opportunities provided by the Global Fragility Act, landmark legislation made possible with bipartisan Congressional support. If confirmed, I will lead our mission to strengthen democratic institutions, deepen economic and cultural ties, and expand partnerships based on mutual respect between the United States and Côte d'Ivoire.

Thank you for your consideration and I look forward to your questions.

Senator BOOKER. We thank you for that presentation.

And I would like to now move to Ms. Lucy Tamlyn.

STATEMENT OF HON. LUCY TAMLYN OF RHODE ISLAND, A CAREER MEMBER OF THE FOREIGN SERVICE, CLASS OF MINISTER–COUNSELOR, NOMINATED TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

Ms. TAMLYN. Thank you, Senator.

To start off, I would like to introduce my cousins, Jessie and Kevin, who are here behind me.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and members of the committee, it is an honor for me to appear before you today. I am grateful to President Biden and Secretary Blinken for the confidence that they have placed in me as their nominee for the Ambassador to the Democratic Republic of the Congo—that is, DRC.

Representing the United States abroad is something that I have done together with my husband, Jorge Serpa, and children, Ben and Filipa, who, unfortunately, were not able to be here today. I thank them for their unwavering support and their enthusiasm across many continents.

In a career spanning 40 years of service, I have most recently served as Chargé d'Affaires in Sudan, Ambassador to the Central African Republic, and Ambassador to the Republic of Benin.

I feel privileged to have served in the countries where we are, literally, on the front lines, where U.S. diplomacy really matters, and side by side with colleagues who answer the call, despite the personal, family, and health sacrifices entailed.

Looking after the safety of the embassy community and ensuring that each and every American or local employee can flourish and bring his or her best to the job in an environment free of harassment and discrimination is my highest priority as a leader.

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, the United States has important interests in the DRC. This enormous country is home to 47 percent of Africa's tropical rainforests. The minerals and metals under its soil, if responsibly extracted, will help power the globe's transition to clean energy.

The DRC's dynamic, entrepreneurial, and creative population of over 100 million are eager to engage with the United States.

Our cooperation with the DRC has strengthened dramatically under the tenure of former Ambassador Mike Hammer. African Growth and Opportunity Act access has been reinstated.

Through the Privileged Partnership for Peace, Prosperity, and Preservation of the Environment, we are broadening our engagement with President Tshisekedi's Government across the full range of issues to include security, democracy and human rights, anti-corruption, the environment, health, and business climate.

If confirmed, I commit to nurturing and strengthening this ambitious agenda which is good both for the DRC and for the United States' health, economy, and the environment.

In this continent sized country, U.S. assistance is helping tackle persistent health threats, notably Ebola, working to advance shared climate goals, and promoting responsible and accountable mineral supply chains.

We are supporting efforts to fight the pervasive trafficking of persons, natural resources, and wildlife, which feeds corruption and violence.

Other countries, notably the People's Republic of China, fully grasp the DRC's potential. We want the Congolese people to know that corrupt mineral exploitation deals, illegal logging, and environmental devastation is not inevitable and that there are alternatives.

If confirmed, I commit to using all our diplomatic tools including leveraging visa ineligibilities and sanctions to help the Congolese fight corruption.

Right now, reducing violence in the DRC's eastern region is critical. The region must not be allowed to stumble into another devastating interstate conflict.

If confirmed, I will work closely with regional institutions and partners to deescalate tensions and pressure nonstate armed groups to stand down.

The DRC is also home to the world's largest U.N. peacekeeping mission. This investment, of which the United States carries a quarter of the cost, must be held to the highest standards of performance and demonstrate its ability to protect civilians and conduct proactive operations against armed groups.

I take this opportunity to express my condolences to the families of the three U.N. personnel killed in Butembo on July 26.

Finally, free and fair elections held in 2023 will be a particular focus of my diplomatic engagement, if confirmed. The future leaders of the DRC are for its citizens to decide, but the international community can play an important role in helping to strengthen democratic institutions, supporting civil society, and calling out without hesitation when we see signs of democratic backsliding.

I recognize that, if confirmed, I will be assuming leadership of a post in a country of enormous size, complexity, and promise. The large portfolio of U.S. assistance requires astute direction, prioritization, and coordination. Chronic staffing shortages, a situation not unique to Kinshasa, need to be managed to ensure that we do not burn out and lose the next generation of Africa hands.

Across all of these activities, I commit to ensuring the efficient and effective use of the resources entrusted to us by the U.S. taxpayer.

I look forward to your advice and counsel on these challenging tasks and I am very happy to take your questions.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Tamlyn follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. LUCY TAMLYN

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and members of the committee, it is an honor for me to appear before you today. I am grateful to President Biden and Secretary

Blinken for the confidence they have placed in me as their nominee for Ambassador to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

Representing the United States is something that I have done together with my husband, Jorge Serpa, and children Ben and Filipa. I thank them for their unwavering support and enthusiasm across many continents.

In a career spanning 40 years of service, I have most recently served as Chargé d'Affaires in Sudan, Ambassador to the Central African Republic, and Ambassador to the Republic of Benin. I feel privileged to have served in countries where we are literally on the front lines, where U.S. diplomacy really matters, and side by side with colleagues who answer the call despite the personal, family, and health sacrifices entailed. Looking after the safety of the Embassy community and ensuring that each and every American or local employee can flourish and bring his or her best to the job in an environment free of harassment and discrimination, is my highest priority as a leader.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, the United States has important interests in the DRC. This enormous country is home to 47 percent of Africa's tropical rainforests. The minerals and metals under its soil, if responsibly extracted, will help power the globe's transition to clean energy. The DRC's dynamic, entrepreneurial, and creative population of over 100 million are eager to engage with the United States.

Our cooperation with the DRC has strengthened dramatically under the tenure of former Ambassador Mike Hammer. African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) access has been reinstated. Through the Privileged Partnership for Peace, Prosperity, and Preservation of the Environment we are broadening our engagement with President Tshisekedi's Government across the full range of issues, to include security, democracy and human rights, anti-corruption, the environment, health, and business climate. If confirmed, I commit to nurturing and strengthening this ambitious agenda which is good for both the DRC and the United States' health, economy, and environment.

In this continent-sized country, U.S. assistance is helping tackle persistent health threats, notably Ebola, working to advance shared climate goals, and promoting responsible and accountable mineral supply chains. We are supporting efforts to fight the pervasive trafficking of persons, natural resources, and wildlife, which feeds corruption and violence.

Other countries, notably the People's Republic of China, fully grasp the DRC's potential. We want the Congolese people to know that corrupt mineral exploitation deals, illegal logging and environmental devastation is not inevitable, and that there are alternatives. If confirmed, I commit to using all our diplomatic tools, including leveraging visa ineligibilities and sanctions, to help the Congolese fight corruption.

Right now, reducing violence in the DRC's eastern region is critical. The region must not be allowed to stumble into another devastating inter-state conflict. If confirmed, I will work closely with regional institutions and partners to deescalate tensions with neighbors and pressure non-state armed groups to stand down.

The DRC is also home to the world's largest U.N. peacekeeping mission. This investment, of which the United States carries a quarter of the cost, must be held to the highest standards of performance and demonstrate its ability to protect civilians and conduct proactive operations against armed groups. I take this opportunity to express my condolences to the families of the three U.N. personnel killed in Butembo on July 26.

Finally, free and fair elections held in 2023 will be a particular focus of my diplomatic engagement, if confirmed. The future leaders of the DRC are for its citizens to decide, but the international community can play an important role in helping to strengthen democratic institutions, supporting civil society, and calling out—without hesitation—when we see signs of democratic backsliding.

I recognize that, if confirmed, I will be assuming leadership of a post in a country of enormous size, complexity, and promise. The large portfolio of U.S. assistance—which cuts across every conceivable area from security to health to conservation—requires astute direction, prioritization, and coordination. Chronic staffing shortages—a situation not unique to Kinshasa—need to be managed to ensure that we do not burn out and lose the next generation of Africa hands. Across all these activities, I commit to ensuring the efficient and effective use of the resources entrusted to us by the U.S. taxpayer.

I look forward to your advice and counsel on these challenging tasks and I am very happy to take your questions.

Senator BOOKER. Thank you for that important and informative opening statement.

We now are going to turn to Ms. Korhonen and your opening statement.

Thank you.

STATEMENT OF RACHNA SACHDEVA KORHONEN OF NEW JERSEY, A CAREER MEMBER OF THE SENIOR FOREIGN SERVICE, CLASS OF COUNSELOR, NOMINATED TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE REPUBLIC OF MALI

Ms. KORHONEN. Good morning, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and distinguished members of the committee. I am honored to appear before you today as President Biden's nominee to be the next U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Mali. I appreciate the confidence he and Secretary Blinken have shown in me through this nomination.

If confirmed, I look forward to working with you, other members of Congress, and staff to advance U.S. interests in Mali.

Mr. Chairman, I joined the Foreign Service because of 9/11. That eventful day woke the need for service in me. I did not choose the Foreign Service. It chose me. It has taken me to India, Kuwait, Sri Lanka, Iraq, Saudi Arabia twice, and, if confirmed, hopefully, to Mali.

A few months ago, Secretary Blinken appropriately observed that Mali remains a linchpin for future stability in the Sahel. We have deep concerns about that stability and deep concerns about the extremism and terrorism that is spreading tentacles in the region.

This is, ultimately, about the people of Mali and their aspirations for peace, their aspirations for development, and respect for human rights. Security partnerships in Mali have shifted in the last year with the departure of European counterterrorism forces and the arrival of the Kremlin-backed Wagner Group. The human rights violations and abuses allegedly committed are not only horrific but will push aggrieved civilians into the ranks of terrorist groups.

If confirmed, I will work to counter Russian disinformation attempts to veil the true harm and cost of Wagner's actions.

Additionally, the United Nations' Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali—MINUSMA—is facing unprecedented challenges due to restrictions placed on it.

I will advocate for the free movement of MINUSMA peacekeepers and for conditions that allow resumption of accountable international security assistance to counter the spread of terrorism across the country.

If confirmed, I look forward to leading Embassy Bamako in advancing U.S. interests in Mali. Our main interests include bringing the country back to a constitutional democracy that helps all of its citizens, furthering economic development, and countering the incursion of terrorism that threatens not only Mali but the rest of the Sahel.

We welcome the agreement to a 24-month timeline between the Economic Community of West African States—ECOWAS—and the transition government. If confirmed, I look forward to shaping U.S. activities to encourage constructive participation in Mali's democratic transition and 2024 elections.

Malians have shown before that they can be the shining light of the region. U.S. assistance in Mali promotes democracy and improves governance while supporting sustainable livelihoods. USAID's health programs reach 80 percent of Mali's population—80 percent.

NIH, CDC, have built solid public health systems that met the Ebola challenge in the past, helped mitigate the impact of COVID, and promise to make inroads in the global fight against malaria.

These programs are closely integrated with our democracy and counterterrorism goals in a well coordinated interagency effort.

If confirmed, I will work together with our interagency and our international partners to maintain strong partnerships for development and stability. We are committed to the Malian people and their aspiration for responsive democratic governance.

Mr. Chairman, if confirmed, my highest priority will be the protection of Americans and American interests, including all mission personnel.

Moreover, I will carefully and diligently ensure responsible stewardship of taxpayer dollars through effective leadership of U.S. Embassy Bamako's strong interagency team.

Mr. Chairman, you see sitting before you the ultimate American dream. I am a proud immigrant girl from New Jersey who has had the good fortune to be nominated to represent the best country on Earth.

So much of who I am belongs to my parents, Paul and Meena Sachdeva. Dad is watching me from New Jersey. Mom is right behind me. I wish my grandfather was alive. He would have been so proud.

But the most important person in my life is my husband, Juha, also sitting behind me. I would not be here today without him. He and our three children—Varun, Vicram, both of whom are here, and Veera, who is hanging out somewhere in Europe, are what really make my life worth living.

I am deeply grateful to them for their support and their love. I could not have done this without them.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member and members of the committee, if confirmed, I look forward to working closely with all of you and would hope to welcome you to Bamako during my tenure.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I welcome your questions.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Korhonen follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF RACHNA SACHDEVA KORHONEN

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and distinguished members of the committee: I am honored to appear before you today as President Biden's nominee to be the next U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Mali. I appreciate the confidence he and Secretary Blinken have shown in me through this nomination. If confirmed, I look forward to working with you and other Members of Congress and staff to advance U.S. interests in Mali.

Mr. Chairman, I joined the Foreign Service because of 9/11. That eventful day woke the need for service in me. I did not choose the Foreign Service; it chose me. It has taken me to India, Iraq, Kuwait, Sri Lanka, and Saudi Arabia (twice) and, if confirmed, to Mali.

A few months ago, Secretary Blinken appropriately observed that "Mali remains a linchpin for future stability in the Sahel and we have deep concerns about that stability and deep concerns about the extremism and terrorism that is spreading

tentacles in the region. This is ultimately about the people of Mali and their aspirations for peace, their aspirations for development and respect for human rights."

Security partnerships in Mali have shifted in the last year with the departure of European counterterrorism forces and the arrival of the Kremlin-backed Wagner Group. The human rights violations and abuses allegedly committed are not only horrific but will push aggrieved civilians into the ranks of terrorist groups. If confirmed, I will work to counter Russian disinformation attempts to veil the true harm and cost of Wagner's actions. Additionally, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) is facing unprecedented challenges due to restrictions placed on it. I will advocate for the free movement of MINUSMA peacekeepers, and for conditions that allow the resumption of accountable international security assistance to counter the spread of terrorism across the country.

If confirmed, I look forward to leading Embassy Bamako in advancing U.S. interests in Mali. Our main interests include bringing the country back to a constitutional democracy that helps all its citizens; furthering economic development; and countering the incursion of terrorism that threatens not only Mali but the rest of the Sahel. We welcome the agreement to a 24-month timeline between the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the transition government. If confirmed, I look forward to shaping U.S. activities to encourage constructive participation in Mali's democratic transition and 2024 elections. Malians have shown before that they can be the shining light of the region.

U.S. assistance in Mali promotes democracy and improved governance while supporting sustainable livelihoods. USAID's health programs reach 80 percent of Mali's population. NIH and CDC have built solid public health systems that met the Ebola challenge in the past, helped mitigate the impact of COVID, and promise to make inroads in the global fight against malaria. These programs are closely integrated with our democracy and counterterrorism goals in a well-coordinated interagency effort. If confirmed, I will work together with our interagency and international partners to maintain strong partnerships for development and stability. We are committed to the Malian people and their aspiration for responsive democratic governance.

Mr. Chairman, if confirmed, my highest priority will be the protection of Americans and American interests, including Mission personnel. Moreover, I will carefully and diligently ensure responsible stewardship of taxpayer dollars through effective leadership of U.S. Embassy Bamako's strong interagency team.

Mr. Chairman, you see sitting before you the ultimate American dream. I am a proud immigrant girl from New Jersey who has had the good fortune to be nominated to represent these United States. So much of who I am belongs to my parents Paul and Meena Sachdeva. I wish my grandfather were alive; he would have been so proud. But the most important person in my life is sitting behind me, my husband, Juha. I would not be here today without him. He and our three children, Varun, Vicram, and Veera are what make life worth living. I am deeply grateful to them for their support and love.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and members of the committee, if confirmed, I look forward to working closely with all of you and would hope to welcome you to Bamako during my tenure. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I welcome your questions.

Senator BOOKER. Thank you for, frankly, that inspiring opening statement about your life and your appreciation of the gravity of the work that you are doing.

Mr. Schiffer, we are turning to you. This could be a very brutal hearing for you because, as I learned from studying the Gospels, you are really not appreciated when you come home.

So if you would like to try to do anything you can to prepare the ground for what—the tilling that might happen after your opening statement, you may go ahead.

[Laughter.]

STATEMENT OF ROLFE MICHAEL SCHIFFER OF NEW YORK, NOMINATED TO BE AN ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR OF THE UNITED STATES AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr. SCHIFFER. I am not entirely sure how to follow up on that, Mr. Chairman. I am wondering if I can get under the table as opposed to be sitting here on this side of the dais.

But my thanks to you, my thanks to Ranking Member Rounds. It is, indeed, a much less pleasant experience being on this side than where I am used to sitting behind all of you. But, hopefully, I will manage to survive.

I am deeply humbled to be coming before this committee today to serve as the nominee as Assistant Administrator of the Asia Bureau at USAID and I am deeply humbled also by the trust placed in me by President Biden and Administrator Power.

If confirmed, I will seek to contribute to USAID's efforts to build an enduring U.S. diplomatic and development presence in the Indo-Pacific, the most strategically vital region of the globe, and I am honored to be here today seeking your trust to join with the dedicated staff of USAID to undertake this important work on behalf of the American people.

I am joined today by my former wife and friend, Wendy Wasserman, and my daughter, Josie. Josie's support and encouragement and all that she has had to put up with over the years, including this right now, means everything to me.

My partner, Stephanie Kleine-Ahlbrandt, and her son are not able to join me today. But Stephanie's wisdom has contributed much to making me capable of seeking your advice and consent to undertake this task and I owe her a debt which can never be repaid.

So, too, my mother and sister, and my father, who is no longer with us, but whose ethical teachings and moral guidance have long been my lodestar.

I also want to express my appreciation and support for Chairman Menendez and all that he has provided me with over the years. His tireless commitment to building a nation in a world consistent with our highest values and aspirations, especially at times when those values have been uniquely stressed both at home and abroad, has been nothing short of inspirational.

And last but, certainly, not least, I want to express my thanks to all the members and the staff of this committee. You all know how strongly I feel about the work that you all do, that we all do—I think I can still say that—and how torn I am to leave.

If confirmed, I pledge that I will work with you in genuine consultation and partnership and I trust that you will keep me honest should I falter in that pledge.

As we face the challenges of the 21st century, including the realities of strategic competition with China, I can think of few undertakings more important than extending USAID's mission to drive sustainable and inclusive development, regional prosperity, and stability in Asia.

It is central to our national interest to help meet the region's humanitarian needs, contribute to free and open regional architecture, and to work with the people and governments of the region

to safeguard their sovereignty, build vital civil societies, and to promote democratic governance, confront human rights violations, and to combat gender inequality, corruption, and kleptocracy.

And, as I know members of this committee appreciate, we do this work not just because it is the right thing to do, although it is certainly that, but because working alongside allies and partners in the region to build a more capable and connected Indo-Pacific community is vital for America and benefits American workers and families.

As the President's Indo-Pacific strategy states, the United States has long recognized the Indo-Pacific as vital to our security and prosperity, and we have pursued partnership in the region since our very founding as a nation.

There is no shortage of challenges in the region. Climate change poses an existential threat across Asia, from Pacific islands threatened with rising tides to the fragile ecosystem of the Tibetan Plateau.

More than 300 million still live in extreme poverty and food insecurity threatens the lives and livelihoods of millions. Unmet basic education and health care needs, democratic backsliding, and immense infrastructure requirements are just a few of the challenges the region faces.

But just as there is no shortage of challenges so, too, there is no shortage of opportunities to foster deeper local partnerships, greater innovation through localization, and more meaningful results to drive development progress, not simply development programs.

If confirmed, I look forward to pursuing opportunities to work with our partners, particularly in the Pacific, on climate adaptation, disaster preparedness and resilience, and a sustainable future, as well as opportunities to enable high-quality development finance and public-private partnerships to further the President's Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment.

Equally important will be furthering good governance, anti-corruption, human rights, and supporting civil society actors in the region. We can do this by building deeper relationships with our development partners, including the Quad, so that together we are more efficient and effective in meeting regional needs.

Likewise, we can strengthen our work with our ASEAN partners to build real functional problem-solving architecture.

Thank you all for the opportunity to appear before you today and for your consideration of my nomination. I look forward to any questions you may have.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Schiffer follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF ROLFE MICHAEL SCHIFFER

Thank you Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Rounds. I have to say, it is a much less pleasant feeling to be on this side of the dais than the one that I am accustomed to, sitting behind you. I am deeply humbled and honored to come before the committee today as the nominee to serve as Assistant Administrator of the Asia Bureau at USAID, and by the trust placed in me by President Biden and Administrator Power.

If confirmed, I will seek to contribute to USAID's efforts to build an enduring US diplomatic and development presence in the Indo-Pacific, the most strategically vital region of the globe. And I am honored to be here today seeking your trust to join with the dedicated staff of the USAID to undertake this important work on behalf of the American people.

I am joined by my former wife Wendy Wasserman and my daughter, Josie. My partner, Stephanie Kleine-Ahlbrandt, and her son, Adrian, are not able to join me today, but Stephanie's wisdom has contributed much to make me capable of the challenge I seek your advice and consent to undertake—and I owe her a debt that can never be repaid. So too my mother and sister, and my father, who is no longer with us—and whose ethical and moral teachings are my lodestar.

I also want to express my appreciation for the support that Chairman Menendez has provided me over the years. His tireless commitment to building a nation and a world consistent with our highest values—even at times when those values have been uniquely stressed both at home and abroad—has been nothing short of inspirational

And last, but certainly not least, I want to express my thanks to all the members and staff of this committee that I have served with for the past decade. You know how strongly I believe in the work of this committee and how torn I am to leave. If confirmed, I give you my pledge to work with you in genuine consultation and partnership, and I trust that you will keep me honest should I falter.

As we face the challenges of the twenty-first century—including the realities of strategic competition with China—I can think of few undertakings more important than extending USAID's mission to drive sustainable and inclusive development, regional prosperity, and stability in the Asia Region. It is central to our U.S. national interest to help to meet the region's humanitarian needs, contribute to a free and open regional architecture, and work with the people and governments of the region to safeguard their sovereignty, build vital civil societies and to promote democratic governance, confront human rights violations, and to combat gender inequality, corruption and kleptocracy.

And, as I know the members of this committee appreciate, we do this work not just because it is the right thing to do—although it is certainly that—but because working alongside allies and partners in the region to build a more capable and connected Indo-Pacific community is vital for American security and prosperity and benefits American workers and families.

As the President's Indo-Pacific Strategy states, "the United States has long recognized the Indo-Pacific as vital to our security and prosperity," and we have pursued partnership in the region since our very founding as a nation.

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But just as there is no shortage of challenges, so too there is also no shortage of opportunities to foster deeper local partnerships, greater innovation through localization, and more meaningful results to drive development progress, not simply development programs.

If confirmed, I look forward to pursuing opportunities to work with our partners, particularly in the Pacific, on climate adaptation, disaster preparedness and resilience, and a sustainable future; as well as opportunities to enable high-quality development finance and public-private partnerships to further the President's Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment. Equally important will be furthering good governance, anti-corruption, human rights and supporting civil society actors in the region. We can do this by building deeper relationships with our development partners like the Quad so together we are more efficient and effective in meeting regional needs. Likewise, we can strengthen partnerships with our ASEAN partners to build real functional problem solving architecture.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today, and for your consideration of my nomination. I look forward to any questions that you may have.

Senator BOOKER. We are grateful for that opening testimony.

We are going to now turn to Mr. Fick for his opening testimony.

STATEMENT OF NATHANIEL FICK OF MAINE, NOMINATED TO BE AMBASSADOR–AT–LARGE FOR CYBERSPACE AND DIGITAL POLICY

Mr. FICK. Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and distinguished committee members, I am honored to appear before you today as nominee to be the first ever U.S. Ambassador-at-Large for Cyberspace and Digital Policy.

Joining me behind me, both physically and metaphorically, are my wife, Margaret, and our daughters, Ella and Kate. They are constant proof for me that, despite the digital world's importance, life's true rewards are found right here in the physical one.

My parents, Neil and Jane, are watching from Maine. They instilled in me a strong sense of family, of integrity, and of public service.

I feel as if all the threads of my professional life come together in this role, from combat service as a Marine Corps infantry officer, to leading a national security research organization, to building and leading a cybersecurity software company.

American technology leadership is critical to the credible promotion of our values, to sustaining our economic strength, and to our national security. It is the next frontier of American diplomacy.

Our future will be shaped by the infrastructure, standards, norms, and policies that determine how digital technologies are developed, deployed, and used. We are in a global contest for a democratic future in which we can all use technology to reach our full potential and against an authoritarian future in which technology is harnessed to repress free expression and destabilize open democratic societies.

Countries such as the People's Republic of China and Russia have a very different vision for cyberspace and the use of digital technologies, which is why American leadership matters in this arena alongside like-minded allies and partners.

Recognizing this context and building on the ongoing work of the Department, Secretary Blinken established the Bureau of Cyberspace and Digital Policy earlier this year with the strong bipartisan support of this committee and others.

If confirmed, I pledge to partner with the committee and with all of Congress to further elevate and integrate cyber and digital policy in U.S. diplomacy and diplomacy in U.S. cyber and digital policy.

There are three key areas where, if confirmed, I would partner with the committee to make progress.

First, we must strengthen adherence to the framework of responsible state behavior that all U.N. member states have endorsed. This framework affirms that international law applies to state conduct in cyberspace and lays out norms that, although voluntary and nonbinding, guide what states should and should not do in cyberspace.

And yet, norms are more effective in binding together our allies than they are in dissuading our adversaries. To reduce the frequency and severity of damaging cyber incidents, we must collaborate across the U.S. Government and with partners around the world to deter malicious cyber activity and impose meaningful consequences on states that engage in it and those that willfully harbor cyber criminal organizations.

Second, we must promote a global digital economy that lets U.S. companies and their workers compete on an equal playing field around the world. This includes preserving the free flow of data across international borders while protecting users' privacy and the confidentiality and integrity of the data.

We must support open transparent standards in the multi-stakeholder model of Internet governance that has enabled decades of

innovation, and we must promote new innovations, such as Open Radio Access Networks, and work to ensure the security of the entire telecommunications ecosystem upon which we all rely.

Third, we must at every turn champion a positive vision for digital freedom and digital inclusion while working to combat digital authoritarianism. This means partnering with civil society, the private sector, and other governments to understand how digital technologies can help people exercise their human rights and reach their full potential.

We must harness these technologies to strengthen democratic governance instead of allowing them to be used for repression. I approach each of these missions with great respect for the dedicated public servants at the Department of State, who have ably championed U.S. interests as cyber and digital issues have become a foreign policy imperative.

If confirmed, I will dedicate my time and energy to building the new bureau into an enduring institution with the talent and resources it needs to advance U.S. interests around the world through diplomatic engagement and foreign assistance.

I appreciate the trust President Biden and Secretary Blinken have expressed in asking me to serve in this new role.

I thank you for the opportunity to be here today and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Fick follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT FOR NATHANIEL FICK

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and distinguished committee members, I am honored to appear before you today as nominee to be the first-ever U.S. Ambassador-at-Large for Cyberspace and Digital Policy. Thank you for considering my nomination.

Joining me here are my wife, Margaret Angell, and our daughters, Ella, and Kate. They are constant proof for me that, despite the digital world's importance, life's true rewards are found in the physical one.

I feel as if all the threads of my professional background—from combat service as a Marine Corps infantry officer, to leadership of the Center for a New American Security, to building and leading a cybersecurity software company—come together in this role.

American technology leadership is critical to the credible promotion of our values, to sustaining our economic strength, and to safeguarding our national security. It is the next frontier of American diplomacy.

The infrastructure, standards, norms, and policies that determine how digital technologies are developed, deployed, and used shape our future. We are in a global contest for a democratic future in which we can all use technology to reach our full potential and against an authoritarian future in which technology is harnessed to repress free expression and destabilize open, democratic societies. Countries such as the People's Republic of China and Russia have a very different vision for cyberspace and the use of digital technologies, which is why American leadership matters in this arena, alongside like-minded Allies and partners.

Recognizing this context and building on the ongoing work of the Department, Secretary Blinken established the Bureau of Cyberspace and Digital Policy earlier this year with the strong bipartisan support of this committee and others. If confirmed, I pledge to partner with this committee and all of Congress to further elevate and integrate cyber and digital policy in U.S. diplomacy—and diplomacy in U.S. cyber and digital policy. And I will continue to build a State Department team that has the expertise and experience to advance national security, economic prosperity, and human rights in this digital age.

There are three key areas where, if confirmed, I would partner with the committee to make progress. First, we must strengthen adherence to the framework of responsible state behavior that all U.N. member states have endorsed. This framework affirms that international law applies to state conduct in cyberspace and lays out norms that—although voluntary and non-binding—guide what states should and

should not do in cyberspace. And yet, norms are more effective in binding together our allies than they are in dissuading our adversaries. To reduce the frequency and severity of damaging cyber incidents, we must collaborate across the U.S. Government and with partners around the world to deter malicious cyber activity and impose meaningful consequences on states that engage in it and those that willfully harbor cybercriminal organizations.

Second, we must promote a global digital economy that lets U.S. companies and their workers compete on an equal playing field around the world. This includes preserving the free flow of data across international borders—while protecting users' privacy and the confidentiality and integrity of their data. We must support open, transparent standards and the multistakeholder model of Internet governance that has enabled decades of innovation. And we must promote new innovations such as Open Radio Access Networks and work to ensure the security of the entire telecommunications ecosystem upon which we rely.

Third, we must, at every turn, champion a positive vision for digital freedom and digital inclusion while working to combat digital authoritarianism. This means partnering with civil society, the private sector, and other governments to understand how digital technologies can help people exercise their human rights and reach their full potential. We must harness these technologies to strengthen democratic governance instead of allowing them to be used for repression. We must help more people—including those coming online for the first time—build resilience to threats they may face, including abuse or foreign influence operations.

I approach each of these missions with great respect for the dedicated public servants who work at the Department of State who have ably championed U.S. interests as cyber and digital issues have become a foreign policy imperative. If confirmed, I will dedicate time and energy to building the new Bureau of Cyberspace and Digital Policy into a strong institution, with the talent and resources it needs to advance U.S. interests around the world through diplomatic engagement and foreign assistance programs.

I appreciate the trust President Biden and Secretary Blinken have expressed in asking me to serve in this new role, one so important for the future of the American people and our shared global future. I thank you for the opportunity to be here today and I look forward to your questions.

Senator BOOKER. Mr. Fick, we thank you so much for your opening statement. I would like to, without any objection from my ranking member, to defer to Senator Menendez for his opening round of questions.

Then we are going to come back to the ranking member. Then we are going to proceed to Senator Kaine. I am going to be here for the duration so I can save my questions for last, depending on who shows up.

And with that, I would like to turn to my senior senator, senior to me in time in the Senate but also senior to me in sagacity, tenacity, and audacity.

[Laughter.]

STATEMENT OF HON. ROBERT MENENDEZ
U.S. SENATOR FROM NEW JERSEY

The CHAIRMAN. Okay. I am going to record these comments.

Anyhow, let me thank you, Mr. Chairman, and the ranking member for presiding over this nomination hearing. One of the most important things we do as members of the committee is oversee nominations and we need the help of all of our colleagues in getting through the nominees.

I appreciate both you and the ranking member for doing it and thank you for the courtesy of being able to go first. I have some other issues.

Congratulations to the nominees before us today. We thank you and all of your families for your service to our country.

Let me take a few minutes of personal privilege to speak about Michael Schiffer, who has been my longtime senior advisor and counselor on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

He is one of the leading foreign policy minds in Washington, having also served as Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for East Asia. He is a respected expert on Asia with a network of relationships across the continent.

I never forgot when I first started visiting Asia when I was on the committee in 2006 and started going with Michael to visit Asia, and it would be very interesting to me when heads of state, including when I was chairman of the committee previously, would say hello, Mr. Schiffer, before they would say hello to me. So it just goes to the depth of relationships he has.

I have long relied on Michael's counsel, expertise, and judgment and dealing with some of the most vexing issues facing the committee, and no one is more qualified or more deserving of this nomination than he is.

He is dedicated and committed to a values-based foreign policy that champions freedom, human rights, and democracy, and he will be a strong advocate for those principles across the continent and will work to ensure that AID's programming reflect our values and our interests.

And he is someone who does not hesitate to speak his mind. Stories about his willingness to speak truth to power abound. But do not worry, Michael, I will not share them here today.

But it is an important quality that will serve him well in the executive branch as he ensures that USAID has a seat at the table and a voice in the interagency process. It is precisely that kind of leadership that we need in the Administration today, someone that knows the right approach on assistance to Asia and how to get it there.

So I appreciate all of those great assets and I will not continue with my remarks on you because then my time will be eaten up for questions. So I will include them for the record.

Michael, thank you for your excellent work with us.

Mr. Fick, to be the Ambassador-at-Large for Cyberspace and Digital Diplomacy is the new frontier for us. The State Department unveiled the Bureau of Cyberspace and Digital Diplomacy in April this year.

Last week, the committee introduced the State Department authorization of 2022 which contains a version of the Cyber Diplomacy Act that would authorize the CDP bureau in statute and thus support its long-term viability.

What would be your top priorities as Ambassador-at-Large for the bureau as it finds its footing in the department?

Mr. FICK. Thank you, Senator, for the question and also for having me here today.

I have three immediate top priorities and I think of them as concentric rings moving from innermost to outermost. Because the bureau is new, the first and innermost priority is building the team and establishing a culture both in the bureau and in the Department where a fluency and expertise in digital technologies is seen as important to the careers and futures of career Foreign Service Officers and members of the civil service.

I can imagine a future where any candidate to be a chief of mission is expected to have an understanding of these issues because they are a substrate that cut across every aspect of our foreign policy.

The second priority,this second ring, moving outward, is to assert the State Department's rightful place in the interagency process on topics of cybersecurity and digital policy.

And then third are all the policy challenges out there in the world. The wolf closest to the door, so to speak, in my view, is the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the threats and opportunities it provides in the digital space for us; and then I believe our strategic competition with China along digital lines is probably the defining strategic question of my generation.

The CHAIRMAN. I am glad to hear you say about making sure that the equities of the State Department at the table in the interagency process are owned because, from my perspective, sometimes the State Department does not get its due as it relates to its critical role in the context of the interagency process. So that will be an important one.

And I hope that you will, upon confirmation, create a productive relationship with this committee. This committee has members that are very interested in this domain and want to engage with you in the days ahead.

Mr. FICK. I commit to that, sir.

The CHAIRMAN. And if I may, Mr. Chairman, one other question.

Ms. Korhonen—did I pronounce it correctly? Okay.

The Trans-Sahel Counterterrorism Partnership Program Act of 2021, which is law, which I sponsored, not only calls for a strategy for the Sahel, it calls for a specific strategy for Mali as part of the overall approach.

We had a hearing where representatives from State, DOD, and USAID shared the Administration's approach, and as I mentioned at that time we look to have input into the strategy as a result of that hearing.

Could you briefly outline for me the draft five-year strategy for Mali? How does that strategy differ from the approach of previous Administrations with respect to balancing the so-called three Ds in Mali?

Ms. KORHONEN. Thank you. I have not seen a five-year strategy for Mali.

I, however, do know that the department and our interagency partners are working together on multiple issues in Mali and I would say that, if confirmed, my priorities will be that we help and support the transition government to come to democratic governance, to elections that they promised with ECOWAS in March 2024. Really happy to see that deadline.

I also know that this—just this past Sunday, the Algerian President Tebboune called for the Malian transition government to hold elections and, in fact, on Monday there was a meeting—a decisional meeting for the Algiers Accord.

So I would say elections, transition to democratic governance, working through the Algerian Peace Accords, support of MINUSMA is—are the things that I would really be looking at in terms of what should be happening in Mali in the next five years.

I believe that is kind of where the department is going at this point.

The CHAIRMAN. We look forward to working with you because the law that we authored, ultimately, seeks to create a clear vision of where we go and a strategy to achieve it versus working ad hoc.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for the courtesy. I have questions for all of the nominees. I am going to submit them for the record in deference to my colleagues.

I would ask you to give me substantive answers. If you do, then you will advance to a business meeting. If you do not, we are going to have to wait for the substantive answers.

So I do hope you will give me substantive answers to the questions that we will propound to you and, again, congratulations to all of you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator BOOKER. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Ranking Member?

Senator ROUNDS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Once again, it is good to see the qualifications of the members in front of us here at this time.

Mr. Fick, the deployment of secure fifth-generation, or 5G, networks is critical not only for U.S. networks but throughout the world with our allies and partners. Meanwhile, countries like China pose a serious threat to our foreign allies and partners through companies such as Huawei.

The fiscal year '21 NDAA established a multilateral telecommunications security fund executed by the Secretary of State to support the development and adoption of secure and trusted telecommunications technologies with our partners and allies. Appropriations for this fund were passed as part of the CHIPS legislation last week.

If confirmed, how do you plan to use this fund to work with our partners and allies to develop secure and trusted alternatives to Huawei and how will you leverage this fund to encourage development of innovative new technologies like Open Radio Access Networks known as ORAN?

Mr. FICK. Thank you, Senator.

I strongly share the sentiment expressed in your question and believe very strongly that global telecom security is essential. I believe that the U.S. cannot do it alone. By its very nature this is a global network of hardware and infrastructure and, if confirmed, I would work to deploy the resources appropriated in the CHIPS Act.

I think from my seat still on the outside looking in I applaud the passage of the Act. Two particular examples for consideration might be partnering with the European Commission under the Trade and Technology Council in order to finance the deployment of secure infrastructure to third countries. That is something that I would very quickly want to explore.

Another example would be expanding work with the Quad countries in order to promote Open RAN deployments in the Indo-Pacific, and you have my commitment that I would engage with the committee and with Congress before and during any implementation.

Senator ROUNDS. Very good. Thank you.

Ms. Korhonen, just last week the State Department ordered the departure of nonemergency U.S. Government personnel from Mali due to heightened risk of terrorist attacks.

Regardless of how long this ordered departure persists, if confirmed, you will serve as chief of mission at a high risk post for U.S. personnel. How will you approach your role as chief of mission in this environment where, despite significant challenges, the staff of the U.S. embassy have important work to do?

Ms. KORHONEN. Thank you, sir.

My first priority absolutely will be the safety and security of American citizens and mission personnel.

The attack on July 22nd was just about 10 miles from the embassy. The situation is serious and we must proceed with an abundance of caution.

I believe my experiences in serving—in the past serving at high threat posts will serve me well, if I am confirmed. I also understand that Mission Bamako enjoys high morale and, if confirmed, it will be my goal to sustain that positive work and life experience while we navigate Mali's myriad challenges together.

Thank you.

Senator ROUNDS. Thank you.

Ambassador Tamlyn, what is your view on the prospects for credible elections in DRC next year?

Ms. TAMLYN. Thank you, sir.

The Congolese have the right to free, fair, and on time elections and they want that, and we know that the path to a more prosperous and stable DRC lies through a good election and a consolidation of their democratic experience.

It is a country with immense challenges because of its size and the logistics that are needed. The institutions, we know, are weak. If confirmed, one of my highest priorities would be to immediately review the planning that is underway to prepare ourselves and the country for elections and there are three things in particular that we need to look at.

The first is progress on national preparations—how are they doing in terms of voter rolls, procurement, and the census that may need to take place.

The second thing is how is our assistance helping in the right places, and then, finally, what is the enabling environment. You cannot have a credible election if there is not an even playing field for all of the candidates and if rights of freedom of assembly or freedom of expression are not fully supported.

Finally, a credible election does not just happen overnight. It is something that you need to be preparing for, and planning for, for a good period of time in advance and that includes messaging to the Government clearly what our expectations are.

So I hope to be able to do that and also work closely with international partners so their messaging is strong and consistent across the board.

Senator ROUNDS. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman, I do have questions for the other nominees, but in the interests of allowing our other members to move forward I think I will defer them and allow the other members to ask questions first.

Senator BOOKER. I recognize Senator Kaine.

Senator KAINE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Senator Rounds.

I could ask questions for about an hour of this panel because I think I could learn a tremendous amount. But let me make two comments and then, really, one question that will be for you, Ambassador Tamlyn.

First, to Nathaniel Fick, when my son, Nathaniel, was a senior in high school in December of 2007 and came to me and said, Mom and Dad, I want you to know that I have been talking to a Marine recruiter for the last few months, I noticed that he had your book "One Bullet Away" on his bookshelf, and I think—it was a surprise to us when he told us this—I think your writing was influential in his decision.

He had an eight-year career as a infantry officer with two deployments, is now a reservist. But I just wanted to say you have influenced a lot of people in a lot of your previous capacities, but that book in particular, and maybe just—maybe even the Nathaniel coincidence was one—helped create a really talented Marine officer in my oldest son.

Mr. FICK. Thank you, sir.

Senator KAINE. And then, Mr. Schiffer, I will just say it is really a treat to see you back. You performed such good service during my time on this committee and you are so well suited for the position.

Ambassador Tamlyn, I am going to take my questions to you in a completely different direction because I feel like the five of you are very qualified for the positions that you are going to be going to and I am going to support you all.

But when we have foreign relations folks who are posted in countries right now that I am concerned about, I often ask about your current post rather than the one to which you will be nominated and I am very, very worried about Sudan and I think I am going to just talk to you a little bit about that.

The reports just within the last few days from CNN that Sudanese gold has been plundered by Russians to support the Ukrainian war has led to street protests in Sudan, and I am interested that the Sudanese Government has reacted to these reports by cracking down on plunderers? No. Cracking down on those who revealed the information that demonstrated that Russia was plundering their gold reserves.

What do you think this very shocking reporting portends for Sudan and what advice would you have for the committee about the way we should approach the U.S.-Sudanese relationship, given the significant number of challenges in Sudan right now?

Ms. TAMLYN. Thank you, Senator.

I think that the path ahead to deal with this and other issues is supporting a civilian-led transitional government.

What we have seen following the revolution is that only a civilian-led government is capable of tackling these issues, of bringing transparency to bear on the events happening in the country, putting in place more responsible government institutions, and thinking about these issues and trying to figure out a better way of doing them.

So that is our major focus right now. We are working very closely with all of the stakeholders involved to support a civilian-led transitional government, and what we have made clear as well is that until there is a credible civilian-led transitional government that has the broad support of the Sudanese people, U.S. assistance will not be available.

Senator KAINE. The reporting is just a few days old and, again, it is really shocking. I would encourage all my colleagues to read it—I mentioned many have—and I applaud CNN for doing such good work on it.

Do you think thus far the reaction in Sudan of the public would suggest that it would increase the public demand for a stable civilian government that could, hopefully, avoid just shocking malfeasance of the kind that has been reported?

Ms. TAMLYN. There is no debating this issue. I would say about 100 percent of the Sudanese population seek a civilian-led government. There is very clear consensus across the board for many reasons but including this one because I think there is a great concern about the natural resources of the country not being used for the benefit of the people.

I think it simply underscores the importance of moving swiftly forward on this transition.

Thank you.

Senator KAINE. Thank you. With that, I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

Senator BOOKER. I am grateful for that yielding of about a minute of your time. I am sure Senator Portman respects that tremendously.

Senator PORTMAN. Yes.

Senator BOOKER. Sir, we yield to you now for your questions.

Senator PORTMAN. It is a good model to emulate.

Senator BOOKER. Yes.

Senator PORTMAN. First of all, I want to thank Chairman Booker and Ranking Member Rounds for holding this hearing, and I know that these nominees have all served their country already but I want to thank you for stepping up to serve again.

And with regard to Africa, enormous potential often overlooked, and so for our nominees heading to African countries we need your U.S. presence there.

I am heading to Africa, to east Africa mostly, with Senator Coons in a couple of weeks and we look forward to that visit. But there are so many questions I could ask about that.

But I am going to focus on something else, which is Mr. Fick and, again, appreciate your service including in the Marine Corps.

What I am concerned about is that we have overlapping responsibilities and authorities with regard to our cyber defense and this has been something I have worked on for a while with very little result, actually.

We seem to keep adding more and more top cybersecurity positions to our Government and the org chart troubles me. More importantly, what troubles me is that without accountability I am worried that things will happen and it is too easy to point fingers. As we saw after the Colonial Pipeline incident, you probably recall, everyone was pointing fingers.

So we have this top position of the deputy national security adviser for cyber already, which is obviously international in orientation. We have the federal CISO, of course, at OMB. We have the National Cyber Directorate, which was established by this Congress after a commission report that indicated we needed a national director.

We have the CISA director at Department of Homeland Security. One could argue that we also have at every agency and department others but, in effect, they are reporting up at least to somebody.

But your position that you are being nominated for is a new one and I think it overlaps with the Office of the National Cyber Director. The legislation says that that director "shall serve as the principal advisor to the President relating to coordination of diplomatic and other efforts to develop norms and international consensus around responsible state behavior in cyberspace," end quote.

So I just want to know from you, one, are you sensitive to this issue and aware of it. And, again, as someone with a military background, I imagine you share some of my concerns and I would like to hear those if you do and how you intend to conduct yourself in this role so that you can fit into this construct.

Congress is not very good at org charts so it really will be the responsibility of the individuals who have these jobs to work together and to not allow the gaps in accountability, in particular, with regard to the National Cyber Director's role, which seems to overlap directly with the State Department Cyber and Digital Policy Bureau functions, responsibilities.

How would you work collaboratively across all departments to assure that we are not being duplicative and ensure that we have accountability?

Mr. FICK. Thank you, Senator. I appreciate the question and the sentiment behind it.

I think in addition to my military experience, my experience building and leading a business instilled in me an appreciation for a clear chain of command and appreciation for clear and well defined swim lanes, an appreciation for accountability, and kind of a wry sense that it is always easy to add but it is hard to subtract, and so I come to this role with a heightened sense of concern about the issue that you raise.

And that said, I have had—I have a strong conviction that this role actually fills a gap that has existed in our Government.

When I was leading a business and working with the Government in this space, CISA has a strong presence here. The White House has a strong presence here. The Defense Department has a strong presence here, and the State Department has not, and I believe that diplomacy should be our tool of first resort. I believe in the intrinsic value of diplomacy.

And so I think this role actually does fill an important gap in the cyber and tech responsibilities across the Government. I have known Director Inglis and Anne Neuberger and Jen Easterly in different capacities for more than a decade.

I have full confidence that we can carve out the right swim lanes and I hope that as the—if confirmed as the inaugural ambassador leading this office, we could create clear lines of responsibility that outlive any individual.

Senator PORTMAN. Thank you. I appreciate the fact you recognize the overlap and the potential conflicts and most importantly, again, just the notion that accountability is necessary for us to be sure we are covering our bases with regard to this growing threat that we face as a country.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator BOOKER. We are going to go now to Senator Cardin.

Senator CARDIN. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate it. I also appreciate the manner in which you conduct this hearing.

Senator BOOKER. I am very grateful for that, sir.

Senator CARDIN. I am glad that you are grateful.

[Laughter.]

Senator CARDIN. Let me also acknowledge what Senator Rounds indicated during his opening comments that all five of our nominees have a career of public service and you have dedicated yourselves to helping our country.

We know that is a family sacrifice and we thank you and your families for your incredible service to our nation, and we are very pleased that you are willing to take on these incredibly important responsibilities, in one case a new position, in other cases some critically important countries, and the position at USAID.

Mr. Schiffer, as I said earlier as you were being eulogized by our chairman because you are leaving us—that is the reason—your service here was incredible. I thank you very much. I enjoyed all of our opportunities together and you have some real challenges at USAID, and I want to talk a little bit about Burma, if I might.

It is a tragic situation. The current government there and its—the human rights records are horrible. So how do we help the people who have been victimized by what has happened in Burma?

How does the United States play a constructive role to try to get help out to the people that have been dislocated and abused as a result of Burmese Government?

Mr. SCHIFFER. Senator Cardin, thank you for your kind comments and let me also thank you for your leadership on Burma over the years.

I share, as you know, your sense in the tragedy that has befallen that country since the coup in 2021 and the challenges that we have in Burma right now.

I think it is absolutely vital that the United States stands with the people of Burma and that we do all that we can, working with our partners in the region—our ASEAN partners—to assure that there is humanitarian access so that we can provide assistance to those who are in the country as well as to provide assistance, whether it is shelter, nutritional assistance, food assistance, educational opportunities, to those that have been displaced to camps either in Thailand or in Bangladesh. I think there is a deep moral obligation.

And then, secondly, I think we have a continued obligation to work with civil society actors who remain in Burma who are trying valiantly to create additional space so that democracy and genuine ethnic and national reconciliation might once again get traction in that country, and to work with them to try to lead Burma back to a path of democracy and responsible governance.

I have no illusions about how tough it is. I have no illusions about the challenges that we face with the military junta in Naypyidaw.

But this is important work and, if confirmed, it is one of the issues I intend to throw myself into.

Senator CARDIN. Thank you.

Ms. Tamlyn, I want to talk a little bit about DRC. There has been, obviously, a challenge in the past. The Government appears to want to make a commitment to fight corruption and I would be interested as to how we can assist in that regard.

They also have an election coming up in 2023 that we would like to see how we could be—assist to make sure that is a free and fair election.

So just tell me your strategies and commitment to the human rights agenda and the democracy agenda to assist in regards to what is necessary to fight corruption and to ensure that we have free and fair elections, the best that we can in that country.

Ms. TAMLYN. Thank you, Senator.

Those would, certainly, be among my highest priorities if confirmed, because we know that human rights abuses and corruption actually eat away at any prospects for the DRC to emerge as a prosperous and stable country. So it is in their interests and it also has to be the sine qua non of our partnership with them that they are making progress on that.

Through what we call the Privileged Partnership for Peace, Prosperity, and Preservation of the Environment, which is kind of a portmanteau for a lot of activities that are undergoing, we have a strong human rights and democracy component and we also, of course, are working to support the elections.

I just mentioned a couple of things that we are doing. But let me note that after the last elections we did not fail to call out actors who had been engaged in corrupt practices and undermining the elections, and I think that that stands out as quite the warning, and we, certainly, need to make sure that we keep those tools ready if we see the same kind of circumstances repeating themselves as far as corruption or bad actors that threaten the integrity of the elections.

And similarly, on human rights and corruption we need to hold the leaders accountable for that and I think that is something that, if confirmed, would be part of my dialogue with leaders of the country to make sure that they understand how it is not just a question of words but actions in terms of addressing problems of corruption whether it is in the military or in other parts of the Government.

Thank you.

Senator CARDIN. I agree. You have our support here in the Senate to amplify those issues, particularly if we believe that attention is needed in order to get the right results. So thank you.

Ms. TAMLYN. Thank you.

Senator CARDIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator BOOKER. We thank the stalwart senator from Maryland and now we move to the one senator in the entire United States Senate who is, indeed, forever young.

[Laughter.]

Senator YOUNG. With apologies to Rod Stewart, thank you, Chairman.

Mr. Fick, last year I introduced legislation with Senator Warner and the Chairman of this committee that would establish an interagency tech partnership office housed at the State Department.

This office would spearhead the United States' global efforts to forge robust technology partnerships with like-minded partners and allies with a special focus on norms and standards, joint research, and export controls and investment screens.

I believe that if America is to truly compete and exceed the Chinese Communist Party's whole-of-government approach to tech domination we must harness all the tools of allies and partners and work together.

Consistent with the bipartisan vision of the CHIPS and Science Act, which just passed Congress and the President of the United States will sign into law in a few weeks, we are trying to formalize this effort to crowd in the talent and treasure of other countries in co-developing technologies so that we can have common standards and really marshal all of the collective wherewithal that we have as we think about this generational competition with the CCP.

Do you believe that the State Department is best positioned within the federal government to lead creation of this interagency tech partnership office? Does the State Department have the resources and the ability to harness the necessary expertise within State and beyond to spearhead this effort?

Mr. FICK. Thank you, Senator.

I do believe that the State Department as the nation's lead foreign policy agency should lead on the partnership aspects of technology collaboration.

I appreciate also that this is a cross cutting issue inherently. It has defense elements, it has intelligence elements, it has economic elements, et cetera. And so I would not expect these efforts to sit exclusively in the State Department.

But I do think as far as partnerships go the State Department is properly positioned to lead and I think—I believe that the creation of this role helps to elevate and integrate those functions at the State Department, and if I am confirmed I would welcome the opportunity to work with you on this vision. I share a strong sense of its importance and do not believe that we can do it alone.

Senator YOUNG. Thank you for that. I would look forward to that opportunity, sir.

I have also noted with great interest the conclusions of the report of the independent task force that you co-chaired for the Council on Foreign Relations, "Confronting Reality in Cyberspace." The report calls for more cohesive links between our national security strategy and our policy for digital competition.

Could you comment on where the U.S. can make meaningful progress on this aspect of our foreign policy and where you envision your role to be in making that policy and implementing it, if confirmed?

Mr. FICK. Yes, Senator.

As I said in my opening statement, I believe that technology is the next frontier of diplomacy. I believe that diplomacy is our tool of first resort in international relations, and so by extension I think

that this is a cross-cutting substrate that is part of every aspect of our national security strategy and foreign policy.

And so my hope, if confirmed in this role, is to provide kindkind of coherence to our tech diplomacy and ensure that we as a government first,and we as a leader of like-minded allies and partners are coordinating our efforts because we have a competitor out there with a very different vision of what our global technology future should look like. I look behind me here at my children and think that this is fundamental to shaping the world that they will grow up in.

Senator YOUNG. Thank you, sir. Got some mic issues here.

And, lastly, I will just ask you and if you can answer in fairly short order, going back to the report I referenced, in lieu of sanctions what tools are available to the United States to strengthen adherence to a framework of responsible state behavior in cyberspace?

Mr. FICK. Senator, I believe that we have not fully extended deterrence into the cyber domain. I believe that American power has been a force for stability in the world since the end of World War II and our adversaries seek to do mischief or harm us using digital means because they know what the consequences are in the physical world and we should be marshaling every ounce of our diplomatic, economic, informational, and if necessary military power to ensure that we extend deterrence into this new domain.

Senator YOUNG. Thank you.

Senator BOOKER. Mr. Young?

Senator YOUNG. Yes, I am through.

Senator BOOKER. Thank you very much for your questions. Thank you very much. Yes, I will get a staffer to help you with your microphone next time.

[Laughter.]

Senator BOOKER. Thank you, my friend. As always, your thorough questions are informative and important. So thank you.

I want to start and jump in.

Ms. Ba, you have been spared the scorn in questioning of my colleagues. So I want to jump in with you on some really—what I think are really important issues.

I have great concern that we are heading as a globe spiraling into the greatest food insecurity our planet has ever seen, affecting more people than ever and, obviously, this is an issue for Côte d'Ivoire.

And so I would like to know from you what is the largest impact of Russia's war in Ukraine on the agricultural sector in the country and what are some thoughts of yours to help to deal with any food insecurity that is going to result?

Ms. BA. Senator, thank you very much for the question.

Indeed, the impact of the war has made—exacerbated foods insecurity in Côte d'Ivoire and across Africa. Agriculture is one of the most important sectors for Côte d'Ivoire. It is one of the largest exporters of cocoa—the largest exporters of cocoa in the world.

And so we are looking to continue and to deepen these partnerships in the agricultural sector with the U.S. companies that are already active in the country but also to set and to strengthen a business climate to encourage other American companies, because

when American companies are working in partnership in Côte d'Ivoire and across the region we see innovation.

And so, if confirmed, I would be focused on strengthening the role of American companies—the American model—to be able to look at how to not only deal with the immediate crisis of food security but also to be able to create the conditions so that small-scale farmers, larger farmers, women, young people, can have livelihoods in the agricultural sector and to be able to feed themselves and to be able to sustain their lives in the long term.

Senator BOOKER. I want to ask you just a personal issue. I worry about our economic relationships often with African nations when we are often sustaining relationships that reflect the colonization of the past.

And so when you look at Côte d'Ivoire, the Government's National Development Plan emphasizes efforts to diversify beyond raw commodity exports, which I think is really important for the development of countries and their strength.

They look to promote domestic processing of cocoa beans or raw cashews into more finished products, which I think is a very healthy economic evolution.

How can the U.S. support this initiative in diversifying their agricultural sector while also ensuring that the other priorities—human rights and more—continue to be sustained for the evolution of their economy?

Ms. BA. Thank you for that as well, Senator.

Economic opportunity is really the foundation of security very often. They go hand in hand, and good governance, transparency, accountability is also part and parcel.

So, if confirmed, I would be looking at how to have integrated approaches in all that we do and, really, to bring the best of the United States to bear in Côte d'Ivoire, to be able to engage with young people, because very often young people—77 percent of the population of Côte d'Ivoire are below the age of 35—they need to be able to see opportunity and they need to be able to see what is possible.

And the American model is different than a colonial model and traditional models, and we have incredible companies. We can help Côte d'Ivoire diversify their economy, looking into other industries as well like cultural industries.

But when we look at American companies encouraging different models that can look at corporate social responsibility and to be able to broaden from an integrated perspective, economics, good governance, as well as security.

Senator BOOKER. Thank you very much.

I would like to go quickly to Mr. Fick. We often look at the issues of cyberspace, digital policy, in terms of our fears, concerns, and understandable worries.

But I would like to maybe frame my question in the opportunity side and really ask you that—about the April 28th Biden administration's announcement that 61 nations joining with them, really, for the Declaration of the Future of the Internet, which really affirms the U.S. and other signatories' commitments to an open, free, global, interoperable, reliable, secure Internet that also protects human rights.

And I guess I would like to know how do you envision the CDP Bureau's role in pursuit of this new global partnership and what aspects of the declaration you are going to be prioritizing.

Mr. FICK. Senator, thank you for taking us from thinking about this issue solely in terms of strategic competition and affording an opportunity to talk about the positive affirmative vision for what technology can do globally, and I think the Declaration for the Future of the Internet is exactly that.

It is an aspirational framework and it is one that has a lot of power as a galvanizing set of principles to help build a voluntary coalition of like-minded partners and allies who share our view of an open, free, interoperable, secure digital future.

If confirmed, I would use this role to try to expand the number of states who are signatories to that document and do it by telling a positive—again, affirmative story of the power of technology.

And I think about my colleagues down the table who may be representing the United States in parts of the world where for the first time in human history, literally, at their fingertips young people can have all of the world's information available to them and that is—that is an incredibly powerful transformative force.

Senator BOOKER. All right.

I made a mistake. I am going to end my questioning—I tend to leave my questions till the very end. We are going to go to Senator Van Hollen, who is an extraordinary partner and important member of this committee.

Then we are going to go back to some procedural questions I have for the entire panel that I should have asked at the top. Then I have some of the most grueling, brutal questions I have ever asked somebody for Mr. Schiffer, and then we are done. I think everybody else is going to submit for the record.

Mr. Schiffer, please get ready for me to come at you hard.

But, Mr. Van Hollen, go ahead.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and congratulations to all of you and I look forward to supporting all of your nominations. You have already been committed to public service in various forms and I think you will all do a terrific job in the posts for which you have been nominated.

Mr. Schiffer, we are going to miss you here but look forward to working with you.

Mr. Fick, I was really glad to see Secretary Blinken announce the establishment—the formal establishment of the Bureau of Cyberspace and Digital Policy. I understand the concerns raised by Senator Portman but I think you addressed them well and I do believe that you will establish those lanes of responsibility.

And I was glad to hear the Chairman talk about the upside of the Internet. I mean, there are places all over the world where it has become a forum that brings people together to support freedom of expression, human rights.

Of course, authoritarian regimes recognize that, which is why they are so determined to block off access to that kind of information. We have seen Putin doing that in Russia. We have seen President Xi do it in China.

And so it is a challenge for us to make sure that that model is not exported to countries around the world, which China is, cer-

tainly, trying to do in places like Africa where we have many nominees appointed to be ambassador.

So I just look forward to following up with you. I also serve on the Appropriations Committee. The authorizers have, I think, on a bipartisan basis supported this mission and I want to make sure that the appropriators do so.

In the interests of time I look forward to continuing the conversation with you down the road.

Mr. FICK. Thank you, Senator. It is mutual.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Thank you.

Let me turn, if I could, to you, Ambassador Tamlyn, and I heard your opening statement from my office and appreciate your answers to questions here.

So the DRC, as you well know, is an incredibly complicated place with all sorts of rivalries and conflicts, especially in the east, and my question for you is what do you think is at the heart of those conflicts and what can you do as a U.S. Ambassador to try to address them in the long-term interests of stability in the DRC?

Ms. TAMLYN. Thank you, Senator. That is a really important question because I think too often we get derailed by saying he did something, they did something, somebody did something, who is to blame, and you really have to look at the root causes of the conflict.

And in my view, it has to do with lack of governance and it has to do with a very valuable part of the country in terms of its natural resources. So there is, inevitably, competition both inside the country as well as outside the country for access to those resources.

And in the absence of a strong government providing services to the people you have instead a whole network of armed groups, which provide some form of local governance but usually not a very good form of local governance.

So what can we do to tackle this situation? We need to work very closely with regional organizations and with leaders in the region to make sure that tension is deescalated, that the region does not fall into another conflict because we have seen how devastating that was.

So it is very important that leaders get the message and, believe me, the State Department has been messaging recently to leaders on the importance of reducing tensions, of cooperating and having dialogue with neighbors and using those regional bodies and mechanisms to try to resolve conflicts.

I think also some of our programming, which tries to address root causes of conflict, which can be traced to exploitation of minerals in a nonsustainable and a nonaccountable, nontransparent way, if we can address that, that helps some of those local grievances and, again, supporting the Government to be the kind of government that provides the security and services to the people that they aspire to.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Thank you for hitting on all those points, and I know that Senator Booker raised the issue of rare earth minerals in his opening statement. That, obviously, is part of what is at the heart of this—a lot of these conflicts, and so look forward to working with you on that as well.

I do want to bring to your attention a great Marylander who has been very involved in the DRC. His name is Pastor Weaver. He is

the pastor of one of the largest AME churches in Maryland. He is the president of the Pan African Collective. He has established a school, the Weaver School, in the DRC that has over 900 students in primary and secondary school, 20 percent of them orphans.

Our former ambassador, Mike Hammer, visited the school, and so my ask of you is once you get settled there if you would also go out to see the school. I think it is a great example of the faith-based community here in the United States supporting important humanitarian educational efforts in Africa.

Ms. TAMLYN. Thank you, Senator.

If confirmed, it would be my pleasure to go and visit.

Thank you.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator BOOKER. I am very grateful for you, Senator Cardin.

So I am going to get my Schiffer questions done. Prepare yourself, sir. There will be five questions. I hope you can answer them as quickly as possible. Then we will have procedural questions and then, I think, we are a wrap.

So, Mr. Schiffer, obviously, there is a crisis in Sri Lanka right now. The president fled and resigned amongst a really full-scale economic crisis and protests. There was a new Sri Lankan president that was elected by the parliament very closely affiliated, unfortunately or fortunately, depending on your views here, but I imagine it is unfortunately, that does not have public confidence.

I am really wondering about USAID and what we could do to sort of guide or alter our policies there and how we might respond quickly to support any meaningful democratic process, institution capacity building, civil society bolstering, in the weeks and months ahead.

Mr. SCHIFFER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I mean, the situation in Sri Lanka has been, truly, in a different way but similar to Burma tragic over the past several months.

My understanding is that USAID has sought to engage to provide for the immediate humanitarian assistance, given the economic crisis on the ground and in Sri Lanka, and that we—the USAID is part of the larger set of activities to coordinate with other partners in the region, including through the Quad, to look to support proper governance in Sri Lanka.

I think this is a long-term rebuilding process. It is an issue that, if confirmed, I do intend to look at closely and come back to this committee and to you to consult and to get your guidance.

Senator BOOKER. I really hope we can have that conversation.

All right, sir. This is the speed round, four last questions, the last chance this committee is going to have to verbally question you before you leave us. We all have abandonment issues as senators so prepare yourself.

Your first question—you are an Asia expert, correct?

Mr. SCHIFFER. Allegedly.

Senator BOOKER. Then you will be able to tell me, sir, the Han Dynasty from—in China from the year 200 BC to the year 220 AD, what were the three biggest accomplishments of the Han Dynasty?

[Laughter.]

Senator BOOKER. Let the record show you could not answer.

[Laughter.]

Senator BOOKER. Number two, sir. There is a significant movement going on in parts of Asia that you, I am sure, have heard of that is called K-pop. Could you please tell me your three favorite male K-pop bands?

Mr. SCHIFFER. There is only one K-pop band and that is BTS. So that is my answer.

Senator BOOKER. That is wrong, and let the record show that you got yet another answer wrong.

And then, finally, you know that modern mathematics was really innovated in Asia—the extraordinary accomplishments in math and science.

So my final question for you, sir—three wrong answers for an Asia expert—but my final question for you, sir, is what is the square root of 1,256?

Mr. SCHIFFER. Am I allowed to call on a family member?

Senator BOOKER. You cannot phone a friend, sir.

[Laughter.]

Senator BOOKER. Let the record show you are 0 for 3 in your final moments before the United States Senate highest—longest serving committee, the Foreign Relations Committee. What an ignominious way to end, sir, and I am very disappointed in you.

[Laughter.]

Senator BOOKER. But, however, you are greatly still loved by people on both sides of the aisle. Your service has been extraordinary.

I want to say right now I have got to do these perfunctory questions. They are important, though. I would hope that there would be a hearty yes from all of you in unison. You do not have to harmonize your yeses but I would like to hear them, if possible.

Do you agree to appear before this committee and make officials from your office available to the committee and designated staff when invited?

[All witnesses answer in the affirmative.]

Senator BOOKER. Let the record show I heard yeses from all of them.

Number two, do you commit to keep this committee fully and currently informed about the activities under your purview?

[All witnesses answer in the affirmative.]

Senator BOOKER. Let the record show I heard all the yeses.

Number three, do you commit to engaging in meaningful consultation while policies are being developed, not just providing notification after the fact?

[All witnesses answer in the affirmative.]

Senator BOOKER. That was not as loud and vocal but I did hear everyone.

[Laughter.]

Senator BOOKER. The last question is do you commit to promptly responding to requests for briefing and information requested by the committee and its designated staff?

[All witnesses answer in the affirmative.]

Senator BOOKER. Thank you very much.

I want to conclude by saying what I said at the top, Mr. Ranking Member. These are extraordinary Americans. You all have very

distinguished service under your belt in the public and the private sector.

You are now taking posts of critical importance that are not only of critical strategic national security and economic possibility importance for our nation but also, as leaders on this planet, really important for humanity.

There is a story about Abraham Lincoln at a time when he was trying to hold our nation together—another time of crisis—and he finished this incredible speech that you all know, the second inaugural address—"with malice towards none, with charity towards all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right."

Afterwards, he was at a reception and people were crowding around him, pulling him in different directions. But he was pushing through the crowd to find his friend. The friend almost did not get in—he was an African-American man—until someone recognized this regal man yet humble in spirit and they brought him into the reception.

Lincoln found this Black man and said to him, "I must know what you thought of my speech." And the man, again, regal in stature but humble of spirit, said, "Mr. President, you should attend to your other guests," and he waved him off and said, "I need to know what you thought of my speech. My friend, please tell me."

Now, this would be the last time in American history these two men would ever speak to each other, and as Lincoln waited the great Frederick Douglass spoke up and he said, "Mr. President, it was a sacred effort." A sacred effort.

You all, should you be confirmed, are continuing that spirit in this country. The work you do is sacred. The difference that you can make will be extraordinary.

I wish you and your families the best on the journey that you are about to embark upon and may God bless you and always bless the United States of America.

There will be questions for the record. I thank my ranking member, and now I need to enter two letters into the record before gaveling out, and they are here.

I would like to, without objection from my colleague and my friend—I would like to introduce two letters for the record in support of Mr. Fick's nomination.

No objection being heard, it is so ordered.

[The information referred to above is located at the end of this transcript.]

Senator BOOKER. Again, the record will remain—for this hearing will remain open until the close of business on Thursday, August 4th. Please ensure that questions for the record are submitted no later than that date, and as you heard from Senator Menendez, please make them thorough.

Again, congratulations to the nominees' families.

Senator ROUNDS. May I——

Senator BOOKER. Please. Please.

Senator ROUNDS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I would just say, look, the United States Senate has not only the responsibility for advice and consent but also for the oversight and, thus, the reason for the questions by the Chairman as to being able

to appear and it is a very important part of the job that we have here.

I thank you for your answers in that specific regard but also for, once again, as we have all tried to express, your interest in serving our country and, in particular, your families' participation as well, which is sometimes very, very challenging.

And with that, Mr. Chairman, I would like to thank you for the hairless, or I should say, errorless way in which you conducted yourself today with this committee hearing.

[Laughter.]

Senator ROUNDS. Thank you.

Senator BOOKER. With that final dad joke, this hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 11:56 a.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

Additional Material Submitted for the Record

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO JESSICA DAVIS BA BY SENATOR ROBERT MENENDEZ

Question. Two years ago, President Ouattara made the decision to run for a third term in office, triggering the most serious unrest in Côte d'Ivoire since the conflict in 2011. His main political rivals, like him, are from an older generation of political elites. How would you assess the state of democracy in Côte d'Ivoire, and what will you do as ambassador, if confirmed, to empower democratic voices-especially from the youth and marginalized communities-and improve governance in the country?

Answer. Ivoirians overwhelmingly prefer democracy to any other form of government—a conclusion based on independent polling by Afrobarometer. If confirmed, I will stress the common democratic values shared by the Americans and Ivoirians—participation, inclusion, transparency, and accountability—assured through the democratic process. Although the 2020 presidential election period was marked by several incidents of violence, the national legislative elections in March 2021 were conducted freely and fairly with broad participation from opposition parties. The next election cycle is expected to begin in 2023 for municipal and regional seats, followed by presidential and legislative elections in 2025 and 2026, respectively. If confirmed, I will prioritize U.S. support throughout the election process, expanding outreach and coordination with partners in country and with multilateral institutions like the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Union. I will urge all actors to participate peacefully and to hold those responsible for any violence accountable. Côte d'Ivoire's future depends on free and fair elections that are held peacefully with an inclusive and transparent electoral process. If confirmed, I will urge the Government and political parties to engage in a real process of reconciliation through continuation of their own National Political Dialogue. To champion participation, especially by women young people, and marginalized communities, I will encourage Ivoirians to get their national ID cards and register to vote. Our Embassy will continue to support the culmination of a larger voter literacy effort that ensures increased civic awareness and involvement for the average citizen, particularly women, youth, and other marginalized communities. If confirmed, I will also urge the Government to make voter registration as easy as possible for all eligible voters to ensure robust participation. I will prioritize opportunities to leverage our programs and convening power to support democratic institutions and the democratic process.

Côte d'Ivoire, like other countries in coastal West Africa, is vulnerable to the spread of violent extremism from the Sahel. In response to this threat, the Administration has targeted five countries in coastal West Africa, including Côte d'Ivoire, priorities under the Global Fragility Act. While these countries face some similar challenges, there are also marked differences between them, including very different systems of governance. For example, Ghana is a relatively strong democracy, and Guinea is currently under military rule. The five countries also vary in terms of income level, social cohesion, and state capacity.

Question. How does the violent extremist threat manifest itself in Côte d'Ivoire? Do you believe that our current assistance programming to counter violent extremism in Côte d'Ivoire is appropriately balanced between defense, diplomacy, and development?

Answer. Violent extremist organizations based in the Sahel have announced their intention to target Côte d'Ivoire and other coastal West African states. In the last two years, over 20 attacks, mainly targeting security services have occurred in the northern region of Côte d'Ivoire along the border with Burkina Faso. If confirmed as U.S. Ambassador to Côte d'Ivoire, I will work with a broad range of stakeholders within the Ivoirian Government and civil society to ensure that implementation of the U.S. Strategy to Prevent Conflict and Promote Stability (SPCPS) includes the appropriate balance of defense, diplomacy, and development tools to support Côte d'Ivoire's National Development Plan and government-community cooperation to build resilience against this threat. If confirmed, I will work with the interagency Embassy team as well as our regional partners at the USAID-West Africa regional mission, USAFRICOM, and my counterparts in Guinea, Ghana, Togo, and Benin to support the Ivoirian people at the community, national, and regional level. In implementing the SPCPS, I will prioritize constant evaluation of our investment of U.S. assistance, re-balancing any emphasis of our approach to build on opportunities to counter violent extremism.

Question. How will you ensure that resources and programming implemented through the Global Fragility Act are appropriately tailored to the requirements of Côte d'Ivoire?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with various stakeholders within the Ivoirian Government and civil society to ensure programming through the Global Fragility Act, implemented according to the U.S. Strategy to Prevent Conflict and Promote Stability (SPCPS), is aligned with Côte d'Ivoire's National Development Plan and facilitates meaningful government-community cooperation. Specifically, the tools we will use to implement the SPCPS can reinforce local and national early warning systems and action plans to prevent the spread of violent extremism; support existing community-led platforms, such as civilian-military committees to foster trust between marginalized communities and security forces; professionalize law enforcement and other government officials to engender trust with the communities they serve; and strengthen legal capabilities to hold violent extremist actors accountable. If confirmed, I will also emphasize the unique tools each of our interagency partners brings to the challenges in Côte d'Ivoire to ensure efficient and effective whole-of-government action to achieve the U.S. objective of long-term peace and stability. Under my leadership, through interagency coordination and planning, U.S. Embassy Abidjan will tailor USG assistance to the specific needs of local communities to reinforce their resilience against the threat of violent extremism, while creating opportunities to build trust with state authorities. To implement this long-term plan, U.S. Embassy Abidjan plans to hire additional staff to collect and analyze data to ensure that USG resources and programming are contextually relevant, most effectively to the requirements of communities in various regions of Côte d'Ivoire.

Democracy and Human Rights

Question. What are the most important actions you have taken in your career to date to support democracy and human rights? What has been the impact of your actions?

Answer. Throughout my career, I have been dedicated to championing democracy and respect for human rights. Most of my overseas tours were in countries in which the U.S. Government focused on building government and civil society capacity, where I worked to advance democracy and respect for human rights. I learned that individual actions can make a difference to shape outcomes that support others in defending their rights when they may not have the resources or freedom to do alone in constrained democratic space. In Guinea, I led our Embassy's effort to empower trade unions through the creative use of the Human Rights and Democracy Fund. U.S. assistance helped bring unions together across sectors in a country where the authoritarian regime curtailed human rights and weakened civil society. The labor coalition organized and began peaceful protests against then-President Lansana Conte. When the regime responded with violence, the labor leaders continued to mobilize Guineans to demand change. When security forces stormed the headquarters of one of the unions, I mobilized our Embassy colleagues across agencies who weighed in with their counterparts to ensure due process. The labor leaders credited our embassy with saving their lives. We continued to support the unions and I shared best practices from American labor and civil rights movements. When the Government responded with violence, we urged the Government to engage its citi-

zens in peaceful dialogue. The labor movement led general nationwide strikes that eventually pushed the president to appoint a more inclusive cabinet and they won a promise for democratic elections for the Guinean people to chart their own future.

From this experience, I recognized that my actions to support democratic coalitions and build partnerships to advance universal human rights could make a difference. U.S. support inspired confidence in Guinea's citizens to stand up for their rights and build a movement that opened new opportunities for democratic renewal. I took lessons from Guinea to each of my subsequent assignments. For example, in Somalia, I negotiated among warring parties in the Djibouti Peace Process for the election of a new transitional federal government integrating wider representation of moderate voices. In Kenya, I engaged women, youth groups, and the private sector to support a peaceful referendum and electoral process. In Iraq, I insisted that the U.S. police training program include human rights instruction in every aspect of our engagement, even when the Iraqi Government requested that we remove these program components. I worked with the African Union to strengthen its elections monitoring and collaborated with partners and AU member states to invest more resources to support elections across the African continent. In Chad, I engaged at the highest level of the Government to link our assistance to accountability for human rights violations. We centered all partnerships for security sector reform on building more transparent institutions for the benefit of the people of Chad. I consistently open space for those seeking to make their voices heard and create opportunities to leverage U.S. assistance resources to support human rights and advance democracy. If confirmed, I will bring this experience to support the aspirations of the people of Côte d'Ivoire.

Question. What issues are the most pressing challenges to democracy or democratic development in Côte d'Ivoire? These challenges might include obstacles to participatory and accountable governance and institutions, rule of law, authentic political competition, civil society, human rights, and press freedom. Please be as specific as possible.

Answer. One of the biggest challenges to democratic development in Côte d'Ivoire is ensuring that the Government can meet the needs of all its citizens, particularly vulnerable groups in the North of the country. The United States is deeply concerned about increased violent extremism along the northern Ivoirian border. The Government of Côte d'Ivoire has expressed its support for the U.S. Strategy to Prevent Conflict and Promote Stability (SPCPS), the implementation of which will support the Government's efforts to address many of these needs in the region. One of the main lines of effort for the U.S. Strategy is to focus on building trust between security forces and the communities they serve.

More broadly, Côte d'Ivoire has never experienced a peaceful transition of power. The 2021 legislative elections were a significant step towards reconciliation and socio-political cohesion. The ongoing national political dialogue is making important progress. However, this progress remains fragile and if confirmed, I will ensure the United States supports the people of Côte d'Ivoire as the country moves towards the 2023 local elections and the 2025 presidential election.

As part of the effort to build social cohesion, the United States has called on the Government of Côte d'Ivoire to respect the human rights of all individuals in Côte d'Ivoire, notably freedoms of expression and peaceful assembly, and to ensure that all those arrested are afforded fair trials. Through implementation of the SPCPS, Embassy Abidjan is planning to support a judicial advisor to support Côte d'Ivoire's justice sector reforms. If confirmed, I will continue to speak out for democratic pluralism, rule of law, press freedom, and respect for human rights.

Question. What steps will you take—if confirmed—to support democracy in of Côte d'Ivoire? What do you hope to accomplish through these actions? What are the potential impediments to addressing the specific obstacles you have identified?

Answer. Supporting good governance and democracy in Côte d'Ivoire is a key goal of our bilateral relationship. If confirmed, I will continue to urge the Government of Côte d'Ivoire to capitalize on their advancements towards increasing respect for democracy, and human rights and fundamental freedoms through their National Dialogue and Reconciliation plan. I will also work with Ivoirian civil society and opposition groups to encourage their participation in the democratic process. If confirmed, I will address potential impediments to democratic ideals and institutions, including security concerns and economic inequality. I will engage personally with the Ivoirian Government, civil society, and opposition groups to ensure that all voices are heard, and all interests are represented at the local and national government level. Specifically, through an interagency collaborative effort with State and USAID, I will promote fairer voter registration processes through civic education,

voter list analysis, and efforts to increase the accessibility of electoral data for all citizens of Côte d'Ivoire.

If confirmed, I will collaborate with the Government of Côte d'Ivoire, political parties, civil society organizations, and other diplomatic missions to promote political reforms, reinforce democratic institutions, and strengthen electoral institutions and processes to promote free and fair elections. I will also support the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association and encourage all Ivoirians to participate in local and national elections as low voter confidence and participation could become an impediment to a robust democracy.

Question. How will you utilize U.S. Government assistance resources at your disposal, including the Democracy Commission Small Grants program and other sources of State Department and USAID funding, to support democracy and governance, and what will you prioritize in processes to administer such assistance?

Answer. If confirmed, I would utilize all available U.S. assistance tools and programs to support democracy and governance in Côte d'Ivoire and prioritize programs that best support U.S. goals in the country. The continued use of available State Department and USAID regional and centrally managed resources are crucial to advancing democracy and respect for human rights in Côte d'Ivoire. If confirmed, I would also seek to leverage the Government of Côte d'Ivoire's strong MCC Compact to encourage further reforms that improve transparency and reduce corruption. In 2019, A Compact Program between Côte d'Ivoire and MCC to improve transportation conditions and to promote new employability and productivity skills entered into force. U.S. assistance and the partnerships forged through the MCC Compact will be critical to driving economic growth and reducing poverty in the country, particularly for women and youth.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to meet with civil society members, human rights, and other non-governmental organizations in the U.S. and with local human rights NGOs, and other members of civil society in Côte d'Ivoire? What steps will you take to pro-actively address efforts to restrict or penalize NGOs and civil society via legal or regulatory measures?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to regularly meeting and hearing directly from civil society and political actors who support strengthening Côte d'Ivoire's democracy and civil society. I would build on interagency Embassy efforts to urge the Government to incorporate opposition voices and civil society in their political dialogue and national reconciliation plan. I would also continue to encourage the Government to build trust by allowing NGOs and civil society true freedom of peaceful assembly and association.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to meet with democratically oriented political opposition figures and parties? What steps will you take to encourage genuine political competition? Will you advocate for access and inclusivity for women, minorities, and youth within political parties?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to continuing and strengthening the relationships our mission has built with democratically oriented political opposition figures and parties. I will strive to support the efforts of these figures and parties to develop a more inclusive political environment in Côte d'Ivoire, including their participation in the government-initiated dialogue with opposition parties. I will urge the Government to ensure the freedom of association and peaceful assembly for all political actors, even those with whom they do not agree. The upcoming 2023 local elections are a key steppingstone for young people, women, and minorities, in particular, who want to enter politics because they offer more opportunities for seats than national-level elections. Through public statements, State Public Diplomacy and USAID programming, and direct engagements, I will advocate for a political environment that is inclusive of women, youth, minorities, and people throughout Côte d'Ivoire who might otherwise be marginalized.

Question. Will you and your embassy team actively engage with Côte d'Ivoire on freedom of the press and address any government efforts designed to control or undermine press freedom through legal, regulatory, or other measures? Will you commit to meeting regularly with independent, local press in Côte d'Ivoire?

Answer. Restrictions on the press, politically motivated arrests, excessive limitations on applications for political gatherings, self-censorship, and suspensions of press outlets have no place in a strong democracy. If confirmed, I would, along with the rest of my Embassy team, prioritize work with the Government of Côte d'Ivoire to prevent restrictions on media outlets and reporters and to remind the Government and all people that freedom of expression, including for members of the press is key to maintaining a healthy democracy. If confirmed, I will commit to meeting

regularly with independent and local press outlets in Côte d'Ivoire as a visible sign of support for freedom of expression, including for members of the press.

Question. Will you and your embassy team actively engage with civil society and government counterparts on countering disinformation and propaganda disseminated by foreign state or non-state actors in the country?

Answer. If confirmed, I will engage civil society and government counterparts to build on the embassy team's progress and programs to combat disinformation and propaganda perpetuated by foreign state and non-state actors. A well-informed population is required for a functioning democracy, and I will prioritize our efforts to build a stronger information and media ecosystem to combat misinformation and disinformation. I will support embassy programs to educate journalists about the dangers of disinformation, including training that offers recent examples like the disinformation circulated on the efficacy and safety of COVID–19 vaccines and on Russia's war in Ukraine. USAID and State Public Diplomacy will continue to work with social media influencers, local radio stations, and community storytellers to deconstruct misinformation and disinformation, particularly in northern communities, to address issues pertaining to violent extremism and attempts to distance the population from the state.

Question. Will you and your embassy teams actively engage with Côte d'Ivoire on the right of labor groups to organize, including for independent trade unions?

Answer. Côte d'Ivoire's law, including related regulations and statutory instruments, provides for the right of workers, except members of police and military services, to form or join unions of their choice; provides for the right to conduct legal strikes and bargain collectively; and prohibits discrimination by employers or others against union members or organizers. It further prohibits firing workers for union activities and provides for the reinstatement of dismissed workers within eight days of winning a wrongful dismissal claim. The law protects unions' ability to conduct their activities without interference. Worker organizations in Côte d'Ivoire have been independent of the Government and political parties. Despite strong legal frameworks, forced labor and labor trafficking have been documented in key economic sectors. Concerns regarding government enforcement of worker rights' protections, including on child labor and forced labor, remain. If confirmed, I and my team will encourage the Government of Côte d'Ivoire to enforce the legal rights of organized labor, civil society, and workers. By putting the right tools in the hands of labor inspectors, business owners, workers, and service providers, we can advance greater transparency and accountability, prevent bad actors from profiting on the backs of workers, and better identify when grueling or poorly paid work becomes involuntary forced labor, thus violating international standards and national laws.

Question. Will you commit to using your position, if confirmed, to defend the human rights and dignity of all people in Côte d'Ivoire, no matter their sexual orientation or gender identity?

Answer. If confirmed, I will continue to support the human rights of all residents of Côte d'Ivoire and their ability to live free from discrimination based on their identity, ethnicity, or medical status. Through collaboration with Ivoirian NGOs, the Embassy supports programming that promotes the human rights and representation of women and LGBTQI+ persons in politics, increases their access to the Ivoirian economy, and increases public-private partnerships to encourage citizen participation and local governance. Embassy Abidjan's PEPFAR program directly improves access to and quality of HIV services for members of the LGBTQI+ population through engagement with the Ministry of Health, LGBTQI+-led organizations, and external stakeholders, including UNAIDS. Under my leadership, we will not compromise on these important American and global ideals. If confirmed, I will work hard to encourage Côte d'Ivoire to continue this positive trajectory.

Question. What challenges do the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) people face in Côte d'Ivoire?

Answer. Violence and discrimination targeting LGBTQI+ persons remain a challenge in the country, primarily due to societal norms. Homosexuality is not illegal, but it is not widely accepted. Same-sex marriages are not recognized as legal unions in Côte d'Ivoire, and legal protections against discrimination do not exist. A 2022 effort in parliament to provide legal protections against discrimination was withdrawn in the face of public opposition. LGBTQI+ persons in Côte d'Ivoire report being stigmatized by their families, communities, religious leaders, and health providers.

Question. What specifically will you commit to do to help LGBTQ people in Côte d'Ivoire?

Answer. If confirmed, I will call on the Government of Côte d'Ivoire to investigate allegations of violence and discrimination targeting LGBTQI+ persons. I also commit to continuing the Embassy's strong slate of programming around LGBTQI+ issues in Côte d'Ivoire. I will pledge to work with the LGBTQI+ community and follow their lead, under the principle of "do no harm," to promote respect for the human rights of LGBTQI+ persons. PEPFAR's ongoing engagement with Ivoirian civil society to improve HIV/TB services and respect for the human rights of every member of the LGBTQI+ community presents an additional opportunity for my direct engagement and advocacy.

Congressional Consultations

Question. Will you commit, if confirmed, to ensuring that you fully brief members of congress and/or their staff each time you are in Washington for visits or consultations during your tenure as Ambassador to Côte d'Ivoire?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit, in coordination with the State Department's Bureau of Legislative Affairs, to respond promptly to all appropriate requests for briefings and for information by this Committee. Congress has an important role to play in foreign policy legislation and during the implementation process. Our foreign policy is stronger when the two branches of government coordinate, and I look forward to strengthening the coordination between our two branches.

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility

Question. Last week we held a hearing on the important work of the State Department's Chief Diversity Officer and the important role diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility efforts play in maintaining our countries' competitive edge on the global stage. How do you anticipate fostering diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility at Embassy Abidjan?

Answer. Throughout my State Department career, I have championed a diverse, inclusive, and equitable work environment and have encouraged policies that advance these values. If confirmed, I intend to bring that same spirit to Embassy Abidjan by supporting post's inclusive hiring and selection procedures and to expand recruiting to ensure we have the greatest expertise and diversity of experience represented in our mission. I will ensure active community participation in Embassy Abidjan's Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Council and support initiatives the Council proposes. I will also encourage every member of the Embassy to make recommendations on how we can be more inclusive and equitable in our operations, practices, and policies. Embassy Abidjan has already been active in this area, with monthly dialogues on these issues, and institutional innovations such as cross-cultural training, Mission-wide mentorship programs, and targeted hiring for persons with disabilities. I commit to listening to both local and U.S. colleagues to ensure that we continue to make progress on these gains.

Question. What specifically will you do to prioritize and promote diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility, while also combating racism, discrimination, and inequality among locally employed staff in Côte d'Ivoire?

Answer. If confirmed, I will make clear that Embassy Abidjan will have a zero-tolerance policy for racism and discrimination, in keeping with Equal Employment Opportunity laws. I intend to ensure that all employees working in Embassy Abidjan, whether they are locally employed staff, eligible family members, or U.S. direct hires, feel supported and have the tools and opportunities they need to contribute to our priorities. I will seek input on ways to make our operations, programs, and outreach more equitable including by maintaining an open office policy and welcoming the contributions and ideas of all working in our mission. I will also actively support Embassy Abidjan's existing mentorship programs for First and Second Tour Officers, Mid-level U.S. Direct Hires, and our Locally Engaged Staff. I will ensure our Embassy meets the professional development needs of staff and that everyone feels safe, welcome, and empowered to contribute to our mission objectives.

Question. In addition to focusing on diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility in our workforce, will you commit to engaging more equitably in operations and programming, particularly with potential partners and communities that traditionally have been marginalized, excluded, or underrepresented in ours and others' donor and partnership efforts? How do you anticipate utilizing local expertise, knowledge, and capacity to meet our foreign policy goals?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to engaging with partners and communities that have been traditionally marginalized, underrepresented or excluded in donor or

partnership efforts. Throughout my State Department career, I have expanded outreach and encouraged new partnerships through U.S. programs to communities that have historically been marginalized. I will bring this commitment to Abidjan, working across U.S. Government agencies to evaluate existing operations and programs to identify opportunities where our assistance and partnerships can be more inclusive. In particular, I will focus on integrating women and young people, ensuring we reach all regions of Côte d'Ivoire, including through creative deployment of the internet, including social media. Learning from local expertise and knowledge is critical to building successful programs and to advance U.S. foreign policy goals.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO JESSICA DAVIS BA BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Question. In December 2020, President Ouattara was sworn in for a controversial 3rd term as president of Côte d'Ivoire. The issue of the 3rd term was a significant issue in Côte d'Ivoire, and taken against a backdrop of multiple coups in the region since 2020 is part of a worrying trend.

- As U.S. Ambassador to Côte d'Ivoire, how will you engage with Ivorian stakeholders ahead of the 2024 elections to ensure a peaceful democratic transfer of power?

Answer. Ivoirians overwhelmingly prefer democracy than any other form of government—a conclusion based on independent polling by Afrobarometer. If confirmed, I will stress the common democratic values shared by the Americans and Ivoirians—participation, inclusion, transparency, and accountability—assured through the democratic process. Although the 2020 presidential election period was marked by several incidents of violence, the nationwide legislative elections in March 2021 were conducted freely and fairly with broad participation from opposition parties. The next election cycle is expected to begin in 2023 for municipal and regional seats, followed by presidential and legislative elections due in 2025 and 2026, respectively. I will prioritize U.S. support throughout the election process, expanding outreach and coordination with partners in country and with multilateral institutions like the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Union. If confirmed, I will urge all actors to participate peacefully and to hold those responsible for violence accountable. Côte d'Ivoire's future depends on free and fair elections that are inclusive, transparent, and peaceful.

If confirmed, I will urge the Government and political parties to engage in a real process of reconciliation through continuation of their own National Political Dialogue. To champion participation, especially by women, young people, and marginalized communities, I will encourage Ivoirians to get their national ID cards and register to vote. I will also urge the Government to make registering as easy as possible for all eligible voters to ensure participation is as high and robust as possible. I will ensure Embassy efforts around political participation and inclusivity continue through the election cycles, such as the ongoing USAID programming to encourage political reconciliation in communities affected by the election-related violence of 2020 and State and USAID efforts to increase political participation among historically underrepresented groups, in particular youth and women. I will prioritize opportunities to leverage our programs and convening power to support democratic institutions and the democratic process.

As concerns about the spread of violent extremist organizations across the Sahel increases, U.S. strategy for preventing violent extremism has shifted focus to the countries of coastal West Africa, including Côte d'Ivoire. As part of this strategy, coastal West Africa, including Côte d'Ivoire, was selected as a target for implementation of the Global Fragility Act.

Question. As U.S. Ambassador, how will you balance engaging with Ivorian stakeholders on important domestic issues while also recognizing that Côte d'Ivoire is part of a broader U.S. strategy to prevent violent extremism?

Answer. If confirmed as U.S. Ambassador to Côte d'Ivoire, I will work with various stakeholders within the Ivoirian Government and civil society to support efforts to address domestic issues, such as uneven economic growth and access to basic services, while also encouraging meaningful Ivoirian participation in multilateral bodies such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Union. Together, these approaches will help Côte d'Ivoire improve its resilience to the threat of violent extremism emanating from the Sahel. If confirmed, I will work with the entire Embassy team to ensure that we achieve the correct bal-

ance of supporting the people inside Côte d'Ivoire, while maintaining an active role and voice in regional engagement and strategies.

Question. Côte d'Ivoire is the world's largest producer of cocoa, and Côte d'Ivoire and its immediate neighbor Ghana produce approximately 60 percent of the world's cocoa. While Côte d'Ivoire is a source of cocoa for numerous American and European chocolate companies, the industry is also working to combat worrying levels of child labor in the production of cocoa in Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana.

- As U.S. Ambassador to Côte d'Ivoire, how will you engage with both the Government of Côte d'Ivoire and American chocolate companies to address the issue of child labor, while also balancing the important role cocoa plays in the Ivorian economy and to American companies?

Answer. Côte d'Ivoire has made significant efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The Government has addressed child labor conditions through the adoption, elaboration, and amendment of several policies, laws, and programs. These efforts included finalizing the National Action Plan for the Fight Against the Worst Forms of Child Labor, revising the Labor Code, adopting an Anti-Trafficking law in 2016, signing a cross-border cooperation agreement with Ghana, drafting a document specifying types of permitted light work, and revising the list of hazardous work.

I am aware of heightened concerns about child labor in the cocoa sector and, if confirmed, I and my Embassy Team as well as interagency colleagues will work closely with the Ivoirian Government, other countries, NGOs, and the chocolate industry to address them. I will continue to work with the Ivoirian Government and the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) through the Child Labor Cocoa Coordinating Group (CLCCG). U.S. companies expressed concern about the expiration of the Harkin-Engel Protocol, which offered a forum for public and private sector engagement on efforts to reduce child labor in the production of cocoa.

I am also aware of the important place that the cocoa sector has in the Ivoirian economy and of the investment that U.S. companies have made in the cocoa sector, which is improving livelihoods in this region. If confirmed, I will continue the Embassy's close dialogue and coordination with U.S. and international cocoa companies which do business in Côte d'Ivoire. Realizing that poverty and limited access to education are significant drivers of child labor, if confirmed, I will continue our active support of sustainable and resilient economic growth, women's economic empowerment, improving access to education, and improving health services. Our efforts to increase law enforcement capacity will help Côte d'Ivoire deal with those who use and traffic in child labor. Together, we can incorporate holistic solutions to combat the worst forms of child labor in the cocoa sector.

State Department Manangement and Public Diplomacy

Question. Many U.S. missions have been under enormous stress over the last few years, in large part due to COVID. What is your understanding of morale throughout Mission Abidjan?

Answer. Embassy Abidjan's strong morale has been driven by community-led investments in the mission's institutions, including mentorship programs for both local and U.S. employees, its Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Council, greening initiatives, and active employee associations. I intend to continue supporting these vital organizations and making the most out of employee and family member contributions along the way. However, maintaining this positive momentum in the face of external challenges and rapid growth will require additional resources to ensure we can build upon our promising relationship with the host government.

Question. How do you intend to improve morale at Mission Abidjan?

Answer. If confirmed, maintaining morale of all members of Mission Abidjan will be of utmost importance for me. I intend to work closely with my staff, understand their concerns and seek ways to find immediate remedies for issues that we can address in Abidjan. For those issues where our community requires additional support, I will communicate staff needs back to Department leadership. I believe that the best work comes from well-resourced teams that support one another towards achieving common goals and advancing U.S. policies. I will work across the interagency and with Washington to ensure that future growth meets U.S. strategic objectives and can be supported effectively by post's management platform.

Recent growth has dramatically increased the number of eligible family members resident at Embassy Abidjan. Our Foreign Service family members contribute directly to mission morale, and if confirmed, I will ensure that those family members are also supported by improving educational options in country and ensuring that

eligible family members who wish to work find meaningful employment at Embassy Abidjan.

Question. How do you intend to create a unified mission and vision at Mission Abidjan?

Answer. If confirmed, I intend to ensure that all employees working in Embassy Abidjan, whether they are Locally Engaged Staff, eligible family members, or U.S. direct hires, feel supported and heard in their work. I maintain an open office policy and welcome the contributions and ideas of those working in our mission. I will also actively support Embassy Abidjan's existing mentorship programs for First and Second Tour Officers, mid-level U.S. Direct Hires, and our Locally Employed Staff and ensure that they meet the professional development needs of staff. Throughout my State Department career, I have valued and encouraged a diverse and inclusive work environment, and if confirmed, I intend to bring that same spirit to Embassy Abidjan by supporting post's inclusive hiring and selection procedures and active community participation in Embassy Abidjan's Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Council events. Most important, I will convene regular conversations across the Mission to reinforce a shared vision by listening to the input of our staff and assessing progress on our Integrated Country Strategy.

Question. Management is a key responsibility for Chiefs of Mission. How would you describe your management style?

Answer. I would describe my management style as collaborative. Over the last two decades, I have created diverse teams to develop a shared vision for how we collectively implement U.S. policy priorities. I seek input broad input from colleagues, stakeholders, and partners to inform the most effective strategies to achieve our policy priorities and integrate these perspectives into plans that I share with all those consulted. My leadership and management style is focused on empowering staff, delegating responsibilities to experts, and removing roadblocks to achieve results. I prioritize communication to gain the benefit of regular feedback and to facilitate decision-making. If confirmed, I will prioritize collaboration and partnerships, including from Congressional representatives, to achieve U.S. policy priorities in Côte d'Ivoire.

Question. Do you believe it is ever acceptable or constructive to berate subordinates, either in public or private?

Answer. Absolutely not. Under no circumstances is that ever acceptable. And, if confirmed, I will not tolerate that behavior by any member of the Embassy Abidjan community. I will clearly emphasize my expectation that all members of our team treat one another and all people with whom we come into contact with mutual respect.

Question. How do you envision your leadership relationship with your Deputy Chief of Mission?

Answer. The relationship between an Ambassador and Deputy Chief of Mission is fundamental to the success of an Embassy. From my experience serving as a DCM, I recognize the importance of establishing the positive and productive leadership necessary for the Mission to achieve its goals. If confirmed, I will build a relationship of trust with my primary advisor—the Deputy Chief of Mission. As the Embassy's leadership team, I envision a partnership focused on ensuring every member of our Mission has the tools and support they need to protect Americans and advance American interests in Côte d'Ivoire. I will prioritize communication, teamwork, and ensure my Deputy Chief of Mission is prepared to serve as Chargé d'affaires, a.i. as required.

Question. If confirmed, what leadership responsibilities do you intend to entrust to your Deputy Chief of Mission?

Answer. If confirmed, I intend to entrust my Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM) with the responsibilities akin to those of a Chief Operating Officer (COO). I will model the Embassy Front Office on Department bureaus, building on best practices in which the Assistant Secretary functions as Chief Executive Officer and the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary as COO. I will entrust the DCM to manage the effective operations of the Embassy. To ensure the entire Mission is engaged in crisis preparedness and emergency planning, I will entrust the DCM to chair the interagency Emergency Action Committee to make considered recommendations on the safety and security of our Embassy and all Americans in Côte d'Ivoire. While both the DCM and I will have responsibility for coaching and mentoring the Embassy Team, if confirmed, I will also ask the DCM to play the primary role in building on existing initiatives to create an inclusive, safe culture for our community. It will be my pri-

ority to ensure my DCM feels empowered to strengthen management controls and oversight on all aspects of Embassy operations so that we are deploying taxpayer resources to the greatest effect.

Question. In order to create and continue employee excellence at the Department, accurate and direct employee evaluation reports (EERs) for Foreign Service Officers are imperative, though often lacking. Do you believe that it is important to provide employees with accurate, constructive feedback on their performances in order to encourage improvement and reward those who most succeeded in their roles?

Answer. Yes. I believe that providing accurate and constructive feedback is important, both through formal evaluations and continuously as we carry out our mission. This kind of dialogue is important both for Locally Engaged Staff and U.S. Direct Hire employees, and I hope to build that culture in Abidjan. I will ensure that each Foreign Service Officer has accurate and timely EERs and that all staff have the appropriate evaluations of their performance. I will require all managers to offer direct feedback about the performance of their staff, listening actively to what their team needs to contribute more to priority embassy goals. If confirmed, I fully intend to reward those who succeed in their roles in the mission, providing an incentive for all to achieve their work objectives.

Question. If confirmed, would you support and encourage clear, accurate, and direct feedback to employees in order to improve performance and reward high achievers?

Answer. Yes. I would support and encourage clear, accurate, and direct feedback to employees to improve performance and reward high achievers. I also want employees to feel comfortable taking calculated risks and pursuing innovative approaches to advancing our policy. This requires honest dialogue and a culture of trust between employees and supervisors. I intend to promote this approach, if confirmed.

Question. It is imperative that U.S. diplomats get outside of posts abroad to meet with local actors, including host government officials, non-government organizations, and fellow foreign diplomats stationed in Côte d'Ivoire. In your opinion, do U.S. diplomats get outside of our embassy walls enough to accomplish fully their missions?

Answer. In my experience, it is imperative that U.S. diplomats leave their office space and meet business, civil society, development, media, and government leaders in the country in which they work. If confirmed, I will compel my staff to work safely and responsibly in the economic capital of Abidjan, and throughout Côte d'Ivoire, to achieve our foreign policy goals. For example, to fulfill their roles in technical and financial oversight of USG funds, it is critical for Embassy staff to regularly engage with field-level beneficiaries and implementing partners. As such, the management, logistical, and security support to facilitate this field presence will be among my priorities. Throughout my career I have valued, both personally and professionally, the relationships I have fostered outside the office to achieve Mission goals. Therefore, I also intend to travel throughout Côte d'Ivoire, inviting members of the mission team across sections to join me, to ensure that the United States is visible outside of Abidjan.

Question. How do you intend to improve the ability of U.S. diplomats to better access all local populations?

Answer. While the COVID–19 pandemic has limited our ability to meet local populations in person, face-to-face contact is vital to the successful advancement of U.S. policy goals in Côte d'Ivoire. If confirmed, I will listen to my team to understand what personnel, financial, or technological resources they need from the Department to carry out our mission effectively. I will advocate to obtain these resources to support engagement, including creative use of media platforms to amplify and sustain access and engagement with local populations.

Question. Public diplomacy is an important aspect of U.S. foreign policy efforts. What is the public diplomacy environment like in Côte d'Ivoire?

Answer. The population in Côte d'Ivoire is generally receptive to U.S. messaging, and our team continues developing creative ways to reach all populations in the country. Challenges include the COVID–19 pandemic, poor transportation options, and greater insecurity in certain parts of the country. Populations outside of the economic capital of Abidjan feel isolated and marginalized. As such, I understand the Public Diplomacy team in Côte d'Ivoire is focused on programming in remote areas, both at our American Spaces in the northern parts of the country and by optimizing travel by all Mission members to different regions of Côte d'Ivoire. I understand the team also creatively employs technology to reach populations that are not easily ac-

cessible in person. As in many other parts of the world, our Mission team is attentive to activity in the public diplomacy arena from global competitors.

Question. What public diplomacy challenges do U.S. diplomats face there?

Answer. The COVID–19 pandemic has made getting out of the office for Public Diplomacy work very challenging, but I understand Mission members have been traveling more widely in recent months as conditions in Côte d'Ivoire have improved. Poor transportation infrastructure and security concerns in the country make travel even more of an undertaking, but Mission members understand it is critical to get outside the walls of the Embassy to perform public diplomacy work effectively. I understand the Country Team coordinates very well together to make sure Mission members can move throughout Côte d'Ivoire to ensure outreach, including to marginalized communities. The media environment in the country continues to develop positively, and our team is actively engaged in supporting those efforts to ensure free and equal access to information for all persons in Côte d'Ivoire. It is critical to link life-saving interventions, such as those supported by PEPFAR and the Global Health Security Agenda, with Public Diplomacy to ensure appropriate communication of USG funding impact. I will encourage coordination and communication among sections such that the Public Affairs Office is well-positioned to disseminate the myriad examples of fruitful USG collaboration in Côte d'Ivoire. If confirmed, I will encourage and support all members of the Mission to take part in public diplomacy to engage Ivoirians across sectors and regions.

Question. How do you balance the importance of Main State versus the in-country mission when it comes to tailoring public diplomacy messages for foreign audiences?

Answer. I believe it is critical for our public diplomacy team to remain in close touch with colleagues at the State Department in Washington, balancing the requirements and guidance from Washington with the priorities 'in the field' to tailor messaging to local realities. Our Public Diplomacy teams must develop and maintain excellent relationships with colleagues in Washington and across the region in order to ensure that messaging is coordinated and that there are no surprises on either side. I understand our team in Côte d'Ivoire works hard with Washington and regional colleagues to ensure synchronized and accurate messaging around all of the U.S. Government's work.

Question. "Anomalous health incidents," commonly referred to as "Havana Syndrome," have been debilitating and sidelining U.S. diplomats around the world for years. They have caused serious, negative consequences for U.S. diplomacy, yet many believe that the Department is not doing enough to care for, protect, and communicate to its personnel.

- If confirmed, do you commit to taking this threat seriously?

Answer. Yes, I commit to addressing this threat. I am deeply troubled by potential anomalous health incidents that have affected U.S. Government personnel and their family members. Serving one's country overseas should not come at the cost of one's health. I agree that such incidents may pose a threat to the well-being of U.S. personnel and must be taken extremely seriously. I understand Embassy Abidjan has put in place standard operating procedures and communicated them widely to the mission community so action can be taken swiftly and seamlessly if any AHIs are reported. If confirmed, the health, safety, and security of Embassy staff, their family members, and all those supporting the mission will be my highest priority.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to talking as openly as you can to Mission Abidjan personnel?

Answer. If confirmed, I am committed to regularly share new information on this issue consistent with ensuring the integrity of ongoing investigations. I commit to ensuring that our staff have the resources they need to remain safe and resilient in the face of these challenges.

Human Rights and International Organizations

Question. In the State Department's 2021 Report on Human Rights, Côte d'Ivoire is noted for significant human rights issues including arbitrary killings; harsh or life-threatening prison conditions; arbitrary arrests; politically motived reprisals; problems with an independent judiciary, restrictions on freedoms of expression; corruption; and more.

- If confirmed, how would you work with the host government to address these issues?

Answer. If confirmed, I am committed to working with the Government of Côte d'Ivoire to address human rights issues by directly supporting and advocating on be-

half of both local civil society organizations and international human rights organizations. Furthermore, the United States has called on the Government of Côte d'Ivoire to respect the human rights of all individuals in Côte d'Ivoire, notably freedoms of expression and peaceful assembly, and to ensure that all those arrested are afforded fair trials. If confirmed, I will continue to speak out for democratic pluralism, rule of law, and respect for human rights.

Question. What steps could you take with prison authorities of the state to improve life-threatening prison conditions?

Answer. There are several programs from the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) that facilitate the development and improvement of correctional systems. If confirmed, I intend to thoroughly review our current programs and consider others that will support the transformation of Côte d'Ivoire's prison systems.

Question. The report additionally notes that within prisons, human rights groups report that security officers subject prisoners to abuse such as denial of needed medicine and medical attention, electric shock, and beatings. Authorities acknowledge that abuse might happen and go unreported due to prisoners' fear of reprisal, and impunity was a problem with security forces.

- How could you engage with security officials to improve upon reporting practices to address prisoner abuse?

Answer. While INL programs are designed to create accountability with correctional system leadership, I understand there are ongoing Embassy efforts to increase engagement with Government of Côte d'Ivoire leadership to increase familiarity with policies and practices that are consistent with international human rights law.

In the State Department's 2022 Report on Trafficking in Persons, Côte d'Ivoire is currently Tier 2, showing efforts to improve towards meeting minimum requirements to eliminate trafficking. However, the Government is lacking in key areas such as a lack of law enforcement training to investigate and identify victims, national anti-trafficking committee meetings did not meet or coordinate anti-trafficking activities, and the Government did not allocate a dedicated budget for the anti-trafficking committee for the third year in a row.

Question. If confirmed, how will you work with government officials to implement a specialized system of training to develop anti-trafficking law enforcement officers?

Answer. Noting that Côte d'Ivoire acknowledges the problem of human trafficking and has demonstrated political will to combat it, with several high-profile events, I am committed to supporting their efforts to combat this devastating practice.

Question. What steps would you take to encourage the host government to address the lack of resources allocated to the anti-trafficking committee in order to facilitate more operational capacity?

Answer. If confirmed, I will continue to advocate for increased Government of Côte d'Ivoire investment in its anti-trafficking committee. Simultaneously, I commit to supporting the growth and development of anti-trafficking civil society organizations (CSOs). Through advocacy to the Government of Côte d'Ivoire and creative efforts to spotlight effective Ivorian anti-trafficking CSOs, our Embassy will continue to support awareness and action to combat trafficking. I will encourage expanded partnership with the anti-trafficking committee and other institutions committed to address this scourge.

Question. Côte d'Ivoire has constitutional provisions for freedom of religious belief and prohibition of religious discrimination, as well as emphasizing religious tolerance as fundamental to the nation's unity. Religious leaders and local law enforcement partner with subnational governmental groups to try to prevent violent extremism and protect communities from the growing threat of terrorism in the Sahel region.

- If confirmed, how could you work with these groups to continue to develop relations that counter violent extremism in the region?

Answer. Faith-based communities have a powerful role to play in supporting democratic institutions, advancing human rights, and promoting peace. If confirmed, I will work to support these efforts through positive U.S. messaging, direct support for cooperation and coordination between these parties, and funding for innovative anti-extremism strategies. I will continue my predecessor's ongoing engagement with religious leaders across faith communities to ensure open communication about the threat of violent extremism, respect for human rights, and global health.

Question. Embassy officials have met with the Government to discuss the state of religious freedom and tolerance to gather insight on levels of violence or discrimination and promote cooperation amongst Christian and Muslim groups.

- What is your assessment of the state of religious tolerance in the country?

Answer. The constitution provides for freedom of religious belief and worship, consistent with law and order, and prohibits religious discrimination. It emphasizes that religious tolerance is fundamental to the nation's unity, peace, reconciliation, and social cohesion and forbids speech that encourages religious hatred. Religious leaders regularly come together for issues related to social cohesion and public health. For example, they partnered with local law enforcement and subnational government leadership on security matters to prevent violent extremism and protect their communities from the growing terrorist threat emanating from the Sahel.

Question. How could you continue to build upon these discussions with the host government to further improve religious tolerance?

Answer. If confirmed, I would continue our long history of engaging at all levels of Embassy Abidjan with various religious communities to demonstrate U.S. support for religious tolerance. I will also use public diplomacy, including around religious holidays, to demonstrate respect for all faiths.

Question. The Office of Multilateral Strategy and Personnel (MSP) in the State Department's bureau of International Organizations is leading a whole-of-government effort to identify, recruit, and install qualified, independent personnel at the U.N., including in elections for specialized bodies like the International Telecommunications Union (ITU). There is an American candidate, Doreen Bogdan-Martin, who if elected would be the first American and first woman to lead the ITU. She is in a tough race that will require early, consistent engagement across capitals and within the U.N. member states.

- If confirmed, do you commit to demarching the Côte d'Ivoire Government and any other counterparts necessary to encourage their support of Ms. Bogdan-Martin?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to demarching the Government of Côte d'Ivoire and others in support of Ms. Bogdan-Martin. It is vital that we continue to engage on behalf of American candidates in multilateral institutions.

Question. If confirmed, how can you work with the International Organizations (IO) bureau and other stakeholders to identify, recruit, and install qualified Americans in positions like the Junior Program Officer (JPO) program at the U.N.?

Answer. I have always encouraged Americans of all backgrounds to pursue work in the international community, recruiting new members of the U.S. Foreign Service while also encouraging opportunities to serve in the U.N. and in other international organizations. If confirmed, I will continue to recruit and mentor to retain excellent officers in our unique careers. I have extensive experience coordinating with the IO Bureau to advocate for U.S. candidates in senior positions in the U.N. and its specialized agencies. At the U.S. Mission to the African Union, we used this multilateral platform to advocate for U.S. policy priorities and American candidates. If confirmed, I will continue to coordinate with the IO Bureau to encourage Americans to secure more opportunities at every level of the U.N. and its specialized agencies. I will also continue to recruit Americans to serve internationally, including through the U.N. Junior Program Officer program, to have more American leaders in these organizations that are vital to advancing U.S. interests.

Question. Côte d'Ivoire has a low rate of voting coincidence with the U.S. in the U.N. General Assembly and in the Security Council. What is your assessment of this issue?

Answer. Although African states find themselves in a difficult situation when it comes to voting patterns, this is a problematic trend that must be addressed through relationship building, increased bilateral ties, and effective short- and long-term messaging. Côte d'Ivoire was one of very few African countries to vote at least three times with the United States on Russia's invasion of Ukraine, demonstrating courage and conviction.

Question. If confirmed, what concrete actions can you take to engage with the Government on anticipated votes in the U.N. system that would increase their voting coincidence with the U.S.?

Answer. If confirmed, I will engage the Government of Côte d'Ivoire to deepen our partnership on multilateral priorities, including upcoming votes in the U.N. system. I will foster initiatives designed to improve trust and relationships between the Gov-

ernment of Côte d'Ivoire and U.S. leadership in Abidjan, New York, and Washington, D.C.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO JESSICA DAVIS BA BY SENATOR MARCO RUBIO

Question. In May, Secretary Blinken said that the People's Republic of China is the "only country with both the intent to reshape the international order and, increasingly, the economic, diplomatic, military, and technological power to do it." The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) clearly holds all the reins of power in the People's Republic of China and has used this power to commit genocide in Xinjiang, flood our communities with fentanyl, and emit by far the largest quantity of greenhouse gases. With their absolute control of Chinese society and industry, the CCP could stop all of these destructive actions tomorrow if they so choose.

- Is the Chinese Communist Party a threat to the United States?

Answer. Certain activities by the People's Republic of China (PRC) and Chinese Communist Party (CCP) represent a challenge to U.S. economic, political, and security interests globally and on the African continent. The PRC has used its influence abroad in ways that undermine laws, agreements, and institutions which has the effect of undermining rule of law and democratic principles. Our engagement with Africa is neither influenced by, nor a reaction to, China or any other third party. The U.S. Strategy Toward Africa recognizes the tremendous opportunities that exist to advance shared interests alongside our African partners. Secretary Blinken said on May 26, we will invest, align, and compete with the PRC to defend our interests and build our vision for the future. If confirmed, I will invest in our partnership with Côte d'Ivoire; align our concerns, including by highlighting the risks associated with PRC engagement that could impact Côte d'Ivoire's security, democracy, and sovereignty and U.S. interests. I will ensure that our vision of regional security and prosperity provides the basis for a positive U.S.-Côte d'Ivoire partnership that competes successfully with the type of relationship offered by the PRC.

Question. Does the Chinese Communist Party undertake any activities that are beneficial to U.S. interests?

Answer. We are prepared to work together with the People's Republic of China (PRC) where our interests intersect, in Côte d'Ivoire and elsewhere, and where it is essential for global peace and prosperity. Issues like climate change, the global drug trade, and COVID–19 directly threaten our prosperity and security, and we need to work with the PRC—just as much as the PRC needs to work with us—to solve these problems without borders. This is especially true in Côte d'Ivoire.

Question. If confirmed, will you approve any joint activity with organizations or representatives from the People's Republic of China in Côte d'Ivoire?

Answer. If confirmed, I am prepared to work together with the People's Republic of China (PRC) where our interests intersect in Côte d'Ivoire and remain in line with core U.S. values, including where it is essential for global peace and prosperity. Issues like climate change, the global drug trade, and COVID–19 directly threaten our prosperity and security, and we need to work with the PRC—just as much as the PRC needs to work with us—to solve these problems without borders. As Secretary Blinken has said, we cannot allow the disagreements that divide us stop us from moving forward on the priorities that demand that we work together, for the good of our people and for the good of the world.

Question. Côte d'Ivoire, like other African countries, is dependent on food imports from Russia and Ukraine. While the United States has diligently worked to release Ukrainian grain through means other than Black Sea ports currently under Russian attack, Côte d'Ivoire and other countries are struggling with the impact of reduced food resources. Côte d'Ivoire also uses Chinese technology for digital surveillance, raising human rights concerns.

- How do you assess Côte d'Ivoire's efforts to secure reliable sources of food for its people?

Answer. Ivoirian authorities have imposed a set of temporary measures to control rising living costs and improve food security, including price ceilings on staple foods and a suspension of custom duties on wheat imports. These measures will mostly benefit the poorest Ivoirians, who spend a larger share of their incomes on essential goods. Also, the above actions will enable Côte d'Ivoire to source food from different places; however, with commodity prices expected to remain high into 2023, further

measures by the government to respond to the rising cost of food and inflation may be necessary.

Question. How would you highlight to Côte d'Ivoire's Government the dangers of using Chinese technology?

Answer. If confirmed, I will emphasize American technology and other options for the Government of Côte d'Ivoire to consider as it expands its infrastructure to meet the needs of the Ivoirian people. We know the People's Republic of China is determined to become the world's technology leader by any means necessary and has a well-resourced and comprehensive plan to achieve that ambition. The State Department is working with allies and partners to build secure, resilient, and diverse supply chains; to protect sensitive technologies, data, and critical infrastructure; and to ensure strategic competitors cannot exploit our own innovative ecosystems to gain military or national security advantage.

Question. What would be the impact to the United States of a prolonged food security crisis in Côte d'Ivoire and the rest of sub-Saharan Africa?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with public and private sector partners and across U.S. Government agencies to help Côte d'Ivoire avert a prolonged food security crisis. Côte d'Ivoire has been experiencing a level of political stability for the past decade that has enabled the country to make great economic progress and effectively address the country's once daunting food insecurity and malnutrition issues. A prolonged food security crisis could result in loss of life and productivity and endanger Côte d'Ivoire's stability, making it more vulnerable to insecurity, democratic backsliding, and malign influence. A food security crisis would result in an increased need for humanitarian and development assistance, which could then put a higher burden on the United States as one of the Côte d'Ivoire's most important partners to advance sustainable development goals. Likewise, much of the rest of Sub-Saharan Africa could see similar struggles with a prolonged food security crisis precipitating more instability in the region and loss of previous food security and nutrition gains. A result could be increased needs for humanitarian assistance as well as other unforeseen consequences of increased food security-related instability.

Question. If confirmed, what will you do to ensure that Côte d'Ivoire reduces its dependence on Russia for food and fertilizer so that it is more resilient to food shocks in the future?

Answer. If confirmed, I will prioritize partnerships to strengthen the agricultural sector that supports the livelihoods of millions of Ivoirians. Investments by the United States through initiatives like the McGovern-Dole school program in Côte d'Ivoire, which feeds over 125,000 children in rural northern areas every day, help reduce dependence on Russia. Resiliency to food shocks begins with consistent programming that meets essential food security needs and draws from a state's agricultural strengths. If confirmed, I will seek to develop and expand programs that harness and build upon Côte d'Ivoire's most traditional food crops, such as yam, cassava, and plantains, that are geared towards increasing domestic food production and security. Côte d'Ivoire has tremendous potential to become a net food exporter, and I will work to identify productive partnership opportunities to further the United States' interests.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO JESSICA DAVIS BA BY SENATOR TODD YOUNG

Question. The State Department has a number of posts in its Bureau of African Affairs that are classified as "historically difficult to staff"; if confirmed, how would you engage the Foreign Service workforce to encourage qualified individuals to serve in Abidjan or other posts in Africa?

Answer. I believe that the best work comes from well-resourced teams that support one another towards achieving common goals and advancing U.S. policies. Embassy Abidjan has experienced rapid growth in the last two years, presenting additional challenges as the post also continues to grapple with the COVID–19 pandemic. If confirmed, I will work across the interagency and with Washington to ensure that future growth meets U.S. strategic objectives and can be supported effectively by post's management platform.

The Bureau of African affairs continues to engage with the Department at the highest levels to improve incentives for working at our most difficult posts, including Abidjan. Throughout my State Department career, I have valued and created

a diverse and inclusive work environment where every member of our team has the opportunities to contribute to our shared goals. If confirmed, I will work with my colleagues in Abidjan and Washington to nourish such an environment and recruit from a diverse and inclusive talent pool—the best that the State Department has to offer. If confirmed, I will continue to support efforts to ensure meaningful family employment at Embassy Abidjan, which helps with recruitment, morale, and to close staffing gaps at this historically difficult to staff post.

Question. With Côte d'Ivoire as a signatory to Beijing's Belt and Road initiative, how do you see the trade relationship evolving between Beijing and Abidjan?

Answer. If confirmed, one of my highest priorities will be to deepen the trade relationship between the United States and Côte d'Ivoire. The role of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in Côte d'Ivoire's economy is growing and the Government of Côte d'Ivoire welcomes investment, including from the PRC. Côte d'Ivoire imports nearly $2.3 billion worth of PRC goods a year but exports only about $576 million in Ivoirian goods to the PRC, mostly raw rubber. Ivoirian complaints regarding PRC-Côte d'Ivoire trade mainly concern the quality of PRC workmanship and the lack of technology transfer. In addition, there is evidence that increased Chinese activity has led to a greater demand for trafficked animals. The Ivoirians recently rejected a PRC overture to begin negotiations on a Free Trade Agreement (FTA), as officials worried it would disturb Côte d'Ivoire's relationship with ECOWAS. I will work with our interagency team and Washington to leverage U.S. Government tools to support American companies to demonstrate best practices and to make trade with the United States more attractive than our competitors.

President Ouattara and his ministers openly welcome American investment. They remain very pro-American but are pragmatic considering the country's massive need for foreign direct investment (FDI), resulting in an open-for-business attitude towards the PRC and others. If confirmed, I will continue to support the expansion of U.S. investment in Côte d'Ivoire to provide an alternative to PRC offers.

Question. What kinds of opportunities and potential do you see for American companies within the Ivoirian private sector, and where should we first focus our efforts?

Answer. The Government of Côte d'Ivoire is eager for more U.S. private sector investment. With total bilateral trade in 2021 almost $1.6 billion, Côte d'Ivoire is currently the United States' largest francophone Africa trading partner, and the United States is Côte d'Ivoire's fifth largest trading partner. The most promising areas for U.S. investment are currently in energy, including renewables, construction equipment and material, agro-processing, agricultural services and products, and telecommunication equipment and services.

Opportunities in the energy sector are abundant. Côte d'Ivoire has oil and gas reserves and has also committed to increase renewable energy generation to 42 percent by 2030. The Ivoirian Government is also focused on expanding infrastructure projects to make the country's economic growth more inclusive and not focused on the Abidjan area in the South. Finally, Côte d'Ivoire's leadership is anxious to improve the value chain capabilities for the country's massive output of agricultural products. The U.S. Government can use tools such as Prosper Africa to support U.S. and Ivoirian businesses in this area. Secretary Blinken met with Ivoirian Prime Minister Patrick Achi in March 2022 to discuss ways in which the United States and Côte d'Ivoire can strengthen the bilateral economic partnership. If confirmed, I will work closely with private sector partners and the Government of Côte d'Ivoire to expand opportunities for U.S. private investment.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO JESSICA DAVIS BA BY SENATOR MIKE ROUNDS

Question. What does Côte d'Ivoire need to do to prevent the spread of violent extremism within its borders? What tools and lessons of the Global Fragility Act will you draw on to help the Ivoirian Government and society become resilient in the face of these challenges?

Answer. Côte d'Ivoire must take a holistic approach to prevent the spread of violent extremism. Security investments alone are insufficient. Such an approach should include targeted investments in democratic governance, private sector solutions, and social services, as well as in the security sector. Côte d'Ivoire's top leaders have expressed a commitment to values such as accountability, democratic governance, social peace, and earning the support of the population, to withstand the

strains imposed by violent extremism spreading from the country's northern neighbors, especially Mali and Burkina Faso. Côte d'Ivoire has taken progressive steps to invest in the north through new social programs focused on youth, major infrastructure development, and expanding the presence of security forces in at-risk areas for terrorist attacks.

If confirmed, I will work with various Ivoirian Government and civil society stakeholders to ensure that the U.S. Strategy to Prevent Conflict and Promote Stability (SPCPS), under the Global Fragility Act, is aligned with Côte d'Ivoire's National Development Plan and facilitates meaningful government-community cooperation. Specifically, the tools offered by the SPCPS can reinforce local and national early warning systems and action plans to prevent the spread of violent extremism; support existing community-led platforms, such as civilian-military committees to foster trust between marginalized communities and security forces; professionalize law enforcement and other government officials to engender trust with the communities they serve; and strengthen legal capabilities to hold violent extremist actors accountable.

If confirmed, I will encourage the Government to continue these efforts and to explore opportunities, including with the private sector, for partnerships to expand services and livelihoods. I will lead our interagency team in Abidjan to use all of our diplomatic, development, and defense tools to support the Government's efforts to build resilience to violent extremism in the northern region and throughout the country.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO HON. LUCY TAMLYN BY SENATOR ROBERT MENENDEZ

Question. Is DRC on track to hold elections in 2023 as required?

Answer. Under prevailing conditions, there is no reason why free and fair elections cannot be held as scheduled in December 2023 in accordance with the DRC's constitutional deadline. Some important steps have been taken, but Congolese officials across the country will have to accelerate preparations—both technical and political—over the next several months to ensure the elections are free and fair including in eastern DRC.

The DRC conducted gubernatorial elections in May in 14 of 26 provinces, which were largely peaceful and included accredited national and international observers, including U.S. Embassy staff and representatives from other diplomatic missions. This election was an encouraging, if limited, sign for the ability of DRC authorities to conduct elections in December 2023. In June, the DRC parliament adopted revisions to the DRC's 2006 electoral law, but measures aimed at ensuring transparency in 2023 and preventing the irregularities that marred previous election cycles failed to pass. Key issues in the process ahead include voter registration, the identification of the voting centers, publication of the electoral calendar, the appropriation and release of an adequate budget, and invitation and accreditation of electoral observers. While there is no doubt that greater progress needs to be made, particularly on political measures, there is still time for free and fair elections to be held.

Question. What is the U.S. doing to support timely, credible, transparent, and peaceful elections in DRC in 2023?

Answer. One of the Administration's top policy priorities in the DRC is to support long-term stability through free and fair elections. The Department continues to press the DRC Government and National Independent Electoral Commission (CENI) to adhere to the planned electoral timeline, to maximize opportunities to be transparent on electoral processes and outcomes, and to ensure an open political environment for the Congolese people to express their views peacefully. Assistant Secretary for African Affairs Molly Phee and Acting Assistant Secretary for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL) Lisa Peterson both stressed this message in meetings with CENI President Denis Kadima during a visit to Washington, D.C. in late February.

We are employing the full range of foreign policy tools in support of the elections in 2023. This includes international pressure in coordination with European and African partners as well as the U.N.; public messaging; diplomatic engagement, including senior-level visits; and technical assistance to support a transparent and credible process. DRL is actively expanding its suite of human rights and democracy programs in the DRC to lay the groundwork for increased citizen participation in and understanding of the electoral process. Total U.S. Government support for the elections and election observation is over $13 million.

Question. How are these activities different from what we did in 2018, when U.S. support for domestic election observers and other election support activity did not result in a timely, transparent, or credible process?

Answer. Unlike in 2018, President Tshisekedi and his top aides have publicly committed to conducting free and fair elections in accordance with constitutional deadlines. Although there are deficiencies, the current President of the National Independent Electoral Commission (CENI) Denis Kadima has also committed to well-managed elections in 2023 that are free and fair.

Embassy Kinshasa and other U.S. representatives have consistently messaged that the United States expects the DRC to conduct elections in accordance with constitutional deadlines that are free and fair and that reflect the will of the Congolese people. The United States is working alongside other likeminded countries to ensure a consistent message on the importance of these elections to help consolidate DRC's democratic transition. USAID is providing technical support to CENI, countering disinformation, and improving access to accurate information about electoral processes, and supporting civil society led civic and voter education. USAID is also readying plans to assist independent domestic and international observation efforts to improve confidence in the integrity of the outcomes. The United States has also encouraged President Tshisekedi to make a formal request to the United Nations to provide logistical and technical support to the elections.

Question. Will you commit to briefing the committee on your election strategy 90 days after arriving at Post, if confirmed?

Answer. Yes, I will work with the Bureau of Legislative Affairs to keep the committee apprised of developments.

Question. Under former President Kabila, the DRC was characterized by human rights abuses, corruption, and impunity. President Tshisekedi vowed to address these issues. Three years later, however, several senior military officers responsible for gross violations of human rights remain at their posts and corruption again appears rampant.

Has the human rights situation and fight against corruption and impunity improved since the 2018 elections?

Answer. President Tshisekedi has taken steps to promote respect for human rights. Since the beginning of his term, he has freed Kabila-era political prisoners, promoted respect for human rights, including for people living with disabilities and vulnerable persons, and affirmed the freedom of peaceful assembly. In July 2022, the Government of the DRC promulgated a new law on the protection of Indigenous Peoples' rights. In 2020, the DRC achieved the ranking of Tier 2 Watch List in the annual Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report after making key achievements that year. Despite enormous institutional hurdles, including limited awareness of TIP and an ineffective judicial system, DRC's law enforcement and victim protection authorities have secured important victories in the fight against human trafficking. In the past two years, the Government broke up a transnational child trafficking ring, convicted perpetrators of sex trafficking in Kinshasa, and launched a national TIP awareness campaign. The Congolese military (FARDC) has taken significant and successful strides to eliminate the recruitment and use of children in its ranks.

Significant challenges do remain in the DRC, but unlike during the Kabila era, the United States is the Tshisekedi administration's partner of choice, and it is aware that our partnership relies on respect for human rights.

Question. What actions will you take if confirmed to make it clear to the DRC Government that respect for human rights and the rule of law are essential for DRC's future and DRC's ability to partner with the U.S. and U.S. companies looking to invest in DRC?

Answer. If confirmed, advancing the protection of human rights and the rule of law would be among my highest priorities. We know that allegations of human rights violations and abuses and corruption eat away at any prospects for the DRC to emerge as a prosperous and stable country. Respect for human rights and a strong focus on anti-corruption efforts are in the DRC's interest. Embassy Kinshasa has consistently stressed the importance of respecting human rights, including freedom of expression (including for members of the press) and the right of peaceful assembly. For eastern DRC especially, the Embassy has continually and strongly urged armed groups and Congolese security forces to end all human rights violations and abuses, end all attacks on civilians, and ensure that those responsible for such acts be held accountable. The United States and the DRC also held its first bilateral Human Rights Dialogue in 2021. If confirmed, I would continue partnering closely with the DRC Government to make progress on these key issues.

Question. Preserving what is left of the Congo forest basin is essential for the health of our planet. The DRC Government has previously emerged as a leader in Africa on preservation of the environment. In July, however, the DRC Government announced its intention to sell 30 oil blocks in forested areas. If drilling occurs in these areas, it could release disastrous amounts of carbon into the atmosphere. Until recently the DRC Government appeared committed to preserving the environment and the Congo forest basin which is home to rainforest, peat bogs, and carbon sinks essential for the health of the planet. In July however the DRC Government's policy seemed to shift with the announcement of the sale of 30 oil and gas prospecting blocks throughout the rainforest.

• How do you explain this shift?

Answer. The DRC Government is attempting to balance achieving long-term global climate goals such as their COP26 commitments with addressing immediate pressing development needs including poverty and hunger. Embassy Kinshasa is discussing the auction of the oil and gas prospecting blocks with the Ministry of Hydrocarbons, the Ministry of the Environment, and the Presidency, urging that verifiable environmental impact assessments be conducted prior to any oil exploration. In the past, the Government has acknowledged the potential for oil in these sensitive areas but has foregone plans to exploit potential reserves in the interest of the environment. Embassy Kinshasa is hoping to partner with the DRC to pursue alternative development pathways that help secure improved livelihoods for the Congolese people and help DRC meet its climate and environmental commitments.

Question. If confirmed, what will you do to work with the Congolese to balance the necessary preservation of what is left of Congo Forest basin and the DRC's economic development objectives and needs?

Answer. In February 2021, in line with President Biden's prioritization of combatting the climate crisis, the U.S.-DRC Privileged Partnership for Peace and Prosperity added "Preservation of the Environment" to its core pillars. To advance his environmental agenda, President Tshisekedi elevated the position of Minister of the Environment and Sustainable Development to one of four Vice-Prime Minister positions in the cabinet. To this role he appointed Eve Bazaiba, an experienced activist and politician.

The DRC could contribute significantly to the fight against climate change if it follows President Tshisekedi's declared intention to take bold steps to combat deforestation and strengthen environmental protections. The DRC is home to 47 percent of Africa's tropical rainforests. The U.S. Government has a wide range of programs across agencies to support both the necessary conservation of the Congo Basin forest and the DRC's economic development objectives and needs. A few examples include the SilvaCarbon program, jointly funded with the Department of State and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and implemented by the U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Geological Survey, and other agencies which mobilizes private sector finance for activities aligned with forest conservation and restoration, including through carbon markets and results-based payments programs; USAID's Central African Regional Program for the Environment (CARPE) that focuses on using a people-centered approach to biodiversity and habitat protection, using protected areas (PAs) as anchors for sustainable development, fostering public private partnerships (PPPs) for PA management, and leveraging natural capital to promote green economies; and the Public-Private Alliance for Responsible Minerals Trade (PPA), a multi-stakeholder forum created in 2011 to support the creation of conflict-free supply chains from the DRC/Great Lakes region. The United States also engages with other like-minded donor countries through the Congo Basin Forest Partnership, which helps coordinate conservation and sustainable management of Congo Basin forest ecosystems.

If confirmed, I will leverage these programs and others to work with the Congolese to balance the necessary preservation of sensitive areas of the Congo Forest basin and the DRC's economic development objectives and needs.

Question. The recent re-emergence of the M23 rebel group has significantly destabilized eastern DRC. In June, the U.N. peacekeeping mission (MONUSCO) reported that the M23 is surprisingly well armed and may outgun U.N. peacekeepers. U.N. experts reported that Rwandan troops are operating alongside M23 inside DRC. In addition to executing civilians and displacing tens of thousands, the group has shot down a U.N. helicopter, killing U.N. troops. MONUSCO's inability to effectively contain M23 has heightened tensions between MONUSCO, the Congolese people and the Congolese Government resulting in the tragic deaths of civilians and U.N. peacekeepers.

- The last time M23 emerged in DRC, in 2012, they did so with Rwandan support. Do you agree that Rwandan support for M23 or the presence of Rwandan troops inside DRC is unacceptable?

Answer. Yes.

Question. If confirmed, should the United States speak out publicly against Rwanda's support for the M23 and the presence of Rwandan troops in DRC?

Answer. Yes.

Question. What steps is the Administration taking to reduce tensions between MONUSCO and the Congolese, and bolster MONUSCO's effectiveness with regard to combatting armed groups and providing civilian protection?

Answer. I am deeply concerned that recent anti-MONUSCO protests have turned violent and included attacks on MONUSCO facilities and resulted in peacekeeper and protester casualties. At the same time, I was appalled by the July 31 shooting of civilians by peacekeepers in Kasindi and welcomed the Secretary-General's swift response and strong statement calling for accountability. MONUSCO is by no means perfect, but it is an essential part of creating conditions for peace in eastern DRC.

For decades, the people of eastern DRC have suffered violence and insecurity, primarily perpetrated in recent years by armed groups and sometimes by DRC's own security forces. Corrupt networks have profited from the illicit exploitation of the region's natural resources. Currently, the M23 armed group with reported backing by the Government of Rwanda is controlling territory near the Uganda border and killing civilians. Addressing the current crisis, and the long-standing underlying issues including the role of DRC's neighbors, is a priority for the State Department. The State Department has maintained steady engagement with senior host nation officials as well as key partners to encourage de-escalation of regional tensions, the termination of the M23 offensive, and progress on the demobilization of all armed groups. Secretary Blinken visited Kinshasa August 9-10 and Kigali August 10-11, following Ambassador Thomas-Greenfield's travel August 4-5 to Uganda. The Bureau of African Affairs' Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary Massinga discussed this issue in depth with the Foreign Ministers of the DRC, Rwanda, and Angola at the African Union (AU) mid-year coordination meeting in Lusaka from July 17-18. Our key message is reinforcing the need to respect the DRC's territorial integrity and to terminate any proxy support to armed groups on all sides. The United States is supportive of the African-led mediation efforts, which have provided important venues for direct discussions among regional heads of state. If confirmed, I will work closely with Washington to ensure that our engagement in Bujumbura, Kampala, Kigali, and elsewhere is coordinated and responds to the regional dynamics that have long influenced the crisis.

MONUSCO has an important role to play in improving the situation. The U.N. Mission continues to carry out its mandate for the protection of civilians. If confirmed, I look forward to frequent interactions with MONUSCO leadership and close coordination with USUN as plans for the Mission's transition move forward.

Question. Will you commit to briefing the committee 30 days after you arrive at post on your assessment as to Rwandan presence in eastern Congo and its support for the M23 along with your recommendations for a set of diplomatic interventions to address such if confirmed?

Answer. Yes, I will work with the Bureau of Legislative Affairs to keep the committee apprised of developments.

Question. The DRC has vast critical mineral reserves, with reserves of cobalt, a necessary component of batteries. As we turn to new technologies like electric vehicles, which require batteries, to address the worsening climate crisis, we face new security risks as China controls significant parts of clean energy supply chain. I am especially concerned about critical minerals in countries like the DRC, as I outlined in a letter I sent to Under Secretary Fernandez back in January.

- What has State done to address the issues outlined in the letter I sent in January about concerns with Chinese monopolization of critical minerals in the DRC?

Answer. The Department shares your concerns regarding the issues identified in your letter, including the People's Republic of China's (PRC) concentrated influence over mining and processing of clean-energy minerals. In May 2021, President Tshisekedi announced his intention to review mining deals with the PRC that include unfavorable terms for the DRC. This is an ongoing process, and the United States has informed the DRC Government of our support for its decision to review contracts and pursue greater accountability in the sector. Economic development

should promote democratic governance, respect for human rights, and transparency. The United States is providing more than $30 million in assistance to help the DRC promote responsible and sustainable mining practices and is actively looking at new engagements in the sector.

To elevate bilateral diplomacy around critical minerals, the State Department has worked closely with other agencies and encouraged them to engage with the DRC. In the past year, high-level delegations from the National Security Council, Department of Labor, and Department of the Treasury have visited the DRC to engage on critical minerals. Additionally, during a visit to Washington, DC by DRC Minister of Mines Antoinette N'Samba Kalambayi in mid-March, Under Secretary of State for Economic Growth, Energy, and the Environment Jose Fernandez signed with the Minister a Memorandum of Understanding for the Department's Bureau of Energy Resources to support Congolese efforts to strengthen sector governance and predictability for investors and maximize benefits of mineral resource development for the Congolese people.

We echo the long-standing calls from African capitals that PRC actions must respect host country laws, particularly regarding human and labor rights, the rule of law, and protections for the environment. I am confident that, in a level playing field, U.S. companies will be a partner of choice for the DRC. By elevating environmental, social, and governance standards and advancing mining-sector reforms in key countries, we aim to reduce the advantage gained by PRC companies that benefit from lax standards. By focusing on the entire supply chain, from mining to refining and processing to end uses, as well as recycling, we provide a holistic approach to securing the critical minerals needed for the energy transition. Finally, through increased information sharing, attention to financing, and minerals-focused diplomacy and commercial engagement, we are taking a forward-looking rather than reactive approach to working with likeminded countries with collective interests toward countering PRC influence and meeting climate and sustainability goals.

Question. What are the most important actions you have taken in your career to date to support democracy and human rights? What has been the impact of your actions?

Answer. As Ambassador in Benin, I used my access to senior government officials to highlight growing limitations on freedom of expression, including for members of the press, and to advocate for a regulatory framework which would not disadvantage the independent media. As Ambassador in the Central African Republic, I worked closely with a group of like-minded countries and institutions to warn against efforts to amend the constitution prior to the 2020 elections which could have potentially extended the term of the incumbent president. As Chargé d'Affaires in Sudan, I repeatedly urged the highest authorities to release opposition leaders held under questionable detention terms, cease violence against protestors, and investigate allegations of gender-based violence. These actions made clear to the host country interlocutors the importance of respect for human rights and democracy for advancing our partnership with the country in question and sent a clear message to human rights defenders that we would stand with them.

Question. What issues are the most pressing challenges to democracy or democratic development in DRC? These challenges might include obstacles to participatory and accountable governance and institutions, rule of law, authentic political competition, civil society, human rights, and press freedom. Please be as specific as possible.

Answer. The most pressing challenge to democracy and democratic development in the DRC is the protracted insecurity in the East. It is the overriding concern of the DRC Government and public with increased calls from civil society for greater U.S. engagement. In May 2021, to deliver on his promise to restore security in eastern DRC, President Tshisekedi declared a "State of Siege"—effectively martial law—in two of the most troubled provinces, North Kivu and Ituri, installing military governors and ramping up Congolese military (FARDC) operations against ISIS-DRC and armed groups in the region. Reports of human rights violations and abuses have accompanied the State of Siege. The U.N. and human rights groups have documented continued violations including extrajudicial killings by FARDC and police while military governments have restricted civil society and political activists and prosecuted some for criticizing the State of Siege. Despite President Tshisekedi's efforts to pursue constructive relationships with eastern neighbors, the resurgence of the March 23 Movement (M23) armed group with reported backing by the Government of Rwanda has strained DRC-Rwanda relations to crisis levels. The U.N. Stabilization Mission in the DRC (MONUSCO) and other stakeholders' efforts have been insufficient to stem the persistent armed conflict. Amid growing tensions over

regional conflict, violent protests in late July have resulted in deaths of MONUSCO peacekeepers and demonstrators alike amid belated calls for calm from Congolese authorities.

Responsibility for organizing the presidential and parliamentary elections due by the end of 2023 falls on the DRC's National Independent Electoral Commission (CENI). Preparations are late in large part due to the delayed formation of a new CENI leadership team. A new CENI board took office in October 2021 led by President Denis Kadima. Since his appointment, Kadima has earned cautious praise from erstwhile opponents for frank and open communication and indications of independence, but broader concerns on CENI management and integrity persist. A revised electoral law promulgated in July includes slight improvements for transparency and gender; however, a series of broader proposed reforms were rejected by Tshisekedi's Sacred Union supermajority, further fanning opposition concerns about electoral process.

Question. What steps will you take—if confirmed—to support democracy in DRC? What do you hope to accomplish through these actions? What are the potential impediments to addressing the specific obstacles you have identified?

Answer. We know that democracy is more than just free and fair elections and we are employing the full range of foreign policy tools in support of the elections in 2023 given their critical importance to the DRC's democratic trajectory. This includes international pressure in coordination with European and African partners as well as the U.N.; public messaging; diplomatic engagement, including senior-level visits; and technical assistance to support a transparent and credible process. The Department continues to press the DRC Government and National Independent Electoral Commission (CENI) to adhere to the planned electoral timeline, to maximize opportunities to be transparent on electoral processes and outcomes, and to ensure an open political environment for the Congolese people to express their views peacefully. Secretary Blinken also stressed the need for free, fair, transparent, and on-time election during his visit. Assistant Secretary for African Affairs Molly Phee and Acting Assistant Secretary for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL) Lisa Peterson both stressed this message in meetings with CENI President Denis Kadima during his visit to Washington, DC in late February.

DRL is actively expanding its suite of human rights and democracy programs in the DRC to lay the groundwork for increased citizen participation in and understanding of the electoral process. Ensuring the success of commitments on the elections process will require sustained attention to financial logistical technical and political challenges. USAID is the largest donor working in elections and is currently the only donor providing technical support to CENI. Recently USAID announced $13 million to finance international and domestic election observation and other election activities. More broadly, the Department seeks to engage the DRC on supporting its democratic aspirations through its participation in the Summit for Democracy, the U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit, and bilateral Human Rights Dialogue.

If confirmed, I will leverage and expand these efforts where possible to support democracy in DRC. Through these actions, I hope to see DRC on a positive trajectory that enables it to realize its democracy and its vast potential for the benefit of the Congolese and American people, as well as Central Africa and the world.

Question. How will you utilize U.S. Government assistance resources at your disposal, including the Democracy Commission Small Grants program and other sources of State Department and USAID funding, to support democracy and governance, and what will you prioritize in processes to administer such assistance?

Answer. U.S. Government assistance resources, including the Democracy Commission Small Grants program and other sources of State Department and USAID funding, are important tools to support democracy, human rights, and governance (DRG). DRG programs strengthen the ability of the Government of the DRC and civil society organizations to deliver basic services, mobilize domestic resources, and encourage greater citizen participation in political processes. U.S. assistance supports free and fair elections, improves transparent and accountable government processes and rule of law, and improves access to information so that citizens may participate fully in the democratic process and make more informed decisions. DRG programs contribute to citizen's empowerment to hold institutions accountable and effectiveness of public and private institutions to deliver public services. If confirmed, I will leverage these resources to support democracy, respect for human rights, and good governance. If confirmed, my priorities will include strengthening transparency and electoral administration; improving civic and voter education; empowering the population, including women and youth, to meaningfully participate

in elections; and helping marginalized communities to understand and access political processes.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to meet with civil society members, human rights, and other non-governmental organizations in the U.S. and with local human rights NGOs, and other members of civil society in DRC? What steps will you take to pro-actively address efforts to restrict or penalize NGOs and civil society via legal or regulatory measures?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to meet with civil society members, human rights, and other NGOs in the United States, and with local human rights NGOs and other members of civil society in DRC.

Embassy Kinshasa regularly meets and engages with NGOs and civil society groups, hosting roundtables and leveraging these relationships for outreach and to advance policy goals. Embassy Kinshasa has continually engaged with counterparts in Ministries of Human Rights, Justice, Defense, Interior, and Communications to discuss human rights issues, including freedom of expression (including for members of the press) and the right of peaceful assembly. If confirmed, I will continue this engagement and expand where possible to proactively address any efforts by the DRC Government to restrict or penalize NGOs and civil society via legal or regulatory measures.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to meet with democratically oriented political opposition figures and parties? What steps will you take to encourage genuine political competition? Will you advocate for access and inclusivity for women, minorities, and youth within political parties?

Answer. Embassy Kinshasa regularly meets with democratically oriented political opposition figures and parties, both to seek their perspectives and to make clear that the U.S. priority is for the DRC to conduct free and fair elections that reflect the will of the Congolese people in accordance with constitutional deadlines. Embassy Kinshasa has also continually engaged with relevant ministries to advocate for specific measures to encourage genuine political competition, including revisions to the electoral law aimed at ensuring transparency and the invitation and accreditation of electoral observers. Total U.S. Government support for the elections and election observation is over $13 million.

If confirmed, I commit to continuing these efforts and expand them where possible, and to meet with democratically oriented political opposition figures and parties. If confirmed, I will advocate for access and inclusivity for women, minorities, and youth within political parties.

Question. Will you and your embassy team actively engage with DRC on freedom of the press and address any government efforts designed to control or undermine press freedom through legal, regulatory, or other measures? Will you commit to meeting regularly with independent, local press in DRC?

Answer. If confirmed, I will actively engage alongside my embassy team with DRC on freedom of expression, including for members of the press, and address any government efforts designed to control or undermine press freedom through legal, regulatory, or other measures. If confirmed, I commit to meeting regularly with independent, local press in DRC.

Question. Will you and your embassy team actively engage with civil society and government counterparts on countering disinformation and propaganda disseminated by foreign state or non-state actors in the country?

Answer. Yes.

Question. Will you commit to using your position, if confirmed, to defend the human rights and dignity of all people in DRC, no matter their sexual orientation or gender identity?

Answer. Yes.

Question. What challenges do the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) people face in DRC?

Answer. Legally, LGBTQI+ status or conduct is not criminalized in the DRC, but the law also does not expressly protect LGBTQI+ persons; some LGBTQI+ persons have been subjected to selective enforcement of "public indecency" mechanisms that are not applied to heterosexual adults. Authorities rarely take steps to investigate, prosecute, or punish officials who committed violence or abuse against LGBTQI+ persons, whether in the security forces or elsewhere in the Government.

Freedom of association for members of the LGBTQI+ community is poorly guaranteed. Activists have noted that the process for registering NGOs was burdensome

and very slow, and LGBTQI+ groups were denied registration. LGBTQI+ activists assert that other human rights organizations exclude LGBTQI+ rights organizations, due either to religious belief or a belief that LGBTQI+ rights are not human rights.

LGBTQI+ persons are vulnerable within the health system. LGBTQI+ activists reported that there were many cases of "corrective" rape against both men and women. When the survivors went to a health clinic for care, they were either rejected for being LGBTQI+ or the staff at the health clinic practiced so-called "conversion therapy" practices and tried to "dissuade" them from being LGBTQI+.

Question. What specifically will you commit to do to help LGBTQ people in DRC?

Answer. In the spirit of "do no harm" and "nothing about us without us," if confirmed, I will work to ensure Embassy Kinshasa consults with members of local LGBTQI+ civil society so that U.S. Government efforts will not inadvertently cause backlash or negative repercussions for members of the local LGBTQI+ community. If confirmed, I commit to promoting respect for human rights, including for members of the LGBTQI+ community, with relevant government officials, such as the Human Rights Minister and the Minister of the Interior. If confirmed, I also commit to engaging with other like-minded Embassies to create a coalition that can take steps to advocate for the protection and inclusion of members of the LGBTQI+ community, encourage the inclusion of LGBTQI+ identity groups in the broader human rights community in the DRC, and discuss the human rights of members of the LGBTQI+ community with religious leaders.

Question. Will you commit, if confirmed, to ensuring that you fully brief members of congress and/or their staff each time you are in Washington for visits or consultations during your tenure as Ambassador to DRC?

Answer. Yes, I will work with the Bureau of Legislative Affairs to keep the committee apprised of developments.

Question. Last week I convened a hearing on the important work of the State Department's Chief Diversity Officer and the important role diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility efforts play in maintaining our countries' competitive edge on the global stage. How do you anticipate fostering diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility at Embassy Kinshasa?

Answer. In June 2020 Embassy Kinshasa established a Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) Council. A survey conducted by the council revealed a desire for increased mentorship at the Mission, especially among locally employed staff, as well as concerns about weak social and collegial bonds between locally employed staff and U.S. Direct Hires (USDH). In response, the DEIA Council created programming to bring the community together, using Pride Month as a trial run. Since these first steps the DEIA council has strengthened locally employed staff unity by assisting with the local staff committee leadership elections, as well as strengthened Congolese-American bonds within the Embassy through new social programming focused on sharing local meals and stories. To address the demand for mentorship, Embassy Kinshasa instituted a mission-wide mentorship program and put an emphasis on greater cross-cultural activities.

Looking after the safety of the Embassy community and ensuring that all American and locally employed staff members can flourish and bring their best to the job in an environment where they feel included and equal is my highest priority as a leader. If confirmed, I will prioritize recruiting and retaining staff to meet our mission's objectives, supporting the physical and mental health of the Embassy community, and setting expectations for how to accomplish mission priorities while maintaining work/life balance. If confirmed, I commit to strong two-way communication with all Mission personnel, including locally employed staff on this subject.

Question. What specifically will you do to prioritize and promote diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility, while also combating racism, discrimination, and inequality among locally employed staff in DRC?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work closely with Embassy Kinshasa's Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) Council to promote their efforts and make clear that combatting racism, discrimination, and inequality for all members of the mission is a priority for me and my leadership team. If confirmed, I look forward to fostering the council's mentorship program and participating in cross-cultural activities. Ensuring that all members of the mission team can flourish and bring their best to the job in an environment where they feel included and equal is my highest priority as a leader. If confirmed, I commit to strong two-way communication with all Mission personnel, including locally employed staff on this subject.

Question. In addition to focusing on diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility in our workforce, will you commit to engaging more equitably in operations and programming, particularly with potential partners and communities that traditionally have been marginalized, excluded, or underrepresented in ours and others' donor and partnership efforts? How do you anticipate utilizing local expertise, knowledge, and capacity to meet our foreign policy goals?

Answer. Our locally employed staff and other local partners are invaluable resources to implement U.S. foreign policy objectives. Their local expertise, knowledge, and capacity are essential to understanding the dynamics in DRC. If confirmed, I will rely on this expertise to maximize our impact. If confirmed, I commit to engaging more equitably in operations and programming, particularly with potential partners and communities that traditionally have been marginalized, excluded, or underrepresented in ours and others' donor and partnership efforts.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO HON. LUCY TAMLYN BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Question. What is your perspective on the situation in Eastern Congo and the role of the United States in addressing the persistent insecurity challenges and complex regional dynamics, both bilaterally and through multilateral organizations, namely the U.N. Peacekeeping Mission MONUSCO?

Answer. For decades, the people of eastern DRC have suffered violence and insecurity, primarily perpetrated in recent years by armed groups and sometimes by DRC's own security forces. Corrupt networks have profited from the illicit exploitation of the region's natural resources. Currently, the M23 armed group allegedly supported by Rwanda is controlling territory near the Uganda border and killing civilians. Addressing the current crisis, and the long-standing underlying issues including the role of DRC's neighbors, is a priority for the State Department. We have maintained steady engagement with senior host nation officials as well as key partners to encourage de-escalation of regional tensions, the termination of the M23 offensive, and progress on the demobilization of all armed groups. Secretary Blinken will visit Kinshasa August 9-10 and Kigali August 10-11, following Ambassador Thomas-Greenfield's travel August 4-5 to Uganda. The Bureau of African Affairs' Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary Massinga discussed this issue in depth with the Foreign Ministers of DRC, Rwanda, and Angola at the African Union (AU) mid-year coordination meeting in Lusaka from July 17-18. Our key message is reinforcing the need to respect the DRC's territorial integrity and to terminate any proxy support to armed groups on all sides. The United States is supportive of the African-led mediation efforts, which have provided important venues for direct discussions among regional heads of state. If confirmed, I will work closely with Washington to ensure that our engagement in Bujumbura, Kampala, Kigali, and elsewhere is coordinated and responds to the regional dynamics that have long influenced the crisis.

MONUSCO has an important role to play in improving the situation. The U.N. Mission continues to carry out its mandate for the protection of civilians. I am deeply concerned that recent anti-MONUSCO protests have turned violent and included attacks on MONUSCO facilities and resulted in peacekeeper and protester casualties. At the same time, I was appalled by the July 31 shooting of civilians by peacekeepers in Kasindi and welcomed the Secretary-General's swift response and strong statement calling for accountability. MONUSCO is by no means perfect, but it is an essential part of creating conditions for peace in eastern DRC. If confirmed, I look forward to frequent interactions with MONUSCO leadership and close coordination with USUN as plans for the Mission's transition move forward.

Question. What lessons were learned from the 2018-2020 Ebola outbreak and more recent experiences with COVID–19 in DRC that we must apply to future outbreaks of infectious disease in DRC? How will you approach coordinating multiple U.S. departments and agencies responding to such an outbreak as U.S. Ambassador?

Answer. The Congolese, international health professionals, NGOs, and U.S. Government responders all made heroic contributions to defeat the 2018-2020 Ebola outbreak in eastern DRC—the second largest in history. Applying lessons learned from this outbreak—whether understanding the epidemiological threat, quickly cementing a response structure and plan, or early and locally driven community engagement, including preventing exploitation within the response—is critical for responding to future outbreaks in the DRC and region, whether Ebola or COVID–19.

Addressing these and other types of outbreaks require continued investment in the health system, leveraging our interagency health platforms that focus on capacity building at national and provincial level governments. With U.S. Government support, the DRC has contained six Ebola outbreaks in the past four years alone, declaring the most recent outbreak over in July.

If confirmed, I will work to maintain the U.S. role as the DRC's most trusted partner on health. Our contributions to the 2018-2020 Ebola response were a natural expansion of our longstanding support for the Congolese health system. The United States has provided over $1.7 billion in health assistance to the DRC over the past 20 years. In 2019, the DRC was designated as a U.S. Global Health Security Agenda (GHSA) intensive support partner country, increasing the DRC's longer-term preparedness capacity to combat health-security threats. Since September 2021, the United States has provided over 3.9 million COVID–19 vaccine doses with the people of the DRC, both in partnership with COVAX and through the African Union's African Vaccine Acquisition Trust (AVAT).

U.S. support to the Congolese health sector has been a whole-of-government approach, bringing together the Departments of State, Defense, Health and Human Services (HHS), Centers for Disease Control (CDC), and USAID. If confirmed, I will work across all U.S. Government departments and agencies to respond to outbreaks and strengthen Congolese health systems. As we did with previous outbreaks, if confirmed, I would welcome CDC, National Institute of Health (NIH), and USAID health and disaster response experts to the DRC for quick engagement with our Congolese and international organization partners. If confirmed, I would support the wide variety of U.S. Government health assistance programs. For example, the CDC has trained more than 300 Congolese field epidemiologists, "disease detectives" who respond to COVID–19 and other outbreaks. USAID led a public-private partnership with the Merieux Foundation to construct a state-of-the-art biomedical lab in eastern DRC that serves as a regional lab to address global health issues such as Ebola and COVID–19. I understand more than one-third of the Congolese population is covered by U.S. Government programs in HIV/AIDS, maternal and child health, nutrition, malaria, and TB interventions reaching at-risk communities. Outbreak response requires constant vigilance and constant coordination, and if confirmed I will work across U.S. Government partners to communicate and align for the most effective response.

Question. Many U.S. missions have been under enormous stress over the last few years, in large part due to COVID. What is your understanding of morale throughout Mission Kinshasa?

Answer. U.S. Embassy Kinshasa is doing important work in a challenging environment. The Embassy is historically difficult to staff, with multiple staffing vacancies. This means many people are assuming the work of multiple employees working in outdated, inadequate office facilities. New facilities for our personnel are long overdue; groundbreaking for construction of a New Embassy Compound to replace and consolidate Kinshasa's three separate compounds is expected to begin in early 2023. In the meantime, Embassy Kinshasa is pursuing upgrades across its three current sites. Infrastructure challenges such as telecommunications are very real, for both U.S. and local personnel. Travel times to and from the United States also affect our staff's well-being. Embassy staff, including locally employed staff, face physical and mental health hazards, including losses due to COVID–19.

Throughout, this team has shown great resilience. I understand Embassy Kinshasa prioritizes improving morale through the community liaison office's outreach, field trips, town halls, and social events for staff to connect with leadership.

Question. How do you intend to improve morale at Mission Kinshasa?

Answer. Looking after the safety of the embassy community and ensuring that each and every American and local employee can flourish and bring his or her best to the job in an environment free of harassment and discrimination is my highest priority as a leader. If confirmed, I will prioritize recruiting and retaining staff to meet our mission's objectives, supporting the physical and mental health of the Embassy community, and setting expectations for how to accomplish mission priorities while maintaining work/life balance. I commit to strong two-way communication with all Mission personnel, including locally employed staff on this subject.

Question. How do you intend to create unified mission and vision at Mission Kinshasa?

Answer. I recognize that, if confirmed, I will be assuming leadership of a post in a country of enormous size, complexity, and promise. The large portfolio of U.S. assistance requires astute direction, prioritization, and coordination. Chronic staffing shortages, a situation not unique to Kinshasa, need to be managed to ensure that

we do not burn out and lose the next generation of Foreign Service Africa experts. If confirmed, I will lead regular discussions with all agencies present at post to establish and review goals, develop strategies and tactics to achieve objectives, and ask that section leaders perform similar reviews with their staff.

Question. Management is a key responsibility for Chiefs of Mission. How would you describe your management style?

Answer. My management style starts with listening to individuals, understanding their strengths and communicating my expectations clearly. I seek to ensure that all staff have the support, resources, and training necessary to do their jobs. I also seek to ensure that staff understand their responsibilities to do their best every day and adhere to the highest standards of ethical behavior in an environment of respect. If confirmed, I will bring special attention to ensuring that new entrants and first-time section heads have the support and mentoring necessary to succeed.

Question. Do you believe it is ever acceptable or constructive to berate subordinates, either in public or private?

Answer. No.

Question. How do you envision your leadership relationship with your Deputy Chief of Mission?

Answer. If confirmed, I will collaborate closely with and rely on my Deputy Chief of Mission for strategic planning, counsel, management of personnel, and implementation of U.S. activities and policy engagement to accomplish strategic objectives. If confirmed, I will work with my Deputy Chief of Mission to articulate and maintain high ethical standards and create a culture of diversity, inclusion, and respect.

Question. If confirmed, what leadership responsibilities do you intend to entrust to your Deputy Chief of Mission?

Answer. If confirmed, I will ask the Deputy Chief of Mission to ensure coordination and collaboration across sections and agencies to support Integrated Country Strategy (ICS) objectives. I will ask the Deputy Chief of Mission to oversee post management with a focus on workforce planning and performance. I will also ask the Deputy Chief of Mission to lead recruitment efforts for our embassy positions and work with other agencies to ensure that their personnel feel fully integrated into Embassy Kinshasa's policy formulation and implementation. If confirmed, I will collaborate closely with the Deputy Chief of Mission on policy implementation and ensure that in my absence, the Deputy Chief of Mission has the knowledge, skills, and confidence to fully take on the responsibilities of the chief of mission.

Question. In order to create and continue employee excellence at the Department, accurate and direct employee evaluation reports (EERs) for Foreign Service Officers are imperative, though often lacking. Do you believe that it is important to provide employees with accurate, constructive feedback on their performances in order to encourage improvement and reward those who most succeeded in their roles?

Answer. Yes, I do.

Question. If confirmed, would you support and encourage clear, accurate, and direct feedback to employees in order to improve performance and reward high achievers?

Answer. Yes.

Question. It is imperative that U.S. diplomats get outside of posts abroad to meet with local actors, including host government officials, non-government organizations, and fellow foreign diplomats stationed in the DRC. In your opinion, do U.S. diplomats get outside of our embassy walls enough to accomplish fully their missions?

Answer. Mission Kinshasa will be most effective if it can engage with Congolese populations outside of the capital, while respecting the safety standards determined by embassy security personnel. Despite limited infrastructure in the largest country in sub-Saharan Africa, Embassy Kinshasa staff routinely overcome significant logistical challenges to travel outside of the capital to engage DRC Government officials, civil society, international organizations, nongovernmental organizations, media, and members of the international community throughout the country. I understand Embassy Kinshasa's Eastern Congo Unit, for example, travels monthly to the East to, among other things, provide U.S. Government oversight for the $1.16 billion U.N. peacekeeping mission (MONUSCO). USAID officers travel countrywide to oversee hundreds of millions of dollars in U.S. development and humanitarian assistance. This travel is critical to ensuring a full understanding of the political, economic, and security challenges in this zone which has been a flashpoint for conflict. Other section personnel need to travel to learn about consular, economic, and polit-

ical issues across the DRC and to provide oversight of U.S. assistance. In my previous assignments, I have made sure that a robust regional security officer-approved travel plan was fully integrated into mission planning. I understand that Embassy Kinshasa's Travel Security Working Group routinely evaluates security conditions throughout the country to determine suitability for mission travel, and RSO puts in place security mitigation measures to overcome security challenges. If confirmed, I intend to continue these best practices.

Question. How do you intend to improve the ability of U.S. diplomats to better access all local populations?

Answer. If confirmed and as security and health conditions permit, I will encourage U.S. diplomats to engage actively, broadly, and in-person with local populations in and outside Kinshasa. If confirmed, I will encourage active engagement through social and virtual media to supplement this outreach. If confirmed, I intend to travel regularly throughout the DRC and use those visits to facilitate contacts for the rest of my team.

Question. Public diplomacy is an important aspect of U.S. foreign policy efforts. What is the public diplomacy environment like in the DRC?

Answer. The Congolese public has embraced social media and public diplomacy, and in turn these have been strategic tools for advancing U.S. policy objectives and amplifying key messages. For example, following President Felix Tshisekedi's April 2019 visit to Washington the United States and DRC launched a "Privileged Partnership for Peace and Prosperity," with a fifth "P" (Preservation of the Environment) added in February 2021. Over the years #PP4PP then #PP4PPP has become not just a hashtag, but the signature framework for strengthening U.S.-DRC ties, advancing common values and objectives, and capturing comprehensive bilateral engagement and activities. If confirmed, I am committed to using public diplomacy as one of the many tools to connect with Congolese populations and advance U.S. foreign policy.

Our colleagues at Embassy Kinshasa regularly use our network of American Spaces in Kinshasa, Matadi, Lubumbashi, Goma to support programming (virtual and in person) to extend our reach. Embassy Kinshasa's LOBA USA podcast, now in its second season, is available online and broadcast on 45 community radio stations throughout the country. The Embassy leverages its robust network of exchange alumni through alumni engagement grants and activities. Our cultural programming has partnered with popular music stars to amplify strategic priorities such as COVID vaccination and conflict resolution. Finally, our innovative use of virtual English instruction in conjunction with our spaces has reached a new generation of Congolese youth.

Question. What public diplomacy challenges do U.S. diplomats face there?

Answer. The DRC's population is overwhelmingly young and many either do not have access to quality education or must leave school because of economic hardship. Telecommunications infrastructure is poor. The limited access to internet or other telecommunications infrastructure by many Congolese limits the opportunities for and impact of virtual engagements which would be especially valuable in a country as large as DRC, where travel for in-person engagements is often difficult. Women in particular often do not have access to technology. The difficult educational landscape also impacts the acquisition of English, which in turn impacts the ability of Embassy Kinshasa to leverage opportunities such as exchanges or study abroad programs that require English proficiency. If confirmed I will seek to find opportunities to overcome these challenges and attract a new generation of Congolese to our programs and platforms.

Question. How do you balance the importance of Main State versus the in-country mission when it comes to tailoring public diplomacy messages for foreign audiences?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work closely with Main State and the interagency to appropriately amplify our messages to advance U.S. foreign policy objectives.

Question. "Anomalous health incidents," commonly referred to as "Havana Syndrome," have been debilitating and sidelining U.S. diplomats around the world for years. They have caused serious, negative consequences for U.S. diplomacy, yet many believe that the Department is not doing enough to care for, protect, and communicate to its personnel. If confirmed, do you commit to taking this threat seriously?

Answer. Yes.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to talking as openly as you can to Mission Kinshasa personnel?

Answer. Yes.

Question. In the State Department's 2022 Human Rights report, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) was noted as having numerous significant human rights issues such as unlawful killings, disappearances, torture, political prisoners, issues of judiciary independence, serious abuses in conflict to include civilian harm, enforced abductions, use of child soldiers, restrictions of expression, corruption, and more. If confirmed, do you commit to directly addressing these issues with the host government?

Answer. Yes.

Question. If confirmed, how could you work with the DRC, international organizations, and NGOs, to improve the human rights situation in the country?

Answer. If confirmed, the human rights and democracy agenda would be among my highest priorities. We know that allegations of human rights violations and abuses and corruption eat away at any prospects for the DRC to emerge as a prosperous and stable country. Respect for human rights and a strong focus on anti-corruption efforts are in the DRC's interest. I understand the Embassy has consistently stressed the importance of respecting human rights, including freedom of expression (including for members of the press) and the right of peaceful assembly. For eastern DRC especially, I understand the Embassy has continually and strongly urged armed groups and Congolese security forces to end all human rights violations and abuses, end all attacks on civilians, and ensure that those responsible for such acts be held accountable. The United States and the DRC also held its first bilateral Human Rights Dialogue in 2021. If confirmed, I would continue partnering closely with the DRC Government to make progress on these key issues.

Question. In the State Department's 2022 Trafficking in Persons report, the DRC remained on the Tier 2 watch list for not meeting the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking. The Government did not demonstrate increasing efforts compared with previous reporting periods; the Congolese National Army (FARDC) officers unlawfully recruited and used children, including in combat roles; authorities penalized victims of acts traffickers compelled them to commit; no anti-trafficking legislation was drafted for a third straight year; and only due to a written plan that, if implemented, would constitute a significant effort to eliminate trafficking was the DRC granted a waiver from being downgraded to Tier 3. If confirmed, how could you work with the DRC to implement its written plan?

Answer. The United States is the Tshisekedi administration's partner of choice, and it is aware that our partnership relies on respect for human rights, including doing all they can to hold traffickers criminally accountable, protect trafficking victims, and prevent trafficking in persons. Through USAID's Counter Trafficking in Person's $3 million activity, implemented by the Organization for International Migration (IOM), the U.S. Government continues to work with the Tshisekedi administration's Agency for the Fight Against Trafficking in Persons, other government institutions, the judiciary, law enforcement, and civil society organizations to implement the DRC's National Strategy on Countering Trafficking in Persons. This includes strengthening the DRC Government's ability to collect data, investigate and prosecute traffickers, protect and provide services to victims of trafficking, and sensitize the public and officials to trafficking in persons in the DRC. State and USAID have also supported the DRC Government's comprehensive draft legislation on trafficking in persons. USG agencies continue to advocate at all levels of government for its immediate passage.

Following the DRC's third consecutive Tier 2 Watch List ranking in 2022, it will be subject to an automatic downgrade to Tier 3 in the 2023 TIP Report if it does not meet the criteria for an upgrade to Tier 2 or Tier 1. If confirmed, I will support the DRC Government's implementation of its anti-trafficking national action plan and continue to urge action on the prioritized recommendations in the 2022 TIP Report.

Question. How would you engage with the host government to reduce the recruitment and use of children in combat and other military related positions?

Answer. Embassy Kinshasa has continually engaged with the DRC Government on the need to improve respect for human rights and explained the risks to our bilateral relationship if unlawful recruitment and use of children is not addressed. At the same time, the U.S. Government implements a variety of programs designed to assist the DRC military on this path. Peacekeeping Operations (PKO) and International Military Education and Training (IMET) funding for DRC enables the United States to continue increasing professionalization of the military, allowing it to provide security within its territory while respecting human rights and inter-

national humanitarian law (IHL). In addition, PKO and IMET funding has supported areas such as military justice, civil-military relations, human rights training, IHL training, English language training, military engineering, and resource management and logistics for security forces in DRC. These efforts not only enhance security provision, but also helps make the security forces a more transparent, accountable institution. Building on this successful cooperation, the United States signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the DRC Government in August 2020 to launch new cooperation in civil military operations (CMO), strategic communications, engineering, and English language training. We are also working with the Congolese armed forces (FARDC) to revamp its human resources infrastructure which, among other things, would allow for enhanced accountability.

These efforts have produced results. The number of prosecutions of both state and armed group actors for crimes involving human rights violations and abuses, including unlawful recruitment and use of children, remains high, as are the number of children separated from armed groups. This past July, the U.N. Secretary-General, in his annual report on children and armed conflict, welcomed "the commitment of the [DRC Government] to sustain the gains made in preventing child recruitment and use, including through screening mechanisms." He also commended the DRC "for its efforts to hold perpetrators of grave violations accountable and urge them to continue to do so, including for cases of child recruitment and use, and for cases of sexual violence." If confirmed, I will leverage these tools and our close relationship with the DRC to aid its commitment to reduce the unlawful recruitment and use of children.

Question. In the State Department's 2021 International Religious Freedom report, the DRC remains a country of operation for ISIS, attacking civilians in the North Kivu and Ituri provinces. U.S. officials have met with government authorities, urging security forces and political leaders to refrain from violence and respect the civil rights of society. What actions would you take with the host government to build on previous U.S. engagement and promote religious freedom and tolerance?

Answer. The United States and DRC are dedicated to the defeat of ISIS. In March 2021, the U.S. designated ISIS-DRC (also known as Allied Democratic Forces) as a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) and Specially Designated Global Terrorist (SDGT). The Allied Democratic Forces is designated under the U.N. 1533 DRC Sanctions Regime. In November 2021, Secretary Blinken also designated ISIS an Entity of Particular Concern for the fifth consecutive year, as a non-state actor that has engaged in particularly severe violations of religious freedom. The DRC joined the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS in 2019 and is increasingly engaged with the Coalition, having participated in the 2022 D-ISIS Ministerial as well as the most recent Communication Working Group meeting held in Washington in July.

With their influence on a wide range of civil and political issues, including elections, religious leaders throughout the DRC are close partners of our embassy in Kinshasa. Embassy Kinshasa has continually engaged with counterparts in Ministries of Human Rights, Justice, Defense, and Interior to discuss issues of freedom of religion or belief, including government relations with religious organizations. U.S. engagement prioritizes ensuring that the DRC Government respects human rights, including the rights to freedom of expression, freedom of peaceful assembly, and to freedom of religion or belief. Ambassador Hammer met with religious leaders frequently and, if confirmed, I would continue these efforts to engage with government representatives and civil society groups to help ensure freedom of religion or belief for the people of the DRC.

Question. How could you work with security forces to increase pressure towards removal of ISIS operation within the country?

Answer. Starting last November, the Ugandan defense forces (UPDF) have been conducting a military intervention in eastern DRC targeting ISIS-DRC, named Operation Shuja. The Ugandans are conducting this mission with the DRC Government approval. MONUSCO is not mandated to work alongside the UPDF, but we have constantly urged and tried to ensure operations are deconflicted with MONUSCO and the Congolese armed forces (FARDC) and that all forces operating in DRC respect human rights.

The DRC joined the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS in 2019 and is increasingly engaged with the Coalition; having participated in the 2022 D-ISIS Ministerial as well as the most recent Communication Working Group meeting held in Washington in July. Closer coordination with DRC security forces will require reform within the FARDC. U.S. training for the FARDC and increased military to military cooperation are items very high on the agenda of the Government of the DRC but deepening our ties will require commensurate commitment to reform by the Government. To

strengthen DRC's ability to prevent and respond to violent conflict, I will, if confirmed, continue to engage with the DRC Government on the need for security sector reform, including respect for the rule of law and human rights and the implementation of a community-based national disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration program.

Question. The Office of Multilateral Strategy and Personnel (MSP) in the State Department's bureau of International Organizations is leading a whole-of-government effort to identify, recruit, and install qualified, independent personnel at the U.N., including in elections for specialized bodies like the International Telecommunications Union (ITU). There is an American candidate, Doreen Bogdan-Martin, who if elected would be the first American and first woman to lead the ITU. She is in a tough race that will require early, consistent engagement across capitals and within the U.N. member states. If confirmed, do you commit to demarching the DRC and any other counterparts necessary to encourage their support of Ms. Bogdan-Martin?

Answer. Yes.

Question. If confirmed, how can you work with the International Organizations (IO) bureau and other stakeholders to identify, recruit, and install qualified Americans in positions like the Junior Program Officer (JPO) program at the U.N.?

Answer. The Junior Professional Officer program is one of the key opportunities offered by the U.N. to encourage young professionals interested in serving in international organizations, and it provides them with hands-on experience across various U.N. agencies. The International Organization Affairs Bureau (IO) and the U.S. Mission to the U.N. (USUN) are well placed to ensure we have sufficient resources, tools, and staffing to support more positions for American citizen JPOs in the U.N. system. With these resources, we can work strategically to increase the number of JPO opportunities funded by the U.S. Government into key agencies and bodies that work on U.S. priorities, expand our recruitment and outreach activities to ensure these opportunities are widely known and available to interested U.S. citizens, and provide tools and services to strengthen our competitiveness in placing qualified American citizens into the U.N. system. If confirmed, I will aid the efforts of IO and USUN from Kinshasa where possible.

Question. The DRC has a low rate of voting coincidence with the United States in the U.N. General Assembly and in the Security Council. What is your assessment of this issue?

Answer. The U.S.-DRC relationship has strengthened significantly since the 2019 inauguration of President Felix Tshisekedi. However, a new DRC Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja, was only just appointed in January 2022, and I note that in 2022 the DRC supported resolutions in U.N. bodies that called out Russia for its attack on Ukraine and aligned with U.S. priorities at the United Nations. If confirmed, I will work through the U.S. Mission to the United Nations and others in the Department of State to ensure U.S. foreign policy objectives are shared and understood across Kinshasa, Washington, and New York.

Question. If confirmed, what concrete actions can you take to engage with the Congolese on anticipated votes in the U.N. system that would increase their voting coincidence with the United States?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work through the U.S. Mission to the United Nations and others in the Department of State to ensure U.S. foreign policy objectives are shared and understood across Kinshasa, Washington, and New York. I will meet with DRC Government officials at the highest levels when appropriate to encourage aligned voting coincidence.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO HON. LUCY TAMLYN BY SENATOR MARCO RUBIO

Question. In May, Secretary Blinken said that the People's Republic of China is the "only country with both the intent to reshape the international order and, increasingly, the economic, diplomatic, military, and technological power to do it." The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) clearly holds all the reins of power in the People's Republic of China and has used this power to commit genocide in Xinjiang, flood our communities with fentanyl, and emit by far the largest quantity of greenhouse

gases. With their absolute control of Chinese society and industry, the CCP could stop all of these destructive actions tomorrow if they so choose.

• Is the Chinese Communist Party a threat to the United States?

Answer. Certain activities by the People's Republic of China (PRC) and Chinese Communist Party (CCP) represent a challenge to U.S. interests globally and in the Africa region. As Secretary Blinken said on May 26, we will invest, align, and compete with the PRC to defend our interests and build our vision for the future.

Question. Does the Chinese Communist Party undertake any activities that are beneficial to U.S. interests?

Answer. We are prepared to work together with the People's Republic of China (PRC) where our interests intersect, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and elsewhere, and where it is essential for global peace and prosperity. Issues like climate change, the global drug trade, and COVID–19 directly threaten our prosperity and security, and we need to work with the PRC—just as much as the PRC needs to work with us—to solve these problems without borders.

Question. If confirmed, will you approve any joint activity with organizations or representatives from the People's Republic of China in the Democratic Republic of Congo?

Answer. We are prepared to work together with the People's Republic of China (PRC) where our interests intersect, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and elsewhere, and where it is essential for global peace and prosperity. Issues such as climate change, the global drug trade, and COVID–19 directly threaten our prosperity and security, and we need to work with the PRC—just as much as the PRC needs to work with us—to solve these problems without borders.μ If confirmed, I will invest in our partnership with the DRC, align our concerns highlighting the risks associated with PRC engagement that could impact the DRC's security and sovereignty and U.S. interests, and ensure that our vision of a positive partnership and regional security and prosperity competes successfully with the PRC.

Question. China has a large peacekeeping presence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), where China Molybdenum, a Chinese mining company, has an 80 percent stake in one of the world's largest cobalt mines and the largest copper mining operation in the DRC. The DRC has given Chinese companies valuable concessions to develop the rich critical mineral resources, like cobalt, in the country. Cobalt is critical to the U.S. information technology and defense industries. Beijing's involvement in the peacekeeping mission in the DRC, and its heavy involvement in the DRC's cobalt sector, raises concerns that it is using its involvement in the peacekeeping system to protect its economic interests. The Trump Administration pushed the DRC Government to revisit these Chinese concessions.

• If confirmed, what will you do to convince the DRC to renegotiate, or even revoke, mineral concessions given to Chinese companies?

Answer. The United States supports the Government of the DRC's decision to review mining contracts and pursue greater accountability in the sector. In May 2021, President Tshisekedi announced his intention to review Chinese mining deals with unfavorable terms for the DRC. This is an ongoing process, and the United States has informed the DRC Government of our support for its decision to review contracts. Further, economic development should promote democratic governance, respect for human rights, and transparency. The United States is providing more than $30 million in assistance to help the DRC promote responsible and sustainable mining practices and is actively looking at new engagements in the sector. As one example, USAID's new Constructing Competitive Responsible Minerals Trade project in the DRC provides trade and investment facilitation support with businesses that support responsible, transparent, and conflict-free mining from the DRC. We support responsible minerals sourcing and trading and work closely with the private sector to support conflict-free mineral supply chains. We created the Public-Private Alliance for Responsible Minerals, working with USAID and the Department of Labor, U.S. companies, and civil society organizations to improve governance systems needed for ethical supply chains of conflict minerals in the DRC and Great Lakes region.

We echo the long-standing calls from African capitals that PRC actions must respect host country laws, particularly regarding the human and labor rights, the rule of law, and protections for the environment. We want to ensure U.S. companies can compete on an even playing field, promoting entrepreneurship, infrastructure development, energy access, capacity-building, and fair practices. I am confident that, in a level playing field, U.S. companies will be a partner of choice for the DRC. If confirmed, I hope to see the DRC on a positive trajectory that enables it to realize its

vast potential for the benefit of the Congolese and American people, as well as Central Africa and the world.

Question. I understand that you served as Ambassador to the Central African Republic (CAR) from January 2019 to January 2022. During this period, the Government of the CAR essentially became a branch of Russia's mercenary, The Wagner Group. To this day, the CAR Government is staffed with the associates and friends of those Russian officials currently planning and managing Vladimir Putin's war against Ukraine. Valery Zakharov, an FSB agent, serves as a national security advisor, Russian Air Force General Oleg Polguev is an advisor to the Defense Minister, and another FSB agent, Vladimir Tintorenko, is an advisor to the Prime Minister.

- During your tenure as Ambassador to CAR, were you aware of growing Russian entanglement with the CAR Government?

Answer. Yes, I was aware and I raised our concerns about the Wagner Group and Russian presence with the highest levels of the Government. The United States Government has severely limited its security assistance to the Government of CAR in response to the CAR Government's decision to continue collaborating with these actors while we evaluate next steps.

Question. Did you advocate for U.S. policies that would encourage the CAR Government to remove Wagner Group and Russian presence in CAR? Please elaborate.

Answer. We raised our concerns about the Wagner Group and Russian presence with the highest levels of the Government, and severely limited our security assistance to the Government of CAR in response to their decision to continue collaborating with these actors while we evaluate next steps. We informed the CAR Government that future assistance would be limited should they continue that relationship. We have encouraged the CAR Government to end impunity for violence and seek partners that respect human rights.

Question. With regard to the DRC, is the Chinese Communist Party making efforts to increase its own influence within that government?

Answer. The People's Republic of China (PRC) has extensive interests in the DRC. The DRC is now tied with the PRC as the third-biggest producer of copper in the world, and the DRC produces approximately 70 percent of the world's cobalt. Exports of copper and cobalt provide 75 percent of the DRC's export revenue, and the PRC is both the largest consumer of DRC-produced copper and cobalt and the DRC's largest trading partner. If confirmed, I will continue to engage with the DRC Government to cement the United States as the DRC's partner of choice.

Question. If confirmed as Ambassador to the DRC, what will you do to ensure that the Chinese Communist Party does not establish the same level of influence there as the Russian Wagner Group did in CAR under your watch?

Answer. The People's Republic of China (PRC) and the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) interest in the DRC is primarily economic. The PRC is the largest consumer of DRC-produced cobalt and copper and the DRC's largest trading partner. The United States has a long history of support for the DRC, including over $20 billion in assistance, much of which has gone to address health and humanitarian emergencies. Socially responsible U.S. business practices compare favorably against PRC business models. Congressionally mandated annual reporting, such as the Human Rights Report, the Findings of the Worst Forms of Child Labor, and the Trafficking in Persons Report shine a spotlight on exploitative business practices and Executive Orders ensure that products made with forced labor and child labor do not reach U.S. markets. We are working with international partners and multilateral organizations, such as the International Labor Organization, to advance due diligence standards and practices in global supply chains and support internationally recognized worker rights. This message resonates with Congolese citizens, and the Congolese media have highlighted labor abuses in PRC-run companies.

We respect the ability of countries to decide for themselves whether to partner with the PRC. At the same time, we want the DRC to have options, to benefit from long-term sustainable economic growth, and to ensure it has the information it needs to make informed decisions. If confirmed, I will continue to amplify Embassy Kinshasa's work advancing a vision for economic development that promotes democratic governance, respect for human rights, and transparency. If confirmed, I will invest in our partnership with the DRC, align our concerns highlighting the risks associated with PRC engagement that could impact the DRC's security and sovereignty and U.S. interests, and ensure that our vision of a positive partnership and regional security and prosperity competes successfully with the PRC.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO HON. LUCY TAMLYN BY SENATOR TODD YOUNG

Question. How do you view China's diplomatic and economic engagement in the DRC?

Answer. The DRC's economic resources make it an attractive destination for any foreign investor, including the People's Republic of China (PRC). We do not seek to limit the DRC's partnerships with other countries. We want the DRC to have options and to ensure it has the information it needs to make informed decisions.

In this regard we echo the long-standing calls from African governments that PRC economic engagement should respect host country laws, particularly those relating to labor rights and environmental protections. We want the Congolese people to know that corrupt mineral exploitation deals, illegal logging, and environmental devastation is not inevitable. We also want to ensure that U.S. companies can compete on an even playing field. We believe the DRC benefits more from its partnership with the United States. The U.S. Government's commitment to responsible business conduct shapes global standards that ensure that rights are respected around the world. DRC officials tell us that they prefer investments by American enterprises because they know a U.S. corporation will respect host country laws and labor rights and protect its workers.

Question. What is the host government's main interest in engaging with China?

Answer. The DRC is now tied with the PRC as the third-biggest producer of copper in the world, and the DRC produces approximately 70 percent of the world's cobalt. Exports of copper and cobalt provide 75 percent of the DRC's export revenue, and the PRC is both the largest consumer of DRC-produced copper and cobalt and the DRC's largest trading partner.

Question. Do you view our work in Kinshasa as sufficient to counter malign PRC economic activity?

Answer. If confirmed, I will fully support the U.S. Government inter-agency endorsed Integrated Country Strategy's (ICS) vision for economic development that promotes democratic governance, respect for human rights, and transparency. Under the ICS, USAID initiatives are supporting investment and trade opportunities in DRC's minerals, energy, and agricultural sectors with a particular focus on responsible natural resources exploitation. Congressionally mandated reporting, such as the Human Rights Report, the Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor and the Trafficking in Persons Report help shine a spotlight on exploitative business practices, and Executive Orders ensure that products made with forced labor and child labor do not reach U.S. markets. We are working with international partners and multilateral organizations, such as the International Labor Organization, to advance due diligence standards and practices in global supply chains. These messages resonate with Congolese citizens, and the Congolese media have themselves highlighted labor abuses in PRC-run companies.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO HON. LUCH TAMLYN BY SENATOR MIKE ROUNDS

Question. What is your perspective on the situation in Eastern Congo and the role of the United States in addressing the persistent insecurity challenges and complex regional dynamics, both bilaterally and through multilateral organizations, namely the U.N. Peacekeeping Mission MONUSCO?

Answer. For decades, the people of eastern DRC have suffered violence and insecurity, primarily perpetrated in recent years by armed groups and sometimes by DRC's own security forces. Corrupt networks have profited from the illicit exploitation of the region's natural resources. Currently, the M23 armed group allegedly supported by Rwanda is controlling territory near the Uganda border and killing civilians. Addressing the current crisis, and the long-standing underlying issues including the role of DRC's neighbors, is a priority for the State Department. We have maintained steady engagement with senior host nation officials as well as key partners to encourage de-escalation of regional tensions, the termination of the M23 offensive, and progress on the demobilization of all armed groups. Secretary Blinken will visit Kinshasa August 9-10 and Kigali August 10-11, following Ambassador Thomas-Greenfield's travel August 4-5 to Uganda. The Bureau of African Affairs' Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary Massinga discussed this issue in depth with the Foreign Ministers of DRC, Rwanda, and Angola at the African Union (AU) mid-

year coordination meeting in Lusaka from July 17-18. Our key message is reinforcing the need to respect the DRC's territorial integrity and to terminate any proxy support to armed groups on all sides. The United States is supportive of the African-led mediation efforts, which have provided important venues for direct discussions among regional heads of state. If confirmed, I will work closely with Washington to ensure that our engagement in Bujumbura, Kampala, Kigali, and elsewhere is coordinated and responds to the regional dynamics that have long influenced the crisis.

MONUSCO has an important role to play in improving the situation. The U.N. Mission continues to carry out its mandate for the protection of civilians. I am deeply concerned that recent anti-MONUSCO protests have turned violent and included attacks on MONUSCO facilities and resulted in peacekeeper and protester casualties. At the same time, I was appalled by the July 31 shooting of civilians by peacekeepers in Kasindi and welcomed the Secretary-General's swift response and strong statement calling for accountability. MONUSCO is by no means perfect, but it is an essential part of creating conditions for peace in eastern DRC. If confirmed, I look forward to frequent interactions with MONUSCO leadership and close coordination with USUN as plans for the Mission's transition move forward.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO RACHNA SACHDEVA KORHONEN BY SENATOR ROBERT MENENDEZ

Question. If confirmed, how will you implement this 5-year strategy given there will be a military junta in place for nearly two of the five years?

Answer. The interagency Sahel strategy seeks to build the political resolve of Sahel governments to regain public confidence at the national and local levels by providing the equitable delivery of government services, law enforcement, and justice. The Mali Integrated Country Strategy and USAID Country Development Cooperative Strategy are the baselines strategies for Mali and were informed by the Sahel Strategy. We can make progress on these goals during the transition period, as the transition government seeks also to make reforms that will strengthen the foundation of Mali's democracy. We provided technical support to the electoral law passed in June that creates a single electoral management body, a best practice that election experts have called for repeatedly. We stand ready to assist the transition government as it moves towards a constitutional referendum and elections.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to updating me on the implementation of the strategy within 180 days of arriving at post?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit, in coordination with the State Department's Bureau of Legislative Affairs, to promptly accommodate requests for briefings and for information by you and this Committee, including on the implementation of the strategy. Our foreign policy is stronger when the two branches of government communicate, and I would look forward to strengthening that communication

Question. Do you believe personal travel bans or other sanctions on military officers who seize power unconstitutionally, or who engage in gross violations of human rights are a useful tool?

Answer. As I understand it, our policy objective has been to work with the transition government to get Mali back on the path to democracy. We continually review all tools available to us and determine what is the best tool to use to advance foreign policy goals. Imposing visa restrictions or financial sanctions as a blanket response to adverse political activity may be incongruent with the task of working with the transition government to undertake reforms that are demanded by their people to form the foundation of a more responsive democratic system. My understanding is that following the May 2021 military takeover, we cut security assistance programs valued at $9.1 million that had continued under available authorities. Ending security assistance, which the Mali coup leaders monitor closely as military officers, had a more significant impact. When we have credible information that a foreign official has been involved in a gross violation of human rights, we are required by law to designate that individual under Section 7031(c). If confirmed, I commit to continually assessing whether visa restrictions or financial sanctions should be imposed.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to reviewing the approach we have taking, and sending to me in writing, your assessment of how such sanctions could usefully be applied within 90 days of arriving at post?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to reviewing the approach we have taken and sending to you in writing, my assessment of how such visa restrictions or financial sanctions could usefully be applied within 90 days of arriving at Post. I also commit to continuously assessing whether visa restrictions or financial sanctions should be imposed during my Ambassadorship, if confirmed.

Question. What are the most important actions you have taken in your career to date to support democracy and human rights? What has been the impact of your actions?

Answer. During my time in Sri Lanka, we encouraged the newly elected government to include all factions in the Government but to also provide accountability for wartime abuses. We achieved some successes on both counts, but it was slow and cumbersome requiring a lot of effort from multiple parts of the US Government. Our biggest success was to encourage the Sri Lankan Parliament to work together with Congress on training and exchanges, a partnership that exists until today that is codified in a USAID project lasting multiple years. During my time in Kirkuk, Iraq, I was able to convince the Turkmen faction to stand in local elections after they threatened to boycott. Their participation in the elections resulted in elections that were accepted by all parties and that laid the foundation for governance and democracy in Kirkuk.

Question. What issues are the most pressing challenges to democracy or democratic development in the Republic of Mali? These challenges might include obstacles to participatory and accountable governance and institutions, rule of law, authentic political competition, civil society, human rights and press freedom. Please be as specific as possible.

Answer. There are many challenges to democracy and democratic development in Mali. Mali has suffered three military seizures of power in the past ten years. Weak governance, a severe security crisis, poor development, and acute food insecurity are some of the many difficulties of life in Mali. The failure of government to address these problems has led to a loss of faith by many Malians in their government and in democracy. This frustration is particularly apparent in the north, where the minority populations have long felt ignored by Bamako. Additionally, corruption is rampant, though during the transition we have not seen the same high-level corruption as in previous regimes. Political parties are numerous but often do not think beyond the special interests of Bamako. The arrival of the Kremlin-backed Wagner Group was accompanied by a spike in pro-Wagner and pro-Russian sentiments across social media as well as disinformation linked to Wagner financier Yevgeniy Prigozhin that has muddied the media environment. Warnings by the transition government to support the Malian Armed Forces reportedly led to self-censorship by the press. Some critics of the transition government have been arrested. Women continue to play a secondary role in Malian society and the transition government has fallen short of meeting the law that requires thirty percent of elected or appointed officials to be women. Finally, the transition government's plan to tackle security does not extend to addressing root drivers of conflict, and as evidenced by allegations of human rights abuses and violations, will increase the distrust Mali's people feel toward their government.

Question. What steps will you take—if confirmed—to support democracy in the Republic of Mali? What do you hope to accomplish through these actions? What are the potential impediments to addressing the specific obstacles you have identified?

Answer. If confirmed, I will assist the transition government as it moves towards a constitutional referendum and elections, building on the partnership established when the United States provided technical assistance in support of the creation of the recent electoral law. I will support programs aimed at bolstering the capacity of civil society and the media as well as programs to counter disinformation. I will amplify the voices of women who are working to make a difference in their communities and for their country. Through these actions, I hope to work with Malians to set them on a path to responsive democratic governance that will lead to a more stable Mali.

Mali's return to democracy and the reforms necessary to create a strong foundation for that democracy are ultimately in the hands of the transition government. We cannot want it more than they do. If confirmed, I will be an advocate for the Malian people and press for the democracy they deserve.

Question. How will you utilize U.S. Government assistance resources at your disposal, including the Democracy Commission Small Grants program and other sources of State Department and USAID funding, to support democracy and governance, and what will you prioritize in processes to administer such assistance?

Answer. If confirmed, I will utilize all available U.S. foreign assistance programs and tools to strengthen democracy and good governance in Mali. State Department and USAID resources are critical to achieving our policy goals and advancing our values in Mali. I will prioritize available assistance necessary to restore democratic governance in Mali.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to meet with civil society members, human rights and other non-governmental organizations in the U.S. and with local human rights NGOs, and other members of civil society in the Republic of Mali? What steps will you take to pro-actively address efforts to restrict or penalize NGOs and civil society via legal or regulatory measures?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to meeting with civil society members, human rights and other non-government organizations in the United States and with local human rights NGOs, and other members of civil society in Mali. I understand the Embassy conducts such engagements regularly and I plan to build on their good work. I will advocate for unimpeded operation by NGOs and civil society, who do much to address root drivers of instability, both with the transition government and publicly should it be deemed helpful.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to meet with democratically oriented political opposition figures and parties? What steps will you take to encourage genuine political competition? Will you advocate for access and inclusivity for women, minorities and youth within political parties?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to meet with democratically oriented political opposition figures and parties. I will encourage political figures and parties to consider the equities of all Malians, not just those in Bamako, and to run on platforms built on substance, not personality. I will advocate with the transition government for opposition figures to be able to participate fully in the political process as Mali holds legislative elections, a constitutional referendum, and presidential elections by March 2024. I will advocate with the transition government for opposition figures to be able to speak freely without fear of reprisal. I will advocate for press freedom, so that disinformation does not interfere in political debates and dialogues. I will advocate for access and inclusivity for women, members of minority groups, and youth within political parties. I will urge the transition government to meet any related requirements under national law, such as the 30 percent appointment of women in the Cabinet and the National Transition Council. I will press for the expeditious implementation of the Algiers Accord, so Mali's democracy more fully represents its northern citizens.

Question. Will you and your embassy team actively engage with the Republic of Mali on freedom of the press and address any government efforts designed to control or undermine press freedom through legal, regulatory or other measures? Will you commit to meeting regularly with independent, local press in the Republic of Mali?

Answer. I am very concerned about the decrease in press freedom and the rise of disinformation that has accompanied the arrival of the Kremlin-backed Wagner Group. If confirmed, I plan to prioritize addressing and countering disinformation. A well-informed citizenry is required for a functioning democracy, so I support the continuation of current embassy and Department programs to educate and train journalists about the dangers of disinformation and procedures to publicly refute dangerous disinformation, such as fact-checking. I will commit to meeting regularly with local press in Mali and extolling the dangers of disinformation and promoting the benefits of a free press.

Question. Will you and your embassy team actively engage with civil society and government counterparts on countering disinformation and propaganda disseminated by foreign state or non-state actors in the country?

Answer. If confirmed, I will prioritize building on the embassy team's ongoing work and programs to counter disinformation and propaganda perpetuated by foreign and non-state actors. I will also build on the close relationship created between the embassy team and the Department's Global Engagement Center (GEC) as they prioritize exposing and countering state-sponsored disinformation. The GEC recently released a public-facing bulletin to expose the Kremlin-backed Wagner Group, Russian oligarch Yevgeniy Prigozhin, and Russia's disinformation networks in Africa, and the bulletin spotlighted several recent cases of disinformation in Mali. I will engage the transition government on the destabilizing effects of disinformation and the need to protect press freedom.

Question. Will you and your embassy teams actively engage with the Republic of Mali on the right of labor groups to organize, including for independent trade unions?

Answer. Labor unions are an important and influential part of Mali's society, and the International Trade Union Confederation has noted the significant efforts of labor unions to strengthen social dialogue and progress on climate change, social protection, universal health insurance, decent work, migration and education. Mali continues to face significant challenges on labor as almost 90 percent of workers are in the informal economy, about 12 percent of children are engaging in child labor, and women still do the lion's share of unpaid care and domestic work, including some forms of descent-based slavery. I will engage the transition government on the right of workers to organize, including to form independent trade unions, and encourage legal remedies for labor abuses.

Question. Will you commit to using your position, if confirmed, to defend the human rights and dignity of all people in the Republic of Mali, no matter their sexual orientation or gender identity?

Answer. If confirmed, I will use my position to promote respect for the human rights and dignity of all in Mali, no matter their sexual orientation or gender identity. A hallmark of Mali's society is its diversity. A country that unites across its differences will always be stronger and more resilient.

Question. What challenges do the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) people face in the Republic of Mali?

Answer. LGBTQI+ individuals in Mali experience physical, psychological, and gender-based violence, with some individuals subjected to "corrective" punishment. Police frequently refuse to intervene when such violence has occurred. As the transition government considers members of the LGBTQI+ community to be "immoral," promoting respect for freedom of association remains difficult. The law prohibits conduct pertaining to "attacks on morality," thereby criminalizing, on a de facto basis, consensual same-sex sexual conduct between adults, as well as non-sexual association. The transition government actively enforces this law. Most LGBTQI+ individuals in Mali isolate themselves and keep their sexual orientation or gender identity hidden. LGBTQI+ individuals frequently drop out of school, leave their places of employment, and do not seek medical treatment in order to hide their sexual identity and avoid social stigmatization.

Question. What specifically will you commit to do to help LGBTQ people in the Republic of Mali?

Answer. As Secretary Blinken has said, promoting and advancing respect for the human rights of LGBTQI+ persons is a foreign policy priority for this Administration. If confirmed, I will advocate for the human rights and dignity of all in Mali, including LGBTQI+ persons. In the spirit of "do no harm," I will meet with LGBTQI+ civil society members and seek their advice on how the U.S. Embassy can best support them.

Question. Will you commit, if confirmed, to ensuring that you fully brief Members of Congress and/or their staff each time you are in Washington for visits or consultations during your tenure as Ambassador to the Republic of Mali?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit, in coordination with the State Department's Bureau of Legislative Affairs, to promptly accommodate requests for briefings and for information by this Committee. Our foreign policy is stronger when the two branches of government communicate, and I would look forward to strengthening that communication.

Question. Last week we held a hearing on the important work of the State Department's Chief Diversity Officer and the important role diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility efforts play in maintaining our countries' competitive edge on the global stage. How do you anticipate fostering diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility at Embassy Bamako?

Answer. Secretary Blinken recently said "The rich diversity of the United States is a core source of our national strength and a cherished part of our national identity. As the agency that represents the United States to the world, the U.S. Department of State has an opportunity—and a responsibility—to build a diplomatic workforce that reflects America's diversity. Diversity makes us stronger and more creative. It is how we bring to bear people's many ideas, experiences, expertise, and contributions for the benefit of our organization and our country. We simply cannot advance America's interests and values around the world without a workforce that is truly representative of the American people."

I will stand up for fairness, equity, inclusion and accessibility at work. I will integrate these principles into my leadership at Embassy Bamako. Throughout my State Department career, I have valued and encouraged a diverse and inclusive work environment, and if confirmed, I intend to bring that same spirit to Embassy Bamako by supporting post's inclusive hiring and selection procedures.

Question. What specifically will you do to prioritize and promote diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility, while also combating racism, discrimination, and inequality among locally employed staff in the Republic of Mali?

Answer. I will hold all of our staff at Embassy Bamako to the same standard. Mali is a country rich and diverse in culture and Embassy Bamako reflects that diversity. If confirmed, I intend to ensure that all employees working in Embassy Bamako, whether they are locally employed staff, eligible family members, or U.S. direct hires, feel supported and heard in their work. I maintain an open office policy and welcome the contributions and ideas of those working in our mission.

Question. In addition to focusing on diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility in our workforce, will you commit to engaging more equitably in operations and programming, particularly with potential partners and communities that traditionally have been marginalized, excluded, or underrepresented in ours and others' donor partnership efforts? How do you anticipate utilizing local expertise, knowledge, and capacity to meet our foreign policy goals?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to engaging with partners and communities that have been traditionally marginalized, underrepresented or excluded in donor or partnership efforts. Learning from local expertise and knowledge is critical to building successful programs and foreign policy goals.

Embassy Bamako has a truly diverse workforce from all parts of Mali, and I hope we can leverage that for our strategic goals for democracy, governance and services for all.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO RACHNA SACHDEVA KORHONEN BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Question. If confirmed, how will you engage the current Government in Mali on the issue of return to constitutional democratic rule?

Answer. If confirmed, I will continue to stand firmly with the Malian people in their aspirations for democracy, peace, development, and respect for human rights. I will press the transition government to keep its promise to return the country to the Malian people through democratic governance. The reforms the transition government has committed to undertake, such as constitutional reform, will build a foundation for a stronger, more responsive democracy in Mali and if confirmed, I will encourage the transition government to undertake these reforms expeditiously. I will also caution them that some reforms are the work of generations and will need to be handed over to a democratically-elected government. I echo Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield's observation "that a Mali isolated from its community of nations and ECOWAS is not where Mali wants to be." I share her wish to work with the Malian transition government to bring Mali back into the community of nations where it belongs. In order to rebuild relationships with its neighbors, the transition government first needs to demonstrate commitment to the transition timelines and to work transparently with ECOWAS special envoy Goodluck Jonathan and the transition monitoring committee. If confirmed, I will seek to assist the transition government as it moves towards the constitutional referendum and elections, but we must see progress.

Question. If confirmed, how will you engage the current Government in Mali on the issue of implementing what is salvageable of the Algiers Accord?

Answer. Full implementation of the Algiers Accord remains the best path to peace in northern Mali. The Accord itself addresses key grievances of northern populations and calls for important steps towards decentralization of power, security sector reform, development, and reconciliation. These priorities are now applicable to other areas of the country suffering from instability. If fully implemented, the Accord's provisions will provide greater stability and facilitate efforts to address the growing terrorist threats in the country.

Since we assess that the main driver of instability in Mali and the broader Sahel is a lack of state presence and responsive governance, the tenets of the Algiers Accord are exactly the kind of improved governance measures we believe will address

root causes of instability. If confirmed, I will underscore this fact to the transition government and urge full implementation of the Accord. The recent meeting among the signatory parties and the transition government's pledge to incorporate 26,000 ex-fighters into the Malian Armed Forces are positive steps. I will also stress that no level of international involvement can secure peace for Mali. The signatory parties themselves must be driving the effort to bring peace throughout Mali.

Question. If confirmed, how will you engage the current Government in Mali on the presence of the Russian-affiliated Wagner Group in Mali as a security alternative following the departure of French Operation Barkhane?

Answer. If confirmed, I will continue to highlight the harmful effects of the Wagner Group, including the rise in allegations of human rights violations and abuses emanating from the campaigns of the Malian Armed Forces alongside the Wagner Group. I will stress that these allegations will put the resumption of U.S. security assistance in doubt after a democratically-elected government has taken office in Mali. I will address the limitations placed on the U.N. Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) due to the Wagner Group and note how the Malian people are not receiving the full benefit of MINUSMA's efforts due to those restrictions. I will illuminate how Yevgeniy Prigozhin's disinformation network is harming Mali's media space, threatening peacekeeper safety, and manipulating the Malian people. I will underscore that Prigozhin's extractive partnerships will leave Mali poorer as it gives away resources that could be invested into the Malian Armed Forces and other government efforts aimed to tackle root drivers of instability.

Question. What is your view of the U.N. Peacekeeping Mission in Mali, MINUSMA, the deadliest peacekeeping mission in the world, particularly given the post-coup environment in Mali?

Answer. The United States strongly supports MINUSMA as the leading component of the international community's efforts to address the political and security crises in Mali, including by supporting the parties to make progress towards sustainable peace. MINUSMA also plays a critical role in the protection of Malian civilians and facilitating their access to basic services as well as humanitarian aid. The restrictions the transition government has imposed on MINUSMA, as well as the arrival of the Wagner Group, threaten the safety of MINUSMA peacekeepers and obstruct the implementation of the mission's mandate.

Question. As U.S. Ambassador, if confirmed, how will you engage MINUSMA leadership to ensure that mandate of the mission is appropriate for the existing political and security environment in Mali?

Answer. If confirmed, I will engage regularly with MINUSMA leadership to determine how the United States can best support the mission's efforts to carry out its mandate, including through advocating with the transition government to ensure MINUSMA's freedom of movement. I will encourage transparent and timely human rights reporting, performance reporting, and reporting on the restrictions placed on MINUSMA as well as host nation Status of Forces Agreement violations. I will work with colleagues in Washington to ensure that MINSUMA's mandate and resources are aligned with the current realities and challenges on the ground.

Question. As U.S. Ambassador, if confirmed, how will you engage with leadership in the Africa Bureau at the State Department to ensure the mandate of MINUSMA is appropriate for the existing political and security environment in Mali?

Answer. If confirmed, I will provide colleagues in the Bureau of African Affairs with the on-the-ground perspective necessary for the Department to assess the mission's effectiveness and inform the interagency policy process. I will be an active participant in Department and interagency discussions on the future of MINUSMA.

Question. As U.S. Ambassador, if confirmed, how will you engage with leadership in the International Organization Affairs Bureau at the State Department to ensure the mandate of MINUSMA is appropriate for the existing political and security environment in Mali?

Answer. If confirmed, I will provide colleagues in the Bureau of International Organization Affairs with the on-the-ground perspective necessary for the Department to assess the mission's effectiveness and inform the interagency policy process. I will be an active participant in Department and interagency discussions on the future of MINUSMA. I will gladly host members of the MINUSMA monitoring and evaluation missions in Bamako or virtually if necessary and ensure they receive access to all relevant interlocuters in MINUSMA and the transition government to inform their report on the status of MINUSMA and its ability to implement its mandate.

Question. Do you commit to being consistently engaged with interlocutors in Mali, as well as with the Office of the Special Presidential Envoy for Hostage Affairs on U.S. efforts to secure the release of U.S. citizen hostages Jeffery Woodke and Sister Tennyson?

Answer. I am already acquainted with Special Presidential Envoy Carstens and his staff, and while we could not discuss the cases, I expressed my commitment to coordinate with him and other stakeholders consistently regarding efforts to secure the release of U.S. citizen hostages. The Department of State has no greater responsibility than the safety and security of U.S. citizens overseas. If confirmed, I commit to raising this important issue consistently with interlocuters in Mali.

Question. If confirmed, how will you engage with the host government on anti-trafficking work? Please describe these efforts in detail.

Question. If confirmed, I will stress the importance of tackling human trafficking and related issues with the transition government, which faces an automatic downgrade to Tier 3 next year. I will advocate for the National Transition Council to amend the 2012 anti-trafficking law to ensure that it can be used to effectively investigate and prosecute trafficking offenses involving hereditary slavery, and sentence convicted slaveholders to significant prison terms. Additionally, Mali continues to struggle with recruitment and use of children by non-state armed groups supported by the transition government. These groups have signed action plans with the United Nations, and I will vigorously advocate for their full implementation and the cessation of all unlawful recruitment and use of children.

Question. According to the State Departments 2021 Human Rights report, Mali had significant human rights issues including arbitrary killings, forced disappearance, serious restrictions on free expression and media, targeting minority groups, among other serious incidents.

• If confirmed, how will you engage with the host government on these issues?

Answer. Respect for human rights is critical to a free and peaceful society. If confirmed, I will advocate for the full respect of human rights with the transition government, support civil society and a free media, and, in the spirit of "do no harm," meet with members of minority groups to seek their advice on how the U.S. Embassy can best support them. I will highlight the allegations of human rights abuses and violations committed by the Malian Armed Forces in cooperation with the Kremlin-backed Wagner Group, which are counterproductive to a viable counterterrorism operation that should seek to protect civilians.

Question. Do you commit to raising these issues directly?

Answer. If confirmed, I am committed to raising credible reports of human rights abuses and violations directly to the highest levels of the transition government to increase accountability for those responsible.

Question. What is your understanding of morale throughout Mission Bamako?

Answer. I understand morale at Embassy Bamako is high despite a challenging living and working environment. The challenges have pulled the team closer and only enhanced interagency cooperation.

Question. How do you intend to improve morale at Mission Bamako?

Answer. The wellbeing of our people is paramount. If confirmed, I will make maintaining morale of utmost importance. I will work closely with my staff, understand their concerns about morale, and communicate those concerns back to Department leadership. In my experience, the best work comes from well-resourced teams that support one another in their work towards achieving common goals and advancing U.S. policies. If confirmed, I will maintain clear communication and articulate goals and priorities early on and often. I will work across the interagency and with Washington to ensure that future growth meets U.S. strategic objectives and can be supported effectively by post's management platform.

Question. How do you intend to create a unified mission and vision at Mission Bamako?

Answer. I will involve everyone in creating our strategy and have buy in at all levels. I will lead by example and empower my team. If confirmed, I intend to ensure that all employees working in Embassy Bamako, whether they are Locally Engaged Staff, eligible family members, or U.S. direct hires, feel supported and heard in their work. I maintain an open office policy and welcome the contributions and ideas of those working in our mission. I will also actively support Embassy Bamako's existing mentorship programs for first and second tour officers, mid-level

U.S. direct hires, and our Locally Employed Staff and ensure that they meet the professional development needs of staff.

Question. How would you describe your management style?

Answer. My management style is to lead from behind. To let the experts do their work while providing enough guidance so that there are no misunderstandings. I like to collaborate and make sure I provide everything in my power so that my team can get the job done. I am a positive person and I like to find the best in everyone. I like to coach, not coerce. I am also empathetic in my approach to leading teams. If confirmed, I will prioritize collaboration and partnerships, including from Congressional representatives, to achieve U.S. policy priorities in Mali. I am willing to give my time and myself to better my team. My management principles are as follows:

- *Act like a leader—Take action and glean insights on the results of those efforts.* Share everything seen and heard with teammates.
- *Regulate yourself—EQ is twice as important as technical skills and IQ in driving performance and achieving success.* Control emotional outbursts and redirect them in more productive ways
- *Become self-aware—Ask for feedback from colleagues.* Effective team performance begins with how the leader sees the situation.
- *Be persuasive—Establish credibility through expertise and relationships.* Reinforce your position with numerical data and stories. Connect emotionally with your audience.
- *Coach the team you have, not the team you want.* Most of us will not have the luxury of inheriting our "dream team". We can encourage and bring out the best traits of our team members and find that rewarding in itself.
- *Surround yourself with people that fill your gaps.* You want a team that complements you. Lack of diversity on a team can create an echo chamber that keeps you from being aware of crucial issues impacting your business.

Question. Do you believe it is ever acceptable or constructive to berate subordinates, either in public or private?

Answer. No, I do not.

Question. How do you envision your leadership relationship with your Deputy Chief of Mission?

Answer. I hope to have a wonderful and honest partnership with my Deputy Chief of Mission. We will work as a true team to ensure the U.S. Mission in Mali is best placed to advance U.S. interests.

Question. If confirmed, what leadership responsibilities do you intend to entrust to your Deputy Chief of Mission?

Answer. If confirmed, I will entrust my DCM with the responsibilities akin to those of a chief operating officer. While both the DCM and I will have responsibility for coaching and mentoring the Embassy team, if confirmed, I will also ask the DCM to play the primary role in ensuring the career development of the first- and second-tour officers on the Embassy team. And I will be open to any ideas that the DCM has about functions in which s/he is particularly interested or where s/he has particular strengths.

Question. Do you believe that it is important to provide employees with accurate, constructive feedback on their performances in order to encourage improvement and reward those who most succeeded in their roles?

Answer. Yes, I do.

Question. If confirmed, would you support and encourage clear, accurate, and direct feedback to employees in order to improve performance and reward high achievers?

Answer. Yes, I will.

Question. In your opinion, do U.S. diplomats get outside of our embassy walls enough to accomplish fully their missions?

Answer. Restrictions on movement due to the security environment have made outside meetings challenging but I understand diplomats at Embassy Bamako are still able to regularly meet contacts and provide robust, well-informed reporting to the Department. If confirmed, I will listen to my team to understand what resources they need to increase in-person interactions. outside Embassy walls. There must be a balance between mission, security concerns, and COVID–19 mitigation. I see great

value in leaving the embassy compound and am committed to ensuring the safety of my teammates. If in-person interactions are unsafe, I will provide technological support to my team so that they are still able to fully accomplish our mission.

Question. How do you intend to improve the ability of U.S. diplomats to better access all local populations?

Answer. If confirmed, I will listen to my team to understand what resources they need from the State Department to increase in-person interactions. If in-person interactions are unsafe, I will provide technological support to my team so that they are able to meet virtually with their contacts.

Question. What is the public diplomacy environment like in Mali?

Answer. The United States is very visible in all areas of public diplomacy in Mali: traditional media, social media, education, and cultural programs. The U.S. Embassy has strong relationships with media professionals in both state-owned and private media, including through the offering of trainings and exchange opportunities. Voice of America's Bambara-language service is a popular and trusted source of information for many Malians. As for social media, the U.S. Embassy's Facebook page is one of the most followed official pages in the country. Over the past year, Malian social media has become thoroughly infested with disinformation, much of it anti-Western and/or pro-Russian. Kremlin-linked proxies exploit instability to gain influence, particularly through disinformation and the deployment of the Wagner Group forces. The onslaught of disinformation has made some parts of the Malian public more skeptical about U.S. policies, but many Malians are still very positively disposed towards the United States. The demand for U.S. help in promoting the teaching and use of English in schools, the media, and the business environment is insatiable, especially as Malians are seeking to diversify partnerships away from reliance on France. The network of exchange alumni, especially those of the Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI) Mandela Washington Fellowship, are force multipliers for the United States. The demand for spaces in U.S. exchange programs is magnitudes beyond the spaces available.

Question. What public diplomacy challenges do U.S. diplomats face there?

Answer. The deteriorating security environment creates the most challenging obstacles to U.S. public diplomacy. Most public diplomacy work outside of Bamako relies on implementation through grant partners. Virtual programs to reach audiences outside the capital are hampered by poor internet quality and expensive internet. Given the burgeoning youth population (one of the youngest populations in the world), the number of positions in youth exchange programs cannot come close to meeting demand. The proliferation of disinformation has transformed the information landscape in ways unfavorable to U.S. interests. Not only has the Prigozhin enterprise deployed considerable resources to turn public opinion against France, Europe, and MINUSMA, but many Malians have enthusiastically taken to creating homegrown disinformation. A network of self-proclaimed "pan-Africanists," some of whom with confirmed links to the Kremlin, from across Africa have taken up the anti-French, pro-Russian cause and have turned Mali into a testing ground for spreading this contagion to neighboring countries. WhatsApp has become the most efficient—and most difficult to track—vector for spreading narratives inimical to U.S. interests. Facebook is widely used to propagate disinformation. TikTok is becoming a new tool for reaching youth with hostile content. The U.S. diplomats based in Bamako do not have the tools, staffing, and resources to counter this coordinated information operation. Rising influence of the People's Republic of China (PRC) is also an issue to watch. While the PRC's presence is most obvious in the economic sphere, the PRC is also growing in influence in the public diplomacy space. For example, the Confucius Institute at the largest public university is well-resourced and very popular with students. The PRC has also played a large role in financing and constructing the new public university campus on the outskirts of Bamako, while the United States just this year opened a modest American Corner on that same campus.

Question. How do you balance the importance of Main State versus the in-country mission when it comes to tailoring public diplomacy messages for foreign audiences?

Answer. I believe both Main State and our mission in Bamako have important roles to play when it comes to tailoring public diplomacy messages for foreign audiences. Public diplomacy officials on the ground can use close relationships with local media to reach a broad array of Malians with our messaging. Officials in Washington—with a wider audience—offer a platform to amplify this messaging. If confirmed, I will ensure our mission and Main State coordinate on messaging to ensure it is as effective as possible.

Question. "Anomalous health incidents," commonly referred to as "Havana Syndrome," have been debilitating and sidelining U.S. diplomats around the world for years. They have caused serious, negative consequences for U.S. diplomacy, yet many believe that the Department is not doing enough to care for, protect, and communicate to its personnel.

• If confirmed, do you commit to taking this threat seriously?

Answer. Yes. I am deeply troubled by potential anomalous health incidents that have affected U.S. Government personnel and their family members. Serving one's country overseas should not come at the cost of one's health. I agree that such incidents may pose a threat to the well-being of U.S. personnel and must be taken extremely seriously. If confirmed, the health, safety, and security of Embassy staff, their family members, and all those supporting the mission will be my highest priority.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to talking as openly as you can to Mission Bamako personnel?

Answer. If confirmed, I am committed to regularly share new information on this issue consistent with ensuring the integrity of ongoing investigations.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO RACHNA SACHDEVA KORHONEN BY SENATOR TODD YOUNG

Question. If confirmed, how would you encourage the transition government to adhere to its agreement with ECOWAS for a 24-month political transition?

Answer. If confirmed, I will continue to stand firmly with the Malian people in their aspirations for democracy, peace, development, and respect for human rights. I will press the transition government to keep its promise to return the country to the Malian people through democratic governance. The reforms the transition government seeks to undertake, such as constitutional reform, will build a foundation for a stronger, more responsive democracy in Mali, and, if confirmed, I will encourage the transition government to undertake these reforms expeditiously. I will also caution them that some reforms are the work of generations and will need to be handed over to a democratic government. I echo Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield's observation "that a Mali isolated from its community of nations and ECOWAS is not where Mali wants to be." I share her wish to work with the Malian transition government to bring Mali back into the community of nations where it belongs. In order to rebuild relationships with its neighbors, the transition government first needs to demonstrate commitment to the transition timelines and work transparently with ECOWAS special envoy Goodluck Jonathan and the transition monitoring committee. If confirmed, I will seek to assist the transition government as it moves towards the constitutional referendum and elections, but we must see progress.

Question. To what degree do you assess that U.S. adversaries and their actors, such as the Wagner Group, successfully operate in Mali?

Answer. Russia enjoys a burgeoning relationship with the transition government, evidenced by numerous ministerial trips by transition government members to Russia in recent months. The Wagner Group, through its partnership with the Malian Armed Forces (FAMa), is participating in operations in the country. Ultimately, 1,000 Wagner forces will not achieve what 5,000 French forces could not. The tactics Wagner has allegedly used in Moura and elsewhere have resulted in a spike in human rights abuses. Wagner will not bring peace to Mali.

Question. Beyond support for international peacekeeping operations, what specifically would you do as Chief of Mission to discourage the Malian Government from relying on the aid of our adversaries—whether military or economic?

Answer. If confirmed, I will share with my Malian colleagues the harm caused by Yevgeniy Prigzhoin and the Wagner Group in multiple contexts, including in Libya, Mozambique, Syria, and the Central African Republic. Countries that partner with Prigozhin and Wagner become weaker, poorer, more volatile and less secure. As a practical matter, leaders in such countries lose control of security operations within their territory. The steep costs in payments and mineral concessions that are demanded by Prigozhin's enterprises deprive national budgets and local citizens of critically needed resources. Prigozhin is best known for financing the Internet Research Agency (IRA), an entity that repeatedly attempted to interfere in the U.S. elections. Through companies that exploit Africa's natural resources, political

operatives who undermine democratic actors, front companies posing as NGOs, and social media manipulation, Prigozhin spreads disinformation to influence African politics in the Kremlin's favor. The Wagner Group's alleged human rights abuses, including at Moura and Gossi, will only harm the transition government counterterrorism efforts by alienated the Malian people.

If confirmed, I will call on the transition government to take action to facilitate responsible and accountable security assistance efforts aimed at protecting and empowering the Malian people.

Question. If confirmed, how will you work as Chief of Mission to ensure continuing support of PEPFAR and other life-saving health programs?

Answer. USAID has partnered with the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, civil society, and private sector for over 60 years and remains Mali's largest bilateral health donor. Our health programs reach 80 percent of Malians. USAID's health programs focus on strengthening communities' capacity to protect their own health and strengthen the health systems that underpin successful expansion of, access to, and use of high impact primary health care services in the areas of maternal and child health, voluntary family planning, and disease prevention and control. I view these health initiatives, including PEPFAR, as vital to our efforts to promote a more stable, peaceful, and resilient Mali. If confirmed, I will endeavor to ensure these programs are supported so we can continue this critical work.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO RACHNA SACHDEVA KORHONEN BY SENATOR MIKE ROUNDS

Question. What is your view of the U.N. Peacekeeping Mission in Mali MINUSMA, the deadliest peacekeeping mission in the world, particularly given the post-coup environment in Mali? As U.S. Ambassador, if confirmed, how will you engage MINUSMA leadership, and leadership in the Africa and International Organization Affairs Bureaus at the State Department to make sure that mandate of the mission is appropriate for the existing political and security environment in Mali

Answer. The United States strongly supports MINUSMA as the leading component of the international community's efforts to address the political and security crises in Mali, including by supporting the parties to make progress towards sustainable peace. MINUSMA also plays a critical role in the protection of Malian civilians and facilitating their access to basic services as well as humanitarian aid.

The restrictions the transition government has imposed on MINUSMA, as well as the arrival of the Wagner Group, threaten the safety of MINUSMA peacekeepers and obstruct the implementation of the mission's mandate. The United States has urged the transition government to enable MINUSMA to carry out its mandate unimpeded. If confirmed, I will continue to advocate for MINUSMA in this regard.

If confirmed, I commit to continuing the sustained, senior-level engagement Embassy Bamako conducts with MINUSMA, both on the Force and Civilian sides. I will also continue to advocate with the transition government for MINUSMA to be able to carry out its mandate unimpeded. I will provide colleagues in the Bureaus of African and International Organization Affairs with the on-the-ground perspective necessary for the Department to assess the mission's effectiveness and inform the interagency policy process.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO ROLFE MICHAEL SCHIFFER BY SENATOR EDWARD J. MARKEY ROUNDS

Question. In 2021, the Philippines had one of the highest per capita murder rates of land and environmental defenders in the world. What actions will you take as Assistant Administrator for the Bureau for Asia to ensure that USAID employees, including officers posted to the region, are trained on (1) effective engagement with environmental defenders and extractive industry or agribusiness companies; (2) how to manage conflict between these groups; and (3) how to encourage businesses to engage responsibly with critics of their activities?

Answer. I have closely followed the Philippines for many years and am very familiar with the environmental and land defenders that you raise. I deeply admire their brave efforts in the face of very real danger in the Philippines. Their efforts are even more urgent in the face of the climate crisis, which impacts the Philippines in profound and numerous ways.

If confirmed, I will work to ensure that all relevant USAID staff give this issue the urgent attention that it deserves. I will make sure our staff are aware of and able to connect defenders and supporting organizations to available resources in each country, including those that may be supported by the USG, and other like-minded partner countries and actors. I will also help USAID partner with counterparts in the Philippines to work toward minimizing conflict.

Question. What actions will you take to push back against the authoritarian playbook of repression in the Indo-Pacific and make investments in democracy promotion, rule of law, and the protection of human rights?

Answer. If confirmed, I plan to take several actions to push back against the authoritarian playbook of repression in the Indo-Pacific and make investments in democracy promotion, rule of law, and the protection of human rights. Following on from the Administration's successful first Summit for Democracy in December 2021, I understand that USAID is launching new global democracy, human rights, and governance (DRG) programs that will complement ongoing DRG programming that supports fundamental democratic practices across the Asia Pacific. I understand that these new and ongoing programs include objectives to promote election implementation and oversight, enhance civil society—including women, youth, and labor engagements, bolster free media, fight corruption, build governing capacity, and strengthen the rule of law.

Also, I understand that USAID will continue to promote transparent, accountable and responsive institutions that build sustainable democracy and counter corruption. I further understand that USAID will also work to maintain the integrity of information technology spaces, promote and protect civil and political rights, strengthen the integrity of electoral processes, and support democratic champions wherever they are.

Using the strength of its field missions with dedicated career DRG officers, my understanding is that USAID focuses most of its assistance on bilateral programs managed by in-country staff.

Programs and approaches vary according to the country's context. However, for issues that are better addressed regionally, I understand that the Asia Bureau develops programs that are managed either from Washington or its regional missions.

Question. As noted in the Administration's Indo-Pacific Strategy, the Indo-Pacific is "the epicenter of the climate crisis." If confirmed, how will you work with partners and allies to ensure the international community provides adequate funding to address issues of both climate change mitigation and adaptation in this vulnerable region?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with partners and allies to ensure the international community provides adequate funding to address issues of both climate change mitigation and adaptation in this vulnerable region. I understand that USAID helps to build climate resilience across Asia, assisting their partner countries to address climate impacts on their doorsteps and reduce their climate impacts. Their assistance helps reduce emissions, protect critical ecosystems, accelerate Asia's transition to renewable energy, and build resilience against climate shocks. Achieving climate results through non-climate programs is critical to mainstreaming climate. I also understand that USAID pursues secondary objectives with indirect adaptation, clean energy, or sustainable landscape results, where appropriate, while staying focused on their primary development purpose.

The USAID Papua New Guinea Electrification Partnership (PEP) is one example of a unique multi donor clean energy initiative, cost-shared in collaboration with Australia, Japan, and New Zealand. PEP's goal is to increase PNG's electrification rate from 13 percent to 70 percent by 2030.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO ROLFE MICHAEL SCHIFFER BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH[1]

Question. Based on the strike that killed Ayman al-Zawahiri, it's clear that the Taliban are providing sanctuary for Al Qaeda. In addition, recent U.N. reports indicate that the Taliban and Al Qaeda remain tied by ideology and marriage, and al Qaeda is actively reestablishing a presence in Afghanistan. Furthermore, the

[1] Within the following set of additional questions and responses, there are questions for which Senator Risch requested a follow up response. The initial question did not change, so only the follow up response is printed here.

Taliban's human rights record is appalling as evidenced by a recent Amnesty International report titled Death in Slow Motion, which captures the plight of Afghan women and girls.

- How do you intend to strike the right balance between providing for the needs of the Afghan people and preventing diversions to terrorism or entrenching human rights abusers?
- What mechanisms are in place to avoid diversions to the Taliban or Haqqani network?

Answer. I understand that USAID has worked in challenging and conflict-affected areas throughout its history and that the Agency has drawn on experiences from its over 20 years in Afghanistan, and other challenging environments—including Iraq, Yemen, Somalia, Sudan, and Colombia—to put in place strong oversight of U.S. Government assistance funds.

I further understand that all USAID humanitarian assistance is channeled through U.N. and international non-governmental organization partners, predicated on validated humanitarian need and the vulnerability of the supported communities and that no USG humanitarian assistance is provided to or through Taliban authorities.

I further understand that while USAID has legal authorizations in place to safeguard against sanctions violations, it still requires its partners to report any instances of diversion, fraud, waste, and abuse, including incidents involving the Taliban and Haqqani Network, and will suspend funding if necessary. Finally, I understand that USAID also vets key personnel of all of its implementing partners to ensure that no funds are diverted for nefarious purposes.

Question. In the West Bank and Gaza, USAID has a formal definition of 'direct benefit' that is operationalized in associated Mission Orders.

- What definition of direct benefit is USAID using in Afghanistan?
- Please describe the categories of USAID assistance to Afghanistan and the intended goals of such assistance.

Answer. "Direct assistance" is not defined legally and the term is not otherwise a term of art. I understand that USAID has been coordinating with the Department of State on application of the restriction and that State and USAID have agreed the scope of the restriction needs to be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. I further understand that because the United States has not yet made a decision as to whether to recognize any entity, including the Taliban, as the Government of Afghanistan, the provision of assistance raises difficult questions regarding its potential application to Afghan Government entities (such as ministries, etc., which continue to exist and operate regardless of any U.S. recognition decision). It is my understanding that State and USAID expect that the restriction would apply to any assistance provided directly to the Taliban as a group and could also apply to entities controlled by the Taliban, depending on the circumstances.

I understand that USAID is doing a great deal alongside its international partners to address Afghanistan's most urgent humanitarian needs. The United States is the largest single donor of humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan, and targets its humanitarian assistance to the most vulnerable populations, focusing on provinces where levels of food insecurity are the most dire and where partners have an operational presence and the capacity to scale up.

Humanitarian assistance is necessary, but not sufficient, to help Afghanistan become economically capable of supporting its population. Therefore, I understand that USAID classifies non-HA assistance into two main areas of support: 1: basic needs through support to livelihoods and agriculture, education, and health sectors; and 2: human rights, and importantly the rights of women and girls.

In health, I understand that USAID programs support the COVID–19 pandemic response; help maintain basic service delivery, particularly maternal health services, prenatal and neonatal care; and increase access to water, sanitation, and hygiene.

I understand that livelihood assistance is helping to minimize the impact of economic disruption and instability on vulnerable households. Assistance is helping to increase production of food and staple crops—such as wheat, soy, beans, and a variety of fresh fruits and vegetables, as well as the livestock and dairy sectors.

It is my understanding that on human rights, USAID supports the rights of women, children, journalists, human rights defenders, persons with disabilities, and members of minority groups. Together with State Department colleagues, they continue to press the Taliban to immediately cease repressive abuses and human rights violations. If confirmed, I look forward to furthering these critical efforts.

Finally, I understand that USAID has been able to sustain support to community-based education programs, private secondary and higher education programs, scholarships for Afghan students at the university level, and teacher training.

Question. If confirmed, will you commit to upholding the statutory structure and organizational principles of the U.S. Agency of International Development (USAID), whereby the agency operates as an independent agency under the foreign policy direction of the U.S. Secretary of State?

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, I will uphold the statutory structure and organizational principles by which USAID formulates and executes U.S. foreign economic and development assistance policies and programs, subject to the foreign policy guidance of the President, the Secretary of State, and the National Security Council.

Question. If confirmed, will you commit to working in a bipartisan manner with the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, including by providing timely, accurate, and complete information on relevant U.S. foreign assistance programs in Asia?

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, I commit to working in a bipartisan manner with the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, including by providing timely, accurate, and complete information on relevant U.S. foreign assistance programs in Asia.

Question. If confirmed, will you commit to upholding a zero tolerance policy for waste, fraud, and abuse in the programs under your purview?

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, I commit to upholding a zero tolerance policy for waste, fraud, and abuse in the programs under my purview.

Question. If confirmed, will you also uphold a zero tolerance policy for USAID staff and implementing partners who engage in the sexual exploitation and abuse of the vulnerable communities they are meant to serve?

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, I will uphold a zero tolerance policy for USAID staff and implementing partners who engage in the sexual exploitation and abuse of the vulnerable communities they are meant to serve.

Question. USAID has a diverse workforce, supported by 22 different hiring mechanisms, that has been under enormous stress over the last few years, in large part due to persistent management challenges, budget uncertainty, and COVID–19 and its associated stresses. If confirmed, you will be responsible for overseeing 8 offices at headquarters, 15 bilateral missions in Asia (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Burma, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Kyrgyz Republic, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Timor-Leste, Uzbekistan, and Vietnam), and 3 regional missions (the Regional Development Mission for Asia in Thailand, the Pacific Islands Regional Office based in the Philippines, and the Central Asia Regional office based in Kazakhstan). A number of these missions, including but not limited to Afghanistan, face significant security and access challenges.

- What is your understanding of morale within the Bureau for Asia?

Answer. If confirmed, one of my highest priorities would be to make the Asia Bureau's morale as strong as possible. From my interactions with Asia Bureau staff, it is evident that staff rightly take deep satisfaction and pride in their work, and are firmly committed to USAID's mission. However, it is my understanding that the impacts of the COVID pandemic, compounded by crises and violence in several countries, such as Afghanistan and Burma, have impacted the morale of Asia Bureau staff. Nevertheless, staff are persisting in their life-saving and life-changing work.

Question. How do you intend to improve morale across the bureau?

Answer. representatives from the Office of Human Capital and Talent Management to gauge the state of morale. I will conduct listening sessions to hear from staff across the Bureau, work with staff to develop a plan of action to address any issues identified, and set an implementation timeline with built-in feedback loops, if confirmed.

Question. How do you intend to create a unified vision across the bureau and its bilateral and regional missions, while also accounting for the areas of overlap with other agencies, bureaus, offices, and initiatives?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with the staff to develop a strategic vision for the Bureau that provides for clear goals and objectives while promoting cross-collaboration among teams. I will empower teams to develop contextualized implementation plans with clearly stated goals and results that derive from and support the Asia Bureau strategic vision and its priorities. I will also work with Bureau staff to continually highlight the importance of our unified vision and the factors that

make for a successful "Team Asia" and ultimately a successful USAID. Where necessary, I will strengthen the Bureau's various mechanisms for accountability and transparency, including performance reports, site visits, robust program evaluations and audits, if confirmed.

Question. How would you describe your management style?

Answer. I would describe my management style as vision-driven and results-oriented. My goal is to create an inclusive, team-oriented environment where staff are held accountable for achieving results and feel empowered and supported by management. I believe in an inclusive, open, and collaborative approach to management, one that seeks to create an environment of constant feedback and learning for a culture that thrives on the free expression of ideas and unleashes the creative potential of the workforce. I believe in the importance of working across and with the entire organization to develop a shared strategic vision; translate that into practical, measurable implementable steps; align organizational resources and activities to do so—in an environment of shared ownership and mutual accountability. Clear communication, candid feedback and flexible decentralized decision-making that empowers employees to own and direct their own work, that monitors accountability and facilitates implementation, and that recognizes that different individuals and teams have different needs, are, in my view, key to a management approach that can create a high-performing, resilient and humane workplace.

Question. In your view, how would your management style translate in a USAID setting, where your workforce is composed of career foreign and civil servants, as well as a dizzying array of political appointees, Foreign Service Limited appointments, Participating Agency Service Agreements, contractors, and grantees?

Answer. My transparent and agile management style would allow me to effectively balance the Bureau's competing priorities while holding everyone accountable for achieving the overall Agency and U.S. Government foreign policy objectives. Although USAID has a variety of hiring mechanisms, it is a workforce that has a competitive edge in being united by a common goal and a shared mission. Given the complex and dispersed nature of many of USAID's programs, if confirmed, I intend to work with my colleagues to help create, build and sustain an organization for all employees at all levels, one that draws on our shared dependence and the commitment of all the members of the organization. I am also strongly of the view that diversity in a workforce, including diverse perspectives that come from different career experiences and modes of professional engagement only strengthen an organization, providing valuable insight that strengthen the ability of an organization to make better decisions, be more adaptive, and engage more effectively and creatively.

Question. As a political appointee rather than career foreign or civil servant, do you believe it is incumbent upon Agency leaders to integrate themselves into bureau operations and culture? If yes, how do you intend to do so?

Answer. Yes. If confirmed, I intend to immerse myself in understanding the nuances of USAID by listening to the Bureau's workforce, both in DC and in the field, to ensure I fully understand the current objectives, programs, workstyle, and organizational strengths—and especially, given the challenges of the past several years and the changing nature of work, what the needs and aspirations of the organization look like within the broader construct of USAID operations, ambitions and culture. If confirmed, I plan to seek the views, perspectives and ideas of the widest possible range of staff and to work together with my team so that we can establish a clear vision and set of goals and objectives that is communicated throughout the bureau, to other elements of USAID and the USG, and to our implementing partners. I am acutely aware of the importance of understanding and being sensitive to different modes and methods of communication, aspirational thinking, and organizational habits—to marry the "policy" goals that the Biden-Harris administration seeks to pursue with an appreciation of USAID "process" and "practice" (or, in other words, culture)—to get things done, and done in a way that creates positive feedback, virtuous cycles, a healthy, motivated workforce, and forward organizational momentum.

Question. Do you believe it is ever acceptable or constructive to berate subordinates, either in public or in private?

Answer. No, I do not believe it is ever acceptable or constructive to berate subordinates, either in public or in private.

Question. In order to incentivize and ensure employee excellence at USAID, accurate performance reviews for all categories of employees are critical, though often lacking. Do you believe that it is important to provide employees with accurate, con-

structive feedback on their performance in order to encourage improvement and reward those who most succeeded in their roles?

Answer. Yes, I believe that it is important to provide employees with accurate, constructive feedback on their performance in order to encourage improvement and reward those who most succeeded in their roles.

Question. If confirmed, would you support and encourage the managers in your bureau to provide clear, accurate, and direct feedback

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, I would support and encourage the managers in the Asia bureau to provide clear, accurate, and direct feedback.

Question. Should the United States engage in highly risky public health research—such as gain-of-function research—in cooperation with countries that do not have adequate biosecurity standards, that have violated or failed to uphold the International Health Regulations, or where the United States cannot certify that such country is in compliance with the Biological Weapons Convention, including China?

Answer. I understand that USAID has never approved any work, including in China, that aimed to increase the ability of infectious agents to cause disease by enhancing its pathogenicity or by increasing its transmissibility (research known as "Gain of Function " studies).

I understand that prior to selecting countries to engage with on public health research activities, USAID conducts an assessment of countries' capacity to responsibly conduct research by evaluating indicators that include but are not limited to, biosafety, biosecurity, IHR reporting compliance, willingness to share data, and political and security risks and that countries that underperform in these criteria are not selected for engagement.

* * *

Follow Up Response

Answer. I do not support USAID conducting research that would make viruses more lethal or transmissible in cooperation with such countries. Furthermore, it is my understanding that USAID does not engage in such highly risky public health research in any partner countries (research sometimes called "Gain of Function)" and that USAID has not funded or conducted any studies or experiments anywhere in the world that would make viruses more lethal or transmissible.

I understand that prior to selecting countries to engage with on public health research activities, USAID conducts an assessment of countries' capacity to responsibly conduct research by evaluating indicators that include but are not limited to, biosafety, biosecurity, IHR reporting compliance, willingness to share data, and political and security risks and that countries that underperform in these criteria are not selected for engagement. If confirmed, I am committed to requiring that compliance with the Biological Weapons Convention is included as a country selection indicator.

* * *

Question. If confirmed, will you ensure USAID's research and development grants for public health research in Asia are fully vetted and do not flow to partners or sub-grantees engaged in such research? How?

Answer. I understand that USAID will build guidance into its Global Health Security projects that helps ensure implementing partners are adhering to rigorous biosafety and biosecurity protocols. I also understand that USAID requires regular reporting on implementing partners' activities supported with Agency funding, which must adhere to the criteria laid out in the award. If confirmed, I will ensure that USAID continues to provide active review and oversight of awards made with Agency appropriated funds to monitor activities and the use of funds, and that funds do not support enhanced Potential Pandemic Pathogen research (i.e. research that makes a potentially pandemic virus more transmissible or pathogenic) through either the prime or sub-partners.

* * *

Follow Up Response

Answer. Yes. I understand that USAID fully vets partners that receive public health research funding. I understand that in accordance with USAID's Operational Policy (ADS 303.3.9 Pre-Award Risk Assessment), this vetting includes, but is not limited to, requiring a USAID Agreement Officer to verify that the partner:

- does not have active exclusions in the System for Award Management (SAM) (beta.sam.gov);
- does not appear on the Specially Designated Nationals (SDN) and Blocked Persons List maintained by the U.S. Treasury for the Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC: http://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/sanctions/SDNList/Pages/default.aspx); and
- is not listed on the United Nations Security designation List (online at: http://www.un.org/sc/committees/1267/aq—sanctions—list.shtml) prior to making an award.

If confirmed, I look forward to engaging with Agency leadership and with you on this issue.

I also understand USAID is building guidance into its Global Health Security projects with a life sciences focus to ensure implementing partners are adhering to rigorous biosafety and biosecurity protocols. Further, I understand that USAID requires regular reporting on implementing partners' activities supported with Agency funding, which must adhere to the criteria laid out in the award. If confirmed, I will reinforce USAID's continued practice of active review and oversight of awards made with Agency appropriated funds to monitor activities and the use of funds, and that funds do not support enhanced Potential Pandemic Pathogen research (i.e. research that makes a potentially pandemic virus more transmissible or pathogenic) through either the prime or sub-partners.

* * *

Question. If confirmed, will you commit to ensuring full and complete compliance with current law, which prohibits the use of U.S. foreign assistance to perform or promote abortion as a method of family planning, support involuntary sterilizations, or lobby for or against the legalization of abortion overseas?

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, I commit to ensuring compliance with all applicable statutory restrictions relating to abortion and involuntary sterilization.

Question. USAID, in coordination with the U.S. Department of State, manages United States contributions to COVAX.

- Do you agree that it is in the national interests of the United States, and the interests of our partners in Asia, to ensure that U.S. financial contributions to COVAX are not used to underwrite the purchase and distribution of substandard Chinese COVID–19 vaccines, particularly following the announcement that COVAX would, in fact, begin making major purchases of Chinese vaccines?
- If confirmed, how do you propose to counter China's vaccine diplomacy—or bullying—in the region?

Answer. Yes, I agree that it is in the interest of the United States and our partners for as many people as possible to be vaccinated with the highest-quality, U.S.-manufactured vaccines available. To that end, I understand that USAID and its interagency partners have delivered nearly 300 million doses of COVID–19 vaccines to 26 countries in Asia. I also understand that most of the Agency's Indo-Pacific partners have specifically asked for U.S.-manufactured vaccines. It is also my understanding that the U.S. contribution to COVAX was not used to purchase vaccines made in the PRC. The Biden-Harris administration is dedicated to its efforts to vaccinate the world and ensure broad availability of safe and effective vaccines to more countries in need, through COVAX and bilaterally, and I believe others should do the same.

I know that across Asia, USAID assists countries with vaccine readiness, vaccine advocacy campaigns, and vaccine delivery. From enhancing laboratory capabilities to installing liquid oxygen tanks, USAID's partnerships with the governments and people have enabled them to respond to COVID–19, strengthen health systems, and better prepare communities for future pandemics.

The Biden-Harris administration supports the World Health Organization's goal of vaccinating 70 percent of the global population and pledged that the United States will be the world's vaccine arsenal. I understand that USAID plays a pivotal role in U.S. contributions to this goal by advancing the President's commitment to make 1.2 billion U.S.-made doses available for donation to low- and lower-middle-income countries. I understand that USAID will also continue to provide financial and technical assistance to deliver and administer vaccines through our leadership of the U.S. Government's Initiative for Global Vaccine Access (Global VAX), through which USAID has supported more than 100 countries.

* * *

Follow Up Response

Answer. It is my belief that the best way to counter the PRC's efforts is for the United States to remain the world's arsenal for vaccines, especially as there is a clear preference for U.S.-made vaccines. To date, USG vaccine donations have significantly outpaced those by the PRC. We also need to continue being assertive in publicizing our contributions; we must keep telling the story of how American innovation and donations—our effective vaccines—have directly contributed to easing the pandemic in communities around the world.

The Biden-Harris administration supports the World Health Organization's goal of vaccinating 70 percent of the global population. I understand that USAID plays a pivotal role in U.S. contributions to this goal by advancing the President's commitment to make doses available for donation to low- and lower-middle-income countries, and that the U.S. has been able to meet vaccine demand for 116 countries who have requested doses. I understand that USAID will also continue to provide financial and technical assistance to deliver and administer vaccines through our leadership of the U.S. Government's Initiative for Global Vaccine Access (Global VAX), through which USAID has supported more than 100 countries. If confirmed, I will work with Congress to ensure these programs are adequately funded.

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Question. USAID overseas missions have a long history of stretching the boundaries when it comes to permissible uses of PEPFAR funds.

- If confirmed, will you commit to working closely with the Office of the U.S. Global AIDS Coordinator and Health Diplomacy (OGAC) at the U.S. Department of State, USAID's Bureau for Global Health, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to ensure that USAID's efforts to combat HIV/AIDS in the region are efficient, effective, aligned and complementary to the work of OGAC?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to working closely with the Office of the U.S. Global AIDS Coordinator and Health Diplomacy at the State Department, USAID's Bureau for Global Health, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and other PEPFAR implementing agencies to ensure that USAID's efforts to combat HIV/AIDS in the region are efficient, effective, and aligned to PEPFAR's objectives.

Question. There has been a strong focus over the last two years on multilateral institutions to address global challenges.

- Recognizing that multilateral and bilateral programs are meant to work collaboratively, and that each have their own unique strengths and challenges, what would you consider to be the appropriate balance between multilateral and U.S. bilateral foreign assistance programs in the region?
- How important to U.S. public diplomacy efforts is "branding" United States foreign assistance in the region?
- Is working through multilateral or regional institutions worth the trade-off when it comes to the loss of branding and other public diplomacy opportunities in the region?

Answer. I understand that in Asia, USAID will continue to engage like-minded partners directly, in-country, and through multilateral initiatives such as the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad), U.S.-Taiwan Pacific Islands Dialogue, U.S.-Japan-Australia Trilateral Infrastructure Consultation, the Trilateral Pacific Security Dialogue, and others. I further understand that USAID will continue to deepen its collaboration with Australia, Japan, New Zealand, the Republic of Korea, , and other like-minded partners and will seek to leverage its strong partnerships with

regional institutions, including the Pacific Islands Forum, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and the Quad.

On the issue of balance between multilateral and bilateral assistance, I believe that balance depends on the country and the goals to be achieved by the assistance. Bilateral assistance allows the USG to achieve goals that further U.S. foreign policy objectives, allows for greater accountability and provides visibility around the assistance delivered. However, there are advantages to using multilateral channels when striving to pool resources and advance a common global cause. For example, USAID may choose to provide assistance through multilateral organizations such as the case of Burma where humanitarian assistance providers' lives could be put at risk should the assistance be branded as USAID assistance. I also believe that a better option could be a hybrid model where assistance is provided to multilateral organizations but is earmarked for specific purposes providing USAID the advantages of both options.

I believe appropriate branding sends a strong public diplomacy message, conveying that United States assistance is due to the generosity of the American people. If confirmed, I commit to complying with all USAID branding legal and policy requirements.

Question. Successive administrations—both Democrat and Republican—have launched initiatives to "localize" U.S. foreign assistance, including by building the capacity of local partners to design programs and manage U.S. funds directly, rather than working as sub-awardees to large, U.S.-based development contractors and non-governmental organizations. Each of these initiatives has had mixed results.

- What is your view of "localization" in the context of USAID's work in Asia?
- How can the Bureau for Asia more effectively empower local partners through its program consultation, design, and implementation processes?
- Is it appropriate to set targets for "localization" and, if so, what would you consider to be reasonable and appropriate?

Answer. I support the vision of localization Administrator Power presented in her November 2021 speech at Georgetown University, "A New Vision for Inclusive Development," in which she outlined USAID's commitment to build on past efforts in making its work more inclusive; and that the Agency will pursue this, in part, through localization. I understand that USAID will shift its programs and practices to expand and enhance its support for locally-led development, the process in which local actors—encompassing individuals, communities, networks, organizations, private entities, and governments—set their own agendas, develop solutions, and bring the capacity, leadership, and resources to make those solutions a reality. I agree with Administrator Power that around the world, when USAID's efforts are responsive to local priorities, and draw upon local capacities, diverse networks, and resources—results are more likely to be sustained by local organizations and institutions.

For the Agency and the Asia Bureau, I understand localization to mean channeling a portion of development and humanitarian awards directly to local civil society, business, and other institutions that are supported by and accountable to local communities. It means changing the power dynamics that have historically characterized the relationships among local actors, international prime partners, and donors, with renewed focus on empowering local actors-and, within that goal, ensuring meaningful participation by marginalized populations, including women, people with disabilities, youth, indigenous populations, displaced persons, and ethnic and religious minorities.

I think it is appropriate to set targets to help motivate and track the Agency's localization efforts. I understand that the targets that the Administrator announced in November—25 percent of USAID's funding going to direct local awards over four years and 50 percent of the Agency's activities incorporating good practices to put local actors in the lead over ten years-are global targets. If confirmed, I look forward to consulting with Congress and with the Bureau and Mission staff, to identify appropriate targets given the unique context of the region.

Question. Many of our partners in the Indo-Pacific want to work with the United States on clean energy. However, they have to prioritize their immediate needs for power and distribution, and often that means continuing to rely on oil and natural gas. Indo-Pacific nations want to cooperate with the U.S. on energy sources like natural gas, but are running into roadblocks with their counterparts in this Administration.

- Do you commit that, if confirmed, you will advance policies and programs with our partners that make sense for them given their current energy needs?

- Do you commit that you will not reject outright cooperation with partners on natural gas, other cleaner fossil fuels, or nuclear energy, if that is what is practical for them to meet their energy needs?
- What will inform how you approach technical assistance and other capacity-building efforts with Indo-Pacific nations on energy?

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, I commit to advancing policies and programs with our partner countries that make sense for them and will not outright reject any development solution to help our partners to meet their energy needs.

I understand that USAID has an adjudication process for reviewing fossil fuel projects under the Administration's International Energy Engagement Guidance. I am told that this guidance allows for support of carbon intensive energy sources necessary for geostrategic or development reasons when no other practical alternatives exist and the assistance will not prevent a country from meeting its decarbonization objectives.

As I understand, USAID's approach to energy sector reform and smart growth is to provide partner countries with the tools and capability needed to evaluate all of their options through an integrated resource planning (IRP) methodology. In addition, I understand that USAID assists countries in establishing open, transparent, competitive procurement processes, in order to obtain clean, affordable, and secure energy supplies.

Question. Do you commit to prioritizing infrastructure partners in the Indo-Pacific region, including through mechanisms such as the Infrastructure Transaction and Assistance Network and the related Transaction Advisory Fund?

Answer. Yes.

Question. The President just announced the Project on Global Infrastructure and Investment (PGII), and you mentioned in your opening statement that you would be involved in its implementation.

- What is PGII's purpose?
- How will PGII and USAID existing infrastructure programs and tools interact? Is PGII going to subsume any responsibilities of USAID?

Answer. As I understand, the purpose of the Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment (PGII) is to forge values-driven, transparent, impactful partnerships to meet the enormous infrastructure needs of low- and middle-income countries and, in so doing, to advance the United States' and our allies' economic and national security interests-for example, the integrity of supply chains.

PGII will mobilize strategic investments in areas vital to sustainable development and global security, including digital connectivity; climate and energy security; health and health security; and gender equality and equity. It will also mobilize strategic investment in hard infrastructure, like ports and rail.

To do this, PGII will promote the execution of projects in consultation and partnership with host countries and local stakeholders, develop clean and climate-resilient infrastructure, advance transparency and accountability, and support the policy and institutional reforms that are key to creating the conditions and capacity for sound projects and lasting results. PGII will coordinate the full suite of tools across the U.S. Government, as well as the G7, other governments, the private sector, multilateral development banks, development finance institutions, and others.

The U.S. aims to mobilize $200 billion for PGII over the next five years through grants, federal financing, and leveraging private sector investments. As part of the announcement of PGII, USAID launched three projects: Digital Invest, a USAID blended finance program that seeks to mobilize investment capital to expand internet access and digital financial services for traditionally underserved consumers in developing markets; The Healthcare Electrification and Telecommunication Alliance, which seeks to enhance health services and assist in COVID–19 response efforts by providing reliable, renewable, and affordable electricity for health care facilities across Sub-Saharan Africa; and Care Infrastructure, a new multi-partner contribution to the World Bank's Childcare Incentive Fund to scale high-quality child care and early learning and empower women to participate in the global economy.

If confirmed, I will closely examine alignment between PGII and existing programs such as the Infrastructure Transaction and Assistance Network (ITAN), which is a whole-of-government initiative to advance sustainable, transparent, high-quality infrastructure across the Indo-Pacific region, and the Transaction Advisory Fund, which I understand the Asia Bureau manages as an interagency tool to provide transaction advisory services on strategic infrastructure projects in the Indo-Pacific. If confirmed, I will ensure that all infrastructure tools and programs are complementary, non-duplicative, and deliver the best value for the US taxpayer.

Question. With respect to Southeast Asia and the Pacific Islands, what would be your top priorities if confirmed?

Answer. I understand that USAID considers its Pacific neighbors essential partners in fostering a free and open Indo-Pacific region and that USAID works to address the region's most pressing challenges: climate change, access to transparent and high-standard infrastructure financing, digital connectivity, good governance and sustainable development.

Working with Pacific Island countries to bolster their nature-based solutions, including conservation of critical ecosystems and sustainable management of fisheries, will strengthen livelihoods, support sustainable and healthy communities and ecosystems, and reduce the impacts of climate-related disasters.

I understand USAID plans to continue to deepen its work with countries in Southeast Asia, and that USAID will also leverage its strong partnerships with development partners and regional institutions, including ASEAN, thePacific Islands Forum, the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme, and the longstanding Pacific Community also known as SPC. Building and maintaining these partnerships will be essential to advancing Administration priorities such as addressing the climate crisis, recovering from the COVID–19 pandemic, countering malign actors, and addressing Burma's humanitarian challenges while seeking to restore democratic governance.

Question. With respect to Southeast Asia and the Pacific Islands] What do you see as major barriers to providing the right and most effective assistance and programming in these regions?

Answer. Pacific Islands countries face a range of barriers, including small geographic size, isolation, and small populations. These factors contribute to the region's extreme vulnerability to the impacts of climate change and natural disasters as well as constrain the growth of their economies. I understand that USAID's approach to the Pacific Islands supports addressing the most pressing priorities of the region . These priorities include combating climate change, sustainable fisheries management, promoting energy security, expanding digital connectivity, supporting economic development, and fostering inclusivity and equality. Effective programming in this region requires working at both the regional level, where there are opportunities to drive collective action and ensure strong unity within key regional organizations, such as the Pacific Islands Forum and the Pacific Community, as well as at the bilateral level, using programming tailored to fit the unique context of each country.

Countries across Southeast Asia are facing the immediate risks of climate change; rapid urbanization; and the overexploitation and contamination of life-sustaining resources of the land, air, and sea. Barriers remain to stronger regional connectivity, sustainable infrastructure development, and commitment to democratic principles and freedoms. Through sustainable, inclusive development partnerships such as the quadrilateral cooperation between Australia, India, Japan, and the United States (the Quad) and with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), I understand that USAID supports developing countries in Asia to realize their development goals and contribute to a more prosperous and peaceful world.

Question. If confirmed, how will you prioritize USAID programming under the Countering Chinese Influence Fund (CCIF)? What will be your guideposts?

Answer. Consistent with the FY 2022 State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Act (SFOAA), if confirmed, my work on the Countering People's Republic of China Influence Fund (CPIF) will be done in close consultation with the designated Coordinator and Deputy Coordinator for the FY 2022 CPIF allocation process.

My understanding is that USAID's priorities will align with both the wider U.S. Government strategy on China as well as the Agency's newly formed strategic approach to the People's Republic of China (PRC), with a focus on select economic, political, security, and technological sectors where PRC actions, influence, or messaging is most acute, is most detrimental to U.S. national security interests or those of our allies and partners, and where limited CPIF resources can have the greatest impact. While the PRC's efforts to displace the United States as the lead global power are a global, multi-sector threat, the Indo-Pacific remains the primary theater of competition and will receive strong consideration for CPIF resources.

Question. In the last several years, the executive branch has notified Congress projects using CCIF money that is clearly an attempt to use China as a justification to fund programs they already wanted to do anyway and that have no discernible nexus to countering China. Do you commit that you will not contribute to this dynamic?

Answer. I commit that, if confirmed as Assistant Administrator for the Bureau for Asia, I will work to ensure that proposals are closely aligned with one of four focus areas (sectors) for strategic competition: economic, political, security, and/or technology, and must articulate how the intended program will address a specific, negative PRC influence, action, or message resulting in a measurable impact

Question. How will you use your leadership role, if confirmed, to ensure CCIF funds are used appropriately?

Answer. If confirmed as Assistant Administrator for the Bureau for Asia, I commit to engaging with Congress as appropriate and necessary to ensure that the process is rigorous and that funds are used appropriately.

Question. Should bureaus and offices in the Department of State and the U.S. Agency for International Development consider CCIF to be a $300 million pot of money that they can use for whatever they want, regardless of whether it is connected to China?

Answer. I understand that USAID received clear feedback from Congress on how to improve its process of the Countering PRC Influence Fund (CPIF) for FY 2022 and beyond. Per their recent Report to Congress on The Framework and Processes for Administering the Countering PRC Influence Fund, the Department of State and USAID's FY 2022 guidance requires successful proposals to articulate how the intended program will address a specific, negative PRC influence, action, or message resulting in a measurable impact.

If confirmed, I will work, together with my counterpart at the Department of State, to ensure our teams apply rigorous standards to determine how CPIF funds will be used. If confirmed, I commit to further consulting with you on this issue.

Question. In the context of CCIF, to what extent will you distinguish between projects that might strengthen our partners and those that counter explicit activity or influence by the People's Republic of China?

Answer. I understand that CPIF is intended to provide the Department of State and USAID with resources to fund activities that strategically invest, align, and compete with the PRC's negative and inappropriate influence, actions, and messaging globally and provide our partners with diplomatic and development alternatives to the PRC's authoritarian model. In some instances, this can be accomplished by directly countering an explicit activity, influence effort, or messaging campaign by the PRC. In other instances, strengthening the systems, capacity and resilience of USAID partner countries to resist the PRC on their own can be equally as effective. Transparent, accountable systems based on a rules-based order inhibit the PRC development model, so strengthening those systems limits opportunity for the negative impact of the PRC. For example, both transparent public procurement systems and active civil society that hold politicians accountable for public asset declarations effectively decrease the opportunity for corruption, undermining inappropriate PRC influence.

While both approaches are valid ways to achieve the same objective, I understand that all proposals will be expected to cite a specific PRC influence or behavior that harms U.S. interests or those of USAID partner countries; describe the specific, measurable outcome to be achieved using CPIF funds; and articulate how the proposal would achieve this outcome and the duration of the project's lifespan.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO ROLFE MICHAEL SCHIFFER BY SENATOR MARCO RUBIO

Question. In May, Secretary Blinken said that the People's Republic of China is the "only country with both the intent to reshape the international order and, increasingly, the economic, diplomatic, military, and technological power to do it." The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) clearly holds all the reins of power in the People's Republic of China and has used this power to commit genocide in Xinjiang, flood our communities with fentanyl, and emit by far the largest quantity of greenhouse gases. With their absolute control of Chinese society and industry, the CCP could stop all of these destructive actions tomorrow if they so choose.

- Is the Chinese Communist Party a threat to the United States?

Answer. Yes. The Chinese Communist Party aims to challenge the U.S.-led model characterized by democratic governance and open markets, which has succeeded at delivering vital public services equitably and preserving sovereignty. This model is the best system to build just, inclusive, and prosperous societies.

Many of the actions that Beijing is pursuing are detrimental to U.S. national security and development interests. Across regions and in multilateral fora, the PRC is attempting to undermine U.S. investments in key development sectors ranging from natural resources management to human rights protection. This poses significant risks to U.S. partner countries' autonomy, stability, and prosperity, and requires us to confront the PRC from a position of strength-to be competitive when we should be, countering when we must be, and collaborate only when it is in our national interest.

If confirmed, I would use all tools available to counter this challenge, such as working with USAID's Anti-Corruption Task Force and Center for Democracy, Human Rights and Governance to combat the CCP's corruptive practices and use of corrosive capital—which in part is how the PRC convinces countries to sign up to its Belt and Road Initiative. In contrast to the PRC's state-led backroom deals, if confirmed, I would further USAID's engagements with the private sector and civil society to counter the PRC's state-led development model that undermines the financial and resource independence of our partner countries.

Question. Does the Chinese Communist Party undertake any activities that are beneficial to U.S. interests?

Answer. As outlined in my response above, we are currently witnessing a Chinese Communist Party (CCP) unwilling to work for the greater good of populations around the world and take actions that are detrimental to U.S. interests.

If confirmed, I would further USAID's activities in building resilient supply chains, combating forced labor, lessening trade distortions, and furthering democratic values.

Question. If confirmed, will you approve any joint activity with organizations or representatives from the People's Republic of China as part of your work?

Answer. Such a pivotal cooperation decision would require extensive high level discussion in the Executive Branch and deep consultation with Congress. The law must be our guide: I am well aware of legal restrictions regarding assistance to the PRC and in the provision of U.S. assistance, including in appropriations legislation.

Question. By virtue of its geography and a decades-long program of dam building, the Chinese Communist Party retains significant control over the Mekong River basin, a source of water, food, and energy for more than 65 million people. At the press of a button, the CCP could stop the flow of water to downstream countries, which would cause an unprecedented humanitarian crisis that would destabilize the region and send even more migrants to our unprotected southern border.

- Are you concerned with the prospect of a humanitarian crisis in the Mekong River Basin caused by the Chinese Communist Party? Please explain.

Answer. I am always concerned about actions that the Chinese Communist Party could take that might negatively impact Indo-Pacific countries, especially those in Southeast Asia, and the United States.

The cascade of dams built by the Chinese Communist Party exacerbate the impacts that climate change is already having on the health of the river and on the countries in the Mekong Basin.

USAID has been instrumental in understanding the impacts of these dams, supporting the Stimson Center to develop and launch the Mekong Infrastructure tracker to better understand the spatial extent and impacts of dams and other infrastructure in the river basin. I understand that programs like SERVIR Mekong out of the Regional Development Mission for Asia, based in Bangkok, Thailand, have developed tools like digital rain gauges and vegetation assessments to track and document the ongoing changes within the basin. USAID programs provide the data and evidence to document the risks of further dam construction while supporting non-hydro renewable energy for downstream Mekong countries.

I also understand that the impacts of dams on fisheries is the reason for the creation of the USAID "Wonders of the Mekong" program. I understand that this program works to understand fish movements throughout the Mekong systems, the impacts of the variety of dams on fish populations and advocates for environmental and social safeguards to protect a healthy Mekong ecosystem providing for the food security of the region.

Finally, it is my understanding that USAID has long partnered with the ASEAN Secretariat's regional humanitarian response unit to strengthen ASEAN's ability to support disaster response in the region, both regionally and bilaterally. I further understand that USAID has teams on standby 24/7 all around the world, including in Southeast Asia, ready to deploy to a range of humanitarian crises.

Question. How is the United States working with downstream Mekong countries to ensure these counties are resilient to the effects of a CCP-sparked humanitarian crisis?

Answer. As I understand, one of USAID's most pressing priorities is to help partner countries, including those in the Mekong region, develop their capacity to be resilient to a range of crises.

USAID, bilaterally and regionally, works towards resilience through agriculture and environment programs. I understand that USAID's efforts for resilience to the changes in river flows caused by the CCP and climate change include monitoring environmental conditions, early warning systems, and conservation. For example, on monitoring, the USAID-funded Mekong Infrastructure Tracker platform is the premier resource for researchers to track, monitor, and quantify the development of energy, transportation, and water infrastructure assets and the social, economic, and ecological changes they bring to Southeast Asia. On conservation, the Wonders of the Mekong Program in Cambodia is rearing endangered fish and releasing them in efforts to increase fish stocks and ecosystem health which contributes to Cambodians' food security.

I further understand that USAID has long partnered with the ASEAN Secretariat's regional humanitarian response unit to strengthen ASEAN's ability to support disaster response in the region, both regionally and bilaterally. I also understand that the Vietnam Mission is specifically focusing on more bilateral work in the Mekong, including the Mekong Delta Coastal Habitat Conservation activity which was announced by Vice President Harris during her visit to Vietnam in 2021.

Question. If confirmed, what types of programming do you recommend USAID support in Mekong River countries to further ensure these countries are resistant to water shocks?

Answer. As I understand, USAID has been tracking the impacts of large-scale hydropower dams and climate change on the Mekong River Basin through a variety of activities.

I understand that USAID works with countries in the Lower Mekong region, as well as the Mekong River Commission (MRC), to build capacity to address water shocks and other adverse environmental impacts. For example, the USAID SERVIR-Mekong initiative, a partnership with NASA, harnesses remote sensing technology and open data to help address development challenges related to a changing climate. I also understand that the MRC recently endorsed USAID SERVIR-Mekong's flood forecasting and reservoir assessment tools, improving climate resilience across the Lower Mekong. I understand that USAID SERVIR-Mekong partnered with the MRC to develop decision support tools that assist member countries to better prepare for and respond to floods and droughts.

I further understand that the USAID-supported Wonders of the Mekong Program has generated new insights on the drought-flood cycle in Cambodia. This new research, which has been featured in National Geographic and other major outlets, has resulted in the Government of Cambodia calling for a moratorium on dams. The Cambodian Government has also prohibited the cutting of flooded forests which will contribute to improving the health of the Mekong River system and the communities dependent upon them.

I further understand that through the Partnerships for Enhanced Engagement in Research (PEER) activity, USAID supports a network of Lower Mekong scientists to better understand the impacts of hydropower and climate change on Mekong fisheries. This network of scientists is positioned to improve fisheries management by characterizing genetic diversity and spatial structure as well as establishing long-term monitoring of important fish species in Cambodia, Laos, Burma, Thailand, and Vietnam. The scientists are working to understand the impact of rapid hydroelectric development in the Lower Mekong Basin on fisheries.

Question. In contrast to the Chinese Communist Party, which continues to have strained relations with many of its neighbors, foreign assistance provided by the United States has enabled its allies and partners to become foreign assistance providers themselves. The Korean International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) and Japan's International Cooperation Agency (JICA) have provided assistance and support to countries in Southeast and Central Asia. Even Mongolia, which only 30 years ago was a satellite of the Soviet Union, has established its own international development agency to promote democracy in other Central Asian states. A vision of a truly free and open Indo-Pacific is only possible when U.S. allies and partners cooperate with us in achieving this goal.

- To what extent can USAID cooperation with Asian development agencies the impact of U.S. foreign assistance? What programs have and have not worked previously?

Answer. I understand that USAID's development assistance to the Republic of Korea decades ago not only helped the country develop into the global leader that it is today, but it also helped the country develop its own very capable international development agency.

Cooperation with Japan advances U.S. interests in the Indo-Pacific and beyond. I understand that USAID works to align development policy and resources with Japan to enhance development impacts with like-minded allies through diplomatic efforts in Washington, DC and through the USAID Senior Development Counselor to Japan and Korea.

Finally, my understanding is that USAID has made a strategic decision to work with key emerging leaders in the Indo-Pacific to help them strengthen their own development agencies, including India, Thailand, Kazakhstan, and others. Strengthening our Indo-Pacific partners' ability to improve their neighbors' development is good strategy, good diplomacy, and good for the U.S. taxpayer.

Question. USAID currently manages co-funded programs with Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade in countries like Sri Lanka and the Maldives. To what extent can this model inform joint projects with Korea and Japan's foreign aid agencies?

Answer. I understand that collaborating with like-minded donors, including Australia, Japan, and the Republic of Korea, is one of USAID's highest imperatives. These partnerships allow USAID to maximize its development investments and programming by avoiding duplicative efforts and promoting policy alignment. It is good strategy, good diplomacy, and good for the U.S. taxpayer.

My understanding is that USAID has strong existing relationships with Japan and the Republic of Korea, and works closely with both Ministries of Foreign Affairs, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) and other government and private sector stakeholders.

I understand that USAID is engaged in a number of co-funded programs with the Republic of Korea and Japan, including the USAID-KOICA Climate Resilient Cities as well as the Marine Litter activities and the Japan-Power Africa collaboration. I understand that USAID plans to build on the successes of such collaborations with the Republic of Korea and Japan by incorporating the lessons learned that the Agency has gleaned from our bilateral engagements with DFAT and other like-minded partners. I look forward to contributing to these efforts, if confirmed.

Question. If confirmed, what will you do to encourage greater USAID cooperation and coordination with Korea and Japan's foreign aid agencies?

Answer. My understanding is that USAID has strong existing relationships with Japan and Korea, and works closely with both Ministries for Foreign Affairs, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), and the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA), among other key Japanese and Korean stakeholders. I understand that USAID's Senior Development Counselor for Japan and Korea, based in Embassy Tokyo, is working to strengthen the Agency's strategic engagement with the Japanese Government, and is similarly focused on growing USAID's relationship with the Korean Government.

I also understand that USAID has frequent engagement with Japan's and Korea's embassies, JICA, and KOICA in the field, and will continue to build and capitalize on this partnership.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO ROLFE MICHAEL SCHIFFER BY SENATOR TODD YOUNG

Question. What actions has USAID taken since Administrator Power's confirmation to streamline USAID's hiring processes to develop the next generation of American development and assistance professionals?

Answer. USAID is committed to strengthening its global workforce to advance the Agency's mission and national security priorities. However, my understanding is that USAID's staffing has not increased at the same rate as its programmatic needs and requirements. USAID has complex requirements and needs to increase both the size and agility of its career workforce while also streamlining non-career employment mechanisms.

I understand that the Global Development Partnership Initiative (GDPI) is the starting point for a strategic workforce effort to finally align USAID's workforce needs with its workforce supply, particularly around direct-hire staffing. I understand that at the end of FY 2021, USAID completed a successful hiring surge to reach the previous staffing appropriations levels of 1,850 FS and 1,600 CS positions. However, given the significant expansion of USAID's work around the world, I understand that the Agency estimates its real staffing requirements are significantly higher in both Foreign Service and Civil Service categories.

I further understand that USAID's Office of Human Capital and Talent Management (HCTM) is focusing on hiring efforts to streamline and diversify the Agency's hiring processes. For example, as part of USAID's General Schedule (GS) process, I understand that HCTM is developing a hiring manager guide and conducting webinars to educate hiring managers across USAID on their role, non-competitive hiring authorities, and timelines in the hiring process.

I understand that USAID is working to attract and retain the brightest minds that will help the Agency achieve its mission by engaging and recruiting diverse quality talent through targeted outreach and recruitment events, including via efforts to expand and maintain partnerships with organizations serving underrepresented groups to source eligible candidates for employment opportunities. I further understand that USAID has expanded its talent sourcing efforts by partnering with organizations that serve persons with disabilities and veterans to source candidates eligible for non-competitive employment consideration. If confirmed, I look forward to supporting these efforts.

Question. Noting food supply disruptions as a result of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, what tools can Congress provide to ensure USAID can fulfill its mission?

Answer. I understand that the generous resources provided by Congress through the Ukraine supplemental appropriations bills have been critical to USAID's ability to scale up humanitarian and development assistance to respond to the food security crisis resulting from Russia's unjustified invasion of Ukraine. However, given the scale of global food insecurity and the dynamic nature of its causes, it is imperative that USAID fully optimize its programs and be able to employ the best food assistance modalities to respond to each context. I understand that the reauthorization of the Farm Bill may provide an unparalleled opportunity for Congress and USAID to work together to ensure the U.S. Government has the best tools at its disposal to meet the humanitarian challenges of the day. If confirmed, I look forward to working with colleagues across the Agency on these issues and to consulting with Congress on these issues.

Question. Given the confluence of so many crises, where should USAID look to first prioritize its efforts?

Answer. I understand that the Agency's priorities for Asia are guided by President Biden's 2022 Indo-Pacific Strategy, the Central Asia Strategy and the U.S. Interim National Security Strategy. From briefings with USAID career staff, I also understand that the Asia Bureau has released a pro-active and affirmative Indo-Pacific framework that will operationalize the President's Indo-Pacific Strategy with ongoing and planned USAID programs. If confirmed, I look forward to delving into the details of USAID's approach to the Indo-Pacific and to consulting with you on these issues.

Question. Regarding U.S. strategy on Burma, if the military junta disrupts USAID's ability to interact with its implementing partners on the ground, how do you propose we work around this to guarantee a continuous supply of U.S. aid?

Answer. USAID's robust work in Burma continues and is more critical than ever. USAID has historical and recent experience managing aid globally in unstable and conflict-affected environments. I understand that USAID continuously adjusts approaches and strategies on the ground to avoid aid bottlenecks. For example, I understand that the Agency has diversified and expanded its use of local partners who may have better access and fewer restrictions to deliver food aid and other assistance to vulnerable communities. Additionally, as publicly announced on February 11, 2021, just 10 days after the coup, I understand that the USAID Mission pivoted $42.4 million of FY 2020 bilateral assistance funds away from development work that could have benefited the military government. This shift, primarily within existing awards, increased aid to civil society and non-governmental actors across all sectors. I understand that since then, the Mission has continued this model to design and implement work across all sectors in ways that do not work through or benefit Burma's military government.

On humanitarian assistance, I understand that the bulk of humanitarian assistance is delivered from within Burma despite increasing restrictions. I also under-

stand that USAID's humanitarian assistance includes mobile health clinics, rehabilitation of water supply infrastructure, construction of sanitation facilities, protection services, shelter, nutrition support, humanitarian coordination, emergency cash, and relief items. I also understand that USAID continues to provide emergency and non-emergency food assistance to displaced populations and newly emerging areas of violence.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO NATHANIEL FICK BY SENATOR ROBERT MENENDEZ

CHIPS+ Funding

Question. Last week, Congress passed the CHIPS Act, which includes a provision that allocates $500 million over 5 years to the Department of State, which in coordination with USAID, the Ex-Im Bank, and the DFC, will be used for a CHIPS for America International Technology Security and Innovation Fund. The purpose of this funding would be to coordinate with partner countries "to support international information and communications technology security." and ".the development and adoption of secure and trusted telecommunications technologies, secure semiconductors, secure semiconductors supply chains, and other emerging technologies."

- Will you commit to keeping this committee fully and currently informed about the use of this funding?

Answer. Yes. The CHIPS for America International Technology Security and Innovation Fund provides critical funding for international information communications technology security and semiconductor supply chain activities. If confirmed, I will commit to keep the Congressional stakeholders fully briefed on how the Department plans to use the CHIPS funding as well as provide regular program status updates.

Question. What would be the CDP Bureau's top priorities when using this funding?

Answer. The Department will support the use of CHIPS funding to promote semiconductor supply chain security and international information and communications technology (ICT) security aligned with the Administration's priorities. If confirmed, I would recommend prioritizing activities that promote cooperation on semiconductor supply chain activities with our allies and partners and encourage and incentivize countries around the world to choose trustworthy suppliers for their next-generation telecommunications network build outs, including for 5G. I would also work with allies and partners to promote a more diverse and resilient ICT supply chain, including through the promotion of new architectures such as Open Radio Access Networks.

National Security Presidential Memorandum 13

Question. In 2018, the Trump administration issued National Security Presidential Memorandum 13, laying out U.S. Cyber Operations Policy, including the approval process for conducting offensive and defense cyber operations outside the United States.

- If confirmed, will you commit to ensuring that the appropriate Senate Foreign Relations Committee staff gains access to this document?

Answer. I respect the committee's important oversight role in U.S. offensive and defensive cyber operations. If confirmed, I will convey the committee's interest in this document to the White House and will advocate for maximum transparency.

Sharing Cyber Capabilities with Partners

Question. The FY 2023 NDAA contains a provision stating that "the Secretary of Defense, with the concurrence of the Secretary of State, shall conduct an assessment on sharing military cyber capabilities of the Armed Forces with foreign partners of the United States for immediate operational use to cause effects on targets or enable collection of information of targets."

- How do you view the Bureau of Cyberspace and Digital Diplomacy's role in coordinating cyber capabilities sharing with foreign partners?

Answer. The Department has long supported collaboration and cooperation with key partners and allies, where appropriate, on cyber operations where we share national interests. This collaboration occurs on a case-by-case basis; the Bureau of Cyberspace and Digital Policy supports increasing this collaboration. That said, the Department has neither an operational role, nor cyber capabilities itself to share

with foreign partners. If confirmed, in close coordination with the Department of Defense and the other interagency partners, I will ensure foreign policy considerations are taken into account when evaluating the sharing of cyber capabilities with foreign partners, and that approved transfers take place as swiftly as possible.

CISA Global Strategy

Question. Just two weeks ago, CISA opened its first attaché office in London to "serve as a focal point for international collaboration between CISA, UK Government officials, and other federal agency officials," and the agency continues to enter into memoranda of cooperation with foreign governments such as Ukraine in July 2022.

- Given these developments, how do you envision the CDP Bureau's relationship the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) evolving in the near and long-term? Where do you view your areas of responsibility beginning and ending?

Answer. The Department of State facilitates engagements between foreign governments and U.S. agencies with specific technical expertise, including through Embassies overseas. Many countries want to work with and learn from CISA, particularly because it houses the best-in-class computer security incident response team with national responsibility. If confirmed, I would look to continue the Department's strong collaborative relationship with CISA, leveraging their expertise to help partners gain the capabilities for better incident response and critical infrastructure protection, including by working with the Department's cyber officers at our diplomatic missions, as I believe is intended by CISA's Global Strategy.

Digital Freedom and Human Rights

Question. There is some concern that two subunits of the CDP Bureau—International Cyberspace Security and International Information and Communications Policy—will be headed by a Deputy Assistant Secretary, whereas the Digital Freedom Unit—the unit tasked to "defend against efforts to legitimize and adopt repressive and authoritarian practices in cyberspace"—is led by a coordinator with little support.

Question. Given this organizational structure, how do you plan to elevate the issue of human rights in the new Bureau? Given that the Digital Freedom Unit is still located within DRL, how will do you plan to work with DRL on these issues?

Answer. CDP and DRL are collaborative partners with complementary missions. DRL continues to lead the Department's work on Internet freedom to ensure that individuals can enjoy their human rights online as well as offline. CDP has an integrated mandate to lead on digital freedom, which provides a broader paradigm to address the intersection between technology and human rights at a time when technology continues to expand into new areas of our lives. If confirmed, I will empower CDP's Digital Freedom Team to promote meaningful access to digital technologies in order to preserve cyber stability and guard against digital authoritarianism by coordinating on these issues across all Department equities and engaging the interagency, international partners, and the multistakeholder community. I will ensure that the Digital Freedom Team receives the resources it needs to lead on this issue, including recognition of the Senior Coordinator as a Deputy Assistant Secretary equivalent.

Question. While the Department of State has sought to centralize responsibility for its cyber diplomacy related activities in the new CDP Bureau, the Bureaus of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor and International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs will continue to have policy and programmatic responsibility for issues related to internet freedom and cybercrime.

- How will you ensure coherent State Department engagement on these and other issues where there is a division of responsibilities across bureaus?

Answer. Before the establishment of the Bureau of Cyberspace and Digital Policy, its component offices successfully navigated the division of responsibilities regarding the leadership of the Internet freedom and cybercrime portfolios. If confirmed, I will continue to maintain the close, collaborative, and functional partnership between the CDP Bureau, DRL, and INL while ensuring that I bring the economic, national security, and digital freedom perspectives together to advance a future where everyone, everywhere, can harness the benefits of an open Internet and digital technologies to reach their full potential.

U.S. Leadership at Standards-Setting Bodies (ITU)

Question. Part of the mission of the Bureau for Cyberspace and Digital Diplomacy is "to advance policies that protect the integrity and security of the infrastructure of the internet." I included a provision in my Economic Statecraft for the 21st Century bill that would establish an interagency working group dedicated to enhancing U.S. leadership and representation at international standards-setting bodies such as the International Telecommunications Union (ITU), which establishes international standards that are fundamental to the operation for today's information and communications technology networks. In the upcoming fall 2022 ITU Plenipotentiary Conference, two candidates, one from the United States and one from Russia, are running for the position of ITU Secretary General, and represent fundamental differences in their views on digital governance.

- What is the Administration doing to ensure that the United States is represented not only in top-level positions at the ITU such as Secretary General, but also at the ITU's lower-level workshops, seminars, and study groups, which is where recommendations and resolutions are sent up to the larger ITU body for votes?

Answer. Responsible, forward-looking, and transparent leadership of the ITU is vital to the U.S. telecommunications industry. The U.S. nomination of Doreen Bogdan-Martin as ITU Secretary-General is a critical piece of ensuring this strong leadership. Ms. Bogdan-Martin has spent the last 28 years in the ITU, working her way up the ranks, demonstrating how support for candidates at all levels is a winning strategy. If confirmed, I will work to ensure continued coordination with likeminded partners in promoting leadership candidates, including those of lower-level working groups and study groups to promote fair, transparent, and consensus-based approach to ITU's work on spectrum, standards, and telecommunications development. The Department, recognizing that vote splitting contributes to undesirable results, coordinates with allies and partners to maximize our chance of electoral victory. I thank Senator Risch for his report entitled "A Concrete Agenda for Transatlantic Cooperation on China" that reaffirms the importance of coordination.

Digital Authoritarianism and Cyber Sovereignty

Question. Governments such as China and Russia have promoted the concept of "cyber sovereignty" in international fora in order to justify more restrictive measures on the Internet, including surveillance and censorship of political activists.

- Please describe your views on "cyber sovereignty" and its implications for global internet governance.

Answer. The concept of "cyber sovereignty" being advanced by countries like Russia and China has the potential to erode the current multistakeholder model of global Internet governance and the benefits of a global, distributed Internet for all. Proponents of "cyber sovereignty" are engaging in restrictive measures-such as surveilling and censoring their citizens and activists-or seeking to bring the Internet under greater inter-governmental control, such as through the UN. For decades, the multistakeholder model has underpinned the Internet's global growth and its success as a platform for free communication, ensuring that no single entity—governmental or otherwise—controls the Internet. If confirmed, I will uphold the U.S. vision of the open, interoperable, secure, and reliable Internet under the global, multistakeholder model and will oppose efforts to undermine it.

Transparency for "Hunt Forward" Operations

Question. According to National Security Agency Director Paul Nakasone, "50 different hunt forward operations were conducted in 16 countries over the past three years," all being "instances where countries invite CYBERCOM to test their systems against theoretical attacks." One of the recommendations made in a report you co-chaired for the Council on Foreign Relations titled "Confronting Reality in Cyberspace: Foreign Policy for a Fragmented Internet" was "to adopt great transparency about defend forward actions."

- If confirmed, as the principal cyberspace policy official within the Department of State, how do you intend to work towards greater transparency for "hunt forward" operations?

Answer. As the report recommends, proactive transparency and information sharing could give the United States first-mover advantages in the information space. U.S. statements on self-restraint and defensive initiatives should be part of our strategy to disrupt and mitigate adversarial cyber operations below the level of armed conflict. In recent years, the Department of Defense has been more proactive and public about discussing its "hunt forward" operations, which is a positive devel-

opment. If confirmed, I intend to work closely with the Department of Defense and promote "hunt forward" operations as defensive measures that enhance partnership with foreign governments, counter cyber threats, and promote stability in cyberspace.

Question. Will you commit to consulting with this committee on significant developments and decisions with respect to the planned Special Envoy for Critical and Emerging Technologies?

Answer. If confirmed, I anticipate that I will work in close collaboration with the planned Special Envoy for Critical and Emerging Technology. The State Department team will continue to keep the committee informed about the planned Office of the Special Envoy for Critical and Emerging Technology.

IT Workforce and Tech Talent Pipeline

Question. Given that approximately 700,000 cybersecurity roles remain vacant in the United States, it is clear that our country faces a growing national security challenge when it comes to cybersecurity. The Biden administration underscored the urgency of this issue in July 2022 by convening the National Cyber Workforce and Education Summit. Similarly, the Department of State faces its own IT workforce challenges. In a GAO report published in April 2022, GAO states that "State has not recruited continuously year-round for most of its IT positions or regularly assessed its staffing needs." Additional challenges include "shortage of talent in pipeline and higher attrition rates compared to new hires" and limited training and career development opportunities." While the Under Secretary of Management normally addresses some of these issues, the Bureau of Cyberspace and Digital Policy for evident reasons has a vested interest in a strong, viable IT workforce comprised of top tech talent. You touched on this in your confirmation hearing when you said that you "can imagine a future where any candidate to be a chief of mission is expected to have an understanding of these issues."

- If confirmed, what will you do to ensure that the Department is recruiting and retaining IT talent as effectively as possible? How do you envision the Bureau of Cyberspace and Digital Policy's involvement in this process?

Answer. The CDP Bureau provides opportunities for all Department employees to learn about cyber and digital policy issues. For example, CDP provides training courses on International Digital Economy Policy and Cyber Diplomacy at the Foreign Service Institute, which are open to all direct-hire employees posted in Washington and overseas. If confirmed, I will work to expand those opportunities. Equally, I will encourage CDP staff to leverage opportunities inside and outside the Department to improve their own expertise on information and communications technology. I also pledge to work closely with the Bureau of Global Talent Management to recruit, retain, train, and sustain a diverse, talented, and inclusive workforce. Likewise, I will advocate in the U.S. business and technology communities to encourage Americans with technology expertise to spend time in public service and am eager to support government-wide efforts to make it easier for mid-career Americans to serve.

Question. How do you plan to ensure that the Department of State has a diverse regional/demographic reach for tech talent?

Answer. I support the Department of State's commitment to building a workforce that reflects our nation's diversity and leverages the creativity of diverse, talented groups to advance the United States' foreign policy priorities. As I stated in my confirmation hearing, my first priority is building the team and culture at the Bureau to enable its long-term success. My hope is that the Bureau's workforce will increasingly become the hub for international cyberspace and digital policy, integrating national security, economic prosperity, and human rights. Achieving this aspiration will demand that we recruit and retain talent from the entire national talent pool—across geography and across demography. If confirmed, I would welcome the opportunity to work with the Bureau of Information Resource Management and the Bureau of Global Talent Management's Diplomats in Residence—career Foreign Service Officers and Specialists located throughout the United States who provide guidance and advice on careers, internships, and fellowships to students and professionals in the communities they serve—to ensure the Department has a diverse workforce.

Question. Would you commit to coming to universities in New Jersey to seek out tech talent for the Department?

Answer. It is critical the United States has the workforce to address the challenges and opportunities in cyberspace and the digital economy. Universities around

the country, including in New Jersey, play an important role. If confirmed, I will work with academic stakeholders to encourage relevant coursework that integrates cyber and digital policy issues into all facets of our education system, and I would look forward to visiting universities in New Jersey and around the country, if invited.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO NATHANIEL FICK BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Question. How can the U.S. re-establish credible deterrence in cyberspace?

Answer. Effectively shaping adversary decision-making requires the thoughtful application of all the tools of national power, including diplomacy. If confirmed, I look forward to working with Congress and my executive branch colleagues to redouble U.S. efforts to achieve a significant, long-lasting reduction in destructive, disruptive, or otherwise destabilizing malicious cyber activities directed against U.S. interests. If confirmed, I will lead U.S. diplomatic efforts to build a broad-based, voluntary coalition of likeminded states that can organize cooperative responses to significant cyber incidents, together ensuring that there are consequences for unacceptable cyber activity and in this way, shaping adversaries' decision-making. Within the U.S. interagency, if confirmed, I will work to strengthen collaboration between the Departments of State and Defense, to include increasing cooperation around cyber operations. These efforts will complement and be strengthened by CDP's positive agenda, grounded in U.S. values to promote the use of digital technologies for the benefit of all people, everywhere.

Answer. What role should the cyber bureau play in these efforts?

Answer. Effectively shaping adversary decision-making requires the thoughtful application of all the tools of national power, including diplomacy as well as other capabilities our interagency partners can bring to bear. If confirmed, I will collaborate with the interagency and lead U.S. diplomatic efforts to build a broad-based, voluntary coalition of likeminded states that can organize cooperative responses to significant cyber incidents, together ensuring that there are appropriate consequences for unacceptable cyber activity and in this way, shaping adversaries' decision-making. Such cooperative responses build on, and create accountability for adhering to, the international consensus around the framework of responsible state behavior in cyberspace. If confirmed, I will continue the Department's work to promote this framework and support its implementation across the globe.

Question. Will you commit to working with the committee on this issue?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with the committee to explore development of a streamlined authority to allow sharing of critical cyber capabilities and information with key operational partners.

Question. What efforts will you take to help ensure the CDP bureau is capable of attract and retain the nation's foremost digital and cyberspace talent?

Answer. The CDP Bureau must operate like a 21st-century talent organization. This means that its success depends not upon a patent or process innovation or a market monopoly, but upon a continuous ability to recruit and retain a broad team of talented people who have many other options for where to spend their professional time and energy. The Bureau's great advantage in doing so is the power and importance of its mission. We will need to make the case—inside the Department, across the interagency, and outside the Government—that technology is the next frontier of diplomacy, that these issues are fundamental to the future of American power and competitiveness, and that public service is a noble and rewarding pursuit. If confirmed, I will encourage Department employees to come spend time in the Bureau, will commit to supporting members of the CDP Bureau team in gaining as much professional training as possible, and will do my utmost to build and sustain a culture that empowers them and enables them to succeed. I pledge to work closely with the Bureau of Global Talent Management to recruit, retain, train, and sustain a diverse, talented, and inclusive workforce. Likewise, I will advocate in the U.S. business and technology communities to encourage Americans with technology expertise to spend time in public service, and I am eager to support government-wide efforts to make it easier for mid-career Americans to serve.

Question. What role does multilateral cooperation have in countering malign cyber influence (e.g., from the PRC, Russian Federation, and DPRK)?

Answer. The United States' work in international and multilateral organizations has led to international consensus on a framework of responsible state behavior in cyberspace. All U.N. member states have committed to act in accordance with this framework. While such a framework is not self-reinforcing, it sets the foundation upon which we can rally likeminded partners to hold irresponsible state actors accountable, including through public attributions, diplomatic actions, and other responses. Likeminded partners have grown increasingly willing to take such action in response to malign cyber influence. If confirmed, I will continue to press for progress with our partners in countering malign cyber influence and promoting a rights-respecting cyber and digital policy agenda.

Question. How will the Department of State integrate the Bureau for Cyberspace and Digital Policy with other functional and regional bureaus?

Answer. The Bureau of Cyberspace and Digital Policy brings together into a single entity the economic, national security, and human rights considerations regarding cyberspace and digital technologies. In doing so, the Bureau not only integrates its approach to these issues internally and thereby advances Secretary Blinken's modernization agenda, but also is well placed to play a coordinating role within the Department and across the interagency. If confirmed, I will build an organization that elevates cyber and digital issues in U.S. foreign policy and maximizes our engagement with regional and functional bureaus to strengthen diplomacy as a tool to achieve our national objectives on cyber and digital issues.

Question. Do you anticipate working closely with other U.S. Government agencies? If so, which?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work to build an organization that can elevate cyber and digital issues within U.S. foreign policy and maximize our engagement with interagency partners, including the Department of Defense, U.S. Agency for International Development, Department of Homeland Security, National Security Council, Office of the National Cyber Director, Department of Justice, Federal Communications Commission, and Department of Commerce. In leveraging the expertise of these departments and agencies, the Bureau can strengthen diplomacy as a tool to achieve our national objectives on cyber and digital issues.

Question. Do you work with cyber/digital trafficking?

Answer. Trafficking is a particularly heinous misuse of the Internet. If confirmed, I pledge to redouble our efforts, working with the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement and the Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, as well as our partners at the Department of Justice and the Federal Bureau of Investigation to ensure U.S. diplomacy maintains clear focus on the prevention of digital trafficking.

Question. In what capacity will you engage with the "deep web?"

Answer. Recognizing the gravity of cybercrime and the importance the United States places on combatting it, if confirmed, I will coordinate within the Department and with our partners in law enforcement to ensure U.S. diplomacy complements other U.S. Government efforts to reduce the threat of international cybercrime wherever it occurs, including the "deep web."

Question. How is the department working towards bolstering public/private partnerships such that innovation in cyberspace is encouraged?

Answer. The Department of State advances U.S. foreign policy priorities through private sector engagement, including by cultivating cross-sector partnerships. Successful partnerships of this nature will be a necessary element of the Bureau of Cyberspace and Digital Policy's overall success, given the concentration of talent and technical capacity in the U.S. innovation economy. If confirmed, I look forward to working to leverage the Department's various mechanisms, tools, and networks to strengthen partnerships with the private sector on cyber and digital issues. We need to continue to foster an open, enabling environment to encourage future innovation aligned with U.S. values.

Question. "Upholding democratic values" is one of CDP's stated goals; which specific regions or nations does it have in mind?

Answer. The U.S. Government works closely with allies and partners around the world, including members of the Freedom Online Coalition and partners who affirm the Declaration of the Future of the Internet, to uphold democratic values globally. The United States works to deter and respond to transnational repression and digital authoritarianism by promoting digital freedom in accordance with the U.S. values of openness and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. If con-

firmed, I will sustain these existing partnerships and seek new opportunities to ensure that U.S. cyber and digital diplomacy advances democracy and human rights.

Question. What role do you envision the CDP bureau playing in ensuring the United States maintains global leadership in developing artificial intelligence, machine learning, and other emergent technologies?

Answer. If confirmed, I envision the CDP Bureau working alongside the Office of the Special Envoy for Critical and Emerging Technology to continue to lead the Department's engagement in many international venues where artificial intelligence policy issues are discussed, such as through bilateral dialogues, at the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, Global Partnership on AI, Group of Seven (G7), Group of Twenty (G20), U.S.-EU Trade and Technology Council, Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, and International Telecommunication Union. The United States can both further our technological capabilities and promote democratic values and human rights by working with our partners and allies to promote the responsible stewardship of trustworthy artificial intelligence and machine learning.

Question. How will CDP collaborate with other agencies and departments in their existing research?

Answer. Research related to artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning, as technologies with cross-cutting implications across policy areas, is discussed in many bilateral and multilateral settings. If confirmed, my vision is that CDP will continue close collaboration with other agencies and departments in their existing research by coordinating U.S. participation in those dialogues. In addition, CDP works alongside the Office of the Science and Technology Advisor and Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs to co-lead the Department of State's participation in the National Science and Technology Council's subcommittee on Machine Learning and AI.

Question. How will CDP maintain an understanding of emergent technology, given its rapid pace of development?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work to ensure CDP maintains an understanding of emergent technology by doing many of the same things I did while leading a cutting-edge technology company: leveraging internal expertise within our organization, close collaboration with other relevant agencies and departments, and regular consultations with industry, academia, and civil society experts. I will work to increase our internal expertise through new hires and access to increased training opportunities. CDP also has the benefit of the Department's network of embassies and consulates to maintain an understanding of international developments and other countries' approaches to emergent technology.

Question. Are there any emergent technologies that the CDP sees utility or potential in?

Answer. Yes, CDP sees utility and potential in many emerging technologies and their applications, including artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning, Internet of Things, blockchain, Web 3.0, 6G, and Open RAN architecture. Advances in emergent technologies present great opportunities in addition to great challenges. If confirmed, I will work with allies and partners, companies, universities, and civil society organizations that promote democratic values and share a commitment to design and deploy technology for the benefit of all people.

Question. If confirmed, how would you engage with allies and partners to promote Cyber policies consistent with U.S. values?

Answer. The Department is on the frontlines of the U.S. Government's efforts to promote meaningful access to digital technologies, maintain an open, interoperable, secure, and reliable Internet, and preserve a stable cyberspace by defending against challenges such as digital authoritarianism. These efforts are central to the Bureau of Cyberspace and Digital Policy's mission. Digitally repressive regimes and foreign adversaries often seek to harness digital technologies to control domestic populations through a sprawling system of censorship, surveillance, and Internet restrictions. These efforts also extend outward through transnational repression of diaspora communities and other critics abroad, and the export of authoritarian goals through trade relationships, the U.N. and other multilateral fora, and standard-setting bodies. If confirmed, I will lead CDP in sustaining and building partnerships to defend against these efforts and ensure U.S. diplomacy advances digital technologies that support democracy and human rights.

Question. If confirmed, how would you directly address actions of U.S. private or public entities in conflict with U.S. national cyber security strategy?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with interagency partners to increase alignment between U.S. public and private entities and the U.S. national cyber security strategy and policy priorities. U.S. companies have a major role in advancing an open, interoperable, secure, and reliable Internet and should not be complicit in enabling the use of technology in ways that violate human rights and democratic values.

Question. Would you directly address foreign countries restricting internet freedoms in violation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political rights?

Answer. Yes. The Department of State monitors and responds to laws, policies, and activities that restrict human rights online and works to address all concerns through appropriate bilateral and multilateral channels and public diplomacy. The Department consistently seeks to advance Internet freedom through U.N. bodies, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the Group of Seven (G7), and other international organizations. The U.S. Government also plays a global leadership role in multi-stakeholder initiatives focused on Internet freedom and human rights online, such as the Freedom Online Coalition (FOC). The FOC has been instrumental in building cross-regional coalitions to support Internet freedom. The United States will take over the chairmanship of the FOC in 2023 as part of our commitment to bolstering its work in the Summit for Democracy's Presidential Initiative for Democratic Renewal. If confirmed, I will continue to carry forward and expand upon this vital work in coordination with the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor.

Question. Please describe your assessment of global internet freedom and the U.S. Government's response to a rising authoritarian threat off and online.

Answer. I am concerned by the decline in Internet freedom globally, including through the misuse of digital technologies. Preventing the misuse of digital technologies, including by authoritarian governments, is a core priority for the United States. This topic is being addressed bilaterally and in coordination with partners and allies via the Summit for Democracy, U.S.-EU Trade and Technology Council, Freedom Online Coalition, and elsewhere. For example, the U.S. Government continues to work through the Summit for Democracy to take action, including establishing a code of conduct on how export controls can be used to address the proliferation of technologies conducive to human rights abuses. Additionally, the Department intends to bolster U.S. global leadership on Internet freedom issues through our chairmanship of the Freedom Online Coalition in 2023. If confirmed, I will continue to carry this work forward.

Question. How can you, if confirmed, best streamline current U.S. Government efforts to promote global internet freedom?

Answer. Promoting Internet freedom is an essential part of the U.S. Government's approach to protecting and promoting human rights. The Department of State leads the U.S. Government's efforts to promote respect for human rights globally, including online, by raising these concerns bilaterally, building and participating in multilateral and multi-stakeholder coalitions focused on advancing human rights online globally, and funding civil society-led policy and advocacy projects that promote Internet freedom. If confirmed, I will strengthen coordination within the Department and across the interagency to ensure the U.S. Government has an integrated, cohesive policy on initiatives to promote Internet freedom that guard against the rise of digital authoritarianism.

Question. Will you also plan to push back against proposals from allies or tech companies that promote censorship or other restrictions on the freedom of speech?

Answer. Some countries attempt to regulate social media to stifle freedom of expression, target activists, or limit access to independent journalism. The United States responds to these actions with diplomatic engagement that advocates for respecting human rights and fundamental freedoms, both online and offline, including in response to content issues. The Department encourages Internet service providers, including social media platforms, to consider their commitments under the U.N. Guiding Principles for Business and Human Rights and their own terms of service. If confirmed, I will work diligently to address and advance digital freedom as a core element of U.S. cyber and digital policy by continuing engagement across the full range of governmental and non-governmental stakeholders.

Question. What is your assessment of the proposed treaty?

Answer. The process to consider a new binding international instrument on cybercrime poses a number of challenges that could, if not squarely addressed, adversely impact the United States and its citizens. However, the delegation leading the negotiations has done a remarkable job in minimizing Russian and PRC influ-

ence, establishing an expert-driven process on the basis of consensus where both nations and civil society experts can have their views heard. The U.S. Government continues to lead efforts to be inclusive and argue for a convention that is a narrowly focused on criminal justice, respects human rights, and supports multistakeholder engagement. If confirmed, I will continue to ensure the United States works towards these objectives.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to working with relevant bureaus and agencies to promoting text that promotes American values and national security interests in the treaty?

Answer. Yes. While the current process was initiated by Russia, they are not leading this process. Instead, the United States is leading a broad and diverse group of experts in debates on the technical merits of an international instrument focused on cybercrime. The United States and its like-minded allies continue to lead efforts to advance a narrowly focused criminal justice instrument that respects human rights, supporting multistakeholder engagement. If confirmed, I will work to ensure the U.S. Government is successful in this regard.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO NATHANIEL FICK BY SENATOR EDWARD J. MARKEY

Question. How will your private sector experience enhance your effectiveness in strengthening opportunities for public-private partnerships to advance U.S. foreign policy goals in the areas of cyberspace and digital policy?

Answer. The United States has long championed the importance of a multistakeholder approach to address cyber and digital policy. This is essential given the concentration of talent and technical capacity in the U.S. innovation economy. Accordingly, successful public-private partnerships are a necessary element of CDP's overall success. If confirmed, I look forward to identifying opportunities to support both new and continued partnerships with the private sector. If confirmed, I will explore a range of options including using blended finance programs to attract private investment in critical technologies, incorporating additional expertise from industry in CDP-funded trainings and workshops, and meeting with global technology business leaders to explain CDP's priorities.

Question. Under your leadership, what principles will govern the Bureau of Cyberspace and Digital Policy's engagement with civil society organizations and participants in other countries who are pushing back against digital authoritarianism and advocating for democracy, human rights, and fundamental freedoms?

Answer. Digital transformation presents great promise for collaboration, communication, and innovation for billions of people. As millions more come online each day to maximize the opportunities for their livelihoods, their societal engagements, and their prosperity, they also face potential risks of exclusion, harm, and the extension of offline inequalities to online disparities. If confirmed, I will ensure that the Bureau of Cyberspace and Digital Policy's engagement on digital freedom is coordinated with key stakeholders within the Department, interagency, and international community, including the private sector and civil society. I will make sure the bureau's work in this space is guided by and consistent with the United States' obligations under domestic and international law and U.S. policy and commitments, including the principles outlined in the founding documents of the Freedom Online Coalition, as well as the Biden-Harris administration's trademark initiatives on technology and democracy such as the Declaration for the Future of the Internet.

Question. The Declaration for the Future of the Internet is an important step in obtaining the commitment of governments to fundamental values including privacy and respect for human rights. What actions will you take to increase the number of signatories and encourage more governments to commit to the Declaration's vision of an open, free, global, interoperable, reliable, and secure Internet?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work closely with likeminded partners to promote the principles of the Declaration for the Future of the Internet (DFI), encourage additional governments to join, and operationalize its commitments in concrete ways. For example, we will use joint demarches with appropriate partner governments to persuade countries that have not yet joined to do so. We will also promote DFI's principles in relevant international forums. I will work to ensure that we ourselves

operate according to DFI's principles so that we are leading by example and reinforcing the norms we are advocating around the world.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO NATHANIEL FICK BY SENATOR MARCO RUBIO

Question. Is the Chinese Communist Party a threat to the United States?

Answer. The next ten years may be the decisive decade in the competition between the United States and the PRC. As I stated in my confirmation hearing, "Our strategic competition with China along digital lines is probably the most defining strategic question of my generation. We have a competitor out there with a very different view of what our global technology future should look like." If confirmed, I will help advance the Biden-Harris administration's comprehensive, whole-of-government strategy to compete responsibly with the PRC, while highlighting with allies and partners our vision for an open, interoperable, reliable, and secure Internet as a key enabler of global freedom and prosperity.

Question. Does the Chinese Communist Party undertake any activities that are beneficial to U.S. interests?

Answer. As Secretary Blinken has said, we will cooperate with the PRC where our interests align. However, the CCP's authoritarian vision for cyberspace, telecommunications, digital governance, and emerging technology is not one of these areas. If confirmed, I will focus on addressing the risks to the United States, our partners, and our allies—and to an open, interoperable, reliable, and secure Internet—that would come from having the rules of the road set by a country that does not share our core values.

Question. If confirmed, will you approve any joint activity with organizations or representatives from the People's Republic of China as part of your work?

Answer. The United States will continue to engage with the PRC in forums where the PRC and the United States are both members, like APEC and the ASEAN Regional Forum. The United States will also continue bilateral diplomatic engagement to further its interests in multilateral fora. By including all stakeholders in standards-developing organizations (SDOs), the resulting standards reflect a private sector-led, consensus-based, bottom-up approach, that has been the key to our efforts to promote a democratic, rules-based system. Their inclusion also avoids the creation of a parallel SDO structure in which the PRC is able to promote its model to smaller countries unopposed. If confirmed, I will pursue bilateral engagement with the PRC on topics and in organizations in which we have shared interests.

Question. Are you aware of the danger posed to these activists by the Chinese Communist Party? If so, what can be done to limit this activity?

Answer. I am concerned about the threat posed by the People's Republic of China's use of transnational repression. To address this threat, the Biden-Harris administration is pursuing a multi-faceted strategy. The Department of State has worked to increase awareness of resources available to assist targets of transnational repression at home and abroad, to encourage open lines of communication between these individuals and the U.S. Government, and to impose consequences on PRC officials engaged in transnational repression. If confirmed, I will strengthen partnerships with the private sector and our allies to counter PRC transnational repression through digital means and work to reduce the likelihood that U.S. partners facilitate PRC transnational repression.

Question. Many of these activists receive direct support and funding from the State Department, or from international organizations that receive U.S. Government funding. If confirmed, what will you do to ensure that communication with these activists is not vulnerable to CCP cyberattacks?

Answer. Safeguarding the activists, human rights defenders, and civil society organizations who receive support and funding from U.S. Foreign Assistance requires that their security practices are guided by experts who understand the local context and can track changes in those threat landscapes. This is true in many sensitive contexts, including those at risk from digital threats stemming from the PRC. If confirmed, I will support ongoing and future U.S. Government efforts to raise awareness of digital risks to individuals at risk of being targeted by the PRC and work with others in the Department to provide digital safety training, tools, and materials to activists, human rights defenders, and civil society organizations at risk of digitally aided repression and online attacks. Furthermore, I will ensure digital

safety-related risk management efforts led by the Department are informed by relevant intelligence information and expertise.

Question. If confirmed, what will you do to work with social media companies, and other countries, to ensure that activists at risk of transnational repression are not vulnerable to CCP cyberattacks?

Answer. If confirmed, I will continue to maintain close contact with social media companies and other digital platforms to raise awareness of transnational repression and to combat PRC malicious cyber activities, disinformation, and online harassment while emphasizing U.S. support for freedom of expression, including online. I will also work with other governments to raise awareness of, and address vulnerabilities to, cyberattacks and other digital security risks to individuals who may be targeted for transnational repression. If confirmed, I will work with others in the Department and across the interagency to promote accountability for actors who facilitate transnational repression using the tools the Department has available, including sanctions, export controls, and visa restrictions.

Question. In your opinion, are American citizens' communications with embassies and consulates overseas protected from surveillance by the Chinese Communist Party, the Russian Federation, Iran, North Korea, the Maduro Regime, or Cuba? Please explain.

Answer. The Department of State uses its resources to monitor all its embassies and consulates for unauthorized surveillance, including surveillance of communications between Department officials and American citizens. In the event that surveillance is detected on Department infrastructure from an unauthorized actor, Department officials work with federal law enforcement and intelligence partners to mitigate the effects of the intrusion. The Department uses information from these incidents to improve its monitoring regime and better secure its communications and IT infrastructure. If confirmed, I will work with the Department colleagues charged with the protection of embassy and consulate communications to align, where needed, any resource requests and related foreign policy concerns.

Question. In your opinion, are formal communications (i.e. visa applications, other consular services) between third-country nationals and our embassy and consulates' Consular Affairs sections adequately protected from authoritarian regimes?

Answer. Cybersecurity is one of the Department's top priorities. The Bureau of Consular Affairs (CA) manages a robust cybersecurity program closely linked to Department and other interagency efforts. CA dedicates substantial resources and highly skilled personnel to continuously monitor, test, and implement upgrades to Department systems to improve the U.S. defense against evolving cybersecurity threats. The Department's network users—both domestic and overseas—undergo annual training to recognize common scenarios and vulnerabilities, such as spear phishing, so they can help defend these critical systems. If confirmed, I will work closely with colleagues in CA to ensure that our efforts are integrated and well-supported.

Question. What more can be done in this regard?

Answer. The Bureau of Consular Affairs collaborates across its directorates and offices, and with other bureaus within the Department, to strengthen the Department's ability to proactively identify and mitigate potential threats to critical systems and networks before they can be exploited. Additionally, Consular Affairs is actively expanding its partnership with the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency and other U.S. interagency partners to increase its security posture. At the individual level, Consular Affairs promotes awareness and a shared sense of responsibility through scenario training, debriefs and workshops, and targeted security awareness briefings to government and contract staff such as developers, site administrators, and application administrators in order to protect the privacy and integrity of the information entrusted to us by the traveling public. If confirmed, I will work closely with Consular Affairs colleagues to support those efforts to prioritize the awareness and security of U.S. citizens abroad.

Question. In your opinion, are American travelers adequately informed of the data security risks when they travel to these countries, or places in which these authoritarian regimes have a major presence?

Answer. U.S. citizens are warned of security risks, including threats to their data and the threat of surveillance and monitoring, through the Department's International Travel—Country Information Pages on travel.state.gov. In addition, U.S. Embassies may notify U.S. citizens of these threats through alerts and messages as appropriate. U.S. citizens are encouraged to enroll in the Smart Traveler Enroll-

ment Program (STEP) before traveling abroad so that they receive direct communication on safety conditions and other important information for their destination. The Department also amplifies these messages on social media in order to reach a wide audience. If confirmed, I will work closely with colleagues throughout the Department to ensure our policy and technical approaches are well-aligned so American travelers can understand the importance of this issue.

Question. Should Americans have TikTok, or other apps operated by companies with close ties to the Chinese Communist Party, on their phones? Do these apps pose a risk? Please explain.

Answer. I believe that apps from developers with close ties to the CCP do pose a privacy risk to their users. Personally, I do not use them, and I do my best to prevent my children from using them. The Biden-Harris administration is committed to protecting Americans' sensitive personal data in line with advancing our overall national security interests, as well as promoting longstanding foreign policy objectives such as the free flow of data with trust over an open, interoperable, secure, and reliable Internet. The Bureau of Cyberspace and Digital Policy leads the Department of State's coordination on multiple lines of effort to strengthen the protection of American users' data, including data shared through phone applications, particularly through the implementation of E.O. 14034 ("Protecting Americans' Sensitive Data from Foreign Adversaries") and E.O. 13873 ("Securing the Information and Communications Technology and Services Supply Chain"). If confirmed, I will ensure the CDP Bureau works both internally and with the interagency, as well as with like-minded allies and partners, to carry out these efforts fully.

Question. Does the State Department keep a list of apps vulnerable to authoritarian surveillance, and if so, does it make American travelers aware of these apps?

Answer. The State Department is involved in several interagency processes to identify risks to U.S. national security, including authoritarian surveillance of U.S. users through social media applications, through implementation of E.O. 14034 ("Protecting Americans' Sensitive Data from Foreign Adversaries") and E.O. 13873 ("Securing the Information and Communications Technology and Services Supply Chain"), led by the Department of Commerce. If confirmed, I will work closely with colleagues in the Department and across the interagency to help ensure Americans are aware of the risks posed by the use of certain digital technologies, including apps.

Question. If confirmed, what will you do to improve State Department policies to protect American travelers from authoritarian surveillance and cyber-attacks?

Answer. The Bureau of Cyberspace and Digital Policy is committed to strengthening the Department of State's policies and programming to address national security challenges in cyberspace to protect U.S. citizens here and abroad. If confirmed, I commit to working with others in the Department, the interagency, and the international community to continue to strengthen the U.S. culture of cybersecurity for the benefit of all users, including by promoting awareness of cyber hygiene.

CORRESPONDENCE I.—SUPPORTING THE NOMINATION OF NATHANIEL FICK TO BE AMBASSADOR-AT-LARGE FOR CYBERSPACE AND DIGITAL POLICY

SUBMITTED BY A BIPARTISAN GROUP OF SECURITY AND INDUSTRY LEADERS

August 2, 2022

The Honorable Bob Menendez
Chairman
Committee on Foreign Relations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable James E. Risch
Ranking Member
Committee on Foreign Relations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Re: Nomination of Nathaniel Fick to be Ambassador at Large for Cyberspace and Digital Policy, Department of State (PN2223)

Dear Chairman Menendez and Ranking Member Risch:

We write today in our respective personal capacities to express our strong support for the nomination of Nate Fick to serve as Ambassador at Large for Cyberspace and Digital Policy at the Department of State. We are a bipartisan cross-section of national security experts and industry leaders, including former government officials with significant national security, technology, or cybersecurity responsibilities who have worked with Nate or are familiar with his work.

Nate comes before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee with an impressive background in the private sector and a deep commitment to serving our nation. Immediately after graduating from college, Nate served as a Marine Corps infantry and reconnaissance officer, including combat tours in both Afghanistan and Iraq. After leaving the military, Nate continued his graduate education and began working on some of the most challenging public policy issues facing our nation. Among other things, Nate served as the CEO of the Center for a New American Security (CNAS), a national security think tank, where he launched the Center's program on technology and national security, and oversaw work related to NATO readiness, diplomacy in the Indo-Pacific, and support for veterans and military families.

Having spent over a decade addressing national security matters on both the battlefield and in the policy arena, Nate decided to put his intellectual capital to work in the business world, joining Bessemer Venture Partners, one of the nations' most-storied venture capital firms, as well as serving as CEO of Endgame, a prominent cybersecurity software company. Nate led Endgame from start-up to global growth, culminating in the acquisition of its services business by Accenture in 2017 and of its software business by Elastic in 2019. During Nate's time at Endgame, the company was selected by Forbes as one of the "100 Best Cloud Companies in the World" and Nate was named one of the "100 Most Creative People in Business" by Fast Company magazine. Today, Nate leads Elastic's global information security business as Vice President, Security Strategy.

In our view, Nate's unique and potent combination of policy and analytical skills, his experience on the battlefield protecting our nation, and his leadership of a successful cybersecurity business make him an ideal fit to serve as Ambassador at Large for Cyberspace and Digital Policy. Today we face a diverse range of threats in the cyber domain, with major nation-state adversaries such as China, Russia, Iran, and North Korea getting significantly more capable and aggressive, while large-scale criminal gangs and other non-state actors also seek to exploit our reliance on digital technologies to steal information and resources and threaten our national security. If the United States is to confront these threats effectively, we will need to work across the public and private sectors not just in our own nation, but with allied governments and their respective industries.

The new ambassador will need the ability to build diverse sets of economic, military, and political coalitions to advance our national interests and help protect our nation in the cyber domain. Nate has lived these challenges personally as a warfighter, policy expert, and business executive, and he is an inspiring leader and a galvanizing communicator. As such, we believe he can bring the right combination of skills to bear on the important work of building bridges across borders, and with private industry as well, and can likewise help our government get tough on its adversaries as we seek to establish real deterrence in cyberspace.

We believe that if the Committee sees fit to recommend Nate, and he receives the advice and consent of the full Senate, then he will once again be able to serve our nation with distinction and will help cement this office as a key center of policy, operational, and diplomatic expertise on cyber matters within the United States government. To that end, we would strongly encourage the Committee to act swiftly on Nate's nomination and to recommended him to the full Senate for confirmation.

Thank you for your consideration of our input. We look forward to answering any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

Elliot Ackerman
Author and Former Special Operations Team Leader, United States Marine Corps

GEN (Ret) Keith Alexander
Former Director, National Security Agency & Founding Commander, United States Cyber Command

Michael Allen
Former Special Assistant to the President & Senior Director for Counter-Proliferation Strategy, National Security Council, The White House

Dmitri Alperovitch
Chairman, Silverado Policy Accelerator

Nikesh Arora
Chairman & CEO, Palo Alto Networks

Rye Barcott
Co-Founder & CEO, With Honor Action

Jeremy Bash
Former Chief of Staff, Department of Defense

Douglas A. Beck
Member, Board of Directors, Center for a New American Security

Rod Beckstrom
Former President & CEO, ICANN

Lauren Bedula
Executive Board Member, Silicon Valley Defense Group

Rand Beers
Former Acting Secretary, Department of Homeland Security

Nicholas F. Beim
Partner, Venrock

Amb. Daniel Benjamin
Former Coordinator for Counterterrorism, Department of State

Peter Bergen
Vice President for Global Studies & Fellows, New America

Nomi Bergman
Former President, Bright House Networks

Ernest Bio
Former Chief Operating Officer, Defense Innovation Unit, Department of Defense

Peter Bloom
Co-Founder, Connected Warrior Foundation

Joshua Broder
CEO, Tilson

Lyndon Brown
Chief Strategy Officer, Pondurance

Robert J. Butler
Former Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Cyber and Space Policy, Department of Defense

James R. Butler II
Former Chief Technology Officer, Endgame

Chris Castaldo
Chief Information Security Officer, Crossbeam

Senator Saxby Chambliss
Former Vice Chairman, Senate Select Committee on Intelligence

David Cowan
Managing Partner, Bessemer Venture Partners

Craig P. Cummings, Ph. D.
General Partner, Moonshots Capital

J. Michael Daniel
Former Special Assistant to the President & Cybersecurity Coordinator, The White House

Richard Danzig
Former Secretary of the Navy

Matthew Devost
CEO, OODA

Donald R. Dixon
Co-Founder & Managing Director, ForgePoint Capital

Amb. Paula Dobriansky
Former Under Secretary of State for Global Affairs, Department of State

Jeffrey W. Eggers
Former Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, National Security Council, The White House

Karen S. Evans
Former Assistant Secretary for Cybersecurity, Energy Security and Emergency Response, Department of Energy

Andrew Exum
Former Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Middle East Policy, Department of Defense

Jamil Farshchi
EVP & Chief Information Security Officer, Equifax

Don Faul
Former CEO, Athos

Guy L. Filippelli
Managing Partner, Squadra Ventures

Michele A. Flournoy
Former Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, Department of Defense

Richard Fontaine
Chief Executive Officer, Center for a New American Security

Glenn S. Gerstell
Former General Counsel, National Security Agency

Ryan Gillis
Former Director of Cybersecurity Policy and Legislative Affairs, National Security Council, The White House

Russell M. Glass
CEO, Headspace Health

Bob Gourley
Former Chief Technology Officer, Defense Intelligence Agency

Ambassador David A. Gross
Former United States Coordinator, International Communications and Information Policy, Department of State

Arun K. Gupta
Venture Partner, Columbia Capital

Royal Hansen
Vice President - Privacy, Safety, Security Engineering, Google

David J. Hogan
Member, Board of Directors, Center for a New American Security.

Christopher B. Howard
Executive Vice President & Chief Operating Officer, ASU Public Enterprise

Will Hurd
Former Member of Congress, House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence

Jamil N. Jaffer
Former Chief Counsel, Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate

Clete D. Johnson
Senior Fellow, Center for Strategic and International Studies

Ely Kahn
Former Director of Cybersecurity Policy, National Security Council Staff, The White House

Geof Kahn
Former Senior Advisor to the Director, Central Intelligence Agency

Lisa Kaplan
Founder & CEO, Alethea Group

Juliette Kayyem
Former Assistant Secretary for Intergovernmental Affairs, Department of Homeland Security

Andy Keiser
Former Senior Advisor, Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, United States House of Representatives

Christopher C. Krebs
Former Director, Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, Department of Homeland Security

Ashutosh Kulkarni
CEO, Elastic

Richard H. Ledgett Jr.
Former Deputy Director, National Security Agency

Robert M. Lee
CEO & Co-Founder, Dragos

Shelley B. Leibowitz
Former Chief Information Officer, World Bank Group

Rachel Carlson Lieber
Former Deputy General Counsel, Central Intelligence Agency

Andrea Little Limbago, Ph.D.
SVP Research and Analysis, Interos

Letitia A. Long
Former Director, National Geospatial Intelligence Agency

Kristin Lord
Former Acting President, United States Institute of Peace

GEN (Ret.) Stanley A. McChrystal
Former Commander, International & Security Forces – Afghanistan

Gary McGraw, Ph.D.
CEO, Berryville Institute of Machine Learning

Michael McRobbie
President Emeritus & University Professor of Computer Science, Indiana University

Tony Meehan
Vice President of Engineering, Elastic Security

Coleman Mehta
Former Director of Legislative Affairs, National Security Council, The White House

Jami Miscik
Former Co-Chair, President's Intelligence Advisory Board, The White House

Michael Morell
Former Deputy Director and Acting Director, Central Intelligence Agency

Harold Moss
CEO, Tautuk

Dr. John Nagl, LTC, USA (Ret)
Former President, Center for a New American Security

Christopher Painter
Former Coordinator for Cyber Issues, Department of State

Walter F. Parkes
CEO & Co-Founder, Dreamscape Immersive

Dr. DJ Patil
Former United States Chief Data Scientist, The White House

Nicole Perlroth
Cybersecurity Journalist and Author, *This is How They Tell Me the World Ends*

Neal A. Pollard
Former Global Chief Information Security Officer, UBS

Cameron Pratt
Managing Partner & CEO, Foulger-Pratt

Major General Arnold Punaro, USMC (ret)
Former Staff Director, Committee on Armed Services, United States Senate

Col. (ret.) Gregory Rattray
Former Director for Cybersecurity, National Security Council, The White House

Philip R. Reitinger
Former Deputy Under Secretary, National Programs and Protection Directorate, Department of Homeland Security

Eric Rosenbach
Former Chief of Staff, Department of Defense

James M. Routh
Chief Security Officer, Transmit Security

David Roux
Co-Managing Partner, BayPine Capital

Richard C. Schaeffer, Jr.
Former Information Assurance Director, National Security Agency

Ted Schlein
Managing Partner, Kleiner Perkins

Christopher M. Schroeder
Member of the Board, The German Marshall Fund

Erica Ruliffson Schultz
President Field Operations, Confluent

Teresa H. Shea
Former SIGINT Director, National Security Agency

Shane D. Shook, Ph.D.
Venture Partner, ForgePoint Capital

Vikram J. Singh
Former Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for South and Southeast Asia, Department of Defense

Christopher Steed
Chief Investment Officer & Managing Director, Paladin Capital Group

Michael Steed
Founder & Managing Partner, Paladin Capital Group

Bobbie Stempfley
Former Acting Assistant Secretary for Cybersecurity and Communications, Department of Homeland Security

Michael Sutton
Former Chief Information Security Officer, Zscaler

Vice Admiral Jan E. Tighe, USN Retired
Former Commander, Fleet Cyber Command

Frances Townsend
Former Counterterrorism and Homeland Security Advisor to the President, The White House

Mike Vickers
Former Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence

Linton Wells II
Former Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense for Networks and Information Integration and Chief Information Officer, Department of Defense

Owen West
Former Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations/Low Intensity Conflict, Department of Defense

Tarah Wheeler
CEO, Red Queen Dynamics

Dr. Ellison Anne Williams
Founder & CEO, Enveil

Amit Yoran
Chairman & CEO, Tenable

Sounil Yu
Former Chief Security Scientist, Bank of America

Robert B. Zoellick
Former Deputy Secretary of State

CORRESPONDENCE II.—SUPPORTING THE NOMINATION OF NATHANIEL FICK TO BE AMBASSADOR-AT-LARGE FOR CYBERSPACE AND DIGITAL POLICY

SUBMITTED BY CHRISTOPHER PAINTER, FORMER COORDINATOR FOR CYBER ISSUES, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

August 2, 2022

The Honorable Bob Menendez Chairman
Committee on Foreign Relations
United States Senate Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable James E. Risch Ranking Member
Committee on Foreign Relations
United States Senate Washington, DC 20510

Re: Nomination of Nathaniel Fick to be Ambassador at Large for Cyberspace and Digital Policy, Department of State (PN2223)

Dear Chairman Menendez and Ranking Member Risch:

I write today to express my strong support for the nomination of Nate Fick to serve as Ambassador at Large for Cyberspace and Digital Policy at the Department of State. Though I have also signed another letter of support from former national security and business leaders, I wanted to write in my personal capacity given my prior government role as the first U.S. top cyber diplomat. I believe my prior experience in establishing the Office of the Coordinator for Cyber Issues at the State Department and serving in that position for six and half years, gives me a unique perspective on the new position and what qualities are needed to succeed in the role.

First, as many have pointed out, Nate has an impressive background that will serve him well in the new position. His combination of cyber industry experience, leadership of a national security-oriented think tank and relationships with many current government cyber leaders will be a great help in carrying out his new duties if confirmed. In particular, I know from experience that establishing a new structure in a relatively new substantive area within the existing bureaucracy of the State Department requires strong and creative leadership. Similarly, such leadership is necessary for fostering cooperation and representing foreign policy interests within the U.S. interagency, working with and leveraging private sector and civil society stakeholders, and, of course, promoting U.S. positions with international partners and building alliances. Nate has demonstrated creative and strong leadership in his prior roles and those skills are essential here.

I also wanted to impress on the Committee the urgency in acting swiftly on Mr. Fick's nomination. Although the position for which he is nominated was created relatively recently, and I commend the Department for creating the new structure, there has not been an appointed leader for these issues for nearly two years. As the Committee is well aware, policy and technical threats in cyberspace are only getting more severe and more impactful. The malicious use of cyber capabilities by some nation states, and the disruption caused by criminal ransomware groups, demonstrate the critical need for U.S. diplomatic engagement and leadership. Although the existing team at State, including the people from my old office, are doing a great job, there is no substitute for empowered high-level leadership.

Finally, I have been pleased that, in my experience, cyber policy has always been a largely non-partisan issue and I hope that approach continues given the common threats and challenges we all face. Given Nate's strong qualifications and the urgent need for continued U.S leadership in this critical area, I urge the Committee to act swiftly on his nomination and to recommended him to the full Senate for confirmation.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Christopher Painter

Former Coordinator for Cyber Issues, U.S. Department of State

NOMINATIONS

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 29, 2022

U.S. SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS,
Washington, DC.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 2:47 p.m., in Room 419, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Jeanne Shaheen, presiding.

Present: Senators Shaheen [presiding], Menendez, Murphy, Kaine, Markey, Van Hollen, Portman, Young, Barrasso, Cruz, and Hagerty.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. JEANNE SHAHEEN, U.S. SENATOR FROM NEW HAMPSHIRE

Senator SHAHEEN. At this time, I would like to call the hearing of the Senate Foreign Relations committee to order. Today, we are going to review the nominations of ten important best ambassadorial nominees to advance American's foreign policy.

We start with the first five who are before us. In our first panel, we will hear from Ms. Kathleen Kavalec to Romania, Mr. Ken Merten to Bulgaria, Mr. Christopher Robinson to Latvia, Mr. Bijan Sabet to the Czech Republic, and Mr. George Kent to Estonia.

Today, diplomats are more critical than ever in advancing U.S. foreign policy and National Security interests at this—the global security landscape is experiencing probably the most seismic shift since World War II.

I recently returned from the Halifax International Security Forum in Canada right before Thanksgiving, and together with Senator Risch, the Ranking Member of the Senate Foreign Relations committee, we led the largest delegation to date, nine members of Congress, bipartisan, bicameral to that forum.

And in each of the interactions that we had with foreign government officials, we felt the United States commitment to providing continued support to Ukraine was mirrored and shared by our allies. And furthermore, that our allies very much appreciated the strong stand taken by the United States and the importance of our foreign policy.

And while our diplomatic impact is forged and sustained by the dedicated public servants of the Foreign Service, we must have qualified, confirmed ambassadors on the ground to lead and support them.

To tackle the myriad complex challenges we are facing, we have to have ambassadors heading our embassies and representing us in multilateral organizations. I want to take this moment to recognize

my ranking member for today's hearing, Senator Portman of Ohio, because this will be our last time chairing a hearing together.

Senator Portman, we have worked together on a whole range of issues on this committee from the—and beyond, from the historic infrastructure deal to bipartisan support for Ukraine. And I am really grateful for your partnership and for the leadership that you have shown in helping to lead the Congressional support for Ukraine.

We have the opportunity to travel there on several occasions together and it is very clear that your commitment to what is happening there is not going to end when you leave the Senate, so thank you for that. Let me introduce the nominees on our first of these two panels. I am pleased that Kathleen Ann Kavalec has been nominated to serve as U.S. Ambassador to Romania.

This would be something of a homecoming, as I understand you served at Embassy Bucharest earlier in your career. You are a career member of the Senior Foreign Service with the rank of Minister Counselor. And since 2019, you have served as the OSCE's Head of Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

She is an expert in the region, having served as Deputy Assistant Secretary of State in the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, led the State Department's Office of Russian Affairs, and served at our Embassy in Kyiv and twice in the U.S. Embassy Moscow.

Romania has been a longstanding leader in NATO with respect to the Black Sea region. This is a vital transportation area that must be protected as the economies and people of many nations depend on the safe, unimpeded passage of goods, grains, and supplies across its waters

I am going to stop in my introductions and see if I can ask Senator Markey, if you would like to do the introduction of Mr. Sabet. Go ahead, Senator Markey.

Senator MARKEY. Thank you, Madam Chair and Ranking Member Portman. I am pleased to introduce an accomplished and acclaimed son of Massachusetts, Bijan Sabet, President Biden's nominee to be the United States Ambassador to the Czech Republic.

He is joined here today by his wife, Lauren, and his children, Sophia, Ali, and James are watching from home. Mr. Sabet story is in many ways the embodiment of the American dream. Although he grew up in New York to immigrant parents, he had the good sense to move to Boston, where he attended my alma mater, Boston College.

Unfortunately, however, while he had the good sense to fly high with the B.C. Eagles, he has failed to have the good sense to abandon the Yankees. But we forgive him for that one lapse of judgment——

[Laughter.]

Senator SHAHEEN. You may forgive him——

[Laughter.]

Senator MARKEY. He got his professional start in the somewhat warmer Silicon Valley. Luckily, his wife eventually convinced him to move back to Massachusetts.

Mr. Sabet continues to affirm his commitment to our beloved brain State, serving on the Board of Trustees of Boston College, as

well as on the board of trustees of both the Beaver Country Day School and the Saint Mark School in Southborough.

Mr. Sabet has built an impressive career with accomplishments too numerous to list in their entirety, but including helping to build up numerous companies, including quite a few headquartered in Massachusetts like Wayfair.

Mr. Sabet has never forgotten the private sector's responsibility to its workers and their communities. He has been an advocate for CEOs in the tech world to stand up for their values and their employees. Recently, he has been focused on supporting climate focused startups, working on several issues close to my heart.

Always hungry for new challenges, Mr. Sabet has turned his considerable talents to public service. This nomination comes at an important time for the region. The United States and Czech Republic have a deep and abiding relationship.

We are NATO's allies, economic partners, and historic friends in the 20th century. Prague was on the front lines of the last hot war in Europe and the epicenter of the ensuing cold one.

And today, as Europe confronts its biggest security challenges in decades, Prague is once again at the center of the storm. I commend Mr. Sabet for rising to meet this moment. Mr. Sabet, we congratulate you on your nomination.

Massachusetts thanks you for your service, and we thank you for appearing before the committee today. You are going to be an outstanding Ambassador. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you very much, Senator Markey. We know your schedule may require that you leave, so feel free to do that at your leisure.

Next, we have Mr. Ken Merten. He is nominated to represent us in Bulgaria, a reliable ally in an area of strategic importance to the United States, where a fragile coalition government must tackle corruption and organized crime, while also facing an economic downturn exacerbated by Russia's war.

To its enormous credit, Bulgaria has stood with Ukraine despite historically close ties to Russia. This would be Ambassador Merten's third tour as Chief of Mission, following successful assignments in Croatia and Haiti.

As ambassador in Haiti, he led the U.S. Government response to the 2010 Haiti earthquake, which involved over 22,000 U.S. military and thousands of civilian personnel in Haiti from numerous U.S. Government agencies.

He received the 2011 Ryan C. Crocker Award for Outstanding Leadership in Expeditionary Diplomacy, which recognizes U.S. diplomats who excel in the most challenging leadership positions overseas. I am also pleased to see Christopher Robinson nominated to the position of Ambassador to Latvia.

Mr. Robinson is a career member of the Senior Foreign Service and currently serves as Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Europe and Eurasia. His nomination comes at an important time for our continued collaboration with Latvia on resisting Russia's maligned influence in Europe.

Mr. Robinson has served as the Senior Political Officer at our Embassy in Moscow, Deputy Director for Russian Affairs at the State Department, and Political Counselor at the U.S. Mission to

the OSCE, earning multiple State Department awards reserved for the finest among our diplomatic corps.

Finally, I want to welcome Mr. George Kent, nominated to be U.S. ambassador to Estonia. Mr. Kent has a distinguished record of service with the Department of State in Ukraine, Poland, Uzbekistan, Thailand, and Washington, and most recently oversaw policy toward Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus, Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan as Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Europe. He previously led U.S. anti-corruption efforts across Europe and Eurasia.

I appreciate that Estonia has been a valuable NATO partner and ally to Ukraine, contributing more military aid per capita than any other country, and hosting 60,000 Ukrainian refugees, a figure more than 4 percent of Estonia's population.

Without further ado, I want to hand it over to the Ranking Member for his opening remarks, and then we will turn to our nominees for their opening statements. Senator Portman.

STATEMENT OF SENATOR ROBB PORTMAN,
U.S. SENATOR FROM OHIO

Senator PORTMAN. Great. Thank you very much, Senator Shaheen, my friend and my partner in so many legislative initiatives. I am going to miss partnering with you here in the United States Senate, but I look forward to continuing to stay in touch.

And to my colleagues who are with us here, who are already in public service, 7 of the 10 of you on these two panels already serve our country as career members of our Foreign Service. Thank you for your service.

And for all of you, thank you for stepping up to take on additional responsibilities. It is an impressive panel, and several of you, I have had the opportunity to work with, or to talk to at least, over the years.

Our first panel, we have Assistant Secretary Chris Robinson, who was just discussed. He is heading to Latvia, should he be successfully confirmed. And he is no stranger to working on these issues, including most recently being in Moscow, which I think is good training for this task.

Unfortunately, our great ally, Latvia, is feeling more and more cyber and other threats from Russia. And so I think that background will be very helpful, that Mr. Robinson brings to the table. I also see we have George Kent with us, Deputy Secretary for Estonia.

I finally remember, Mr. Kent, a meeting with you back in 2018, I think it was in the spring of 2018, and when you helped me to be able to get transportation out to the line of contact at the time.

November 2014 was when the Russians first invaded. And 2018, there was a hot war going on in the Donbass, and I was able to go and see it firsthand, partly due to your interventions. I appreciate that. And I want to hear what we are going to do to try to help Estonia even more to push back on again the threats that they are facing, including cyber threats.

By the way, the place where I was able to go was in the East near Bakhmut. And seeing the recent photographs of Bakhmut are heartbreaking. That part of the country has been utterly destroyed by Russia's brutal assaults, and the Wagner Group in particular,

mercenaries. So anyway, I look forward to seeing how we can deepen our ties with Estonia.

Next up, Ken Merten is here, a nominee for Bulgaria, a strong ally of the United States. I have worked with Mr. Merten before because when he was at the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs, he helped on a very sensitive issue with regard to Haiti.

And I told you this, but I appreciate your personal involvement with my constituents, and eventually a successful outcome. But I am curious to know how you will strengthen our partnership with Bulgaria and fight Russia's efforts to exert malign influence over that country as well. It is an important role right now.

Ms. Kathleen Kavalec is here, who is a nominee for Romania. I was in Romania last year and they have done yeoman's work to try to help with regard to Ukraine. They are suffering, too, as you know, with the electrical issues, with Russian bombing the infrastructures in Ukraine. They are affected directly.

I am glad to have the opportunity to see you before the committee and I appreciate it talking to you in advance. Glad you are finally here. And then finally last up, Mr. Bijan Sabet, who was just talked about, the Ambassador to the Czech Republic, the only non-career nominee on this panel.

I am curious to know how your private sector experience will serve you well in this important role with the Czech Republic, again, at a critical time, our relationship with Prague.

Again, thank you so much. I will now turn it back to my friend and colleague, Senator Shaheen.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you very much, Senator Portman. I would ask that we begin at this end with Christopher Robinson, and we will go down the table and each of you give your opening statements. Please begin.

STATEMENT OF CHRISTOPHER T. ROBINSON OF MARYLAND, A CAREER MEMBER OF THE SENIOR FOREIGN SERVICE, CLASS OF MINISTER–COUNSELOR, NOMINATED TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE REPUBLIC OF LATVIA

Mr. ROBINSON. Chairwoman Shaheen, Ranking Member Portman, and distinguished members of this committee, it is a privilege to appear before you. I am honored to be the nominee for U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Latvia.

And I thank President Biden and Secretary Blinken for their confidence in me. I want to start by recognizing those who have made it possible for me to be here today.

First, I want to honor my wife, Donka, who is here with me today. For her love, her commitment, and her support for over 27 years of marriage. I would not be here without her. We are blessed by our three daughters, Faith, Hope, and Charity. Charity also joins me here today. I want to thank them for their love and the sacrifices they have made growing up with the frequent moves and the demands of life in the Foreign Service.

I would also like to thank my mother, Eileen Robinson, and my father in law, Peter Todorov, my sister, Gillian, and brother, Matthew, as well as my brother and sister in law, Ned and Neda

Todorov, for their inspiration and steadfast support every step of the way.

I am a career Foreign Service Officer with over 27 years of experience. I have served in Russia, Belarus, Nicaragua, and Iraq, among many other assignments. Much of my career has focused on supporting the freedom and independence of Europe, as well as defending human rights, often in some of the world's most authoritarian regimes.

As the events unfolding in Ukraine today demonstrate, protecting and supporting these freedoms is fundamental to safeguarding our own National Security. Most recently, as Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Russia, I have had the privilege to work with this committee to help implement policies to counter and deter Russian aggression.

I thank the committee for the strong bipartisan support it has given to these efforts. If confirmed, my first priority would be to ensure the safety and security of U.S. citizens in the Republic of Latvia. My second priority will be to enhance bilateral efforts to counter and deter Russia's aggression, particularly against Latvia, and regional efforts to strengthen transatlantic security.

At the core of our relationship with Latvia is our bond as NATO's allies. Latvian soldiers have served side by side with U.S. soldiers in Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Balkans, contributing to NATO missions and operations. Latvia hosts one of NATO's battlegroups, and our service members train alongside Latvians to defend NATO territory.

Latvia was among the first countries to send weapons to Ukraine and continues to support the Government and people of Ukraine as they fight for their freedom and democracy. Tens of thousands of Ukrainian refugees are currently living in Latvia, supported by the Latvian Government.

If confirmed, I will work with the Latvian Government to strengthen our security partnership and our alliance through NATO. My third priority will be to collaborate with Latvia to address global challenges. Our partnership with Latvia is deep and productive and extends far beyond the security realm.

As an EU member state, Latvia has a critical voice in Brussels on regulations and the single market, sanctions, and energy policy. Latvia shares U.S. concerns about China's human rights record, its strategic alignment with Russia, and its record of economic coercion. If confirmed, I will work with Latvia to strengthen international protections for human rights and the rules based order.

As host of the NATO's Strategic Communication Center of Excellence, Latvia has worked with other countries in the region to counter disinformation from Russia and other malign actors. If confirmed, I hope to build on and deepen our bilateral cooperation to confront this growing challenge.

Latvia has also committed to ending its dependance on Russian natural gas and is working with the U.S. Government to identify diversified energy options, including liquefied natural gas and advanced nuclear technologies.

If confirmed, I will work with Latvia to end its dependance on Russian energy. Finally, if confirmed, I look forward to working

with the talented team at Embassy Riga to build on their successes and advance these shared goals together.

I will continue to partner with Congress to further U.S. priorities in Latvia, and I enthusiastically await hearing from people across Latvia, sharing our ideas and deepening people to people ties as we strive towards a better tomorrow.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today, and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Robinson follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF CHRISTOPHER T. ROBINSON

Chairwoman Shaheen, Ranking Member Portman, and distinguished members of the committee, it is a privilege to appear before you. I am honored to be the nominee for U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Latvia, and I thank President Biden and Secretary Blinken for their confidence in me.

I want to start by recognizing those who have made it possible for me to be here today. First, I want to honor my wife, Donka, for her love, commitment, and support for over 27 years of marriage. We are blessed by our three daughters, Faith, Hope and Charity. I want to thank them for their service to our country in the sacrifices they have made growing up with frequent moves and the demands of life in the Foreign Service. I would also like to thank my mother, Eileen Robinson, and my father-in-law, Peter Todorov, my sister Gillian, and brother Matthew, as well as my sister-in-law, Neda Todorov, for their inspiration and steadfast support every step of the way.

I am a career Foreign Service Officer with over 27 years of experience. I have served in Russia, Belarus, Nicaragua, and Iraq, among many other assignments. Much of my career has focused on supporting the freedom and independence of Europe as well as defending and advancing human rights, often in some of the world's most authoritarian regimes. As the events unfolding in Ukraine today demonstrate, protecting and supporting these freedoms is fundamental to safeguarding our own national security. Most recently, as Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Russia, I have had the privilege to work with this committee over the last four years to help build and implement policies to counter and deter Russia's aggression in Europe and around the world. I thank the committee for the strong bipartisan support it has given to these efforts.

If confirmed, my first priority would be to ensure the safety and security of U.S. citizens in the Republic of Latvia.

My second priority will be to enhance bilateral efforts to counter and deter Russia's aggression, particularly against Latvia, and regional efforts to strengthen Trans-Atlantic security.

At the core of our relationship with Latvia is our bond as NATO Allies.

Latvian soldiers have served side-by-side with U.S. soldiers in Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Balkans, contributing to NATO missions and operations. Latvia hosts one of NATO's battle groups and our service members train alongside Latvians to defend NATO territory.

Latvia was among the first countries to send weapons to Ukraine and continues to support the Government and people of Ukraine as they fight for their freedom and democracy.

Tens of thousands of Ukrainian refugees are currently living in Latvia, supported by the Latvian Government.

If confirmed, I will work with the Latvian Government to strengthen our security partnership and our Alliance through NATO.

My third priority will be to collaborate with Latvia to address global challenges.

Our partnership with Latvia is deep and productive and extends far beyond the security realm.

As an EU member state, Latvia has a critical voice in Brussels on regulations in the single market, sanctions, and energy policy.

Latvia shares U.S. concerns about China's human rights record, its strategic alignment with Russia as Putin pursues his war of choice against Ukraine, and its record of economic coercion. If confirmed, I will work with Latvia to strengthen international protections for human rights and the rules-based order.

As host of the NATO Strategic Communications Center of Excellence, Latvia has worked with other countries in the region to counter disinformation from Russia and

other malign actors. If confirmed, I hope to build on and deepen our bilateral cooperation to confront this growing challenge.

Latvia hosts a large segment of the Russian independent media-in-exile and has supported Russian journalists' efforts to connect with Russian audiences and share the truth of Putin's brutality. If confirmed I will support these journalists as they continue doing their important work.

Latvia has also committed to ending its dependence on Russian natural gas and is working with the U.S. Government to identify diversified energy options, including liquified natural gas and advanced nuclear technologies. If confirmed, I will work with Latvia to end its dependence on Russian energy.

If confirmed, I eagerly await working with the talented team at Embassy Riga to build on their successes and advance these shared goals, together. I look forward to partnering with Congress to further U.S. priorities in Latvia. And I enthusiastically await hearing from people across Latvia, sharing our ideas, and deepening people-to-people ties as we strive toward a better tomorrow.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I look forward to your questions.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you very much, Mr. Robinson. Mr. Kent.

STATEMENT OF GEORGE P. KENT OF MASSACHUSETTS, A CAREER MEMBER OF THE SENIOR FOREIGN SERVICE, CLASS OF MINISTER–COUNSELOR, NOMINATED TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE REPUBLIC OF ESTONIA

Mr. KENT. Chairwoman Shaheen, Ranking Member Portman, distinguished members of the committee, thank you for holding this hearing today.

It is an honor and a privilege to appear before you as the President's nominee to be the Ambassador to the Republic of Estonia. I would like to thank President Biden and Secretary Blinken for their confidence in me.

If confirmed, I look forward to working with you, your staff, and your colleagues in Congress to ensure the security and welfare of U.S. citizens in Estonia and the hardworking Americans and Estonians at our Mission.

I will also work with you to advance regional security and NATO cooperation at a time of Russia's war in Ukraine, deepen our bilateral trade and entrepreneurship ties, particularly in the digital economy in which Estonia excels, and combat hybrid threats and transnational crime, with a particular focus on cyber.

Madam Chair, with your permission, I would also like to acknowledge and introduce two family members who are here with me today. I deeply grateful to my wife, Velida, for moving across three continents with me over the past 27 years, and our son Georgiy, who along with his two sisters, embraced our peripatetic life and constant changes in schools and friends.

It has been my honor to serve our Nation for 30 years in Central Asia, and Central and Eastern Europe, and Southeast Asia, and now as the President's nominee to be Ambassador to Estonia.

The pursuit of a Europe whole, free, and at peace has been the generational goal of our diplomacy during my entire career. This year, the United States and Estonia celebrate 100 years of diplomatic bilateral relations.

Estonia exemplifies what it means to be a committed member of NATO. It consistently invests in armed forces with over 2 percent of GDP, aiming to gain 3 percent by 2024, deploys globally on secu-

rity and peace missions, even as it shores up its own borders to deter Russia, which it considers an existential threat.

If confirmed, I will work to ensure Estonia continues to strengthen its capabilities and ability to contribute to its own defense, and to operate jointly with the United States and other NATO allies.

This will strengthen European and transatlantic deterrence and defense, improve the credibility of our collective security architecture, and dissuade the increasingly assertive and dangerous activities by Russia and other adversaries.

As you earlier mentioned, Madam Chair, Estonia has been a leader in the region's response to Russia's unjust war in Ukraine. Estonia is the largest contributor per capita of assistance to Ukraine, contributing more than $250 million in military aid and $25 million in economic and humanitarian assistance this year, as well as hosting almost 60,000 Ukrainian refugees, nearly 5 percent of its resident population.

2022 also marks the 82nd anniversary of the 1940 Wells Declaration, under which the United States refused to recognize the forced annexation of Estonia, as well as Latvia and Lithuania, into the Soviet Union.

Estonia showed great strength and determination in overcoming Soviet occupation, restoring its independence in 1991, and making extraordinary progress to become a member of NATO and the European Union in 2004. Estonia has emerged as an exemplar of prosperity and transparent governance to the region and the world.

If confirmed, I am committed to working with Estonia to promote our common goals of democratic values, human rights, and the rules based international order around the world.

The U.S. is also working with Estonia to deepen our trade and investment ties, to build back better from the global pandemic, to set the rules of the road for the 21st century economy, including reliable supply chains, to strengthen energy security and the transition to a green economy, and stand united against non-market and coercive economic practices.

Estonia also is a world leader in digital services and cybersecurity. Estonia hosts the NATO's Cooperative Cyber Defense Center of Excellence, which the U.S. joined in 2011. In fact, the annual NATO's Cyber Exercise started in Tallinn today.

The United States and Estonia share a vision of a secure and open cyberspace in which all countries behave responsibly. If confirmed, I look forward to broadening our strong cooperation on cyber issues.

In sum, the relationship between the U.S. and Estonia is as strong and important now it has ever been. If confirmed, I look forward to representing our country, and advancing U.S. interests and deepening our cooperation with Estonia to confront regional and global challenges, and to promote transatlantic priorities worldwide.

Madam Chair, Ranking Member, other members of the committee, I am grateful for the opportunity to have addressed you today, and I will be at your disposal to answer any questions you may have. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Kent follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF GEORGE P. KENT

Chairwoman Shaheen, Ranking Member Portman, distinguished members of the committee, thank you for holding this hearing today. It is an honor and a privilege to appear before you as the President's nominee to be Ambassador to the Republic of Estonia. I would like to thank President Biden and Secretary Blinken for their confidence in me. If confirmed, I look forward to working with you and your colleagues in Congress to ensure the security and welfare of U.S. citizens in Estonia and the hard-working Americans and Estonians at our Mission in Tallinn. I will also work to advance regional security and NATO cooperation at a time of Russia's war in Ukraine, deepen our bilateral trade and entrepreneurship ties, particularly in the digital economy in which Estonia excels, and combat hybrid threats and transnational crime, with a particular focus on cyber.

Madam Chair, with your permission, I would like to acknowledge and introduce some family members who are here with me today. I am deeply grateful to my wife Velida for moving across three continents with me over the past 27 years, and my son Georgiy, for embracing our peripatetic life and the constant changes in schools and friends.

It has been my honor to serve our Nation for the last thirty years, in Central Asia, in Central and Eastern Europe, in Southeast Asia, and now as the President's nominee to be the Ambassador to Estonia. The pursuit of a Europe whole, free, and at peace has been the generational goal of our diplomacy during my career.

This year the United States and Estonia celebrate 100 years of bilateral relations. Estonia exemplifies what it means to be a committed member of NATO, consistently investing in its armed forces with over two percent of GDP while deploying globally on security and peace missions, even as it shores up its own borders to deter Russia, which it considers an existential threat. If confirmed, I will work to ensure Estonia continues to strengthen its capabilities and ability to contribute to its own defense and operate jointly with the United States and other NATO Allies.

This will strengthen European and transatlantic deterrence and defense, improve the credibility of the collective security architecture, and dissuade increasingly assertive and dangerous activities by Russia and other adversaries. Estonia has been a leader in the region's response to Russia's unjust war in Ukraine. Estonia is the largest contributor per capita of assistance to Ukraine, contributing more than $255 million in military aid this year, as well as hosting almost 60,000 Ukrainian refugees, five percent of Estonia's resident population.

2022 marks the 82nd anniversary of the 1940 Welles Declaration under which the United States refused to recognize the forced annexation of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania into the Soviet Union. Estonia showed great strength and determination in overcoming Soviet occupation, restoring independence in 1991, making extraordinary progress to become a member of NATO and the European Union in 2004, and emerging as an example of prosperity and transparent governance to the region and to the world. If confirmed, I am committed to working with Estonia to promote our common goals of democratic values, human rights, and the rules-based international order around the world.

The United States is also working with Estonia to deepen our trade and investment ties, build back better from the global pandemic, set the rules of the road for the 21st century economy including reliable supply chains, strengthen energy security and the transition to the green economy, and stand united against non-market and coercive economic practices. Estonia is also a world leader on digital services and cyber security. Estonia hosts the NATO Cooperative Cyber Defense Center of Excellence in Tallinn, which the United States joined in 2011. The United States and Estonia share a vision of a secure and open cyberspace, in which all countries behave responsibly. If confirmed, I look forward to continuing our strong cooperation on cyber issues.

Madam Chair, the relationship between the United States and Estonia is strong. Estonia has played an active role in advancing our shared security, economic, and social values. Our relationship with Estonia is as important now as it has ever been. If confirmed by the Senate, I look forward to representing my country in advancing U.S. interests and in deepening our long-standing and critical cooperation with Estonia as we work together to strengthen our already productive relationship in confronting regional and global challenges and promoting transatlantic priorities worldwide.

I am grateful for the opportunity to have addressed you today and am at your disposal to answer any questions you may have. Thank you.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you, Mr. Kent.

Mr. Merten.

STATEMENT OF HON. KENNETH MERTEN OF VIRGINIA, A CAREER MEMBER OF THE SENIOR FOREIGN SERVICE, CLASS OF CAREER MINISTER, NOMINATED TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA

Mr. MERTEN. Thank you, Chairwoman Shaheen, Ranking Member Portman, and distinguished members of the committee. I am honored and humbled to be here, to appear before you today as President Biden's nominee for U.S. Ambassador to Bulgaria. Thank you for your consideration of my nomination.

Should I be lucky enough to be confirmed, I commit to working very closely with you and your staffs. I would like to take a moment to acknowledge my wife, Susan, who is here today, and our daughters, Elizabeth and Carol.

We are a Foreign Service family. Susan has accompanied me throughout my career, including three tours in Haiti. My daughter Carol is not here today but is a first tour Foreign Service officer in Matamoros, Mexico. My family and I have had the honor of representing the United States overseas for 20 of my 35 years in the Foreign Service.

I have been fortunate enough to have served six of those years as Chief of Mission in two very different countries. If confirmed, I believe I would bring relevant and broad based experience to our Mission in Bulgaria.

My time as U.S. Ambassador to Haiti, in which I confronted the worst urban natural disaster in modern history, a cholera epidemic and a hurricane, gave me numerous opportunities to demonstrate a full range of management, political, and public diplomacy skills. I led an Embassy that ensured an effective transition from a 22,000 person military mission to a smaller, civilian-led humanitarian mission.

In Croatia, my team and I accompanied the Government through the final stages to EU membership. I successfully advocated at every level of the Croatian Government for the return of pre-war Jewish property to the Croatian Jewish community, resulting in the first repatriation of Jewish property since Croatian independence.

My efforts also laid the foundation for Croatia to construct a liquefied natural gas terminal, thus making Croatia more energy independent, a particularly important consideration these days. If confirmed, these experiences would inform my sense of U.S. priorities in Bulgaria.

First and foremost, the well-being of U.S. citizens and Embassy colleagues will be my most important and sacred responsibility. Since joining NATO in 2004, Bulgaria has consistently demonstrated its commitment to the alliance. It contributed forces and sustained casualties in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Russia's war against Ukraine makes our coordination with Bulgaria all the more urgent. Bulgaria is today hosting a multinational NATO battle group that includes U.S. troops. It has registered more than 145,000 refugees from Ukraine for temporary protection, fully supported sanctions against Russia, and in November, Bulgaria's parliament voted overwhelmingly in support of military assistance to Ukraine.

Bulgaria's acquisition of a second tranche of F–16s will mark a significant step towards meeting NATO's defense spending commitments. If confirmed, I will continue to grow our Mission's engagement and security issues, and support Bulgaria's efforts to combat Russia's malign influence.

Bulgaria has taken positive steps towards energy diversification, particularly since Russia cut off natural gas supplies in April. The completion of the interconnector Greece-Bulgaria, which facilitates natural gas imports from Azerbaijan, was a major achievement in this regard.

We will continue to work together in this area, should I be fortunate enough to be confirmed. If confirmed, I will work tirelessly to build on the outstanding work of my predecessors, to strengthen the bilateral relationship with the Republic of Bulgaria and advocate for the priorities of the United States.

Thank you for your time and consideration, and I look forward to answer your questions.[The prepared statement of Mr. Merten follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. KENNETH MERTEN

Thank you, Chairwoman Shaheen, Ranking Member Portman, and distinguished members of the committee, I am honored and humbled to appear before you today as President Biden's nominee for U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Bulgaria. Thank you for your consideration of my nomination. Should I be lucky enough to be confirmed, I commit to working closely with you and your staffs.

I'd like to take a moment to acknowledge my wife Susan and our daughters Elisabeth and Caryl. We are a Foreign Service family. Susan has accompanied me throughout my career, including three tours in Haiti. My daughter Caryl is not here today but is a first tour Foreign Service Officer serving in Matamoros, Mexico.

My family and I have had the honor of representing the United States overseas for over twenty years of my thirty-five years in the Foreign Service. I've been fortunate enough to have served six of those years as Chief of Mission, in two very different countries. If confirmed, I believe I would bring relevant, broad-based experience to our Mission in Bulgaria.

My time as U.S. Ambassador to Haiti—in which I confronted the worst urban natural disaster in modern history, a cholera epidemic, and a hurricane—gave me numerous opportunities to demonstrate a full range of management, political, and public diplomacy skills. I led an Embassy that increased in size by 20 percent; managed a whole-of-government approach as Mission Haiti began to spend $1.2 billion dollars in reconstruction assistance; and ensured an effective transition from a 22,000-person military mission to a smaller civilian-led humanitarian mission.

In Croatia, my team and I accompanied the Government through the final stages to EU membership. I successfully advocated at every level of the Croatian Government—including with heads of state—for the return of pre-war Jewish property to the Croatian Jewish community, resulting in the first restitution of Jewish property since Croatian independence. My efforts also laid the foundation for Croatia to construct a liquefied natural gas terminal, thus making Croatia more energy independent, a particularly important consideration these days.

If confirmed, these experiences would inform my sense of U.S. priorities in Bulgaria. First and foremost, the safety and well-being of U.S. citizens living, working, and traveling in Bulgaria, as well as that of the Embassy team in Sofia, will be my most important and sacred responsibility.

Bulgaria is a strategic partner and Ally of the United States. Since joining NATO in 2004, Bulgaria has consistently demonstrated its commitment to the Alliance. It contributed forces and sustained casualties in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Russia's unprovoked and unjustified war against Ukraine makes our continued close coordination with Bulgaria all the more urgent, particularly given the country's position along Europe's Eastern Flank. Bulgaria is hosting a multinational NATO battlegroup that includes U.S. troops. It has registered more than 145,000 refugees from Ukraine for temporary protection, fully supported sanctions against Russia, and in November Bulgaria's parliament voted overwhelmingly in support of military assistance to Ukraine. Bulgaria's acquisition of a second tranche of F-16s

will mark a significant step toward meeting its NATO defense spending commitments. If confirmed, I will continue to grow our Mission's engagement in security issues and support Bulgaria's efforts to combat Russia's malign influence.

If confirmed, I will also prioritize the expansion and diversification of our economic ties with Bulgaria while serving as a tireless advocate for stronger rule of law and for the fair treatment of U.S. firms. There is tremendous potential to boost our relations and expand U.S. commercial interests in key areas like technology and innovation, agriculture, education and entrepreneurship, infrastructure, and notably, energy.

Bulgaria has taken positive steps toward energy diversification, particularly since Russia cut off natural gas supplies in April after the Bulgarian Government refused to pay Gazprom in rubles. The completion of the Interconnector Greece-Bulgaria, which facilitates natural gas imports from Azerbaijan, was a major achievement in this regard. More remains to be done, from securing further LNG supplies to procuring nuclear fuel that does not rely upon Russian inputs. If confirmed, I am committed to supporting Bulgaria's efforts to strengthen energy security, including with the help of U.S. companies' technology and know-how.

If confirmed, I commit myself to earnestly serving as a Chief of Mission who leads, manages, and safeguards all our Embassy colleagues. I will work tirelessly to build on the outstanding work of my predecessors to strengthen our bilateral relationship with the Republic of Bulgaria and advocate for the priorities of the United States.

Thank you for your time and your consideration. I look forward to answering your questions.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you very much. Ms. Kavalec.

STATEMENT OF KATHLEEN ANN KAVALEC OF CALIFORNIA, A CAREER MEMBER OF THE SENIOR FOREIGN SERVICE, CLASS OF MINISTER–COUNSELOR, NOMINATED TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO ROMANIA

Ms. KAVALEC. Thank you, Chairwoman Shaheen, Ranking Member Portman, and distinguished members of this committee. I am honored to appear before you today as President Biden's nominee for U.S. Ambassador to Romania.

As we speak, Secretary Blinken is in Bucharest, which underscores the importance of our long standing partnership in Romania. Thank you for your consideration today of my nomination. Allow me first to introduce my husband, Mark Taplin, a retired Foreign Service Officer, and as well as our three children, Ben, Sam and Gwen, who are listening remotely today.

I wish to thank them from the bottom of my heart for all the great support they have given me in my career as we have traveled around the world together. I had the pleasure of serving in Romania once before, as you mentioned, as Cultural Affairs Officer at U.S. Embassy Bucharest.

In that role, I traveled throughout the country to carry out our public diplomacy programs and expand our people to people ties. I gained an appreciation for cultural exchange from my late father, Dan Kavalec, a Spanish instructor, a Fulbright grantee, and proponent of good listening skills which are so critical to effective diplomacy.

In my diplomatic career, I focused on building coalitions, nurturing relationships, and listening. If confirmed, I look forward to applying these and other core diplomatic principles to America's vital relationship with Romania.

To that end, please allow me to outline my policy priorities that will guide my work as U.S. Ambassador to Romania, if confirmed.

First, I will commit myself foremost to the safety and security of our Mission team and of U.S. citizens living, working, and traveling in Romania.

Second, if confirmed, I will advance our cooperation with Romania and vital security matters. Since the end of the communist dictatorship in 1989, Romania has made remarkable progress in building a genuine democracy and a market economy.

Romania made it clear early on that its goal was to join NATO and the European Union, and through hard work and determination, the country and its people succeeded. I was on hand in 2008 when Romania hosted the Bucharest NATO's summit, a source of pride for the entire country.

My family and I joined the celebrations in Sibiu on New Year's Day 2007, led by the then mayor, now President Klaus Iohannis, that greeted Romania's official accession to the EU. Today, Romania is a model for other NATO members. It has budgeted 2 percent of its GDP for defense, and most recently committed to raising its defense budget to 2.5 percent, much of it allocated to purchase U.S. equipment in its robust modernization effort.

It hosts multinational NATO forces and is a longstanding contributor to NATO missions and operations worldwide. If confirmed, I will continue to strengthen this security cooperation. I am determined to work closely with Romania as we stand united against the Kremlin's unprovoked, unjustified, and horrific war against Ukraine. Putin's aggression has only strengthened the Ukrainian people's desire to remain free and independent.

The firm resolve of Romania has been especially laudable in this crisis. The country and its people have welcomed with open arms and hearts over 2.5 million Ukrainian refugees, more than 85,000 of which—of whom remain in the country and have generously supported those refugees with critical assistance and essential services.

In addition, Romania has supported unprecedented sanctions to weaken Putin's war machine and aided Ukraine through a wide range of other humanitarian and security efforts. Nor has Romania shied away from pushing back on the People's Republic of China's attempts to impose coercive economic arrangements on countries in Central Europe.

Romania passed 5G legislation that excludes untrusted vendors from its 5G tender, blocked greater PRC involvement in Romania civil nuclear industry, and instituted robust investment screening legislation to protect its critical infrastructure.

If confirmed, I will coordinate closely with Romanian authorities to counter efforts by the PRC Government to pursue steps that would weaken Romanian National Security or economic standing. I also pledged to work on deepening and broadening our economic cooperation with Romania.

I will encourage Romania's efforts to foster a business climate that facilitates U.S. investment. The country's efforts to advance clean energy technologies, including in nuclear and other renewables, are already model for the region.

Finally, I stand ready to support Romania's efforts to fight corruption and strengthen its democratic institutions, including in

supporting a free press. In sum, I will commit myself to expanding our long standing American partnership with Romania.

This year, the United States and Romania are celebrating the 25th anniversary of our bilateral strategic partnership. I look forward to taking the next steps in building upon this very strong foundation.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear today and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Kavalec follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF KATHLEEN ANN KAVALEC

Thank you, Chairwoman Shaheen, Ranking Member Portman, and distinguished members of the committee. I am honored to appear before you today as President Biden's nominee for U.S. Ambassador to Romania. As we speak, Secretary Blinken is in Bucharest, which underscores the importance of our long-standing partnership with Romania. Thank you for your consideration of my nomination.

Allow me first to introduce my husband, Mark Taplin, a retired FSO, and my three children, Ben, Sam, and Gwen. I want to thank them from the bottom of my heart for all the great support they have given me in my career.

I had the pleasure of serving in Romania once before, as Cultural Affairs Officer at Embassy Bucharest. In that role, I traveled throughout the country to carry out our public diplomacy programs and expand our network of "American Corners"—resource centers where Romanians can learn more about American culture, history, and government.

I gained an appreciation for cultural exchange from my late father, a Spanish instructor, Fulbright grantee, and proponent of good listening skills, which are critical to effective diplomacy. In my diplomatic career, I have focused on building coalitions, nurturing relationships, and listening. If confirmed, I look forward to applying these and other core diplomatic principles to America's vital relationship with Romania.

To that end, please allow me to outline my policy priorities that will guide my work as U.S. Ambassador to Romania, if confirmed. First, I will commit myself foremost to the safety and security of our Mission team and of U.S. citizens living, working, and traveling in Romania.

Second, if confirmed, I will advance our cooperation with Romania on vital security matters. Since the end of the Communist dictatorship in 1989, Romania has made remarkable progress in building a genuine democracy and market economy. Romania made it clear, early on, that its goal was to join NATO and the European Union, and through hard work and determination, the country and its people succeeded. I was on hand in 2008 when Romania hosted the Bucharest NATO summit, a source of pride for the entire country. My family and I joined the celebrations in Sibiu on New Year's Day 2007—led by the then mayor, now President Klaus Iohannis—that greeted Romania's official accession to the EU.

Today, Romania is a model for other NATO members. It has budgeted 2 percent of its GDP for defense—and most recently committed to raising its defense budget to 2.5 percent, much of it allocated to purchase U.S. equipment in its robust modernization effort. It hosts multinational NATO forces and is a longstanding contributor to NATO missions and operations worldwide. If confirmed, I will continue strengthen this security cooperation.

I am determined to work closely with Romania as we stand united against the Kremlin's unprovoked, unjustified, and horrific war against Ukraine. The firm resolve of Romania has been especially laudable in this crisis. The country and its people have welcomed, with open arms and hearts, over two and a half million Ukrainian refugees, more than 85,000 of whom remain in the country, and have generously supported these refugees with critical assistance and essential services. In addition, Romania has supported unprecedented sanctions to weaken Putin's war machine and aided Ukraine through a wide range of other humanitarian and security efforts.

Nor has Romania shied from pushing back on the People's Republic of China's attempts to impose coercive economic arrangements on countries in Central Europe. Romania passed 5G legislation that excludes untrusted vendors from its 5G tender, blocked greater PRC involvement in Romania's civil nuclear industry, and instituted robust investment screening legislation to protect its critical infrastructure. If confirmed, I will coordinate closely with Romanian authorities to counter efforts by the

PRC Government to pursue steps that would weaken Romanian's national security or economic standing.

I also pledge to work on deepening and broadening our economic cooperation with Romania. I will encourage Romania's efforts to foster a business climate that facilitates U.S. investment. The country's efforts to advance clean energy technologies, including in nuclear and other renewables, are already a model for the region.

Finally, I stand ready to support Romania's efforts to fight corruption and strengthen its democratic institutions, including in supporting a free and independent media.

In sum, I will commit myself to expanding our longstanding American partnership with Romania. This year, the United States and Romania are celebrating the 25th anniversary of our bilateral Strategic Partnership. I look forward to taking the next steps in in building upon this strong foundation.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear today and I look forward to your questions.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you very much. Mr. Sabet.

STATEMENT OF BIJAN SABET OF MASSACHUSETTS, NOMINATED TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE CZECH REPUBLIC

Mr. SABET. Thank you, Chairwoman Shaheen, Ranking Member Portman, and distinguished members of this committee. And thank you, Senator Markey, for the kind introduction. It is a profound honor to be—to appear before you as President Biden's nominee to serve as the United States Ambassador to the Czech Republic.

I want to express my gratitude to the President and Secretary Blinken for the confidence they have placed in me with this nomination. Before I begin, I would like to introduce my family, starting with my wife, Lauren, who is here today.

Lauren is my best friend and partner who makes everything I do possible. She is also the daughter of a Delaware police officer who is privileged to know the President who once chaired this committee. Our three wonderful children, Sophia, Ella, and James, are watching online. I love you so much and I am so proud to be your dad.

If confirmed, Lauren and James will join me in Prague, and I know our daughters will visit as often as they can. I also want to recognize and thank my parents who taught me and my younger brother to cherish the democratic values and ideals of freedom and opportunity. Like so many, they immigrated to this country in pursuit of the American dream and became U.S. citizens as soon as they could.

My father was born in Iran, where he completed medical school before traveling to the United States for his residency in the late 1960s. Here he met another young doctor, my mother, who had recently immigrated from South Korea. Born under Japanese occupation, she grew up during the Korean War with a deep sense of gratitude to U.S. service members who helped save South Korea from communism.

I have spent the better part of my life and career supporting entrepreneurs, helping them make the most of their potential. I cocreated one of our country's leading venture capital firms, and we have supported hundreds of startups leading to the creation of tens of thousands of jobs. I also serve on the boards of several educational institutions, including Boston College.

I enjoy mentoring students and young professionals, particularly those with backgrounds that are underrepresented in the venture capital industry. If confirmed, I will bring that experience, energy, and focus on the next generation to the work that I do in the Czech Republic.

If confirmed, I will also commit to using my experience to advance bilateral trade and investment by building relationships between the Czech and U.S. companies and entrepreneurs. To that end, I would like to outline five policy priorities that will guide my work as U.S. Ambassador to the Czech Republic, if confirmed.

First, if confirmed, I will have no greater priority than the safety and security of the entire Embassy team and the thousands of U.S. citizen visitors and students who come to the Czech Republic each year.

Second, if confirmed, I will support the Czech Republic in its outstanding efforts to promote regional security and protect Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity against Russia's aggression. I will also deepen our bilateral defense cooperation and NATO partnership and support the negotiations for the purchase of American made F–35s.

Third, if confirmed, I will promote U.S. companies as partners of choice for nuclear energy expansion, including small modular reactors and for nuclear fuel diversification. I will look for ways to support all clean energy sources, especially U.S. companies working in renewable energy.

Now more than ever, it is time to advance energy diversification and security. Fourth, if confirmed, I will work alongside our Czech partners to honor the legacy of former President Vaclav Havel in promoting democracy and human rights worldwide, and especially in upholding media freedom and journalistic integrity.

And finally, if confirmed, I pledge to keep this committee informed as I work to strengthen the alliance, friendship, and partnership between the United States and the Czech Republic.

Madam Chair, Ranking Member Portman, and members of this committee, thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you today. I welcome your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Sabet follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF BIJAN SABET

Thank you, Chairwoman Shaheen, Ranking Member Portman, and distinguished members of this committee.

It is a profound honor to appear before you as President Biden's nominee to serve as United States Ambassador to the Czech Republic. I want to express my gratitude to the President and Secretary Blinken for the confidence they have placed in me with this nomination.

Before I begin, I'd like to introduce my family, starting with my wife Lauren who is here today. Lauren is my best friend and partner, who makes everything I do possible. She's also the daughter of a Delaware police officer, who was privileged to know the President who once chaired this committee. Our three wonderful children, Sophia, Ellie, and James are watching online. I love you so much, and I'm so proud to be your Dad. If confirmed, Lauren and James will join me in Prague, and I know our daughters will visit as often as they can.

I also want to recognize and thank my parents, who taught me and my younger brother to cherish the democratic values and ideals of freedom and opportunity. Like so many, they immigrated to this country in pursuit of the American dream and became U.S. citizens as soon as they could. My father was born in Iran, where he completed medical school, before traveling to the United States for his residency

in the late 1960's. Here, he met another young doctor—my mother—who had recently immigrated from South Korea. Born under Japanese occupation, she grew up during the Korean War with a deep sense of gratitude to the U.S. service members who helped save South Korea from Communism.

I've spent the better part of my life and career supporting entrepreneurs and helping them make the most of their potential. I co-created one of our country's leading venture capital firms where we have supported hundreds of startups—leading to the creation of tens of thousands of jobs. I also serve on the boards of several educational institutions, including Boston College. I enjoy mentoring both students and young professionals, particularly those from backgrounds that are underrepresented in the venture capital industry. If confirmed, I will bring that experience, energy, and focus on the next generation, to the work I do in the Czech Republic. If confirmed, I also commit to using my experience to advance bilateral trade and investment by building relationships between Czech and U.S. companies and entrepreneurs.

To that end, I would like to outline five policy priorities that will guide my work as U.S. Ambassador to the Czech Republic, if confirmed:

- If confirmed, I will have no greater priority than the safety and security of the entire Embassy team and the thousands of U.S. citizen visitors and students who come to the Czech Republic each year.
- If confirmed, I will support the Czech Republic in its outstanding efforts to promote regional security and protect Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity against Russia's aggression. I will also deepen our bilateral defense cooperation and NATO partnership, and support negotiations for the purchase of American-made F-35s.
- If confirmed, I will promote U.S. companies as partners of choice for nuclear energy expansion, including small modular reactors, and for nuclear fuel diversification. I will look for ways to support all clean energy sources, especially U.S. companies working in renewable energy. Now more than ever, it is time to advance energy diversification and security.
- If confirmed, I will work alongside our Czech partners to honor the legacy of former President Vaclav Havel in promoting democracy and human rights worldwide, especially in upholding media freedom and journalistic integrity.
- Finally, if confirmed, I pledge to keep this committee informed as I work to strengthen the alliance, friendship, and partnership between the United States and the Czech Republic.

Madam Chair, Ranking Member Portman, and members of the committee, thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you today. I welcome your questions.

Senator SHAHEEN. Well, thank you all very much. Ms. Kavalec And Mr. Merten, I would like to begin with both of you, as you are being nominated to be Ambassador to two countries that border the Black Sea. And what we have seen since Russia's unprovoked war in Ukraine is just how important the Black Sea region is.

Senator Romney, who also sits on the Foreign Relations committee, and I have legislation that would call for an interagency strategy on how we approach the Black Sea region.

I wonder if either of you can speak to what current strategy is, with respect to the Black Sea region, and how you think we should be working to advance greater regional cooperation among Black Sea countries? And I do not know, which one of you wants to go first? Mr. Merten.

Mr. MERTEN. Happy to start. Thank you, Madam Chairwoman. First of all, we want to thank you for your leadership on this area, in this area, in this geographic region. I think recent events have borne out how really important this area is for several of our allies and friendly nations in the area.

And I think a redoubled focus on the Black Sea is well-deserved. I know the Administration is, led by the NSC, is looking at ways we can operationalize some of our activities overseas. In the Bulgarian context, I will just say we are working hard to support Bul-

garian defense modernization, including working with their navy so they can protect their seas.

I think we need to work with all friendly nations in the area to continue to ensure that commercial activity and benign naval activity can continue unimpeded in the Black Sea. So should I be lucky enough to get confirmed, you have my commitment to stay in touch with you and your colleagues, your staff.

If you have ideas that we can advocate for, we are happy to hear them and happy to work further on them. I will pass it over to Kathy.

Ms. KAVALEC. Thank you. Thank you, Senator Shaheen, for that question, and also for your interest and support in this region. And that also from Senator Romney. I think it is really important to raise the profile of this area as we have seen in this terrible war how important this region is and what the risks are.

Of course, the first priority is to ensure that Ukraine prevails in the war. But we—and in there, in that respect, we have been focusing on deepening our engagement in the region, expanding our presence in the littoral countries since February 24th.

I think, as you know, there is a new rotational brigade combat team in Romania. And we are also looking at energy security and diversification as an important component of supporting this region and strengthening the Black Sea area.

So very much look forward to working with you and to supporting the Administration as it develops an approach that—on an interagency basis to strengthen this area.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you both very much for that. Mr. Robinson and Mr. Kent, the countries that you are nominated to be Ambassadors for, Latvia and Estonia, along with Lithuania, really are impressive in terms of their shared economic and National Security interests with the United States.

I think certainly they have punched above their weight, to use a cliche, in terms of NATO and their willingness to stand up to Russia and its fight against Ukraine. So, can you talk about how you will continue to work together to foster this collective advocacy for Baltic Sea countries? Mr. Robinson, you want to begin?

Mr. ROBINSON. Thank you, Chairwoman Shaheen. I think the Baltic cooperation on this is fundamental. I think all three countries, but I can speak to Latvia, view Russia as an existential threat, and the tragedies and the horrors that we have seen in Ukraine only amplify and deepen the sense of—that we need to work together as a transatlantic community to counter and deter that threat for the long term.

That even as Ukraine makes successes on the battlefield, that this is a long term challenge. Senator, you have noted correctly, Latvia spends more than 2 percent on—to meet its defense commitments. It is committed to 2.5 percent by 2025 and is looking at even moving to 3 percent.

With this committee's support, we have—are expect to provide over $145 million in foreign military financing to help Latvia modernize and increase its equipment purchases to better deter Russian aggression for the future.

And, of course, as the Center for—hosting the NATO's Center for Strategic Communications Excellence, it has been at the forefront

of helping to develop tools and techniques to counter Russian disinformation, for example.

So I think there are many, many ways that we continue to foster that cooperation, both among the three countries, in their defense outlook, in their energy security issues, but also directly with bilaterally, with Latvia to deepen that partnership.

Ms. KAVALEC. Thank you. Mr. Kent.

Mr. KENT. Chairwoman Shaheen, Chris and I worked this sort of issues together as Deputy Assistant Secretaries of State, and we will be happy to continue that cooperation in the Baltics, if confirmed.

The Baltic foreign ministers were just in Kyiv yesterday together along with their Nordic counterparts, and I think this shows the strength of regional cooperation. It is why Sweden and Finland's joining NATO, if all members agree, are going to strengthen our Northern and Eastern flanks.

And I think the security assistance and security spending that Chris mentioned is also critically important for Estonia. They have been receiving additional funds thanks to the appropriations from Congress, and they are dedicating that to buy the HIMARS system, which is also very well-known now from Ukraine.

For every dollar that we have given in security assistance, the Estonians have spent $2.60 of their own money. So I think this is showing how wise leveraging of our resources can contribute to common security for us all.

And you have our commitment to continue to work with you and with each other, if confirmed.

Ms. KAVALEC. Thank you both very much. Senator Hagerty.

Senator HAGERTY. Thank you, Chair Shaheen. And to all of you, a hearty congratulations. I can think of no greater honor than to represent the most exceptional Nation in the world to the various countries that you are going to be serving. So my congratulations to you for your nomination, and my appreciation to all of your families who are going to support you a great deal.

Those of you who are career service officers know this and thank you for your service. And to you, Mr. Sabet, you will learn it in a way, I think, that will be very positive. And I might stay with you, Mr. Sabet, for a moment.

I was pleased to hear your commitment to work with the Czech Republic to continue to strengthen the alliance there with NATO and deal with the situation that Russia has created in Ukraine. I encourage you to continue to work in that direction. There is an area I have a greater concern about, even more so than Russia, and that is China.

And the Ukrainian—I am sorry, the Czech Government has demonstrated a determination to actually support and deepen ties with Taiwan. In fact, legislative leader of the Taiwan Legislative one actually visited the Czech Republic earlier this year. And he said, and I would like to quote, "the Czech Republic is a sanctuary of democracy for the whole world. I appreciate your support and help for Taiwan in times of need."

I very much appreciated that comment, and I would like to ask you first, if you are confirmed, how will you work with the Czech Government with respect to deepening their ties to Taiwan?

Mr. SABET. Thank you, Senator, for the question. And you raise a very important point. I mean, Prime Minister Fiala's government has made it clear that they have a very firm stance towards China. In fact, there is broad skepticism towards China throughout the Government. The Czech Republic has had a critical stance on China, for China's position on Russia, given the illegal war against Ukraine.

The Czechs are participating in the 14 plus 1 framework but have received very little investment from the PRC. And in fact, recently the Senate, the Czech Senate on Foreign Relations passed a non-binding resolution to leave the 14 plus 1, which is quite—it was quite positive.

As you mentioned, the Czech Republic has made real strides in collaborating with Taiwan, both economically and academically. And I think this is important to emphasize and to support. I have read this, Senator Risch's report on China from 2020 out of this committee. So if confirmed, I will bring those, many of those concerns to the post and be mindful of those with me.

And if confirmed, I will work with the Embassy team to look for every opportunity to support the Czech Republic's effort to counter malign influence, support their efforts to screen out untrusted vendors, and to implement their cybersecurity efforts.

Senator HAGERTY. Excellent. Given your background in technology, I think you will be a tremendous asset in advising the Czech Government and particularly on dealing with situations like—that are presented by companies like ZTE and Huawei.

So thank you for that. I would like to turn to, so you work with the Embassy staff there. There is a—in my conversations, I understand there have been some issues in the management section of Embassy Prague. Are you aware of the issues and do you have an update on the status of those? Have they been resolved?

Mr. SABET. You know, my understanding is, from everyone I have spoken to, is the Embassy Prague team is an outstanding team, both direct American hires and our locally employed staff.

I think the challenge in the Czech Republic is you have very low unemployment, very high inflation, and I think recruiting our attention are the highest priority management challenges.

Senator HAGERTY. I encourage you to pay close attention to the situation there and it will certainly enhance your effectiveness to have that working well. And I understand the challenge you raise too, in terms of the competitive dynamic of the marketplace. You mentioned something that is a keen interest to me, and that is your desire to work with the Czech Government to advance investments in energy sources such as nuclear energy, small modular reactors.

I just would like to remind you that I am a Senator from the State of Tennessee. Oak Ridge National Labs, an entire industry is built up there that could be very helpful in that regard. So if you are confirmed, I would encourage you to reach out to find a way to work together, and I would love to volunteer resources from my home State to come and assist.

When I was Ambassador to Japan, they came over to help me in dealing with some situations that had arisen around Fukushima.

I think you might find it very helpful as you advance that arena. And congratulations for a businessperson stepping into this role.

I think you will bring a unique set of capabilities and perspective, should you be confirmed. Thank you.

Mr. SABET. Thank you. You have my commitment.

Senator SHAHEEN. Spoken from experience, Senator Hagerty? Senator Kaine.

Senator KAINE. Thank you, Chairman Shaheen, and congratulations to the members of this panel. Highly qualified. I am just going to ask one question and I would like maybe, Mr. Robinson, you to address it and then just move from my right to left, and it deals with energy policy.

I am very, very complimentary of the Biden Administration strategy to forge very diverse nations into a quite unified coalition and support Ukraine against the Russian illegal invasion. I do not think it is perfect, though.

And here is an area where I am troubled and increasingly troubled, and that is, I think sometimes U.S. energy policy, we want to do a number of different things that are often in conflict with each other. We want to promote green energy to fight climate change. We should do that.

We want our allies to develop their own energy resources. They should do that. We also want to help our allies wean themselves away from overreliance on petro dictators like Russia or Iran or the Saudis or Venezuela. We should do that.

Sometimes those are inconsistent goals, and I have yet really to hear the Biden Administration articulate a harmonized view of the way we can accomplish those things. The way to do it is probably through phasing.

I am not going to ask you to respond to my critique, but here is where I am worried. Recently, statements out of the EU have shown some anxiety about U.S. policies. As their energy prices go, as we are starting to take some trade actions with respect to green energy that affects some of their domestic industries, you see rumblings out of the EU.

As we are coming into the winter that could get worse. So what can the U.S. do to help each of the countries that you hope to be in to deal with the energy crises that are acute all over the world, but particularly acute in Europe with nations that have had to rely upon Russian energy sources?

And Mr. Robinson, I would like to start with you.

Mr. ROBINSON. Thank you, Senator Kaine. And I agree this is really one of the most foremost issues. Whether it is countering Russian aggression or deepening our bilateral partnership or enhancing transatlantic security, and above all, addressing climate issues for the long term, is to get these issues right.

I also want to say, having been Deputy Assistant Secretary for Russia, my enormous gratitude to this committee for its leadership on European energy issues over a number of years. That strong bipartisan voice has been very clear, from CAATSA to PEESA, and I thank the committee for the leadership on that.

With regard to Latvia, I think this is where we have great opportunity to address the convergence of these different issues, as you rightly point out. Latvia is committed to—has long warned that

Russia uses energy as a weapon, and they need it to transition to other sources and means for energy for its own National Security.

They get nearly 50 percent of their electrical energy from hydro, and they are looking to expand into wind and other sources of renewable that provide an opportunity for U.S. bilateral partnership. As my colleagues have also mentioned, Latvia has joined, like others, the first program at the State Department to look into small modular nuclear reactors.

And then lastly, they are looking at increasing and they have prioritized for the near term increasing LNG imports and have—are looking to build a new terminal to be able to expand that. So Latvia has committed to moving to carbon neutral by 2050, and really prides itself on making progress in this area.

So I think there is a lot of opportunity for U.S., Latvia bilateral partnership and our companies and our technology in these areas to do this, both to address climate and also to enhance energy security for the region.

Senator KAINE. Mr. Kent, without repeating anything that Mr. Robinson has said.

Mr. KENT. Estonia's area of current expertise is in shale oil production, and that is where they get over 50 percent of their energy. Like Latvia, they are interested in exploring small modular reactors where U.S. technology could help.

A shared challenge that Baltics faces, that their electricity grid is still tied to Russia and Belarus. And so I think our national labs have expertise in gaming out how they might be able to accelerate switching to the European energy grid.

So again, I think combination of our expertise as well as our technology can help Estonia be independent, and they are cutting themselves off of Russian oil and gas ahead of the EU deadlines because for them it is a matter of principle, and they are willing to pay for the inflated costs of energy.

Senator KAINE. Mr. Merten.

Mr. MERTEN. Well, we have been working with Bulgaria on diversifying their energy, both supply and the types of energy they use. I am happy to report that on the 1st of October, the Bulgarians and Greeks opened up the interconnected Greece-Bulgaria, which will allow the Bulgarians to receive gas from Azerbaijan.

As of right now, I understand they receive no Russian gas anymore, which is good. Russia cut them off in April. We are also, the Embassy and we will continue to do this should I be confirmed, have been working with them to look into their nuclear energy supply, how they can develop that further.

We are looking—we have funded a $300,000 study to help them explore options with small modular reactors. We are working with them on resourcing their supply of nuclear fuel for their existing plants. Currently, those are supplied by Russia. We believe that Westinghouse could be another source for them.

So we are looking at other options. Bulgaria has got a lot of attention from the Administration. We have had—Amos Hochstein has been out there. Our Assistant Secretary for Energy, Geoff Pyatt, has recently been to Bulgaria.

This is front and center of our relationship and will remain so, should I be lucky enough to be confirmed.

Senator KAINE. I am over time, but could I ask the other two to give——

Senator SHAHEEN. Absolutely——

Senator KAINE.—pithy responses?

Ms. KAVALEC. Thank you so much for the question. This is also a huge priority for Romania, which is fortunate in that it has already greatly diversified its energy system, and with U.S. help is doing—will be expanding in the area of nuclear power.

Romania recently signed an agreement with U.S. company Nuscale on small modular reactors and is seeking to become a center in Europe for this technology. Also recently, EXIM signed two letters of interest to help complete the build out of the Cernavoda nuclear power plant for different locations.

So that is another area I will be following up on in my—if I am confirmed. A US led consortium in Black Sea oil is also working to bring Black Sea gas online from Romania. And Romania has also shown its leadership in providing energy to Moldova, which is suffering from, you know, the cut off from energy supplies from Russia. So I will be following up in all these areas.

Senator KAINE. Thank you. Mr. Sabet.

Mr. SABET. Senator Kaine, thank you for the question. The Czech Republic has had a historic reliance on Russia for natural gas and oil. I think 97 percent of their natural gas consumption has come from Russia.

So it is a substantial issue. You know, the United States is engaged in a number of areas here. Number one is establishing new energy sources, new energy distribution routes, fuel types, etcetera. I am pleased that Westinghouse, an American company, has won the tender for the nuclear facility in Dukovany. It is a 10 year agreement, which is a big step to transitioning from nuclear energy.

There is currently another tender, a second facility at Temelin. And we are clearly hoping that that also goes towards Westinghouse. And if I am confirmed, I will be an active advocate for U.S. interests there.

The Czech also seeks to be a first mover with SMRs in Europe. The company is engaged with six pilots at the moment, and U.S. companies are involved in a number of these negotiations. And if confirmed, I will be advocating for those procurement opportunities as well to make sure we are on a level playing field.

And I commit to you that I will advocate for clean energy sources as a way to not only deal with our climate crisis, but as a way to deal with energy security and independence for the Czech Republic.

Senator KAINE. Thank you so much. Thanks, Chairman Shaheen.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you, Senator Kaine. I would like to do another round of questions. I have a couple more questions. I want to go back to the conversation we had about the commitment from both Latvia and Estonia to NATO and to complying with the 2 percent of their defense spend commitments.

And just ask for those of you representing other countries, Mr. Spent and Mr. Merten most specifically, how can we encourage both the Czech Republic and Bulgaria to reach their 2 percent of GDP requirement for NATO? Mr. Merten.

Mr. MERTEN. Thank you, Senator, for the question. We have been working with the Bulgarians, and we were very happy that they signed an agreement with us to buy one tranche of F–16 fighters.

This was a major investment for them, $1.3 billion. This is not the European Union's richest country, and for them to devote those kind of resources to that, we think that is pretty important. We are delighted that the parliament has approved their purchase of an additional eight F–16s.

This is going to be a big investment for them, and this is going to take them, I think, a long way into meeting their commitments. You know, they have—certainly should I be lucky enough to be confirmed, we will continue to encourage them to do their utmost to work with us on defense modernization, focusing their procurement on American products.

And I think we are going to be, I hope we will be pushing on an open door there.

Senator SHAHEEN. That is encouraging, and I appreciate that they have many challenges that they are dealing with. Mr. Sabet.

Mr. SABET. Senator Shahee, thank you for the question—Chairman Shaheen. You know, the Czech Republic is an important NATO ally and security partner with a strong track record of joint missions in Europe and elsewhere.

The Czechs served courageously with the United States in Afghanistan, and the Czechs are a framework Nation leading a new NATO battle group in Slovakia and have contributed 650 troops. It is the case the Czechs are currently short of their NATO's commitment this year. They have, in their budget 1.35 percent of GDP for their military spend.

But they have announced that they are going to meet their NATO pledge in their Wales defense investment targets by 2024. In addition to the procurement of eight Bell Textron helicopters, the Foreign Ministry of the Czech Republic is pursuing foreign military sales of 24 F–35s.

And if I am confirmed, you have my commitment to be an active advocate to help the Czechs achieve their goals for their NATO commitments and advancing their military capacity.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you. Thank you all very much. Senator Cruz.

Senator CRUZ. Thank you, Madam Chair. Welcome to each of the witnesses. Mr. Kent, you have been outspoken throughout your career, speaking against corruption. And I want to talk about corruption. I want to talk in particular about corruption in the current Administration.

And I have serious concerns about corruption of President Joe Biden that extends for considerable time, both his time as President and his time as Vice President. To take one obvious and troubling example, accounts linked to the Biden family's personal finances received millions of dollars through ties to CEFC China Energy.

This is where we get the infamous quote about 10 percent to the big guy from the Chinese communists. But you have also been involved very directly with Ukraine and corruption in Ukraine.

And I will say, you showed real courage speaking out against what I think was the very obvious concerns of corruption of Joe Biden and his son, Hunter Biden, in Ukraine in particular. On November 13th, 2019, you testified to Congress that you had become concerned with Hunter Biden's status as a board member of the Ukrainian natural gas company Burisma.

You said you would raise those concerns to the White House in February of 20, 2015, and in particular what you said, "as I became aware that Hunter Biden was on the board of Burisma, soon after that, in a briefing call with the National Security staff at the office of the Vice President in February of 2015, I raised my concern that Hunter Biden's status as a board member could create a perception of a conflict of interest."

Tell me, why did you have this concern about, as you described, a perception of a conflict of interest?

Mr. KENT. Well, Senator, I can give you and every member of this committee my commitments that I will always raise concerns to members of any Administration and to Congress when I have concerns.

And so I was made aware of information, and I passed that along to the staff of the Office of the Vice President.

Senator CRUZ. So why were you concerned? Why were you concerned about Hunter Biden being on the board of Burisma?

Mr. KENT. The issue at hand was the owner of the companies, Zlochevsky, had awarded himself gas contracts. And as I testified both in the impeachment hearings and in the Johnson, Grassley hearings of 2020, our concern was about the corrupt acts of Zlochevsky, the ex-minister, and the FBI had been pursuing freezing his assets, and it was in the interest of the United States to remain at the gold standard of our own actions.

Senator CRUZ. So the Ukrainian oligarch who owned Burisma, there was very substantial evidence of corruption on his part, and he named Hunter Biden to his board of directors. To your knowledge, does Hunter Biden speak Ukrainian?

Mr. KENT. I have never talked to Hunter Biden, no.

Senator CRUZ. To your knowledge, did you have any knowledge before serving on that board about anything concerning oil or natural gas?

Mr. KENT. I am not aware of his CV.

Senator CRUZ. To your knowledge, did Hunter Biden have any qualification whatsoever for that board job other than the fact that his daddy was the sitting Vice President at the time?

Mr. KENT. Senator, I—no one consulted me about who was on the board of Burisma. There was another American, Cofer Black, who was a former——

Senator CRUZ. I asked a question, to your knowledge, did Hunter Biden have any qualification to be on that board other than the job his daddy had at the moment?

Mr. KENT. I am not familiar with his resume, sir.

Senator CRUZ. Okay. He was paid $83,000 a month by this Ukrainian oligarch. You are an expert in Ukraine. Have you ever been paid $83,000 a month?

Mr. KENT. I am a public servant, sir. I have never served on a corporate board.

Senator CRUZ. So does that mean, no, you have not been paid $83,000 a month?

Mr. KENT. I have not been paid $83,000, no, sir.

Senator CRUZ. So, look, the concern here is not Hunter Biden's own problems, but rather it is official corruption from the then Vice President of the United States, Joe Biden, and now the President of the United States, Joe Biden. Let me ask you, while his son was on the board of Burisma, making $1 million a year, did Joe Biden do anything that benefited the corrupt oligarch who was paying his son?

Mr. KENT. Vice President Biden led our efforts to fight corruption in Ukraine.

Senator CRUZ. Let me ask you the question again, did Vice President Joe Biden do anything that benefited the corrupt oligarch who was paying his son $1 million a year?

Mr. KENT. He did not.

Senator CRUZ. He did not. Well, it is interesting, someone who disagrees with you, Mr. Kent, is Joe Biden. And I want to read from what he said on January 23rd, 2018, at the Council on Foreign Relations, quote, this is Joe Biden speaking, "and I went over, I guess the 12th, 13th time to Kyiv, and I was supposed to announce that there was another billion dollar loan guarantee. And I had gotten a commitment from Poroshenko and Yatsenyuk that they would take action against the state prosecutor," the prosecutor that was investigating Burisma, "and they did not."

So Biden continues, "I said, no, I am not going to—we are not going to give you the billion dollars. They said, you have no authority. You are not the President. The President said—I said, call him. I said, I am telling you, you are not getting the billion dollars. I said, you are not getting the billion dollars. I am going to be leaving here. And I think it was about six hours. I looked at them and said, I am leaving here in six hours, if the prosecutor is not fired, you are not getting the money. Well, son of a bitch, he got fired."

Let me ask you something, do you think Joe Biden holding $1 billion hostage to force the Ukrainian Government to fire the prosecutor that is investigating the corrupt oligarch who is paying his son $1 million a year, did getting that prosecutor fired benefit that oligarch?

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you, Senator Cruz. Senator Van Hollen.

Senator CRUZ. Are you going to allow me to answer the question, Madam Chairman?

Senator SHAHEEN. I am not going to allow him to answer the question.

Senator CRUZ. Why are you covering for the Vice President? Do you not want him to answer that question? He said that the Vice President did nothing to benefit the oligarch——

Senator SHAHEEN. I think it is unfortunate for you, Senator Cruz, to put in positions that are uncomfortable the nominees to be our Ambassadors.

Senator CRUZ. Okay, this is a sworn testimony—this is a sworn testimony. I understand that you want to cover for——

Senator SHAHEEN. And he already answered——

Senator CRUZ.—the Vice President——

Senator SHAHEEN.—that he is going to raise those concerns any time he has responsibility——

Senator CRUZ. Was his testimony true or false that Biden did nothing to benefit the oligarch?

Senator SHAHEEN. I do not know what his testimony——

Senator CRUZ. Let him answer the question. Why are you afraid of him answering the question?

Senator SHAHEEN. I am not. I just want to move on because the votes have started——

Senator CRUZ. But you will not let him answer it. I asked a yes or no question. Will you allow him to answer the yes or no question?

Senator SHAHEEN. Yes, you can answer yes or no. Thank you.

Mr. KENT. The prosecutor who was fired by the Ukrainian parliament did nothing to investigate Zlochevsky. And everything the Vice President Biden, the State Department and the U.S. Embassy did acted in good faith to reduce corruption and help the Ukrainians.

Senator CRUZ. So firing him did not benefit the oligarch?

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you, Senator Cruz. Senator Van Hollen.

Senator CRUZ. You are protecting the President well.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chair. And I am going to return in a moment to the comments of Senator Cruz. But first, congratulations to all of you on your nominations.

To all of you are Foreign Service Officers, thank you and your families. I grew up in a Foreign Service family. I appreciate all that you do. And Mr. Sabet, congratulations to you. And I do want to echo the comments made by my colleague, Senator Hagerty, regarding the importance of making sure that the Czech Republic is not bullied by China because of its relationship with Taiwan.

I think it is very important that the United States, whether in the Czech Republic, Lithuania, other parts or places around the world, makes it clear that the United States is going to respond to that bullying by making clear we support those relationships.

Mr. Kent, let me just say at the beginning, and I think you underscored this in your testimony, that there has been absolutely no evidence zero, including in the Johnson, Grassley investigation, suggesting that the State Department, you, or the Vice President, Vice President Biden at the time, or any other officials made any changes to U.S. policy because of Hunter Biden's role on Burisma's board, is not that true?

Mr. KENT. Yes, Senator.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. And Senator Cruz, if he would read the results, the investigations conducted in the Congress itself and the testimony, would know that full well. I wish we saw the same level of outrage back in the day when the Trump administration was withholding badly needed weapons to Ukraine in order to get the Ukrainian Government the time to come up and manufacture dirt on the Biden family.

I did not hear a lot from my colleague, Senator Cruz, complaining about that at the time. Now, if I could just turn quickly to the issue of Estonia. And Mr. Kent, you may know, you may not know, the State of Maryland has a special relationship with Esto-

nia. We have a long time relationship between the Maryland National Guard and the Estonian military in the area of cybersecurity.

We have a number of sister city relationships between cities in Estonia and in Maryland, so I look forward to working with you to further cement the ties between the State of Maryland and Estonia. Let me ask you about the issue of money laundering in Estonia.

And I think you know that Estonia over the years has had trouble within its banking system for being a place where Russian oligarchs go to launder a lot of their money. I know they are making progress.

What is your assessment of the situation today, and what can we do to help them strengthen the security of their banking system with respect to anti-money laundering efforts?

Mr. KENT. Thank you for the question, Senator. And I am also very grateful for the Maryland National Guard for that great State partnership. So we welcome you to come often and help support that process.

In terms of the integrity of the financial system, I think this is a challenge that both Estonia and Latvia have taken on. We do have a U.S. Secret Service representation at our Embassy in Estonia, and I think the U.S. law enforcement community, as well as my Treasury colleagues, are committed to work with Estonia to ensure that their financial system is also free from malign influence and undermining of dirty money from Russia in particular, but in general.

So you have my commitment to work with you, your colleagues, and with Estonian colleagues to ensure that they are not—their systems are—have integrity and can avoid being undermined by malign influences.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Thank you. And Ambassador Merten, I listened to the testimony, and I agree that all of the countries where you are going to be the United States representatives or Ambassadors to have been firm in standing up against Putin's aggression and support in Ukraine.

In the case of in the case of Bulgaria, there is a particular energy situation pending right now that I do not think has been discussed, and that is the question of their continuing relationship with Lucas Oil and their decision to continue refining that oil, not just for domestic purposes, not just for domestic purposes, which I get, but for exports.

Where, as you know, there is a real, very real question as to whether that violates the commitment undertaken by the EU not to import Russian oil. Can you speak to that issue and how you might help reduce Bulgaria's dependance on Russian oil?

And as you well know, we have a December 5th, I believe, date coming up where the United States is leading an effort to impose a price cap on Russian oil, and how will their decision, if they continue to export that oil, how would that impact that?

Mr. MERTEN. Well, thanks for the question, Senator. I am not going to pretend to be an expert in all the ins and outs of this complex issue. I do know that, as I mentioned earlier, that energy

issues are front and center of the State Department's engagement with the Government of Bulgaria.

We have had visits by Amos Hochstein, as well as our Energy Assistant Secretary, Greg Pyatt out there. We have been working with the Bulgarians to look at ways that they can reduce this. This is a historical legacy commitment, as I understand it, which is obviously problematic in the current circumstances.

I think we need to be working closely with our other European colleagues, those in the EU and those in the European Commission, to see what mechanisms we can—what tools we can give the Bulgarians to break this relationship.

It might take a little bit of time, but I think it is worth—you will certainly have my commitment that I will work on that.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. [Technical problems]—Madam Chair. I do think it is important we have a united front. I think we need to support the EU decision to not continue to import Russian oil.

And the reason the Bulgarian decision is troubling is not so much the part of it where they would continue to use that oil for their own consumption, but if they continue to export that, that is obviously a leak in the regime and breaks that united front.

So I hope you will convey at least my concerns about that decision. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you, Senator Van Hollen. Senator Barrasso.

Senator BARRASSO. Thanks, Madam Chairman. Congratulations to all of you. Mr. Robinson, I want to visit with you about some of my trips to Latvia and discussions with Latvia leaders over the last decade and a half. The security of our NATO allies is critically important, especially in light of the increased aggression from Russia, but also from China.

And as a result, NATO is focused on increasing its presence in the Baltic States, increasing the amount of military aid being given to the countries to strengthen their defenses. What additional efforts could help Latvia bolster its security? And what can specifically be done by the U.S. to reinforce Latvians' defenses?

Mr. ROBINSON. Great. Thank you, Senator Barrasso. And thank you for your leadership and your engagement with Latvia and on a range of transatlantic security issues over a number of years. Latvia is committed to increasing its defense expenditure, including on military equipment.

As I have mentioned before, we expect to provide $145 million in additional foreign military financing to help Latvia in this effort. They are looking at anti-ship missiles, HIMARS systems, aircraft. They will be receiving Black Hawks in the year ahead. They—Canada is the lead Nation for the NATO battalion, and we are working very closely with Canada and Latvia to make sure that those commitments and presence is there. And as you know well, Senator, we have committed to a heel to toe presence in the Baltics.

We have increased our tempo of exercise and presence. We just had a Coast Guard cutter in Latvia a few weeks ago as another visible manifestation of that. So I think all these platforms provide ways that we can build and deepen this partnership for what will be a long term challenge to counter and deter Russian aggression and bolster Latvian security.

Senator BARRASSO. And Mr. Kent, moving next door to Estonia, earlier this year, Estonia announced their intent to end imports of Russian gas by the end of this year.

In April, Finland and Estonia agreed to develop that floating liquefied natural gas terminal. They have since agreed to charter a vessel for U.S. based energy for 10 years. How soon will that joint floating storage and regasification unit will come online? I am not sure, do you know?

Mr. KENT. I believe it is starting this winter and it is going to be located in Finland, sir.

Senator BARRASSO. And what impact do you think it is going to have on energy security in all of Europe?

Mr. KENT. I think the variety of locations that are increasing take-on points of LNG really helps the region and because they then have interconnectors. Putting additional gas into the system helps regionally these countries survive the lack of Russian sources and pressures from Russia.

Senator BARRASSO. Do you support increasing U.S. exports of natural gas to Europe to help reduce Russia's natural gas influence?

Mr. KENT. Very much so, sir.

Senator BARRASSO. Okay, thanks. And then, Mr. Robertson, back to you on energy as well. You know, Russia uses energy resources as a weapon. It is a long term weapon for them. They get it. It is a currency. It is a universal currency. So the world has seen Russia cut off gas supplies to Europe.

In July, Gazprom halted natural gas supplies to Latvia for a week. Latvia is working to end imports of Russian gas. In fact, the Latvian parliament passed legislation this summer to ban imports of Russian gas to enter the country by January, just coming up now in the next month. Do you know, what is the status of Latvia's efforts to end its reliance on Russian gas?

Mr. ROBINSON. Thank you, Senator. Latvia does look to end its imports of Russian gas by 2023. I expect that they will be ahead of schedule. They have been looking to fill all their storages ahead of the winter season, and they have prioritized building an LNG terminal as a national priority for that—for investment.

They are also looking at diversifying their sources of energy to small modular nuclear reactors and wind energy. So all these provide ways to reduce and eliminate Russia's dependance.

And you have my commitment, sir, to continue to work with Latvia and this committee to make that process.

Senator BARRASSO. And then you support U.S. exports of natural gas to Europe to help replace the Russian natural gas?

Mr. ROBINSON. Absolutely, Senator.

Senator BARRASSO. Great. And I think you made the point, you said they already filled the storage of natural gas in Latvia for the upcoming——

Mr. ROBINSON. I believe they were working on that, and they expected to meet that objective.

Senator BARRASSO. Okay. And then Mr. Kent, the security of our NATO allies is critically important, especially in light of increased aggression by Russia and China. Let us—one out of line—there it is. To both of you in the last time I have left, the Baltic States

reached an agreement with the European Commission to connect their electricity grids with Europe by 2025.

Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania have long been connected to Russian electric grid. The grid operators in Europe indicated that they could immediately implement the switch in the event if Russia cuts them off. Do you know what the status is right now of connecting the Baltic States to the European grid?

Mr. KENT. Sir, they do have a plan that would take several years, and it is quite expensive. It is about $1 billion to implement. There is contingency planning, if the Russians were to get them off the grid, and U.S. laboratories are helping with that contingency planning.

Senator BARRASSO. Are there things that we could do to expedite that, because just we know how Russia behaves in situations like this?

Mr. ROBINSON. I think that the concern, Senator, is that Russia might use that as an opportunity to disconnect the grid ahead of time. So as my colleague mentioned, we are working very closely with three countries, a number of projects underway to make sure that that process is ready.

Senator BARRASSO. Okay. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Thank you, Senator Barrasso. I know that Senator Shaheen is on her way back. I do—I will take this opportunity, Mr. Robinson, to ask you a question. As you know, Latvia has become an important haven for Russian journalists who are fleeing persecution in Russia and has become really a hub, I think, for opportunities to try to get good information back to the people of Russia.

Can you talk a little bit more about how we can support that ongoing effort so that we can get the truth to penetrate more of Russia's efforts to keep it out?

Mr. ROBINSON. Absolutely, Senator. This is a key priority. And if confirmed, this will continue to be a priority for me, and I will work closely with this committee.

There are two factors here. Yes, as Putin intensified his crackdown on his own people ahead of this war, many Russian human rights leaders, and importantly, independent media organizations fled Russia and set up their operations in Latvia.

Latvia did a lot to welcome these groups in and facilitate their entry, and to help them get a footing to continue to communicate the truths about what is happening in Russia and Russia's war in Ukraine back to the Russian people.

In addition, more than 30 percent of Latvia's population is either ethnic Russian or Russian speaking, and this provides a real opportunity for us to continue our public diplomacy and messaging efforts to reach that community and to continue our efforts to tell the truth about what is happening in Ukraine and in Russia, and Putin's atrocious war against the Ukrainian people.

So we have a number of programs underway, and we are committed. We thank the committee for its support for those efforts, and we are committed to supporting independent Russian journalism and the access of Russian people to fair and independent media.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Thank you. Thank you for that. Let me just say to Ms. Kavalec, congratulations on your nomination. There are two people who I have had, you know, long term friendships with who are prior ambassadors to Romania, Al Moses, as well as a Jim Rosapepe, who is currently now a Maryland State Senator.

So they both asked me to pass on their best wishes. And they are, of course, if you have not already, available for any conversations that you may have as you head off or after you arrive.

Ms. KAVALEC. Great. Thank you so much.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. And is—okay. All right, it looks like there are no further questions. Again, congratulations to all of you on your nominations. I look forward to supporting all of your nominations. And I think we are going to be turning to a new panel momentarily, but no reason for all of you to wait around for that.

So, congratulations, and we will do our very best to have these votes as soon as possible. The hearing is adjourned.

[Recess.]

Senator SHAHEEN. Good afternoon. Congratulations to all of our nominees this afternoon. We are in the middle of votes, as I tried to explain to each of you, and so we expect Senators to come in and out. But in the interest of trying to move the panel along, I am going to go ahead and begin.

And very pleased to introduce our nominees, Mr. Manuel Micaller to Tajikistan, Ms. Stephanie Sanders Sullivan to the African Union, Mr. Henry Jardine to the Republics of Mauritius and Seychelles.

And the hearing will also review the nomination of Mr. Felice Gorordo to be Ambassador to the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, and Mr. Richard Weiner to be Ambassador to the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. So let me do brief introductions of each of you, and then we will ask you to give your opening statements.

Manuel Micaller has been nominated to the position of Ambassador to Tajikistan. His Foreign Service career has been marked by distinguished service and depth of knowledge of Central Asia, including prior service in Dushanbe as Political Counselor and Acting Deputy Chief of Mission.

More recently, he served as Deputy Chief of Mission at our embassies in Nepal and Mongolia. I am also pleased to see Stephanie Sanders Sullivan nominated to lead our Mission to the African Union.

And she has worked on African issues in Washington and in the field for more than 20 of her 30 plus year distinguished career and is revered as a successful leader and manager by her State Department colleagues.

Senator Menendez just joined us. He is the Chair of this committee. Senator Menendez, would you like to go ahead and do your introduction, and then I will continue with the remaining nominees.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, thank you, Madam Chair, for conducting the previous panel and this panel. It is an important part of what we do in the Foreign Relations committee is reviewing the nominees for various positions, and we are pleased that our subcommit-

tees and our ranking chairs and ranking members of our committees are willing to do so. So thank you very much for doing so.

Congratulations to all of the nominees for their nominations. I am particularly here to introduce Felice Gorordo, a nominee to be the U.S. Alternate Executive Director of the World Bank.

At a time when China is increasingly willing to use its economic power to pressure other nations to do its bidding, when Latin America is trying to recover from the economic impact of the COVID pandemic, when Putin's war in Ukraine threatens the food supply of developing nations around the world, strong, dependable leadership at the World Bank has never been more important.

And Felice Gorordo has the experience, commitment, and vision of the United States that needs to tackle the challenges the World Bank faces today. His journey starts the way that mine did. He is the son of Cuban exiles who fled dictatorship in their country. His parents came to the United States in search of the American dream. His dad was in law enforcement. His mother was a teacher.

And from then, Felice learned the value of public service. That is why Felicia found that Raizes de Esperanza, Roots of Hope, a nonprofit that empowers young people in Cuba through technology and entrepreneurship. It is why he worked for both the Bush and Obama Administrations, advancing the United States national interest, no matter which party was in the White House.

At the same time, Felice has an impressive private sector experience. He has been CEO of three different equity investment ventures. Emerge Americas, a platform focused on transforming Miami into the tech hub of the Americas.

Clearpath, a tech company focused on revolutionizing the paper based immigration filing process. And Libre, a venture backed mobility tech company with operations in the United States and Mexico.

In the wake of COVID, his understanding of finance, economic statecraft, and technology will help the United States and its like-minded partners make the concerted push to prevent economic collapse in the developing world.

He should be in this post because we need to make sure that China will not continue getting away with their malign influence at the institutions that we, the United States, created to shape the international order.

And if confirmed to this post at the World Bank, Felice will advocate for our values, will stand up for democracy and human rights. So I urge my colleagues to support the nomination of Felice Gorordo for the post of U.S. Alternate Executive Director for the World Bank. I do not, as the chairman, very often come to introduce individuals.

But, Felice, you certainly deserve. Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you very much, Senator Menendez. And it is very true, he does not often come to introduce folks, so it is an honor. Let me continue with the remaining members of the panel and go to Henry Jardine, who is nominated to serve as Ambassador to the Republic of Mauritius and Seychelles.

He has a strong record of leadership throughout his nearly 30 year Foreign Service career, with service across four geographic re-

gions in Washington, where he currently leads the State Department's Career Development and Assignments Office.

Among his many leadership positions overseas, he served as Deputy Chief of Mission in Albania and Management Councilor at our Embassy in Thailand. Finally, I am pleased to introduce Richard Weiner, who is the nominee to represent the United States at the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, or the EBRD.

Mr. Weiner is one of our leading international trade and investment lawyers and is qualified to practice law in both the European Union and the United States. As Senior Partner in the Washington and Brussels offices of the international law firm of Sidley Austin, he is a member of the law firm's global arbitration, trade, and advocacy group.

He spent more than 30 years working on U.S., EU trade and investment policy and market access issues. So with that, I am going to ask Ms. Sullivan to begin with your opening statement.

Senator SHAHEEN. Ms. Sullivan.

STATEMENT OF HON. STEPHANIE SANDERS SULLIVAN OF MARYLAND, A CAREER MEMBER OF THE SENIOR FOREIGN SERVICE, CLASS OF CAREER MINISTER, NOMINATED TO BE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE AFRICAN UNION, WITH THE RANK AND STATUS OF AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY

Ms. SULLIVAN. Thank you for your kind introduction, Madam Chairperson, Ranking Member, and distinguished Members of the Foreign Relations committee. Thank you for this opportunity to appear before you today. I am honored to be the President's nominee for U.S. Ambassador to the African Union. I appreciate the trust and confidence President Biden and Secretary Blinken have in me.

If confirmed, I pledge to work with you to advance our Nation's interests through our partnership with that key institution and its member states. I am joined by my husband, John, my pillar of support, who has accompanied me on each posting. Our sons, Dan and Scott are here from Maryland and New Jersey, respectively.

From my first experience in Africa as a Peace Corps volunteer in the DRC, I have felt drawn to the charms and challenges of the continent and its people. I have spent two-thirds of my 35 years of diplomatic service in Africa or working on African issues with postings in Cameroon, the Republic of Congo, Ghana, twice, and Washington, D.C.

Throughout my career, I have teamed up with committed interagency colleagues to advance U.S. diplomatic, economic, and security interests. A two time Ambassador, I have visited 33 African countries in all five regions on the continent.

If confirmed as the seventh United States ambassador to the AU, I will be proud to represent our country, which has a sizable portion of Africa's sixth region, the diaspora. The AU brings together its member states to deliberate and act on the continent's most pressing issues and to establish standards by which all members can hold each other accountable.

The U.S. Mission to the AU enhances our engagement with and our ability to understand the perspective of the AU Commission and the AU Member States. If confirmed, I will lead the talented

U.S. AU team to advance the Administration's Africa strategy, in which the U.S. partnership with the AU plays a central role.

The strategies mutually reinforcing objectives are to, one, foster openness and open societies. Two, deliver democratic and security dividends. Three, advance pandemic recovery and economic opportunity. And four, support conservation, climate adaptation, and adjust energy transition.

We have long partnered with the AU on shared priorities, and the pathways of this strategy will support the AU's Agenda 2063 for a more prosperous and peaceful continent and bolster the region's ability to solve global problems alongside the United States.

First, democracy and accountable governance remain essential for peace, security, and sustained economic growth. Recent democratic backsliding in some places undermines the progress African countries have made toward inclusive development.

If confirmed, I will reinforce our shared commitment to democratic principles and the rule of law, to include transparency, justice, free and fair elections with peaceful transfer of power, and respect for human rights.

Second, fragility and ongoing conflicts in parts of Africa also threaten global and U.S. National Security. They hinder economic growth and enable violent extremism to spread. The AU has made significant strides to prevent, respond to, and resolve armed conflict, most recently in Ethiopia, and to counter transnational threats.

If confirmed, I will maintain capacity building efforts to achieve a more secure continent where people and nations can reach their full potential. Third, the Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention led the continent's effective response to the COVID–19 pandemic by mobilizing health ministers, coordinating a continental strategy, and establishing a platform to procure vaccines.

The collaboration between Africa CDC and our own CDC, and other U.S. Government agencies, shaped our life saving support to the continent. If confirmed, I will continue our partnership with the AU to improve global security—global health security and strengthen African health systems.

On the broader economic front, the African Continental Free Trade Area positions African governments to reduce tariff and nontariff barriers, enhance regional integration, and increase trade and investment, to form a $3.4 trillion trading bloc of an estimated 1.3 billion people. When fully implemented, this economic bloc will be the fifth largest in the world.

If confirmed, I will champion additional American private sector investment in the growing African market to promote mutual prosperity and jobs on both sides of the Atlantic. Fourth, the United Nations recognizes Africa as the region most vulnerable to the effects of climate change.

For example, four consecutive years of drought have created a food security crisis in the Horn of Africa that has been exacerbated by Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine. If confirmed, I will work closely with the AU on addressing the impacts of climate change and help support a just energy transition through programs like Power Africa.

Madam Chairperson and members of the committee, ranking member, thank you again for today's hearing. I look forward to answering your questions.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Sullivan follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF STEPHANIE S. SULLIVAN

Chairwoman Shaheen, Ranking Member Portman, distinguished members of the Foreign Relations Committee, thank you for this opportunity to appear before you today. I am honored to be the President's nominee for U.S. Ambassador to the African Union (AU). I appreciate the trust and confidence President Biden and Secretary Blinken have in me. If confirmed, I pledge to work with you to advance our nation's interests through our partnership with this key institution and its member states.

This afternoon I'm joined by my husband John, a pillar of support who has accompanied me on each posting. Our sons Dan and Scott are here, from Maryland and New Jersey, respectively.

From my first experience in Africa as a Peace Corps Volunteer in the DRC, I have felt drawn to the charms and challenges of the continent and its people. I have spent two thirds of my thirty-five years of diplomatic service in Africa or working on African issues, with postings in Cameroon, the Republic of Congo, Ghana (twice), and Washington, DC. Throughout my career, I have teamed up with committed interagency colleagues to advance U.S. diplomatic, economic, and security interests. I have visited 33 African countries, in all five regions on the continent. If confirmed as the seventh U.S. Ambassador to the AU, I will be proud to represent our country, which has a sizeable portion of Africa's "Sixth Region"—the diaspora.

The AU brings together its member states to deliberate and act on the continent's most pressing issues and to establish standards by which all members can hold each other accountable. The USAU's vantage point enhances our engagement with—and ability to understand the perspective of—the AU Commission and the AU member states. USAU facilitates our collaboration with Africa to solve global problems.

If confirmed, I will lead the talented USAU team to advance the Administration's Africa Strategy, in which the U.S. partnership with the AU plays a central role. The Strategy's mutually reinforcing objectives are to: 1. Foster Openness and Open Societies; 2. Deliver Democratic and Security Dividends; 3. Advance Pandemic Recovery and Economic Opportunity; and 4. Support Conservation, Climate Adaptation, and Just Energy Transition. We have long partnered with the AU on shared priorities, and the pathways of the strategy will both support the AU's Agenda 2063 and bolster the continent's ability to solve global problems alongside the United States.

First, democracy and accountable governance remain essential for peace, security, and sustained economic growth. Recent democratic backsliding in some places undermines the progress African countries have made toward inclusive development. If confirmed, I will reinforce our shared commitment to democratic principles and the rule of law—to include transparency; free and fair elections with peaceful transfers of power; justice; and respect for human rights.

Second, fragility and ongoing conflicts in parts of Africa also threaten global and U.S. national security. They hinder economic growth and enable the spread of violent extremism. The AU has made significant strides to prevent, respond to, and resolve armed conflict—most recently in Ethiopia—and to counter transnational threats. If confirmed, I will lead ongoing capacity-building efforts to achieve a more peaceful and more secure continent where people and nations can reach their full potential.

Third, the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) led the continent's response to the COVID–19 pandemic by mobilizing health ministers, coordinating a continental strategy, and establishing a platform to procure vaccines. The coordination between Africa CDC and our own CDC and other USG agencies shaped our lifesaving support to the continent. If confirmed, I will continue our partnership with the AU to improve global health security and strengthen African health systems. On the broader economic front, the African Continental Free Trade Area positions African Governments to reduce trade barriers, enhance regional integration, and increase trade and investment, to form a 3.4 trillion-dollar trading bloc of an estimated 1.3 billion people. When fully implemented, this economic bloc will be the fifth largest in the world. If confirmed, I will champion additional American private sector investment in the growing African market, to promote mutual prosperity and jobs on both sides of the Atlantic.

Fourth, the United Nations recognizes Africa as the region most vulnerable to the effects of climate change. For example, four consecutive years of drought have exac-

erbated the food security crisis in the Horn of Africa. If confirmed, I will work closely with the AU on addressing the impacts of climate change and help support a just energy transition through programs like Power Africa.

Madam Chair, Ranking Member, and members of the committee, thank you again for this opportunity to appear before you today. I look forward to answering your questions.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you very much, Ms. Sanders Sullivan. Mr. Jardine.

STATEMENT OF HENRY V. JARDINE OF VIRGINIA, A CAREER MEMBER OF THE SENIOR FOREIGN SERVICE, CLASS OF MINISTER–COUNSELOR, NOMINATED TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE REPUBLIC OF MAURITIUS, AND TO SERVE CONCURRENTLY AND WITHOUT ADDITIONAL COMPENSATION AS AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE REPUBLIC OF SEYCHELLES

Mr. JARDINE. Chairwoman Shaheen, Ranking Member, and members of the committee, I am honored to appear before this committee today as President Biden's nominee to be the next United States Ambassador to the Republic of Mauritius and the Republic of Seychelles.

I am thankful for the trust that the President and Secretary Blinken have placed in me to nominate me for this role, and I consider it a privilege to represent the United States of America. My parents immigrated to this country from the United Kingdom in the 1950s.

My father experienced a childhood of poverty in North Wales, and my mother, the devastating bombings, Nazi bombings of Liverpool. They understood the promise that the United States could offer, and from their example and experience comes my commitment of service to this country for over the past 30 years in both the United States Army and Department of State.

As a career member of the Senior Foreign Service with extensive work experience in the Indo-Pacific region on a range of policy and management issues, I have developed the skills that will allow me to strengthen our relationship with both countries.

While my professional experience has prepared me for the opportunity to serve as Ambassador to Mauritius and the Seychelles, this is only possible with the great support of my wife, Kathleen Jardine, who is here with me today. She is presently a Fairfax County public teacher who was there as a partner through the long years, far from family and in some difficult circumstances.

I also note with pride my son, Thomas, who, while experiencing many disruptions in his young life in education as a result of my career, is now a successful college student in the Netherlands. In just over 50 years, since gaining independence from the United Kingdom, Mauritius has achieved political stability through a commitment to democracy, establishment of a strong economy, and acceptance of ethnic diversity.

Mauritius has shown the global community that it is a model both politically and economically for Africa, the Indian Ocean region, and beyond. The United States also enjoys a positive bilateral relationship with the Government of Seychelles, which in 2020 held

free and fair elections and peacefully transitioned power to the opposition party for the first time since independence 46 years ago.

We support Seychelles' efforts to solidify its democratic transition, support of regional peace, and to tackle climate change. Despite its high per capita income, Seychelles needs support to strengthen its financial system and anti-corruption regime. The United States is well-placed to provide assistance in these areas.

Regional security is an important element of our bilateral relationship with both Mauritius and Seychelles, and I will seek additional ways we can partner to combat drug trafficking, transnational criminal activity, and illegal, unregulated, and unreported fishing in the Indian Ocean.

Although the United States Embassy is located in Mauritius, I intend to travel to Seychelles frequently as we continue to focus on expanding our bilateral relationship. Democracy promotion continues to be an important element of our foreign policy in Africa. Both Mauritius and Seychelles are models for the rest of sub-Saharan Africa.

The 2020 election in Seychelles showed the world that the Seychelles are fiercely committed to democracy. While the Mauritian general elections are set to take place in 2024, I would work with both countries to strengthen their democratic systems and to spread their examples elsewhere.

Of course, while pursuing all these objectives, I would make protecting Americans living and traveling in both Mauritius and Seychelles my highest priority. Again, I am honored to be the next Ambassador—honored to be nominated to be the next Ambassador to Mauritius and Seychelles.

And if confirmed, I look forward to working closely with you and other members of the committee. I look forward to your questions. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Jardine follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HENRY V. JARDINE

Chairwoman Shaheen, Ranking Member Portman, and members of the committee, I am honored to appear before this committee today as President Biden's nominee to be the next United States Ambassador to the Republic of Mauritius and the Republic of Seychelles. I am thankful for the trust that the President and Secretary Blinken have placed in me to nominate me for this role, and I consider it a great privilege to represent the United States.

My parents immigrated to this country from the United Kingdom in the 1950s. My father experienced a childhood of poverty in North Wales and my mother the devastating Nazi bombings of Liverpool. They understood the promise that the United States could offer, and from their example and experience comes my commitment of service to this country over the past 30 years in both the Army and the State Department.

As a career member of the Senior Foreign Service with extensive work experience in the Indo-Pacific region on a range of policy and management issues, I have developed the skills that will allow me to strengthen our relationship with both countries.

While my professional experiences have prepared me for the opportunity to serve as Ambassador to Mauritius and the Seychelles, this was only possible with the great support of my wife, Kathleen Jardine, presently a Fairfax County public school teacher, who was there as a partner through the long years far from family and in some difficult circumstances. I also note with pride my son Thomas, who, while experiencing many disruptions in his young life and education as a result of my career, is now a successful college student in the Netherlands.

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the global community that it is a model, both politically and economically, for Africa, the Indian Ocean region, and beyond.

The United States also enjoys a positive bilateral relationship with the Government of Seychelles, which in 2020 held free and fair elections and peacefully transitioned power to the opposition party for the first time since independence 46 years ago. We support Seychelles' efforts to solidify its democratic transition, support regional peace, and tackle climate change.

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Of course, while pursuing all these objectives, I would make protecting Americans living and travelling in both Mauritius and Seychelles my highest priority.

Again, I am honored to be nominated to be the next ambassador to Mauritius and Seychelles. If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with you and other members of the committee. I welcome your questions.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you very much. Mr. Gorordo. Am I pronouncing your name correctly?

Mr. GORORDO. You are.

Senator SHAHEEN. Great. Thank you.

STATEMENT OF L. FELICE GORORDO OF FLORIDA, NOMINATED TO BE UNITED STATES ALTERNATE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE INTERNATIONAL BANK FOR RECONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT FOR A TERM OF TWO YEARS

Mr. GORORDO. Good afternoon, Chair, Ranking Member, and distinguished members of the committee. I am humbled and honored to have been nominated by President Joe Biden to be the next United States Alternate Executive Director for the World Bank.

I would also like to personally thank the chairman, Chairman Menendez, for his very kind and moving introduction, for which I am deeply grateful. I appreciate this opportunity to serve at such a critical time for both our Nation and the world. I want to recognize several important individuals in my life without whom this would not be possible and who are present here today.

I would like to begin by thanking my wife of 13 years and my partner in all things for 19, Bianca Ferrer Gorordo, and our two children, David, who is here present, and Catalina, who I am sure is watching from home. I would also like to pause to recognize members of my family who are not here today, but who have played a pivotal role in my life.

I am tremendously appreciative to my mother, Marta Serra Mohr, who was reunited with our creator seven years ago today. And to all my extended family for their love, sacrifice, and unwavering support throughout the years.

As the chairman noted, I am the son of Cuban exiles who fled a communist revolution, risking it all and leaving everything be-

hind in search of freedom, opportunity, and the American Dream. This great Nation received them with open arms and gave them a fighting chance to make a better life for themselves and their family.

And for these reasons, we have always been indebted to our country and sought to pay it forward. The call to public service was instilled in me by my family and by my faith. My father, Francisco Gorordo, served as a police officer for more than 25 years, and my mother worked in education for over two decades.

They nurtured in me a purpose driven resolve to ensure that we live up to the Gospel of Matthew Chapter 25, to feed the hungry, heal the sick, and welcome the stranger. My Jesuit education and upbringing further cultivated my vocation to service, taking part in humanitarian missions in Latin America during my high school years and then founding a non-governmental organization while I was in college called Roots of Hope, which still exists today, and focuses on empowering Cuban youth to become the authors of their own futures.

Following my graduation from Georgetown University, I proudly served in the U.S. Department of Commerce, State, and Homeland Security during the Administration of President George W. Bush. In 2011, I was appointed as a White House fellow by President Barack Obama and served in the White House Office of Public Engagement and Intergovernmental Affairs, working with industry leaders on economic competitiveness programs.

There, I developed and organized the first ever White House Conference on connecting the Americas, which included participation of business and government leaders from throughout the Americas in the lead up to the 2012 Summit of the Americas.

In 2013, I returned home to Miami to pursue a career in entrepreneurship, and I served as CEO of three mission-driven technology companies as an investor and advisor of two venture capital funds with global mandates, one in health care and another in infrastructure.

I believe this experience has prepared me to take on the important responsibilities that the President has nominated me for at the World Bank. The bank's mission is to end extreme poverty and promote shared prosperity in a sustainable way.

Given Russia's unprovoked war in Ukraine, which has worsened food insecurity around the world, the prolonged global pandemic and the rising threat of authoritarian regimes like China, the bank remains a critically important institution to create sustainable and inclusive economic growth and resiliency for the most vulnerable, and to promote prosperity for people around the world.

If confirmed, I will use my experience to help advance U.S. development, foreign policy, and National Security priorities, while also expanding markets for U.S. products and services. Drawing on my fiduciary experience as an investor, executive, and board member of both for profit and nonprofit companies, I am resolved to be a good steward of our tax dollars to ensure the bank's programs yield the greatest return on investment and uphold our values.

I will also seek to engage with a diverse range of important stakeholders, including members of both parties, to ensure the in-

terests of all Americans are represented in the bank's boardroom and projects.

Moreover, I will draw on my two decades of experience in management and oversight to promote the greatest degree of integrity, transparency, and accountability in the bank's operations.

As a first generation American whose family suffered at the hands of a communist totalitarian regime, I am deeply committed to honoring, protecting, and advancing the cause of democracy, human rights, and economic prosperity here and abroad.

If confirmed, I will work relentlessly to uphold U.S. values and advance our interests around the world. Again, I am so grateful to you all for your consideration of my nomination, and I would be happy to answer your questions. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Gorordo follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF L. FELICE GORORDO

Good afternoon, Chair, Ranking Member, and distinguished members of the committee, I am humbled and honored to have been nominated by President Joe Biden to be the next United States Alternate Executive Director for the World Bank. I appreciate this opportunity to serve at such a critical time.

I want to recognize several important individuals in my life, without whom this would not be possible, and who are present here today. I would like to begin by thanking my wife of 13 years and my "partner in all things" for 19 years, Bianca Ferrer Gorordo, and our two children: Catalina and David.

I would also like to pause to recognize members of my family who are not here today, but who have played a pivotal role in my life. I am tremendously appreciative to my mother Martha Serra Mohr and my father-in-law Jose Ferrer (who have been reunited with our Creator), my father Francisco Gorordo, my stepfather Charles Mohr, my step-mother Delvis Mouri, my mother-in-law Carmen Ferrer, my siblings Nicole and Carolina, and all of my family viewing from home—for their love, sacrifice, and unwavering support and encouragement throughout the years.

I am the son of Cuban exiles who fled a communist revolution—risking it all and leaving everything behind—in search of freedom, opportunity, and the American Dream. This great Nation received them with open arms and gave them a fighting chance to make a better life for themselves and their family. For these reasons, we have always been indebted to our country and sought to pay it forward.

The call to public service was instilled in me by my family and my faith. My father served as a police officer for more than 25 years, and my mother worked in education for over two decades. They nurtured in me a purpose-driven resolve to ensure that we live up to the Gospel of Matthew, Chapter 25: to feed the hungry, heal the sick, and welcome the stranger. My Jesuit education and upbringing further cultivated my vocation to service—taking part in humanitarian missions in Latin America during my high school years, and then founding a nongovernmental organization while I was in college called Roots of Hope, which still exists today and focuses on empowering Cuban youth to become the authors of their own futures.

Following my graduation from Georgetown University, I proudly served in the U.S. Departments of Commerce, State, and Homeland Security during the Administration of President George W. Bush. In 2011, I was appointed as a White House Fellow by President Barack Obama and served in the White House Office of Public Engagement & Intergovernmental Affairs, working with industry leaders on economic competitiveness programs. There, I developed and organized the first-ever "White House Conference on Connecting the Americas," which included the participation of business and government leaders from throughout the Americas in the lead up to the 2012 Summit of the Americas.

In 2013, I returned home to Miami to pursue a career in entrepreneurship, serving as CEO of three mission-driven technology companies, and as an investor and advisor at two venture capital funds with global mandates, one in healthcare and another in infrastructure.

I believe this experience has prepared me to take on the important responsibilities that the President has nominated me for at the World Bank.

The Bank's mission is "to end extreme poverty and promote shared prosperity in a sustainable way." Given Russia's unprovoked war in Ukraine which has worsened food insecurity around the world, the prolonged global pandemic, and the rising

threat of authoritarian regimes like China, the Bank remains a critically important institution to create sustainable and inclusive economic growth and resiliency for the most vulnerable and to promote prosperity for people around the world.

If confirmed, I will use my experience to help advance U.S. development, foreign policy and national security priorities, and expand markets for U.S. products and services. Drawing on my fiduciary experience as an investor, executive and board member of both for-profit and nonprofit companies, I resolve to be a good steward of our tax dollars to ensure the Bank's programs yield the greatest return on investment and uphold our values. I will also seek to engage with a diverse range of important stakeholders, including Members of both parties, to ensure the interests of all Americans are represented in the Bank's boardroom and projects. Moreover, I will draw on my two decades of experience in management and oversight to promote the greatest degree of integrity, transparency, and accountability in the Bank's operations.

As a first-generation American whose family suffered at the hands of a communist totalitarian regime, I am deeply committed to honoring, protecting, and advancing the cause of democracy, human rights, and economic prosperity here and abroad. If confirmed, I will work relentlessly to uphold U.S. values and advance our interests around the world.

Again, I am so grateful to you all for your consideration of my nomination. I would be happy to answer your questions.

Thank you.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you very much. Mr. Weiner.

STATEMENT OF RICHARD L.A. WEINER OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, NOMINATED TO BE UNITED STATES DIRECTOR OF THE EUROPEAN BANK FOR RECONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT

Mr. WEINER. Thank you for your kind introduction, Madam Chair, Ranking Member, and distinguished members of the committee. I am honored to have been nominated by President Biden to be the U.S. Director of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and humbled to appear before you today.

I wish to take a moment to recognize several individuals in my life, in particular my wife of 33 years, Joann Weiner, who seated behind me, herself a former U.S. Treasury Department Tax Economist and now Professor of Economics at George Washington University. Watching online are our three adult children, Josh, Steven, and Naomi, whose love sustains us both.

I would also like to recognize family members who are not here today. My late parents, Professors Herbert and Dora B. Weiner, came to this country from Hitler's Europe and crafted distinguished academic careers, first in New York and then at UCLA. My father was born in Vienna and raised in London, coming to the United States as an immigrant in 1939. My mother was born in Germany and fled the Nazis, first to France, then Morocco, then Cuba, before entering America as a refugee in December 1942.

My parents seized the enormous opportunity of this Nation, teaching my brothers Tim and Tony and me of America's greatness, but also of her essential goodness. Their memories are a blessing to all who knew them.

My family's experience fueled my professional pursuits. I was educated at Harvard College, where I served as the Student Chairman of the John F. Kennedy Institute of Politics, the University of Cambridge and Columbia Law School. I clerked for an extraordinary Federal judge, the Honorable Barefoot Sanders, before entering private practice. For 35 years, I have worked on international trade, energy, environmental and investment issues, in-

cluding the past 19 years as a partner in the Washington and Brussels offices of the international law firm Sidley Austin LLP. I am dual qualified as a lawyer in the European Union and the United States, and I have worked on U.S., European issues throughout my career, including 10 years resident in Brussels, where I was the founding managing partner of Sidley's Brussels office.

I hope to use my personal and professional background as a foundation for taking on the important responsibilities of U.S. Director of the EBRD at this critical time.

As members of the committee know, the EBRD was formed after the collapse of Soviet communism to promote open markets and private entrepreneurship in Central and Eastern Europe, and in turn to promote stability, democracy, and the rule of law.

Pursuit of these goals advances America's political and economic interests in foreign policy, National Security, diplomacy, development, and commerce.

Overall, the Bank has done a commendable job advancing market transitions, improving the business climate, and promoting private sector solutions in emerging economies in Europe, Eurasia, the Middle East, and North Africa.

The Bank is unique among development banks in having a political mandate, to promote democracy, the rule of law, and democratic institutions. A clear eyed assessment would suggest that its results in this area have been uneven. Should I be confirmed, I look forward to harnessing the comparative advantages of the EBRD to help rebuild Ukraine, wean Europe off Russian fossil fuels, green the economy of borrower nations, and promote democracy and democratic institutions in accordance with the Bank's Charter.

Nowhere is the Bank's role more vital than in Ukraine and other frontline states fighting to resist Russia's unprovoked aggressions. The Bank has played and will play a vital role in sustaining national economies in the region and addressing immediate needs, such as food and energy security. The Bank has taken important steps via loan deferral, liquidity support, and trade financing, and Congress appropriated an additional $500 million to the Bank in its second Ukraine supplemental this May.

Over the longer term, the Bank will help Ukraine in reconstruction, including rebuilding infrastructure, revitalizing the engines of economic growth, binding the wounds of its people, and fostering private sector job creation.

Nearly a century ago, my grandfather fled instability and antisemitism in Central Europe to work as a banker in London. It is an extraordinary testament to history's arc that I may have the honor to return there now to promote American values in the region.

I am grateful for your consideration, and I would be delighted to answer your questions. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Weiner follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF RICHARD L.A. WEINER

Good afternoon, Chair, Ranking Member, and distinguished members of the committee, I am honored to have been nominated by President Biden to be the U.S. Di-

rector of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and humbled to appear before you today.

I wish to take a moment to recognize several individuals in my life, in particular my wife of 33 years, Joann Weiner, herself a former U.S. Treasury Department tax economist and now professor of economics at George Washington University. Watching on-line are our three adult children, Josh, Stephen, and Naomi, whose love sustains us both.

I would also like to recognize family members who are not here today. My late parents, Professors Herbert and Dora B. Weiner, came to this country from Hitler's Europe and crafted distinguished academic careers, first in New York and then at UCLA. My father was born in Vienna and raised in London, coming to the United States as an immigrant in 1939. My mother was born in Germany and fled the Nazis first to France, then Morocco, then Cuba, before entering America as a refugee in December 1942.

My parents seized the enormous opportunity of this nation, teaching my brothers, Tim and Tony, and me of America's greatness, but also of her essential goodness. Their memories are a blessing to all who knew them.

My family's experience fueled my professional pursuits. I was educated at Harvard College, where I served as student chairman of the John F. Kennedy Institute of Politics, the University of Cambridge, and Columbia Law School. I clerked for an extraordinary judge, Hon. Barefoot Sanders, before entering private practice. For 35 years, I have worked on international trade, energy, environmental, and investment issues, including the past 19 years as a partner in the Washington and Brussels offices of the international law firm, Sidley Austin LLP. I am dual-qualified as a lawyer in the European Union and the United States and have worked on U.S.-European issues throughout my career, including ten years resident in Brussels where I was the founding managing partner of Sidley's Brussels office.

I hope to use my personal and professional background as a foundation for taking on the important responsibilities of U.S. Director of the EBRD at this critical time.

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The Bank is unique among development banks in having a political mandate—to promote democracy, the rule of law, and democratic institutions. A clear-eyed assessment would suggest that its results in this area have been uneven. Should I be confirmed, I look forward to harnessing the comparative advantages of the EBRD to help rebuild Ukraine, wean Europe off Russian fossil fuels, green the economies of borrower nations, and promote democracy and democratic institutions, in accordance with the Bank's Charter.

Nowhere is the Bank's role more vital than in Ukraine and other front-line states fighting to resist Russia's unprovoked aggressions. The Bank has played and will play a vital role in sustaining national economies in the region and addressing immediate needs such as food and energy security. The Bank has taken important steps via loan deferral, liquidity support and trade financing, and Congress appropriated an additional $500 million to the Bank in its Second Ukraine Supplemental this May.

Over the longer-term, the Bank will help Ukraine in reconstruction, including rebuilding infrastructure, revitalizing the engines of economic growth, binding the wounds of its people, and fostering private-sector job creation.

Nearly a century ago, my grandfather fled instability and antisemitism in Central Europe to work as a banker in London. It is an extraordinary testament to history's arc that I may have the honor to return there now to promote American values in the region.

I am grateful for your consideration and would be delighted to answer your questions.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you very much. Mr. Micaller, is that correct?

Mr. MICALLER. That is correct.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you.

STATEMENT OF MANUEL P. MICALLER, JR. OF CALIFORNIA, A CAREER MEMBER OF THE SENIOR FOREIGN SERVICE, CLASS OF MINISTER–COUNSELOR, NOMINATED TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE REPUBLIC OF TAJIKISTAN

Mr. MICALLER. Chairwoman Shaheen, Ranking Member Portman, distinguished members, it is an honor to appear before you as the President's nominee to be the next U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Tajikistan.

I am grateful to be joined today by my dear mother, Monina Micaller, and I want to acknowledge my brother Jose, who is watching from home in San Francisco. Both have supported me throughout my Foreign Service career, and I would like to take this opportunity before the Senate to recognize and honor my late father, Manuel Micaller Senior, who inspired and encouraged me to embark on this journey of service to our great country.

If confirmed, I will return to Central Asia, where I began my career in 1996 at the U.S. Embassy in Turkmenistan. I was drawn to this region, having studied the former Soviet Union, and I keep returning because of the critical importance it plays in our National Security and the opportunity to use my experience in a challenging environment to advance our shared interests.

Tajikistan is a fascinating country, rich in culture and long at the crossroads of history. Bordering Afghanistan and China and exposed to Russian influence, Tajikistan is seeking to diversify its foreign partners, and the United States has proven itself as a reliable partner over the course of our 30 year diplomatic relationship.

Today, we have an opportunity to strengthen this relationship by easing economic and food insecurity caused by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and by helping Tajikistan to diversify away from PRC investments.

Tajikistan is balancing between a cautious generation that experienced the brutal civil war and a younger generation that is keen to advocate for itself and address challenges. We can seize this critical moment by building people to people connections.

Tajikistan is an increasingly important security partner and has long been a key partner in supporting Afghanistan's stability. If confirmed, I will prioritize bilateral and regional security cooperation.

I will also not hesitate to urge the Government to strengthen rule of law, demonstrate accountability in government—governance, protect freedom of expression, including for the press, and uphold the rights of minority and marginalized groups, including persons with disabilities, women, and religious and ethnic minorities.

I will stress how addressing human rights can benefit Tajikistan's economic and security goals by attracting investment and preventing the radicalization of potential terrorists. If confirmed, I will work to expand and deepen our economic efforts with Tajikistan by supporting initiatives that develop accountable business practices and transparent institutions, improve the investment climate, reduce corruption, and create an equitable business environment.

Tajikistan is eager to become a regional leader on addressing environmental challenges, so there are tremendous opportunities for enhanced partnership that can ultimately lead to a more prosperous Tajikistan.

Protecting Americans abroad is the State Department's most important responsibility. If confirmed, I will endeavor to ensure the safety and health of our Embassy team, as well as of all American citizens in Tajikistan. The diversity of our staff is our greatest strength.

I remain committed to an inclusive work environment consistent with the Biden Administration's and this committee's vision of a State Department workforce culture that values collegiality, teamwork, and respect.

In closing, Madam Chair, Ranking Member, members of the committee, our goal is a stable, secure, sovereign, and prosperous Tajikistan. If confirmed, I will seek to strengthen our bilateral security, reinforce people to people and economic ties, and promote the democratic values we share.

I pledge to work closely with you to strengthen the United States' strategic partnership with Tajikistan. I appreciate the opportunity to speak with you today, and I welcome your questions. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Micaller follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT FOR MANUEL P. MICALLER

Chairwoman Shaheen, Ranking Member Portman, distinguished members of this committee, it is an honor to appear before you today as the President's nominee to be the next U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Tajikistan.

I am grateful to be joined today by my mother, Monina Micaller, and I want to acknowledge my brother, Jose Micaller, who is watching from home in San Francisco. Both have supported me throughout my Foreign Service career. And I would like to take this opportunity before the Senate to recognize and honor my late father, Manuel Micaller, Sr., who inspired and encouraged me to embark on this journey of service to our great country.

If confirmed, I will return to Central Asia, where I began my career in 1996 as Vice Consul at the U.S. Embassy in Turkmenistan and later served as Political-Economic Chief in Tajikistan. I was drawn to this region having studied the former Soviet Union in college, and I keep returning because of the critical importance it plays in our national security and the opportunity to use my experience in a challenging environment to advance our shared interests.

Tajikistan is a fascinating country, rich in history and culture. It has long been at the crossroads of history, and so it is again with the significant global shifts of recent years. With an 843-mile border with Afghanistan, a 280-mile border with China, and exposure to Russian influence, Tajikistan is seeking to diversify its foreign partners beyond its immediate neighbors. Despite the unique challenges presented by Tajikistan's neighborhood and our geographic distance, the United States has proven itself as a reliable partner over the course of our 30-year diplomatic relationship. Today we have an opportunity to strengthen this relationship by easing economic and food insecurity caused by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and by helping Tajikistan's economy to diversify away from PRC investments.

The only Central Asian country to experience a civil war after the fall of the Soviet Union, Tajikistan is confronting generational dynamics as it balances between a cautious generation that experienced the brutal 1992-1997 civil war and a younger generation that is keen to advocate for itself and address upcoming challenges. We can seize this critical time in generational discussions by using our public diplomacy work to build people-to-people connections that will benefit individuals and civil society for decades to come. Tajikistan has become an increasingly important strategic security partner and has long been a key partner in supporting Afghanistan's stability. We welcome the growing relationship on counterterrorism and border security efforts and continue to carefully consider how to partner with Tajikistan to implement programs and train security and law enforcement officers in accordance with

international human rights standards. If confirmed, I will prioritize bilateral and regional security cooperation.

As a previous Political Chief in Dushanbe, I understand how delicate discussions about human rights can be with the Government of Tajikistan. I will not hesitate to urge the Government to strengthen the rule of law, institute fair legal processes and institutions, demonstrate accountability in governance, protect the freedom of expression—including for the press—and uphold the rights of minority and marginalized groups, including persons with disabilities, women, and religious and ethnic minorities. I will stress how addressing human rights can benefit Tajikistan's most pressing economic and security goals by attracting foreign direct investment and preventing the radicalization of potential terrorists.

If confirmed, I will work to expand and deepen our economic efforts with the Government of Tajikistan by supporting the already significant initiatives that develop accountable business practices and transparent institutions, strengthen Tajikistan's banking system, improve the investment climate, reduce corruption, and create an equitable business environment. Tajikistan is eager to become a regional leader on addressing water-related environmental challenges. In both economic and environmental areas of cooperation, there are tremendous opportunities for enhanced partnership that can ultimately lead to a more prosperous Tajikistan.

Protecting Americans abroad is the State Department's most important responsibility. If confirmed, I will endeavor to ensure the safety and health of my Embassy team, as well as all American citizens in Tajikistan.

None of this critical work can be accomplished without our dedicated Locally Engaged Staff, Eligible Family Members, and Foreign Service Officers. The diversity of our staff is our greatest strength. I remain committed to an inclusive work environment, consistent with the Biden administration's and this committee's vision of a State Department workforce culture that values collegiality, teamwork, and respect.

In closing, Madam Chair, Ranking Member, members of the committee, I understand our goal is a stable and prosperous Tajikistan that is free to pursue political, economic, and security interests on its own terms. If confirmed, I will seek to strengthen our bilateral security, reinforce people-to-people and economic ties, and promote the democratic values we share.

I pledge to work closely with you to strengthen the United States' strategic partnership with Tajikistan. I appreciate the opportunity to speak with you today. I welcome your questions.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you very much. Thank you to each of you. I am going to now turn it over to Senator Hagerty while I go vote, and I shall return shortly.

Senator HAGERTY. Thank you, Senator Shaheen. And I will see you shortly too and we will get this voting underway. I hope you will understand and appreciate some of the complexities of navigating these hearings in the afternoon when we have votes ongoing. I would like to first and foremost congratulate all of you for being here today.

In your various roles, you will have the opportunity to represent the most exceptional Nation in the world, and I cannot think of a higher honor than the ones that you have been nominated for.

So my deep congratulations to you and my deep appreciation to all of your families for the support that they will give you in hopes of being very successful in the roles that you will fulfill, if you are confirmed.

To our career Foreign Service Officers, I want to thank you for your service. It has been my pleasure to have the opportunity to work closely with many of you, and I appreciate what you and your families have done for our Nation.

And then for Mr. Gorordo and Mr. Weiner, I want to congratulate you and welcome you to a new world. A little bit less so for you, Mr. Gorordo, because I understand you were a White House fellow, as was I.

A few years after I was, I might say. But congratulations on that. I think that service probably served as an inspiration for you to be sitting here today, so I am very pleased to see you here. And Mr. Weiner, it is great to see you.

Our mutual friend, Tennessean, Alice Randall, who is a professor at my alma mater, Vanderbilt, was kind enough to introduce us, and I appreciate the conversations that we have had.

We touched on this somewhat, but I would like to come back to our conversations, particularly with respect to the challenge that you will be facing as Ukraine is to be rebuilt in a number of areas that will be a matter of focus.

I would like to get your perspective on your top priorities as you investigate and pursue that challenge.

Mr. WEINER. Well, Senator, thank you very much for the kind introduction and for being so gracious as to spend time with me before Thanksgiving. I cannot tell you how much I appreciate it.

It is hard to find words sufficient to condemn Russia's unprovoked attacks on Ukraine.

Besides, the tens of thousands killed and wounded, Russia's targeting of civilians, its destruction of utilities, oil, gas, and water, its bombardment of hospitals and apartment blocks are absolutely grotesque. And we have seen, at the economic level, if I can limit discussion there, a third of the population estimated to have been displaced, and GDP falling 35 percent approximately.

We thought we had seen the end of land wars in Europe, but obviously that is not the case. And the United States to-date has been the leader in security assistance to Ukraine and in economic aid to the country.

Before the war, Ukraine was already the third largest client of the EBRD. The EBRD has had more than 500 projects in Ukraine and has invested more than €5 billion to date in the country. Since the war, since the wintertime, the Bank has established a special support fund for grants and risk sharing, approximately €3 billion of commitments through the end of next year, of which the Congress has appropriated $500 million through the second Ukraine supplemental in May.

The focus of this support fund is really in five areas, food, security, energy security, infrastructure, trade facilitation, and medicines and pharmaceuticals. So that is the initial focus of the EBRD.

Over the longer term, of course, we look towards the relief efforts phasing into reconstruction, phasing into modernization, and ultimately into EU accession, which will look something like the Marshall Plan, but it will be different in very important respects. There will be more than one donor. There will be one primary recipient instead of 16. And of course, unlike 1945, the shooting may not have stopped or may not have stopped in all of Ukraine, and therefore, it is a unique situation. Each of these steps will overlap. And it requires several things which you, and given your private-sector expertise, and given your tenure as Ambassador in Japan, understand very well.

We have got to find a way to pool political risk. We have got to find a way to provide insurance coverage that will bring the private sector in. And we need to rethink how force majeure provisions will be provided.

I have gone on too long, but let me just mention one other thing, oversight is critical.

Accountability is critical. Transparency is critical. We have got to make sure the money is spent for its intended uses. Ukraine historically is considered as the third most corrupt country in Europe, and we have got to make sure that high integrity standards are applied to American taxpayers' dollars spent in support of Ukraine.

Senator HAGERTY. I have utmost appreciation for the final point that you made and a great deal of concern, given the amount of taxpayer money that the United States Government has already committed and the lack of clarity that we have at this point in terms of where those funds are directed.

If I could come back again to the role of the bank, and specifically comment on a point of concern that I have. And I am going to stay with you for just a moment, Mr. Weiner. This is on the bank's website. The bank, "is aligned with some of the stated objectives of the Belt and Road Initiative of China."

And it is something that I think we need to look at. Back in June of last year, National Security Adviser Sullivan said that the United States is, along with like-minded countries in the G–7, should be looking to embrace alternatives to the Belt and Road Initiative. I could not agree with that statement more.

And I am very concerned about the abuse of debt trap financing and the predatory practices that the CCP uses in the Belt and Road Initiative all around the world. I am also very concerned about China's continued support for Russia in the face of their invasion of Ukraine.

So I am going to ask you about your position on the European banks' continued cooperation on projects that are associated with communist China's Belt and Road Initiative.

Mr. WEINER. Senator, thank you for that very important question. It is no question that confronting China is perhaps the essential U.S. foreign policy challenge of the 21st century. Let me take the question, if I may, in two parts.

The first is that China is not a client of the Bank. It does not receive loans from the EBRD. It is a shareholder, but its shareholding is less than 1/10th of 1 percent of total shares. I believe the correct number is 0.097 percent.

Put differently, the United States with a 10 percent shareholding has it more than 100 times the say of China in terms of the Bank's operations.

Now, that is not fully responsive to your question. China is a malign actor. And as Congress and the Administration have made very clear, we are in competition with China's form of economic statecraft: the use of state-owned enterprises, unfair trade practices, theft of technology, forced labor, environmental degradation, the list goes on from there.

The EBRD is essential to the United States and its allies in confronting Chinese reach in the 37 client countries of the EBRD. We have to offer an alternative to Chinese financing. It is an opportunity for us to project a Western power.

And we have got to make sure, as an example and we talked about this the other day and I was grateful for your comments, we have to make sure that the lifecycle costs of projects do not allow

the Chinese to offer low standards and cheap construction at the inflated prices that we have seen.

As you have mentioned and correctly so, it is essential that we provide an alternative that is the opposite of the Chinese model. And there, if I may, one other comment. When we talked the other day, you mentioned JBIC, and I would be very grateful if we had the opportunity to get your expertise with respect to JBIC and similar Asian institutions in terms of their role in supporting what the EBRD and similar institutions are doing to confront China in Central Asia and elsewhere.

Senator HAGERTY. I think that could be very helpful because Japan has taken an increasingly greater interest in what is happening, particularly in the wake of the attack on Ukraine by Russia. They have been attending NATO meetings. They are much more focused, I think, on the region broadly today.

And I do believe that there is great opportunity, as you and I discussed, and I am more than happy to facilitate that. Mr. Gorordo, I do not want to miss the opportunity to get your perspective on China's role with the bank, and your perspective on how you would handle and manage the relationship, in path with the United States.

Mr. GORORDO. Well, first of all, thank you, Senator. And thank you for your kind words about my previous service and our shared affinity for the White House fellowship, which was undoubtedly a transformative experience for me personally, and very much which has helped cultivate in me a calling for public service.

And so in the spirit of the fellowship, I have seek to, in this new role, if confirmed, pay it forward and take to heart all that has been invested in my time as a fellow and in my great appreciation for this country and what it has done for my family.

I would like to echo the sentiments of Mr. Weiner and associate myself with his comments, especially with regards to China and its role as a malign actor. There is no question, as the Secretary of the Treasury and Deputy Secretary have said, we are in a strategic competition with China.

And there is no doubt, and I have seen it firsthand in Latin America, operating there previously, how it acts in an adversarial way as it tries to steal our intellectual property and undermine American values every chance it gets.

So for those reasons, I would push—I would ensure that we push back and outcompete China at every chance that we get. My understanding is that in 2018, as part of the capital increase of the bank, the bank made certain commitments about graduating companies—countries that meet the criteria for graduation.

My understanding is that China, because of its high per capita income, its own institutional capacity, as well as its access to other alternative forms of financing, has met that criteria.

And so I would use the voice and vote of the U.S. Government to ensure that we push China to graduate from the World Bank.

Senator HAGERTY. Let us stay on—welcome, Madam Chairman. I was trying to keep a conversation going while you were——

Senator SHAHEEN. And you did a very nice job. Thank you.

Senator HAGERTY. I will turn the gavel back to you.

Senator SHAHEEN. Okay. Well, thank you very much, Senator Haggerty. I am—I will try not to repeat your questions, although certainly on China and the World Bank, I guess I do want to follow up. And forgive me if you have already responded to this—but, as soon as I can find it.

So I know that Senator Hagerty was asking about the World Bank's engagement with China, and Chinese firms have received $52 billion out of the $280 billion of outstanding World Bank contracts. And at the same time, state-owned Chinese firms have been debarred for violating procurement policies.

So, can you talk about how we should be addressing this challenge? And is the World Bank's reliance on Chinese firms problematic? And what can we do to address that? And also, can you speak to whether we should support a suspension of Russia's membership from the World Bank?

Mr. GORORDO. Well, first of all, thank you, Senator, for your question. This is actually a question that is very near and dear to my heart. I first started working with our multilateral development banks when I worked at the Department of Commerce and worked with our commercial service liaisons at the various MDBs, including the World Bank.

Specifically working with them to help American companies be able to win procurement opportunities. And so it would be a priority of mine, if confirmed, to help our American companies get a fair share of the contracts that they are competing for, level the playing field, and expand U.S. markets for U.S. products and services.

With regards to China, as I stated with Senator Hagerty, there is no question that we are in a strategic competition with China, and that when it is looking to undercut our values or steal our intellectual property, that it is acting in an adversarial way.

Moreover, with regards to procurement opportunities, and specifically, I would advocate for a greater focus, an emphasis on lifetime costs and lifecycle costs, as well as value for cost versus the lowest bid, which is how often times China wins its contracts.

Lastly, I would push for resourcing the World Bank's integrity unit to ensure that we are combating corruption everywhere, and specifically also in our procurement. With regards to Russia, I would like, as I stated in the record, to condemn Russia for its illegal and unprovoked war in Ukraine.

There is no question that in the bank right now since—the bank has ceased operations rather in Russia and also ceased all projects in Russia, that Russia is isolated. And so I would work very closely with our allies and build a coalition to ensure that we further isolate Russia.

And I am happy, if confirmed, to work with my colleagues to get an answer to your question with regards to the suspension.

Senator SHAHEEN. And when you talked about focusing on some of the other areas that are important other than just the lowest bid for Chinese firms, is there support among other—among the international community and other colleagues at the bank to put in place those kinds of criteria for making determinations on loans?

Mr. GORORDO. Well, Senator, thank you for your follow up question. With regards, you know, to the specifics of those details, given

that I am not in the Administration, not yet confirmed, I cannot speak to those details of the bank's management and other executive directors.

But what I can say that I will commit myself wholeheartedly to work, to build coalition with our allies, to be able to advance our values and our interests, especially in this regard.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you. Mr. Weiner, staying on international finance, I want to ask you to explore a little bit more about the importance of the EBRD to rebuilding Ukraine after the war and the kinds of initiatives that you think could be supported by the European community.

Mr. WEINER. Well, thank you very much for your question, Senator. The rebuilding of Ukraine, the efforts that have begun or at least are being thought about today, really have four stages to them.

There is the relief phase which we are in now, efforts then ultimately to rebuild and modernize, and then ready Ukraine for accession to the European Union. It will be a form of Marshall Plan, but that really does not do it justice because the fighting may not have stopped.

Also, there will be multiple donors, not just one, and there will be one principal target, not to minimize the needs of the other frontline states, but the principal target will be Ukraine itself, not 16 countries as it was in the post-World War II period.

It is absolutely critical that the multiple donors that commit to funding Ukrainian reconstruction actually step up, that there be burden sharing. The commitments that have been made by the EU, since that is your specific question, as I understand it, and of course, like the others on this panel, I am not yet in a position to speak in terms of the Administration's understanding, but my understanding is that those commitments have not yet been lived up to.

There is a shortfall with respect to Ukraine. And that is not acceptable. It cannot be acceptable as we talk about the rebuilding in a very different sort of way, because the shooting may not have stopped. We may be talking about rebuilding in certain parts of the country or certain sectors of the economy, and that it may not be uni-directional, it will not be uni-dimensional. It will be different.

As part of that process, accountability, transparency, oversight, return on investment are absolutely critical because if the money is not wisely spent, if we cannot account for the money, there will not be a next tranche, and no one interested in the future of Ukraine should be willing to accept that result, including the Ukrainians, of course, themselves.

One other point, as we get closer to European Union accession, historically, the European Commission and the member states, the European Investment Bank, and others have funded that process. They did it for every other member state seeking accession as they figured out how to accept the acquis communautaire in their laws and worked on infrastructure and so on that met European standards, there is no reason that should not happen in this case as well.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you. I appreciate that. I especially appreciate the accountability piece because I think there will be more

and more focus on that as time goes on. Another area of Europe that I think, that is of great concern to me is what is happening in the Western Balkans.

It is a part of Europe that I think we have taken our eyes off of after the end of the conflict that followed the breakup of Yugoslavia, and we are seeing the results of not keeping a focus on what is happening there. And one of the biggest challenges, of course, is the economy in countries like Bosnia and Herzegovina.

So can you talk about what kind of avenues the EBRD might explore to help countries like Bosnia and Herzegovina?

Mr. WEINER. Senator, thank you. That is a very, very important question, and thank you for posing it. And I also wanted to welcome your leadership on this issue, and particularly the legislation you introduced in the summer, with respect to the Western Balkans.

The EBRD has played a key role in the Western Balkans, in the six nations of the Western Balkans, through its financing, its policy engagement, and through hosting of regional summit meetings there to promote regional integration and to advance the Western Balkans as an attractive investment destination.

And both of those are needed to maintain the region's stability. Pursuant to the EBRD's investment plan to advance regional integration, the Bank has invested more than €15 billion in the region, and it is investing more than €1 billion a year. That is more than any other multilateral development bank. And it shows again that an institution like the EBRD can have a big voice in small nations.

The key focus of the Bank's operations has been to build connective tissue. I use that phrase both talking about infrastructure, the building of highways that link the countries, but also in terms of setting up a registry for businesses in the region. 1.5 million businesses are linked together in a way to help facilitate their cooperation.

The Bank has placed its emphasis in four areas where I think historically it has done very well: policy reform and good governance; investment in the private sector, which is the Bank's focus, and particularly in small- and medium-sized enterprises; the green economy transition, to use their parlance, including an issue that was very important to you, which is curbing ties to Russian fossil fuels; and trying to overcome the digital divide and help forge e digital transformation in these six countries, particularly to help youth and to help women.

And on that point, let me just say that as the son, the husband, and the father of professional women, the issue of women's empowerment is of critical importance to me, and I would welcome the opportunity to work with you and your staff on those issues, should I be fortunate enough to be confirmed.

Senator SHAHEEN. Well, thank you. I am sure we will take you up on that, should you be confirmed. Ms. Sanders Sullivan, one of the developments that I have found quite concerning as a result of Russia's war on Ukraine has been what that has meant to the availability of food for African countries.

And what is even more concerning is not just that the food is not available because of the blockade of the Black Sea. Although, and I appreciate Turkey's help in trying to negotiate some ships to get

that grain out of Ukraine, but it is really the disinformation that Russia has spread in Africa that says that it is the United States that is at fault, not Russia's war on Ukraine.

Can you talk about the kinds of things that we might be doing and should be doing with the African Union to help correct that misinformation or disinformation because I think it is deliberate, in a way that addresses the responsibility for what is really happening with the food stocks?

Ms. SULLIVAN. Senator, thank you very much for raising this important point. The disinformation has become on steroids.

There has always been disinformation, but I think the ready availability of all the social media and the speed with which it circulates around the globe is unprecedented, and I think we do need to do a better job of not just getting our story out in a very traditional way, but also developing new tools where we can meet this disinformation on the battlefield.

Interestingly, this week, Merriam-Webster dictionary announced that the word of the year was gaslighting. And if confirmed, I pledge to take that on in a way that not only tells our story about the good things that we are doing with the future, with working with African partners on a just energy transition, working on amplifying the availability of fertilizer, and also on the food and agriculture piece, working to address the root causes as well as the real time humanitarian crises that have been exacerbated certainly by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, but also the climate issue.

So all of these are intertwined. There is no one answer to it, but we do have our global engagement center. If confirmed, I would work with my team to figure out ways that we might tackle that, not just, you know, at the level of the African Union, but there are no more borders when it comes to information these days and figuring out a way to get our story out there and straighten out the disinformation that is circulating. So thank you for the question.

Senator SHAHEEN. Well, thank you. I think that this is an issue that is also about how do we better coordinate our messages across various agencies of the United States. So USAID, State, all of the efforts that we have, DOD, because we do not—we are not always talking with the same message in a way that I think would be important as we try and counter the disinformation that is out there.

So, I appreciate your response. Mr. Jardine, I had the opportunity a number of years ago to meet with the former President of Mauritius. And one of the things that really struck me, it was at a time when we were trying to do some work in Africa to address the peaceful transition of power.

And he had a very impressive story to tell about Mauritius' ability to better transition than most African countries. Why do you think that is and what do you think—can you assess the current governance in both Mauritius and Seychelles and how it compares?

Mr. JARDINE. Madam Chairwoman, thank you. Thank you very much for the opportunity to answer the question about democracy in Mauritius, why it has experienced successful democratic system, and similarly the experiences that are ongoing in Seychelles.

Again, I think both countries, as you noted, do represent potential models for sub-Saharan Africa because of the success they have had. I think it is hard to characterize why, you know, some coun-

tries are more successful than others. I think in the case of Mauritius, one, has been, you know, focus on education, which is critical.

It is not a large population, so there is a sense of community. I think that is helpful. In addition, I think there is a strong sense of family and stability within the community, and there is also the historical traditions of parliamentary democracy that they inherited. But again, in some cases, it may be hard to just assess any one country and its unique development. And sometimes there is also an element of luck I would have to say.

In the context of Seychelles, also similar situation in which it gained independence from the United Kingdom. Small, you know, small population, a fairly close community, however it experienced a period of single party state, a coup d'etat in 1977, and which essentially suppressed or stopped the democratic progress.

However, more recently, they have had a very successful transition, democratic elections and a transition to an opposition party, as I mentioned, just in 2020. So again, I think it is very encouraging that they—that in Seychelles, that they are seeing sort of a path forward and consolidating the success of head on democracy.

And again, I think from the United States position, we want to try to encourage others to look at Mauritius and Seychelles as a model and to see if those countries can assist. I know they are very engaged within the context of the African Union and see that membership as very important.

And so I would hope that through that forum, that they would be able to again exchange and develop that perspective on democracy within the context of that multilateral organization.

Again, if confirmed, that would be one area that I want to continue to focus on extensively, which is promoting the democratic progress that those two countries have experienced.

I think the key approach would be to engage broadly, inclusively, and to reach a whole cross-section of the community in both islands, both republics. Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I hope I answered your question.

Senator SHAHEEN. Yes, that is helpful. Thank you. Senator Barrasso.

Senator BARRASSO. Thanks, Madam Chairman. Mr. Gorordo, the—I want to talk about energy. Global philanthropist Bill Gates explains that "increasing access to electricity is critical to lifting the world's poor out of poverty," something about which we can agree.

For the first time in decades, the number of people around the world without access to electricity is actually set to rise in 2022. That means about 775 million people living without electricity.

Due to inflation, the energy crisis, failed development policies, these people are struggling to safely and reliably cook and heat their homes. In fact, nearly 3 billion people today on this globe today rely on wood and waste for household energy.

People living in poor and developing nations want and need a stable energy supply. They are looking for power generation that provides energy security. It helps create jobs and improves their lives.

While traditional fuels are a vital tool for escaping poverty, they always have been, yet over the past few years, the World Bank has

been imposing restrictions on the financing of traditional energy projects. It is a policy decision. It is critical that the World Bank immediately lift these harmful restrictions that are hurting people around the globe, people that they claim to be helping.

To achieve its mission, the World Bank must embrace, not exclude, affordable energy resources. Ultimately, the solution to energy poverty does not lie in limiting options, but in using all available options for people in need.

So if confirmed, will you commit to ensuring the World Bank is promoting all forms of energy projects across the globe, including oil, natural gas, and coal?

Mr. GORORDO. Senator, first of all, thank you for that question. I actually cut my teeth in the private sector working in the energy sector and continue through my work at a private equity fund focused on infrastructure working in this sector. So this is a question very near and dear to my heart.

With regards to the specifics of the current, you know, bank and its policies and programs, obviously I am not confirmed yet and not in the Administration so I cannot speak to those details, but my understanding is Deputy Secretary of Treasury has said it is vitally important for the U.S. and our allies to take steps to ensure that developing countries have the resources they need for public health and economic recovery, especially during this very difficult time after the pandemic.

And so, if confirmed, I will work with Treasury and bank staff to support the most vulnerable countries and ensure that these countries have access to the tools needed to mitigate and adapt to the impact of climate change, as well as to have the energy that they need to be able to promote their own economies, and to balance the short term and long term needs of their development.

In addition to that, I commit myself to evaluating each project on its own merits and aligned with the country's strategy and needs, according to the bank and U.S. regulations and Treasury guidance from my colleagues at Treasury, to ensure that we are upholding the highest standards.

Senator BARRASSO. And given that you are not confirmed yet and will consult with the folks from Treasury, the U.S. Department of Treasury announced plans to end support for fossil fuels at multilateral development banks.

They said, except for exceptional circumstances. So to me, I want to know your opinion. What are exceptional circumstances in which the United States would support a fossil fuel project at the World Bank?

Mr. GORORDO. Senator, thank you for your follow up question. As I shared and as you stated, I am not currently confirmed to this role and not in the Administration, but I do commit myself to work with my Treasury colleagues to get you a response to your question.

Senator BARRASSO. Can you tell me what actions the United States has taken already to end World Bank's support for fossil fuel?

Mr. GORORDO. Again, Senator, currently not in the role so I cannot speak to the specifics and details. My understanding is, as I

shared, that the current—the Administration is focused on balancing the short term and long term needs of each country.

If confirmed, I will work to judge each project based on its own merits, taking into account the country's strategy and needs, and ensure that it is aligned with our U.S. regulations and policy, as well as the bank's guidance.

Senator BARRASSO. With regard to Russia in the World Bank, the World Bank has not provided any new financing for Russia since the invasion of Crimea in 2014. So we are going back now eight years. In March of this year, the World Bank suspended all programing in Russia.

There has been some discussion by analysts that Russia should be suspended from its membership in the international financial institutions. Do you support a suspension of Russia's membership from the World Bank?

Mr. GORORDO. Thank you, Senator, for that question. As I shared with the chair, as well as with Senator Hagerty when they asked a similar question, I take this opportunity to condemn Russia's unprovoked and illegal war in Ukraine.

My understanding, as you stated, is that the bank has ceased all operations in Russia, as well as is not financing any additional projects in Russia. And I will work tirelessly with our allies in building coalition to effectively isolate Russia. And I can get you an answer back on——

Senator BARRASSO. And Madam Chairman, if I may, I have one question on China. Thank you, Madam Chairman. This is regarding China's predatory lending. You know, through the Belt and Road Initiative, the Chinese Communist Party offers countries the ability to borrow a lot of money for infrastructure projects.

Problem is, these countries accumulate large amounts of debt, debt to China. They are unable to pay it back while still not achieving the development gains the countries are seeking. Unable to escape the massive debt owed to China, countries face default or forfeiture of strategic assets and natural resources.

And we are seeing this around the world. So on top of the financial pressure, countries are now facing the economic hardships caused by coronavirus, inflation, energy crisis, things you have raised, is a recipe for disaster.

What actions do you believe the World Bank should take, and how should we ensure that American taxpayers are not bailing out Chinese financial institutions and further enabling China's predatory lending?

Mr. GORORDO. Thank you again, Senator, for that question regarding China. As I shared with the chair, as well as Senator Hagerty on similar questions, I believe we are, as the Deputy—as the Secretary of Treasury and the Deputy Secretary have stated, in a strategic competition with China, and that China is in fact a maligned actor that tries to undercut American values and interests every chance that it gets, and that acts in an adversarial way, specifically also when it is trying to steal our intellectual property.

In addition to that, with regards to procurement at the bank, you know, this is something that is very near and dear to my heart as I shared with the with the chair. I started my career working at the Commerce Department with our commercial service officers at

the various multilateral development banks, including the World Bank, to help American companies be able to compete and get their fair share of contracts and to expand markets for U.S. products and services.

And so I would work very closely with our allies and with the bank management to ensure that American companies are able to compete for those opportunities. And then with regards to China itself, with regards to its role at the bank, my understanding is that in 2018, as part of the capital increase of the bank, the bank made certain commitments to graduate countries that have met the criteria for graduation.

And that China, because of its high per capita income, its own institutional capacity, as well as alternative sources of financing, has met that criteria. And I would work very closely to push back on China in regards to its adversarial actions as well as to ensure that it graduates, as the bank has made that commitment.

Senator BARRASSO. Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chairman.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you, Senator Barrasso. I just want to finish up with a few questions for Mr. Micaller with respect to Tajikistan. Can you talk about what we are seeing in terms of Tajikistan's economy from Russia's war on Ukraine?

Mr. MICALLER. Thank you, Madam Chair, for your question, and for highlighting this very important issue. I think it is important to note first and recognize the significant levers and pressure points that Russia has over Tajikistan, particularly the reliance on remittances from up to 1 million Tajik migrant workers in Russia, and Moscow's control over critical trade, infrastructure, transportation, and energy linkages.

So they do have significant levers, and the Government of Tajikistan has long sought to diversify its economic partners. Russia's war against Ukraine has underscored the critical importance of continuing that approach.

And I would add that supporting options and choices for the Tajik Government and the Tajik people has long underpinned our approach to the bilateral relationship, with an eye towards enhancing the country's security, prosperity, and sovereignty.

If confirmed, I will continue this approach and continue to have these discussions with the Tajik Government and our partners. I do want to add that it is also important to recognize that in the face of the tremendous pressure and economic challenges resulting from Russia's war in Ukraine, Tajikistan continues to admirably attempt to pursue its own independent course, and I could offer several examples recently.

It has continued to resist calls and pressure to join the Eurasian Economic Union. It has resisted calls to deploy peacekeeping troops from the Collective Security Treaty Organization to its own borders.

And most significantly, the Government warned its own citizens, Tajik migrant workers in Russia, not to participate in Moscow's illegal war against the Ukrainian people, underscoring that such activities would be in violation of Tajikistan's own laws.

So again, I do want to recognize the challenges they face and commit to working in partnership with the Government and with

our likeminded friends to support their efforts to diversify economic relations.

Senator SHAHEEN. It is impressive that the Government has taken that position. Has Russia responded in any way to their admonition to Tajik citizens?

Mr. MICALLER. I am aware of media reporting that there was continued pressure on Tajik migrant workers. There have been reports of document checks and threats of revoking registration and visas. And again, this is a significant threat to the economy and the livelihoods of individual Tajiks and families.

Senator SHAHEEN. Well, thank you very much. Thank you to each of you. I am being told I need to go vote so we can close out our votes this afternoon, but we will leave the record of this hearing open until close of business tomorrow, November 30th.

And I hope that if you do receive any questions from my colleagues on the committee, that you will respond as soon as possible. Our hope is to advance your nominations in an expeditious way. I hope before the end of the year. And so anything you can do to help us to get that done would be appreciated.

And again, thank you to each of you for your willingness to serve the country. At this time, I will close this hearing on the committee on Foreign Relations.

[Whereupon, at 5:35 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

Additional Material Submitted for the Record

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO CHRISTOPHER T. ROBINSON BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Russia

Question. How will you engage with the Latvian Government and address their concerns about threats from Russia?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work closely with the Latvian Government to strengthen Latvia and NATO's ability to defend Latvian borders against Russia's aggression. Congress's generous support through Foreign Military Financing and Section 333 funds have been critical to U.S. Embassy Riga's work with the Latvian military to strengthen its defense and tighten integration with NATO defense planning. I will also work with the Canadians and other partner countries on the NATO battlegroup in Latvia to ensure plans are moving forward to strengthen that battlegroup in line with NATO's Madrid Summit declaration and Strategic Concept.

Question. How will you respond to Latvia's requests for a stronger forward presence from the U.S. and NATO?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with the U.S. Department of Defense to ensure our posture is commensurate to the threats and challenges we face on NATO's eastern flank. I will also work to continue implementing our commitment to maintain a persistent, heel-to-toe presence in the region and intensify training with the Latvian Government to ensure that it is fully interoperable with NATO and capable of supporting the battle group it hosts.

Question. How will you engage with the significant minority population of ethnic Russians living in Latvia and ensure they are not disenfranchised within U.S.-Latvian diplomatic efforts and fall under the malign influence of the Kremlin?

Answer. If confirmed, I will regularly engage with the ethnic Russian population in Latvia through trips to Russian-speaking regions and engagement with Russian-speaking minority groups, so that these groups know that their voices are being heard and that they are welcome in the Transatlantic community. I will work with Latvian Russian-language media to help them compete with Kremlin-controlled media and reach ethnic Russian populations with independent messaging.

Defense

Question. What are the most effective ways Latvia can further its defense cooperation with the U.S. and within NATO?

Answer. Latvia has done incredible work to strengthen its defense cooperation with the United States and NATO. Latvia has met its Wales Pledge commitment to spend two percent of GDP on defense in 2018, and plans to hit 2.5 percent in 2025. Latvia has worked closely with the United States and NATO to ensure that this spending effectively contributes to collective defense. It is currently working on plans to build additional facilities for the lodging and training of additional troops. If confirmed I will work with the Latvian Government to build on these efforts and strengthen the defense of NATO's Eastern Flank.

Question. How will you respond to Latvia's requests for a stronger forward presence from the U.S. and NATO?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with the U.S. Department of Defense to ensure our posture is commensurate to the threats and challenges we face on NATO's eastern flank. I will also work to continue implementing our commitment to maintain a persistent, heel-to-toe presence in the region and intensify training with the Latvian Government to ensure that it is fully interoperable with NATO and capable of supporting the battle group it hosts.

Support to Ukraine

Question. How will you work with the Government of Latvia to assist their efforts to host and provide support to Ukrainian refugees?

Answer. Latvia provides government benefits to more than 43,000 refugees from Ukraine, and there continues to be widespread public support for helping refugees despite the significant costs of hosting them. At the same time, the U.S. Department of State is developing ways for U.S. embassies in the Baltic states to complement these activities with small grants to local organizations to respond to critical gaps, not covered by existing federal, state, and local government. The State Department is also engaging with the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees to ensure that Latvia and other Baltic states are receiving the support they need. If confirmed, I will ensure the Embassy continues to support efforts to provide support to refugees from Ukraine in Latvia.

Question. Latvia has given a significant amount of their military stocks to Ukraine. As Ambassador, how would you work with the Government of Latvia to assess their needs and help provide backfill for their military stocks?

Answer. The U.S. Government has prioritized regional Foreign Military Financing for the Baltics to develop defensive capabilities, such as electronic and hybrid warfare, border security, and maritime and air domain awareness. It has also increased the Baltic states' interoperability with NATO armed forces and contributed to strengthening NATO's defense and deterrence posture in the region. If confirmed, I will continue to work with the U.S. Department of Defense and our Baltic Allies to align security assistance with our interests in enhancing collective defense and confronting Russia's aggression.

Economic Engagement and Energy

Question. How will you support economic engagement between Latvian and U.S. business sectors?

Answer. I will work closely with the Latvian Government, the U.S. business community, and the U.S. interagency to ensure a level playing field for U.S. companies and ensure that Latvian companies are aware of opportunities to partner with U.S. companies to strengthen supply chains and build needed infrastructure. I will work with the U.S. Department of Commerce to ensure that U.S. companies are aware of opportunities in Latvia and have everything they need to successfully compete for those opportunities.

Question. What are the perceived risks to western investment, and how can they be mitigated?

Answer. The Latvian Government has done incredible work in recent years to protect its economy from the risks of corrosive capital. Latvia launched a major anti-money laundering drive that has helped protect its banking sector from criminal activity and has implemented and strengthened investment screening legislation that will allow it to protect its economy from future malign investments. U.S. Embassy Riga has worked closely with the Latvian Government on these efforts, and, if confirmed I will continue sharing information and best practices to ensure that Latvia remains a safe place for U.S. investment.

Question. What role, if any, do you see the U.S. Development Finance Corporation playing in stimulating western investment in Latvia?

Answer. Latvia was extremely grateful for the U.S. Development Financing Corporation's (DFC) announcement of $300 million in loans to support the Three Seas Initiative, and looks forward to working with the DFC in coming years to bring more infrastructure investment to the region. Due to the European Energy Security and Diversification Act of 2019, the DFC can be particularly helpful in supporting Latvia's efforts to break free from Russian energy dependence and meet its clean energy targets.

Question. What sectors do you see as potential areas of growth for U.S.-Latvia business ties?

Answer. Latvia has a growing technology sector, which is already closely tied to the United States. Latvia's first billion-dollar startup, Printful, has investments in Texas, California, and North Carolina. If confirmed I will work to strengthening ties between our technology sectors, to attract more investments like these and create more opportunities for U.S. exports.

Latvia also has plans to expand investment in energy infrastructure in the next few years. It plans to build a liquified natural gas terminal in the next two years and is looking into the possibility of building a small modular nuclear reactor within the next decade. If confirmed, I hope to work with the Latvian Government to ensure that U.S. companies can take full advantage of these opportunities to expand their markets in Latvia.

Question. What can the U.S. do to help Latvia maintain a sufficient supply of energy as it decouples from Russia?

Answer. Latvia is building a new liquified natural gas (LNG) terminal and hopes that LNG will be able to fill the gap left by Russian gas until clean alternatives can be developed. U.S. efforts to expand production of LNG to meet this growing demand will be critical to Latvia's medium-term energy security. Over the longer-term, the U.S. can continue to work with Latvia and other countries in the region to develop and deploy clean energy technologies that can take the place of Russian gas, including potential investments in advanced nuclear reactors such as small modular nuclear reactors.

Question. What can the U.S. do to help Latvia maintain a sufficient supply of energy as it decouples from Russia?

Answer. Latvia is building a new liquified natural gas (LNG) terminal and hopes that LNG will be able to fill the gap left by Russian gas until clean alternatives can be developed. U.S. efforts to expand production of LNG to meet this growing demand will be critical to Latvia's medium-term energy security. Over the longer-term, the U.S. can continue to work with Latvia and other countries in the region to develop and deploy clean energy technologies that can take the place of Russian gas.

Question. How can the U.S. help Latvia's efforts to decouple its electrical grid from Russia and Belarus and integrate with its western neighbors?

Answer. The U.S. Department of State is supporting a technical assistance program to help the Baltics ensure the reliability and resilience of their grid with the goal of promoting a safe decoupling from the Russia-controlled BRELL electricity grid for all three countries, including Latvia. If confirmed, I will continue to work with Latvia to ensure that this process moves forward, and that Latvia has everything it needs to decouple as soon as possible.

Question. How will you work with your State Department and interagency colleagues to coordinate U.S. economic engagement with Latvia across the Baltics and greater Eastern European region?

Answer. If confirmed, I would work with the Latvian Government, fellow U.S. Ambassadors, the U.S. Department of State, and the interagency to ensure strong participation in regional forums such as the Three Seas Initiative and the U.S. Department of Energy's Partnership for Transatlantic Energy and Climate Cooperation (P-TECC). I will work with my colleagues within the U.S. Department of State and the interagency to ensure that the United States is aware of and fully engages with any opportunities to strengthen economic engagement and economic security.

State Department Manangement and Public Diplomacy

Question. Many U.S. Missions have been under enormous stress over the last few years, in large part due to COVID. What is your understanding of morale throughout Mission Riga?

Answer. U.S. Embassy Riga has faced challenges posed by COVID–19, and I am thankful for the staff's resilience and continued service. If confirmed, the health and safety of the personnel and family members of Mission Riga will be my top priority, and I look forward to working with the talented team of U.S. Direct Hires, locally employed staff, and their families, and ensuring that everyone on my team understands they are valued and have my support.

Question. How do you intend to improve morale at Mission Riga?

Answer. If confirmed, I will ensure everyone on my team is treated professionally, their rights are respected, they are safe and secure, and they have the resources necessary to perform their jobs. We are all one team working for the good of the U.S.-Latvian relationship and the interests of the United States and the American people.

Question. How do you intend to create a unified mission and vision at Mission Riga?

Answer. If confirmed, I look forward to ensuring open and continuous communication throughout the Mission. We are all one team working together to advance the U.S.-Latvian relationship and the interests of the American people, so I will ensure this collaborative service focus is central to our work. Furthermore, I am committed to supporting a diverse and inclusive workforce at U.S. Embassy Riga. Diversity makes the Mission strong by bringing different perspectives and enhancing creativity. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the team to maximize innovation and effectiveness.

Question. Management is a key responsibility for Chiefs of Mission. How would you describe your management style?

Answer. I have been blessed with opportunities that have prepared me to be a Chief of Mission, and to build consensus among diverse stakeholders. I have demonstrated an ability to work with colleagues of all backgrounds and if confirmed, I will regularly engage with members of my team and always seek to create a space for open dialogue and diversity of thought. I also believe in leading by example. If confirmed, I will work hard to foster an environment of respect as U.S. Embassy Riga carries out important work on behalf of the American people.

Question. Do you believe it is ever acceptable or constructive to berate subordinates, either in public or private?

Answer. No, it is never acceptable or constructive to berate subordinates, either in public or private. If confirmed, I will work hard to foster an environment of respect and professionalism as U.S. Embassy Riga carries out important work on behalf of the American people.

Question. How do you envision your leadership relationship with your Deputy Chief of Mission?

Answer. If confirmed, I look forward to a close and productive relationship with the Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM) to advance U.S. priorities in Latvia, including protecting the safety and security of Americans, expanding our economic relationship, and advancing shared priorities.

Question. If confirmed, what leadership responsibilities do you intend to entrust to your Deputy Chief of Mission?

Answer. If confirmed, I will entrust the Deputy Chief of Mission with responsibility for the day-to-day operations of the Mission and to serve as Chargé d'Affaires in my absence. If confirmed, I will consult closely with the Deputy Chief of Mission on a range of issues and I will value the institutional knowledge that my talented fellow career Foreign Service officers provide.

Question. Do you believe that it is important to provide employees with accurate, constructive feedback on their performances in order to encourage improvement and reward those who most succeeded in their roles?

Answer. Yes, I believe it is important to provide employees with accurate, constructive feedback on their performance to encourage improvement and reward those who succeed in their roles. If confirmed, I hope to be an inspiring leader with an open-door policy to discuss constructive and timely feedback to enhance and lift the performance of the entire team.

Question. If confirmed, would you support and encourage clear, accurate, and direct feedback to employees in order to improve performance and reward high achievers?

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, I would support and encourage clear, accurate, and direct feedback to employees to improve performance and reward high achievers.

It is imperative that U.S. diplomats get outside of posts abroad to meet with local actors, including host government officials, non-government organizations, and fellow foreign diplomats stationed in Greece.

Question. In your opinion, do U.S. diplomats get outside of our Embassy walls enough to accomplish fully their missions?

Answer. I firmly believe it is imperative that U.S. diplomats get outside of the Embassy to meet with local citizens, including host government officials and non-governmental organizations. The COVID–19 pandemic has been a challenge for U.S. diplomats to travel and fully engage face-to-face with host country nationals, but as conditions improve, I understand that U.S. diplomats have resumed in-person engagements and programs again, as appropriate.

Question. How do you intend to improve the ability of U.S. diplomats to better access all local populations?

Answer. If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with the Embassy public diplomacy section to use both social and traditional media to reach people across Latvia. Diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility are also an important part of public diplomacy outreach to ensure efforts reflect the diversity of U.S. society and societies abroad and encourage the involvement of people from traditionally underrepresented audiences. If confirmed, I will work with the Embassy team to leverage engagements with the media, cultural and educational exchange organizations, and individual interactions to expand the people-to-people bonds that are the foundation of our strong bilateral relationship.

Question. Public diplomacy is an important aspect of U.S. foreign policy efforts. What is the public diplomacy environment like in Latvia?

Answer. The U.S. has strong academic, cultural, and professional exchanges with the people of Latvia. If confirmed, I will work with my Embassy team to continue leveraging the media, cultural and educational exchange organizations, and individuals to expand the people-to-people bonds that are the foundation of our strong bilateral relationship.

Question. What public diplomacy challenges do U.S. diplomats face there?

Answer. While the Kremlin's and the PRC's malign influence and disinformation have not gained a foothold in Latvia in recent years, both remain a persistent threat that requires vigilance.

If confirmed, I will work with the Embassy team to continue its engagement with the Latvian Government to assess and address the threats of malign influence and disinformation posed by the Kremlin and the PRC. I will also encourage my team to continue its use of public diplomacy tools to expand digital and media literacy programs and to empower local opinion leaders who can raise awareness of these threats. Finally, I will ensure that we quickly deploy additional resources, in coordination with the Government of Latvia, should these threats become a new reality.

Question. How do you balance the importance of Main State versus the in-country Mission when it comes to tailoring public diplomacy messages for foreign audiences?

Answer. We are all one team working to advance the bilateral relationship and the interests of the United States and the American people and if confirmed, I look forward to working with the offices at U.S. Department of State to advance U.S. foreign policy goals in Latvia. If confirmed, I will leverage public diplomacy resources to enhance security cooperation, strengthen collaboration on climate issues, expand economic and trade relations, and deepen people-to-people ties that highlight our shared values. I will also work to counter malign influence, propaganda, and disinformation with the wide range of public diplomacy tools at our disposal. Working with the public diplomacy team, we will tailor our messaging in a way that is most appropriate for Latvian audiences.

Question. "Anomalous health incidents," commonly referred to as "'Havana Syndrome," have been debilitating and sidelining U.S. diplomats around the world for years. They have caused serious, negative consequences for U.S. diplomacy, yet many believe that the Department is not doing enough to care for, protect, and communicate to its personnel.

- If confirmed, do you commit to taking this threat seriously?

Answer. Yes. I am deeply troubled by potential anomalous health incidents that might have affected U.S. Government personnel and their family members. Serving one's country overseas should not come at the cost of one's health. I agree that such

incidents may pose a threat to the wellbeing of U.S. personnel, and must be taken extremely seriously. If confirmed, the health, safety, and security of Embassy staff, their family members, and all those supporting the Mission will be my highest priority.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to talking as openly as you can to Mission Latvia personnel?

Answer. If confirmed, I am committed to regularly share new information on this issue consistent with ensuring the integrity of ongoing investigations.

Trafficking in Persons

Question. In the 2022 Trafficking in Persons Report, Latvia remained on Tier 2 for its increased efforts to prosecute more traffickers, identifying more victims, and approving a new national action plan. Yet, the Government did not investigate as many cases and fell behind in a few additional areas. How will you address these issues with the host government and civil society actors if you are confirmed as Ambassador?

Answer. Latvia has made key achievements in this past reporting period, which if confirmed, I look forward to building on. If confirmed, I would leverage the TIP Report as the primary guide for U.S. anti-trafficking policy and encourage the Latvian Government to implement the TIP Report's prioritized recommendations, including to investigate, prosecute, and convict traffickers under the trafficking statute, develop and implement a national referral mechanism to include guidance on identification, referral, and information exchange among stakeholders, and enhance training for investigating cases and collecting evidence against suspected traffickers.

Question. Do you commit to reporting accurate information as it pertains to the reality of the trafficking situation in Latvia?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to reporting accurate information as it pertains to the reality of the trafficking situation in Latvia.

International Religious Freedom

Question. In the 2021 International Religious Freedom report, Latvia was noted as having several antisemitic and anti-Islam incidents and that U.S. officials in country continued engagements with religious and government leaders to press on the importance of religious tolerance. What is your assessment of this particular issue and if confirmed, how will you work with the office of the Ambassador-at-Large for international religious freedom to bolster religious freedom in-country?

Answer. In this past year, the Latvian Government showed its clear commitment to strengthening religious freedom when it passed a law in February providing €40 million in restitution for Jewish communal and heirless properties seized during the Holocaust. This money will be used to support and strengthen the Latvian Jewish community, and provides a clear signal that Latvia stands against religious intolerance. Our Embassy in Riga engages regularly with religious minority groups, the Latvian Government, and the U.S. Ambassador-at-Large for international religious freedom, and, if confirmed, I will continue this engagement.

Human Rights

Question. In the 2021 Human Rights Report, Latvia was identified as having no significant human rights abuses but the U.S. Mission can still support the work of civil society actors in country or regionally to better overall respect for human rights. How will you direct your Embassy to work with civil society organizations to improve the human rights situation on the ground?

Answer. If confirmed, I would regularly engage with the Latvian Government to maintain its strong human rights record for all, through meetings and outreach with counterparts in the Government and throughout civil society. I would also ensure the Embassy regularly engages on this issue.

Refugees and Asylum Seekers

Question. Since Russia's invasion of Ukraine in early 2022, Latvia has taken in around 43,000 Ukrainian refugees, a number equal to nearly 2.3 percent of its population. Latvia has also been a destination for Russian citizens who are leaving their country to avoid the military draft or to escape persecution by their government for anti-war or anti-government views or actions.

- Do you believe that Ukrainian refugees in Latvia are being well-treated? Do you have any concerns that they will be subject to human trafficking or otherwise exploited?

Answer. Latvia's unflagging support for more than 43,000 refugees from Ukraine, is yet another example of its willingness to support Ukraine despite the economic cost. The Embassy engages regularly with the Government, and NGOs supporting the migrant community, and we have seen that refugees are being treated well, though resources in some cases are strained. The U.S. Department of State is developing ways for embassies to complement these activities with small grants to local organizations to respond to critical gaps, not covered by existing federal, state, and local government. If confirmed I commit to working with the Latvian Government, international organizations, and local partners to protect these refugees.

Question. If it becomes clear that Ukrainian refugees in Latvia are being exploited or poorly-treated, would you as ambassador commit to raising their condition with the Government of Latvia and acting to defend their human rights?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to regularly engaging with the Government of Latvia on the status of refugees from Ukraine, including raising their condition with the Government of Latvia and acting to defend their human rights if it becomes clear that refugees from Ukraine are being exploited or poorly treated.

Question. Do you believe that Russian asylum-seekers refugees in Latvia are being well-treated?

Answer. The Latvian Government has a long history of welcoming dissidents and exiles from Russia, including hosting the Russian-media outlet Meduza since 2014. Since the start of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Latvia has welcomed more than 400 journalists and their families from Russia. This record is why U.S. institutions such as Radio Free Europe have felt comfortable basing their Russian language operations in Riga.

Latvia has attempted to balance this effort with a policy of denying visas to those looking to escape sanctions or to engage in disruptive activities in Latvia or in the EU. Our Embassy in Riga has been in regular discussion with the Latvian authorities to ensure that the needs of legitimate asylum seekers are being taken into account during this process, and if confirmed I will continue to work with the Latvian authorities on this issue.

Question. News reports indicate that Russian asylum-seekers in Latvia and other Baltic nations are increasingly made to feel unwelcome by both the local populations and governments. If confirmed, do you commit to using the resources of the U.S. Embassy in Riga to track the treatment of Russian asylum-seekers in Latvia and to encouraging the Government of Latvia to provide them with the rights and treatment guaranteed them under European Union law?

Answer. Yes. If confirmed, I will use the resources of the U.S. Embassy in Riga to track the treatment of Russian Federation nationals who are asylum-seekers in Latvia and will encourage the Government of Latvia to provide them with the rights and treatment guaranteed to them under European Union law.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO CHRISTOPHER T. ROBINSON BY SENATOR MARCO RUBIO

Question. In May, Secretary Blinken said that the People's Republic of China is the "only country with both the intent to reshape the international order and, increasingly, the economic, diplomatic, military, and technological power to do it." The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) clearly holds all the reins of power in the People's Republic of China and has used this power to commit genocide in Xinjiang, flood our communities with fentanyl, and emit by far the largest quantity of greenhouse gases. As we speak, the Party is cracking down on unprecedented student protests across the country. With their absolute control of Chinese society and industry, the CCP could stop all of these destructive actions tomorrow if they so choose.

- Is the CCP a threat to the United States?

Answer. The President made it clear in his National Security Strategy that the People's Republic of China (PRC) harbors the intention and, increasingly, the capacity to reshape the international order in favor of one that tilts the global playing field to its benefit. As Secretary Blinken said on May 26, we will invest in America, align with our Allies, and compete with the PRC to defend our interests and build our vision for the future. If confirmed, I will strengthen our partnership with Latvia concerning the PRC.

Question. Does the CCP undertake any activities that are beneficial to U.S. interests?

Answer. Although we are strategic competitors, as the President laid out in his National Security Strategy, the United States does not seek conflict or a new Cold War. We and our allies and partners have an opportunity to shape the PRC's external environment in a way that influences their behavior even as we compete with them. The United States' approach towards the PRC focuses on competing with the PRC where our interests and values differ and cooperating with them when they align. If confirmed, I will continue working closely with Latvia to strengthen our shared values of democracy and support for the rules-based order.

Question. Do you believe there are any areas within which the CCP would constructively work with the United States in good faith?

Answer. Although we are strategic competitors, as the President laid out in his National Security Strategy, the United States does not seek conflict or a new Cold War. We and our allies and partners have an opportunity to shape the PRC's external environment in a way that influences their behavior even as we compete with them. The United States' approach towards the PRC focuses on competing with the PRC where our interests and values differ and cooperating with them when they align. If confirmed, I will continue working closely with Latvia to strengthen our shared values of democracy and support for the rules-based order.

Question. If confirmed, will you approve any joint activity with organizations or representatives from the People's Republic of China in Latvia?

Answer. As the United States National Security Strategy makes clear and as Secretary Blinken said in October, the People's Republic of China (PRC) is the greatest geopolitical challenge that we face because it is the only competitor with the intent and increasingly the capability to remake the international order. And Beijing's actions suggest PRC officials have the intention to do so. Latvia shares our skepticism of the PRC and has downgraded its cooperation and actively pushed back against PRC influence, including departing the regional mechanism formerly known as 17+1 (now 14+1 after Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania exited), protecting Latvian critical infrastructure from untrusted vendors, and putting in place CFIUS-like legislation to review foreign direct investment in Latvia. The United States' approach towards the PRC focuses on competing with the PRC where our interests and values differ and cooperating with them when they align. If confirmed, I will support the Administration's policy on the PRC.

Question. Since Vladimir Putin launched his invasion of Ukraine this past February, the United States has provided the largest amount of security and financial assistance to Ukraine. While this assistance, if properly overseen and monitored, is a cost-effective way to safeguard American interests in Europe, our European allies and partners must also step up to assist Ukraine in fending off Putin's assault on their doorstep. In contrast to other European states, Latvia has gone above and beyond in providing military assistance to Ukraine. In this year alone, Latvia has provided 32.1 percent of its total defense budget to Ukraine. To compare, total U.S. assistance to Ukraine equals just 3.3 percent of our defense budget.

- What can the United States do, in concert with other European allies, to ensure Latvia and other frontline states can continue to provide military assistance to Ukraine while also maintaining their own defensive readiness against a Russian attack on their own borders?

Answer. Latvia has been a steadfast defender—along with the United States and other European Allies and partners—of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. If confirmed, I will work to ensure U.S. and Latvian policies toward Russia remain closely coordinated.

Latvia faces continued security threats from Russia. To combat these threats our assistance focuses on bolstering NATO interoperability, deterrence, and defense, strengthening Latvian national defenses, and combating hybrid threats. Since 2017, the United States provided approximately $478 million in total security assistance to build Latvia's defensive capabilities and over $145 million in Foreign Military Financing this year. The resurgence of Russia's aggression has changed the priorities for these investments and resulted in Latvia's request to procure more capable military systems such as the High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS).

The State Department has prioritized regional Foreign Military Financing for the Baltics to develop defensive capabilities, such as electronic and hybrid warfare, border security, and maritime and air domain awareness. If confirmed, I will continue to work with the Department of Defense and our Baltic Allies to align security assistance with our interests in enhancing collective security and confronting Russia's aggression.

Question. Is there a role that Latvia and other Baltic states play in ensuring that assistance provided to Ukraine is properly used and not siphoned off by corruption?

Answer. The U.S. Plan to Counter Illicit Diversion of Certain Advanced Conventional Weapons in Eastern Europe is a comprehensive, whole-of-government approach to mitigate the risk of illicit diversion of advanced weapons systems transferred to Ukraine for its urgent defense needs. The Plan has three lines of effort:

- Bolster Accountability through safeguarding and accounting for arms and munitions in Ukraine and neighboring countries when they are transferred, stored, and deployed;
- Strengthen Borders by enhancing regional border management and security; and
- Build Capacity of security forces, law enforcement, and border control agencies in the region to deter, detect, and interdict illicit arms trafficking.

The Plan emphasizes the importance of cooperation with Allies and partners. The United States is coordinating closely with both NATO and the European Union, the latter of which is developing its own plan that will complement ours. As EU Member States, Latvia and its Baltic neighbors will be well positioned to support similar lines of effort and contribute to counter-diversion efforts. The United States can also work with Latvia to identify bilateral activities, as well as through NATO, to pursue these efforts.

Question. Since February, the CCP has worked feverishly to create the façade that it's somehow not complicit in Putin's invasion of Ukraine. They do this by issuing statements emphasizing their support for a peaceful resolution and respect for sovereignty. In reality, the CCP continues to purchase Russian energy and do business with sanctioned Russian companies. Earlier this year, Latvia and Estonia both withdrew from the "Cooperation between China and Central and Eastern European Countries Initiative," also known as the "16+1," which the CCP uses to promote its views within Europe. In August, I sent a letter to the President, urging the Administration to support countries that leave the 16+1 and face a CCP economic blockade as a result.

- What consequences has the CCP tried to impose on Latvia since it announced it was leaving the 16+1?

Answer. Latvia, in coordination with Estonia, left the PRC's initiative originally known as 17+1 (from 2019-21), then 16+1 (2021–22 after Lithuania departed), and now 14+1, having assessed it delivered little benefit. Latvia and the PRC have a limited economic relationship, with no observed fallout since the Latvia withdrawal. If confirmed, I will continue our close consultations with Latvia on this matter.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to working with Latvia to help convince other European countries to also withdraw from 16+1?

Answer. If confirmed, I look forward to working with Latvian officials and the Latvian business community on the challenges posed by the PRC, as well as working to increase U.S.-Latvian trade and economic ties. We must collaborate to promote shared economic growth and work together to ensure PRC investment meets global best practices for transparency and good governance, while warning our partners of the PRC's economic coercion and market distorting practices.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO CHRISTOPHER T. ROBINSON BY SENATOR TODD YOUNG

Question. You stated that, if confirmed, your "first priority would be to ensure the safety and security of U.S. citizens in the Republic of Latvia." Aside from Russian influence and aggression, what do you assess impacts U.S. citizen security and safety within Latvia?

Answer. Latvia is a safe country, but U.S. citizens in Latvia face a range of problems typical to visitors and residents of any country, including sickness, injury, and occasional petty crime. Beyond these issues, the threat of Russia's aggression and malign activities poses a unique threat and must be deterred.

Question. As Ambassador, what steps would you take to engage the U.S. citizen community to accomplish this?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with our consular team to ensure our U.S. citizens are registered with the Embassy and that they are aware of the resources

available to help the U.S. citizen community in Latvia. We will engage in regular outreach to the U.S. citizen community in Latvia to ensure we know what problems they face, and that they know we are there to help them.

Question. I was intrigued at your specific mention of China's economic aggression. If confirmed, what steps would you take to demonstrate to Beijing that such behavior will not be tolerated in Latvia?

Answer. The PRC's recent economic coercion of Lithuania, Latvia's neighbor, over the name of the local Taiwan representative office was a wake-up call for the entire EU. The U.S. Department of State has actively engaged the region to make sure that governments are aware of the risks of economic dependence on Beijing and ensure that countries can access alternative vendors for critical infrastructure and critical supply chain goods. Latvia takes this risk seriously and, if confirmed, I will work with the Latvian Government to strengthen economic ties and develop resilient, strong supply chains.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO GEORGE P. KENT BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Russia

Question. How will you engage with the Estonian Government and address their concerns about threats from Russia?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work closely with the Estonian Government to strengthen Estonia and NATO's ability to defend Estonian borders against Russia's aggression and counter cyber threats. Congress's generous support through Foreign Military Financing and Section 333 funds have been critical to U.S. Embassy Tallinn's work with the Estonian military to strengthen its defenses and tighten integration with NATO defense planning. The United States has been a member of the Estonia-based NATO Cooperative Cyber Defense Center of Excellence since 2011. I will also work with the United Kingdom and other partner countries on the NATO battlegroup in Estonia to ensure plans are moving forward to strengthen that battlegroup in line with the NATO Madrid Summit declaration and Strategic Concept.

Question. How will you engage with the significant minority population of ethnic Russians living in Estonia and ensure they are not disenfranchised within U.S.-Estonian diplomatic efforts and fall under the malign influence of the Kremlin?

Answer. If confirmed, I will regularly engage with the ethnic Russian population in Estonia through trips to Russian-speaking regions and support for programs that promote social inclusion so that these Russian speakers in Estonia know that their voices are being heard and that they are welcome in the Transatlantic community. I will also work with Estonia-based Russian-language media to help them increase their reach into ethnic Russian populations, providing independent messaging that can counter Kremlin-based media narratives.

Defense

Question. What are the most effective ways Estonia can further its defense cooperation with the U.S. and within NATO?

Answer. Estonia has done incredible work to strengthen its defense cooperation with the United States and NATO. Estonia has exceeded its Wales Pledge commitment to spend two percent of GDP on defense; it is on track to spend close to three percent of GDP in 2023. Estonia has worked closely with the United States and NATO to ensure that this spending effectively contributes to collective defense. If confirmed I will work with the Estonian Government to build on these efforts and strengthen the defense of the eastern flank.

Question. How will you respond to Estonia's requests for a stronger forward presence from the U.S. and NATO?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with the U.S. Department of Defense to ensure that we follow through with the commitments made in the NATO Madrid Summit declaration to provide heel-to-toe rotations of U.S. troops in the region. If confirmed, I will also work with the Estonian Government to ensure that it is fully prepared to host and work with any additional U.S. troops.

Support To Ukraine

Question. How will you work with the Government of Estonia to assist their efforts to host and provide support to Ukrainian refugees?

Answer. Estonia hosts more than 60,000 refugees from Ukraine. This represents about 4.6 percent of the population of Estonia. Refugees from Ukraine are entitled to register for Temporary Protection in Estonia, which provides access to work, housing, healthcare, and education. While support for hosting refugees from Ukraine among Estonian citizens remains high—at more than seventy percent—the costs of hosting them are significant. The U.S. Department of State is engaging through U.S. Embassy Tallinn with U.N. and other international organizations to coordinate U.S. humanitarian assistance to the refugees. At the same time, the U.S. Department of State is developing ways for embassies to complement these activities with small grants to local organizations to respond to critical gaps. If confirmed, I will ensure the Embassy continues to support efforts to provide support to refugees from Ukraine in Estonia.

Question. Estonia and the U.S. are developing the "Shield Wall" project to support cyber defense training and resilience in Ukraine. As Ambassador, how will you take part in this effort?

Answer. Estonia is a close bilateral partner with which we collaborate on a wide range of cyber issues, including cybersecurity, cyber defense, and cyber capacity building programming. The host of the NATO Cooperative Cyber Defense Center of Excellence (CCDCOE), Estonia also stands as a strong likeminded partner, advancing responsible state behavior in cyberspace across numerous multilateral fora and finding tools to deter state-sponsored malicious cyber activity. If confirmed, I look forward to strengthening our cooperation with the Estonian Government, CCDCOE, and the local IT industry on cyber issues.

Question. Estonia has given a significant amount of their military stocks to Ukraine. As Ambassador, how would you work with the Government of Estonia to assess their needs and help provide backfill for their military stocks?

Answer. Since 2016, the United States provided approximately $442 million in total security assistance to build Estonia's defensive capabilities, including over $140 million in Foreign Military Financing in Fiscal Year 2022, as well as Section 333 funds as part of the Baltic Security Initiative. The resurgence of Russia's aggression has changed the priorities for these investments and resulted in Estonia's request to procure more capable military systems such as the High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS), as announced in June.

The State Department has prioritized regional Foreign Military Financing for the Baltics to develop defensive capabilities, such as electronic and hybrid warfare, border security, and maritime and air domain awareness. It has also increased the Baltic states' interoperability with NATO armed forces and contributed to strengthening NATO's defense and deterrence posture in the region. If confirmed, I will continue to work with the U.S. Department of Defense, European Command, and our Baltic allies to align security assistance to build their capabilities with our interests in enhancing collective security and confronting Russia's aggression.

Economic Engagement and Energy

Question. How will you support economic engagement between Estonian and U.S. business sectors?

Answer. I will work closely with the Estonian Government, the U.S. and Estonian business communities, and the U.S. interagency to ensure a level playing field for U.S. companies and make sure that Estonian companies are aware of opportunities to partner with U.S. companies to strengthen supply chains, migrate to green energy options, including nuclear and renewables, and build needed infrastructure. I will work with the U.S. Department of Commerce to ensure that U.S. companies are aware of opportunities in Estonia and have everything they need to successfully compete for those opportunities.

Question. What are the perceived risks to western investment, and how can they be mitigated?

Answer. The Estonian Government has taken steps in recent years to protect its economy from the risks of corrosive capital and untrusted vendors. A committee of government experts and a parliamentary working group have both made recommendations for improving Estonia's regime to prevent and prosecute financial crimes in Estonia. The Parliament has approved a series of legal changes to strengthen Estonia's anti-money laundering regime. In 2021, the Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU) was re-established as an independent agency under the Ministry

of Finance and provided additional resources to enhance supervision. U.S. Embassy Tallinn has worked closely with the Estonian Government on these efforts, including providing a U.S. Treasury Advisor to the FIU., If confirmed I will continue sharing information and best practices to ensure that Estonia remains a safe place for U.S. investment.

Question. What role, if any, do you see the U.S. Development Finance Corporation playing in stimulating western investment in Estonia?

Answer. Estonia was grateful for the U.S. Development Financing Corporation's (DFC) announcement of $300 million in loans to support the Three Seas Initiative and looks forward to working with the DFC in coming years to bring more infrastructure investment to the region. Due to the European Energy Security and Diversification Act of 2019, the DFC can be particularly helpful in supporting the region's efforts to break free from its dependence on Russian energy and meet its clean energy targets.

Question. What sectors do you see as potential areas of growth for U.S.-Estonia business ties?

Answer. The United States' trade relationship with Estonia is driven in large part by innovative small- and medium-sized enterprises, a sector in which Estonian companies have been particularly successful, as well as the IT sector. The United States and Estonia work closely together to drive technological innovation. As leaders in the digital arena, Estonian businesses provide innovative solutions in a wide range of sectors: retail sales software, delivery robots, money transfer services, and telecommunications solutions to U.S. companies. They have also helped with supply chain issues, replacing untrusted vendors. If confirmed, I will work with the Government and the private sector to increase and strengthen our trade and economic ties.

Question. What can the U.S. do to help Estonia maintain a sufficient supply of energy as it decouples from Russia?

Answer. Estonia has committed to ending imports of Russian gas by 2023 and has secured rights to purchase LNG from a floating terminal based in Finland. Estonia is currently investing in alternate sources of energy, including renewables and LNG. Over the longer-term, the U.S. can continue to work with Estonia, Latvia, and other countries in the region to develop and deploy clean energy technologies that can take the place of Russian gas.

Question. How can the U.S. help Estonia's efforts to decouple its electrical grid from Russia and Belarus and integrate with its western neighbors?

Answer. The U.S. Department of State is providing technical assistance to the Estonia and its neighbors to help them through the process needed to ensure that Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania can safely decouple from the Russia-controlled BRELL electricity grid and join ENTSO-E, the European network, a move currently scheduled to take place by 2025. If confirmed, I will continue to work with Estonia to ensure that this process moves forward, and that Estonia with its two neighbors has everything it needs to decouple as soon as possible.

Question. How will you work with your State Department and interagency colleagues to coordinate U.S. economic engagement with Estonia across the Baltics and greater Eastern European region?

Answer. If confirmed, I would work with the Estonian Government, fellow U.S. Ambassadors, the U.S. Department of State, and the interagency to strong participation in regional economic forums such as the Three Seas Initiative and Partnership for Transatlantic Energy and Climate Cooperation. I will work with my colleagues within the U.S. Department of State and the interagency to ensure that the United States and our business community are aware of and fully engages with any opportunities to strengthen economic engagement and economic security.

State Department Management and Public Diplomacy

Question. Many U.S. Missions have been under enormous stress over the last few years, in large part due to COVID.

- What is your understanding of morale throughout Mission Tallinn?

Answer. Mission Tallinn has faced challenges posed by COVID–19, and I am thankful for the staff's resilience and continued service, as reflected in a positive Office of the Inspector General periodic review in early 2022. The current Chancery, in use for nearly 100 years, is cramped, and a more spacious replacement facility is currently in the design phase, years away from completion. If confirmed, the health and safety of the personnel and family members of Mission Tallinn will be my top priority, and I look forward to working with the talented team of U.S. Direct

Hires, locally employed staff, and their families, and ensuring that everyone on my team understands they are valued and has my support.

Question. How do you intend to improve morale at Mission Tallinn?

Answer. If confirmed, I will ensure everyone on my team is treated professionally, their rights are respected, they are safe and secure, and they have the resources necessary to perform their jobs. We are all one team working for the good of the U.S.-Estonian relationship and the interests of the United States and the American people. Local staff compensation and retention are related issues, and I will work with the Department of State on local staff compensation in a high inflation country.

Question. How do you intend to create a unified mission and vision at Mission Tallinn?

Answer. If confirmed, I look forward to ensuring open and continuous communication throughout the Mission. Since we are all one team working together to advance the U.S.-Estonian relationship and the interests of the American people, I will ensure this collaborative service focus is central to our work. Furthermore, I am committed to supporting a diverse and inclusive workforce at U.S. Embassy Tallinn. Diversity makes the Mission strong by bringing different perspectives and enhancing creativity. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the team to maximize innovation and effectiveness.

Question. Management is a key responsibility for Chiefs of Mission. How would you describe your management style?

Answer. In my 30 years in the Foreign Service, I have worked to model integrity, ensure accountability, built consensus among diverse stakeholders. I have consistently acted in the spirit that sharing information, rather than restricting it, empowers the entire team to perform better. I have demonstrated an ability to work with colleagues of all backgrounds, and if confirmed, I will regularly engage with members of my team and always seek to create a space for open dialogue and diversity of thought. If confirmed, I will work hard to foster an environment of respect as Embassy Tallinn carries out important work on behalf of the American people.

Question. Do you believe it is ever acceptable or constructive to berate subordinates, either in public or private?

Answer. No. It is never acceptable or constructive to berate subordinates, either in public or private.

Question. How do you envision your leadership relationship with your Deputy Chief of Mission?

Answer. If confirmed, I look forward to a close and productive relationship with the Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM). From my own experience as DCM in Kyiv, Ukraine, I know that it is critical to have full alignment between an ambassador and Deputy Chief of Mission, working smoothly as a team. I would work closely with the DCM to manage our Mission and advance U.S. priorities in Estonia, including protecting the safety and security of Americans, expanding our economic relationship, and addressing the security challenges faced by Estonia and the transatlantic community.

Question. If confirmed, what leadership responsibilities do you intend to entrust to your Deputy Chief of Mission?

Answer. If confirmed, I will entrust the Deputy Chief of Mission with responsibility for the day-to-day operations of the Mission, to serve as Chargé d'Affaires in my absence, and be another important voice in our public diplomacy outreach. If confirmed, I will consult closely with the Deputy Chief of Mission on every issue that I will address as Chief of Mission.

Question. In order to create and continue employee excellence at the Department, accurate and direct employee evaluation reports (EERs) for Foreign Service Officers are imperative, though often lacking.

- Do you believe that it is important to provide employees with accurate, constructive feedback on their performances in order to encourage improvement and reward those who most succeeded in their roles?

Answer. Yes, I believe it is important to provide employees with accurate, constructive feedback on their performance to encourage improvement and reward those who most succeed in their roles. If confirmed, I will continue with my career-long, open-door approach to be open to ideas and to share constructive and timely feedback to enhance and lift the performance of the entire team.

Question. If confirmed, would you support and encourage clear, accurate, and direct feedback to employees in order to improve performance and reward high achievers?

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, I would support and encourage clear, accurate, and direct feedback to employees to improve performance and reward high achievers.

Question. It is imperative that U.S. diplomats get outside of posts abroad to meet with local actors, including host government officials, non-government organizations, and fellow foreign diplomats stationed in Greece.

- In your opinion, do U.S. diplomats get outside of our Embassy walls enough to accomplish fully their missions?

Answer. I firmly believe that all U.S. diplomats, not just the Ambassador and public diplomacy section officers, should regularly engage with local citizens, including host government officials, students, businesses, and non-governmental organizations. We all have stories of America to share. The COVID–19 pandemic has been a challenge for U.S. diplomats to travel and fully engage face-to-face with host country nationals, but as conditions have improved, U.S. diplomats have resumed in-person engagements and programs, as appropriate.

Question. How do you intend to improve the ability of U.S. diplomats to better access all local populations?

Answer. If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with the Embassy public diplomacy section to use both social and traditional media to reach people across Estonia, as well as our America Spaces in four Estonian cities, and to expand the number of day trips for outreach in the geographically compact country. Diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility are also an important part of public diplomacy outreach to ensure efforts reflect the diversity of U.S. society and societies abroad and encourage the involvement of people from traditionally underrepresented audiences. If confirmed, I will work with the Embassy team to leverage engagements with the media, cultural and educational exchange organizations, and individual interactions to expand the people-to-people bonds that are the foundation of our strong bilateral relationship.

Question. Public diplomacy is an important aspect of U.S. foreign policy efforts. What is the public diplomacy environment like in Estonia?

Answer. We have strong public diplomacy engagement with the people of Estonia, through academic, cultural, and professional exchanges and programs. The level of English usage is strong, particularly in the student and business populations, and Estonians are receptive to Americans and our outreach. If confirmed, I will work with my Embassy team to continue our strong partnerships with the media, cultural, educational, and business organizations, and individuals to expand the people-to-people bonds that are the foundation of our strong bilateral relationship.

Question. What public diplomacy challenges do U.S. diplomats face there?

Answer. While Kremlin and PRC malign influence and disinformation have not gained a foothold in Estonia in recent years, both remain persistent threats that requires vigilance.

If confirmed, I will work with the Embassy team to continue engagement with the Estonian Government and civil society to assess and address the threats of malign influence and disinformation posed by the Kremlin and the PRC. I will also encourage my team to continue its use of public diplomacy tools to expand digital and media literacy programs and to empower local opinion leaders who can raise awareness of these threats. Finally, I will ensure that we quickly deploy additional resources, in coordination with the Government of Estonia, should these threats become a new reality.

Question. How do you balance the importance of Main State versus the in-country Mission when it comes to tailoring public diplomacy messages for foreign audiences?

Answer. We are all one team working to advance the bilateral relationship and the interests of the United States and the American people. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the offices at U.S. Department of State in Washington to advance U.S. foreign policy goals in Estonia. If confirmed, I will leverage public diplomacy resources to enhance security cooperation, strengthen collaboration on climate issues, expand economic and trade relations, and deepen people-to-people ties that highlight our shared values. I will also work to counter malign influence, and disinformation with the wide range of public diplomacy tools at our disposal. Working with the public diplomacy team, we will tailor our messaging in a way that is most appropriate for Estonian audiences.

Question. "Anomalous health incidents," commonly referred to as "Havana Syndrome," have been debilitating and sidelining U.S. diplomats around the world for years. They have caused serious, negative consequences for U.S. diplomacy, yet many believe that the Department is not doing enough to care for, protect, and communicate to its personnel.

• If confirmed, do you commit to taking this threat seriously?

Answer. Yes. I am deeply troubled by potential anomalous health incidents that might have affected U.S. Government personnel and their family members, and have received both unclassified and classified briefings. Serving one's country overseas should not come at the cost of one's health. I agree that such incidents may pose a threat to the wellbeing of U.S. personnel and must be taken extremely seriously. If confirmed, the health, safety, and security of Embassy staff, their family members, and all those supporting the Mission will be my highest priority, and I am committed to good communication to all stakeholders in such situations.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to talking as openly as you can to Mission Estonia personnel?

Answer. Yes. If confirmed, I am committed to regularly share new information on this issue consistent with ensuring the integrity of ongoing investigations.

Trafficking in Persons

Question. In the 2022 Trafficking in Persons Report, Estonia remained on Tier 1 for its sustained efforts to combat human trafficking but fell behind in a few key areas, including less prosecutions and convictions of suspected traffickers. How will you work with the host government and civil society actors to address these issues if you are confirmed as Ambassador?

Answer. Estonia has made key progress during this past reporting period which, if confirmed, I look forward to building on. As noted in this year's TIP Report, the Estonian Government ordered convicted traffickers to pay restitution and approved a four-year violence prevention agreement, which included several anti-trafficking activities. Additionally, the Government participated in a European study aimed at exploring the national practices of detecting, identifying, and protecting potential foreign trafficking victims through national policy and legislative developments. If confirmed, I would leverage the TIP Report as the primary guide for U.S. anti-trafficking policy and encourage the Estonian Government to implement the TIP Report's prioritized recommendations, including to investigate, prosecute, and convict traffickers under the anti-trafficking provision and develop and implement a reliable comprehensive statistical system for collecting and collating data.

Question. Do you commit to reporting accurate information as it pertains to the reality of the trafficking situation in Estonia?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to reporting accurate information as it pertains to the reality of the trafficking situation in Estonia.

International Religious Freedom

Question. In the 2021 International Religious Freedom report, Estonia was listed as protecting religious freedom, but antisemitic acts in society were common. What is your assessment of this particular issue and if confirmed, how will you work with the office of the Ambassador-at-Large for international religious freedom to bolster religious freedom in-country?

Answer. The U.S. Department of State is monitoring the rise of antisemitism across Europe. In April 2021, the Estonian Government approved a plan to combat antisemitism designed by representatives of the Ministries of the Interior, Culture, Foreign Affairs, Education and Research, and Justice, the Police and Border Guard Board, the Estonian Jewish Community, and the Estonian Jewish Congregation. If confirmed, I will regularly meet with the Jewish community to discuss religious tolerance and the state of religious freedom in Estonia. I will also work with the U.S. Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom, the Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Antisemitism, the Estonian Government, and Estonian civil society to raise the importance of combating antisemitism, promoting religious tolerance, and promoting Holocaust education in meetings with government officials.

Human Rights

Question. In the 2021 Human Rights Report, Estonia was listed as having no reports of significant human rights abuses, but the U.S. Mission can still support civil society actors in country to bolster human rights. How will you direct your Embassy

to work with civil society organizations to improve the human rights situation on the ground?

Answer. If confirmed, I would regularly engage with the Estonian Government to maintain its strong human rights record for all, through meetings and outreach with counterparts in the Government and throughout civil society. I would also ensure the Embassy regularly engages on this issue.

Refugees and Asylum Seekers

Question. Since Russia's invasion of Ukraine in early 2022, Estonia has taken in 62,000 Ukrainian refugees, a number equal to nearly 5 percent of its population. Estonia has also been a destination for Russian citizens who are leaving their country to avoid the military draft or to escape persecution by their government for anti-war or anti-government views or actions.

- Do you believe that Ukrainian refugees in Estonia are being well-treated? Do you have any concerns that they will be subject to human trafficking or otherwise exploited?

Answer. Estonia hosts more than 60,000 refugees from Ukraine. More than seventy percent of all Estonian citizens support hosting refugees. The Estonian Government has undertaken generous efforts to ensure the safety and security of refugees from Ukraine, including registering nearly 39,000 for temporary protection benefits. If confirmed, I will continue to work closely with the Estonian Government, international organizations, and local partners to protect refugees.

Question. If it becomes clear that Ukrainian refugees in Estonia are being exploited or poorly-treated, would you as Ambassador commit to raising their condition with the Government of Estonia and acting to defend their human rights?

Answer. If confirmed, I would regularly engage with the Estonian Government to maintain its strong human rights record, through meetings and outreach with counterparts in the Government and throughout civil society.

Question. Do you believe that Russian asylum-seekers refugees in Estonia are being well-treated?

Answer. Estonia is already home to more than 300,000 native Russian speakers, a category that includes ethnic Russians and other nationalities from the former Soviet Union. Estonia has continued to provide humanitarian exceptions to travel restrictions imposed on Russian citizens following Russia's further invasion of Ukraine. Our Embassy in Tallinn has been in regular discussion with the Estonian authorities to ensure that the needs of legitimate asylum seekers are being taken into account during this process, and if confirmed I will continue to work with the Estonian authorities on this issue.

Question. News reports indicate that Russian asylum-seekers in Estonia and other Baltic nations are increasingly made to feel unwelcome by both the local populations and governments. If confirmed, do you commit to using the resources of the U.S. Embassy in Tallinn to track the treatment of Russian asylum-seekers in Estonia and to encouraging the Government of Estonia to provide them with the rights and treatment guaranteed them under European Union law?

Answer. Yes. If confirmed, I will use the resources of the U.S. Embassy in Tallinn to monitor the treatment of Russian Federation nationals who are asylum-seekers in Estonia and to encourage the Government of Estonia to provide them with the rights and treatment guaranteed them under European Union law.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO GEORGE P. KENT BY SENATOR MARCO RUBIO

Question. In May, Secretary Blinken said that the People's Republic of China is the "only country with both the intent to reshape the international order and, increasingly, the economic, diplomatic, military, and technological power to do it." The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) clearly holds all the reins of power in the People's Republic of China and has used this power to commit genocide in Xinjiang, flood our communities with fentanyl, and emit by far the largest quantity of greenhouse gases. As we speak, the Party is cracking down on unprecedented student protests across the country. With their absolute control of Chinese society and industry, the CCP could stop all of these destructive actions tomorrow if they so choose.

- Is the CCP a threat to the United States?

Answer. The President made it clear in his National Security Strategy that the People's Republic of China (PRC) harbors the intention and, increasingly, the capacity to reshape the international order in favor of one that tilts the global playing field to its benefit. As Secretary Blinken said on May 26, we will invest in America, align with our Allies, and compete with the PRC to defend our interests and build our vision for the future. If confirmed, I will strengthen our partnership with Estonia, including working with Estonia to implement investment screening mechanisms to protect ports and other critical infrastructure.

Question. Does the CCP undertake any activities that are beneficial to U.S. interests?

Answer. Although we are strategic competitors, as the President laid out in his National Security Strategy, the United States does not seek conflict or a new Cold War. We and our allies and partners have an opportunity to shape the PRC's external environment in a way that influences their behavior even as we compete with them. The United States' approach towards the PRC focuses on competing with the PRC where our interests and values differ and cooperating with them when they align. If confirmed, I will continue working closely with Estonia to strengthen our shared values of democracy and support for the rules-based order.

Question. Do you believe there are any areas within which the CCP would constructively work with the United States in good faith?

Answer. Although we are strategic competitors, as the President laid out in his National Security Strategy, the United States does not seek conflict or a new Cold War. We and our allies and partners have an opportunity to shape the PRC's external environment in a way that influences their behavior even as we compete with them. The United States' approach towards the PRC focuses on competing with the PRC where our interests and values differ and cooperating with them when they align. If confirmed, I will continue working closely with Estonia to strengthen our shared values of democracy and support for the rules-based order.

Question. If confirmed, will you approve any joint activity with organizations or representatives from the People's Republic of China in Estonia?

Answer. As the United States National Security Strategy makes clear and as Secretary Blinken said in October, the People's Republic of China (PRC) is the greatest geopolitical challenge that we face because it is the only competitor with the intent and increasingly the capability to remake the international order. And Beijing's actions suggest PRC officials have the intention to do so. Estonia shares our skepticism of the PRC and has downgraded its cooperation and actively pushed back against PRC influence, including departing the regional mechanism formerly known as 17+1 (now 14+1 after Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania exited), passing legislation to protect Estonian supply chains from untrusted vendors, and forwarding CFIUS-like legislation to review foreign direct investment in Estonia. The United States' approach towards the PRC focuses on competing with the PRC where our interests and values differ and cooperating with them when they align. If confirmed, I will support the Administration's policy on the PRC.

Question. Since Vladimir Putin launched his invasion of Ukraine this past February, the United States has provided the largest amount of security and financial assistance to Ukraine. While this assistance, if properly overseen and monitored, is a cost-effective way to safeguard American interests in Europe, our European allies and partners must also step up to assist Ukraine in fending off Putin's assault on their doorstep. In contrast to other European states, Estonia has gone above and beyond in providing military assistance to Ukraine. In this year alone, Estonia has provided 37.5 percent of its total defense budget to Ukraine. To compare, total U.S. assistance to Ukraine is equal to just 3.3 percent of our defense budget.

- What can the United States do, in concert with other European allies, to ensure Estonia and other frontline states can continue to provide military assistance to Ukraine while also maintaining their own defensive readiness against a Russian attack on their own borders?

Answer. Estonia has been a steadfast defender—along with the United States and other European Allies and partners—of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. If confirmed, I will work to ensure U.S. and Estonian policies toward Russia remain closely coordinated.

Estonia faces continued security threats from Russia. To combat these threats our assistance focuses on bolstering NATO interoperability, deterrence, and defense, strengthening Estonian national defenses, and combating hybrid threats. Since 2016, the United States provided approximately $442 million in total security assistance to build Estonia's defensive capabilities and over $140 million in Foreign Mili-

tary Financing this year. The resurgence of Russia's aggression has changed the priorities for these investments and resulted in Estonia's request to procure more capable military systems such as the High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS), as announced in June.

The State Department has prioritized regional Foreign Military Financing for the Baltics to develop defensive capabilities, such as electronic and hybrid warfare, border security, and maritime and air domain awareness. If confirmed, I will continue to work with the Department of Defense and our Baltic Allies to align security assistance with our interests in enhancing collective security and confronting Russia's aggression.

Question. Is there a role that Estonia and other Baltic states can play in ensuring that assistance provided to Ukraine is properly used and not siphoned off by corruption?

Answer. The U.S. Plan to Counter Illicit Diversion of Certain Advanced Conventional Weapons in Eastern Europe is a comprehensive, whole-of-government approach to mitigate the risk of illicit diversion of advanced weapons systems transferred to Ukraine for its urgent defense needs. The Plan has three lines of effort:

- Bolster Accountability through safeguarding and accounting for arms and munitions in Ukraine and neighboring countries when they are transferred, stored, and deployed;
- Strengthen Borders by enhancing regional border management and security; and
- Build Capacity of security forces, law enforcement, and border control agencies in the region to deter, detect, and interdict illicit arms trafficking.

The Plan emphasizes the importance of cooperation with Allies and partners. The United States is coordinating closely with both NATO and the European Union, the latter of which is developing its own plan that will complement ours. As EU Member States, Estonia and its Baltic neighbors will be well positioned to support similar lines of effort and contribute to counter-diversion efforts. The United States can also work with Estonia to identify bilateral activities, as well as through NATO, to pursue these efforts.

Question. Since February, the Chinese Communist Party has worked feverishly to create the façade that it's somehow not complicit in Putin's invasion of Ukraine. They do this by issuing statements emphasizing their support for a peaceful resolution and respect for sovereignty. In reality, the CCP continues to purchase Russian energy and do business with sanctioned Russian companies. Earlier this year, Latvia and Estonia both withdrew from the "Cooperation between China and Central and Eastern European Countries Initiative," also known as the "16+1," which the CCP uses to promote its views within Europe. In August, I sent a letter to the President, urging the Administration to support countries that leave the 16+1 and face a CCP economic blockade as a result.

- What consequences has the CCP tried to impose on Estonia since it announced it was leaving the 16+1?

Answer. Estonia, in coordination with Latvia, left the PRC's initiative originally known as 17+1 (from 2019-21), then 16+1 (2021–22 after Lithuania departed), and now 14+1, having assessed it delivered little benefit. Estonia and the PRC have a limited economic relationship, with no observed fallout since the Estonia withdrawal. If confirmed, I will continue our close consultations with Estonia on this matter.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to working with Estonia to help convince other European countries to also withdraw from 16+1?

Answer. If confirmed, I look forward to working with Estonian officials and the Estonian business community on the challenges posed by the PRC, as well as working to increase U.S.-Estonia trade and economic ties. We must collaborate to promote shared economic growth and work together to ensure PRC investment meets global best practices for transparency and good governance, while warning our partners of the PRC's economic coercion and market distorting practices.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO GEORGE P. KENT BY SENATOR TODD YOUNG

Question. Without Russian language media outlets to amplify Moscow's propaganda, how do you assess Putin is attempting to threaten, intimidate, and manipulate ethnic Russians in Estonia?

Answer. While the Kremlin's malign influence and disinformation has not gained a foothold in Estonia in recent years, it remains a persistent threat that requires vigilance. Estonian media platforms, both government-owned and privately-held, do produce Russian language news for TV and online to provide objective coverage.

If confirmed, I will work with the Embassy team to continue its engagement with the Estonian Government to assess and address the threats of malign influence and disinformation posed by the Kremlin. I will also encourage my team to continue its use of public diplomacy tools to expand digital and media literacy programs and to empower local opinion leaders who can raise awareness of these threats. Finally, I will ensure that we work in coordination with the Government of Estonia, should these threats become a new reality.

Question. In your view, is the United States effectively countering Moscow's propaganda? And how would you support this work, if confirmed?

Answer. The United States is using the full range of diplomatic, public diplomacy, and foreign assistance tools to effectively counter the Kremlin's disinformation in Estonia, as well as across Europe. Our work to declassify and expose Russia's plans for a wider invasion of Ukraine last February is a clear example of how we have effectively limited Russia's ability to manipulate the information space. We continue to publicly expose the Kremlin's disinformation and propaganda ecosystem through our public webpage state.gov/disarming-disinformation

If confirmed, I would continue the effective cooperation between the U.S. and Estonian Governments and Estonian media and civil society on all fronts, including information-sharing, public diplomacy, and further increasing the Estonian public's resiliency against Russia's disinformation through media literacy programs and support for Estonia-based Russian-language media.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO HON. KENNETH MERTEN BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

War in Ukraine

Question. How will you work with the Government of Bulgaria to assist their efforts to host and provide support to Ukrainian refugees?

Answer. Since Russia's unprovoked full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Bulgarians have generously opened their hearts and homes to refugees from Ukraine. According to Bulgarian Government figures, as of early November, over 900,000 refugees from Ukraine have entered Bulgaria since the start of the war. Over 55,000 Ukrainian citizens remain in Bulgaria, with 87 percent of them women and children. The United States, through the Bureau for Population, Refugees and Migration, has provided humanitarian assistance funding to UNHCR, IOM, UNICEF, and the WHO for their support to Ukrainian refugees in Bulgaria. If confirmed as Ambassador, I will continue to prioritize these and other avenues of support and ensure that U.S. assistance is used resourcefully and effectively.

Question. As Ambassador, how would you work with the Government of Bulgaria to assess their needs and help provide backfill for military stocks that have been donated Ukraine?

Answer. Bulgaria was quick to condemn Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, supported sanctions against Russia, and provided various forms of humanitarian aid to Ukraine and refugees from Ukraine. On November 3, Bulgaria's parliament passed a resolution to provide lethal military assistance to Ukraine, reversing Bulgaria's earlier position which limited the Government to providing non-lethal military assistance only. Bulgaria can now expand the scope of its assistance beyond humanitarian aid and repair of Ukrainian heavy military equipment. If confirmed, I will work closely with our Bulgarian partners to identify Bulgaria's defense requirements, Bulgarian military assets that could bolster Ukraine's defense against Russia's unprovoked war, and the forms of support that the United States and our allies can provide to Bulgaria to facilitate such support of Ukraine.

Black Sea

Question. The war on Ukraine has also given increased attention to the Black Sea. Bulgaria, along with Romania and Turkey, are Black Sea littoral states who are also members of NATO. The other three littoral states, Ukraine, Russia, and Georgia, are not NATO members.

- Do you believe that the U.S. has placed enough importance on the Black Sea region?

Answer. The Black Sea region will continue to be an area of great geostrategic importance, and there is no question that the biggest threat to the region is Russia's continued aggression. While more work remains to be done, the United States and NATO have expanded our presence in littoral countries before and since Russia's unprovoked full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Earlier this year, NATO established a multinational battlegroup to which the United States contributes a Stryker armored company. The U.S. Department of State spearheaded the Black Sea Maritime Domain Awareness program in 2019, providing Foreign Military Financing allocation across Bulgaria, Georgia, Romania, and Ukraine to bolster regional security and cooperation. The U.S. Department of Defense has built upon this program, and it remains a key security cooperation line of effort. If confirmed, I am committed to working with Congress, the interagency, and our Allies and partners within the Black Sea region as we continue to address the region's needs.

Question. What are the most effective ways Bulgaria can further its defense cooperation with the U.S. and within NATO?

Answer. Since joining NATO in 2004, Bulgaria has proven itself an enthusiastic Ally proactively contributing to NATO operations. To date, 21,000 Bulgarian troops have participated in various NATO missions. Earlier this year, Bulgaria agreed to host one of four new multinational NATO battlegroups, in which U.S. forces play a key role, to bolster NATO's deterrence and defense posture along its eastern flank after Putin's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Additionally, Bulgaria hosts, staffs, and funds a NATO Force Integration Unit and the NATO Crisis Management and Disaster Response Center of Excellence. Bulgaria understands burden sharing and is willing to do more as its capabilities and economy develop. The United States and Bulgaria have a strong history of security cooperation and training, especially through named exercises with US EUCOM, NATO, and the 30-year Tennessee State Partnership Program (SPP). The United States Army also has a rotational infantry battalion conducting training at the Novo Selo Training Area. If confirmed, I will work with U.S. interagency partners and Bulgaria to build upon this progress, bolstering NATO interoperability through joint training, regional infrastructure development, and foreign military sales to trusted Allies.

Question. How will you respond to Bulgaria's requests for a stronger forward presence from the U.S. and NATO?

Answer. Through a 2006 Defense Cooperation Agreement, the Bulgarian Government granted the United States access to several military facilities. Since 2006, the facilities have been used for hundreds of military-to-military engagements of various sizes. Earlier this year, Bulgaria agreed to host one of four new multinational NATO battlegroups, in which U.S. forces play a key role, to bolster NATO's deterrence and defense posture along its eastern flank after Putin's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. If confirmed, I will partner with the U.S. Department of Defense to ensure that we honor our commitments made in the 2022 Madrid NATO Summit declaration to provide consistent rotations of U.S. troops in the region.

Economic Engagement and Energy

Question. How will you support economic engagement between Bulgaria and U.S. business sectors?

Answer. If confirmed, my top priority in the economic sphere is to ensure a fair and transparent playing field for U.S. businesses. Increased transparency, predictability, and stability in the investment climate are key. I will also, if confirmed, promote U.S. exports and help U.S. businesses identify and take advantage of economic opportunities in areas such as agriculture, education, energy, defense, technology, and water, among others. This includes encouraging more U.S. trade delegation visits to Bulgaria, and vice versa.

Question. What are the perceived risks to western investment, and how can they be mitigated?

Answer. Greater transparency and improved corporate governance would benefit not only U.S. firms that consider investing in Bulgaria, but also the Bulgarian economy as a whole. Increased predictability, stability, and rule of law enforcement in

the investment climate are key. Bulgaria can enhance its appeal to U.S. businesses by improving in these domains.

Question. What sectors do you see as potential areas of growth for U.S.-Bulgarian business ties?

Answer. Russia's weaponization of energy supplies has motivated several European states to seek out more reliable suppliers, and the United States has an important role to play here. If confirmed, I will prioritize supporting partnerships with U.S. firms that bolster Bulgaria's energy security and its adoption of low-carbon energy sources and the technologies that facilitate this transition. Bulgaria's market presents broader opportunities for partnerships with U.S. firms in areas as diverse as agriculture, education, healthcare, defense, and technology, among others.

Question. What role, if any, do you see the U.S. Development Finance Corporation playing in stimulating western investment in Bulgaria?

Answer. Bulgaria enthusiastically welcomed the U.S. Development Financing Corporation's (DFC) announcement of $300 million in financing to support the Three Seas Initiative. As a Black Sea littoral state, Bulgaria will continue to seek opportunities to partner with the DFC in the coming years to bring more infrastructure investment to the region. Investments that promote regional energy and commercial integration will benefit Bulgaria and broader regional prosperity.

Question. What can the U.S. do to help Bulgaria maintain sufficient energy supplies as it faces cuts from Russia?

Answer. Bulgaria has taken positive steps toward energy diversification, particularly since Russia cut off natural gas supplies in April after the Bulgarian Government refused to pay Gazprom in rubles. The completion of the Interconnector Greece-Bulgaria, which facilitates natural gas imports from Azerbaijan, was a major achievement in this regard. More remains to be done, from securing further liquified natural gas supplies to procuring nuclear fuel that does not rely upon Russian inputs. If confirmed, I am committed to supporting Bulgaria's efforts to strengthen energy security, including with the help of U.S. companies' technology and know-how.

Question. How will you work with your State Department and interagency colleagues to coordinate U.S. economic engagement with Bulgaria across the Balkans and greater Eastern European region?

Answer. If confirmed, I will advocate for continuously deepening regional economic integration between Bulgaria and the Eastern European region. Improving energy supply interconnectivity, as well as commercial and logistical linkages, will require close coordination with U.S. interagency partners such as the U.S. Department of Commerce and the U.S. Department of Energy, while also leveraging the expertise of the U.S. Development Finance Corporation and U.S. Export-Import Bank. Successful economic engagement across the region will also hinge on effective partnership with Bulgaria and the EU. The United States has strongly supported North Macedonia's and Albania's integration into the EU and believes the future of the Western Balkans is squarely within the EU. The EU accession process promotes economic growth through market integration and heightens prosperity throughout the region.

State Department Management and Public Diplomacy

Question. Many U.S. Missions have been under enormous stress over the last few years, in large part due to COVID.µ

- What is your understanding of morale throughout Mission Sofia?

Answer. The staff of the U.S. Embassy in Sofia demonstrated resilience, professionalism, and a spirit of service throughout what I hope will prove to have been the worst of the COVID–19 pandemic, and I am grateful for their unwavering service. If confirmed, ensuring the safety and well-being of the Embassy Sofia team and their families will be among my most important and sacred duties, and I will be firmly committed to fostering an environment where colleagues feel valued and their contributions to our national security and prosperity are recognized.

Question. How do you intend to improve morale at Mission Sofia?

Answer. I have had the honor of representing the United States overseas for over twenty years of my thirty-five years in the Foreign Service, serving as Chief of Mission in two very different countries for six of those years. While holding these positions of leadership, I have committed to bringing integrity, honesty, and energy to my engagements with Embassy staff. If confirmed, I will continue to apply this philosophy while holding regular consultations with colleagues at all levels to seek feedback on Mission morale. I understand that Russia's unprovoked February inva-

sion of Ukraine has elevated the pace and volume of work at U.S. Embassy Sofia, and I hold the greatest respect for the dedication demonstrated by the team there.

Question. How do you intend to create a unified mission and vision at Mission Sofia?

Answer. If confirmed, I am committed to proactively engaging with all U.S. Embassy Sofia colleagues to ensure we hold a shared understanding of our Mission's strategic priorities. It will be my responsibility to guarantee that all in the Mission understand their role in advancing these priorities and receive the support they need to consistently deliver on the responsibilities before them. In my experience, colleagues are most engaged when they grasp the broader impact of their work and share responsibility for the Mission's success. If confirmed, it will be my intent to actively foster such an environment through open, honest communication with U.S. direct hires, their families, and locally employed staff.

Question. Management is a key responsibility for Chiefs of Mission. How would you describe your management style?

Answer. As a Chief of Mission, I aim to foster a collaborative environment. If confirmed, I will do my utmost to encourage all members of the U.S. Embassy team to take ownership of the challenges we confront and think creatively in developing sustainable solutions. I am also an advocate for open communication and recognizing the contributions of individuals. This includes ensuring that colleagues have opportunities to develop skills to advance their careers.

Question. Do you believe it is ever acceptable or constructive to berate subordinates, either in public or private?

Answer. Absolutely not. It is never appropriate to berate subordinates, either in public or private. Such behavior undermines morale, reduces productivity, and is never acceptable from any manager.

Question. How do you envision your leadership relationship with your Deputy Chief of Mission?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work closely with the Deputy Chief of Mission to ensure the effective management of U.S. Embassy Sofia. I will develop a relationship of trust and honest communication. I will mentor and provide the appropriate tools to the deputy to serve as the Mission's chief operating officer and ensure they can step in for me if I am not available. If confirmed, I will work closely with my Deputy Chief of Mission to foster their success.

Question. If confirmed, what leadership responsibilities do you intend to entrust to your Deputy Chief of Mission?

Answer. I see the role of the Deputy Chief of Mission as a chief operating officer who complements the relative strengths of an ambassador. The exact division of labor would be determined based on the interests and skills of the Deputy Chief of Mission and the needs of the Mission.

Question. In order to create and continue employee excellence at the Department, accurate and direct employee evaluation reports (EERs) for Foreign Service Officers are imperative, though often lacking.

- Do you believe that it is important to provide employees with accurate, constructive feedback on their performances in order to encourage improvement and reward those who most succeeded in their roles?

Answer. Having previously served as the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Bureau of Global Talent Management, I believe it is important to provide employees with accurate, timely, and constructive feedback. If confirmed, I will ensure all U.S. direct hires and locally employed staff fully appreciate the importance of fair, transparent, and objective measures of employee performance and are appropriately acknowledged for their successes.

Question. If confirmed, would you support and encourage clear, accurate, and direct feedback to employees in order to improve performance and reward high achievers?

Answer. Yes. Clear, accurate, and direct communication is critical to maintaining a high functioning and trusting work environment.

Question. It is imperative that U.S. diplomats get outside of posts abroad to meet with local actors, including host government officials, non-government organizations, and fellow foreign diplomats stationed in Greece [Bulgaria].

- In your opinion, do U.S. diplomats get outside of our Embassy walls enough to accomplish fully their missions?

Answer. As a leader and a diplomat, I wholeheartedly believe that we must engage with as many local actors and organizations as possible to advance U.S. foreign policy and national security objectives. We also have the responsibility to balance these needs with an accurate assessment of risks. If confirmed, I pledge to work closely with the Regional Security Office and my management team to keep our employees safe while giving them maximum flexibility to travel the country and meet people. I intend to interact with a wide array of Bulgarians around the country and will encourage my team to follow by example.

Question. How do you intend to improve the ability of U.S. diplomats to better access all local populations?

Answer. If confirmed, I will encourage all employees at Mission Sofia to get outside the Mission walls, meet with the local population, and travel widely throughout the country to learn as much as possible about local issues. We will balance all security considerations appropriately. My understanding is that the team in Sofia regularly travels throughout the country, and I intend to continue to support for these efforts.

Question. Public diplomacy is an important aspect of U.S. foreign policy efforts. What is the public diplomacy environment like in Bulgaria?

Answer. Bulgarians are eager to engage with the West but continue to maintain a strong historic affinity for Russia, whom many view as having liberated them from 500 years of Ottoman rule. While younger Bulgarians view the United States positively, favorable public opinion of the United States as a whole is considerably lower than that of Russia—even in the aftermath of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. As has been widely reported, Bulgarians are heavily susceptible to Russia's propaganda and malign influence. This situation is exacerbated by a weak and highly concentrated media environment that is heavily influenced by oligarchs and entrenched political and economic interests, and marked by frequent self-censorship. Bulgarian Government and civil society actors have shown increasing willingness to counter disinformation and strengthen the media landscape, although efforts to date have had limited effect. Working closely with the U.S. interagency and with Bulgarian and international partners, the Embassy is deeply engaged to address these deficits in the public diplomacy landscape and to reinforce, at every turn, Bulgaria's western orientation. Cultural and educational programming that underscores our shared values is integral to this effort.

Question. What public diplomacy challenges do U.S. diplomats face there?

Answer. While younger Bulgarians view the United States positively, favorable public opinion of the United States as a whole is considerably lower than that of Russia—even in the aftermath of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. NATO faces a formidable public opinion challenge, with a significant percentage of Bulgaria's population believing NATO and the West are to blame for Russia's war against Ukraine and opting for "neutrality" to avoid being drawn into the conflict. Bulgarians are heavily susceptible to Russia's malign influence, and according to recent research, Kremlin propaganda has increased tenfold since Russia's February 24 full-scale invasion of Ukraine. This situation is exacerbated by a weak and highly concentrated media environment that is heavily influenced by oligarchs and entrenched political and economic interests, and marked by frequent self-censorship. Bulgaria also lacks a robust civil society, and efforts by civil society organizations and the Government to counter disinformation and strengthen the media environment have had limited effect to date. If confirmed, I will continue the Embassy's engagement with the Bulgarian Government and civil society to ensure a unified and proactive approach to countering Russia's disinformation and to strengthening democratic institutions to solidify Bulgaria's long-term orientation towards the West.

Question. How do you balance the importance of Main State versus the in-country Mission when it comes to tailoring public diplomacy messages for foreign audiences?

Answer. I understand that Embassy Sofia's Mission objectives align closely with top Department and Administration priorities—strengthening democracy, combating corruption, advancing shared security, and building prosperity—and the Public Diplomacy team, as at all U.S. Embassies, creatively tailors and deploys high-level USG messaging to local audiences. If confirmed, I will work with the Public Affairs section to ensure a unified approach to highlighting key U.S. messages and policies in Bulgaria. The Public Affairs section routinely engages in a wide range of public outreach—through traditional and social media, and in-person engagements—to inform and engage Bulgarians about U.S. policy; promote Embassy activities and

events; enhance the image of the United States; and provide information on security, voting, and other topics of interest to U.S. citizens.

Question. "Anomalous health incidents," commonly referred to as "Havana Syndrome," have been debilitating and sidelining U.S. diplomats around the world for years. They have caused serious, negative consequences for U.S. diplomacy, yet many believe that the Department is not doing enough to care for, protect, and communicate to its personnel.

- If confirmed, do you commit to taking this threat seriously?

Answer. Yes. If confirmed, there is nothing I will take more seriously than the health and security of the people who will be working with me.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to talking as openly as you can to Mission Sofia personnel?

Answer. Yes. If confirmed, I commit to sharing what information I can within the bounds of privacy and security concerns with Mission Sofia personnel.

Question. In the 2022 Trafficking in Persons Report, Bulgaria was identified as Tier 2 Watch List for a lack of sustained efforts to combat trafficking and hold traffickers accountable. How will you work with the host government and civil society actors to address these issues if you are confirmed as Ambassador?

Answer. Human trafficking is a multifaceted crime and a challenging problem faced by all countries. Bulgaria remains one of the largest source countries of trafficking victims in the EU. I understand Embassy Sofia is working closely with Bulgaria's National Commission for Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings and relevant ministries to encourage further progress. Embassy officials promote a victim-centered approach to trafficking in persons by the Commission and other government institutions such as the prosecution service and the law enforcement authorities. The U.S. Government has also participated in training for Bulgarian officials on issues ranging from collecting evidence to identifying victims of trafficking. If confirmed, I will ensure resources are made available to continue our partnership with Bulgaria to prevent and mitigate human trafficking.

Question. Do you commit to reporting accurate information as it pertains to the reality of the trafficking situation in Bulgaria?

Answer. Yes. If confirmed, I will ensure we base our reporting on the trafficking situation in Bulgaria on the best information available to us. Only through transparent, objective reporting can we identify the necessary steps to improve enforcement.

Question. In the 2021 International Religious Freedom report, Bulgaria was identified as generally tolerant of religious freedom but reports of harassment of religious minorities were clear. What is your assessment of this particular issue and if confirmed, how will you work with the office of the Ambassador-at-Large for international religious freedom to bolster religious freedom in-country?

Answer. Bulgaria's constitution provides for freedom of religion and conscience. Nonetheless, instances of threatening behavior and rhetoric against religious minorities persist. I understand that Embassy Sofia officials have met with relevant government officials, including representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Directorate for Human Rights, the Council of Ministers' Directorate for Religious Affairs, Office of the Ombudsman, Commission for Protection against Discrimination, and local governments regularly to discuss cases of religious discrimination, harassment of religious minorities, and their efforts to promote interfaith dialogue. Embassy Sofia officials have also developed strong relationships with religious leaders and communities across the country and are engaged with them on these issues. If confirmed, I will closely coordinate with the Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom and maintain dialogue with Bulgarian interlocutors representing the Government, religious, and civil society communities to encourage tolerance and interfaith dialogue.

Question. In the 2021 Human Rights Report, Bulgaria was identified as having committed significant human rights abuses including abuse of freedom of assembly, speech and media, lack of judicial independence, corruption, violence against children, and more.

- If confirmed, what steps will you take to address these instances with the host government?

Answer. Human rights reform is a long-term, multifaceted, and challenging process. Bulgaria has taken some steps to build a more open, inclusive, just, and prosperous society. More needs to be done, however. As noted in the most recent Human

Rights Report for Bulgaria, the United States is concerned about reports of the intimidation of journalists by individuals with political and economic power and incidents of violence directed at journalists. If confirmed, I will speak out publicly and privately on the importance of protecting media freedom and editorial independence and encouraging responsible journalism. If confirmed, I will also prioritize continued, regular engagement with the host government to identify critical areas for improvement and provide U.S. support and technical assistance as appropriate to efforts at reform.

Question. How will you direct your Embassy to work with civil society organizations to improve the human rights situation on the ground?

Answer. If confirmed, I am committed to working closely with civil society to make tangible progress toward improved human rights practices in Bulgaria. Department of State programs currently support capacity-building for civil society, law enforcement, and members of the judiciary. I understand that Embassy Sofia has also supported progress by engaging civil society and speaking publicly about the importance of reforms. If confirmed, I would like to continue our capacity-building programs and encourage my team to engage frequently and at all levels with Bulgarian civil society actors.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO HON. KENNETH MERTEN BY SENATOR MARCO RUBIO

Question. In May, Secretary Blinken said that the People's Republic of China is the "only country with both the intent to reshape the international order and, increasingly, the economic, diplomatic, military, and technological power to do it." The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) clearly holds all the reins of power in the People's Republic of China and has used this power to commit genocide in Xinjiang, flood our communities with fentanyl, and emit by far the largest quantity of greenhouse gases. As we speak, the Party is cracking down on unprecedented student protests across the country. With their absolute control of Chinese society and industry, the CCP could stop all of these destructive actions tomorrow if they so choose.

- Is the CCP a threat to the United States?

Answer. The President made it clear in his National Security Strategy that the People's Republic of China (PRC) harbors the intention and, increasingly, the capacity to reshape the international order in favor of one that tilts the global playing field to its benefit. The PRC is a strategic competitor, and Secretary Blinken has committed to align our efforts with partners and allies and compete with the PRC to defend our interests and build our vision for the future.

If confirmed, I will seek opportunities to strengthen our cooperation with Bulgaria to uphold shared values. This includes encouraging Bulgaria to adopt an investment screening mechanism.

Question. Does the CCP undertake any activities that are beneficial to U.S. interests?

Answer. Although we are strategic competitors, as the President laid out in his National Security Strategy, the United States does not seek conflict or a new Cold War. We and our allies and partners have an opportunity to shape the PRC's external environment in a way that influences their behavior even as we compete with them. The United States' approach towards the PRC focuses on competing with the PRC where our interests and values differ and cooperating with them when they align. If confirmed, I will continue working closely with Bulgaria to promote our shared values of democracy and support for the rules-based order.

Question. Do you believe there are any areas within which the CCP would constructively work with the United States in good faith?

Answer. Although we are strategic competitors, as the President laid out in his National Security Strategy, the United States does not seek conflict or a new Cold War. We and our allies and partners have an opportunity to shape the PRC's external environment in a way that influences their behavior even as we compete with them. The United States' approach towards the PRC focuses on competing with the PRC where our interests and values differ and cooperating with them when they align. If confirmed, I will continue working closely with Bulgaria to promote our shared values of democracy and support for the rules-based order.

Question. If confirmed, will you approve any joint activity with organizations or representatives from the People's Republic of China in Bulgaria?

Answer. As the United States National Security Strategy makes clear and as Secretary Blinken said in October, the PRC is the greatest geopolitical challenge that we face because it is the only competitor with the intent and increasingly the capability to remake the international order. And Beijing's actions suggest PRC officials have the intention to do so. While Bulgaria maintains friendly political relations with the PRC and remains open to PRC investment, the Bulgarian Government notably signed a Joint Declaration on 5G Security with the United States in October 2020. The United States' approach towards the PRC focuses on competing with the PRC where our interests and values differ and cooperating with them when they align. If confirmed, I will support the Administration's policy on the PRC.

Question. This past week, protesters gathered in several Bulgarian cities against the Bulgarian Government's decision to provide military medical training to Ukrainian soldiers. While the protests were small in scale, we can only expect protests like these to continue in Europe and even in the United States as Putin's war drags on and the West does not have a clearly communicated objective for assistance to Ukraine. It is imperative that European countries especially maintain the will and unity in providing assistance to Ukraine, as the United States must primarily focus on the threat from the CCP in the Indo-Pacific.

- To what extent do you believe that these recent protests reflect genuine fatigue and dissatisfaction with ongoing Western assistance to Ukraine rather than as the result of a Russian influence campaign?

Answer. While Bulgaria maintains cultural and historical affinities with Russia, the Bulgarian Government's response to Russia's February invasion of Ukraine affirms its status as a stalwart NATO Ally. Bulgarian citizens have opened their hearts and their homes to refugees from Ukraine as the Government supported sanctions against Russia and authorized the supply of humanitarian aid and military equipment repair for Ukraine. On November 3, Bulgaria's parliament overwhelmingly passed a resolution to provide lethal military assistance to Ukraine. I cannot profess to know what inspires individuals to protest—a right protected in Bulgarian law—but we do know that Russia is actively engaged in a disinformation campaign aimed at undermining Bulgarian democracy and diminishing public support for the Euro-Atlantic partnership, taking advantage of longstanding cultural ties between the countries as well as the economic challenges that are, in fact, exacerbated by Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

Question. If confirmed, what will you do to ensure that the Bulgarian Government is equipped to effectively communicate to the Bulgarian people the objectives and necessity of providing continued European assistance to Ukraine?

Answer. Many stakeholders, including the U.S. Government, the Government of Bulgaria, and European allies work to emphasize a positive narrative about transatlantic values. This lets Bulgarians, who chose to join NATO and the EU, judge for themselves the relative value of the messages promoted in the Kremlin's propaganda regarding the war in Ukraine and the necessity of supporting Ukraine's self-defense. The U.S. Government works closely with NATO and EU partners on a variety of initiatives that build strategic communications capacity for the Bulgarian Government. Delivering fair, objective reporting to the Bulgarian public has become more critical since Russia's unprovoked, full-scale invasion of Ukraine. We need more of this to help counter the Kremlin's propaganda machine. If confirmed, I will continue our capacity-building programs for the Bulgarian Government, civil society partners, and independent media—including training that applies U.S. best practices in fact-checking, investigative reporting, digital and multimedia communications, and financial sustainability.

Question. When the CCP first announced its pernicious Belt and Road Initiative in Europe, Bulgaria was among its most enthusiastic adopters. Bulgaria announced a strategic partnership with China in 2018 and even hosted a meeting of China's 16+1 initiative, which it uses to spread its influence in Central and Eastern Europe. Since then, Bulgaria has cooled its support for CCP initiatives. It has stopped sending senior government officials to meetings of 16+1 and, to date has received the second lowest amount of Chinese lending in central and eastern Europe.

- Former Prime Minister Boyko Borissov last week was given the mandate to form a government. His last tenure in office saw the strengthening of Bulgarian-Chinese relations. Should we expect Bulgaria to resume a pro-CCP course under another Borissov tenure?

Answer. Since it joined the EU in 2007, Bulgaria has garnered increasing interest from PRC investors, but concerns about EU regulations, lack of state guarantees, and Bulgaria's reluctance to take on debt impede significant PRC investments. Cur-

rently, PRC investments in Bulgaria include wind energy, telecommunications, IT, and agriculture. Bulgaria has friendly political relations with the PRC, but Sino-Bulgarian trade remains relatively low for the region. In February 2021, under the Borissov government, Bulgaria sent its tourism minister rather than its prime minister to the PRC-Central and Eastern European Countries summit (CEEC or "16+1," currently "14+1").

If confirmed, I will continue to convey to Bulgarian interlocutors the risks involved with PRC investment and the broader utility of adopting an investment screening mechanism in line with EU directives.

Question. If confirmed, what will you do to ensure that Bulgaria does not fall victim to the debt trap diplomacy of the CCP's Belt and Road Initiative, as have Sri Lanka and other counties?

Answer. Bulgaria is the poorest state in the European Union but boasts strong macroeconomic fundamentals, with a history of steady growth, an ironclad peg of its currency, the Lev, to the Euro, and fiscal discipline. Bulgaria also has one of Europe's lowest budget deficits and debt-to-GDP ratios. Bulgaria maintains friendly political relations with the PRC, but concerns regarding EU regulations, lack of state guarantees, and Bulgaria's reluctance to take on debt impede significant PRC investments. If confirmed, I will advocate for U.S. commercial and investment entities that are well-positioned to serve as reliable partners of Bulgaria while making market-driven decisions.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO HON. KENNETH MERTEN BY SENATOR TODD YOUNG

Question. If confirmed, what does a "Chief of Mission who leads, manages, and safeguards" look like in practice to you?

Answer. Based on my experience serving as the Ambassador in Haiti and Croatia, I believe a Chief of Mission must bring integrity, honesty, and energy to all of their engagements with Embassy staff, host government officials, and the broader, host country community. Effective leaders create a vision for their team, entrust staff with the resources to execute on those priorities, and remain vigilant in creating and preserving an appropriate environment where this work can be done. This simple formula has served me well no matter the size of the Mission I led, the scope of resources with which I was entrusted, or the complexity of issues that defined the bilateral relationship. It is a philosophy that I leaned heavily upon in Haiti, where I oversaw the United States' on-the-ground efforts to provide immediate relief after the 2010 earthquake and subsequent evacuation efforts, and one that I will continue to abide by, if confirmed.

Question. Noting your past experience as Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for the Bureau of Global Talent Management, did you witness any particularly positive examples of leadership during the pandemic that you could model? Or conversely, can you provide any examples of Missions that needed better support and leadership during that time?

Answer. The COVID–19 pandemic was an unprecedented challenge for the global community and a stress test for the resilience, creativity, and agility of the dedicated public servants of the Department of State, whether serving abroad or in the United States. As the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for the Bureau of Global Talent Management throughout much of the pandemic, I witnessed countless instances of exemplary leadership at all levels from which I drew inspiration and the confidence that we would adapt and overcome. From the early stages of the pandemic that required our posts to support the safe evacuation of American citizens, to the rapid implementation of technological solutions that enabled many of our colleagues to work safely from home, I was particularly impressed by the commitment that our entry- and mid-level public servants brought to bear on these challenges. Their collective, innovative responses to the hardships brought by the pandemic continue to give me great confidence in the Department's future corps of leaders.

Question. With your wealth of experience both leading Missions and supporting the Department's personnel from Washington, what is the biggest challenge to the Department's efforts to hire and retain a qualified and diverse workforce?

Answer. The goal of creating and maintaining a qualified and diverse work force is one worth diligently pursuing. I believe a more diverse, equitable, inclusive, and accessible (DEIA) Department leads to a stronger, smarter, and more creative for-

eign policy, and one delivered by a diplomatic corps that looks like the America it represents. In March 2022, the Department of State submitted its five-year DEIA Strategic Plan to the Office of Personnel Management. Important elements of the plan include an effort to promote recruitment activity across the diversity spectrum, implement a recruitment strategy that targets underrepresented groups, and examine the hiring process to address barriers to entry for diverse candidates. These efforts will advance our efforts to hire and retain a workforce that reflects the diversity and talents we will need to succeed in 21st century diplomacy.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO KATHLEEN ANN KAVALEC BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Question. Russia's invasion of Ukraine has had huge effects on Ukraine's neighbors, not least Romania. Hundreds of thousands of refugees have flowed through Romania; many have settled there temporarily. The conflict

- Do you believe that the support provided to Romania in the spheres of humanitarian assistance, energy, and defense has been adequate? Why?

Answer. Since Russia's further invasion of Ukraine, the United States has greatly increased support for Romania. The Department of Defense tripled the number of U.S. troops in Romania and President Biden announced at the NATO summit in June that the United States will headquarter a Brigade Combat Team in Romania. The Department of State, through the Bureau for Populations, Refugees, and Migration, has given over $40 million to international organizations in Romania that are helping to process the entry and transit of refugees from Ukraine fleeing Putin's violence. On energy, the United States and Romania have a strong partnership on energy diversification and are cooperating on nuclear energy. If confirmed, I pledge to work with the Romanian Government, my U.S. Government counterparts, and the private sector to assess Romania's needs and ensure that U.S. assistance is impactful and spent well.

Question. In what areas has international support to Romania not been adequate?

Answer. Russia's unprovoked war on Ukraine has stretched the resources of many of our European allies, including Romania. If confirmed, I pledge to advocate for appropriate support to Romania and ensure that such support is utilized effectively.

Question. How will you work with the Government of Romania to assist their efforts to host and provide support to Ukrainian refugees?

Answer. Romania has welcomed more than two and a half million refugees from Ukraine, 85,000 of whom remain in the country. Romania has created a significant humanitarian assistance apparatus to facilitate the entry, processing, and transit for the large number of refugees who have entered since Russia's full-scale invasion. Through the State Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, the United States has provided more than $40 million to international humanitarian organizations in Romania supporting refugees from Ukraine. If confirmed as Ambassador, I will continue to prioritize these and other avenues of support and ensure that any U.S. assistance is impactful and spent well.

Question. As Ambassador, how would you work with the Government of Romania to assess their needs and help provide backfill for military stocks that have been donated to Ukraine?

Answer. Romania has been a strong backer of international efforts to support Ukraine. Russia's unprovoked, full-scale invasion of Ukraine has stretched Romania's resources, as it has the resources of many countries in the region. Romania would benefit from U.S. assistance, above all in Foreign Military Financing. Romania received $86.3 million in the second Ukraine supplemental to help deter and defend against the increased threat from Russia. Assistance would also be useful to address disinformation, bolster civil society, and fight corruption. If confirmed as Ambassador, I would advocate for appropriate U.S. support for Romania, and I will ensure that any U.S. assistance is impactful and spent well.

Question. The war on Ukraine has also given increased attention to the Black Sea. Romania, along with Bulgaria and Turkey, are Black Sea littoral states who are also members of NATO. The other three littoral states, Ukraine, Russia, and Georgia, are not NATO members.

- Do you believe that the U.S. has placed enough importance on the Black Sea region?

Answer. There is no question that the biggest threat to the Black Sea region is Russia's continued aggression. I understand the Administration is working across the inter-agency to develop an approach that addresses the United States' vital long-term interests in the region. The first priority must be to ensure Ukraine prevails in this war. At the same time, the Administration can continue and deepen our already multifaceted engagement in the region. The United States and NATO have expanded our presence in Black Sea littoral countries since February 24. The United States is headquartering a new Brigade Combat Team in Romania. The administration has tripled the number of U.S. troops in Romania since the start of the war and has redoubled efforts to support Romania's defense modernization.

I understand the Administration is also already thinking longer-term about how to ensure a Black Sea region that is free and prosperous. The United States is working with our Black Sea partners to diversify energy sources away from a reliance on Russian oil and gas. If confirmed, I commit to continuing to work with Congress, the interagency, and our Allies and partners within the Black Sea region as we continue to address the region's needs.

Question. What are the most effective ways Romania can further its defense cooperation with the U.S. and NATO?

Answer. Romania is a stalwart NATO Ally, a frontline country in Russia's aggression in Ukraine, a member of the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS, and a consistent supporter of our highest-priority international security policies. Romania meets its fair share of common defense burdens by consistently allocating 2 percent of its GDP to defense spending—and pledged an increase to 2.5 percent in 2023. Romania has 123 active Foreign Military Sales cases valued at $4.7 billion and currently hosts approximately 3,000 U.S. military personnel in country, including a rotational Brigade Combat Team announced by President Biden at the June NATO Summit in Madrid. Romania also hosts a NATO Battlegroup led by the French, which was approved at the March 24 NATO Summit. If confirmed, I will seek to deepen our already strong security partnership in the face of Russia's further invasion of Ukraine.

Question. How will you respond to Romania's requests for a stronger forward presence from the U.S. and NATO?

Answer. I understand that Romania has been vocal about the need for a stronger, more unified EU-NATO stance against Russia's encroachment in the region. The administration's recent decision to headquarter a Brigade Combat Team in Romania underscores U.S. resolve to anchor our presence on NATO's Eastern Flank. The United States continues to work with our Allies at NATO on force posture positioning as the security situation on the ground evolves.

Question. How will you support economic engagement between Romanian and U.S. business sectors?

Answer. The Romanian market has excellent potential and Romanians are generally pro-American and very favorably disposed to U.S. products and services. Romania welcomes all forms of foreign investment. Its strategic location, membership in the EU, sizable domestic market, relatively well-educated workforce, competitive wages, and abundant natural resources make it a desirable, relatively low-cost foothold for accessing the wider EU, Central Asia, and Near East markets. If I am confirmed as ambassador, promoting greater economic engagement and assisting U.S. businesses in Romania will be a top priority. Business plays an important role in fostering prosperity and bringing people together. I will be personally involved in advocating and supporting our companies to promote prosperity for the American people.

Question. What are the perceived risks to western investment, and how can they be mitigated?

Answer. I understand that a number of challenges to the business climate persist, despite reforms and some improvements. Romania has made significant strides in combatting corruption, but this remains an ongoing challenge. The Romanian Government still plays an oversized role in the economy in terms of employment and ownership of assets. State-owned enterprises shape many sectors as dominant customers, suppliers, or competitors. If I am confirmed as ambassador, assisting U.S. businesses in Romania will be a top priority. I will work closely with the U.S. Department of Commerce, if confirmed, to ensure that the full resources of the U.S. Government are used to advocate for and support U.S. companies to promote prosperity for the American people.

Question. What sectors do you see as potential areas of growth for U.S.-Romania business ties?

Answer. U.S. firms have invested billions of dollars in Romania since the fall of communism, and there are many opportunities for greater bilateral trade and investment—especially in the defense, energy, IT, transportation, film, and agricultural sectors. If confirmed, I will encourage Romania to implement policies and practices to improve its business and investment climate, foster a stronger environment for entrepreneurship and innovation, and unlock its potential. Romania has enormous economic potential and a positive economic story to tell. If confirmed, I will work to improve Romania's visibility to U.S. exporters and investors.

Question. What role, if any, do you see the U.S. Development Finance Corporation playing in stimulating western investment in Romania?

Answer. The U.S. Development Finance Corporation (DFC) is an important partner in stimulating investment overseas, including in Romania. It is my understanding that the DFC can play a role in the context of the Three Seas Initiative (3SI), which aims to strengthen North-South infrastructure on the EU's eastern flank in energy, transportation, and digital infrastructure, as well as outside of the 3SI context, directly in bilateral financing. Romania is an active participant in 3SI and will host the 2023 summit. If confirmed, I commit to using the full range of U.S. Government tools, including collaboration with the DFC, to advance our economic goals in Romania.

Question. While Romania has a lower dependence on Russia for its energy supplies, how can the U.S. help further increase its energy security?

Answer. Romania is a strong proponent of energy security in Europe and has prioritized support for vulnerable neighbors like Moldova since the beginning of Russia's war against Ukraine. The United States and Romania have a strong partnership on energy, and I understand that Romania is working hard to reduce its reliance on Russian oil and natural gas in ways that meet our shared climate objectives.

In partnership with the United States, Romania plans to double its nuclear energy capacity in the coming decade by building two additional reactors at the Cernavoda nuclear power plant by 2031 and by hosting a "first-of-its-kind" small modular reactor (SMR) by 2028 or 2029. This expansion of Romania's nuclear power program will bolster Romania's energy security and reduce its reliance on Russian oil and natural gas in ways that meet our shared climate objectives. Once these projects are completed, Romania will be able to export more electricity to Moldova and Ukraine. The United States is also assisting Romanian policy makers and regulators in developing the administrative capacity for offshore wind, hydrogen, and geothermal energy.

If confirmed, I commit to continuing to support U.S.-Romania energy cooperation to advance our energy security goals.

Question. How can the U.S. and Romania work together to reduce dependence on Russian for energy supplies in the region?

Answer. Romania's significant and diverse domestic energy resources provide it greater energy security than many of its neighbors. Romania supports energy diversification efforts and is uniquely positioned to bolster European energy security with its potential to increase energy supply from the Black Sea. The United States and Romania are working together to develop alternate sources of energy including through civil nuclear cooperation and building Romania's capacity for offshore wind, hydrogen, and geothermal energy.

Romania also plays a critical role in helping neighbors like Moldova reduce dependence on Russian energy sources. Natural gas carrier Transgaz built reverse flow capacity with Bulgaria and Hungary, and a pipeline from the Romanian border to Chisinau, providing a potential alternative gas route for Moldova. If confirmed, I will continue these efforts to foster greater U.S.-Romanian energy cooperation.

Question. How will you work with your State Department and interagency colleagues to coordinate U.S. economic engagement with Romania across the Balkans and greater Eastern European region?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with my colleagues at Mission Bucharest, in Washington, and in the region to build on the already strong economic relationship between the United States and Romania. One vehicle for expanded regional economic cooperation is offered by the Three Seas Initiative (3SI), which aims to strengthen North-South infrastructure on the EU's eastern flank in energy, transportation, and telecommunications. The Initiative now includes 12 countries across

the Balkans and greater Eastern Europe region. Romania is an active participant and will host next year's summit.

The U.S. Government strongly supports the 3SI, as it fosters regional prosperity and security, making its members stronger partners of the United States and more effective partners in building a Europe strong and free. If confirmed, I will support 3SI efforts as well as other regional efforts to build interconnectivity and economic cooperation.

Question. Many U.S. Missions have been under enormous stress over the last few years, in large part due to COVID. What is your understanding of morale throughout Mission Bucharest?

Answer. My understanding from the State Department is that, despite the challenges posed by COVID and Russia's invasion of Ukraine, morale is high, and the Mission is well-run. I am aware that following Russia's full-scale February invasion of neighboring Ukraine, the Mission has been called upon to do much more and has risen to the challenge. If confirmed, I will make it my priority to nurture and maintain high morale through open communication, frequent consultation, and listening to all employees as valued members of the team.

Question. How do you intend to improve morale at Mission Bucharest?

Answer. In my experience, building and sustaining high morale among team members is critical to the effectiveness of the Mission. If confirmed, upon arrival I intend to meet with all parts of the Mission community to offer support and encouragement, to understand their challenges and concerns, to establish regular channels of communication, and to identify key issues that need to be addressed. One area which I understand requires early attention is that of the level of compensation for Locally Employed staff. If confirmed, I will work with Washington colleagues to ensure that Locally Employed staff salaries keep up with those of the local labor market. I will strive to ensure that the Mission has the personnel and tools necessary to effectively carry out its expanded responsibilities.

Question. How do you intend to create a unified mission and vision at Mission Bucharest?

Answer. If confirmed, I intend to lead an inclusive strategic planning exercise involving all Mission elements and drawing on previous planning exercises to ensure that the Mission team has a clear and unified vision of our goals and priorities. I will also ensure that there is a process for periodically assessing progress and making adjustments as needed. I will work with the Embassy management team, senior staff, and Community Liaison Office to promote open, constructive communication and an inclusive, welcoming culture in which creativity and initiative is encouraged and recognized. I will promote and attend community events, including Town Halls, informal get-togethers, holiday celebrations, awards ceremonies and other happenings that contribute to a sense of teamwork and community.

Question. Management is a key responsibility for Chiefs of Mission. How would you describe your management style?

Answer. As a manager, I seek to build a team environment in which employees feel empowered to speak up, offer creative ideas, take initiative, do work that matters, and be recognized for their contributions. I am a strong advocate for the principles of diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility, and believe it is important that every leader and manager in the Mission model these values. As we work for the American people, we have the responsibility to hold ourselves to the highest ethical standards. If confirmed, I pledge to create a positive and productive work environment so we can successfully execute our mission.

Question. Do you believe it is ever acceptable or constructive to berate subordinates, either in public or private?

Answer. Absolutely not. It is never acceptable or constructive to berate subordinates, either in public or in private. Such behavior undermines morale, reduces productivity, and is never acceptable from any manager. If confirmed, I pledge to treat all staff at Mission Bucharest with the utmost respect.

Question. How do you envision your leadership relationship with your Deputy Chief of Mission?

Answer. Having served myself as a Deputy Chief of Mission, I understand the importance of establishing a strong, open, and honest partnership between the Ambassador and Deputy Chief of Mission, as this relationship is critical to the success of the Mission. As Ambassador, if confirmed, my intent is to empower my Deputy

Chief of Mission as a chief operating officer to oversee day-to-day Mission management, to serve as my alter ego, and to act on my behalf in my absence.

Question. If confirmed, what leadership responsibilities do you intend to entrust to your Deputy Chief of Mission?

Answer. If confirmed, I will entrust my Deputy Chief of Mission to serve as the U.S. Embassy's Chief Operating Officer and my closest advisor. I will count on my Deputy Chief of Mission to offer honest, sound advice and well-founded recommendations. The position of Deputy Chief of Mission traditionally ensures its smooth operations and steps in for the Ambassador when he or she is not available. If confirmed, I will work closely with my deputy to ensure his or her success.

Question. In order to create and continue employee excellence at the Department, accurate and direct employee evaluation reports (EERs) for Foreign Service Officers are imperative, though often lacking.

- Do you believe that it is important to provide employees with accurate, constructive feedback on their performances in order to encourage improvement and reward those who most succeeded in their roles?

Answer. I agree that accurate, timely, and constructive feedback is critical to foster morale and encourage high performance, as well as to encourage improvement. In my previous assignments as a manager, I always sought to offer constructive feedback, address deficiencies, and write effective evaluations that accurately reflect the employee's performance and contributions. If confirmed, I will continue to prioritize this management imperative.

Question. If confirmed, would you support and encourage clear, accurate, and direct feedback to employees in order to improve performance and reward high achievers?

Answer. Yes, if confirmed I will support and encourage clear, accurate, and direct feedback to employees, as I have done in my previous assignments as a manager and a leader.

Question. It is imperative that U.S. diplomats get outside of posts abroad to meet with local actors, including host government officials, non-government organizations, and fellow foreign diplomats stationed in Romania.

- In your opinion, do U.S. diplomats get outside of our Embassy walls enough to accomplish fully their Missions?

Answer. As a leader and a diplomat, I believe that we must engage with as many local actors and organizations as possible to advance U.S. foreign policy and national security objectives. It is my understanding that our Embassy regularly engages with contacts outside the Mission. In my previous tour in Romania, I traveled widely throughout the country to promote our public diplomacy and advance people-to-people ties. If confirmed, I intend to interact with a wide array of Romanians around the country and will encourage my team to follow by example.

Question. How do you intend to improve the ability of U.S. diplomats to better access all local populations?

Answer. If confirmed, I will encourage all employees at Embassy Bucharest to get outside the Mission walls, meet with local populations, and travel widely throughout the country to learn as much as possible about local issues. We will balance all security considerations appropriately. My understanding is that the team in Bucharest regularly travels throughout the country, and I intend to continue support for these efforts.

Question. Public diplomacy is an important aspect of U.S. foreign policy efforts. What is the public diplomacy environment like in Romania?

Answer. The Romanian people admire and respect the United States and its people and desire closer ties at all levels. The Romanian people share our democratic principles and values, including respect for media freedom. As cultural affairs officer in Romania between 2005-2008, I helped create the vibrant network of ten American Corners throughout Romania that regularly hold programs to educate Romanians about American culture and values.

If confirmed, my public diplomacy objectives will mirror my Mission objectives, namely to leverage public diplomacy tools to enhance security cooperation, support a free, independent, and diverse press, counter malign influence, expand free market opportunities between the United States and Romania, strengthen democratic institutions, and deepen people-to-people ties. I will work to counter malign influence, in all its forms, with the variety of tools at our disposal, including with tradi-

tional media, social media, outreach, educational and capacity building grants and programs, and personal interactions.

Question. What public diplomacy challenges do U.S. diplomats face there?

Answer. Disinformation poses problems throughout the world, and Romania is no exception. Russia has a long history of disseminating disinformation to Romania, and currently uses social media, messaging applications, and other avenues to this end. The messaging is frequently focused on the drawbacks of Romania aligning itself with the West.

The amount of disinformation Russia disseminates to Romania has grown since Russia's further invasion of Ukraine this year, and the Kremlin's false narratives often accuse Ukraine of poor treatment of its Romanian minority. Disinformation about vaccines during the COVID crisis unfortunately discouraged many Romanians from getting vaccinated. If confirmed, I will engage with the Romanian Government, civil society, media outlets, and thought leaders ranging from politicians to journalists to ensure a unified and proactive approach to countering Russia's disinformation.

Question. How do you balance the importance of Main State versus the in-country Mission when it comes to tailoring public diplomacy messages for foreign audiences?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with the Public Diplomacy Section to closely coordinate the efforts of public diplomacy professionals in both Washington and Bucharest to ensure that there is a unified approach to highlighting key U.S. messages and policies in Romania. The Public Diplomacy Section engages on a variety of different social media platforms in both English and Romanian to deliver tailored messages on U.S. foreign policy priorities; promote Embassy activities and events; provide information on security, voting, and other topics of interest to U.S. citizens; and communicate with the Romanian public.

Question. "Anomalous health incidents," commonly referred to as "Havana Syndrome," have been debilitating and sidelining U.S. diplomats around the world for years. They have caused serious, negative consequences for U.S. diplomacy, yet many believe that the Department is not doing enough to care for, protect, and communicate to its personnel.

- If confirmed, do you commit to taking this threat seriously?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to have no higher priority than the safety and security of the Embassy team and their family members. President Biden has said that the well-being of American public servants is of paramount importance to the Administration, and I share his view. If confirmed, I pledge to make every effort to protect and care for our personnel serving at the Mission.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to talking as openly as you can to Mission Bucharest personnel?

Answer. Throughout my career, including my past assignments as Head of Mission and Deputy Chief of Mission, I have placed a high value on open communication with those I manage. Effective communication enables us to operate as one Mission, and I understand that as a leader I set the tone. If confirmed, I commit to open communication with Mission Bucharest personnel.

Question. In the 2022 Trafficking in Persons Report, Romania was upgraded to Tier 2 for various efforts to combat and monitor trafficking in persons. How will you work with the host government and civil society actors to address these issues if you are confirmed as Ambassador?

Answer. Romania was upgraded to Tier 2 in the 2022 TIP Report, as the Government demonstrated improvement in anti-trafficking efforts, including by investigating more trafficking cases, prosecuting and convicting more traffickers, and increasing prevention efforts. However, trafficking remains a significant problem in Romania. Romania is one of the primary source countries of human trafficking in the EU.

I understand that the U.S. Government works closely with Romania on law enforcement, judicial training, education, and victim assistance programs. If confirmed, I will engage frequently with civil society actors working on trafficking issues and encourage Romanian authorities to prioritize combating trafficking in persons, intensify victim identification efforts, collaborate with NGOs, and support trafficking victims through a victim-centered approach.

Question. Do you commit to reporting accurate information as it pertains to the reality of the trafficking situation in Romania?

Answer. The Department of State's Trafficking in Persons report is an important diplomatic tool for engaging with foreign governments on efforts to end human trafficking. As Secretary Blinken said on his message for the 2022 TIP report, human trafficking affects all countries "by diminishing and destroying our communities, sense of security, and the global economy." If confirmed, I pledge that Mission Bucharest will report accurate information as it pertains to the trafficking situation in Romania.

Question. What efforts, if any, does the Government of Romania provide to local NGOs to support trafficking victims and to prevent further trafficking?

Answer. I understand from the 2022 TIP Report that the Government of Romania implemented a pilot program that authorized funding at the local level to an NGO for victim services. Additionally, the Government adopted an emergency ordinance and an action plan aimed at improving its capacity to assist vulnerable children and other at-risk populations and investigate various crimes against children, including trafficking. These efforts contributed to Romania's upgrade to Tier 2. If confirmed, I pledge to continue the Mission's support for Romania's efforts to support trafficking victims, hold traffickers accountable, and prevent future trafficking.

Question. In the 2021 International Religious Freedom report, Romania was identified as generally intolerant of religious freedom, particularly regarding the treatment of Jewish individuals and institutions. What is your assessment of this particular issue and if confirmed, how will you work with the office of the Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom to bolster religious freedom in-country?

Answer. As noted in the State Department International Religious Freedom report, there have been isolated cases of government discrimination against minority religious groups in Romania. As in many countries in the region, antisemitism in Romania tends to manifest as hate speech (including online hate speech), vandalism, and Holocaust distortion or conspiracy theories. In May 2021, the Government approved a two-year national strategy and action plan to combat antisemitism, xenophobia, radicalization, and hate speech. On November 15, 2021, the Romanian Senate passed a bill making Holocaust education compulsory for all high school students by 2023, marking an important step forward for Holocaust remembrance and education in Romania.

If confirmed, I will advocate for religious freedom and equality of treatment for all religious groups, and work with the Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom, the Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat antisemitism, and our Romanian Government and NGO partners to counter antisemitism, anti-Muslim hatred, and other forms of discrimination against minority religious groups.

Question. In the 2021 Human Rights Report, Romania was identified has having significant human rights abuses, including widespread corruption and cruel and inhuman punishment of individuals by the Government. If confirmed, what steps will you take to address these instances with the host government?

Answer. Advancing human rights is a cornerstone of U.S. foreign policy and if confirmed I pledge to work closely with the Government of Romania and with civil society to advocate for human rights protections.

Question. How will you direct your Embassy to work with civil society organizations to improve the human rights situation on the ground?

Answer. Civil society plays in important role in advocating for human rights and reporting human rights violations. I understand our Embassy already has strong relationships with various civil society organizations in Romania. As part of my efforts to ensure Embassy staff are getting out and talking to all members of the local society, if confirmed, I will encourage my team to proactively meet with civil society organizations in Romania.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO KATHLEEN ANN KAVALEC BY SENATOR JEANNE SHAHEEN

Question. Romania's access to the Visa Waiver Program is very important to Romanian citizens and Americans of Romanian origin. Romania is a key and steadfast U.S. ally and one of only two EU member nations whose citizens cannot travel to the U.S. without a visa. How do you plan to work to change this situation?

Answer. I am aware of Romania's desire to join the U.S. Visa Waiver Program (VWP) and look forward to Romania joining the program when it meets the eligi-

bility criteria. If confirmed, I pledge to work with the Department of Homeland Security, which administers the VWP in consultation with the State Department, and with the Government of Romania, as it works to meet the various law enforcement, immigration, and security requirements for designation into the program. Romania does not currently meet the Congressionally mandated visitor visa refusal rate of less than three percent, although this is only one of many criteria required for designation into the program. Romania's refusal rate has remained steady around 10 percent over the past decade.

Question. What role could Romania's oil and natural gas resources play in bolstering energy security in central and eastern Europe? What types of projects or support would enable their development and transportation?

Answer. Romania's significant domestic energy resources provide it greater energy security than many of its neighbors. Romania produced 8.7 billion cubic meters (bcm) of natural gas and 3.5 million tons of oil in 2020, ranking fourth for gas production and fifth for oil production in Europe. With at least 200 bcm of proven natural gas reserves and 600 million barrels of proven oil reserves, Romania has potential to bolster European energy security by providing Romania and other European countries an alternative to Russian oil and gas.

Romania also plays a critical role in helping neighbors like Moldova reduce dependence on Russian energy sources. Natural gas carrier Transgaz built reverse flow capacity with Bulgaria and Hungary, and a pipeline from the Romanian border to Chisinau, providing a potential future alternative gas route for Moldova.

The United States and Romania have a strong partnership on energy security and diversification. Business plays an important role in bringing prosperity to both our nations. Romania has made strides in improving its investment climate in recent years, although challenges remain. The United States Government is currently working with U.S. companies eager to enter Romania's oil and gas market with a view to investing for the long-term. If confirmed, I pledge to continue assisting U.S. companies interested in investing in Romania and to advocate for policies that facilitate foreign investment, including in the oil and natural gas sector.

Question. Please discuss U.S.-Romania cooperation on nuclear energy. To what extent could nuclear energy bolster Romania's energy security?

Answer. In partnership with the United States, Romania plans to double its nuclear energy capacity in the coming decade by building two additional reactors at the Cernavoda nuclear power plant by 2031 and hosting a "first-of-its-kind" small modular reactor (SMR) by 2028 or 2029. This expansion of Romania's nuclear power program will bolster Romania's energy security and reduce its reliance on Russian oil and natural gas in ways that meet our shared climate and energy security objectives. Once these projects are completed, Romania will be able to export more electricity to Moldova and Ukraine. Romania is working with U.S. SMR designer NuScale on building the SMR, which represents preeminent U.S. nuclear power technology with a remarkable level of safety, creates thousands of jobs, strengthens Romanian and European energy security, and addresses the climate crisis head on.

At COP27, the United States reaffirmed our support for projects to refurbish the Cernavoda nuclear power plant's Unit 1 and complete construction of Unit 3 and Unit 4 by delivering letters of interest for more than $3 billion in financing from EXIM. I pledge to continue this important cooperation as Ambassador, if confirmed.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO KATHLEEN ANN KAVALEC BY SENATOR MARCO RUBIO

Question. In May, Secretary Blinken said that the People's Republic of China is the "only country with both the intent to reshape the international order and, increasingly, the economic, diplomatic, military, and technological power to do it." The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) clearly holds all the reins of power in the People's Republic of China and has used this power to commit genocide in Xinjiang, flood our communities with fentanyl, and emit by far the largest quantity of greenhouse gases. As we speak, the Party is cracking down on unprecedented student protests across the country. With their absolute control of Chinese society and industry, the CCP could stop all of these destructive actions tomorrow if they so choose.

- Is the CCP a threat to the United States?

Answer. The President made it clear in his National Security Strategy that the People's Republic of China (PRC) harbors the intention and, increasingly, the capacity to reshape the international order in favor of one that tilts the global playing

field to its benefit. The PRC is a strategic competitor, and Secretary Blinken has committed to align our efforts with partners and allies and compete with the PRC to defend our interests and build our vision for the future.

Romania shares our clear-eyed assessment of the PRC and has pushed back on PRC influence with respect to 5G and nuclear energy issues, and banned countries, like the PRC, that did not comply with EU rules from competing in state-owned procurement tenders. Romania has participated in the PRC's China-CEEC (Central and Eastern European Countries) or "14 +1" platform leadership events by sending representatives at the ministerial or lower levels.

If confirmed, I will seek opportunities to strengthen our cooperation with Romania to uphold shared values.

Question. Does the CCP undertake any activities that are beneficial to U.S. interests?

Answer. Although we are strategic competitors, as the President laid out in his National Security Strategy, the United States does not seek conflict or a new Cold War. We and our allies and partners have an opportunity to shape the PRC's external environment in a way that influences their behavior even as we compete with them. The United States' approach towards the PRC focuses on competing with the PRC where our interests and values differ and cooperating with them when they align. If confirmed, I will continue working closely with Romania to strengthen our shared values of democracy and support for the rules-based order.

Question. Do you believe there are any areas within which the CCP would constructively work with the United States in good faith?

Answer. Although we are strategic competitors, as the President laid out in his National Security Strategy, the United States does not seek conflict or a new Cold War. We and our allies and partners have an opportunity to shape the PRC's external environment in a way that influences their behavior even as we compete with them. The United States' approach towards the PRC focuses on competing with the PRC where our interests and values differ and cooperating with them when they align. If confirmed, I will continue working closely with Romania to strengthen our shared values of democracy and support for the rules-based order.

Question. If confirmed, will you approve any joint activity with organizations or representatives from the People's Republic of China in Romania?

Answer. As the United States National Security Strategy makes clear and as Secretary Blinken said in October, the People's Republic of China (PRC) is the greatest geopolitical challenge that we face because it is the only competitor with the intent and increasingly the capability to remake the international order. And Beijing's actions suggest PRC officials have the intention to do so. Romania shares our skepticism of the PRC and has downgraded its cooperation and actively pushed back against PRC influence. The United States' approach towards the PRC focuses on competing with the PRC where our interests and values differ and cooperating with them when they align. If confirmed, I will support the Administration's policy on the PRC.

Question. Last month, we saw what was widely suspected to be Russian missile attack on Polish territory. Had this been true, we would have been in a situation where a NATO ally would invoke Article 5 and we would need to respond and uphold our treaty commitments to defend NATO territory. Thankfully, the Polish Government kept its cool, waited for all information to come in, and determined that it was shrapnel from a Ukrainian air defense missile. It is a tragedy, nonetheless, for the two Polish victims and their families, but not a cause for potential nuclear war. Romania, like Poland, is a NATO ally that has an extensive border with Ukraine.

- If confirmed, how would you handle a situation where there is reasonable suspicion that Russia has attacked Romania?

Answer. Secretary Blinken has reiterated that the United States has full confidence in the Polish Government's investigation of the explosion near their border with Ukraine and commended them for the professional and deliberate manner in which they are conducting it. It is clear that the party ultimately responsible for this tragic incident is Russia. Ukraine had—and has—every right to defend itself. Romania shares a land border with Ukraine and is a Black Sea littoral state, and it has been vocal about the need for a unified NATO stance against Russia's encroachment in the region. I understand there are currently nearly 5,000 NATO Allied troops in Romania. If confirmed, I will continue to work with Romania and other NATO Allies to develop our response to Russia's unprovoked and horrific war and, if necessary, uphold our Article 5 commitments.

Question. What is your assessment of the Romanian Government's ability to respond in the same way Poland had last month?

Answer. Romania is a steadfast NATO Ally and partner. We have a close and collaborative security relationship and Romania has been united with us and other NATO Allies on NATO's response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The explosion that led to the tragic deaths of two Polish citizens recently in Przedowow highlighted the importance of continued, close coordination among NATO Allies. If confirmed, I will continue to work with Romania and our other NATO Allies to encourage unity in our response to Russia's continued aggression.

Question. If confirmed, what will you do to advise the Romanian Government to convey to the Russians the disastrous mistake they would make should they attempt an attack on NATO?

Answer. Romania is an enthusiastic supporter of a strong and united NATO. Romanians view Russia as their greatest threat, a view that has been shaped by history and Russia's repeated incursions into historically Romanian territory. Romania understands that now is not a time for business as usual with Russia. If confirmed, I will work closely with the Romanian Government to ensure NATO Allies speak with one voice in condemning Russia's aggression.

Question. Putin's war in Ukraine has wreaked a tremendous humanitarian cost on the people of Ukraine. Not least among these is the issue of orphans, many of whom were in the middle of the process to be adopted by American families. Several of my constituents across the State of Florida are worried about the safety of the children they have selflessly committed to welcoming into their families. I understand that the Ukrainian Government had relocated these orphans to facilities in Romanian. My office has received reports that these facilities are lacking compared to those in Ukraine and the United States.

- If confirmed, what will you do to ensure the wellbeing of these orphans in Romanian while they wait until it is safe again to resume intercountry adoptions?

Answer. The United States fully recognizes and respects concerns and desires to care for these children in need. If confirmed, I would do everything in my power to work with the Romanian authorities to ensure the well-being of any Ukrainian children in Romanian care and destined for U.S. adoption. As the Government of Ukraine is the legal guardian of the refugee orphans, we must defer to Ukraine in its authority over decisions about the best interests of their citizens.

We understand many families seek to bring children in the process of being adopted to the United States temporarily for their safety. The Department does not have the ability to facilitate the transfer of Ukrainian children to the United States or other countries outside of the adoption process in compliance with U.S. and Ukrainian laws that govern adoption and immigration.

Question. Last year, Romania passed a law, similar to my Secure Equipment Act, that banned Huawei from entering the Romanian telecoms market. While this is a great first step more is needed to protect the integrity of Romania's telecommunications networks from companies controlled by the Chinese Communist Party.

- If confirmed, what will you do to encourage Romania to adopt policies that also ban Tiktok, Hikvision, ZTE and other CCP-controlled companies?

Answer. Romania has shown great leadership in pushing back on PRC influence with respect to 5G and nuclear energy issues, and on banning countries, like the PRC, that did not comply with EU rules on competing in state-owned procurement tenders. As you note, in 2021, Romania passed legislation that banned untrusted vendors from its 5G infrastructure. In October, the Romanian Government finalized regulations for a new investment screening committee, modeled off the process facilitated by the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States (CFIUS) to block malign influence. If confirmed, I will actively seek opportunities to strengthen our cooperation with Romania to uphold shared values and promote rules-based economic cooperation.

Question. How can the U.S. work with the Three Seas Initiative and other regional fora to provide alternative sources of investment and financing to improve telecommunications infrastructure in Romania and other European countries?

Answer. I understand that Romania is an enthusiastic participant in the Three Seas Initiative (3SI), which aims to strengthen North-South infrastructure on the EU's eastern flank in energy, transportation, and telecommunications. Romania invested 20 million euros in the 3SI Investment Fund and will also host the next 3SI summit in 2023.

The U.S. Government strongly supports the Three Seas Initiative; the U.S. Development Finance Corporation has agreed to provide up to $300 million in financing to the 3SI Investment Fund. The Three Seas Initiative fosters regional prosperity and security, making its members stronger partners of the United States and more effective partners in building a Europe strong and free. It also creates important opportunities for U.S. businesses. If confirmed, I will urge Three Seas member countries to focus on concrete outcomes that will position the Initiative as a platform for meaningful action.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO KATHLEEN ANN KAVALEC BY SENATOR TODD YOUNG

Question. What role could Romania's oil and natural gas resources play in bolstering energy security in central and eastern Europe?

Answer. Romania's significant domestic energy resources provide it greater energy security than many of its neighbors. Romania produced 8.7 billion cubic meters (bcm) of natural gas and 3.5 million tons of oil in 2020, ranking fourth for gas production and fifth for oil production in Europe. With at least 200 bcm of proven natural gas reserves and 600 million barrels of proven oil reserves, Romania has the potential to bolster European energy security by providing Romania and other European countries an alternative to Russian oil and gas.

In June 2022, a consortium led by U.S. company Carlyle—Black Sea Oil and Gas—went online, extracting natural gas from the Black Sea at a rate of approximately 1 bcm per year, helping to diversify the region's natural gas supply. State-owned natural gas producer Romgaz took over ExxonMobil's share in Neptun Deep, a deep-water offshore natural gas project, in 2022. If Romania develops this offshore bloc, it could become a net exporter of natural gas to the region.

Romania also plays a critical role in helping neighbors like Moldova reduce dependence on Russian energy sources. Natural gas carrier Transgaz built reverse flow capacity with Bulgaria and Hungary, and a pipeline from the Romanian border to Chisinau, providing a potential future alternative gas route for Moldova.

Question. What types of projects or support would enable their development and transportation?

Answer. The United States and Romania have a strong partnership on energy security and diversification. Business plays an important role in bringing prosperity to both our nations. Romania has made strides in improving its investment climate in recent years, although challenges remain. The United States Government is currently working with U.S. companies eager to enter Romania's oil and gas market with a view of investing for the long-term. If confirmed, I pledge to continue assisting U.S. companies interested in investing in Romania and to advocate for policies that facilitate foreign investment, including in the oil and natural gas sector.

Question. There is a growing concern about the vulnerability of refugees to human trafficking in Romania and elsewhere in the region. Will you prioritize this issue in your engagement with the Romanian Government and civil society organizations?

Answer. Secretary Blinken noted at the launch of the Department of State's 2022 Trafficking in Persons Report that Russia's war against Ukraine has forced millions of Ukrainians to flee their homes, making them highly vulnerable to exploitation. Romania has welcomed more than two and a half million refugees from Ukraine, 85,000 of which remain in the country. Romania has created a significant humanitarian assistance apparatus to facilitate the entry, processing, and transit for this large number of refugees, and through the State Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, the United States has provided more than $40 million to international humanitarian organizations in Romania supporting refugees from Ukraine.

The United States supports Romania's efforts to support trafficking victims, hold traffickers accountable, and prevent future trafficking. If confirmed as Ambassador, I will prioritize this important issue in my engagements with the Romanian Government and civil society organizations and continue our efforts to combat trafficking.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO BIJAN SABET BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Question. What is your understanding of morale throughout Mission Prague?

Answer. My understanding is that morale at U.S. Embassy Prague is good, though challenges with retention of local staff due to salaries not keeping up with the local labor market have put a strain on many sections. With Russia's war against Ukraine impacting the Czech Republic and other nearby EU member states, the Czech Republic holding the Council of the EU presidency since July 2022, and numerous high-level visits to Prague, I understand the Mission's workload has grown, and the team has stepped up to meet the challenge. If confirmed, I will prioritize morale throughout the Mission, advocate for increases to Locally Employed Staff salaries that keep up with the labor market and focus on strategies for improving retention.

Question. How do you intend to improve morale at Mission Prague?

Answer. If confirmed, I will bring my experience, energy, creativity, and leadership to Embassy Prague. One of my first actions will be to meet the entire Embassy team, and I will mentor employees to prioritize objectives, seek creative ways to address challenges, and focus on efficiency. I will lead by example and hold myself to the same standard expected of the entire team. I understand that great ideas can come from all parts of an organization and all levels, and I will listen to the Embassy team. I will demonstrate my openness to respectful differences of opinion and will encourage the highest level of professionalism. If confirmed, I will work closely with the senior staff, Management team, and Community Liaison Officer (CLO) to promote a collegial atmosphere and I will maintain open, transparent communication. I pledge to hold regular Town Hall meetings, consult with all staff (both U.S. Direct Hires and Locally Employed Staff), and convey my appreciation for the work they do to advance U.S. foreign policy goals. I will advocate for Locally Employed staff salaries that keep up with the labor market and focus on strategies for improving retention. I will also support employees by prioritizing wellness and mental health.

Question. How do you intend to create a unified mission and vision at Mission Prague?

Answer. If confirmed, I will ensure all team members at all levels of the Embassy understand the strategic priorities of the Administration, the Mission, and the Department. I commit to ensure all in the Embassy understand their role in advancing these priorities and receive sufficient support in carrying out those responsibilities. My management style is active and engaged, and I will make sure that everyone at U.S. Embassy Prague knows that my open-door policy is genuine and that I am readily available. I will always prioritize a "one team" culture. If confirmed, I will continuously engage with the entire Embassy Team to articulate objectives, measure performance, provide constructive feedback, and deliver operational excellence.

Question. How would you describe your management style?

Answer. I have developed a management approach throughout my career that embraces three key elements: active listening, leading by example, and an ongoing commitment to foster a deep team alignment around a well-understood mission and purpose. I have also learned that the best ideas can often come from all areas of an organization and commit to creating a team-oriented environment. I am also a strong proponent of open communication and ensuring that people are recognized for the important work they do. This includes ensuring that members of the team have opportunities to grow and further develop skills in order to advance their careers.

Question. Do you believe it is ever acceptable or constructive to berate subordinates, either in public or private?

Answer. No. Berating subordinates undermines morale, reduces productivity, and is never acceptable from any leader. If confirmed, I will treat employees with the utmost respect and expect all within the Embassy to do the same. I will not waiver from maintaining this standard of workplace conduct.

Question. How do you envision your leadership relationship with your Deputy Chief of Mission?

Answer. If confirmed, I expect to build a positive working relationship based on trust and mutual respect with the Deputy Chief of Mission. I will empower her to serve as the Mission's chief operating officer, delegate when appropriate, and ensure

she successfully leads the Mission when I am not available. At the same time, I will remain personally accountable for the Mission's success.

Question. If confirmed, what leadership responsibilities do you intend to entrust to your Deputy Chief of Mission?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work closely with the Deputy Chief of Mission to ensure the effective management of U.S. Embassy Prague and to advance U.S. priorities in the Czech Republic, including: protecting the safety and security of U.S. citizens, deepening our economic ties, and advancing our shared political priorities. Coming from the private sector, I will rely on her expertise for many matters related to the inner workings of an effective U.S. Embassy, and will consult closely with her on all bilateral issues.

Question. Do you believe that it is important to provide employees with accurate, constructive feedback on their performances in order to encourage improvement and reward those who most succeeded in their roles?

Answer. Yes, I absolutely believe this. Candid and comprehensive performance reviews are essential for employees to know where they stand and for them to understand where they need to improve. If confirmed, I commit to proactively learning about the Department's Employee Evaluation Report (EER) process. It is also important for supervisors to make clear what the expectations are and to give continuous constructive feedback. If confirmed, I will place a high priority on proactively providing accurate, constructive feedback to senior staff and ensure they do the same for their teams.

Question. If confirmed, would you support and encourage clear, accurate, and direct feedback to employees in order to improve performance and reward high achievers?

Answer. I fully support these principles and, if confirmed, I pledge to provide my employees clear, accurate, and direct feedback. If confirmed, I will ensure employees receive a clear assessment of their performance, including specific acknowledgment of achievement and concrete areas for improvement. This kind of communication and feedback is fundamental to a high functioning and healthy work environment.

Question. It is imperative that U.S. diplomats get outside of posts abroad to meet with local actors, including host government officials, non-government organizations, and fellow foreign diplomats stationed in Greece.

- In your opinion, do U.S. diplomats get outside of our Embassy walls enough to accomplish fully their missions?

Answer. Creating people-to-people ties is one of the best ways not only to conduct business but to build relationships between our nations and advance U.S. interests. In an environment where disinformation is prevalent, it is especially essential to receive first-hand information from government counterparts and the citizens of the Czech Republic. If confirmed, I pledge to meet with communities throughout the Czech Republic, and I will ensure the Embassy team follows my example of proactive outreach.

Question. How do you intend to improve the ability of U.S. diplomats to better access all local populations?

Answer. If confirmed, I will make clear that outreach to diverse populations and regions is a core component of the Embassy's responsibilities. I will encourage Embassy staff to engage with the broadest cross-section of communities across the Czech Republic and will ensure that U.S. diplomats under my authority can do so safely.

Question. What is the public diplomacy environment like in Czech Republic?

Answer. The majority of Czech citizens see the U.S.-Czech relationship as strong. Since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Czech public opinion has become more strongly pro-Western; one non-governmental organization's survey reported 87 percent of Czechs support remaining in NATO, a significant increase from last year.

Czech media is free and independent; however, business and politics often intersect, resulting in several large media conglomerates. If confirmed, I will continue the Mission's goals of supporting free media, including supporting the Czech Republic in its Summit for Democracy pledge to strengthen the independence of Czech public media through sustainable financing and protection from political influence while supporting independent journalists.

If confirmed, I pledge to meet regularly with a wide range of Czechs—in person, on social media, via the traditional press—to improve their views of the United States and the importance of the Transatlantic relationship.

Question. What public diplomacy challenges do U.S. diplomats face there?

Answer. A significant challenge in the Czech Republic is disinformation. Russia has a long history of disseminating disinformation to the Czech Republic and the wider region, using social media, messaging applications, and other avenues. This disinformation is frequently focused on the drawbacks of the Czech Republic aligning itself with the West. If confirmed, I would continue to engage with the Czech Government, civil society, and the broader public to ensure a unified and proactive approach to counter Russian disinformation.

Question. How do you balance the importance of Main State versus the in-country mission when it comes to tailoring public diplomacy messages for foreign audiences?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with the Public Diplomacy Section to closely coordinate the efforts of public diplomacy professionals in both Washington and the Czech Republic to ensure there is a unified approach to highlighting key U.S. messages and policies in the Czech Republic. The Public Diplomacy Section engages on a variety of different social media platforms in both English and Czech to deliver tailored messages on U.S. foreign policy priorities; promote Embassy activities and events; provide information on security, voting, and other topics of interest to U.S. citizens; and communicate with the Czech public.

Question. "Anomalous health incidents," commonly referred to as "Havana Syndrome," have been debilitating and sidelining U.S. diplomats around the world for years. They have caused serious, negative consequences for U.S. diplomacy, yet many believe that the Department is not doing enough to care for, protect, and communicate to its personnel.

- If confirmed, do you commit to taking this threat seriously?

Answer. I understand these incidents are an absolute priority for the Department, and they would be an absolute priority for me if I am confirmed. I have no higher priority than the safety of the members of Embassy Prague and their family members.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to talking as openly as you can to Mission Prague personnel?

Answer. Yes. I believe open and transparent communication is critical for a healthy and efficient workplace, and leadership should set the example for that. This is particularly true in the context of anomalous health incidents.

Question. In the 2022 Trafficking in Persons Report, the Czech Republic was identified as Tier 1 for sustained efforts to combat human trafficking, but did fall short in accurately identifying trafficking victims. How will you work with the host government and civil society actors to address these issues if you are confirmed as Ambassador?

Answer. If confirmed, I will ensure Czech interlocutors understand the United States is committed to combating trafficking in persons in the Czech Republic and beyond. While the Czech Government has demonstrated serious and sustained effort to combat human trafficking, there are still concerns with inadequate collection of trafficking data and ineffective screening of vulnerable populations, such as asylum-seekers and migrant workers. New trafficking risks have emerged since February 2022 with the arrival of refugees from Ukraine, most of whom are women and children. If confirmed, I will encourage the Czech Government to increase proactive identification and assistance for victims. If confirmed, I will lead Mission Prague to develop and implement both short- and long-term strategies of engagement with government officials, business leaders, and civil society in the Czech Republic.

Question. Do you commit to reporting accurate information as it pertains to the reality of the trafficking situation in the Czech Republic?

Answer. If confirmed, I will continue to pursue opportunities for the United States to share its expertise to strengthen the Czech Republic's capacity to address human trafficking. If confirmed, I commit to reporting accurate information as it pertains to the reality of the trafficking situation in the Czech Republic.

Question. In the 2021 International Religious Freedom report, the Czech Republic was identified as lacking societal respect for religious freedom with noted violent incidents against ethnic and religious minorities. What is your assessment of this particular issue and if confirmed, how will you work with office of the Ambassador-at-Large for international religious freedom to bolster religious freedom in-country?

Answer. The Czech constitution provides for the protection of the freedom of religion or belief, and there are not major religious freedom issues. Societal anti-Muslim sentiment and antisemitism are not uncommon, however. If confirmed, I will com-

mit to working with the Czech Government, faith leaders, civil society, and internally with the Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom and Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Antisemitism to proactively address these issues.

Question. In the 2021 Human Rights Report, the Czech Republic was identified as having significant human rights abuses, including violence against women and threats of violence against minorities, including the Romani.

If confirmed, what steps will you take to address these instances with the host government?

Answer. Human rights issues of concern in the Czech Republic include crimes and threats of violence against members of the Roma community, lack of accountability for violence against women due to limitations within the Czech legal framework, and legal disparities that remain for same-sex couples. Continuing the legacy of former president Vaclav Havel, the Czech Government has prioritized human rights and strives to serve as a worldwide leader. In May, the Czech Republic was elected to take Russia's vacated U.N. Human Rights Council (UNHRC) seat. Since Russia's February 2022 full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the Czech Republic has also provided resettlement assistance to hundreds of Russian and Belarusian civil society activists and journalists to continue their work in Prague. U.S. Embassy Prague actively supports human rights through advocacy, awareness raising, and direct support to non-governmental organizations. If confirmed, I will continue to prioritize respect for human rights as a shared value of the bilateral relationship.

Question. How will you direct your Embassy to work with civil society organizations to improve the human rights situation on the ground?

Answer. U.S. Embassy Prague actively supports human rights through advocacy, awareness-raising, and direct support to non-governmental organizations. If confirmed, I will work with Embassy Prague and the Czech Government to proactively address the continued marginalization of the Czech Republic's Roma minority.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO BIJAN SABET BY SENATOR MARCO RUBIO

Question. In May, Secretary Blinken said that the People's Republic of China is the "only country with both the intent to reshape the international order and, increasingly, the economic, diplomatic, military, and technological power to do it." The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) clearly holds all the reins of power in the People's Republic of China and has used this power to commit genocide in Xinjiang, flood our communities with fentanyl, and emit by far the largest quantity of greenhouse gases. As we speak, the Party is cracking down on unprecedented student protests across the country. With their absolute control of Chinese society and industry, the CCP could stop all of these destructive actions tomorrow if they so choose.

- Is the CCP a threat to the United States?

Answer. The President made it clear in the National Security Strategy that the People's Republic of China (PRC) harbors the intention and, increasingly, the capacity to reshape the international order in favor of one that tilts the global playing field to its benefit. As Secretary Blinken has stated, we will invest at home, align our efforts with partners and allies, and compete with the PRC to defend our interests and build our vision for the future. Alongside the United States, the Czech Republic has been clear-eyed on the threat the PRC poses. If confirmed, I would work to deepen ties between Washington and Prague and leverage the inherent advantages of our democracies to ensure the international system remains rooted in democratic values, not authoritarian ones.

Question. Does the CCP undertake any activities that are beneficial to U.S. interests?

Answer. Although we are strategic competitors, as the President laid out in the National Security Strategy, the United States does not seek conflict or a new Cold War. We and our allies and partners have an opportunity to shape the PRC's external environment in a way that influences its behavior even as we compete with it. The United States' approach towards the PRC focuses on competing with the PRC where our interests and values differ and cooperating with them when they align. If confirmed, I will continue working closely with the Czech Republic to strengthen our shared values of democracy and support for the rules-based international order.

Question. Do you believe there are any areas within which the CCP would constructively work with the United States in good faith?

Answer. Competition is the defining feature of our relationship with the PRC. The United States is open to cooperation with Beijing when interests intersect, and where the world expects the United States to do so as a responsible global power. Potential areas of cooperation include climate change, global health security, counterproliferation, and counternarcotics.

Question. If confirmed, will you approve any joint activity with organizations or representatives from the People's Republic of China in Czechia?

Answer. As the United States National Security Strategy makes clear, and as Secretary Blinken stated, the People's Republic of China (PRC) is the greatest geopolitical challenge that we face because it is the only competitor with the intent, and increasingly the capability, to remake the international order. Beijing's actions suggest PRC officials have the intention to do so. The Czech Republic shares our skepticism of the PRC and has downgraded its cooperation and actively pushed back against PRC influence, including by enacting a foreign investment screening law. The United States' approach towards the PRC focuses on competing where our interests and values differ and cooperating with it when they align. If confirmed, I will support the Administration's policy on the PRC.

Question. In recent weeks, Czechia has seen a growing number of conflicting protests regarding assistance to Ukraine. Several tens of thousands of people have gathered in Prague for both anti-Ukraine protests, as well as pro-Ukraine protests. While the Czech Government remains broadly supportive of continuing assistance to Ukraine, these protests reflect a growing division in Czech society. It is paramount that Europe maintains the will to provide assistance to Ukraine so that the United States and its Pacific allies have the bandwidth to lead the charge in confronting the CCP in the Indo-Pacific.

- If confirmed, what can you do to bolster bipartisan support for Ukraine assistance within Czech society?

Answer. The Czech Republic has been one of the clearest voices supporting Ukraine's sovereignty and has contributed over $180 million. In addition, a Czech public crowdfunding campaign collected over $55 million to purchase military equipment for Ukraine from the Czech defense industry. The Czech Government has sent more than $15 million in humanitarian aid to Ukraine, and public Czech donors have collected over $120 million for humanitarian assistance to Ukraine. Czechs have opened their homes to over 460,000 refugees from Ukraine. Several rallies have been held in Prague with tens of thousands of Czechs demonstrating solidarity with Ukraine and support for democratic values.

I have also read about the recent protests in Prague and recognize the concerns of many Czech citizens related to high energy prices and inflation. If confirmed, I commit to working with the Czech Government to find solutions to the energy crisis, including working with U.S. companies, and to continue to build and maintain support for Ukraine across the Czech political spectrum.

Question. In January, Czechia will hold general elections for its Presidency and parliament. Based on the local election results in September, it's likely we'll see a return to power for former Prime Minister Andrej Babis' ANO party. What implications would a new Babis Government have on continued Czech support for Ukraine?

Answer. While I cannot predict the outcome of the Czech presidential election in January, if confirmed, I commit to working closely with the next Czech president to maintain the long history of shared commitment to democracy, freedom, and to the strong bilateral relationship between the Czech Republic and the United States. Government leaders across all major parties in the Czech Republic have voiced their unwavering public support for Ukraine, and if confirmed, I pledge to work closely with all Czech leaders to support the Czech Republic as it stands with Ukraine.

Question. Since February, the CCP has worked feverishly to create the facade that it's somehow not complicit in Putin's invasion of Ukraine. They do this by issuing statements emphasizing their support for a peaceful resolution and respect for sovereignty. In reality, the CCP continues to purchase Russian energy and do business with sanctioned Russian companies. Earlier this year, Latvia and Estonia both withdrew from the "Cooperation between China and Central and Eastern European Countries Initiative," also known as the "16+1," which the CCP uses to promote its views within Europe. In August, I sent a letter to the President, urging the Administration to support countries that leave the 16+1 and face a CCP economic blockade as a result.

- In June, the Czech Government announced its intention to explore withdrawing from 16+1. What can you tell me about the status of the Government's decision to leave this CCP-led international organization?

Answer. The Czech Republic engages with China diplomatically and commercially. It is also presently part of the 14+1 framework. Earlier this year, the Czech Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defense, and Security unanimously passed a non-binding resolution calling on the Government to leave the PRC's 14+1 initiative, and my understanding is that the issue is still under consideration. The Czech Republic has not been a recipient of major PRC investment, and recent opinion polls show that Czech attitudes toward the PRC are turning less favorable. Czech civil society organizations—as well as some officials—are enhancing cooperation with Taiwan while taking a harder line on the PRC. Under both the current and previous governments, the Czechs have been leaders in Europe for expanding international space for cooperation with Taiwan, particularly economic and academic engagement.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to working to persuade the Czech Government to finalize a decision to withdraw from 16+1?

Answer. The United States supports countries' sovereign right to shape the contours of their foreign policy. That said, I understand the State Department has shared concerns with U.S. allies and partners over the PRC's problematic policies, including in Europe and we have seen increasing concern among the Czech authorities about the PRC's foreign policy. The Czech Republic will make its own decision on membership in the grouping, which is now known as the 14+1 following the departure of Lithuania, Estonia, and Latvia over concerns with problematic PRC policies, including support for Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine and economic coercion of Lithuania.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO BIJAN SABET BY SENATOR TODD YOUNG

Question. Nominees from the private sector often bring a fresh perspective to their positions. However, they also sometimes chafe against the sometimes onerous but necessary restrictions of bureaucracy. How would you work with members of your Mission who may tell you that certain things cannot be done?

Answer. I have consulted with several highly effective U.S. Ambassadors who came from the private sector. If confirmed, I will bring my experience, energy, creativity, and leadership to the Mission. I will mentor our teams to prioritize objectives, seek creative ways to address challenges, and focus on operational excellence. If confirmed, I will promote a team atmosphere and will empower our team through open, transparent communication to execute our mandate and advance U.S. interests in the Czech Republic. I pledge to hold regular Town Hall meetings, consult with all staff (U.S. Direct Hires and Locally Employed staff), and convey my appreciation for the work they do to advance U.S. foreign policy goals. With Russia's war against Ukraine impacting nearby EU states, the Czech Republic holding the Council of the EU presidency since July 2022, and numerous high-level visits of late, I understand the Mission has stepped up to meet the challenge. If confirmed, I will advocate for Locally Employed staff salaries that keep up with the labor market and focus on strategies for improving retention.

Question. Can you speak to any personal experience in how you handled dissent from employees within any of your past ventures?

Answer. I have developed a management approach throughout my career that embraces three key elements: active listening, leading by example, and an ongoing commitment to foster a deep team alignment around a well-understood mission and purpose. I have also learned that the best ideas can often come from all areas of an organization. The State Department has a strong interest in facilitating open, creative, and honest dialogue on foreign policy issues, including the opportunity to offer alternative or dissenting opinions without fear of penalty. Whether through informal conversations with me or through more formal procedures with the Department of State's Dissent Channel, if confirmed, I commit to supporting all Mission employees in their ability to express dissenting or alternative views on policy issues.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO HON. STEPHANIE SANDERS SULLIVAN BY SENATOR ROBERT MENENDEZ

Question. There have been a number of coups in Africa since 2020—two in Mali, two in Burkina Faso, one in Chad, one in Guinea, and one in Sudan. The African

Union (AU) should serve as an important bulwark against unconstitutional change in Africa. Unfortunately, coups continue to occur.

- What actions is the AU taking—beyond the suspension of some countries—to deter military coups in Africa, and what role will you play if confirmed in advocating for consistent consequences for those who undertake coups and other unconstitutional changes of government by the AU?

Answer. With limited exceptions, the AU has consistently applied their policy of suspending countries who suffer from a coup or other unconstitutional change of government. Following the AU Extraordinary Summit on Terrorism and Unconstitutional Changes in Government in Malabo in May 2022, the AU has rededicated efforts to improving implementation of AU sanctions and enhancing its coordination with the Regional Economic Communities and Regional Mechanisms (RECs/RMs). We support these efforts.

Question. If confirmed, what will your role be in advocating for consistent application of the African Union's own principle of prohibiting transitional leaders from serving as candidates in elections they are responsible for organizing?

Answer. I anticipate being as proactive as possible to reinforce this principle and to encourage African voices to speak the loudest on this policy.

Question. What effect has the African Union and international community's failure to call General Mahamat Deby's unconstitutional seizure of power a coup had on efforts to advocate for a transition to a democratically elected, civilian led government in Chad, and what steps will you take if confirmed to encourage robust engagement by the AU to support a transition?

Answer. The AU Peace and Security Council (PSC) cited grave security threats in Chad following the death of President Idriss Deby in April 2021 to justify allowing an 18-month transition to restore constitutional government in Chad with clear guidelines that Chad has since disregarded. If confirmed, I would engage with the AU PSC and its members to advocate for a strong stance to uphold AU directives supporting Chad's transition to an elected civilian government.

Question. What message does the AU's failure to call what occurred in Chad a coup and impose appropriate consequences send to other military coup leaders, and coup plotters, and what steps will you take if confirmed to encourage consistent actions by the African Union in response to coups?

Answer. There are real risks that Chad could set a negative precedent for the Africa region if it disregards the clear guidelines issued by the AU PSC and fails to ensure an inclusive and credible transition to democracy, while still maintaining its AU membership. If confirmed, I will advocate with the AU and its members to maintain and apply consistent consequences for unconstitutional changes of government and to incentivize AU member states to avoid lapses in constitutional government.

Question. While a number of African leaders have reinforced the democratic trajectories of their countries by retiring in accordance with constitutionally mandated term limits, others have plunged their countries into greater instability and uncertainty by seeking unconstitutional and illegal third terms. In October, for instance, Central African Republic (CAR) President Faustin Touadera illegally removed the President of CAR's Constitutional Court after she declared Touadera's efforts to engineer a third term unconstitutional. Polling by the Afrobarometer consistently shows overwhelming public support for term limits, with more than three-quarters of people across Africa in favor of holding their presidents to two terms in office.

- Given overwhelming public support for term limits and the evident damage third terms inflict on development, democracy, and stability across Africa, should the African Union do more to prevent third term bids?

Answer. A fundamental aspect of a democratic society is successful, and regular, transitions of power. In recent years, we have witnessed a growing number of African leaders refusing to step down after their constitutionally mandated terms have expired, and even changing or attempting to modify the constitution in order to seek additional terms in office.

Within its own charters, the African Union condemns and rejects unconstitutional changes of government. And leaders across the continent have echoed such concerns. For example, in July, Botswana co-hosted a Summit on Constitutionalism and Democratic Consolidation with the National Democratic Institute. The summit concluded by issuing the Gaborone Declaration in Support of Constitutionalism and Democratic Consolidation, which commends the peaceful transfer of executive power through credible and inclusive elections and the strengthening of democratic prac-

tices in a number of African countries. If confirmed, I will encourage African Union counterparts to leverage similar events to advance our shared commitment to meaningful democratic processes and regular transitions of power that reflect the will of the people.

Question. What steps should the African Union take to dissuade Touadera and other leaders from seeking third terms?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with the AU to elevate recent democracy success stories, such as those of countries that have recently completed their first peaceful, democratic transfer of power; those who are long-standing democracies; those whose leaders are reinvigorating the fight against corruption; and those where democratic institutions have been tested and prevailed. U.S. partnership with the AU, member states, civil society, and like-minded international actors presents the best way to push back against this antidemocratic tide so countries can enjoy long-term stability to advance inclusive economic growth, create jobs, and improve health and livelihoods.

Question. What should be the consequences for leaders who insist on undoing their constitutions to remain in office?

Answer. The United States remains committed to democratic institutions and processes. It is ultimately up to the people in African nations to decide the future of their country, which should be done through a consultative, free and fair, and transparent process. The United States believes in regular, democratic transitions of power, which yield more accountability, stronger institutions, more constructive citizen participation in the political process, and less corruption.

Question. What is the African Union's position on the presence of foreign mercenaries in Africa? Russian mercenaries working for the Kremlin-backed Wagner Group are present in Mali, the Central African Republic, Sudan, and elsewhere in Africa. Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy, meanwhile, invited Eritrean mercenaries into Ethiopia to fight the Tigrean Peoples Liberation Front (TPLF) in northern Ethiopia. Both groups—Wagner and the Eritreans—are responsible for perpetrating gross violations of human rights alongside the national armies they are aligned with. What steps has the African Union taken to hold these mercenaries, and the governments that hired them, responsible for these abuses?

Answer. The African Union Peace and Security Council has recognized the threat mercenaries and foreign-backed forces pose to peace and stability on the continent and has convened a working group to design a framework for regulating the best practices vis a vis private military companies (PMCs), recognizing many countries have a legitimate interest in seeking external support to resolve security issues. This is a serious and sincere effort to which the AUPSC has devoted their own resources, rather than being an initiative driven by external donor funds. We fully support this effort.

Question. What will be your top priorities as Ambassador to the African Union? What specific steps will you take to encourage the AU to do more to prevent democratic backsliding, establish accountability for human rights abuses, and resolve conflicts?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with the AU to coordinate continued efforts to strengthen democratic principles and institutions on the continent. At the core of our efforts will be the promotion of transparent, effective, and accountable governments, with institutions that both empower citizens and respond to citizens' aspirations, while simultaneously addressing backsliding and human rights abuses. Strong, accountable, and democratic institutions, sustained by a deep commitment to respect for human rights and access to justice for all people, generate greater prosperity, deliver tangible benefits, and meet with greater success in ensuring peace, while enhancing U.S. security and economic partnerships. One of the great successes of our partnership with the African Union is the progress we have made in the health sector. The United States has supported the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention CDC (Africa CDC) since 2015, when former Secretary Kerry and then-AUC Chairperson Zuma signed a memorandum of cooperation on the Africa CDC to formalize cooperation, including technical assistance exchanges between the U.S. CDC and the AUC. I endeavor to continue building on this important cooperation.

Democracy & Human Rights

Question. What are the most important actions you have taken in your career to date to support democracy and human rights? What has been the impact of your actions?

Answer. As Ambassador to Ghana, in the runup to Ghana's December 2020 elections, I emphasized to all parties the importance of peaceful, free and fair elections, subsequent to political violence at a by-election in January 2019. When the opposition candidate refused to concede the election, I urged him to advance his concerns through available legal avenues, which defused a charged situation. I also urged the Government of Ghana to investigate election-related deaths. These investigations were ongoing at the time I departed Ghana in April 2021.

On the human rights front, I spoke out publicly and privately about a free and responsible media, including the importance of pursuing the investigation of the murder of investigative journalist Ahmed Hussein-Soule in January 2019. The investigation was ongoing at the time I departed Ghana in April 2021.

I raised a pride flag at my residence in June 2021, an act of solidarity with the beleaguered LGBTQI+ community which attracted months of threatening social media messages from a local religious figure. My team and I remained steadfast in our support for the community and continued to raise concerns (with leaders of the executive and legislative branches) about the sweeping draft homophobic legislation that private members (rather than the government) introduced in Parliament several weeks later. Ghana's Attorney General has since issued an opinion that several provisions of the draft are unconstitutional.

While Ambassador to the Republic of Congo, I made numerous private demarches (including related to AGOA eligibility and our annual reports on Human Rights, Trafficking in Persons, and Child Labor) and public statements and speeches in support of respect for human rights, free and fair elections, democracy, respect for the constitution and rule of law, as well as freedom of expression and association, as well as ending trafficking in persons and child labor. I believe that as a result of my actions and those of others, the Republic of Congo's new constitution (of 2015, replacing that of 2002) included term limits (when early indications were that there would be no term limits), although the term limitation for the incumbent president was reset. I raised these topics with officials from other sub-Saharan countries both as Acting Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for African Affairs and as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Central Africa.

At Embassy Brazzaville, I created an Eligible Family Member position of human rights specialist in the political section. This enabled our Human Rights Report to be provide greater insights on the human rights situation outside the major cities, in particular with regard to the indigenous Baka people. Also in Brazzaville, I continued the annual African American film festival, which showed U.S. films that modeled peaceful civic action and persistence in the face of discrimination. I initiated an annual film festival promoting a free and responsible media for press freedom day, which led to the commitment on the part of the Government of the Republic of Congo to hold a national stocktaking of the state of the media. I revived and advanced a multi-year project to have Voice of America transmit in Brazzaville, which will provide a credible source of information in a largely government-controlled media landscape; the transmission debuted in July 2018.

I organized Embassy election observation missions during my tenure in Cameroon, Ghana (twice), and the Republic of Congo, and supported other observation efforts from the Bureau of African Affairs. In part as a result of these efforts, countries knew that the United States valued peaceful and credible processes and that the United States was paying close attention.

While in Ghana as Political Chief, after I saw multiple reports of police killings via "stray bullets," I spearheaded a proposal for community policing training, that was approved and conducted during my time at post. I also became aware of a potential attack on a church service during a period in which there was traditional ban on drumming. I attended the church service, during which a mob attacked the church with cement blocks. I believe my presence as a U.S. diplomat deterred the attackers from inflicting worse damage than they did. I subsequently raised the attack with government officials in the context of religious freedom.

Question. What issues are the most pressing challenges to democracy or democratic development in Africa? These challenges might include obstacles to participatory and accountable governance and institutions, rule of law, authentic political competition, civil society, human rights and press freedom. Please be as specific as possible.

Answer. Democratic deficiencies contribute to transnational threats across the region. Therefore, we must help communities foster legitimate, inclusive political systems that respect human rights and the rule of law, reduce fragility, mitigate risks of violent conflict and instability, deliver services to their citizens, and create enabling environments for economic growth. The African continent has made important

gains in democracy and institution building over the last few decades, but those gains have been uneven, are fragile, and require support.

Repressive laws, often in the name of security, restrict freedoms of expression and peaceful assembly and undercut efforts to support nascent civil society. These laws can provide legal cover for harassment of opposition politicians, journalists, and civil society. They curb internal dissent, squelch legitimate criticism, and limit the development of viable political competition, and as a result, fuel grievances that are sometimes addressed violently.

Although elections are widely accepted as the norm in the region, meaningful democracy extends far beyond elections. In many countries, corruption is endemic, and state institutions remain weak. In addition to corruption, unaccountable public financial management systems undermine sustainable economic growth and responsive democratic governance.

Question. What steps will you take—if confirmed—to encourage the African Union to place a strong emphasis on adherence to democratic principles and the rule of law by member states? What do you hope to accomplish through these actions? What are the potential impediments to addressing the specific obstacles you have identified?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with the AU, as well as AU member states, to support democratic institutions, respect for human rights, accountability, access to justice, and good governance. This includes supporting and improving the effectiveness of the Department of Political Affairs, Peace and Security; Office of Legal Counsel; and other relevant AU organs, all of which play a critical role to promote democratic values within the AU and the region.

If confirmed, I will also utilize the annual U.S.-AU Commission High Level Dialogue to advance support for free and fair elections that are peaceful, inclusive governance, transitional justice, protection of marginalized populations, and anti-corruption efforts.

There will be challenges. Capacity remains weak and resources scarce within AU institutions. Leaders of some member states do not share American values of democracy and respect for human rights, and thus, achieving consensus within the AU for these issues could be difficult. If confirmed, I commit to identifying influential decision-makers who share our values and who can help advocate for them as being in the best interest of Africa and Africans, by highlighting the impact on the investment climate, for example.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to meet with civil society members, human rights and other non-governmental organizations and with human rights NGOs, and other members of civil society who are seeking to engage with the AU?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to meet with civil society members, human rights and other non-governmental organizations and with human rights NGOs who are seeking to engage with the AU, as appropriate. A robust and diverse civil society able to do its work unhindered is imperative for a peaceful and prosperous Africa. I will strive to empower all Africans, with particular emphasis on women and youth, to constructively shape and participate in inclusive social, political, and economic environments where they can thrive and contribute to sustainable economic development.

Question. What steps will you take to encourage the AU to consistently support genuine political competition in member states?

Answer. A healthy democracy requires free and fair political processes that are peaceful, as well as checks and balances, a free and responsible press, respect for human rights, and an engaged civil society. If confirmed, I will highlight the shared commitment of African nations articulated in documents such as the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance as a tool to promote meaningful political competition and adherence to democratic norms. I will promote robust engagement with African civil society including youth and marginalized populations to advance inclusive political and democratic processes that welcome the voices of all citizens in political debate.

Question. Will you and your Embassy team actively support more robust actions by the AU related to violations of member states of freedom of the press including government efforts designed to control or undermine press freedom through legal, regulatory or other measures? Will you commit to meeting with independent press from AU member states if confirmed?

Answer. If confirmed, I will commit to meeting with independent press from AU member states, as appropriate. A free, responsible press remain underpinnings for

democracies throughout the world, in order to hold elected officials accountable and foster an informed citizenry.

Question. Will you and your Embassy team actively engage on countering disinformation and propaganda disseminated by malign actors?

Answer. If confirmed, I and my Embassy team will actively engage on countering disinformation and propaganda disseminated by malign actors. We are working to counter disinformation through Global Engagement Center (GEC) counter-disinformation programming across Africa by working with local African partners to provide counter-disinformation training for journalists, along with exposing, countering, and building resiliency to disinformation aimed at undermining the stability and the integrity of African democratic systems. As disinformation and manipulation work best in a monopolized information space, I will work with allies and partners to encourage and promote professional, balanced, and fact-based reporting while respecting the independence of the media and expose and counter hostile disinformation campaigns.

Question. Will you and your Embassy team actively engage the AU on speaking out on labor rights, including the right to organize for independent trade unions in member states?

Answer. The AU has a long-standing memorandum of understanding with the U.N. International Labor Organization (ILO). Among recent engagements, in 2021, the African Union (AU), in collaboration with the International Labour Organization (ILO), launched the International Year for the Elimination of Child Labour in Africa. Since 2018, the African Union Commission (AUC), ILO, International Organization for Migration (IOM), and U.N. Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) have collaborated on a Joint Program on Labor Migration Governance for Development and Integration (JLMP). The JLMP identifies challenges in many African countries. JLMP priorities include delivering improved migration governance services in cooperation with workers, employers' organizations, the private sector, recruitment industry and relevant civil society organizations. The USAU mission supports these efforts and seeks to contribute to advancing labor sector best practices, in part through sharing U.S. experiences and expertise.

Question. Will you commit to using your position, if confirmed, to defend the human rights and dignity of all people, no matter their sexual orientation or gender identity?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to using my position to defend the human rights and dignity of all people, no matter their sexual orientation or gender identity. The safety and security of members of all marginalized groups, including LGBTQI+ persons, is of the utmost importance; therefore, I will ensure our approach within the AU, first and foremost, does no harm. I will also urge the AU to develop strategies that prioritize regular discussions with local LGBTQI+ communities and civil society partners.

Congressional Consultation

Question. Will you commit, if confirmed, to ensuring that you fully brief Members of Congress and/or their staff each time you are in Washington for visits or consultations during your tenure as Ambassador to the African Union?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to ensuring that Members of Congress and/or their staff receive timely briefings when requested, either from myself or Africa Bureau leadership in Washington.

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility

Question. Earlier this year I convened a hearing on the important work of the State Department's Chief Diversity Officer and the important role diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility efforts play in maintaining our countries' competitive edge on the global stage. How do you anticipate fostering diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility at the U.S. Embassy to the African Union?

Answer. I am proud that the U.S. Embassy to the African Union and our co-located U.S. bilateral Embassy to Ethiopia have a joint Diversity Equity Inclusion and Accessibility Council (DEIA Council) that has spent the past year establishing itself and is already engaging in a range of programming for our community. The DEIA Council promotes DEIA values and standards by: developing and implementing a range of programs, practices, and systems to improve and increase diversity; to promote DEIA training; and build capacity for staff. The DEIA Council is led by an Executive Committee (EC) comprised of the council co-chairs, primary and backup treasurer, and the five subcommittee chairs. The five subcommittees consist of 1)

the Data Analysis & Institutional Policy Reforms Sub-Committee, which analyses various DEIA workplace metrics, 2) the Inclusive Design & Accessibility Sub-Committee, 3) the Communications Sub-Committee, 4) the Coordination Sub-Committee, which coordinates with HR and other Mission organizations, and 5) the Programs and Events Sub-Committee which promotes and supports DEIA events, activities, and discussions. Already during its first year, the DEIA Council has organized conversations on DEIA values, a Juneteenth celebration, and fundraising events. Strong unequivocal leadership on DEIA values is critical for progress. I will demonstrate that leadership, if confirmed, as I did as Chief of Mission in Accra and Brazzaville. I look forward to working with the DEIA Council and Embassy community as we promote DEIA values within our joint Mission community and with our external partners and interlocutors.

Question. What specifically will you do to prioritize and promote diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility, while also combating racism, discrimination, and inequality among locally employed staff?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to engaging more equitably in operations and programming with partners and communities that have traditionally been marginalized, excluded, or underrepresented.

Question. In addition to focusing on diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility in our workforce, will you commit to engaging more equitably in operations and programming, particularly with potential partners and communities that traditionally have been marginalized, excluded, or underrepresented in ours and others' donor and partnership efforts? How do you anticipate utilizing local expertise, knowledge, and capacity to meet our foreign policy goals?

Answer. The State Department relies on new and established relationships to meet our foreign policy goals; if confirmed, I intend to continue building upon our ties. For example, I will track the inclusion of women in USAU representation events and avoid male-only panels to the extent possible.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO HON. STEPHANIE SANDERS SULLIVAN BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Question. The African Union has mediated peace agreements in Ethiopia (2022) and the Central African Republic (2019), and South Sudan (2018), and in 2022 it formed a high-level panel with the U.N. Secretary-General to respond to security and humanitarian crises in the Sahel region. The AU also has authorized or otherwise endorsed regional military interventions that aim to stabilize Somalia, the Sahel, the Lake Chad Basin, Mozambique, and eastern Democratic Republic of Congo.

- As U.S. Ambassador, how would you balance U.S. support for AU leadership on regional peace and security initiatives, while also responding to instances where AU mediations and military interventions have led to flawed outcomes?

Answer. We believe strongly in the principle of African solutions for African problems, and endeavor to support the AU leadership's efforts to reduce and resolve conflicts. There are few conflicts worldwide that have a perfectly peaceful resolution; all require sustained engagement and further mediation after the initial agreement. In addition, it is crucial for organizations to undertake ongoing monitoring and evaluation and conduct after action reports in order to share lessons learned and continuously improve. If confirmed, I would bring to bear my own experience doing so, particularly with crisis management in the Operations Center.

Question. What U.S. actions would you advocate in cases where AU peace mediation efforts have failed to hold regional leaders accountable for mass atrocities committed during armed conflicts, as in South Sudan?

Answer. We consistently raise issues of accountability and transitional justice in the course of our diplomacy and offer technical and fiscal support as we are able to those lines of effort wherever they are welcome. If confirmed, I would strongly encourage the AU to give advance notice of consequences and to follow up with imposition of consequences as warranted.

Question. As U.S. Ambassador, would you encourage a greater AU role in addressing conflicts in the Sahel and Cameroon? Why or why not?

Answer. African leadership is a necessary component to effectively address root causes of conflicts on the African continent and finding sustainable and inclusive solutions. Interventions and solutions imposed from outside tend to be less effective.

If confirmed, I would engage with AU leadership on its criteria for continuing to defer to the Regional Economic Communities in the first instance, in line with the AU principle of subsidiarity, or deciding to engage in specific conflict resolution efforts at the level of the AU.

Question. Under what conditions, if any, would you advocate a change in U.S. policy to support the financing of AU peace operations through U.N. assessed contributions?

Answer. The United States is committed to continued dialogue with the AU and its member states regarding sustainable and predictable financing for AU peace operations consistent with the terms outlined under UNSCR 2320. UNSCR 2320 notes a number of important conditions with respect to possible U.N. financing for AU peace operations, including expectations regarding burden-sharing by the AU and finalization of human rights and conduct and discipline frameworks. If confirmed, I would pay particular attention to AU progress on these fronts and report on the status to policymakers in Washington, accompanied by recommendations developed in consultation with my team.

Question. Please outline your position, and the Administration's, on the AU's decision to mandate member states' collection of a 0.2 percent levy on imports to finance the AU Peace Fund.

Answer. The United States is committed to continued dialogue with the AU and its member states regarding sustainable and predictable financing for AU peace operations and supports the commitments made by the AU and its member states towards greater burden-sharing in the context of financing these operations. We understand there are currently 17 countries using or planning to use the 0.2 percent levy as a tool to meet their financial obligations as AU member states, including but not limited to their required contributions to the AU Peace Fund. The United States is committed to working with our African partners to achieve these goals through methods that are consistent with their international obligations, to include their WTO obligations.

Question. Military officers have seized power in several African countries in recent years, including Burkina Faso, Chad, Guinea, Mali, and Sudan. At least two more African countries have claimed to put down military coup attempts. The AU's African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance pledges "condemnation and total rejection of unconstitutional changes of government."

As U.S. Ambassador to the AU, what actions will you pursue to encourage African leaders to uphold their commitments to deter unconstitutional changes of government, including military coups?

Answer. The dramatic increase in coups and other unconstitutional changes of government over the past few years highlights how weak institutions, defined by ineffective governance, endemic corruption, a lack of genuine accountability, and limits to political participation, can contribute to the deployment of extraconstitutional means to reset political cultures. If confirmed, I will work with the African Union and member states to build and support democratic institutions capable of meeting the needs of their people. Together, we must continue to highlight to African leaders that strong, accountable, and democratic institutions, sustained by a deep commitment to respect for human rights and access to justice for all people, attract desired foreign direct investment, generate greater prosperity, deliver tangible benefits, and meet with greater success in ensuring peace and long-term stability.

Question. As Ambassador, how would you pursue U.S. efforts to isolate Russia diplomatically and respond to its malign activities in Africa?

Answer. The actions of Kremlin-backed forces on the continent and Russia's violation of the bedrock principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity, which are enshrined in the U.N. Charter, have done more to isolate Russia diplomatically than we could hope to accomplish through rhetoric alone. Many African leaders see that Russia's rhetoric and disinformation do not match its actions, and that entities such as the Wagner Group are more interested in extracting African resources rather than improving local security and prosperity. Only leaders without viable security alternatives have turned to Wagner for assistance, and they do so at the cost of their nation. If confirmed, I will continue to work with African interlocutors to highlight and contrast our agenda of genuine partnership and prosperity with Russia's malign intentions.

Question. The People's Republic of China financed the AU's headquarters in Ethiopia and is reportedly building a new headquarters for the AU's Africa Centres for

Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC). As Ambassador, how would you seek to counter China's influence within the AU?

Answer. The AU and Africa CDC should seek transparency within every partnership, including on infrastructure development. If confirmed, I will continue USAU's work to develop and implement transparent, respectful, and action-oriented partnerships that are fully aligned with both USG and AU/Africa CDC standards and priorities. This would include continuing to draw on U.S. comparative advantages in global health and development—including leveraging our proven expertise, programs, and resources in Africa as well as the U.S.'s global leadership in science, technology, and innovation—to engage with AU agencies and member states. The AU established a technical working group to ensure that the construction of the new Africa CDC headquarters was carried out appropriately, and Africa CDC has requested that all software—including the building's information and data management systems—be handled by an independent group to ensure that it is under the strict oversight of the AU. Africa CDC has yet to move into the new headquarters but, if confirmed, I will keep a close eye on how the situation progresses.

Question. Many U.S. Missions have been under enormous stress over the last few years, in large part due to COVID. What is your understanding of morale throughout Mission African Union?

Answer. Like at many U.S. Missions, the COVID–19 pandemic affected morale at USAU, as did the 2021 ordered departure. Despite these challenges, as I understand it, USAU's interagency team has shown its resiliency and dedication, maintained high productivity, and worked together to improve morale—referring to themselves as a "small but mighty" team. If confirmed, I commit to leading a Mission that prioritizes the morale of its team, and to supporting USDH and PSC employees as well as locally engaged staff, as I have elsewhere.

Question. How do you intend to improve morale at Mission African Union?

Answer. If confirmed, I will endeavor to continue to improve morale at USAU by appreciating and empowering my team, providing strategic direction, and ensuring our Mission has the training and staffing levels needed for success in the multilateral arena. I would look forward to working supportively and inclusively with the talented interagency professionals at USAU as well as with our esteemed colleagues at the bilateral mission who provide the USAU management platform.

Question. How do you intend to create a unified mission and vision at Mission African Union?

Answer. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the staff of five agencies who make up the USAU team. Together, we will renew our mission and vision, particularly drawing on the outcomes of the upcoming U.S.-Africa Leaders' Summit, aligning our objectives articulated in the U.S. Strategy for Sub-Saharan Africa and the AU's Agenda 2063. I look forward to drawing on the expertise of my team to review and improve upon the strategic frameworks of our partnership with the AU and prioritize activities where we can have the greatest strategic impact.

Question. Management is a key responsibility for Chiefs of Mission. How would you describe your management style?

Answer. Over the course of my 35 years of public service, I have learned quite a bit on how to manage and empower staff and have developed an inclusive, servant-leadership style. I believe in identifying and harnessing the individual strengths and skills of my staff to contribute to a collaborative effort to achieve U.S. objectives, whereby the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

Question. Do you believe it is ever acceptable or constructive to berate subordinates, either in public or private?

Answer. It is never appropriate or acceptable to berate subordinates.

Question. How do you envision your leadership relationship with your Deputy Chief of Mission?

Answer. If confirmed, I plan to work closely and collaboratively with the Deputy Chief of Mission at the U.S. Mission to the African Union. The role is currently occupied by Mika Cleverley, an experienced and effective diplomat. If confirmed, I would look forward to working with him as a full partner and my top advisor, who can fill in for me internally or externally with my complete confidence and authority.

Question. If confirmed, what leadership responsibilities do you intend to entrust to your Deputy Chief of Mission?

Answer. If confirmed, I intend to entrust the Deputy Chief of Mission with management of personnel and the administrative platform, acting Chief of Mission duties when applicable, and assistance in formulating U.S. policy that will have the greatest impact on our relationship with the African Union.

Question. In order to create and continue employee excellence at the Department, accurate and direct employee evaluation reports (EERs) for Foreign Service Officers are imperative, though often lacking.

Do you believe that it is important to provide employees with accurate, constructive feedback on their performances in order to encourage improvement and reward those who most succeeded in their roles?

Answer. The Department seeks to empower all staff to succeed throughout their careers and is scrupulous about the need for timely evaluation reports. If confirmed, yes, I will ensure that supervisors provide accurate and timely feedback to all employees in a constructive manner, to help them reach their full potential.

Question. If confirmed, would you support and encourage clear, accurate, and direct feedback to employees in order to improve performance and reward high achievers?

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, I will support and encourage clear, accurate, timely, direct, and effective feedback to all employees.

Question. It is imperative that U.S. diplomats get outside of posts abroad to meet with local actors, including host government officials, non-government organizations, and fellow foreign diplomats stationed in Ethiopia.

- In your opinion, do U.S. diplomats get outside of our Embassy walls enough to accomplish fully their missions?

Answer. Much of diplomacy relies on interacting directly with foreign interlocutors. Our highly qualified and motivated team at the U.S. Mission to the African Union routinely makes key connections with important contacts outside of the Embassy walls, including with the AU Commission, AU member states, AU organs and international partners, as well as think-tanks, academia, and other civil society organizations focused on AU matters as appropriate, with extensive travel outside Addis Ababa. The current USAU team has demonstrated superb outreach in building relationships across the AU, including with far-flung AU institutions throughout the continent. If confirmed, I intend to continue that approach.

Question. How do you intend to improve the ability of U.S. diplomats to better access all local populations?

Answer. If confirmed, I will expect my team at the U.S. Mission to the African Union to cast a broad net in terms of diversity of contacts, whether in person or virtually, given the geographical breadth of the AU and its member states. I would ensure my team coordinates with our accredited Embassy when engaging substantively with interlocutors based in member states.

Question. Public diplomacy is an important aspect of U.S. foreign policy efforts. What is the public diplomacy environment like in African Union institutions?

Answer. The African Union currently represents a population of 1.3 billion people. That incredible diversity presents both immense public diplomacy opportunities and messaging challenges. The communication departments of the AU and its organs strive to reach all their audiences, but often lack resources to do so effectively. More transparency, interaction with the African press, and citizen engagement would serve the AU well in creating a body that has African public buy-in and ownership. If confirmed, I would explore ways to partner with the AU to enhance its public diplomacy capacity.

Question. What public diplomacy challenges do U.S. diplomats face at African Union headquarters?

Answer. The African Union Commission (AUC) is a friendly environment for public diplomacy-focused U.S. diplomats. Resource limitations, lack of communication-focused staff, lack of public engagement-focused staff, and the U.S. status as an observer state rather than a member state can hinder collaboration. USAU public diplomacy officers, however, regularly identify opportunities within the AUC's own initiatives for strategic support, such as engaging the African public on the AU's theme of the year, providing training and reporting opportunities for AU Media Fellows, and connecting the AUC's Citizens and Diaspora Directorate with African American organizations in the United States. If confirmed, I would explore innovative ways to increase the following for our social media outreach, keeping in mind

Africa's youthful demographics, which are trending toward half the continent's population being under the age of 25 by 2025.

Question. How do you balance the importance of Main State versus the in-country Mission when it comes to tailoring public diplomacy messages for foreign audiences?

Answer. It is a collaborative effort. For messaging to be effective, it both must be consistent and sensitive to context. It is important for Main State to lead on topline messaging so that posts worldwide are sending a consistent message. In-country Missions then can take those messages and tailor them to their particular cultural contexts and audiences. It requires two-way communication between posts and Washington, a method that our consistently improving communication tools are enabling with more efficiency each year.

Question. "Anomalous health incidents," commonly referred to as "Havana Syndrome," have been debilitating and sidelining U.S. diplomats around the world for years. They have caused serious, negative consequences for U.S. diplomacy, yet many believe that the Department is not doing enough to care for, protect, and communicate to its personnel.

- If confirmed, do you commit to taking this threat seriously?

Answer. The health and safety of all employees of the State Department is of utmost importance. I also take the responsibility for the health and safety of my team seriously, as demonstrated during civil unrest in the Republic of Congo and the pandemic in Ghana. If confirmed, I intend to echo the concern and dedication of our Secretary of State in ensuring all staff are protected from threats to their health and to communicating relevant information about AHIs to my team.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to talking as openly as you can to Mission African Union personnel?

Answer. I have always believed in the importance of clear, open, and timely communication. If confirmed, I intend to talk as openly as possible to all personnel at the U.S. Mission to the African Union.

Question. In the State Department's 2022 Human Rights report, many of the countries within the AU are noted for egregious human rights abuses. One of the AU's stated objectives is to promote and protect human and people's rights in accordance with the African Charter of Human and People's Rights in member states.

- Would you directly address the issue of human rights abuses with the states committing violations?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with the AU to coordinate continued efforts to strengthen democratic principles and institutions and respect for human rights on the continent. Promoting democracy, civic engagement, and respect for human rights in Africa contributes to peace and prosperity, which enhances U.S. security and economic partnerships. Invoking the African Union's own standards is an approach I believe would be effective in general, while deferring the lead in specific cases to my counterparts in the relevant bilateral Embassy and appropriate geographical Bureau in Washington.

Question. In the State Department's 2022 Trafficking in Persons report, a majority of the countries in the AU are Tier 2 or worse for failing to meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking. Many states fail to identify victims and traffickers, provide victim services, prosecute traffickers, and are plagued by corruption of officials complicit in trafficking crimes.

- If confirmed, how could you work with AU to combat corruption and complicity in anti-trafficking work regionally?

Answer. AU members are making progress in addressing corruption and complicity, with support of the United States and other partners. If confirmed, I will encourage the AUC to reinforce member states' efforts to combat human trafficking. In particular, I will highlight the need for governments to address corruption and complicity, a shared global challenge in the fight against human trafficking, by urging increased efforts to investigate and prosecute such crimes, including cases involving officials.

Question. How would you engage with the AU to improve member states' ability to protect and provide for victims, while increasing the amount and efficiency of investigations, prosecutions, and convictions of traffickers?

Answer. One of the AU's greatest strengths is its ability to promote principles that influence and shape the policies of its member states. It is also able to elevate the importance of issues, such as combatting human trafficking and the protection of human rights. If confirmed, I will support AU and member state government ef-

forts to inform implementation of anti-trafficking laws through targeted and routine trainings as well as coordination on effective use of identification and referral mechanisms for trafficking victims. In addition, I will work with my team and colleagues in bilateral missions to share best practices as appropriate.

Question. In the State Department's 2021 International Religious Freedom report, the member states of the AU make up a diverse assembly of religious demography, and many states struggle with allowing for religious freedoms for minority religious groups and promoting religious tolerance amongst their societies.

- What actions would you take with the AU to mitigate religious violence and promote religious tolerance amongst and within member states?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to promoting respect for the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all persons, including promoting religious tolerance within the AUC and AU member states. I commit to working with the U.S. Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom to engagement with the AU on religious freedom.

I will also work with the AU to develop strategies on violence prevention and the promotion of religious tolerance and as well as engage in discussions with religious leaders and civil society partners. I will raise religious freedom and tolerance and related issues in the context of broader human rights and democracy concerns wherever possible.

Question. How could you engage with the AU to increase cooperation within the member states on improving religious freedoms?

Answer. Africa is dynamic, where identity, including religious identity, is complex and multifaceted. The region also prides itself not just on religious tolerance, but on religious pluralism. If confirmed, I commit to work with the Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom to support the AUC in its efforts to advance and promote religious freedom throughout the continent.

Advancing respect for human rights fundamental freedoms are critical to achieving peace and long-term stability on the continent. If confirmed, I will engage with the AU on the positive role religion can play in conflict transformation, reconciliation, and advancing respect for human rights. Promoting religious freedom also specifically contributes to strengthening tolerance and respect among religious groups and people of all beliefs (whether atheists, Christians, Muslims, indigenous groups, or any others). If confirmed, I will also seek to amplify African voices in support of religious freedom and tolerance across the continent.

Question. The Office of Multilateral Strategy and Personnel (MSP) in the State Department's bureau of International Organizations is leading a whole-of-government effort to identify, recruit, and install qualified, independent personnel at the U.N., including in elections for specialized bodies like the International Telecommunications Union (ITU). There is an American candidate, Doreen Bogdan-Martin, who if elected would be the first American and first woman to lead the ITU. She is in a tough race that will require early, consistent engagement across capitals and within the U.N. member states.

- If confirmed, do you commit to demarching the member states governments and any other counterparts necessary to encourage their support of Ms. Bogdan-Martin?

Answer. I am pleased Ms. Bogdan-Martin was elected on September 29, 2022. The U.S. Mission to the AU played an important role in encouraging massive support for her candidacy from AU member states. If confirmed, I commit to mobilize my team in similar efforts to advance key U.S. candidacies in multilateral fora.

Question. If confirmed, how can you work with the International Organizations (IO) bureau and other stakeholders to identify, recruit, and install qualified Americans in positions like the Junior Program Officer (JPO) program at the U.N.?

Answer. The Junior Professional Officer program is one of the key opportunities offered by the U.N. to encourage young professionals interested in serving in international organizations, and it provides them with hands-on experience across various U.N. agencies. If confirmed, I will coordinate closely with my colleagues in the International Organization Affairs Bureau and other stakeholders to ensure we have sufficient resources, tools, and staffing to support more positions for American citizen JPOs in the U.N. system. With these resources, we can work strategically to increase the number of JPO opportunities funded by the U.S. Government into key agencies and bodies that work on U.S. priorities, expand our recruitment and outreach activities to ensure these opportunities are widely known and available to

interested U.S. citizens, and provide tools and services to strengthen our competitiveness in placing qualified American citizens into the U.N. system.

Question. Many AU countries have a low rate of voting coincidence with the U.S. in the U.N. General Assembly and in the Security Council. What is your assessment of this issue?

Answer. The Bureaus of African Affairs and Near Eastern Affairs are working to improve this, in concert with desks and posts to develop support through capitals—with promising results. The U.N. General Assembly Resolution on Territorial Integrity in October is one example. If confirmed, I will lead my team in supportive efforts with AU member states.

Question. If confirmed, what concrete actions can you take to engage with the member states on anticipated votes in the U.N. system that would increase their voting coincidence with the U.S.?

Answer. If confirmed, my team and I will closely coordinate with the Bureaus of African Affairs and Near Eastern Affairs which, in turn, closely coordinate with the Department's other bureaus to discuss anticipated votes and maximize multilateral campaigns in capitals and elsewhere to increase voting coincidence.

Question. Do you believe that the U.N. Security Council should finance AU peacekeeping missions without express authorization from a majority of the Security Council? Why or why not?

Answer. We are working with the African Union and its member states to explore options for predictable and sustainable financing for AU-led peace support operations, in line with prior U.N. Security Council resolutions. UNSCR 2320 stresses the primacy of U.N. Security Council oversight for any operations that are authorized by the UNSC, consistent with Chapter VIII of the U.N. Charter. The resolutions do not leave open the possibility of financing operations absent a U.N. Security Council authorization.

Question. Do you commit to ensuring that any financing to any AU peacekeeping mission is authorized explicitly by the Security Council?

Answer. We are working with the African Union and its member states to explore options for predictable and sustainable financing for AU-led peace support operations, in line with prior U.N. Security Council resolutions. Specifically, UNSCR 2320 stresses the primacy of U.N. Security Council oversight for any operations that are authorized by the UNSC, consistent with Chapter VIII of the U.N. Charter. The resolutions do not leave open the possibility of financing operations absent a U.N. Security Council authorization, so I commit to ensuring that any financing to any AU peacekeeping mission is authorized explicitly by the Security Council.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO HON. STEPHANIE SANDERS SULLIVAN BY SENATOR MARCO RUBIO

Question. In May, Secretary Blinken said that the People's Republic of China is the "only country with both the intent to reshape the international order and, increasingly, the economic, diplomatic, military, and technological power to do it." The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) clearly holds all the reins of power in the People's Republic of China and has used this power to commit genocide in Xinjiang, flood our communities with fentanyl, and emit by far the largest quantity of greenhouse gases. As we speak, the Party is cracking down on unprecedented student protests across the country. With their absolute control of Chinese society and industry, the CCP could stop all of these destructive actions tomorrow if they so choose.

- Is the CCP a threat to the United States?

Answer. Yes, as laid out clearly in the President's National Security Strategy, we recognize that the People's Republic of China (PRC) is the greatest geopolitical challenge that we face, because it is the only competitor with the intent to reshape and remake the international order, and increasingly has the economic, diplomatic, military, and technological capability to do so.

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FOLLOW UP TO THE PREVIOUS QUESTION SUBMITTED
TO AMB. SULLIVAN BY SENATOR RUBIO

Question. In your response to my question for the record ("In May, Secretary Blinken said that the People's Republic of China is the 'only country with both the intent to reshape the international order and, increasingly, the economic, diplomatic, military, and technological power to do it.'"), you responded: "Yes, as laid out clearly in the President's National Security Strategy, we recognize that the People's Republic of China (PRC) is the greatest geopolitical challenge that we face, because it is the only competitor with the intent to reshape and remake the international order, and increasingly has the economic, diplomatic, military, and technological capability to do so."

- In your answer you recognize the PRC as the greatest geopolitical challenge the U.S. faces?
- How will your policy implementation of "Africa policy is about Africa" take into account and influence your recognition that the PRC is the greatest challenge we face?

Answer. We understand the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the PRC Government as inextricably linked. As noted in my previous response and as mentioned in the President's National Security Strategy, we recognize that the People's Republic of China (PRC) is the greatest geopolitical challenge that we face, because it is the only competitor with the intent to reshape and remake the international order, and increasingly has the economic, diplomatic, military, and technological capability to do so.

Our policy towards Africa is to advance U.S. interests, which include checking the PRC and Russia. Our strategic approach is to focus on how the U.S. and Africa can best partner in areas of mutual interest, while pointing out threats to the rules-based order, global standards, accountable democracy, sustainable economic prosperity, and peace and security posed by the CCP and PRC as well as by Russia and its proxies such as the Wagner Group. If confirmed, I intend to work with the AU Commission to prevent further democratic backsliding; reinforce the progress many African countries have made on democratization, human rights, and governance; and ensure democratic ideals and practices are most attractive and compelling to African Governments and their people—in stark contrast to the approach offered by the PRC.

If confirmed, I also intend to engage vigorously with the AU Commission, AU organs, and AU member states to shape African views and influence African positions in multilateral fora as they are being formed, including to reinforce the rules-based order and secure U.S. candidacies, cognizant that our competitors are working to advance their own interests. I would seek high-level engagements on the continent to implement commitments made during the U.S.—Africa Leaders Summit of December 2022. Many of these commitments, such as our renewed and expanded partnership in tackling the food security crisis; strengthening health systems and preparing for the next pandemic; building a strong and inclusive global economy; supporting accountable governance and respect for human rights; and advancing peace and security, serve to counter malign influence, while also promoting U.S. interests and advancing our shared objectives in support of the AU's Agenda 2063.

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Question. Does the CCP undertake any activities that are beneficial to U.S. interests?

Answer. Support for U.N. Peacekeeping operations is in the U.S. interest. Behind the United States, the PRC is the second largest financial supporter of peacekeeping operations. It also contributes as the 10th-largest troop-contributing country, with about 2,200 troops and police officers in missions to Mali, Democratic Republic of the Congo, and South Sudan. The PRC also has staff officers in staff positions across U.N. missions and key senior leader billets.

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FOLLOW UP TO THE PREVIOUS QUESTION SUBMITTED
TO AMB. SULLIVAN BY SENATOR RUBIO

Question. In your response to my question for the record ("Does the CCP undertake any activities that are beneficial to U.S. interest?"), you responded: "Support for U.N. Peacekeeping operations is in the U.S. interest. Behind the United States, the PRC is the second largest financial supporter of peacekeeping operations."

- Are you familiar with the 2020 bipartisan annual report to Congress from the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission findings which found that China leverages its influence in the U.N. Peacekeeping system to advance its economic goals?
- How will you counter PRC leverage and influence across U.N. missions in Africa?
- Are you familiar with a finding in the same 2020 bipartisan report which highlighted the Chinese Governments political influence in the U.N. to advance its economic objectives in South Sudan? As the report highlighted, "A key instance where the Chinese Government seems to have used its political influence in the U.N. to advance its economic objectives is South Sudan. China currently has 1,072 peacekeeping personnel deployed in South Sudan and the China National Petroleum Corporation controls a 40 percent stake-the largest of any stakeholder-in a consortium that extracts South Sudan's oil. In 2012, the Chinese Government dispatched its first combat unit to the continent to support the U.N. Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS). After civil war broke out in the country in 2013, Beijing played a significant role in increasing the UNMISS authorized troop strength and modifying UNMISS's mandate to include a broader interpretation of the U.N.'s nonintervention policy. In this expanded mandate, Beijing successfully lobbied for a provision to include the protection of workers on oil installations. Although the provision initially encountered resistance from officials in the U.N. Department of Peacekeeping Operations, who argued the change would undermine the U.N.'s neutrality and place peacekeepers on the side of the South Sudanese Government and the oil industry, the mandate expansion was ultimately adopted unanimously by the U.N. Security Council in 2014. According to Mr. Meservey, the new mandate "effectively aligned" peacekeepers with the South Sudanese Government and the country's oil sector, and by extension, Beijing's economic interests. A year after the mandate was expanded, Beijing deployed 700 PLA combat troops to support the peacekeeping mission."
- Which CCP U.N. Peacekeeping activities and operations in Africa are in the U.S. interest?

Answer. Thank you for referencing the 2020 bipartisan report, with which I am now familiar. I intend to discuss in depth how to address the issues raised in the report with the Department of State's new Office of China Coordination, to advance U.S. objectives with the African Union Commission and its Member States and counter harmful behavior by the PRC and other actors across the board, if confirmed.

This new office, inaugurated immediately following the U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit, brings together a group of China experts from throughout the Department and beyond to work more effectively with colleagues from every regional bureau and experts in international security, economics, technology, multilateral diplomacy, and strategic communications. If confirmed, I would work with the Office of China Coordination to advance U.S. interests related to the PRC in the context of the African Union Commission and its Member States. I would also coordinate closely with colleagues working multilateral issues related to Africa in U.N. institutions, such as U.N. peacekeeping operations, including with colleagues at the U.S. Mission to the U.N. and with Addis Ababa-based like-minded members of the U.N. Security Council, which at any given time includes three rotating seats from African Union Member States.

U.N. peacekeeping operations are critical to securing U.S. interests on the continent, and the significant PRC burden-sharing with respect to financing those operations bears close scrutiny. I strongly believe that the PRC's contributions to specific peacekeeping operations warrant continuous monitoring, from the outset to deployment, to prevent the PRC from exploiting those operations to further its interests.

As the second-largest financial contributor to U.N. peacekeeping operations and the tenth largest contributor of peacekeepers worldwide, the PRC contributes around $1.2 billion to these missions. The PRC has 1,741 peacekeepers deployed to five U.N. peacekeeping missions in Africa (UNMISS, MINUSMA, MONUSCO, UNISFA, and MINURSO). Its contributions include specialized units including police, engineers, field hospitals, helicopter units, as well as the infantry battalion in the Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS). Some of these contributions help Missions achieve their mandates. For example, the Chinese helicopter unit in the U.N. mission in Abyei (UNISFA) provides the Mission with most of its air lift capacity, which enables the Mission to respond to threats, move personnel, and resupply troops. That said, I am also keenly aware of the challenges that PRC involvement in U.N. peacekeeping may pose to U.S. interests, including the PRC's efforts to advance its own narrow economic agenda, and, if confirmed, I will be vigilant.

As outlined by Secretary Blinken, our approach to the PRC is to invest at home, compete with China to defend our interests and build our vision for the future, and align with allies and partners with shared interests and who are opposed to China's authoritarian system and overseas development policies. There are many areas where we compete with the PRC in Africa. If confirmed, I will contest vigorously where PRC engagement undermines U.S. interests and our mutual interests with the African Union Commission and its Member States. I will avail myself of the expertise resident in the Office of China Coordination to inform our approaches with our African partners for maximum effectiveness, as well as of the expertise residing in the State Department's Global Engagement Center.

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Question. Do you believe there are any areas within which the CCP would constructively work with the United States in good faith?

Answer. I recognize the way the U.S. and the PRC manage our relationship in the coming years will have significant consequences for the entire world. This is why competition with Beijing will not preclude cooperation in areas where our interests intersect.

In Africa, we continue to explore options where the interests of the United States and the PRC align. This includes areas such as public health, counternarcotics, counterterrorism, food security, and the environment.

Question. If confirmed, will you approve any joint activity with organizations or representatives from the People's Republic of China in the African Union?

Answer. If confirmed, I would support joint activities where interests align, in consultation with Washington.

Question. Africa has been among the most significant targets of the CCP's Belt and Road initiatives, with hundreds of billions of loans given to African Governments. Meanwhile, U.S. assistance to these same countries is hamstrung by "woke" priorities that direct investment towards small-scale, gender-based, and green energy initiatives instead of the major development and infrastructure projects these countries desperately need to bring their populations out of poverty.

- If confirmed, will you coordinate with other U.S. envoys to the region and convey to this administration of the critical need to provide development assistance to African counties that can effectively compete with Chinese aid? Please explain.

Answer. Though our relationship with the PRC is among the most complex and consequential of any in the world, our Africa policy is about Africa, not about the PRC. Certainly, if confirmed, I will work hand in glove with our U.S. ambassadors across the continent. The affirmative agenda of the United States is to strengthen our partnerships with African nations and demonstrating our commitment to the advancement of African economies that simultaneously support American jobs. If confirmed, I would seek to advance the Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment, which unlocks billions of dollars to deliver quality, sustainable infrastructure that makes a difference in the lives of Africans; strengthens and diversifies our supply chains; creates new opportunities for American workers and businesses and advances our national security. I would also work with the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation to advance development goals or mutual benefit to the United States and AU member states.

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FOLLOW UP TO THE PREVIOUS QUESTION SUBMITTED
TO AMB. SULLIVAN BY SENATOR RUBIO

Question. In your response to my question for the record ("Africa has been among the most significant targets of the CCP's Belt and Road initiatives, with hundreds of billions of loans given to African Governments.") you responded: "Though our relationship with the PRC is among the most complex and consequential of the any in the world, our Africa policy is about Africa, not about the PRC." Please elaborate with specificity regarding what "Africa policy is about Africa" entails. Many African countries the United States courts through diplomacy in Africa have accepted billion of PRC loans for infrastructure, have agreed to allow the PRC sole access to significant rare earth materials and mines, and are in various stages of negotiations for increased PRC naval port access or PRC naval port construction for military purposes.

- How does "Africa policy is about Africa" plan to address and counter the significant PRC influence upon military, economic, and diplomatic efforts on the continent?
- Does "Africa policy is about Africa" consider other foreign actors we can partner with, or currently partner with, when collaborating on U.S. policy?
- Does "Africa policy is about Africa" consider other foreign malign actors, such as Russia or it's Private security contractor Wagner Group, when developing U.S. policy considerations?

Answer. If confirmed, I intend to coordinate with other U.S. envoys to the region on the critical importance of development assistance and economic statecraft to our overall partnership with African countries. I intend to enhance cooperation with the AU Commission in the areas of accountable governance and human rights, so that the AU can fulfill its potential as a norm-setting institution, in an effort to prevent further democratic backsliding, to shore up the progress many African countries have made on democratization, human rights, and governance; and to ensure that democratic ideals (and not those offered by the PRC) are most attractive and compelling to African Governments and their people.

Our policy towards Africa is to advance U.S. interests, which include checking the PRC and Russia on the continent. If confirmed to be Ambassador to the African Union, I recognize the immense opportunity I would have in this regard with the African Union Commission and the several dozen AU Member States. Our approach is to enhance our partnership with the African Union and African countries to jointly address shared challenges, which include countering PRC efforts to undermine shared values on accountable democracy, human rights, free markets, and environmental stewardship. For maximum influence with African audiences, experience has shown it is usually most effective to conduct our most direct conversations about the negative influence of the PRC behind closed doors.

However, during my tenure as Ambassador to Ghana, I also spoke out publicly against IUU fishing and illegal gold mining, deforestation, and wildlife trafficking in Ghana, all widely known to be carried out largely by PRC nationals. Also, during my tenure there, my Embassy submitted a proposal for Economic Support Funds to address environmental and water resource degradation caused by illegal mining in Ghana. The proposal was to fund an alternate, more objective means of monitoring and exposing illegal mining, as currently the only monitoring tools are furnished by the PRC. If confirmed, I will continue to bring information about the PRC's illicit activities to the attention of our African partners, and encourage influential local leaders to express their concerns about malign PRC activity publicly.

Africans want partnership with the United States to be genuinely in our mutual interests, as opposed to appearing to be primarily a proxy for geopolitical rivalry. We find the most effective public approach is to showcase the overwhelmingly positive story of the U.S.—African partnership, highlighting our sustained investments that benefit the African people, from public health programs like PEPFAR and CDC engagement on the continent, to high-impact Millennium Challenge Corporation compacts. This approach helps us encourage more transparent business climates that will attract further U.S. trade and investment, bringing principled companies that model fair labor practices, build local capacity, respect the environment, and practice corporate social responsibility.

If confirmed, I look forward to playing a role in implementing the Memorandum of Understanding between the United States and African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Secretariat, signed during the US—Africa Leaders Summit in December. This MOU is one of only three such agreements (the others being with the PRC and the UK). Along with U.S. colleagues in Washington and Addis, while Ambassador to Ghana I had worked on initial efforts toward the MOU with the Accra-based AfCFTA Secretariat.

Demonstrating the generosity of the American people and strengthening meaningful partnerships in areas of mutual interest will make the United States an increasingly attractive partner of choice to African Governments and their constituents. The United States and its democratic and altruistic values appeal to African civil society and—very significantly—to young people in Africa, who are part of a burgeoning youth bulge heading for one of every four people on the planet to be an African by 2050. We will work with the Department's Global Engagement Center to amplify accurate narratives about the U.S.-Africa partnership, build capacity among African civil society and media, and improve resilience to information manipulation from state and nonstate actors, including the PRC.

An "Africa policy for Africa" envisions partnership that not only overtly leverages our strengths, but also helps to mitigate negative malign influences such as those of the PRC and Russia, particularly those that degrade democracy, peace and security, and economic prosperity. For example, the PRC threatens coastal livelihoods and food security for many African nations via its Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing carried out by its trawlers.

While I was Ambassador to Ghana, Ghana hosted Obangame Express 2021, AFRICOM's multinational exercise in the Gulf of Guinea. The exercise enhanced the maritime security capacity and interoperability of African partner navies from Morocco to Namibia, to counter such illegal fishing practices. This is one of many examples of how our partnership, leveraged with resources and other like-minded partner nations, can have a significant positive impact on Africa while advancing U.S. interests. As I noted in my speech at the opening ceremony, "Piracy and other illicit maritime activities threaten development efforts, weaken state security, and rob states of precious resources needed for greater economic growth and effective governance. At its worst, such illicit activities can destabilize regions and create pockets for terrorism to thrive. Our shared goals of a secure, stable, and prosperous Africa benefit not only our African partners and the United States, but also the entire international community. And collaboration with our African, European, North and South American partners plays a key role in maintaining that security."

In addition to the United States, 22 African nations participated in Obangame Express 2021, alongside ten like-minded partners from Europe and the Americas. Activities spanned the spectrum of maritime security issues. In fact, during the exercise, a French vessel interdicted maritime vessel NAJLAN in the Gulf of Guinea, leading to the seizure of approximately 6,068 kilograms of cocaine. This real-life success, based on information from multiple international law enforcement agencies, including the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, via the Maritime Analysis and Operations Center-Narcotics (MAOC-N) in Lisbon, exemplifies the continued importance of coordinating with our like-minded partners and building capacity with our African partners.

Having observed Ghana's use of Chinese-provided patrol boats, I took a personal interest in steering Ghana towards the acquisition of two U.S. Coast Guard patrol boats through the Excess Defense Articles program. The U.S. vessels are expected to arrive in Ghana in a few months.

In multilateral settings like the African Union, it is essential to partner with other countries to build consensus, support, and momentum for shared priorities. For example, the United States worked closely with Senegalese President Macky Sall as AU President to develop an approach, as outlined in the "U.S.-AU Joint Statement on Food Security," to diversify Africa's food supply chain and enable resilient, sustainable, and productive food systems. This partnership also included a Food Security Ministerial and summit with the AU and the European Union to marshal the resources needed to save lives in the immediate term, as well as to help countries build their own capacity for resilient, sustainable agricultural production over the longer term. If confirmed, I will continue to promote the Global Food Security Strategy, including with like-minded partners, with the AU, as I did in Ghana while Ambassador there.

The United States made significant strides in ending the acute phase of the COVID–19 pandemic—providing nearly $20 billion for the global response, distributing more than 670 million doses of safe, effective vaccines to over 115

countries. As Ambassador to Ghana, I was personally present on the tarmac to receive every shipment of some nine and a half million doses of the lifesaving vaccine the United States donated to Ghana, including on Christmas Eve. I ensured our robust public diplomacy around U.S. pandemic relief eclipsed the earlier, highly publicized, far more modest contributions of personal protective equipment from the PRC. I also led our interagency participation in Ghana on the Global Action Plan, which brought together dozens of countries to get shots in arms, to bolster health supply systems, and to combat misinformation and disinformation. If confirmed as Ambassador to the African Union, I will continue my passion for advancing our Global Health Security Agenda, while countering malign PRC actions and influence.

Through the G7 and other multilateral fora, the United States collaborates closely with our partners on the continent. We routinely engage with the G7 on issues regarding disinformation campaigns by foreign actors, peace and security efforts, particular in the Sahel, and coordinated sanctions campaigns against organizations and individuals that threaten democracy and economic progress in Africa. While serving as a Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Bureau of African Affairs, I represented the United States with G-7 Africa Directors as we coordinated common positions in preparation for the G7 Summits in 2017 and 2018.

The United States supported AU-led talks that led to the cessation of hostilities between Ethiopia and Tigrayan forces, working closely with the AU Commission and the three countries of the AU's High-level Panel, Nigeria, Kenya, and South Africa. If confirmed, I will join colleagues in engaging with partner countries and organizations to support these multinational efforts towards a lasting peace, which is crucial to U.S. interests in the Horn of Africa.

As diplomats, we consider all actors in the foreign policy arena and scrutinize malign actors such as the Wagner Group, which enter countries in conflict under false pretenses and end up driving greater insecurity, exploiting precious minerals, sowing disinformation, and diverting scarce host country resources that could be used for more effective security and development purposes. I have held many conversations with African officials on the topic of malign influence.

* * *

Question. In past years, the African Union has stepped up to lead multi-national operations against terrorists in Somalia, Comoros, and Sudan. These military missions are critical allies and resources which multiply the effectiveness of U.S. special forces operations in Africa without dedicating the level of resources invested in past interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan.

- If confirmed, what will you do to ensure the African Union is able to maintain the capability to continue these anti-terrorism missions, which serve to prevent terrorist groups from becoming powerful enough to attack the American homeland?

Question. If confirmed, I will continue U.S. support for the ongoing development of the African Union, the Peace and Security Council, and AU member states' ability to lead multinational operations against terrorists to the maximum extent allowed by the resources and authorities allocated to us by Congress.

Question. To your knowledge, has the CCP indicated an interest in supporting African Union missions?

Answer. The Department is aware of sporadic PRC support for African Union peace operations and related initiatives. For instance, the PRC has provided sporadic equipment to the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), now African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS). The PRC has also supported the African Standby Force. Nonetheless, PRC support for African-led peace operations is substantially smaller-scale and less reliable than the significant support the United States has provided to AMISOM and other African-led missions in such locations as Darfur, Mali, and Central African Republic. We are also aware of equipment quality issues and lack of follow-on support to effectively receive and sustain the pre-positioned equipment at Douala.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO HON. STEPHANIE SANDERS SULLIVAN BY SENATOR JOHN BARRASSO

Question. During your testimony you said, "If confirmed, I will work closely with the AU on addressing the impacts of climate change and help support a just energy transition through programs like Power Africa."

- If confirmed, what initiatives would you promote dealing with climate change?

Answer. If confirmed, I would focus on supporting climate adaptation and mitigation in Africa. Seventeen of the twenty most climate-vulnerable countries are in Africa, and the continent is experiencing more extreme climate-related events that threaten its people and infrastructure, such as the recent flooding seen in Nigeria and Cameroon, and the fourth consecutive year of drought in the Horn of Africa. These detrimental impacts of a changing climate could diminish African economic growth and exacerbate conflict or climate migration. To help African partners adapt to a changing climate, President Biden announced $150 million in new funding for climate adaptation in Africa at COP27, focusing on expanding availability of early warning systems, facilitating access to adaptation finance, expanding risk-based insurance, and crowding in private sector investments to climate-resilient food security in Africa. This complements preexisting Africa-focused programs that integrate climate adaptation, such as USAID's investment of $300 million in Resilient Food Security Activities in FY 2022 across Africa that supports agricultural development and food security.

If confirmed, I would also work across the U.S. interagency and with the AU to promote a just energy transition in Africa that expands energy access to Africa's citizens while also promoting a path to decarbonization and economic growth, supporting clean energy programs for development, and strengthening energy security.

Question. What is your definition of a "just energy transition?"

Answer. All of Africa, with a population of 1.3 billion people, accounts for a little more than three percent of total global electricity generation.

Africa has the potential to play a leading role in the global energy transition toward a net-zero future. The continent's geographic diversity holds huge potential for solar, wind, and geothermal power, and its crustal rocks host many of the critical minerals needed for clean energy technologies. Pillar IV of the U.S. Strategy Toward Sub-Saharan Africa addresses the ongoing energy transition, one that must be just to be successful, and appreciates that priorities such as rapidly expanding energy access and affordability, energy security and resilience, industrialization, job creation and business formation, are particularly trenchant in Africa.

For Africa, a transition to clean energy is a way to increase energy system resilience, reduce electricity costs, reduce exposure to fuel supply disruptions and commodity price swings, and grow local renewable energy supply chains, all in keeping with global climate change. Considering the above, a just energy transition should seek to highlight economic benefits of clean energy yet acknowledge the unique energy and natural resource circumstances of individual countries.

Question. The Biden administration is asking countries in Africa to "leapfrog" over traditional energy resources to power itself with solar, wind and renewables only. The United States utilized traditional energy resources like coal, oil and natural gas to build our economy. African nations deserve the same opportunity.

- How important is providing reliable baseload energy in assisting countries in Africa with economic growth, job creation and poverty reduction?

Answer. Reliable baseload energy is important, and energy matrices should have a diverse mix of sources with an increasing proportion provided by clean energy sources. Electricity is projected to become the backbone of Africa's new energy systems, powered increasingly by renewables. Africa is home to 60 percent of the best solar resources globally, yet only 1 percent of installed solar PV capacity. Solar PV—already the cheapest source of power in many parts of Africa—is expected to outcompete all sources continent-wide by 2030, and renewables could account for approximately 80 percent of new power generation capacity by the end of the decade.

At present, more than 600 million people in Africa, or 43 percent of the total population, lack access to electricity, most of them in sub-Saharan Africa. Universal access to affordable electricity by 2030 requires new connections to 90 million people a year, triple the rate of recent years. Energy access is critical to economic growth, job creation, healthcare, and poverty reduction across Africa.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, the number of people without access increased in 2020 for the first time since 2013. Sub-Saharan Africa's share of the global population without access to electricity rose to 77 percent from 74 percent before the pandemic. Countries such as Ghana, Kenya, and Rwanda are on track for full access by 2030

using primarily renewable sources, offering success stories other countries can follow. Per International Energy Agency (IEA) models, extending national grids is the least costly and most prudent option for almost 45 percent of those gaining access by 2030. In rural areas, however, where over 80 percent of the electricity-deprived live, mini-grids and stand-alone systems, mostly solar based, are the most viable solutions.

Question. Africa has the world's lowest levels of per capita use of modern energy. As its population and incomes grow, demand for modern energy is projected to expand by a third between 2020 and 2030. As Africa's industry, commerce and agriculture expand, so too does the need for productive uses of energy. IEA models show that energy demand in industry, freight and agriculture will grow by almost 40 percent by 2030.

- What steps will you take to help countries in Africa get access to traditional energy resources to build their economies?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with interagency colleagues to support countries across the continent to get access to a full array of energy sources with an increased emphasis on clean and renewable technologies. Thanks to its vast critical mineral supply, Africa holds the key to our global energy transition. That key should also unlock real economic opportunity across Africa. Our partnership-focused approach in the Power Africa Initiative includes harnessing the Department of Energy's 17 National Labs and their expertise in an effort to increase energy access through added clean energy capacity. The U.S. private sector also continues to be involved in a broad range of commercial energy projects in Africa, which the State Department and other U.S. Government agencies help facilitate in a manner consistent with U.S. international energy engagement guidelines. Yet, the most LNG resources in Senegal will be exported; re-investment of revenues for clean energy infrastructure is needed to meet electricity access goals,

Question. In July, the Ugandan President met with the Russian Foreign Minister about a 2,000 megawatt nuclear power facility by 2032.Uganda asked Russia for help in developing a nuclear power plant—not the United States. The President of Senegal explains that ending gas financing for Africa will be a fatal blow. He said, "At a time when several African countries are preparing to exploit their significant gas resources, the end of funding for the gas sector, under the pretext that gas is a fossil energy, would bear a fatal cost to our emerging economies."

- Given the extensive expertise of the United States in these areas, why isn't our nation partnering with Uganda and Senegal on these projects?

Answer. The United States stands ready to provide support and partnership to those countries around the world that have prioritized nuclear in their clean energy and climate plans to address the global climate crisis and bolster energy security.

In Ghana, where I most recently served as Ambassador, my team and I facilitated U.S. involvement with a Request for Proposals for developing a nuclear energy capability in Ghana. The U.S.-Japan partnership with Ghana announced October 26 aims to support Ghana's goal of being the mover in Africa for Small Nuclear Reactor deployment. U.S. firm NuScale is involved in the feasibility study. Although a number of countries on the continent have established partnerships with Russia to establish nuclear power facilities, no construction of a Russian supported nuclear power plant exists on the ground.

U.S.-based Kosmos Energy is involved in fossil fuel exploitation in Ghana, Senegal, and Mauritania as well as other countries on the continent. On Senegal's natural gas fields, we apply our International Energy Engagement Guidance which requires review of new carbon-intensive engagement as guided by the President's Executive Order 14008 on Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad. The United States supports efforts to diversify liquefied natural gas (LNG) supplies in alignment with climate objectives and overall U.S. international energy engagement guidance. The goal of U.S. policy in this realm is to ensure that the vast majority of U.S. international energy engagements promote clean energy, advance innovative technologies, boost U.S. cleantech competitiveness, and support net-zero transitions, except in rare cases where there are compelling national security, geostrategic, or development/energy access benefits and no viable lower carbon alternatives accomplish the same goals.

Initiatives that offer technical assistance on a broad range of technology solutions that focus both on near-term opportunities to scale up implementation on advanced efficiency and clean energy and to engage on promising new technologies including critical minerals, energy storage, and clean hydrogen will facilitate a just energy transition, that does not leave African countries with sunk investments in stranded fossil fuel assets.

Question. What are the negative implications that could result from this partnership with Russia?

Answer. Russia seeks to gain support and influence in Africa. We have already seen in Ukraine and elsewhere how Russia is weaponizing energy. Increased dependence on Russia for energy in Uganda or elsewhere would not be in the best interests of African states that could be subject to coercion in a manner inimical to their own—and the United States'—interests.

Question. China and Russia are gaining support and influence in Africa. How can we do better in countering the Chinese and Russian influence campaigns in Africa?

Answer. I think we can best counter non-market behavior and illegitimate development goals of the PRC and Russian authorities by focusing on furthering our longstanding partnerships with African nations and continuing to advance our economic and diasporan engagements. If confirmed, I look forward to advancing our shared interests with the AU and taking a further step to build 21st Century U.S.-African partnerships that expand on and deepen our historical engagement. This includes expanding long-term U.S.-Africa partnerships to advance shared priorities, amplifying African voices to collaboratively meet the era's defining challenges, and leveraging the best of America—including our Government, private sector, and civil society—to uplift and empower African institutions, individuals, and nations. I will focus on leveraging our own Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment to deliver quality, sustainable infrastructure that makes a difference in the lives of African people, strengthens and diversifies our supply chains, creates new opportunities for American workers and businesses, and advances our national security.

We are working to counter disinformation through the Global Engagement Center (GEC) by working with local African partners to provide counter-disinformation training for journalists, along with exposing, countering, and building resiliency to disinformation aimed at undermining the stability and the integrity of African democratic systems. Russia is the great threat in the disinformation space. The GEC recently released two public-facing bulletins designed to expose for foreign audiences the Wagner Group, Prigozhin, and Russia's disinformation networks in Africa. We are increasing access to accurate information by working with the GEC to partner with local implementing partners to strengthen fact-checking across Africa to increase access to verified information for African publics.

We are increasing access to accurate information by facilitating trainings and exchange program opportunities for journalists and members of the media. We do this through IVLP programs such as the Edward R. Murrow Program for Journalists, trainings organized by the Global Engagement Center, and programming at the Embassy's American Center. We have also organized numerous capacity-building sessions to support accurate reporting for journalists. One example includes two discussions between journalists in the Central African Republic and in Mali to share best practices on how to report on mercenary activity in conflict zones. Another includes a joint roundtable with PAS and USAID key media contacts on the causes and implications of disinformation and how to best reach target audiences with truthful reporting.

If confirmed, I would make it a high priority to focus my team and the interagency on this issue, as well as coordinate with like-minded diplomatic partners such as France who are facing the same issue.

Question. How do you plan to shed light on the terrible practices and atrocities committed by China and Russia to African leaders?

Answer. If confirmed, I will continue to work with African counterparts to highlight and contrast our agenda of genuine partnership and prosperity with Russia's and the PRC's malign intentions.

The actions of Russia-backed forces on the continent and the Russian Government's violation of the bedrock principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity in Ukraine have done more to isolate Russia diplomatically than we could hope to accomplish through rhetoric alone. African leaders see that Russia's rhetoric does not match its actions, and that entities such as the Wagner Group are more interested in extracting African resources rather than improving local security and prosperity; only the most desperate leaders have turned to Wagner for assistance, and they do so at the cost of control over their countries. The PRC's treatment of ethnic and religious minorities in Xinjiang and Tibet, along with many other actions, goes against the core tenets of the U.N. Charter that Beijing constantly cites and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. We'll continue to work with our partners in Africa to raise our concerns on these issues and call for change—not to stand against China, but to stand up for peace, security, and human dignity. African nations and civil society groups are also starting to take measures to ensure that negative prac-

tices of the PRC and PRC-supported companies are brought to light and that precautions are taken to improve transparency and accountability in ways to put African growth, development, and environmental conservation first. A 2021 report by the U.K.-based Business and Human Rights Resource Center found 181 human rights allegations connected to Chinese investments in Africa between 2013 and 2020, with the highest number of incidents in Uganda, Kenya, Zimbabwe, and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). In the DRC, President Félix Tshisekedi is reviewing all foreign mining contracts, mostly with Chinese companies, with an aim of bringing increased scrutiny, and accountability. The U.S. Government will continue to support efforts by African Governments that seek to advance good governance and inclusive growth and development.

Question. African nations rely on Ukraine and Russia for grain exports. Following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, these supplies have been dramatically disrupted. What impacts have Russia's actions in Ukraine had on Africa and food insecurity?

Answer. The Russia-Ukraine conflict has significantly degraded Africa's food security by disrupting supply chains for food commodities, fuel, and fertilizer. Several African countries are highly dependent on grain exports from Ukraine and Russia. Of particular concern, the Horn of Africa faces the world's worst food security crisis. The worst drought in over 70 years, highlighted by five poor growing seasons to date, may get even worse in 2023. Even if rainfall returns to normal, it will take years for communities to recover. Nearly 26 million people are currently experiencing "Crisis or worse" levels of food insecurity in Somalia, Kenya, (northern and eastern), and southern and southeastern Ethiopia. Food and nutrition assistance in the Horn of Africa could run out by April 2023 without a surge of additional funding from the international community.

Protracted conflict in Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, and Nigeria have also deepened food insecurity in West Africa, which now faces its worst food crisis on record. On May 18, Secretary Blinken convened more than 30 Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Agriculture, and Development at the United Nations in New York to hammer out a plan to address food insecurity caused by the COVID–19 pandemic, the climate crisis, armed conflicts, and exacerbated by Russia's unprovoked invasion in Ukraine.

The United States introduced, and Ministers endorsed, the Roadmap to Global Food Security, focused on seven key actions, including increasing humanitarian and development assistance, mitigating the fertilizer shortage, keeping agricultural markets open, investing in climate-resilient agriculture, and coordinating for maximum effect. Over 100 U.N. Members have signed onto the Roadmap—including 15 G20 members.

The Leaders' Summit on Global Food Security at UNGA further confirmed the commitment of leaders to act urgently, proportionately, and in concert in line with the Roadmap. Feed the Future has recently expanded into eight additional countries in Africa for a total of 16, As the U.S. Government's global hunger and food security initiative, Feed the Future works hand-in-hand with partner countries to develop their agriculture sectors and break the vicious cycle of poverty and hunger.

Question. What is the Administration's strategy for responding to the food shortage?

Answer. Food security is a global, cross cutting challenge and, particularly in Africa, it is crucial to listen to and work with African leaders to solve this dynamic and complex issue. Through collaboration and information-sharing, we can create viable, workable solutions.

In September, the United States, the African Union, and other partners hosted the Global Food Security Summit. During his remarks, Secretary of State Blinken stated that "Action is crucial because the current crisis is one that no individual country or even group of countries can solve alone." He also highlighted efforts under the May 2022 Roadmap for Global Food Security and called on U.N. member states to take measures to keep food and agricultural markets open, increase fertilizer production, and invest in climate-resilient agriculture.

During the 2022 U.N. General Assembly, President Biden announced the United States would provide more than $2.9 billion in new assistance to address global food insecurity. That amount is in addition to the $6.9 billion the U.S. already committed this year to support global food security, which is largely focused on supporting Africa. On short-term fertilizer needs, the United States is supporting efforts to bolster availability, efficiency of use, and local production.

The United States is the World Food Program's largest donor, providing about half of all contributions thanks to the generosity of Congress and American taxpayers. We encourage other countries with the capacity to do more to increase their contributions.

Concerning addressing one of the gravest threats to food security, the U.S. was pleased that in mid-November there was agreement to extend the deal the U.N. and Turkey brokered between Russia and Ukraine. This deal was crucial in getting grain to Africa from Ukraine. It allowed grain and other agricultural exports from Black Sea ports, which were previously halted when Russia invaded Ukraine, blocked its ports, and prevented food shipments.

The U.S. Government is committed to strengthening global food systems and helping countries improve their capacity to produce their own food. Our African colleagues have underscored the need for more investment in agricultural innovation and sustainability. This will require coordination of ongoing efforts as well as attracting more private sector investment and tying our efforts to African-led initiatives and programs.

The African Union, in coordination with AU entities, the Regional Economic Communities (RECs), and member states, is spearheading efforts to address food security through the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program (CAADP). According to CAADP and the African Common Position on Food Systems, Africa spent US$43 billion on food imports in 2019, and it is projected to increase to US$90 billion annually by 2030i. The common position pointed out that despite having 60 percent of the world's arable land, Africa on average imports about 40 percent of its food.

U.S. efforts to promote regional food security include supporting CAADP's goals of having African suppliers capture a greater share of African food consumption. This, in turn, strengthens broad-based inclusive economic growth. Women comprise more than 50 percent of Africa's agricultural workforce. Roughly 80 percent of food consumed in Africa passes through the hands of small or medium enterprises (SME). The Africa Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) has also emphasized the need for trade to be inclusive of women, youth, and small businesses. We want to work with the AfCFTA Secretariat as a key vector for enhancing intra-African trade and improving value chains in the food sector.

Regarding investments, over the next five years, we hope to work alongside Congress on plans to provide funds toward durable agricultural production, including through Feed the Future, our flagship program to broaden social safety nets, strengthen food systems, and improve nutrition. In August, we added eight new African partners to this initiative. Through Feed the Future, we are also scaling up innovative ways to get drought- and heat-resistant seeds into the hands of farmers who need them. We are also distributing fertilizer and improving its efficiency so that farmers can produce a higher yield while using fewer resources to do so.

Question. Last year, there were reports that Chinese hackers were expected to have been stealing security camera footage from inside the African Union headquarters building in Ethiopia. The headquarters were built by China. In 2018, it was discovered that the buildings had been interspersed with listening devices and the servers would send data to Shanghai daily. If confirmed, how do you plan to address China's actions at the African Union?

Answer. The AU established a technical working group to ensure that the construction of the new Africa CDC headquarters was carried out appropriately, and Africa CDC has requested that all software—including the building's information and data management systems—be handled by an independent group to ensure that it is under the strict oversight of the AU. Africa CDC has yet to move into the new headquarters but, if confirmed, I will monitor the situation and work to mitigate potential harm.

Question. Our competitors recognize the importance of the African Union to increasing their influence on the continent and have robust engagement with the AU. The agenda of the United States at our mission to the African Union is to strengthen our partnership with the African Union and its member states. How do you plan to combat China's influence in the African Union?

Answer. Though our relationship with the PRC is among the most complex and consequential of any in the world, our Africa policy is about Africa, not about the PRC. The affirmative agenda of the United States is to strengthen our partnerships with African nations and demonstrate our commitment to the advancement of African economies that simultaneously support American jobs.

If confirmed, I will continue USAU's work to develop and implement transparent, respectful, and action-oriented partnerships that are fully aligned with both USG and AU/Africa CDC standards and priorities. This would include continuing to draw on U.S. comparative advantages in global health and development—including leveraging our proven expertise, programs, and resources in Africa as well as the

U.S.'s global leadership in science, technology, and innovation—to engage with AU agencies and member states.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO HON. STEPHANIE SANDERS SULLIVAN BY SENATOR TODD YOUNG

Question. Last July, AU Commission Chair Mahamat granted Israel observer status to the AU. There is ongoing pressure from a bloc of members, particularly by South Africa and Algeria, to again have this accreditation withdrawn. What is your assessment of this campaign, especially when other members' records have not been subject to the same scrutiny?

Answer. The United States strongly supports Israel's observer status to the AU. AU Commission Chairperson Moussa Faki Mahamat accepted credentials of the Ambassador of Israel in July of 2021. A number of AU member states objected to the Chairperson's action and raised their objection during the Executive Council and Assembly meetings of February 2022. During the February 2022 ordinary session of the Assembly, AU Chairperson defended his decision, noting that 44 AU member states had diplomatic relations with Israel. The African Union Executive Council appointed a six-member Head of State committee to consult on the issue and report at the 2023 Assembly meeting. The United States has consistently supported Israel's observer status to the AU and will continue to do so. The African Union firmly supports a two-state solution. We believe it is important for countries that share this goal to engage with both Israel and the Palestinians. Nations that wish to advance peace and stability between the Palestinians will be better positioned to do so if they have open and constructive engagement with both sides.

Question. How would you advocate to have Israel maintain its observer status, if confirmed?

Answer. We strongly support Israel's observer status to the AU. Israel maintained an equivalent to observer status with the AU's predecessor organization, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) until the transition to the AU in 2002. Further, we note, as referenced by AU Commission Chairperson in his February 2022 remarks to the AU Assembly Heads of State and Government, that 44 AU member states have established bilateral diplomatic ties with Israel and many have ongoing economic relationships. We have shared our consistent support for Israel's expanding diplomatic relationships globally with the leadership of African Union member states, as we have elsewhere.

Question. Provided the AU confirms Israel's observer status when it revisits this issue next year, what will you do, if confirmed, to ensure Israel is treated fairly before this body?

Answer. The U.S. Mission to the African Union has engaged the AU and other stakeholders to make clear our strong support for Israel's observer status, while respecting the AU's process, and will continue to do so. If confirmed, I will continue to engage with Israeli diplomatic representatives and advocate for the U.S. administration's position on this issue with AUC and AU member state officials, as well as confer with relevant counterpart U.S. Chiefs of Mission.

Question. In your testimony, you speak to the U.S. commitment to AU's Agenda 2063. How does Agenda 2063 conflict with China's Belt and Road Initiative?

Answer. The world recognizes the important leadership of the AU and that the AU is a key partner for engagement in Africa and facilitating economic relationships in a region of the world with a burgeoning population. The People's Republic of China (PRC) has a dedicated Mission to the AU that provides substantial assistance and conducts robust diplomatic and economic engagement.

We do not seek to contain or inhibit China's legitimate development goals or market-based industry or trade. We also respect African nations' choice to have a variety of partners. However, when Chinese companies, especially those that are financed by the PRC, lack transparency, disregard workers' rights and environmental standards, and are willing to engage in corrupt business practices then these firms and the PRC institutions that support them are not advancing the continent's economic and development goals consistent with the AU Agenda 2063. A 2021 report by the U.K.-based Business and Human Rights Resource Center found 181 human rights allegations connected to Chinese investments in Africa between 2013 and 2020, with the highest number of incidents in Uganda, Kenya, Zimbabwe, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. If confirmed, I would highlight how such approaches

seriously undermine the AU's Agenda 2063 roadmap for a more prosperous and peaceful Africa.

Question. If confirmed, what will you do to support the AU's vision of a "prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens" when that vision is conflicting with PRC's Belt and Road Initiative?

Answer. If confirmed, I look forward to advancing our shared interests with the AU and taking a further step to build 21st Century U.S.-African partnerships that expand on and deepen our longstanding engagement. This includes expanding long-term U.S.-Africa partnerships to advance shared priorities, amplifying African voices to collaboratively meet the era's defining challenges, and leveraging the best of America—including our government, private sector, and civil society and the diaspora—to uplift and empower African institutions, individuals, and nations. I will focus on leveraging our own Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment and Development Finance Corporation to deliver quality, sustainable infrastructure that makes a difference in the lives of African people, strengthens and diversifies our supply chains, creates new opportunities for American workers and businesses, and advances our national security.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO HENRY V. JARDINE BY SENATOR ROBERT MENENDEZ

Question. The UK recently announced that is willing to negotiate with Mauritius over the status of the Chagos Islands, which hosts a military base on Diego Garcia that the U.S. leases from the UK. As ambassador, what role will you play in advocating for continued U.S. access to Diego Garcia on terms that are consistent with our strategic interests?

Answer. We continue to recognize UK sovereignty over the BIOT. We regard the dispute over sovereignty as a bilateral matter and applaud the UK and Mauritius as they work together to find a way forward. The specific arrangement involving the facilities on Diego Garcia is grounded in the uniquely close and active defense and security partnership between the United States and the UK. It cannot be replicated. If confirmed, I commit to continue to coordinate closely with the UK regarding the base on Diego Garcia to ensure continued access and use.

Question. Will you commit to engaging with members of the Chagossian community that were forcibly expelled from their islands to make way for the UK/U.S. bases on issues related to the negotiation over the status of the Chagos Islands and its inhabitants?

Answer. We recognize the UK parliament's efforts to address this issue by granting UK citizenship to Chagossians and their descendants. If confirmed, I will engage with people of all backgrounds in Mauritius and Seychelles, including Chagossians.

Question. What are the most important actions you have taken in your career to date to support democracy and human rights? What has been the impact of your actions?

Answer. As the deputy chief of Mission in Tirana, Albania, I focused extensively on fostering democratic institutions in the country, which had a legacy of being the most oppressive Communist dictatorship in Europe during the Cold War. For example, I led and coordinated our Embassy efforts to monitor the national and local elections in 2013 and 2015 in conjunction with other international partners. As a result of these and other efforts, Albania in 2013 held the most free and fair elections to up to that point, experienced no violence, and had a peaceful transition of power to the opposition party.

Question. What issues are the most pressing challenges to democracy or democratic development in Mauritius and the Seychelles? These challenges might include obstacles to participatory and accountable governance and institutions, rule of law, authentic political competition, civil society, human rights and press freedom. Please be as specific as possible.

Answer. Mauritius and Seychelles are both leaders in Africa when it comes to democracy and human rights. Since becoming an independent republic in 1968, Mauritius has been a beacon of democratic stability in the region, with uninterrupted peaceful transfers of power following free and fair elections. Seychelles continues to advance its democratic transition, with opposition parties successfully contesting legislative elections for the first time in 2016 and for the presidency in 2020. In both Seychelles and Mauritius, we see many of the challenges to democracy that have

been ascendant across the world in recent years. While Mauritius has a vibrant free press, the increasing use of strict libel laws are having a chilling effect on political dialogue. Despite general support for ethnic pluralism, some ethnic minorities do not have broad representation in government agencies. In Seychelles, notwithstanding much progress, the democratic transition is in its nascent stages and remains fragile. The country requires capacity building of civil society, media, and government ministries to ensure improved good governance.

Question. What steps will you take—if confirmed—to support democracy in Mauritius and the Seychelles? What do you hope to accomplish through these actions? What are the potential impediments to addressing the specific obstacles you have identified?

Answer. Supporting democracy has been a cornerstone of U.S. foreign policy since the founding. If confirmed, I will continue to work with democratic partners in Mauritius and Seychelles to reinforce what is working well and to help shore up what needs improvement. In both countries, this means providing support to the press, NGOs, and a wide variety of civil society organizations, while also conversing directly with leaders of government, business, and the faith community to identify ways to preserve and strengthen our common democratic values. Thanks to the hard work of the U.S. Embassy and generations of U.S. diplomats assigned to Port Louis, we are fortunate to have an extraordinarily expansive and robust network of leaders and influencers who are alumni of U.S. training, programs, and universities. If confirmed, I will continue to leverage this network to ensure that we are both publicly and privately, but always effectively, advocating in the cause of strong, vibrant, and healthy democracies that can serve as an example to the region.

Question. How will you utilize U.S. Government assistance resources at your disposal, including the Democracy Commission Small Grants program and other sources of State Department and USAID funding, to support democracy and governance, and what will you prioritize in processes to administer such assistance?

Answer. If confirmed, I will take a holistic approach to ensure that grants and programs funded by the U.S. Government result in the maximum benefit for our most important policy priorities in Mauritius and Seychelles, including the goal of the U.S. Strategy Toward Sub-Saharan Africa to "foster openness and open societies" and "deliver on democratic dividends and security dividends." I will ensure that State Department and Defense Department offices at the Embassy are working hand-in-hand to send the right candidates to our military education and training programs. Supporting democracy and the civil society institutions that are essential to free and fair elections, a vibrant and professional press, and healthy pluralism is a priority of our Embassy in Port Louis. If confirmed, I will take advantage of the wide array of exchange, training, and educational programs provided by the Department of State and other sources to build capacity and likeminded networks of influencers in Mauritius and Seychelles. If confirmed, I will also prioritize ensuring that the country team, especially those offices that handle governance, security, and anti-corruption efforts, are coordinating their efforts to steward resources while advancing U.S. foreign policy and contributing to good governance in both countries.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to meet with civil society members, human rights and other non-governmental organizations in the U.S. and with local human rights NGOs, and other members of civil society in Mauritius and the Seychelles? What steps will you take to pro-actively address efforts to restrict or penalize NGOs and civil society via legal or regulatory measures?

Answer. If confirmed, I will commit to meet with civil society members, human rights and other NGOs in the United States as well as in Mauritius and Seychelles. I will meet with groups experiencing undue restrictions and seek to highlight U.S. Government support for them and their efforts. I will utilize social media or other public diplomacy platforms to message U.S. support and concern for these groups or individuals, partner with likeminded international organizations or embassies to emphasize shared concerns, and engage with relevant government officials to emphasize U.S. Government support for civil society, human rights, and democratic institutions.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to meet with democratically oriented political opposition figures and parties? What steps will you take to encourage genuine political competition? Will you advocate for access and inclusivity for women, minorities and youth within political parties?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to meet with democratically oriented political opposition figures and parties. I would encourage genuine political competition by meeting with a full cross-section of political figures; messaging regularly on the im-

portance of strong democratic institutions; partnering with likeminded organizations and embassies to coordinate efforts, programs and messages supporting democracy; and emphasizing with host government counterparts the importance of fulfilling democratic commitments. In addition, I would engage underrepresented groups to support their participation in the democratic process, and I would advocate for the access inclusion of women, minorities and youth within political parties.

Question. Will you and your Embassy team actively engage with Mauritius and the Seychelles on freedom of the press and address any government efforts designed to control or undermine press freedom through legal, regulatory or other measures? Will you commit to meeting regularly with independent, local press in Mauritius and the Seychelles?

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, I would actively engage on freedom of the press and address government efforts to control or undermine press freedoms. The Embassy in Port Louis is already very focused on this issue and works closely with local contacts to message on U.S. Government concerns regarding press freedoms. I intend to continue and expand on these efforts, regularly meeting with independent, local press in Mauritius and Seychelles.

Question. Will you and your Embassy team actively engage with civil society and government counterparts on countering disinformation and propaganda disseminated by foreign state or non-state actors in the country?

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, I and the Embassy team will continue to actively engage with civil society and government counterparts on countering disinformation and propaganda. I will do this in part through the Global Engagement Center (GEC), which is working across Africa with African partners to provide counter-disinformation training for journalists as well as exposing, countering, and building resiliency to disinformation aimed at undermining the stability and the integrity of African democratic systems.

Question. Will you and your Embassy teams actively engage with Mauritius and the Seychelles on the right of labor groups to organize, including for independent trade unions?

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, I and the Embassy team will be actively engaged with Mauritius and Seychelles on the right of workers to organize, including to form independent trade unions.

Question. Will you commit to using your position, if confirmed, to defend the human rights and dignity of all people in Mauritius and the Seychelles, no matter their sexual orientation or gender identity?

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, I will commit to defend the human rights and dignity of all people in Mauritius and Seychelles, no matter their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Question. What challenges do the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) people face in Mauritius and the Seychelles?

Answer. Mauritius and Seychelles are among the more progressive African nations in respecting the human rights of LGBTQI+ persons. Seychelles reformed its colonial-era legal code to decriminalize same-sex conduct in 2016, and discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation is banned by law. A provision of Mauritius's colonial-era legal code that bans same-sex conduct is currently facing multiple, credible challenges in court, and LGBTQI+ persons in Mauritius are generally protected from legal discrimination and discrimination in employment and the provision of goods. Both countries have civil society groups advocating for the wellbeing of LGBTQI+ persons. Nevertheless, neither Seychelles nor Mauritius recognizes same-sex marriage nor civil unions, and stigma and discrimination against LGBTQI+ persons have not been entirely overcome in either country, disadvantaging LGBTQI+ persons in housing, health care, and education.

Question. What specifically will you commit to do to help LGBTQ people in Mauritius and the Seychelles?

Answer. We support efforts around the globe to promote respect for the human rights of all individuals, including LGBTQI+ persons. With a commitment to "do no harm," we consult local LGBTQI+ organizations and activists on where we can be most helpful to prevent violence against and abuse of LGBTQI+ persons; combat criminalization, discrimination, and stigma; end so-called conversion therapy practices; and empower local movements. The U.S. Embassy in Port Louis has strong relationships with the leaders and membership of the civil society groups advocating for the human rights of LGBTQI+ persons in Mauritius and Seychelles. We help

fund initiatives by these groups, send rising leaders to participate in our exchange and alumni programs, and publicly advocate for respecting and protecting the rights of all Mauritians and Seychellois. We are also a leader among the diplomatic community in Mauritius and Seychelles in championing respect for these rights. If confirmed, I will continue and expand these efforts, while also ensuring that we report current and accurate information on the state of the civil and human rights of LGBTQI+ persons in both countries.

Question. Will you commit, if confirmed, to ensuring that you fully brief Members of Congress and/or their staff each time you are in Washington for visits or consultations during your tenure as Ambassador to Mauritius and the Seychelles?

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, I will commit to ensuring that I fully brief Members of Congress and/or their staff each time I am in Washington, D.C. during my tenure as ambassador to Mauritius and the Seychelles.

Question. How do you anticipate fostering diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) among both American and locally employed staff at Embassy Port Louis?

Answer. To foster diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) among both American and locally employed staff, I would take the following steps, among other efforts: advance the work of the Embassy's DEIA committee; ensure that our hiring procedures follow best practices for eliminating biases in hiring; engage with the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations and the Office of Accessibility and Accommodations to ensure the new Embassy compound project and existing facilities are accessible for those with disabilities; use technologies and other resources to ensure public diplomacy and other outreach efforts are more accessible for those with hearing, vision or other disabilities; and ensure Embassy officials engage a wide variety of individuals and that our convened gatherings are inclusive of diverse citizens.

Question. What specifically will you do to prioritize and promote diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility, while also combating racism, discrimination, and inequality among locally employed staff in Mauritius and the Seychelles?

Answer. To prioritize and promote DEIA, while combating racism, discrimination and inequality among locally employed staff, I would take the following steps, among others: articulate a clear zero tolerance for racism and discrimination in the Mission; ensure that hiring practices are consistent with DEIA standards and allow for a transparent, equitable and inclusive hiring process; prioritize facility projects and programs that facilitate accessibility for employees; and insist on regular DEIA training and other activities for Embassy employees.

Question. In addition to focusing on diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility in the foreign service workforce, will you commit to engaging more equitably in operations and programming, particularly with potential partners and communities that traditionally have been marginalized, excluded, or underrepresented in ours and others' donor and partnership efforts? How do you anticipate utilizing local expertise, knowledge, and capacity to meet our foreign policy goals?

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, I will commit to engage equitably in operations and programming. I would draw on local expertise to best message our policy priorities; identify and reach out to organizations and groups that the Embassy may not have previously engaged; and broaden our outreach across communities.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO HENRY V. JARDINE BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Question. Some Mauritians have expressed concern about democratic backsliding and electoral processes under Prime Minister Pravind Jugnauth, who succeeded his father after the latter stepped down in 2017 due to ill health. As U.S. Ambassador, what actions would you encourage Mauritian authorities to take to enhance democratic accountability and bolster public faith in the electoral process?

Answer. Mauritius was a participant in President Biden's Summit for Democracy precisely because it is one of the strongest democracies in sub-Saharan Africa and has strong democratic foundations. If confirmed, I commit to work with the Government and civil society to ensure they recognize the implications of any actions that threaten these traditions and opportunities for free and fair elections. I will also use all the tools the United States has at our disposal to support civil society, educate young leaders, and work with the Government to continually strengthen and promote our shared democratic principles.

Question. Mauritius claims sovereignty over the United Kingdom-controlled Chagos Archipelago, where a U.S. naval and air base is located on the island of Diego Garcia. As U.S. Ambassador, how would you balance pursuing U.S. national security interests related to Diego Garcia while also upholding positive U.S.-Mauritian relations?

Answer. The United States continues to recognize UK sovereignty over the BIOT. We regard the dispute over sovereignty as a bilateral matter and applaud the UK and Mauritius as they work together to find a way forward. The specific arrangement involving the facilities on Diego Garcia is grounded in the uniquely close and active defense and security partnership between the United States and the UK. It cannot be replicated. The United States continues to enjoy a strong bilateral relationship with Mauritius, with extensive cooperation in maritime security and economic development. If confirmed, I will work to maintain our positive relations and explore opportunities to deepen our cooperation on security and in other areas of mutual interest.

Question. The People's Republic of China has reportedly provided extensive development financing to both Mauritius and Seychelles. As U.S. Ambassador, how would you seek to counter China's influence in Mauritius and Seychelles, including economic and strategic competition in the Indian Ocean?

Answer. The United States continues to expand our bilateral engagement with Mauritius and Seychelles to ensure we can be a partner of choice in advancing shared priorities. Both Mauritius and Seychelles are very receptive to our offers of support in maritime security, economic governance, and academic and professional exchanges. If confirmed, I will continue to expand our strong diplomatic, economic, and security partnerships with both Mauritius and Seychelles as an alternative to the PRC.

Question. Many U.S. Missions have been under enormous stress over the last few years, in large part due to COVID. What is your understanding of morale throughout Mission Port Louis?

Answer. Most COVID restrictions have been lifted in Mauritius so that is no longer a major issue. Given the relatively high quality of life in the country and a clear sense of mission at the Embassy, morale at post is strong.

Question. How do you intend to improve morale at Mission Port Louis?

Answer. While there has been a significant gap between ambassadors assigned to Port Louis, morale at post is already strong. I would build on the existing positive teamwork and commitment to the Embassy's goals. I would engage all Mission offices; actively and regularly visit all offices within the Mission; conduct an offsite meeting of office leaders early in my tenure to develop our strategic program and to promote collaboration; and frequently host community events and activities.

Question. How do you intend to create a unified mission and vision at Mission Port Louis?

Answer. From my earliest leadership experiences as an infantry platoon leader over 30 years ago, and throughout my assignments in the Foreign Service leading large organizations with hundreds of personnel, I understand it is important to communicate effectively and frequently with the team to create a unified mission and vision. It is critical for a leader to articulate the organization's key strategic goals and mission, and to ensure the team can provide good, constructive feedback on the goals and progress. In addition, it is important to model strong personal ethics and behaviors to set organizational expectations.

Question. Management is a key responsibility for Chiefs of Mission. How would you describe your management style?

Answer. I would characterize my management style as collaborative in seeking input from the teams I lead, but it is also important to define expectations, goals, and vision early in an assignment, so that everyone in the organization understands their role and feels engaged in the Mission. I will also seek to establish a level of organizational accountability by establishing clear metrics with team input and to periodically review progress against the goals that the team has established.

Question. Do you believe it is ever acceptable or constructive to berate subordinates, either in public or private?

Answer. No, it is never productive or acceptable to berate subordinates under any circumstances. Performance feedback is important but should be done professionally and in line with the Department's guidance on performance evaluations and counseling.

Question. How do you envision your leadership relationship with your Deputy Chief of Mission?

Answer. Having served previously as a Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM), I understand how critical it is for the ambassador and DCM to forge a true partnership. If confirmed, I would see my relationship with my DCM as being highly collaborative, ensuring regular communication between us. I would also seek to mentor the DCM and prepare them to take on even greater responsibilities in their future assignments with the Department of State.

Question. If confirmed, what leadership responsibilities do you intend to entrust to your Deputy Chief of Mission?

Answer. Having served previously as Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM), I understand the critical role the DCM plays in the Mission. I would empower the DCM to coordinate the activities of Mission offices and to operationalize our various initiatives and activities, particularly those focused on promoting diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility. In addition, State Department regulations clearly define aspects of the DCM's responsibilities, such as developing and implementing mentorship programs for first- and second-tour officers as well as mid-level personnel. I would also ensure the DCM was prepared to lead as appropriate during any brief absence I may have from post.

Question. In order to create and continue employee excellence at the Department, accurate and direct employee evaluation reports (EERs) for Foreign Service Officers are imperative, though often lacking. Do you believe that it is important to provide employees with accurate, constructive feedback on their performances in order to encourage improvement and reward those who most succeeded in their roles?

Answer. Throughout my time in the Foreign Service and in my present role as director of career development and assignments for the Department's Foreign Service professionals, I understand the value of providing accurate and constructive feedback on performance. It actually helps those receiving the feedback to understand where they may need to focus their professional development. In addition, rewarding those who have succeeded serves as a positive reinforcement of professional performance and helps to foster organizational morale and productivity.

Question. If confirmed, would you support and encourage clear, accurate, and direct feedback to employees in order to improve performance and reward high achievers?

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, I would support and encourage clear, accurate, and direct feedback to employees.

Question. It is imperative that U.S. diplomats get outside of posts abroad to meet with local actors, including host government officials, non-government organizations, and fellow foreign diplomats stationed in Greece [Mauritius and Seychelles]. In your opinion, do U.S. diplomats get outside of our Embassy walls enough to accomplish fully their missions?

Answer. It can be a challenge to balance the tasks that keep U.S. diplomats in the Embassy offices with the need to do outreach in the local community. However, I agree that the priority should be for diplomats to do more outreach and more engagement outside of the office. I would encourage this through my own example and make a point of engaging as much as possible with local counterparts, officials, and organizations.

Question. How do you intend to improve the ability of U.S. diplomats to better access all local populations?

Answer. I would seek to improve the ability of U.S. diplomats to access local populations by providing the focus and time for them to do so. In my own outreach, I would bring along other Embassy officials to provide them engagement opportunities so they can initiate and foster the critical relationships with the local community. In addition, I would encourage a robust Embassy language program to provide the needed skills to do the outreach.

Question. Public diplomacy is an important aspect of U.S. foreign policy efforts. What is the public diplomacy environment like in Mauritius and the Seychelles?

Answer. The public diplomacy environment in Mauritius and Seychelles is favorable to U.S. values and interests. Both countries maintain audiences that are interested in U.S. culture, and American educational opportunities remain a gold standard for studying abroad for young Mauritians and Seychellois. Social media continues to play a growing role in the dissemination of information, with internet pen-

etration high in both countries. Media outlets in both Mauritius and Seychelles, in general, operate freely, but are subject to strict libel laws and policies.

Question. What public diplomacy challenges do U.S. diplomats face in the two countries?

Answer. Current public diplomacy challenges include the active presence of our strategic competitors in both countries (including the PRC and Russia), the role of online misinformation and occasional hate speech, and a press corps in both countries that requires continued support to build capacity and develop stronger journalistic standards.

Question. How do you balance the importance of Main State versus the in-country Mission when it comes to tailoring public diplomacy messages for foreign audiences?

Answer. Main State and in-country Mission public diplomacy efforts should be coordinated to complement each other. Some issues or messages may resonate less with local audiences. The Embassy typically has expertise on how messages can be best translated or prioritized to engage the local community effectively. In these instances, it is important to use Embassy personnel, especially local staff, and to leverage insights from local civil society to effectively tailor messages that advance the State Department's mission.

Question. "Anomalous health incidents," commonly referred to as "Havana Syndrome," have been debilitating and sidelining U.S. diplomats around the world for years. They have caused serious, negative consequences for U.S. diplomacy, yet many believe that the Department is not doing enough to care for, protect, and communicate to its personnel. If confirmed, do you commit to taking this threat seriously?

Answer. If confirmed, I do commit to taking anomalous health incidents seriously, working closely with the State Department's Care Coordination Team and bureaus of medical services and diplomatic security to safeguard the health and well-being of our employees and protect against these events in the future.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to talking as openly as you can to Mission Port Louis personnel?

Answer. Yes, I would commit to talking as openly as possible with Mission Port Louis personnel.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO HENRY V. JARDINE BY SENATOR MARCO RUBIO

Question. In May, Secretary Blinken said that the People's Republic of China is the "only country with both the intent to reshape the international order and, increasingly, the economic, diplomatic, military, and technological power to do it." The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) clearly holds all the reins of power in the People's Republic of China and has used this power to commit genocide in Xinjiang, flood our communities with fentanyl, and emit by far the largest quantity of greenhouse gases. As we speak, the Party is cracking down on unprecedented student protests across the country. With their absolute control of Chinese society and industry, the CCP could stop all of these destructive actions tomorrow if they so choose. Is the CCP a threat to the United States?

Answer. As laid out in the President's National Security Strategy, we recognize that the People's Republic of China (PRC) is the greatest geopolitical challenge that we face. That is especially true in Africa, where we actively promote our values, including respect for human rights, and contest the PRC whenever it engages in harmful behavior, like predatory lending.

Question. Does the CCP undertake any activities that are beneficial to U.S. interests?

Answer. Evaluating the activities of the CCP would be beyond the scope of my duties were I to be confirmed as the United States Ambassador to Mauritius and Seychelles. However, it is clear that the PRC does seek to counter U.S. strategic interests.

Question. Do you believe there are any areas within which the CCP would constructively work with the United States in good faith?

Answer. The way the United States and the PRC manage our relationship in the coming years will have significant consequences for the entire world. That is why

competition with Beijing should not preclude cooperation in areas where our interests intersect. In Africa, the State Department continues to explore options where the interests of the United States and the PRC could align. This includes areas such as public health, counterterrorism, counternarcotics, food security, and the environment.

Question. If confirmed, will you approve any joint activity with organizations or representatives from the People's Republic of China in Mauritius or the Seychelles?

Answer. If confirmed, I might support joint activities if interests were to align and there was a clear benefit for advancing U.S. Government foreign policy goals and interests, such as in areas of public health, counternarcotics, counterterrorism, the environment, and food security. However, such cooperation would have to be carefully considered, done in consultation with and approval by appropriate U.S. agencies or offices, and demonstrate a clear benefit to the United States, Mauritius, and Seychelles.

Question. One of the United States' major military bases in the Indian Ocean, Diego Garcia, is located in the Chagos Archipelago, with the permission of the British Government, which controls the islands. Mauritius claims the islands, and last year, the International Court of Justice and the United Nations General Assembly passed resolutions affirming Mauritius' claims. Should Mauritius regain control of the islands, our ability to maintain Diego Garcia and continue military operations in the strategic Indian Ocean will be at risk. If confirmed, what will you do to ensure that the United States is able to continue to operate the Naval Support Facility in Diego Garcia?

Answer. We continue to recognize UK sovereignty over the BIOT. The joint defense facility on Diego Garcia contributes significantly to global security. Diego Garcia allows the United States, UK, and our allies to conduct operations that support regional stability and provide a rapid response to humanitarian crisis. The specific arrangement involving the facilities on Diego Garcia is grounded in the uniquely close and active defense and security partnership between the United States and the UK. It cannot be replicated. We regard the dispute over sovereignty as a bilateral matter and applaud the UK and Mauritius as they work together toward a mutually acceptable resolution. If confirmed, I commit to continue to coordinate closely with the UK regarding the base on Diego Garcia to ensure continued access and use.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO HENRY V. JARDINE BY SENATOR TODD YOUNG

Question. The United States typically invests far more in its physical presence by orders of magnitude than other countries. Some would argue that it may be time to revisit these requirements to ensure they reflect both the security environment and our operational needs. Do you agree, and how should we approach this issue?

Answer. Yes, I agree that it is time to re-examine these requirements. As Secretary Blinken has said, "A world of zero risk is not a world in which American diplomacy can deliver." To that end, the Department is endeavoring for legislative changes to the Secure Embassy Construction and Counterterrorism Act of 1999. The one-size-fits-all nature of the law, especially with smaller posts, does not adequately address the realities of varied environments around the world. Amending this legislation and introducing other flexibilities would allow the Department to evaluate prospective Embassy locations more broadly, not only allowing us to decrease costs, but also allowing our diplomats to extend their reach and broaden their scope.

Question. What would you say to those who would that any relaxation to these requirements opens our personnel and their families up to potential danger?

Answer. I believe those who join the Foreign Service do so with an understanding of the inherent risk in the profession. The Department has some of the best minds working to ensure our people are strategically managing risks, including potential danger. The Department designs and constructs facilities to address both current and future threats. The proposed legislative changes would allow us to manage risk more strategically in conducting diplomacy.

Question. How would you sell this decision to my constituents who might express sticker shock at these costs?

Answer. During my tenure as the Principal Deputy Director and Acting Director for the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations, I grappled first-hand with the im-

pacts of the current one-size-fits-all security standard that hampers our ability to conduct diplomacy in the most advantageous locations in a cost-effective way. Construction limitations, such as restrictions on noise, truck access, and laydown areas, combined with the cost of a full setback in a dense urban center, especially in the highly developed world, increase the overall cost of delivery. If the Department's legislative proposals are adopted, the increased flexibility to determine Embassy locations would decrease costs.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO L. FELICE GORORDO BY SENATOR MARCO RUBIO

Question. In May, Secretary Blinken said that the People's Republic of China is the "only country with both the intent to reshape the international order and, increasingly, the economic, diplomatic, military, and technological power to do it." The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) clearly holds all the reins of power in the People's Republic of China and has used this power to commit genocide in Xinjiang, flood our communities with fentanyl, and emit by far the largest quantity of greenhouse gases. As we speak, the Party is cracking down on unprecedented student protests across the country. With their absolute control of Chinese society and industry, the CCP could stop all of these destructive actions tomorrow if they so choose.

- Is the CCP a threat to the United States?

Answer. We are in a serious strategic competition with China, which is led by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Certain conduct by China (1) hurts American workers, (2) blunts our technological edge, and (3) threatens our alliances and our influence in international organizations.

I understand that the Biden administration is committed to responsible competition with China and pushing back on China's aggressive actions and unfair practices that threaten American interests.

The Biden-Harris administration has and will continue to engage in a whole-of-government approach to China that uses our available tools in a manner that is designed to achieve our economic, national security, and foreign policy goals.

If confirmed, I am committed to work with allies and partners to jointly tackle China's activities that can undermine global values and norms.

Question. Does the CCP undertake any activities that are beneficial to U.S. interests?

Answer. As the Administration has stated, China is the only country with both the intent to reshape the international order and, increasingly, the economic, diplomatic, military, and technological power to do it. Under President Xi, the ruling Chinese Communist Party has become more repressive at home and more aggressive abroad. We have profound differences with China.

It is in the United States' interests to stabilize its relationship with China while recognizing the wide range of concerns we have with its practices.

Question. Do you believe there are any areas within which the CCP would constructively work with the United States in good faith?

Answer. I believe it is important for the United States and China to work together to tackle transnational challenges—from macroeconomic cooperation to concerted action on debt relief, the pandemic, food security, and climate change. It is in the world's interest for the two economies to have the opportunity to exchange views even amid strategic competition, and I believe the Chinese Government recognizes the importance of that as well.

Question. If confirmed, will you approve any joint activity with organizations or representatives from the People's Republic of China at the World Bank?

Answer. I understand the Treasury Department has actively discouraged World Bank involvement with China's Belt and Road Initiative. If confirmed, I would closely scrutinize any proposed World Bank joint activity with China.

Question. Mr. Gorordo, I understand you have focused on turning Miami, our mutual hometown, into the Tech Hub of the Americas. Looking at your eMerge Americas organization, I can see potential for the types of initiatives that will be critical in building lasting relations between the United States and other countries in the Western Hemisphere. Unfortunately, there is ample opportunity for the Chinese Communist Party to use forums, such as these, to surreptitiously spread its influence in our country and others throughout the Americas. While you're on the right path, you and others, must ensure that it is not subverted by the CCP, which as

we speak, is committing a horrific genocide against the Uyghur people and cracking down on peaceful protests across China.

Answer. Senator, I share your concern that the atrocities being committed by the CCP against the Uyghur people are horrific. I am equally concerned about China's use of forced labor of the Uyghur people and other minorities. As the White House has said, the United States and the world's leading democracies stand united against forced labor, and the United States is committed to ensuring that global supply chains are free from the use of forced labor.

I understand that the U.S. Government has tasked agencies to put this into action, and if confirmed, I commit to work with all parts of the U.S. Government and my fellow Board members to uphold high labor standard in projects.

Question. Last week, Star Xu, a Chinese tech executive was released from temporary detention by China's Ministry of Public Security, one of the CCP's security organs used to uphold its totalitarian grip on the Chinese people. Xu was detained for more than a month, for no stated reason, other than he was being "investigated." I raise this because Xu is the founder and CEO of OKCoin, one of the sponsors of eMerge Americas, your organization. Xu's case demonstrates exactly the problem of working with companies subject to the CCP's jurisdiction—in many cases these companies are controlled by the CCP through coercion and intimidation. Since Xu was detained on October 16, did eMerge Americas inquire with the CCP on the details of his detention to ensure one of its partners was safe?

Answer. OKCoin is not a sponsor of eMerge Americas. OKCoin USA, Inc., is a sponsor of eMerge Americas. With regards to Xu's case, I have never been in contact with Xu and do not know of the details of his detention. With that said, I make myself available to be able to obtain information regarding the detention.

Question. In vetting sponsorship offers, does eMergeAmericas ensure that sponsors are not compromised or controlled by the Chinese Communist Party? Please explain.

Answer. eMerge Americas does not do business with any entities determined to be controlled by CCP. Should an entity that does business with eMerge Americas be determined to be controlled by the CCP, eMerge Americas will comply with all relevant U.S. laws and regulations.

Question. If it is determined that OKCoin is controlled by the Chinese Communist Party, will eMerge Americas return any money received from OKCoin?

Answer. eMerge Americas does not do business with any entities determined to be controlled by CCP. Should an entity that does business with eMerge Americas be determined to be controlled by the CCP, eMerge Americas will comply with all relevant U.S. laws and regulations.

Question. If confirmed, what kind of vetting should we expect from you when evaluating whether or not the World Bank should lend to companies controlled by the Chinese Communist Party?

Answer. If confirmed, I will vote in accordance with applicable U.S. laws and policies. The CCP does not share the World Bank's commitment to supporting inclusive development, so I will deeply scrutinize CCP involvement in any World Bank-financed project. I believe World Bank investments should be based on market principles, high standards, and inclusiveness and should avoid contact with political parties.

Question. I understand that you are the founder of Roots of Hope, an organization that seeks to develop relationships between American and Cuban Youth. During your time in the Obama administration, you helped to re-establish diplomatic ties with the Castro regime. After the historic protests on July 11, 2021, you and other Cuban activists met with President Biden to advise him on how to support the Cuban people in overcoming the draconian censorship the regime imposes on Cubans.

- Do you acknowledge that the policies you supported during the Obama administration contributed to supporting a regime that, even today, tortures and kills its own people?

Answer. I have spent my entire life fighting for human rights and freedom and I am committed to that cause. As a first-generation Cuban-American whose family suffered at the hands of a communist totalitarian regime, I reject the human rights violations of the Cuban Government whole-heartedly. I am deeply committed to honoring, protecting, and advancing the cause of democracy, human rights, and economic prosperity here and abroad. I abhor the Cuban Government's repression against the Cuban people, as my family has paid the price firsthand.

While I was in college, I co-founded Roots of Hope, a nonprofit organization focused on empowering Cuban youth to become the authors of their own futures. Through Roots of Hope, I have supported young Cuban independent journalists like Yoani Sanchez and young human rights and civil society leaders like the late Harold Cepero, who was killed alongside Cuban pro-democracy activist Oswaldo Paya in 2012. If confirmed, I will work relentlessly to continue to uphold U.S. values and advance our interests around the world.

Question. Do you continue to advocate for re-opening an Embassy in Havana, even though the regime continues to detain minors and children for participating in the July 11 protests?

Answer. I understand that The U.S. Embassy in Havana has remained open since the United States and Cuba re-established diplomatic relations in 2015. The Department of State is gradually increasing the number of staff at U.S. Embassy Havana as part of Department of State efforts to facilitate diplomatic and civil society engagement while ensuring the safety of our personnel., and that the State Department has committed to increasing its staffing, consistent with security protocols, in order to provide more services to the U.S. and Cuban people. The Administration continues to call for the release of all persons, including children, detained during the July 11, 2021 and subsequent summer's protests. The Cuban Government should respect Cubans' right to speech and peaceful assembly.

Question. If confirmed, will you uphold standing U.S. law, such as the LIBERTAD Act, that prohibits U.S. support to the Castro-Diaz-Canel regime?

Answer. If confirmed, I will represent and vote consistent with the U.S. position and U.S. law.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO L. FELICE GORORDO BY SENATOR JOHN BARRASSO

Question. What is the total financial contribution from the United States to the World Bank?

Answer. The total the value of U.S. financial contributions to the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), the World Bank's nonconcessional lending arm, is $48.012 billion. This includes $3.483 billion in paid-in capital and $47.785 billion in callable capital.

Question. What are the top 10 financial contributing countries and how much have each of those countries contributed to the World Bank?

Answer. Based on the IBRD's 2022 financial statements, the top 10 financial contributing countries to the IBRD are as follows:

TOP TEN CONTRIBUTING COUNTRIES TO THE IBRD IN 2022

(Billions US$)

Rank/Country	Paid-In Capital	Callable Capital
#1 United States	$3.483	$47.785
#2 Japan	1.752	22.361
#3 China	1.178	16.061
#4 Germany	0.913	12.329
#5 United Kingdom	0.919	11.744
#6 France	0.900	11.763
#7 India	0.692	9.215
#8 Russia	0.611	8.051
#9 Canada	0.620	7.880
#10 Italy	0.563	7.550

Question. If confirmed, will you commit to ensuring the World Bank is promoting all forms of energy projects across the globe, including oil, gas, nuclear and coal?

Answer. I will review each project on its own merits, assessing the country's needs, and the consistency with the World Bank's strategy in that country as well as U.S. policies and guidance. I will also ensure that projects are consistent with all relevant Board-approved policies and each country's country strategy, which ensures that World Bank activities provide a coherent and agreed structure.

I will also rely on Treasury's review team to give me guidance on whether the individual projects contain strong environmental and social safeguards, and that the projects are consistent with any relevant Congressional mandates and Treasury guidance.

Question. The U.S. Department of Treasury announced plans to end support for fossil fuels at multilateral development bank, except for exceptional circumstances.

- What are the "exceptional circumstances" in which the United States would support a fossil fuel project at the World Bank?

Answer. I understand that the MDBs support a wide array of energy projects that strive to support sustainable energy goals and help address energy access issues.

For the United States, and as Alternate Executive Director, if confirmed, I would work to evaluate each project on its own merits, assessing the country's needs, consistency with the MDB's strategy in that country, and the policies and guidance of its shareholders.

I understand that the Treasury Department has put on its website some guidance that urges the MDBs to limit their support of fossil fuel projects. I understand this is consistent with the Biden-Harris administration's approach towards supporting more sustainable growth. I look forward to learning about the Administration's approach and working with the World Bank Management to help ensure that developing countries are able to address energy access, in as clean and sustainable a manner as possible.

Question. What actions has the United States taken to end World Bank support for fossil fuel?

Answer. While I'm not in the position right now, I am aware that the World Bank supports a wide array of energy projects and that they strive to support countries' efforts to have sustainable energy and to address energy access issues. I look forward to learning more about the World Bank approach and working with you to help ensure that the World Bank is funding the most appropriate energy solutions for the developing world.

Question. Do you support the financing of fossil fuel projects at the World Bank?

Answer. If confirmed, I will vote according to applicable laws and policies, including the guidance that Treasury recently released concerning MDB financing of fossil fuel projects. The World Bank can play a vital role in expanding energy access in developing countries while at the same time supporting ambitious emissions reduction, protecting critical ecosystems, building resilience against climate change, and promoting the flow of capital toward climate-aligned investments. The World Bank should select energy projects that account for the full range of costs and externalities over the lifecycle of the project and avoid financing projects that the private sector is capable of financing. The World Bank should finance projects that utilize technologies providing energy access, while promoting energy efficiency, that do not lock developing countries into high-emissions trajectories or technologies that may soon be obsolete.

Question. In a tweet on July 30, 2022, you said "we must do all that we can to combat climate change & sea level rise."

- If confirmed, what climate change initiatives would you promote?

Answer. If confirmed to be the next U.S. Alternate Executive Director at the World Bank, I will work with Treasury and World Bank staff to support the most vulnerable countries and ensure that these countries have access to the tools needed to mitigate and adapt to the impact of climate change in a sustainable, responsible way.

Question. If confirmed, would climate change your top priority at the World Bank?

Answer. As I stated in my written testimony, if confirmed, I will use my experience to help advance U.S. development, foreign policy and national security priorities, and expand markets for U.S. products and services. Drawing on my fiduciary experience as an investor, executive and board member of both for-profit and nonprofit companies, I resolve to be a good steward of our tax dollars to ensure the Bank's programs yield the greatest return on investment and uphold our values. I will also seek to engage with a diverse range of important stakeholders, including Members of both parties, to ensure the interests of all Americans are represented in the Bank's boardroom and projects. Moreover, I will draw on my two decades of experience in management and oversight to promote the greatest degree of integrity, transparency, and accountability in the Bank's operations. Mitigating and adapting to climate change is fundamental to achieving the World Bank's twin goals of pov-

erty alleviation and shared prosperity. It is imperative to address all of these priorities in a coherent and coordinated manner.

Question. There has been some discussion by analysts that Russia should be suspended from its membership in the international financial institutions.

- Do you support a suspension of Russia's membership in the World Bank? Why or why not?

Answer. I understand that the Bank has ceased all operations and development projects in Russia. There are both advantages and risks to suspending Russia's membership in the World Bank. It is important that regardless of Russia's status at the Bank that it remain isolated. If confirmed, I will work closely with allies and World Bank Management to maximize Russia's isolation and deter its ability to exert influence at the World Bank.

Question. After the Taliban took control of Afghanistan, the World Bank halted funding for projects in Afghanistan.

- Under what circumstances, if any, would you recommend the United States support World Bank projects in Afghanistan under the Taliban rule?

Answer. I understand that the World Bank has paused its own-funded activities in Afghanistan but has recently been providing through the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund support to the Afghan people in the areas of basic human needs through U.N. agencies. The international community, including the World Bank, should continue examining options to responsibly provide support to the Afghan people, while engaging in strong due diligence and application of appropriate safeguards to prevent the flow of funds to any entity supporting terrorism or other acts of violence against the United States.

Question. Chinese firms are the largest recipients of World Bank contracts. Chinese firms won nearly a quarter of investment projects between 2016 and 2020.

- What are the risks and challenges posed by the World Bank's reliance on Chinese firms for implementation of its development projects?

Answer. Competition with China is one of the central challenges of the 21st century, including competition with China's economic statecraft. As we have seen, supply chain diversification is an important global priority for numerous reasons. Investments from the World Bank can help with this effort.

Question. What is your plan to address this issue?

Answer. If confirmed, I look forward to working with President Biden, Secretary Yellen, and Congress to craft an economic and diplomatic agenda that promotes economic fairness and democratic values. I will work to ensure that the World Bank offers a high-quality, sustainable alternative to borrowing from China, that there is an emphasis on increasing developing countries' capacity to evaluate procurement bids and contracts on the basis of quality and value-for-money, and for investments in responsible efforts at supply chain diversification. I will also advocate for robust resourcing for the World Bank's Integrity Unit, so that firms and individuals found to have engaged in corruption are restricted from MDB procurement opportunities.

Question. Through the Belt and Road Initiative, the Chinese Communist Party offers countries the ability to borrow a lot of money for infrastructure projects. The problem is that these countries accumulate large amounts of debt to China, they are unable to pay back, while still not achieving the development gains they were seeking. Unable to escape the massive debt owed to China, countries face default or the forfeiture of strategic assets and natural resources.

Question. What actions do you believe the World Bank should take, if any, to assist countries facing default and economic collapse due to China's predatory lending?

Answer. I fully share your concern about the increasing debt vulnerabilities many of the poorest countries face. The World Bank can play an important role in assisting countries with building debt management capacity, promoting debt transparency through debt data collection and reporting, and supporting countries participating in debt relief initiatives, such as the G-20 Common Framework.

Question. How would you ensure American taxpayers are not bailing out Chinese financial intuitions and further enabling China's predatory lending practices?

Answer. If confirmed, I pledge to call attention to China's predatory lending practices through the voice and vote of the United States on the World Bank's Board of Directors. Furthermore, I will advocate for the World Bank assistance to countries with building debt management capacity, promoting debt transparency

through debt data collection and reporting, and supporting countries participating in debt relief initiatives, such as the G-20 Common Framework.

Question. What are the biggest challenges developing countries across the globe face from China's predatory lending practices?

Answer. As Secretary Yellen has said, "Today, nearly 60 percent of low-income countries are at high risk of or are in debt distress. This over-indebtedness poses a risk to stability and growth at a time when financial pressures are mounting. Without timely and orderly debt relief, we worry that many developing countries may face severe economic fallout."

Question. As the bank's largest contributor, the United States has a duty to ensure American taxpayer resources are used wisely. I believe China should not be receiving any loans from the World Bank.

- Do you support ending all lending to China at the World Bank?

Answer. I understand that the World Bank made a series of commitments on graduation as part of its 2018 capital increase. If confirmed, I will encourage the World Bank to adhere to those commitments, in coordination with the U.S. Executive Director and Treasury colleagues.

I believe China meets the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development's criteria for graduation, given its high per capita income, institutional capacity, and ample access to other sources of finance.

Question. If confirmed, what actions will you take to ensure no more US taxpayer funding goes to China at the World Bank?

Answer. I believe the PRC meets the IBRD's criteria for graduation, given its high per capita income, institutional capacity, and ample access to other sources of development finance. If confirmed, I will press for the PRC's graduation as soon as possible, and will seek to advance this position by working with the U.S. Executive Director, World Bank Management, Secretary Yellen and Treasury Colleagues, Congress, and other U.S. agencies, as well as likeminded partners.

Question. How much funding has China received from the World Bank since it met the bank's graduation criteria?

Answer. I understand that as per China's current country partnership framework (CPF) with the World Bank, which runs from World Bank FY 2020 to FY 2025, the lending it receives will average about $1.0-$1.5 billion per year and gradually decline during the CPF period.

Question. What is the process at the World Bank for graduating countries? What reforms would you recommend to the current process?

Answer. My understanding is there is not a formal process for graduating countries from IBRD lending, and that graduation from IBRD lending is effectively voluntary. World Bank Management assesses countries' readiness for graduation based on sustained per capita income about the graduation discussion income threshold, creditworthiness and access to other sources of finance, and institutional capacity. However, a number of reforms were agreed as part of the 2018 Capital Package negotiations that move IBRD borrowers that exceed the per capita income threshold that triggers discussions on graduation in the direction of graduation. These include (a) reduced lending volumes, (b) narrowed scope of activities financed to focus on the institutional strengthening needed for graduation, and (c) higher loan prices. I will continue to press for transparency in assessments of graduation readiness and targeting assistance on addressing constraints to graduation. In the case of China, I will work with the U.S. Executive Director and others in the U.S. Government to press for the PRC's graduation as soon as possible.

Question. Which countries have met the criteria for graduation but still receive loans from the World Bank?

Answer. I believe the PRC has met the criteria. I understand there are several other countries that have per capita incomes above the graduation discussion income threshold but in most cases, do not have sufficiently robust access to other financing sources on reasonable terms and/or lack institutional capacity to sustain graduation. If confirmed, I will advocate for transparency in assessments of graduation readiness and targeting assistance on addressing constraints to graduation.

Question. What countries are close to graduating?

Answer. I understand there are several countries that have per capita incomes above the graduation discussion income threshold but in most cases, do not have sufficiently robust access to other financing sources on reasonable terms and/or lack

institutional capacity to sustain graduation. If confirmed, I will advocate for transparency in assessments of graduation readiness and targeting assistance on addressing constraints to graduation.

Question. The World Bank recently partly guaranteed a Ghana bond which is expected to complicate the country's debt workout. In 2015, Ghana issued a $1 billion bond due in 2030.

- What is the expected outcome of this partial guarantee?

Answer. My understanding is that the Treasury Department is closely monitoring the matter. The outcome will depend on how the World Bank interprets the relevant provisions of the bond contract.

Question. What was the outcome the last time the World Bank issued a similar guarantee?

Answer. The World Bank has issued only one other guarantee to Argentina in 1999 and chose not to demand immediate reimbursement following Argentina's default.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO L. FELICE GORORDO BY SENATOR TED CRUZ

Question. On March 11 of 2016 you participated in a political event with then-Assistant to President Barack Obama and Deputy National Security Advisor Ben Rhodes. The event was publicly described as a "Town Meeting on the Future of U.S.-Cuba Relations with Young Cuban American Business People and Students," with a news conference to follow afterward. Mr. Rhodes publicly promoted the event and described it as in line with the Administration's "process of normalization" with the Cuban regime, and cited arguments about U.S. businesses engaging Cuba. In his public post regarding the event, Mr. Rhodes cited a narrative ostensibly written by you about traveling to Cuba in 2015.

- Do you believe that promoting economic normalization between Cuba and the United States is in the national security interests of the United States?
- Do you believe that promoting economic normalization between Cuba and the international community is in the national security interests of the United States?

Answer. I have spent my entire life fighting for human rights and freedom and I am committed to that cause. As a first-generation Cuban-American whose family suffered at the hands of a communist totalitarian regime, I reject the human rights violations of the Cuban Gpovernment whole-heartedly. I am deeply committed to honoring, protecting, and advancing the cause of democracy, human rights, and economic prosperity here and abroad.

While I was in college, I co-founded Roots of Hope, a nonprofit organization focused on empowering Cuban youth to become the authors of their own futures. Through Roots of Hope, I have supported young Cuban independent journalists like Yoani Sanchez and young human rights and civil society leaders like the late Harold Cepero, who was killed alongside Cuban pro-democracy activist Oswaldo Paya in 2012. If confirmed, I will work relentlessly to continue to uphold U.S. values and advance our interests around the world.

As President Biden has stated, I believe the U.S. should "continue to stand with the Cuban people, who have suffered for decades and decades under a failed communist regime." I believe that it is in national security interests of the United States to actively pursue measures that will both support the Cuban people and hold the Cuban regime accountable.

Question. Do you believe that the Cuban regime would use additional resources to promote anti-American movements in the Western Hemisphere? Do you believe that the Cuban regime would use additional resources to promote violence against American interests in the Western Hemisphere?

Answer. The Biden administration has made clear that it will not provide support to the Cuban military, intelligence, or security services. Cuba is not a member of the World Bank, and does not receive resources from it. If confirmed, as the Alternate Executive Director, I will represent and vote consistent with U.S. positions and U.S. law at this institution.

Question. Please list all officials who were or did serve in the Government of Cuba with whom you met while visiting Cuba in 2015.

Answer. In August 2015, I attended the raising of the American flag ceremony at the U.S. Embassy in Havana as a guest of then-U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry. I did not have any meetings with officials that were or did serve in the Government of Cuba. However, I did meet with human rights, civil society and pro-democracy leaders at the ceremony at the U.S. Embassy.

In September 2015, I participated with my late-mother Martha Serra Mohr in the Catholic Church pilgrimage for the visit of Pope Francis to Cuba. The pilgrimage was headed by the Archbishop of Miami Thomas Wenski and organized in part by the international faith-based nongovernmental organization Catholic Relief Services. It was the dying wish of my mother to return to Cuba for the first time after more than 40 years when she was diagnosed with late stage pancreatic cancer. The Catholic Church and Catholic Relief Services made this trip possible, and my mother was personally blessed by Pope Francis two months to the day before she was reunited with our Creator. I did not have any meetings with officials that were or did serve in the Government of Cuba. However, I did meet with Catholic Church leaders as part of the pilgrimage.

Question. Please provide a transcript or recording of your comments during the March 11 event with Mr. Rhodes.

Answer. With regards to the event held at Miami Dade College in 2016, I have looked for a recording or a transcript, but I have been unable to find one. I have also reached out to the Miami Dade College. Unfortunately, Miami Dade College has been unable to locate a transcript or recording. The basis of my opening statement can be found in Medium blog post that was the basis for my opening and closing remarks. The basis for Mr. Rhodes' participation in the Town Hall can also be found in the White House Archived Medium blog post that he authored. Below please find the blog posts and a relevant article by press that covered the event:

http://bit.ly/3TqfLR9

http://bit.ly/3Lmucnr

https://bit.ly/3FrTcG2

Question. Please provide a transcript or recording of your comments during the news conference following the March 11 event with Mr. Rhodes.

Answer. I did not participate in the news conference following the March 11 event at Miami Dade College.

* * *

FOLLOW UP TO PREVIOUS QUESTIONS SUBMITTED
TO L. FELICE GORORDO BY SENATOR CRUZ

Question. In the QFRs submitted pursuant to your nomination, I asked you for details regarding a March 11, 2016 political event with then-Assistant to the President and Deputy National Security Advisor Ben Rhodes regarding the Administration's "process of normalization" with the Cuban regime.

Specifically, I asked you to provide a transcript or recording of your comments during the event. The event had been livestreamed and in conversations with my staff, you had indicated you would be able to provide a record of your comments, but in your response to the QFRs, you wrote "With regards to the event held at Miami Dade College in 2016, I have looked for a recording or a transcript, but I have been unable to find one. I have also reached out to the Miami Dade College. Unfortunately, Miami Dade College has been unable to locate a transcript or recording." I also asked you more generally, in the context of that event, whether you believe that promoting economic normalization between Cuba and the United States is in the national security interests of the United States. In partial answer to this question, you cited your work "co-found[ing] Roots of Hope, a nonprofit organization focused on empowering Cuban youth to become the authors of their own futures."

- Please provide any copies you have of your prepared remarks for the event, e.g. introductions, speech text, etc.

Answer. I have conducted an exhaustive search of my files both electronic and paper, and I do not have a recording or transcript of my prepared remarks for the event that took place at Miami Dade College.

My understanding is that the event was live streamed by Miami Dade College. For this reason, I have reached out to Miami Dade College to request any video recording or transcript of the event. Miami Dade College searched their

archives and stated that they did not have a video recording or transcript of the event.

As I noted in my response to the previous question, the basis of my opening statement for the Miami Dade College event can be found in the Medium blog post below:

http://bit.ly/3mIS6z1

From what I recall, the basis for Mr. Rhodes' participation in the Town Hall can also be found in the White House Archived Medium blog post that he authored. Below please find the blog post:

http://bit.ly/3TmhQ0C

Moreover, below please also find the link to an article by press that covered and recapped the event:

https://bit.ly/3ZNSOJT

Question. Has Roots of Hope received funding for the U.S. Federal Government, and if so how much?

Answer. Roots of Hope has not received funding from the U.S. Federal Government.

Question. Please list any foreign donors to Roots of Hope who have contributed in excess of $250.

Answer. I have no objection to your staff asking for this information. Feel free to reach out to Roots of Hope directly and I'm fully supportive of this request.

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RESPONSE TO AN ADDITIONAL QUESTION FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO RICHARD L.A. WEINER BY SENATOR MARCO RUBIO

Question. In May, Secretary Blinken said that the People's Republic of China is the "only country with both the intent to reshape the international order and, increasingly, the economic, diplomatic, military, and technological power to do it." The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) clearly holds all the reins of power in the People's Republic of China and has used this power to commit genocide in Xinjiang, flood our communities with fentanyl, and emit by far the largest quantity of greenhouse gases. As we speak, the Party is cracking down on unprecedented student protests across the country. With their absolute control of Chinese society and industry, the CCP could stop all of these destructive actions tomorrow if they so choose.

- Is the CCP a threat to the United States?

Answer. We are in a serious strategic competition with China, which is led by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Certain conduct by China (1) hurts American workers, (2) blunts our technological edge, and (3) threatens our alliances and our influence in international organizations.

I understand that the Biden Administration is committed to responsible competition with China and pushing back on China's aggressive actions and unfair practices that threaten American interests.

The Biden-Harris administration has and will continue to engage in a whole-of-government approach to China that uses our available tools in a manner that is designed to achieve our economic, national security, and foreign policy goals.

If confirmed, I am committed to work jointly with allies and partners to tackle China's activities that undermine global values and norms.

Question. Does the CCP undertake any activities that are beneficial to U.S. interests?

Answer. As the Administration has stated, China is the only country with both the intent to reshape the international order and, increasingly, the economic, diplomatic, military, and technological power to do it. Under President Xi, the ruling Chinese Communist Party has become more repressive at home and more aggressive abroad. We have profound differences with China.

It is in the United States' interests to stabilize its relationship with China while recognizing the wide range of concerns we have with its practices.

Question. Do you believe there are any areas within which the CCP would constructively work with the United States in good faith?

Answer. I believe it is important for the United States and China to work together to tackle transnational challenges—from macroeconomic cooperation to concerted action on debt relief, the pandemic, food security, and climate change. It is in the world's interest for the two economies to have the opportunity to exchange views even amid strategic competition, and I believe the Chinese Government recognizes the importance of that as well.

Question. If confirmed, will you approve any joint activity with organizations or representatives from the People's Republic of China at the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development?

Answer. I understand the Treasury Department has actively discouraged EBRD involvement with China's Belt and Road Initiative. As the Secretary has said, the Biden Administration is willing to make use of the full array of tools to hold China accountable, and, working with U.S. allies and partners, including through multilateral institutions, to confront China's abusive behaviors. If confirmed, I will do so.

If confirmed, I would closely scrutinize any proposed EBRD joint activity with China.

Question. Since February 2014, Vladimir Putin has consistently supported policies that violate the sovereignty and undermine the democracy of Ukraine, most horrifically with the invasion he launched earlier this year.

- Do you support efforts to expel Russia from the EBRD?

Answer. It is absolutely critical that multilateral funds not support Russia's unprovoked and illegal war in any way. If confirmed I would consider the implications across all international financial institutions if the EBRD were to expel Russia.

I understand that the EBRD Board of Governors passed a resolution in April suspending Russia's access to any Bank resources, which requires the institution to avoid any new support to Russia. The EBRD has also closed its offices in Russia. EBRD management is in the process of divesting from its remaining Russian holdings and, if confirmed, I will make sure this is done in a way that does not inadvertently enrich the Russian regime.

Question. Beyond expulsion, what other efforts are available to sanction Russia at the Bank?

Answer. Working with our allies and partners, we must be firm in our resolve that multilateral funds not support Russia's unprovoked and illegal war in any way. If confirmed, I will work to ensure proper controls and accountability over the execution of EBRD's projects. If confirmed, I understand that there are that are various procedures available to prevent any Russian influence over Board decisions, and I will work closely with allies and EBRD Management to maximize Russia's isolation in the EBRD.

Question. The United States has the largest single vote in the EBRD, but European countries, together, have a majority share in the institution.

- If confirmed, how will you utilize America's position at the Bank to lead other shareholders in directing loans away from projects sponsored by the Chinese Communist Party?

Answer. While the United States is the largest shareholder with a 10 percent stake and is able to exercise considerable influence over Bank policies and operations, U.S. influence at the Bank also depends on our ability to build coalitions with likeminded shareholders.

If confirmed, I commit to exercising the United States' voice and vote to advance U.S. interests at the EBRD while also partnering with our allies and partners to extend U.S. influence over the institution.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to opposing all EBRD loans to projects that are controlled by, or affiliated with, the Chinese Communist Party?

Answer. If confirmed, I will vote in accordance with applicable U.S. laws and policies. The CCP does not share the EBRD's commitment to supporting transition to market-based economies and democratic pluralism, so I will deeply scrutinize PRC involvement in any EBRD-financed project. I believe EBRD investments should be based on market principles and should avoid contact with political parties.

RESPONSE TO AN ADDITIONAL QUESTION FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO RICHARD L.A. WEINER BY SENATOR TODD YOUNG

Question. Article 1 of the EBRD charter says that countries must commit to and apply the principles of multiparty democracy, pluralism, and market economics in order to qualify for EBRD loans. Do all of the countries currently borrowing from the EBRD meet these standards?

Answer. I understand that the EBRD assesses this commitment as part of its development of country strategies for each country and calibrates its approach to assistance in those countries that are deficient. If confirmed, I will underscore the importance of this commitment to the EBRD's mission and promote appropriately calibrated approaches in those countries.

Question. How important do you believe the goals of Article 1 should be in guiding EBRD lending decisions? Should countries be denied loans if they fail to comply?

Answer. The EBRD has a unique mission to support the transition of countries from command economies to multi-party democracies with market economies. The EBRD's political mandate as stated in Article 1 of its charter makes it unique among development banks. The United States views this mandate as a critical element to the EBRD's work in the region to promote vibrant and open democracies. If confirmed, I will advocate for the EBRD to support countries through all its tools to strengthen public institutions, improve public financial management, and improve transparency and anticorruption. I will also advocate for EBRD to consult actively with civil society groups and implement robust safeguards and accountability over its operations. I will use the voice and vote of the United States to support projects that uphold these values and high standards.

Question. In EBRD's 31 year history, only the Czech Republic has graduated from EBRD borrowing. Are any other countries close to graduating?

Answer. In 2007, the Czech Republic (Czechia) graduated from EBRD borrowing; it was the only country to do so. EBRD graduation is a country-led process, and I understand that the Treasury Department continues to view graduation from EBRD investment as the ultimate indicator of the Bank's success in achieving its transition mission. Progress toward transition is not always linear, however. I understand the Treasury Department has supported a flexible post-graduation approach, which allowed the Czech Republic (Czechia), to return to borrower status temporarily due to the economic impacts of COVID–19.

For other countries that are advanced in transition, such as those in Central Europe and the Baltics, I will advocate for ensuring that EBRD assistance is targeted at addressing remaining transition gaps and does not crowd out private investment.

Question. If confirmed, what criteria would you support to gauge whether a country should graduate from the EBRD?

Answer. I understand that the EBRD assesses a country's transition to an open market-oriented economy across six areas: competitive, inclusive, wellgoverned, green, resilient, and integrated. A number of factors should be considered within these areas in determining whether a country should graduate. If confirmed, I pledge to work with EBRD management and shareholders to promote a constructive approach to graduation.

Question. Is there a concern that, as the EBRD expands the number of countries it operates in that it is spreading itself too thin?

Answer. I understand that the EBRD's approach to private-sector development is unique, would be of great value to African countries, where it is currently contemplating a limited and incremental expansion, and that the needs are large enough to accommodate additional actors on the continent. Geostrategically, it is crucial for the United States to assist African countries in their development to market economies. If confirmed, I will work with Management and other shareholders to ensure any additional expansion is taken in a responsible and effective manner, with no loss of focus on its existing emerging transition countries. The EBRD's expansion into the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean over the past decade indicates it is capable of expanding effectively into new, geostrategically important markets while still delivering in its existing countries of operation.

RESPONSE TO AN ADDITIONAL QUESTION FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO RICHARD L.A. WEINER BY SENATOR JOHN BARRASSO

Question. What are the top five financial contributing countries to the EBRD?

Answer. EBRD's 73 shareholders include 71 countries across five continents, as well as the European Union and the European Investment Bank. These shareholders have each made a capital contribution, which forms the Bank's core funding. The United States is a founding member of the EBRD and is the single largest shareholder with a 10 percent share of the Bank's capital. The other top financial contributors are the United Kingdom, Japan, Italy, France, and Germany.

Question. What is the total financial contribution from the United States to the EBRD?

Answer. The United States is a founding member of the EBRD and is the single largest shareholder with a 10 percent share of the Bank's capital. Our total paid-in capital contributions are $636 million.

Question. What level of influence does the United States have over the European Bank for Reconstruction (EBRD) operations and EBRD loan policy?

Answer. While the United States is the largest shareholder with a 10 percent stake and is able to exercise considerable influence over Bank policies and operations, U.S. influence at the Bank also depends on our ability to build coalitions with likeminded shareholders. If confirmed, I commit to exercising the United States' voice and vote to advance U.S. interests at the EBRD while also partnering with our allies and partners to extend U.S. influence over the institution.

Question. Energy is a critical tool to help countries alleviate poverty. Yet, multilateral development banks have been imposing restrictions on financing of traditional energy projects. These restrictions only exacerbate the global inequities of energy. To achieve its mission, the EBRD must embrace, not exclude, affordable energy resources. Ultimately, the solution to energy poverty does not lie in limiting options but in using all available options.

- Should poverty alleviation and economic development be the top priorities at the EBRD?

Answer. The EBRD has a unique mission to support the transition of countries from command economies to multi-party democracies with market economies. The EBRD recognizes that poverty alleviation and economic development are critical to that transition and are best and most sustainably addressed through private sectorled growth.

Question. When reviewing projects at the EBRD, what criteria will you use in determining whether the United States will support energy development projects?

Answer. I will review each project on its own merits, assessing the country's needs, and its consistency with the Bank's strategy in that country as well as U.S. policies and guidance. I will also ensure that projects are consistent with all relevant Boardapproved policies and each country's strategy to ensure that Bank activities provide a coherent and agreed structure.

I will also rely on Treasury's review team to give me guidance on whether the individual projects contain strong environmental and social safeguards and are consistent with relevant Congressional mandates and Treasury directives.

Question. Do you support financing of fossil fuel projects at the EBRD? If confirmed, will you commit to ensuring the EBRD is promoting all types of energy projects across the globe, including oil, gas, and coal?

Answer. I believe the Bank should carefully consider the total costs of energy resources, factoring in the social cost of carbon and its short- and long-term effects, particularly its impact on the climate by burning fossil fuels. It is important that the Bank is part of the solution to climate change by helping countries transition toward low-emission growth, decarbonizing their energy generation and reaching Paris Alignment, while continuing to promote growth, create jobs, and reduce poverty.

Question. Other development banks, including the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, and even China's Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, are funding projects in EBRD member countries.

- Does the EBRD partner with China on its Belt and Road Initiative? If so, what is your view on that effort and how would you address it?

Answer. As the Administration and Congress have said, competition with China is one of the central challenges of the 21st century, including competition with Chi-

na's economic statecraft. The Bank's focus on high development standards and outcomes, as well as its broad shareholding by the United States, Europe, and G7 partners, make it an attractive alternative to other sources of financing, including from China. If confirmed, I look forward to working with President Biden, Secretary Yellen, and Congress to craft an economic and diplomatic agenda that promotes economic fairness and democratic values. I also understand the Treasury Department has actively discouraged EBRD involvement with China's Belt and Road Initiative. If confirmed, I would closely scrutinize any proposed EBRD joint activity with China.

Question. How will you ensure EBRD is not duplicating efforts, creating redundancies, and working at cross-purposes?

Answer. The Department of Treasury undertakes extensive coordination efforts via the U.S. interagency process and with allies and partners to maximize the development impact of assistance provided by the EBRD and to avoid redundancies with other development finance institutions, notwithstanding different mandates, governance structures, and regional focuses of each MDB.

Answer. If confirmed, I will work closely with U.S. Government agencies and other EBRD Board members and Management to advocate for strong coordination and cooperation across partners. The EBRD's transition mission and strong focus on private-sector and sub-sovereign public finance (e.g., municipal services) are its comparative advantage relative to other multilateral development banks that provide sovereign guaranteed public finance or exclusive private sector support.

Question. What is your view of the EBRD planned expansion to different regions? Does this cause issues of duplication and redundancies? Under what scenarios would it be wise for the EBRD to move away from its original mandate of helping Ukraine and other post-Soviet states diversify their economies away from Russia?

Answer. I understand that the EBRD's approach to private sector development is unique, would be of great value to African countries, where it is currently contemplating a limited and incremental expansion, and that the needs are large enough to accommodate additional actors on the continent.

Geostrategically, it is crucial for the United States to assist African countries in their development to market economies. If confirmed, I will work with Management and other shareholders to ensure any additional expansion is taken in a responsible and effective manner, with no loss of focus on its existing emerging transition countries, and in coordination with other MDBs already active in those markets. The EBRD's expansion into the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean over the past decade indicates it is capable of expanding effectively into new, geostrategically important markets while still delivering in its existing countries of operation.

Question. As the EBRD expands the number of countries it operates in, how will you address the concern the EBRD is spreading itself too thin?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with Management and other shareholders to ensure any expansion is implemented in a responsible and effective manner, without detriment to other EBRD priorities, such as Ukraine, and is well coordinated with other MDBs already active in any new markets for EBRD. I understand that shareholders and Management have emphasized that expansion will be limited and incremental and must not come at the expense of support for existing countries of operation that are less advanced in transition.

Question. Article 1 of the EBRD charter requires countries to commit to and apply the principles of multiparty democracy and market economics in order to qualify for EBRD loans.

- Do all countries currently borrowing from the EBRD commit to and apply the principles of multiparty democracy and market economics? If not, please list the countries that are not meeting the standards outlined in Article 1.

Answer. I understand that the EBRD assesses each country's commitment to principles of multiparty democracy, pluralism, and market economics as part of its development of country strategies for each country and calibrates its approach to assistance in those countries that are deficient, including in some cases limiting assistance to only private companies or not investing at all. If confirmed, I will underscore the importance of this commitment to the EBRD's mission and promote appropriately calibrated approaches in those countries.

Question. What countries have been denied loans at the EBRD for failure to meet the Article 1 standards?

Answer. I understand that countries that have been subject to calibrated approaches include Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, and Belarus. More recently, EBRD

shareholders decided to suspend all new operations in Russia and Belarus and engage in an orderly exit from existing investments due to the inconsistency of those countries' brutal and unjustified actions in Ukraine with the principles articulated in Article 1 of the Agreement Establishing the Bank. If confirmed, I will advocate for the EBRD to support countries in strengthening public institutions, improving public financial management, and improving transparency and anti-corruption efforts. I will also advocate for the EBRD to consult actively with civil society groups and implement robust safeguards and accountability over its operations. I will use the voice and vote of the United States to support projects that uphold these values and high standards and promote appropriately calibrated approaches in countries not applying the principles.

Question. What are the criteria used to determine whether a country should graduate from the EBRD?

Answer. I understand that the EBRD assesses a country's transition to an open market-oriented economy across six areas: competitive, inclusive, well-governed, green, resilient, and integrated. A number of factors should be considered within these areas in determining whether a country should graduate. If confirmed, I pledge to work with EBRD management and shareholders to promote a constructive approach to graduation.

Question. What is the process at the EBRD for graduating countries from the EBRD? What reforms would you recommend to the current process?

Answer. EBRD graduation is a country-led process, and I understand that the Treasury Department continues to view graduation from EBRD investment as the ultimate indicator of the Bank's success in achieving its transition mission. As noted, I understand that the EBRD assesses a country's transition to an open market-oriented economy across six areas: competitive, inclusive, well-governed, green, resilient, and integrated. A number of factors should be considered within these areas in determining whether a country should graduate. If confirmed, I pledge to work with EBRD management and shareholders to promote a constructive approach to graduation.

Question. Which countries have met the criteria for graduation but still receive loans from the EBRD?

Answer. As noted, EBRD graduation is a country-led process, and I understand that the Treasury Department continues to view graduation from EBRD investment as the ultimate indicator of the Bank's success in achieving its transition mission. Progress toward transition is not always linear, however. I understand the Treasury Department has supported a flexible post-graduation approach, which allowed the Czech Republic (Czechia), the only current EBRD graduate, to return to borrower status temporarily due to the economic impacts of COVID-19. For other countries that are advanced in transition, such as those in Central Europe and the Baltics, I will advocate for ensuring that EBRD assistance is targeted at addressing remaining transition gaps and does not crowd out private investment.

Question. What countries are close to graduating?

Answer. EBRD graduation is a country-led process. Countries in Central Europe and the Baltics are considered advanced in transition, while Greece is slated to have its status as a temporary country of operations end in 2025. I will advocate for ensuring that EBRD assistance is targeted at addressing remaining transition gaps and does not crowd out private investment in these countries.

Russia has traditionally been one of the EBRD's largest borrowers. The EBRD approved an operational suspension of Russia's access to EBRD resources.

Question. Under what conditions would you support restarting EBRD projects in Russia?

Answer. EBRD projects in Russia can be restarted only if Russia meets its commitment to the fundamental principles of multiparty democracy, the rule of law, respect for human rights and market economics as outlined in the EBRD's Agreement Establishing the Bank, which would include ending its unprovoked and illegal war and respecting the territorial integrity of Ukraine.

Question. Do you support efforts to expel Russia from the EBRD?

Answer. It is absolutely critical that multilateral funds not support Russia's unprovoked and illegal war in any way. If confirmed, I would consider the implications across all international financial institutions if the EBRD were to expel Russia.

I understand that the EBRD Board of Governors passed a resolution in April suspending Russia's access to any lending, which requires the institution to avoid any new support to Russia. The EBRD has closed its offices in Russia. EBRD management is also in the process of divesting from its remaining Russian holdings and, if confirmed, I will make sure this is done in a way that does not inadvertently enrich the Russian regime.

Question. Beyond expulsion, what other efforts are available to sanction Russia at the EBRD?

Answer. Working with our allies and partners, we must be firm in our resolve that multilateral funds not support Russia's unprovoked and illegal war in any way. If confirmed, I will work to ensure proper controls and accountability over the execution of EBRD's projects.

If confirmed, I understand that there are various strategies available to prevent any Russian influence over Board decisions, and I will work closely with allies and EBRD Management to maximize Russia's isolation in the EBRD.

RESPONSE TO AN ADDITIONAL QUESTION FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO RICHARD L.A. WEINER BY SENATOR BILL HAGERTY

Question. The Office of the U.S. Executive Director has in the past raised objections with the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) when the bank invests in a development project involving a person on the Specially Designated National (SDN) list of entities threatening U.S. foreign policy and national security interests. If confirmed, will you commit to using the voice, vote, and influence of the U.S. to object to EBRD investments for any project in which a Chinese company on the Treasury Department's Non-SDN Chinese Military Industrial Complex Companies List (NS-CMIC List) participates in?

Answer. If confirmed, I will represent and vote consistent with U.S. positions and U.S. law at this institution. U.S. Policy forbids supporting projects in which sanctioned entities participate, including those identified on Treasury's sanctions list, such as the List of Specially Designated Nationals and Blocked Persons, among others.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO MANUEL P. MICALLER BY SENATOR ROBERT MENENDEZ

Question. Considering Tajikistan has announced it will host an Iranian drone factory and is increasing its security cooperation with China, how can the United States continue to consider Tajikistan a strong partner? It is difficult to make the argument that U.S. assistance is producing the desired results in Dushanbe. If such a factory is built, should Washington reassess its assistance to Tajikistan? And if not, at what point would you recommend our doing so?

Answer. Tajikistan has limited capacity to handle significant border security challenges, and U.S. security assistance is critical to mutual counterterrorism and border security goals in the region. I understand developments related to Tajikistan hosting an Iranian drone factory are being followed closely. If confirmed, I will encourage Tajikistan to limit security cooperation with the PRC and halt any exchange of military technology with Iran, while enhancing border security and counterterrorism cooperation with the United States and likeminded partners. This would reduce Tajikistan's reliance on—and the influence of—competing actors, while demonstrating U.S. commitment to regional security.

Question. Considering Tajikistan's neutral stance on Ukraine and Iranian drones' use in the conflict, do you think there is a diplomatic opportunity to encourage Tajikistan to halt any actions supporting the Iranian factory?

Answer. I believe the U.S. can continue to encourage Tajikistan to cease cooperation with any Iranian defense entities and to pursue alternate avenues for military UAV requirements for domestic use, including by developing Tajikistan's nascent capability to perform aerial surveillance on the Tajik-Afghan border. The United States is Tajikistan's partner of choice for security cooperation on the Tajik-Afghan border. However, competitors such as Iran and the PRC may seek to fill the void if the United States were to opt out or is slow to respond to requests for assistance to help Tajikistan develop this critical surveillance capability.

Question. If the Iranian drone factory is built and Tajik-produced drones were to be utilized as Russia runs out of equipment, how would you recommend Washington respond in Dushanbe?

Answer. It is my understanding that Tajikistan has provided assurances at various levels that it has no intentions to export any drones that might be manufactured in Tajikistan in the future. If Tajikistan were to supply drones for Russia, I would advocate, if confirmed, for consideration of all tools available to impose costs on actors involved in such transfers.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO MANUEL P. MICALLER BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Question. Since its invasion of Ukraine, Russia has had a diminished influence in Central Asia as it focuses its diplomatic efforts elsewhere. This has opened a window of opportunity for increased U.S. involvement in Tajikistan.

- In what ways can the United States best take advantage of this opportunity and lay down the foundation for permanent progress in the U.S.-Tajikistan relationship?

Answer. Russia's war has raised concerns across the region about its reliability as a security partner. Tajikistan appreciates the foremost U.S. objective in Tajikistan is ensuring the country's independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity. If confirmed, I will seek to expand our security cooperation to advance shared interests in countering terrorism and securing the border. The Tajiks recognize their future depends on diversifying economic relationships away from Russia. We can support this effort by increasing bilateral economic relations and promoting ties with Tajikistan's Central Asian neighbors. Our Economic Resilience Initiative seeks to build regional trade and bolster opportunities to engage with the United States and globally.

Question. Since its invasion of Ukraine, Russia has had a diminished influence in Central Asia as it focuses its diplomatic efforts elsewhere. This has opened a window of opportunity for increased U.S. involvement in Tajikistan.

- How will you work with Tajikistan's Government and private sector to increase economic ties with the United States?

Answer. Strengthening economic connections between the United States and Tajikistan will be an important priority for me if confirmed. Tajikistan's economy has major issues with corruption and lack of transparency that will need to be addressed to attract U.S. business. The banking industry's close links to Russia's banking system is a further obstacle. If confirmed, I will encourage Tajikistan to address corruption and transparency issues; I will work with like-minded partners to modernize and expand Tajikistan's banks and businesses' ties to the global financial system, and I will continue to work with Tajikistan's business community to expand markets and create business opportunities for American companies that will support U.S. domestic job creation.

Question. Since its invasion of Ukraine, Russia has had a diminished influence in Central Asia as it focuses its diplomatic efforts elsewhere. This has opened a window of opportunity for increased U.S. involvement in Tajikistan.

- As Ambassador, how will you work to build people-to-people ties between the U.S. and Tajikistan, particularly to counter Russian influence?

Answer. U.S.-Tajik people-to-people ties are at the center of our 30-year bilateral relationship. If confirmed, I look forward to expanding U.S.-Tajikistan ties and continuing to prioritize people-to-people engagements. Our eight American Corners throughout the country, visited by thousands of people per year, offer programs to deepen understanding of our policy priorities and share educational resources and information on U.S. studies and cultural exchange programs. I also look forward, if confirmed, to expanding English-language programming in Tajikistan to help audiences access alternatives to Russian state media. I will also deepen USAID work in agriculture, public health, municipal water supply, and education.

Question. There have been multiple cases of censorship, political persecution, and violence against journalists, including RFE/RL employees and affiliates in Tajikistan.

- If you are confirmed as U.S. Ambassador, what will you do to support the work of RFE/RL and ensure open access for Congressionally-funded international journalists at your new post?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to continuing our efforts in this critical space. I will underscore to Tajik officials the importance of media freedom and speak out against the Government's ongoing crackdown on bloggers, journalists, and their families. I will actively engage with local and international media, providing access and transparency about the important work we do in Tajikistan. We will continue to advocate for a free press and engage proactively with the Tajik Government in support of RFE/RL and other independent media.

Question. There have been multiple cases of censorship, political persecution, and violence against journalists, including RFE/RL employees and affiliates in Tajikistan.

- How will you engage with the Government of Tajikistan and encourage them to respect the rights of journalists?

Answer. If confirmed, I will call out threats to freedom of the press publicly and with Tajik interlocutors, in accordance with the values we share with the Tajik people and our support for human rights. We are proud of our longstanding support for journalists in Tajikistan, and I will continue our work to empower independent voices and to advocate on their behalf. The United States has facilitated regular dialogue between government and journalists, ensuring journalists know their legal rights. Now more than ever it is important for the Tajik people to have access to accurate, transparent information. If confirmed, I will remind the Tajik Government of its commitments and emphasize that freedom of expression is in Tajikistan's national interests in continuing to develop as a stable, prosperous, and sovereign nation.

Question. How do you plan on leading the fight against corruption in Tajikistan from the U.S. Embassy?

Answer. If confirmed, I will publicly and privately raise the importance of rule of law and anti-corruption efforts to the prosperity and independence of Tajikistan. I will also seek to ensure USAID and INL continue to prioritize assistance programming that effectively advances rule of law and anticorruption efforts, including efforts to increase transparency in customs regulation enforcement, energy payments and distribution, and health services.

Question. What can the United States do to support anti-corruption efforts and democratic reforms in Tajikistan?

Answer. Freedom of expression and media are essential in fostering transparency of government and combatting corruption. Throughout my career, I have witnessed firsthand how promoting media freedom can have a democratizing effect on countries. If confirmed, I will work with civil society to defend opportunities for free speech, and I will have frank conversations with the Government of Tajikistan to underscore that freedom of the press, combatting corruption, increasing transparency, and improving good governance enhance domestic stability and security.

Question. How will you encourage Tajikistan's Government to ensure its economy is not used for sanctions evasion?

Answer. If confirmed, I will underscore to Tajik authorities the importance of strengthening international sanctions and export controls introduced in response to Russia's war against Ukraine and the serious consequences of sanctions evasion. Recognizing that this is a collaborative effort, I will also ensure that the U.S. interagency works with our Tajik partners in the Government and private sector to explain existing sanctions and offers guidance on how to avoid inadvertent violations.

Question. What is your understanding of morale throughout Mission Dushanbe?

Answer. My understanding is that morale at Embassy Dushanbe is high. If confirmed I will seek to sustain a cohesive environment by promoting an organizational culture of mutual respect and collaboration. I am committed to attracting strong candidates and, in cases where morale issues arise, managing those situations effectively to prevent broader impacts on the Mission.

Question. How do you intend to improve morale at Mission Dushanbe?

Answer. If confirmed, I will foster a professional, inclusive, and respectful culture. the Embassy has made excellent efforts to support diversity and inclusion, and I intend to build on inclusive and transparent recruiting for both American and Local Staff positions. To address workspace and residential challenges resulting from years of Mission growth, I will proceed as expeditiously as possible with facilities

upgrade projects. After years of negotiations, the Department recently received approval for a Build-to-Lease residential compound that will provide seismically safe housing. I also will bolster efforts to expand recreational facilities to promote wellness and attract qualified talent.

Question. How do you intend to create a unified mission and vision at Mission Dushanbe?

Answer. I am a strong believer in a one-team, one-mission approach, and I have consistently implemented this principle as Deputy Chief of Mission and Chargé d'Affaires, a.i., over the past six years. If confirmed, I will communicate the President's foreign policy, the Secretary's vision, and my strategic outlook to all members of our mission through a range of formal and informal platforms, including Country Team meetings, townhalls, and one-on-one discussions. I will proactively seek all Mission member views, drawing from diverse perspectives and experiences to shape consensus. Most importantly, I will champion an organizational culture based on mutual respect and collaboration to build morale and effectively execute policies and programs.

Question. How would you describe your management style?

Answer. My leadership style is inclusive. I seek consensus and buy-in in managing and leading change. I strive to lead with strategic vision while empowering my staff to execute policy and programming. I avoid micromanagement, as I firmly believe this is an ineffective approach that runs counter to strategic, visionary leadership and undermines team morale. I am always open to constructive and appropriate dissent, supporting innovation and appropriate risk-taking.

Question. Do you believe it is ever acceptable or constructive to berate subordinates, either in public or private?

Answer. It is never acceptable to berate subordinates or colleagues. Secretary Blinken has been clear on his expectations of Chiefs of Mission and all employees on maintaining a workplace culture of mutual respect. I fully support the Secretary's directive and Department policy on workplace conduct.

Question. How do you envision your leadership relationship with your Deputy Chief of Mission?

Answer. As a two-time DCM, I recognize this partnership, and a collaborative relationship between the Chief of Mission and her or his Deputy, are critical to any Mission's success. As an MBA and with my in-service private sector experience through the Eagleburger fellowship, I often cite the "Ambassador as CEO, DCM as COO" model as an effective approach. I will ask my DCM to provide me frank and candid management, operational, and policy advice—including dissenting views and recommendations. Only through this collaborative, inclusive approach can we best benefit from the diversity of experiences and different skillsets that my DCM brings to our Mission.

Question. If confirmed, what leadership responsibilities do you intend to entrust to your Deputy Chief of Mission?

Answer. If confirmed, I will ask her to lead on mentoring and development of entry-level and first- and second-tour Officers and Specialists. I will also ask her to coordinate working-level security matters, chairing the Emergency Action Committee to effectively support my own primary leadership responsibility in this area. In addition, I will ask her to lead on strategic policy formulation, particularly related to regional issues (countering PRC and Russian influence and disinformation, Iran, Afghanistan) and formulating recommendations to me on assistance and public diplomacy programming.

Question. In order to create and continue employee excellence at the Department, accurate and direct employee evaluation reports (EERs) for Foreign Service Officers are imperative, though often lacking.

- Do you believe that it is important to provide employees with accurate, constructive feedback on their performances in order to encourage improvement and reward those who most succeeded in their roles?

Answer. Yes. This is a mandatory responsibility of all supervisors under longstanding Department policy and one that I take very seriously. In previous leadership positions, including most recently as DCM in two posts, I have taken an engaged, active role in providing constructive feedback, mentoring of employees, and leading informational training sessions on the EER process, drawing from my own experiences, including prior service on a Foreign Service Selection Board.

Question. If confirmed, would you support and encourage clear, accurate, and direct feedback to employees in order to improve performance and reward high achievers?

Answer. Yes. Clear, accurate, direct, and timely feedback is critical to helping all our employees succeed and realize their potential, which in turn will underpin our success as a Mission. In addition, feedback, including mentoring and active coaching, is key to rewarding high achievers and preparing them for the future leadership roles we will need them to assume in an increasingly challenging, complex world.

Question. It is imperative that U.S. diplomats get outside of posts abroad to meet with local actors, including host government officials, non-government organizations, and fellow foreign diplomats stationed in Tajikistan. In your opinion, do U.S. diplomats get outside of our Embassy walls enough to accomplish fully their missions?

Answer. I am firmly committed to engaging in robust public diplomacy. It is my understanding that U.S. diplomats in Tajikistan have been able to meet with an array of individuals from Tajik society across the country—from individuals serving in government, education, energy, security, and foreign missions. As an example, the Public Diplomacy Section implements English-language programs for civil servants, teachers, refugees, and journalists—all of whom develop language fluency and continue to build a bridge as U.S. diplomats go out to support the work of these audiences and communities in Tajikistan. The Embassy also maintains a network of eight American Spaces throughout the country to extend the reach of U.S. programs.

Question. How do you intend to improve the ability of U.S. diplomats to better access all local populations?

Answer. If confirmed, I would work to ensure that our Embassy team continues to build and expand its contacts with the people of Tajikistan. I would encourage our diplomats to use their language skills to interact with the broadest possible cross-section of society and to travel extensively throughout the country. From my experience, I believe direct, people-to-people contact is the most effective and impactful in terms of promoting U.S. values and understanding local perspectives. At the same time, I will continue to support efforts to leverage new media and high-technology as a force multiplier to expand our outreach and amplify our messaging across Tajikistan.

Question. Public diplomacy is an important aspect of U.S. foreign policy efforts. What is the public diplomacy environment like in Tajikistan?

Answer. We have a wide-ranging series of Public Diplomacy (PD) programs in Tajikistan. Cultural heritage preservation work continues to be an area of cooperation. Additionally, the network of American Spaces remains a popular educational resource. Over the last year, Dushanbe PD has positioned itself as a hub for regional cooperation by successfully integrating local Tajiks, Afghan refugees, and fellow Central Asian neighbors into a network of motivated youth looking to improve their future. If confirmed, I will ensure PD programming is a key part of our efforts to build trust and understanding between the United States and Tajik people.

Question. Public diplomacy is an important aspect of U.S. foreign policy efforts. What public diplomacy challenges do U.S. diplomats face there?

Answer. Public Diplomacy practitioners in Tajikistan face a challenging information environment. Internet penetration is low, and Russian, Iranian, and PRC disinformation is rampant. Our team dedicates significant time to empowering local partners to counter false narratives and disseminate fact-based messaging. Additionally, slow responses and bureaucratic hurdles from the Government of Tajikistan continue to challenge our public diplomacy efforts.

Question. Public diplomacy is an important aspect of U.S. foreign policy efforts. How do you balance the importance of Main State versus the in-country Mission when it comes to tailoring public diplomacy messages for foreign audiences?

Answer. In general, we defer to officers and local staff in-country who are experts on the local media environment and can tailor our messaging for Tajik audiences. In fact, one of our local staff members was this year's runner up for a Department-wide award for local staff employee of the year for her efforts to advance public outreach programming. Main State and the Public Diplomacy Section maintain constant communication and work together on mutually reinforcing public messaging with the goal of advancing support for U.S. policy effectively among local audiences.

Question. "Anomalous health incidents," commonly referred to as "Havana Syndrome," have been debilitating and sidelining U.S. diplomats around the world for

years. They have caused serious, negative consequences for U.S. diplomacy, yet many believe that the Department is not doing enough to care for, protect, and communicate to its personnel.

- If confirmed, do you commit to taking this threat seriously?

Answer. Yes. I am deeply troubled by potential anomalous health incidents that have affected U.S. Government personnel and their family members. Serving one's country overseas should not come at the cost of one's health. I agree that such incidents may pose a threat to the wellbeing of U.S. personnel and must be taken extremely seriously. If confirmed, the health, safety, and security of Embassy staff, their family members, and all those supporting the Mission will be my highest priority.

Question. "Anomalous health incidents," commonly referred to as "Havana Syndrome," have been debilitating and sidelining U.S. diplomats around the world for years. They have caused serious, negative consequences for U.S. diplomacy, yet many believe that the Department is not doing enough to care for, protect, and communicate to its personnel. The past occurrences and ongoing threat of anomalous health incidents among Embassy personnel and their families poses a serious challenge to morale. When personnel at post fear for their safety or doubt that their case will be taken seriously if they were affected, the performance of Embassy operations can suffer.

- If confirmed, do you commit to talking as openly as you can to Mission Dushanbe personnel?

Answer. If confirmed, I am committed to share regularly new information on this issue, consistent with ensuring the integrity of ongoing investigations.

Question. In the 2022 Trafficking in Persons Report, Tajikistan remained on Tier 2 for its implementation of a national action plan but failing to convict any traffickers, among other key issues. How will you work with the host government and civil society actors to address these issues if you are confirmed as Ambassador?

Answer. Tajikistan's Government has demonstrated sustained political will and openness to closer cooperation with the U.S. Government and other international partners to counter trafficking in persons (TIP), but it faces significant challenges in terms of weak institutional capacity and underlying economic factors that drive TIP trends. If I am confirmed, I will engage with the Government of Tajikistan, in particular the Prosecutor General's Office, to help it more actively pursue cases against traffickers, protect victims, and implement the country's TIP National Action Plan, including the adoption of standard operating procedures for victim identification and referral to services.

Question. Do you commit to reporting accurate information as it pertains to the reality of the trafficking situation in Tajikistan?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with the Government of Tajikistan, civil society, and international organizations to obtain accurate and up-to-date information regarding the human trafficking situation in Tajikistan. I will ensure reporting of accurate information as it pertains to the reality of trafficking in Tajikistan.

Question. In the 2021 International Religious Freedom report, Tajikistan's dismal record on religious freedom very clearly is in peril of declining further. The report outlines repressive policies on public religious events or displays, bans on religious wear, and increasing numbers of religious prisoners of conscience. What is your assessment of this particular issue and if confirmed, how will you work with the office of the Ambassador-at-Large for international religious freedom to bolster religious freedom in-country?

Answer. I am deeply concerned about the status of religious freedom in Tajikistan. Since 2016, Tajikistan has been designated a Country of Particular Concern for engaging in or tolerating particularly severe violations of religious freedom. Authorities have detained and, in some cases tortured, members of religious groups based on allegations of "religious extremism." The Government bans those under age eighteen from public religious events, the only national government in the world to do so. Ambassador Hussain regularly engages with the Tajik Government to raise religious freedom concerns, and if confirmed, I look forward to working with Ambassador Hussain to promote religious freedom in Tajikistan and the region.

Question. In the 2021 Human Rights Report, Tajikistan had numerous significant human rights abuses including torture and abuse of detainees, arbitrary detention, forced disappearance, censorship, threats against journalists, and more. If confirmed, what steps will you take to address these instances with the host government?

Answer. Unfortunately, since the publication of the 2021 Human Rights Report, the human rights situation in Tajikistan has worsened, especially since the Government's crackdown on May protests in the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous region. If confirmed, I will raise human rights at the highest levels of the Tajik Government, promote programming that supports civil society and media freedom, and press the Government to provide answers on cases of arbitrary and politically-motivated detention. I will advocate for an end to torture and other abuses, and for the release of political prisoners. I will convey that human rights concerns are an impediment to closer bilateral relations and that we stand ready to provide assistance to foster progress.

Question. How will you direct your Embassy to work with civil society organizations to improve the human rights situation on the ground?

Answer. Civil society's contributions are essential to ensuring the people of Tajikistan can exercise their fundamental freedoms. If confirmed, I will continue to invest in improving media literacy, journalist training, and countering misinformation, all essential to building and sustaining a robust civil society. I will ensure our Embassy routinely engages with key groups, especially those involved in freedom of expression and representing marginalized groups, and that our team hears civil society voices within Tajikistan, and well as those outside the country. An informed and engaged civil society in Tajikistan will be critical to our broader efforts to counter authoritarian pressure an undemocratic models from Russia and China, and I commit to prioritizing these efforts.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO MANUEL P. MICALLER BY SENATOR MARCO RUBIO

Question. In May, Secretary Blinken said that the People's Republic of China is the "only country with both the intent to reshape the international order and, increasingly, the economic, diplomatic, military, and technological power to do it." The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) clearly holds all the reins of power in the People's Republic of China and has used this power to commit genocide in Xinjiang, flood our communities with fentanyl, and emit by far the largest quantity of greenhouse gases. As we speak, the Party is cracking down on unprecedented student protests across the country. With their absolute control of Chinese society and industry, the CCP could stop all of these destructive actions tomorrow if they so choose.

- Is the CCP a threat to the United States?

Answer. As Secretary Blinken has noted, the ruling Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is the most serious long-term challenge to the international order. Beijing's coercive tactics are deeply destabilizing and threaten U.S. interests across the globe. PRC authorities have committed genocide and crimes against humanity against Uyghurs and members of other ethnic and religious minority groups in Xinjiang. Secretary Blinken has made clear that the United States stands with countries and people around the world in condemning the atrocities happening in Xinjiang, and if confirmed, I will encourage Tajikistan to promote accountability for the PRC's atrocities against Uyghurs and members of other religious and ethnic minority groups.

Question. Does the CCP undertake any activities that are beneficial to U.S. interests?

Answer. In Tajikistan, the PRC has expanded security cooperation with the Tajik Ministry of Internal Affairs under the auspices of contributing to border security in the Tri-Border region between Tajikistan, Afghanistan, and the PRC. However, the effect this cooperation will have on regional security is unclear. The United States is currently Tajikistan's partner of choice in securing its border with Afghanistan, and our cooperation is a significant factor in moving Tajikistan away from partnerships with the PRC and other problematic neighbors.

Question. Do you believe there are any areas within which the CCP would constructively work with the United States in good faith?

Answer. The way the U.S. and the PRC manage our relationship in the coming years will have significant consequences for the entire world. That is why competition with Beijing will not preclude cooperation in areas where our interests intersect. In Tajikistan, we continue to explore options where the interests of the United States and the PRC align. This includes areas such as public health, counterterrorism, counternarcotics, food security, and the environment.

Question. If confirmed, will you approve any joint activity with organizations or representatives from the People's Republic of China in Tajikistan?

Answer. The United States does not currently have any joint activities with organizations or representatives from the PRC in Tajikistan. If confirmed, I would explore the possibility of diplomatic engagement with the PRC Embassy in Dushanbe on issues where our interests align.

Question. Since the U.S. left Afghanistan, many countries in the region find themselves at renewed risk of Taliban-sponsored terrorism. Much of the anti-Taliban resistance in Afghanistan is composed of ethnic Tajiks, while several Afghan Air Force pilots flew American provided planes and helicopters to Tajikistan in the wake of the Taliban takeover. We are now seeing signs that China is expanding its presence in the region to fill the void left by the U.S.

- How do you assess that China's presence in Tajikistan will evolve in light of the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan?

Answer. The PRC has a strong economic presence in Tajikistan and is by far Tajikistan's largest foreign investor, with PRC loans accounting for more than 30 percent of Tajikistan's external debt. The PRC may seek to take advantage of both border insecurity caused by the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan and Russia's diminished security cooperation with Tajikistan, to expand its own security presence in Tajikistan. In October 2021, the PRC agreed to build a base for Tajik Ministry of Internal Affairs officers in the tri-border region. Tajikistan offered the PRC full ownership of an existing joint Tajik-PRC base in Tajikistan's Gorno-Badakhshon. Both facilities are near the Kulma border crossing point between Tajikistan and the PRC. If confirmed, I will continue to build on our longstanding history as a trusted security partner to Tajikistan, underscoring the greater quality, efficacy, and transparency of U.S. training and equipment programs.

Question. Does Russia's war against Ukraine have implications for the Chinese presence in Tajikistan?

Answer. Russia's invasion of Ukraine has raised concerns regarding Russia's intentions and reliability as a partner for Tajikistan. The PRC may seek to exploit Russia's currently limited bandwidth in Tajikistan to strengthen or expand its own position and influence.

Question. If confirmed, what will you do to ensure the return of American equipment in Tajikistan?

Answer. Since the former Afghanistan Air Force and Special Mission Wing aircraft and associated equipment first arrived in Tajikistan, the Government of Tajikistan has honored USG ownership of the equipment and formally requested transfer in support of emergent border security and counterterrorism concerns following the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Afghanistan. We are working through the formal security cooperation process to determine which aircraft will support both Tajikistan's requirements and our own national security interests in the region.

Question. How would you describe Tajikistan's approach to the Taliban and to anti-Taliban Afghan groups?

Answer. Tajikistan is an outlier in Central Asia in its stance on Afghanistan, as it remains resolute in its unwillingness to recognize the interim Taliban Government and open to supporting the Afghan National Resistance Front. President Rahmon has repeatedly condemned the persecution of minorities and urged establishment of an inclusive Afghan Government that represents ethnic Tajiks and other minority groups. As early as August 25, 2021, President Rahmon announced Tajikistan would not recognize a government "formed through oppression," and Dushanbe has not wavered on this stance despite pressure from the PRC, Pakistan, and Russia.

Question. What role, if any, should the United States play in backing Tajikistan's support of anti-Taliban Afghan groups?

Answer. The United States maintains an active dialogue with the Government of Tajikistan on regional security interests of mutual concern, including Afghanistan. In August 2021, Tajikistan was instrumental in helping ensure the safety and security of U.S. persons who sought to cross the border. If confirmed, I commit to continue our robust dialogue with Tajik interlocutors on mutual concerns vis-à-vis Afghanistan.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO MANUEL P. MICALLER BY SENATOR TODD YOUNG

Question. What implications does Russia's war against Ukraine have for Tajikistan's economy?

Answer. Russia's war against Ukraine has significant implications for Tajikistan's economy. At least one million Tajiks live in Russia as labor migrants; their remittances comprise approximately 30 percent equivalent of Tajikistan's GDP. Tajikistan's top trading partner is Russia. Tajikistan's economy is vulnerable to sanctions applied on Russia and reduced remittance inflows. In March, the World Food Program projected that Russia's war in Ukraine could cause an anticipated eightfold increase in severely food insecure individuals in Tajikistan by the fall of 2022. Tajikistan imports 60 percent of its food, and the price of flour, largely imported from Kazakhstan, has risen more than 20 percent since February.

Question. How can Tajikistan decrease its economic dependence on Russia? And if confirmed, how would you effectively support those efforts?

Answer. Tajikistan can decrease its economic dependence on Russia by expanding trade with other Central Asian countries, disconnecting its banks and businesses from Russia, and reducing corruption in its economy to attract foreign direct investment. If confirmed, I will support Tajikistan's efforts to decouple its economy from Russia by fostering intraregional economic connectivity through programs such as the Economic Resilience Initiative for Central Asia via the C5+1 (Central Asian countries, plus the United States). I will also work with likeminded partners to expand Tajikistan's banking and business ties with the global financial system.

Question. How do you assess that China's presence in Tajikistan is evolving, especially as it moves to secure primacy in supply chains and trade?

Answer. The PRC has a strong economic presence in Tajikistan and is by far Tajikistan's largest foreign investor, with PRC loans accounting for more than 30 percent of Tajikistan's external debt. The PRC may seek to take advantage of border insecurity caused by the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan and Russia's waning security cooperation with Tajikistan, expanding its own security presence in Tajikistan. In October 2021, the PRC agreed to build a base for Tajik Ministry of Internal Affairs officers in the tri-border region. Tajikistan offered the PRC full ownership of an existing joint Tajik-PRC base in Tajikistan's Gorno-Badakhshon. Both facilities are near the Kulma border crossing point between Tajikistan and the PRC.

NOMINATIONS

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 30, 2022

U.S. SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS,
Washington, DC.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 2:37 p.m., in Room SD–419, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Robert Menendez presiding.

Present: Senators Menendez [presiding], Shaheen, Murphy, Kaine, Merkley, Schatz, Van Hollen, Risch, Romney, Portman, Young, and Barrasso.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. ROBERT MENENDEZ, U.S. SENATOR FROM NEW JERSEY

The CHAIRMAN. The Senate Foreign Relations Committee will come to order.

Today, we will consider five nominations that are critical to United States foreign policy.

Ambassador Lynne Tracy nominated to be the Ambassador to Russia is on the first panel.

The second panel will be Ambassador Julie Fisher to be the Ambassador to Cyprus, Ms. Kristina Kvien to be the Ambassador to Armenia, Ms. Carol Spahn to be the director of the Peace Corps, and Ms. Cynthia Dyer to be the director of the Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking.

Before we proceed, I understand that Senator Portman is going to be introducing Ambassador Tracy.

Senator Portman, you are recognized.

STATEMENT OF HON. ROB PORTMAN, U.S. SENATOR FROM OHIO

Senator PORTMAN. Great. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

It is my honor to be here to introduce a fellow Ohioan, Ambassador Lynne Tracy, to be the nominee for Russia. She was born and raised in Barberton, Ohio, to Albert and Carol Sue Tracy, both Ohio natives. Her sister, from Barberton, is behind us.

She graduated from Barberton High School where she played volleyball, was a great student. And then she branched out and decided to go south to University of Georgia where she majored in Soviet studies.

After graduating, she put her studies to the test, working as a contractor at the U.S. Embassy in Moscow for three years in the late 1980s. Of course, that was when it was still the Soviet Union so it was a challenging time.

But not even the joyful winters of USSR could keep her away from home. Ohio called her and she returned to attend law school at the University of Akron.

Shortly thereafter, Ambassador Tracy entered her nation's call and she joined the Foreign Service. Her career sense has been impressive and prepares her well, I believe, for the role she is seeking.

She has been all across post-Soviet space including some very difficult postings. She has worked our diplomatic missions in Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Embassy Moscow, where she served as the DCM—Deputy Chief of Mission—from 2014 to 2017.

She has also served several assignments here in Washington D.C., including in the European and Eurasian Affairs Bureau at State Department and on the National Security Council.

Her career has taken her to Pakistan twice and even to Afghanistan soon after 9/11 when the country was still a very active war zone. This position will be Ambassador Tracy's second ambassadorship as she is currently U.S. Ambassador to Armenia where she has been since 2019.

I do not have to tell anybody on this panel that Armenia and the Caucuses have been an interesting place to be during that period of time, very challenging, and she served there with distinction.

Her long Foreign Service career in the post-Soviet space, her current experience as chief of mission, even her college major in Soviet studies, and, of course, her solid, Midwestern upbringing in Ohio—all of these things have prepared her well for this very difficult role.

Needless to say, our relationship with Russia is strained and a challenging one to manage. We should not confirm anyone as U.S. Ambassador to Russia who is untested or unqualified.

Ambassador Tracy is neither of those. She is tested, she is eminently qualified, and I am pleased to introduce her today and look forward to hearing from her.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator Portman, and always good to have one of our distinguished colleagues on the committee be introducing a nominee.

Let me congratulate all of the nominees. We thank you for your service to our country, your willingness to serve. We thank you for and your families as well. I know they will have to make sacrifices as you serve in your posts.

This is especially true in Russia. Our diplomatic presence in Moscow, our dialogue with Putin's government, have shrunk dramatically in the wake of his illegal and barbaric invasion of Ukraine.

Putin's war against Ukrainian civilians is targeting their electricity and their water and abducting their children. It is unlike anything Europe has seen since the Second World War.

And, yet, even as Putin continues to carry out this brutal war, we need an ambassador who can represent us there.

You, Ambassador, will not only have to carry out your duties in the face of a hostile government but you will also represent America beyond the Kremlin walls to the broad mass of the Russian peo-

ple, many of whom feel isolated and betrayed by their leader's war of aggression, to the detainees of this war, to the Russian opposition activists who are fighting for a different way forward in Russia, and to the Ukrainians who will look to you for assessments of our relationship with Moscow.

It is difficult to imagine a more challenging assignment for a career diplomat. So I look forward to hearing from you how to plan—how you plan to tackle these and other issues upon your confirmation.

With that, I will turn to Ranking Member Risch for his remarks.

STATEMENT OF HON. JAMES E. RISCH,
U.S. SENATOR FROM IDAHO

Senator RISCH. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Good morning, and welcome to Ambassador Tracy. Ambassador Tracy has been nominated to be Ambassador to Russia at the lowest point of relations between our two countries since the Cold War. Our soldiers are not on the field facing each other but our weapons do combat back and forth every day.

Putin continues his unjust, unprovoked, and inhumane war on Ukraine, which includes deliberate attacks on civilian critical infrastructure as well as atrocities perpetrated against the civilian population.

He continues to weaponize Russian energy supplies against U.S. allies and partners in Europe and uses the profits to fund his war in Ukraine.

Under Putin, Russia has reemerged as a strategic challenger to the United States and the entire transatlantic community. The withdrawal of Russia from bilateral arms control measures further highlights the dangerous game of brinksmanship they always play.

Russia continues to be a very dangerous place for Americans. There are a number of Americans held in Russia today, two of whom have been designated as wrongfully detained under the Levinson Act.

It is clear these people are targeted to be used as political bargaining chips. The Kremlin has long been suspected of using its personnel in the U.S. or assigned to Russian consulates, the Russian Embassy, and the Russian mission to the U.N. to conduct espionage and malign influence activities against the United States.

Meanwhile, over the past eight years, the U.S. has been forced to close three of its consulates in Russia while Russia continues to operate its consulates in Houston and New York.

In addition, our State Department continues to grant more diplomatic visas to Russia than Russia grants to the United States.

We must build on recent though tenuous progress in countering these efforts, which began during the Trump administration and not giving in to Russian pressure tactics.

Short staffing at Embassy Moscow has seriously hindered facilities management and the day-to-day conduct of American diplomacy and I commend our diplomats in Moscow for continuing to keep our embassy operational in spite of these challenges.

While I wish to see these restrictions eased, I also expect the department to prioritize visa reciprocity in any conversations about increasing our footprint in country.

We cannot allow the Kremlin to hold our diplomatic facilities and personnel hostage in an attempt to secure policy concessions or an increased diplomatic or intelligence presence in the U.S.

From managing the lines of diplomatic effort and dialogue to pursuing consular access for Americans held in Russia to simply keeping the building and team running, Ambassador Tracy will face many challenges, if confirmed.

Ambassador Tracy, I thank you for your years of service and for stepping up to this, what is going to be a very difficult task, undoubtedly. I look forward to hearing your plans to confront these issues.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator Risch. So we will turn to Ambassador Tracy. Your full statement will be included in the record.

We would ask you to summarize it in about five minutes or so so that the members of the committee can have a conversation with you.

And you are recognized.

STATEMENT OF HON. LYNNE M. TRACY OF OHIO, A CAREER MEMBER OF THE SENIOR FOREIGN SERVICE, CLASS OF CAREER MINISTER, NOMINATED TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

Ms. TRACY. Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Risch, members of the committee, thank you, Senator Portman, for the very kind introduction.

I also want to thank you for your service to the state of Ohio, the Senate, and to this committee. Your leadership and commitment to public service is inspirational, particularly with the national challenges—national security challenges facing our country.

I am honored to appear before you today as President Biden's nominee to be the next ambassador of the United States to the Russian Federation and I am grateful to President Biden and Secretary Blinken for the confidence they have placed in me during a period of unprecedented tension in U.S.-Russia relations brought about by Russia's war on Ukraine.

For 28 years, I have had the good fortune to represent the United States as a Foreign Service Officer. Many of those assignments have been in countries—in the countries of the former Soviet Union.

It has been a privilege to serve as U.S. Ambassador to Armenia and prior to that as Deputy Chief of Mission in Moscow. My experience as a contractor in the late 1980s at the embassy in Moscow as part of an American-only staff is an experience that has again become relevant to some of the challenges we are facing today.

Throughout my career, I have worked hard to protect our nation and its interests. For me, this has always been about more than the effort of one individual. It has required teamwork that goes beyond a single department or just one branch of our government.

If confirmed, I pledge to continue that team approach and to work closely with the members and staff of this committee on our Russia policy.

Mr. Chairman, this committee and other members of Congress have my commitment that, if confirmed, the plight of U.S. citizens detained in Russia will be a top priority for me.

U.S. citizens living and traveling in Russia have faced unprecedented harassment and some have been determined by the Secretary of State to be wrongfully detained.

With the support of the consular team in Moscow, I will devote my attention and energy to supporting the welfare and well being of every U.S. citizen detained in Russia.

I will work closely with Washington as the Administration continues to engage Russian authorities to bring Paul Whelan and Brittney Griner home. I will also pursue the humanitarian release of Marc Fogel.

I will press the Russian Government to live up to its obligations, including as they relate to providing timely and consistent consular access and to the fair treatment of our citizens who are detained.

As the members of this committee know all too well, Russia's unjustified and unprovoked war against Ukraine has shattered European security and undermined global economic stability.

Russia's war has resulted in catastrophic loss of life and in recent days, as it struggles on the battlefield, the Putin regime has escalated its attacks with a bombing campaign against civilian infrastructure intended to cause suffering and death for ordinary Ukrainians.

Together, with our allies and partners, the United States remains committed to supporting Ukraine's sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity and to helping Ukraine defend itself.

We are also imposing unprecedented economic costs on Russia and welcome the continued close coordination with Congress on sanctions and other tools.

As the world's two preeminent nuclear powers, the United States and Russia have special responsibilities. These include refraining from reckless saber rattling, maintaining lines of communication to reduce nuclear risks, and living up to the commitments under the New START treaty and other arms control obligations.

President Biden has said the Administration is ready to negotiate a new arms control framework to replace New START when it expires in 2026. But we need Russia to allow for inspections to resume under the treaty before we can have a dialogue on what comes next.

The Russian Government is intensifying repression against civil society, independent media, human rights activists, pro-democracy activists, advocates, and even Russian citizens who simply have the courage to use the word war.

If confirmed, I will work to keep a spotlight of support on those like Vladimir Kara-Murza, Alexei Navalny, and Radio Free Europe reporter Vladislav Yesypenko, who have been jailed or harassed simply for seeking to exercise their fundamental freedoms.

I believe that promoting mutual understanding among Americans and Russians can contribute to long-term stability in our bilateral relations. Even in the darkest days of the Soviet Union citizens of goodwill in both our countries formed people-to-people ties.

I will cultivate those connections, particularly through our public diplomacy programs, in order to keep the door open to a better future.

If confirmed, I will reach out to the Russian people at all levels of society as one of my priorities. These topics and others require hard conversations and, if confirmed, I will make it a priority to conduct frank diplomacy, supporting the President's efforts to maintain a clear channel of communication and to hold Russia accountable.

We have a team of smart, experienced, and dedicated public servants at our embassy in Moscow who are performing brilliantly in an extremely challenging environment. Their safety, security, and ability to do their jobs is of paramount concern.

If confirmed, it will be one of the greatest honors and privileges of my career to lead them and I pledge to do so with integrity and humility.

Finally, I am pleased to be joined today by my sister, Anita Jepsky. I have been blessed to receive the indispensable support of my family. My parents, Albert and Carol Sue Tracy, Anita, and my sister, Mary Lou Tracy, have always believed in me and been there for me.

I am grateful to Ambassador John Sullivan and my mentor, Ambassador John Tefft, for their wise counsel and strong example of public service. I also want to acknowledge my history professor at the University of Georgia, Dr. Ronald Rader, and his wife, Zhanna Rader, who guided my first steps as a student pursuing a deeper understanding of Russia and the Soviet Union.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, thank you for the privilege of appearing before the committee today and considering my nomination. I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Tracy follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. LYNNE M. TRACY

Thank you, Senator Portman, for the very kind introduction. I also want to thank you for your service to the state of Ohio, the Senate, and to this committee. Your leadership and commitment to public service is inspirational, particularly with the national security challenges facing our country.

Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Risch, and members of the committee, I am honored to appear before you today as President Biden's nominee to be the next Ambassador of the United States to the Russian Federation. I am grateful to President Biden and Secretary Blinken for the confidence they have placed in me during a period of unprecedented tension in U.S.-Russia relations brought about by Russia's war on Ukraine.

For 28 years, I have had the good fortune to represent the United States as a Foreign Service Officer—many of those assignments have been in the countries of the former Soviet Union. It has been a privilege to serve as U.S. Ambassador to Armenia and prior to that as Deputy Chief of Mission in Moscow. My experience as a contractor in the late 1980s at the Embassy in Moscow as part of an American-only staff is an experience that has again become relevant to some of the challenges we are facing today.

Throughout my career, I have worked hard to protect our Nation and its interests. For me, this has always been about more than the effort of one individual. It has required teamwork that goes beyond a single department or just one branch of our government. If confirmed, I pledge to continue that team approach and to work closely with the members and staff of this committee on our Russia policy.

Mr. Chairman, this committee and other Members of Congress have my commitment that, if confirmed, the plight of U.S. citizens detained in Russia will be a top priority for me. U.S. citizens living and traveling in Russia have faced unprecedented harassment, and some have been determined by the Secretary of State to

be wrongfully detained. With the support of the consular team in Moscow, I will devote my attention and energy to supporting the welfare and well-being of every U.S. citizen detained in Russia. I will work closely with Washington as the Administration continues to engage Russian authorities to bring Paul Whelan and Brittney Griner home. I will also pursue the humanitarian release of Marc Fogel. I will press the Russian Government to live up to its obligations, including as they relate to providing timely and consistent consular access and to the fair treatment of our citizens who are detained.

As the members of this committee know all too well, Russia's unjustified and unprovoked war against Ukraine has shattered European security and undermined global economic stability. Russia's war has resulted in catastrophic loss of life and in recent days as it struggles on the battlefield, the Putin regime has escalated its attacks with a bombing campaign against civilian infrastructure intended to cause suffering and death for ordinary Ukrainians.

Together with our allies and partners, the United States remains committed to supporting Ukraine's sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity and to helping Ukraine defend itself. We are also imposing unprecedented economic costs on Russia and welcome the continued close coordination with Congress on sanctions and other tools.

As the world's two pre-eminent nuclear powers, the United States and Russia have special responsibilities. These include refraining from reckless saber-rattling, maintaining lines of communication to reduce nuclear risks, and living up to commitments under the New START Treaty and other arms-control obligations. President Biden has said the Administration is ready to negotiate a new arms control framework to replace New START when it expires in 2026. But we need Russia to allow for inspections to resume under the Treaty before we can have a dialogue on what comes next.

The Russian Government is intensifying repression against civil society, independent media, human rights activists, pro-democracy advocates, and even Russian citizens who simply have the courage to use the word "war." If confirmed, I will work to keep a spotlight of support on those, like Vladimir Kara-Murza, Alexei Navalny, and Radio Free Europe reporter Vladyslav Yesypenko, who have been jailed or harassed simply for seeking to exercise their fundamental freedoms.

I believe that promoting mutual understanding among Americans and Russians can contribute to long-term stability in our bilateral relations. Even in the darkest days of the Soviet Union, citizens of good will in both our countries formed people-to-people ties. I will cultivate these connections, particularly through our public diplomacy programs, in order to keep the door open to a better future. If confirmed, I will reach out to the Russian people at all levels of society as one of my priorities.

These topics and others require hard conversations. If confirmed, I will make it a priority to conduct frank diplomacy, supporting the President's efforts to maintain a clear channel of communication and to hold Russia accountable. We have a team of smart, experienced, and dedicated public servants at our Embassy in Moscow who are performing brilliantly in an extremely challenging environment. Their safety, security, and ability to do their jobs is of paramount concern. If confirmed, it will be one of the greatest honors and privileges of my career to lead them, and I pledge to do so with integrity and humility.

Finally, I am pleased to be joined today by my sister, Anita Jepsky. I have been blessed to receive the indispensable support of my family. My parents Albert and Carol Sue Tracy, Anita, and my sister Mary Lou Tracy have always believed in me and been there for me. I am grateful to Ambassador John Sullivan and my mentor Ambassador John Tefft for their wise counsel and strong example of public service. I also want to acknowledge my history professor at the University of Georgia Dr. Ronald Rader and his wife Zhanna Rader, who guided my first steps as a student pursuing a deeper understanding of Russia and the Soviet Union.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, thank you for the privilege of appearing before the committee and considering my nomination. I look forward to your questions.

The CHAIRMAN. All right. Well, thank you.

Before we start our five-minute rounds, there are questions that we ask all nominees and I just simply need a yes or no from you.

It speaks to the importance this committee places on responsiveness by officials in the executive branch and that we expect and will be seeking from you.

So do you agree to appear before this committee and make officials from your office available to the committee and designated staff when invited?

Ms. TRACY. Yes.

The CHAIRMAN. Do you commit to keep the committee fully and currently informed about the activities under your purview?

Ms. TRACY. Yes.

The CHAIRMAN. Do you commit to engaging in meaningful consultation while policies are being developed, not just providing notification after the fact?

Ms. TRACY. Yes.

The CHAIRMAN. And do you commit to promptly responding to requests for briefings and information requested by the committee and its designated staff?

Ms. TRACY. Yes.

The CHAIRMAN. All right. So our nominee has answered yes to all those questions so we will start a round of five minutes. I will recognize myself.

It is obvious the importance of this nomination because while we have a whole series of nominees that will be testifying at a second panel we have had you exclusively before this panel, which—before the committee. So it speaks volumes about the importance that we think this particular position entails.

And so I want to ask you, I know that you have been our Ambassador to Armenia. I know that you at one time were the Deputy Chief of Mission in Russia. But this is a very high profile and, I would say, tough job.

Are you up to it?

Ms. TRACY. Mr. Chairman, thank you for the question. I believe that I am.

Over the course of my 28 years in the Foreign Service I have been tested in a number of assignments, both in terms of some of the challenges of physical security during a tour in the Peshawar, Pakistan.

My tour as Deputy Chief of Mission in Russia at the embassy in Moscow was already in a period after Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea when our relations were hurtling downward and we faced regular harassment of our staff.

We—I personally experienced some of that where we were in the glare of ambushes from so-called journalists. So I have seen in Russia already some of what I expect will be a continuation of some of the same practices.

And then let me say, finally, it has been a tremendous honor to be the U.S. Ambassador to Armenia in a period of enormous opportunity but of tremendous challenge, as I know you understand very well as someone who has followed the Caucasus very closely.

During my tenure we were in a period of active conflict, a war that brought tremendous pressures on our embassy, on our staff, and that is another experience that I believe I will bring to bear in serving if confirmed as the U.S. Ambassador to the Russian Federation.

Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. You refer to some of the difficulties of this particular assignment. The Russian Government has sought to make

it difficult for the United States to operate diplomatic facilities in Russia. They forcibly terminated local employed staff, declared diplomats to be persona non grata.

So we want to, first of all, take this opportunity to thank the personnel who have worked at our embassy in Russia over the years, both Americans and local staff, and particularly those currently serving during an incredibly trying and challenging time.

How can the embassy's work be effective both in terms of providing service on behalf of Americans and in representing and advancing U.S. interests at a time that our diplomatic relations are barely existent?

Ms. TRACY. Mr. Chairman, as you well know and the committee knows, we are operating at a greatly reduced staffing and, yet, everything that I have seen in my preparation for this hearing and for understanding our operations in Moscow speaks to the dedication, the capabilities, of our excellent team in Moscow of Americans able to carry out duties under extremely difficult circumstances.

It is not easy, particularly in the kind of surveillance environment that we have in Russia. I mean, this was something that I saw when I was the Deputy Chief of Mission.

It is almost impossible to go anywhere without some kind of surveillance, including when we were meeting journalists, political activists, academics, and it has gotten a lot harder even since then. People are afraid.

But what has struck me as I have looked at some of the work that the embassy is doing is that Russians are still reaching out to us, interested in maintaining contact.

We have still some very strong public diplomacy programs that are active, exchange programs that are allowing us to keep the door open to Russian citizens who are interested in a better kind of relationship and future.

But it is difficult and we have to be careful because of the risks that people are taking when they are in touch with our embassy in these times.

The CHAIRMAN. Two final sets of questions and let me try to synthesize them.

I remain deeply concerned about Americans detained in Russia, including Paul Whelan, Brittney Griner, Marc Fogel, and James Wilgus, a New Jersey constituent.

Do you commit to requesting regular consular access for all Americans detained in Russia to assure that their basic needs are being met?

Ms. TRACY. Absolutely.

The CHAIRMAN. Will you personally commit to visit wrongfully detained Americans Paul Whelan and Brittney Griner and supports us beyond working to secure their release?

Ms. TRACY. Yes, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Russia continues to jail opposition leaders including Vladimir Kara-Murza, Alexei Navalny, Ilya Yashin, who, I believe, are true patriots of Russia who advocate for a better future for the Russian people.

In September, Ranking Member Risch and I wrote the Administration requesting a determination under the Global Magnitsky Human Rights and Accountability Act as to whether the treatment

of Mr. Kara-Murza is sanctionable under the Act and, if so, if the Administration plans to impose sanctions.

So, assuming you are confirmed, do I have your commitment that you will work with the Administration to respond to our letter with a determination no later than January 20th of next year, which is the date required by law?

Ms. TRACY. Yes, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Okay. I have other questions in this regard but I will submit them for the record in deference to my colleagues. Senator Risch went to vote and so I will recognize Senator Romney at this time.

Senator ROMNEY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I appreciate very much your willingness to serve in a hostile place, an often cold place. Moscow is not particularly beautiful, depending upon the corner of the city you happen to be in, and, of course, there are no McDonald's there anymore.

So it is a challenging spot. The last piece, obviously, a bit of humor, the other quite serious, and I very much appreciate your service and that of the people who serve with you.

I want to ask you a question just about Armenia, which is what is the perception of the people in Armenia with regards to Russia, with regards to Putin, with regards to the Ukrainian invasion?

How do they see that and do you believe that is shared by other of the Soviet state—former Soviet states? But in particular with regards to Armenia what is the perspective there?

Ms. TRACY. Senator, thank you. You have asked an extremely timely and relevant question.

What I have been seeing and hearing since Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 24th is a sense of real concern among other former Soviet countries about the future of their independence and sovereignty and territorial integrity. They, I think, are each looking and wondering who is next.

Unfortunately, there are also a number of dependencies among former Soviet states on Russia. We think the United States and Armenia and with the support of Congress has, thankfully, been able to work on reducing some of those dependencies and to be looking in a more westward direction.

In 2018, the Armenian people held their freest and fairest elections since independence and underwent then in 2020 one of the greatest stress tests that a democracy can endure, which was a war, and in the following summer held, again, free and fair elections.

And what Armenians have told me is because they do not want to go back, they do not want to go back to corrupt leaders, and they want to find a better future.

Coming back to Russia, I think the problem—and this is what Armenians are saying—they see that some of their previous relationships or standing relationships that they have had with Russia are not meeting the needs of Armenia today.

So I think where we are at right now between the United States and Armenia is having some very important conversations about how we can be helpful to Armenia as it continues, I think, seeking a more democratic future and a secure future.

I will say that there are many security challenges there as well that Russia is playing a role in that we have to keep—pay attention to.

Thank you.

Senator ROMNEY. Thank you.

News reports suggest that many, many people left Russia escaping the potential to be drafted into their military service or, perhaps, just escaping a brutal regime. Is there accuracy to that report?

Have there been a lot of people leaving Russia and can we facilitate, particularly those with skills and expertise that would be helpful here—can you and can our effort continue to facilitate the immigration of people who wish to come to this country to make that easier and a source of strength for us?

Ms. TRACY. So I can confirm, based on regular conversations that I have had with Armenian Government officials, that they have received a steady stream of Russian citizens since February 24th.

There was a big wave in the spring and then, after the mobilization, more. Not all have stayed in Armenia. Some have moved on to places like Georgia, Turkey, western Europe, but approximately 40,000 have remained in Armenia.

These are young—many of them are young IT professionals and we are, certainly, available and open at the embassy. We have a lot of contacts.

I think we have devoted attention to understanding who is in this community so that we can look at the kinds of questions that you are raising for the future, and this is something I would certainly be happy to stay in touch with you about.

Senator ROMNEY. Thank you. Mr. Chairman?

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Shaheen?

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and congratulations, Ms. Tracy, on your nomination.

You expressed your concern about Vladimir Kara-Murza in your opening testimony and Senator Menendez talked about the Americans who are unjustly detained as well in Russia.

What can you do as ambassador to help keep tension on those unjust detentions and what we can—what can we do to try and continue to urge Russia to release people who are being held?

Ms. TRACY. Senator Shaheen, thank you.

There are public and private aspects to what we can be doing and I think publicly the kinds of efforts that we are seeing from members of this committee, other members of Congress, to keep a spotlight on political prisoners, political activists who have been unjustly jailed, as well as our detained American citizens that the public spotlight is so important so that they do not feel forgotten because I think that can happen in isolation.

One of the most inspiring and early experiences that I had with this kind of a situation was actually when I was working at the embassy in Moscow in the late 1980s.

Secretary Schultz visited and championed the refuseniks, the divided families. He made a point of meeting with them.

I had the good fortune to backbench on one of those meetings and seeing the comfort, the hope, that families took from that even as they remained divided or were being refused exit privileges was,

for me, just such a clear point of understanding on the importance of this public spotlight.

Privately I commit to this committee that this will be a part of my ongoing conversation with Russian officials that there will—this will never go unsaid, the importance of the release of the wrongfully detained, of the need for appropriate consular access for our American citizens, and for the release of the political opposition, who, as I said, have been unjustly detained.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you.

This week Russia walked away from continuing negotiations around New START, and given Vladimir Putin's rhetoric that heightens the nuclear threat because of the war in Ukraine, can you talk about how we should think about future efforts to reduce weapons with Russia?

Ms. TRACY. Senator, I think, first of all, in looking at New START, the focus of the Administration has been on resuming inspections under the treaty.

It is not a gift to Russia. It is a right that we have for treaty implementation and those inspections are very important. Obviously, Russia receives some of those same rights.

But I think this can be one avenue of at least verification. It is hard to talk about trust in the current climate. But I think having some ability to agree on the inspections for the verification is one measure that we can continue to pursue and I believe the Administration, which was ready to meet to talk about resuming inspections, is still prepared to do. We see that—the treaty as an instrument of stability.

I think the other approach here that is so very important is that we have very clear communications with the highest levels of the Russian Government to enforce what—reinforce what President Biden has already said, which is that the use of nuclear weapons would bring severe consequences and extremely irresponsible, and I think that having that clear channel of communication so that there are no misunderstandings, no misperceptions, is what is absolutely needed right now.

Senator SHAHEEN. You have a very difficult challenge, as any ambassador to Russia would at this time, because on the one hand it is important for future relationships to maintain that open channel of communication with Russia.

On the other hand, we need to condemn their outrageous behavior in the war in Ukraine, the obvious war crimes that are being committed, the disinformation, the hostile activities that they are engaging in in the United States and Europe and other parts of the world.

So help me understand how you walk that fine line and how do you raise those concerns while at the same time trying to keep an open channel of communication?

Ms. TRACY. Senator, I faced some of these same difficulties when I was the Deputy Chief of Mission in Moscow and I found it very important to be professional and to be prepared in these conversations with Russian officials but to also be frank and candid, and I think there is a way to do that.

That, as I said, can be effective in ensuring that there are not misperceptions but it is not easy, having had that seat, as I said, as the deputy.

Publicly, I think we have a lot of tools through our public diplomacy platform, our social media tools, to publicly be messaging about all the concerns that we have and to shine a light to expose the untold suffering that Russia has inflicted on Ukraine.

I think that that is absolutely necessary so that there is no question about it. But this is a tough environment. It is tough to sometimes penetrate through the propaganda.

When people have been drinking Kool-aid for a long time it is hard to get them to take water. But I think we have to keep trying there.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Portman?

Senator PORTMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and again, Ambassador Tracy, thank you for stepping up.

You just talked about the untold suffering that is occurring in Ukraine and I appreciate your views on that. How do you feel about sanctions on Russia based on the February 24th invasion and the ongoing war on Ukraine since then?

We had some data yesterday, a projected 7.1 percent decrease in the GDP in Russia in this quarter, the fourth quarter, about 4 percent last quarter. In Ukraine, it is about 40, 50 percent.

I believe our sanctions are not having the impact that we had intended. Can you talk about the sanctions on Russia and what we should do, perhaps, to make them more effective if you believe that is the right course?

Ms. TRACY. Senator, I absolutely agree that the right course is to stay the course on sanctions, to continue tightening the sanctions.

One area that I know you are very familiar with that we have talked about is reducing Russia's energy revenues. One mechanism that is projected to come into place is the oil price cap.

I think that is already showing some signs, if realized, that it could be very effective at reducing some of Russia's revenue but at the same time maintaining some stability in the oil market.

I think we need to continue looking at who the actors are in the Russian Government and in their wider networks who are a part of the pernicious and malign influence that Russia is projecting.

But I am very mindful that, as you pointed out and as I have seen, that Ukrainians, particularly now with all of these attacks on the civilian infrastructure, on the energy infrastructure, are suffering.

I think we want to have it—these sanctions feeling the impact sooner rather than later. I think, based on what I have been seeing in reports, we are starting to see sand in the gears of the Russian economy.

We are seeing Russia turning to actors like North Korea and Iran for their weapon supplies. We see that Russia has lost ablebodied workers through mobilization and through flight, and so I think the expectation is that we are going to continue to see the

impacts of our sanctions. But I cannot predict exactly when that point is when——

Senator PORTMAN. Let me say this. I hope you will, should you be confirmed—I think you will be—once you are there that you will dig into this issue and give us advice as to how those sanctions can be effectively tightened, and from our conversation you know how I feel about the energy exports and how that really is what is funding the war machine.

Let me ask you a more—a broad question, a tougher one. How do you think you would be most effective in convincing Vladimir Putin, his top officials, perhaps some effective communication with oligarchs, that the illegal, brutal, and totally unprovoked war is also a senseless war and one that is counterproductive for Russia? How would you get Russia to the bargaining table?

Ms. TRACY. I think by continuing to do what we are doing right now, which is exacting a cost on the battlefield. I think we have seen already that President Putin has had to pay attention to this issue.

He recently felt the pressure to meet with mothers of soldiers. Even though some of the meeting appeared staged in terms of participants, the very fact that he felt the need to do that, I think, showed some pressure.

And so I think continuing to show that that strength of support, that unity of purpose, is so very important because my impression of President Putin and his mindset is that he thinks that he is more patient than we are, that he can wait us out, that our unity of purpose and will will crumble before his does, and I think that that needs to be demonstrated to him that that is not an accurate calculation.

Senator PORTMAN. Do you believe that he believes that his missile supply will last longer than our patience in the West?

Ms. TRACY. He may, although his missile supply appears to be running low.

Senator PORTMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I hope that you will strongly support the aid package from Congress to continue our help for all the reasons you just stated, that this is a crucial time in Ukraine and to keep pressure on Russia. It is important that we maintain our support.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Senator Van Hollen?

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and, Madam Ambassador, it is great to see you. Congratulations on the nomination, and my colleagues have covered a lot of territory, including your effort—your future effort to help gain the release of unjustly detained Americans and political prisoners there.

I am interested in following up on some of the questions regarding your operational flexibility in Moscow as ambassador. I am assuming you have had a chance to talk to our outgoing ambassador, Ambassador Sullivan. Is that right?

Ms. TRACY. Yes, Senator.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. And in terms of just your ability to move around either Moscow or the country, how limited is that right now?

Ms. TRACY. Senator, there is some limited ability to move around outside of Moscow but it requires a lot of effort and planning, and because of the size of the embassy now and some of the needs that go with ambassadorial travel it can be a very—it can shift a lot of the resources away from the embassy.

Obviously, there are some very important priorities, though, that require that travel, including visiting American citizens who are detained. Ambassador Sullivan described to me an ability to move around Moscow.

But I think, as you can imagine, the climate there and because of the position the United States has taken with respect to Ukraine we are not always warmly welcomed everywhere.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Right. So and that leads to my next question, but first of all, do you need prior approval from the Russian authorities to go outside of Moscow?

Ms. TRACY. Senator, I believe that there are some exempted officials from prior notification but I would have to come back to confirm to you.

I believe that the ambassador and a few other staff—there is a limited group that has that exception. Most require notification and approval to be able to travel outside of Moscow.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Yeah. If you could get back to me. I am curious about whether and to what extent we are applying reciprocity here, whether the rules that apply to the Russian ambassador here and members of the Russian embassy are similar to the ones they are applying to the—our embassy and folks in Russia.

How about in terms of just access to government officials? What did Ambassador Sullivan tell you? Is he frozen out? Did he have an opportunity to meet with any folks of authority or were those conversations to the extent they happened going on between, for example, others in the Russian Government and folks here in Washington, either at the NSC or the State Department or Defense Department?

Ms. TRACY. Senator, he described to me some channels but fairly limited channels, and also my impression was some of the same people that he was speaking with were speaking with officials here in Washington.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Right. That has been my impression, which is that they have sort of frozen out to the extent that they can and they can do a pretty good job of freezing out folks in Moscow.

So I hope you will, at least with respect to non-Russian Government officials, push the boundaries of talking to other folks, as you say, in civil society and elsewhere, and I would be interested in the extent to which we are applying reciprocity to their diplomats here.

Let me just get to this issue of the price cap, which, as you know, is scheduled to take effect, I think, December 5th, and I think it is a very important move by the G–7, the United States, our allies.

Obviously, lots of questions about how it will work and I think some of us believe that, ultimately, this price cap needs to be backed up with the threat of sanctions to those who do not comply with what the EU is doing.

But what role, if any, will you have or what do you know about our efforts right now to get other countries like India and those

who have not been part of setting the price cap—getting those countries to comply?

Ms. TRACY. Senator, my understanding is that we are having conversations across the globe. I mean, I, certainly, participated in some of these in Armenia about sanctions compliance.

I think that we continue to encourage some of the major purchasers of Russian energy to join us. But that is as much as I know at this point of those conversations.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. I appreciate that. Obviously, in order for this to be effective we need to sort of shut all the loopholes and not just keep the back of the barn open. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Schatz?

Senator SCHATZ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Ambassador, thank you so much for being willing to continue to serve this country in incredibly difficult circumstances.

I want to follow up on something that Senator Shaheen was asking about and also Senator Portman. I want you to describe the information environment as you understand it in Russia.

I guess the most basic question is do you think the Russian people know that they are losing?

Ms. TRACY. Senator, thank you.

My impression is that there are, certainly, Russians who have sought out access to outside sources of information to be able to more accurately gauge what is happening in terms of Russia's war on Ukraine.

But when you look at the polling that takes place inside of Russia, and I think some of it is pretty good and pretty credible, there are still many Russians who, because of the years of propaganda, are still persuaded that this is a just cause, although the rationales keep changing.

Senator SCHATZ. And whatever mistakes that may have been made are tactical or a general's fault or about equipping and training and not a sort of major strategic error. So I want to talk to you about the sort of—the way I see it is two vectors, right.

One is years of propaganda and culture and media channels that are organized around Putin and the other is increasingly that they want to control the inputs, right. They actually do want to restrict access to truthful information.

Freedom House already described Russia as not free in terms of information but also noted that there was the biggest decline in 2022 in terms of the ability to access truthful information.

I am sort of wondering how you think those two factors are interacting right now, because I do not want to get overly fixated on making sure people have access to truthful information if, in the end, the problem is the propaganda that overwhelms anyway.

China has the ability to actually control all information and have the Great Firewall. Russia does not have that capability.

They would like to, but I am not sure they need it, and I am wondering how you see those and also how you see the Department of State being useful in this conversation to make sure that the Russian people know that this is going badly.

Ms. TRACY. Senator, thank you.

I think one of the ways in which we are helping both in terms of keeping alive some of the credible independent voices of media is through some support that the State Department has been providing and I think that is very important because these are journalists who understand the challenges in the Russian media space and the mindset and, I think, having that kind of support to homegrown journalists. I have seen this elsewhere in my career. People can smell cooked-up storylines.

But when you have people who understand the mindset who are local they are probably best placed to provide that kind of entry point into getting at sometimes these narratives of misinformation and disinformation.

So that is one—I think that is one way that we need to continue to be very active and engaged is to be supporting media—Russian media who are in opposition in exile to be able to project.

But it is—again, it is a very tough environment. But I do not think that we can afford to walk away from championing internet freedom of making sure that people have access.

Senator SCHATZ. No, I agree, and I think this is a tough nut to crack. It just seems to me that we have to understand the information environment as it is evolving pretty fast because it was ever thus as it relates to the propaganda channels. But this new desire to control truthful information presents additional complications and I think the State Department is going to have some navigating to do.

But before you start just jumping in and tweeting out things or whatever, we have to have a theory of the case about what exactly is going on here and why Russian public opinion remains pretty stubborn even in the face of at least accessible facts.

They may not have them in their brains but they—it is theoretically accessible via computer in a way that it is not, for instance, in China.

So thank you.

Ms. TRACY. Senator, I promise I will not just jump in and start tweeting.

Senator SCHATZ. That is my job.

The CHAIRMAN. And you do it so well.

Let me—a second vote for members who have not voted should know that it has started.

Senator Young is next. But then after him is Senator Murphy. I have asked Senator Murphy to preside until the chair can return.

Thank you.

Senator YOUNG. Welcome, Ms. Tracy. Good to have you here.

Earlier this year, my Senate colleagues and I introduced legislation to sanction Chinese financial institutions that conduct transactions with any Russian financial institutions trying to avert sanctions by using China's alternative to SWIFT.

The end goal of this legislation was to encourage Beijing to consider the costs of siding with Putin in his barbaric attack on Ukraine.

From your perspective, can you expand on how actions like this from the international community have prompted Putin's allies and friends of convenience to rethink their relationships with Moscow?

Ms. TRACY. Senator, thank you.

I think that the kinds of conversations that the Administration and our partners and allies in Europe and elsewhere have been having with not just government officials in the PRC but also the private company have—private sector have had an effect.

I think there is a very clear understanding that evading these sanctions, crossing these sanctions, will bring consequences. That is my understanding, based on the conversations that have taken place thus far.

But I think that we are going to have to remain vigilant and I think you are—if I am taking that point from you, it is the importance of vigilance here.

Senator YOUNG. So in the spirit of vigilance, have you seen and maybe could you point to some changes that have occurred in the Russia-Chinese bilateral relationship, positive or negative, since we took this action?

Ms. TRACY. One very telling episode to me was the—what happened in Tashkent earlier this year. This was in the fall, I believe. It was a gathering. President Xi was there. There were other leaders from the region there. And, certainly, President Putin looked very uncomfortable.

I mean, this has been well noted in the press and he had to acknowledge that after that initial announcement back in—during the Olympics of the no limits partnership that his Chinese colleague was expressing some concern and had questions, and the fact that he had to say that publicly was a pretty big deal.

We saw—and we saw some other interactions at that particular conference that, I think, again, showed that some of Russia's partners were and are uneasy with the course that Russia has been taking.

Senator YOUNG. Thank you.

So as the months have lingered on since that point Vladimir Putin has found himself on his back foot, to put it charitably, and he has been increasingly desperate, it seems, and Moscow has signaled from time to time that it is willing to respond asymmetrically to the West in various ways.

Where do you assess our interests are most vulnerable to these Russian acts of asymmetric retaliation?

Ms. TRACY. Senator, in terms of the asymmetrical behavior, some of it is falling on our mission operations, something that was touched on earlier.

I think that we also see Russia projecting a very pernicious and malign influence in places like Africa where we do not always have an easy answer, and in this case I am thinking of groups like the Wagner Company, who are really, as I said, a pernicious influence that is destabilizing good governance efforts, the—fueling corruption in some of its activities.

So this is—these are at least——

Senator YOUNG. Gray zone warfare, as it were, right?

Ms. TRACY. Yes.

Senator YOUNG. Yeah. And before I return—yield to the—back to the chairman, just with respect to that discrete threat, do you have any thoughts about how we best safeguard ourselves and work with our allies to safeguard them against these actions?

Ms. TRACY. Senator, this is where I think we need just to maintain some very tight coordination. We need to be talking very, very frankly and candidly with our allies and we need to do things in unison.

I think this is, certainly, something I have seen across my career that when we act with partners and allies on some of these tough transnational issues or gray zone issues that we are in a much better place.

But I think it is—there is a lot happening right now, and so that we do not lose sight of some of these places that maybe are not on the European continent but actually have a nexus to what Russia is doing in Ukraine.

Senator YOUNG. Thank you, Ms. Tracy.

Chairman?

Senator MURPHY [presiding.] I am recognizing myself under Senator Menendez's instructions and then going to Senator Risch.

Good to see you. Thank you for stepping up at a time of peril to serve in maybe the most difficult diplomatic post that we have. We are grateful for your time with us here today.

I want to build on Senator Young's questions and build on your prior service in Armenia. Senator Young was asking about this sort of set of asymmetric threats that Russia brings to bear.

Russia thrives in neighboring countries with weak rule of law. Some of Russia's tools are pretty sophisticated. Some of them are not.

Some of them are just paying people off in order to do what they want, which is easier to do in places that do not have a strong system of rules, a strong democratic history, a free press.

So maybe drawing on your experience in Armenia, talk a little bit about how America's commitment to the rule of law is not just about trying to sort of stand up healthy democracies. It is also about pushing back on Russia's ability to get what it wants by preying on countries that have weak rule of law.

Ms. TRACY. Senator, thank you.

I think that, first of all, I want to acknowledge with respect to Armenia, and this is true in a—for a number of former Soviet Union countries, the great importance of the investment that the United States has made through assistance that Congress has provided to development assistance, to economic development, but maybe most importantly to investment in people, young leaders, and that matters because what we saw, for instance, in Armenia in 2018 this was totally homegrown, the leadership of and the movement to call for an end to corruption in government.

And so when I think about—when I think about that, part of that also relates to Russia. As I noted earlier, I think what we have seen in the last two elections in Armenia is people turning away from the model that Russia offers, looking for something better for a government that is accountable.

And even though people had experienced something very traumatic in 2020 with the conflict they did not want to go back to corruption and I think it is because they see what Russia represents.

They see how the country is run, and I think that, as I said, that that investment in people who have the opportunities to be credible journalists, to provide strong accountability to government institu-

tions, I mean, these are all the things that we can be continuing to do, not just in places like Armenia, that I think act as a hedge against the kind of model and malign influence that Russia represents.

Senator MURPHY. Many of us see this work in the Balkans as well, countries that have weaker rules structures. Those are the places where Russia plays more vigorously.

You also speak to this broader opportunity that exists in every crisis. You can always find a little hidden nugget of opportunity and there are countries all along Russia's periphery that are now entertaining closer relations with the United States as a hedge against a neighbor who has now shown no compunction about moving troops across borders. Central Asia is another example of that.

In the remaining 50 seconds just a word from you on what you have learned about Moscow's current disposition on a nuclear weapon-armed Iran.

Russia stood with us in the JCPOA negotiations. They now are in a different place because they are relying on Iran to provide critical weapons for the fight in Ukraine.

So have you learned that there is any prospect for Russia continuing to be a partner if we were ever able to get back into a conversation with Iran on their nuclear future or has their relationship with Tehran fundamentally changed?

Ms. TRACY. Senator, this is not an area that I have had a chance to have consultations on or been read into. But, clearly, I will be happy to take that question for the record and be back to you.

Senator MURPHY. Great. I will follow up with you on that. Thank you.

Senator Risch?

Senator RISCH. Thank you very much, and thank you, Ms. Tracy, for being willing to take on this job. This is going to be a tough one. There is no question about it. Probably the toughest one you have had and that you ever will have in your position with the State Department.

And thank you for talking with me about the sensitive area that we talked about and we will talk about in another—in a classified setting at some point. I am glad you understand the issues there and are willing to engage on that.

I would like to get your thoughts generally on diplomat—what you envision diplomatic engagement is going to be like in Moscow. Obviously, you are going to spend a lot of your time on the related things like security and facilities and management and staffing.

But, obviously, we all know what the usual type of diplomatic engagement is with a country in discussing this with our diplomatic engagement with Russia, with NSC people and State Department people. Seems to be a pretty heavy lift at the present time and what—have you got any thoughts on that of how you will engage in that?

Ms. TRACY. Senator, thank you—Ranking Member, thank you very much, and you are absolutely right. This is probably going to be the toughest assignment of my career.

One of—we were already seeing during my tenure as DCM in Moscow a real shrinking of the channels of communication. The Russians withheld a lot of meetings from us.

But I think one thing that we had to continue to do was to ask and to probe and to see where we were able to open up channels. So I, certainly, intend to do that to see what that may yield and Ambassador Sullivan shared with me the channels that he was able to maintain.

Another—I think another very important constituency in Moscow are our partners and allies and ensuring that we are lashed up there very closely. So that is something that I saw when I was in Moscow in my earlier assignment that I thought was very important to being effective as an embassy, and then to the extent that I can to be reaching out and getting out.

I do not know what kind of reception I will get in some places. I mean, I think this is going to be one of those situations where you have to test the water.

But I do think it is important that we continue to be out and about to the extent that we can.

Senator RISCH. I really appreciate that and I think that is probably the best you are going to be able to do, what you just described.

I would note that, I think, as far as our allies are concerned a good share of them are not in any better shape than we are as far as their relationship with Moscow. So you will have comrades in arms there, in any event.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN [presiding]. Thank you.

Senator Barrasso?

Senator BARRASSO. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Congratulations.

I want to talk a little bit about uranium because Russia uses energy as a geopolitical weapon. For years I have raised concerns about the risks posed by being dependent on Russia for energy resources.

In 2021 Russia was our third largest supplier of uranium, 14 percent of U.S. demand, and every dollar we give to Russia state supports Putin's war on Ukraine.

So despite the Administration's so-called ban on Russian energy we are still importing Russian uranium. Do you agree that the U.S. needs to ban Russian uranium?

Ms. TRACY. Senator, my understanding is that we are working very closely with our allies and partners, including in the G–7, to reduce and ultimately eliminate our reliance on Russian uranium services.

Several countries in Europe have taken important steps to reduce their reliance on Russian uranium services and nuclear fuel since the beginning of Russia's war in Ukraine.

The administration is also focused on this issue here at home by working to identify domestic solutions that support our foreign policy goals and address our own strategic vulnerability.

And I would just commit to you that I will, certainly, be supporting those efforts and looking for ways that we can reduce that strategic vulnerability.

Senator BARRASSO. In terms of strategic vulnerabilities then we move on to rising energy prices and what that means for helping Russia fund their war—their killing machine.

Reducing the amount of Russian energy going to Europe would hurt Russia's economy. The oil and gas revenues make up about half of Russia's national budget.

In 2021 Russia sold $100 billion worth of oil and natural gas to Europe. With natural gas prices increasing, oil surpassing, at times, $100 a barrel, more of our allies' money, basically, lines the pockets of Putin. It is a windfall, I believe, for Russia. As a result, the amount of Russian energy going to Europe is a major problem.

Is there a national security issue when our allies and partners are increasingly dependent on Russian energy sources?

Ms. TRACY. Senator, what I believe we are seeing in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine is that our allies and partners have seen that Russia is not a reliable energy partner.

We have seen significant drops in certain parts of the energy landscape. I think we are expecting, potentially, to see more starting December 5th and we need to continue doing that to—as a part of that, not just focusing on reducing the dependency on Russia but then providing alternatives that can give the Europeans a stable energy supply from other locations.

Senator BARRASSO. You used the phrase alternatives and then a reliable energy partner, which is what they are looking for long term. Do you support quickly increasing U.S. exports of natural gas to Europe to help reduce their dependence on Russia's natural gas?

Ms. TRACY. Yes, Senator. I do.

Senator BARRASSO. I wanted to talk about what is happening with Ukrainian children, and you have read that since Russia's invasion of Ukraine there have been reports of Putin ordering the transfer of Ukrainian children to Russia to be adopted and become citizens of Russia.

Our U.S. Ambassador to the U.N., Linda Thomas-Greenfield, reported that thousands of Ukrainian children have been taken from their homes or orphanages before being put up for adoption in Russia. She said more than 1,800 children—I mean, it is an astonishingly large number—were transferred from Russian-controlled areas of Ukraine to Russia I think she said in just July alone, so in one month.

In May, Putin signed a decree making it easier for Russia to adopt and give citizenship to Ukrainian children. The New York Times had an article in October titled "Using Adoptions, Russia turns Ukrainian children into the spoils of war." The Associated Press had an article titled "How Russia grabs Ukrainian kids and makes them Russians."

So how can the U.S. and the international community hold Putin accountable for the large-scale forced relocation and deportation—of this program?

Ms. TRACY. Senator, what you have just described is absolutely sickening and horrible and I, certainly, commit to you and to this committee that one of the first things I will be doing is—if confirmed, is reaching out to my colleague, Ambassador Brink, in Kyiv so that we have a good coordination there on some of the information that is coming out.

I think how we hold Russia accountable is to support and engage in as much documentation as we can to expose these horrible practices and then, I think, to look for approaches and avenues where

we can, certainly, in the case cases that you are describing where we have had children separated to get children back to their parents.

I do not have an answer right here for how that is. But I do think it is very important to have that channel or that—have that emphasis on approaches that look at restoring children to their families.

Senator BARRASSO. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Ambassador Tracy, one last question. We had a hearing here on the Caucasus. It was one of the most disappointing hearings I have ever conducted.

You have been the ambassador to Armenia. So let me ask you, and I relate this to your post that you would be confirmed for, have you seen the videos of the execution of Armenian soldiers by Azerbaijan?

Ms. TRACY. Senator, yes, I have, and I have also seen the video of—it was one of the most sickening things I have seen in my life—of the mutilation and desecration of a female Armenian soldier, and when the report first emerged of—that this video was circulating I reached out to Armenia's human rights ombudsperson, Kristinne Grigoryan, who is a rising star in Armenia.

She has been a very important partner with us in law enforcement reform but she had moved over to the ombudsperson's office.

I went to see her. She was engaging in efforts to document, authenticate, what we were seeing in these videos. She was working, she told me—and I have great confidence in what she was saying—to use best international practices and they were able to identify—they identified the female soldier. I think they were identifying then—there were some other bodies in the video. And so——

The CHAIRMAN. So they not only identified, did they authenticate that, in fact, these actions took place?

Ms. TRACY. I think what they authenticated that—who these individuals were and the state in which their bodies were. What I remember from—particularly from the video with the female soldier being mutilated it was hard to see who was acting in the video.

But what I want to assure you of is that we reported these conversations, what the ombudsperson's office was doing, and what we are focused on right now is accountability and I think accountability is——

The CHAIRMAN. Who did you report them to? Who did you report them to?

Ms. TRACY. To the State Department. To Washington.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, this is at least a much better set of answers than I got at the other hearing where no one knew about—either did not know about the videos or in the case of Ambassador Reeker did know about the videos but no one had done anything to determine the authenticity and legitimacy of it.

I have no reason to dispute the videos that I have seen but it seems to me—and the reason I want to connect this here, you are the present ambassador to Armenia and you are nominated for something else. But here is the point.

We need our ambassadors, particularly in places of conflict, to be able to pursue what the truth is so that we, as policy holders, can then decide what we do about that truth.

And since you are going to Russia—obviously, Russians are being arrested for their dissidency. Others have been attacked. Some supposedly have been killed.

We need, to the extent possible, the U.S. ambassador in Moscow to do what I would want to have seen done as it relates to Armenia, to identify where these abuses have taken place, try to authenticate it, and then report on it in a way that then we—that it is actionable, at the end of the day.

So that is the spirit in which I am asking you the questions. I expect that if you are confirmed you will do that in Moscow to the best of your ability.

Ms. TRACY. Senator, yes, I will. I, certainly, pledge that and very much due to some of the experiences that I have had as ambassador to Armenia, some of what I have seen from conflict there, and the need for accountability and to pursue justice in some of these very egregious situations.

The CHAIRMAN. All right. Without accountability there is not justice.

Thank you for your testimony before the committee. We will be submitting—members will be submitting questions for the record. I would urge you to answer them as expeditiously and fully as possible so that we can consider your nomination before a business committee.

With the thanks of the committee, you are excused.

Ms. TRACY. Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, members of the committee, thank you very much.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Let us bring up our second panel.

[Pause.]

The CHAIRMAN. All right. We would like to have our nominees take their seats. We are all having a good time.

The hearing continues. The second panel—we consider remaining four nominations. I understand that Senator Shaheen will be introducing Ambassador Fisher and Senator Van Hollen will be introducing Ms. Spahn.

Let us turn to Senator Shaheen first.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and congratulations to each of the nominees this afternoon. I appreciate your letting me go first since I have a 4:00 o'clock appointment. I will be back, however.

But it really is my honor to introduce Ambassador Fisher today as this committee considers her nomination to serve as U.S. Ambassador to Cyprus.

Ambassador Fisher and I spent a very interesting day in Warsaw right before the start of the war in Ukraine, actually, this year and I know and had reinforced for me then what a great job she has done.

She has served our country with distinction from her previous roles as Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Western Europe and the European Union to Deputy Permanent Representative of the U.S. mission to NATO.

Most recently, Ambassador Fisher represented the United States as the Special Envoy to Belarus and that is the role in which we were dining in Warsaw.

However, against circumstances not of her own doing Ambassador Fisher has not had the opportunity to put her ambassadorial title to full use because despite being nominated and confirmed by this body as Ambassador to Belarus in 2020, the first time the position had been filled since 2008, Ambassador Fisher was forced to serve as a U.S. Special Envoy in Lithuania after the Belarusian authorities refused to grant her accreditation.

Ambassador Fisher was a committed partner to the Belarusian people, nonetheless, who continue to peacefully advocate for a democratic future for themselves and their country.

Ambassador Fisher recognized the need to keep the democratic movement in the spotlight and secure meetings for opposition leader Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya with U.S. leaders, including President Biden.

This was critical to conveying to the rest of Europe and the world that she has support from the United States, both Ambassador Fisher and the opposition.

Ambassador Fisher also worked effectively with Congress to humanize the plight of the Belarusian people and keep members apprised on the political situation in the country.

With her support in her role as Special Envoy, I co-founded the Free Belarus Caucus with Senator Wicker to continue advocating for democracy and free and fair elections in Belarus where Putin's puppet Lukashenko continues to tighten his authoritarian grip, crack down on free press, and threaten the sovereignty of Ukraine.

Ambassador Fisher showed why this role is so critical. I saw Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya a few weeks ago where she also called for a successor to this important position. I hope that the State Department can announce a successor without delay.

I look forward to see her apply the same level—he or she apply the same level of energy and expertise to that position as Ambassador Fisher has and I expect that Ambassador Fisher will apply that level of energy and expertise to her new position as Ambassador to Cyprus.

Amid renewed tensions with Turkey and Russia's malign influence throughout Europe, we need a diplomat like Ambassador Fisher to promote American interests in the Mediterranean.

I know she will continue to serve the American people well and I urge my colleagues to advance her nomination without delay.

Congratulations, Ambassador Fisher.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Senator Van Hollen?

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Risch, Senator Shaheen, and I want to congratulate all the nominees here today and I think the President has chosen wisely.

I am here to introduce the President's nominee to serve as the next director of the Peace Corps, Carol Spahn. The President has picked somebody with vast experience, impeccable character, and sharp intellect, and President Biden has also selected a Marylander

for this role, which Senator Cardin and I think shows a special wisdom.

But beyond being a Marylander and, very seriously, there is no doubt in my mind that Ms. Spahn has the background and the wisdom to excel in this role. From January 2021 to November 2022, during some of the toughest days of the pandemic, she served as CEO of the Peace Corps and had to navigate the Corps through that difficult period.

As most Corps members had to return home, many were then effectively deployed to support public health vaccination campaigns across the United States, including over 60 Corps volunteers in my state of Maryland.

Her good stewardship of the Corps helped get shots in arms and save lives across our country. That effort was just the most recent chapter in a storied career of service.

Ms. Spahn's connection to the Peace Corps dates all the way back to 1994 when she served as a volunteer in Romania. Since then she has been chief of operations in the Africa region and country director for Malawi, among other important assignments both inside and outside the Corps.

Beyond this impressive resume and set of assignments, I am absolutely confident and I am confident that the committee will agree that Ms. Spahn has the character and qualities that will help her succeed in this important position.

I had the opportunity to speak with her many months ago talking about the important role of the Peace Corps around the world, including in Africa where Senator Rounds and I as subcommittee chair and ranking member spend a lot of time.

I was struck by Ms. Spahn's devotion to the Peace Corps and her determination to serve our fellow Americans and others around the world. That meeting left no doubt in my mind that she is ready for this important challenge at this important moment.

Mr. Chairman, in my view, the Peace Corps is more than an opportunity for service. It is an important part of our identity as a nation and central to what we stand for.

I have witnessed that truth firsthand. As many of you know, I grew up in a Foreign Service family and spent many early years overseas.

One memory from that stands out with respect to the Peace Corps. I was traveling with my parents to a remote village in Sri Lanka as sort of an early teenager. It was a very remote village. We went into a hut there and there inside the hut hung a portrait of John F. Kennedy.

And the reason that portrait was there even 10 years after President Kennedy had been assassinated and half a world away from the United States of America was that the Peace Corps had been in that village.

The Peace Corps had been there helping dig wells, helping with sanitation projects, and that left an imprint and memory on all the villagers about what America stood for and the fact that we could be a force of good and for justice and hope around the world.

And, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Risch, we must continue to live up to that standard and I am absolutely confident that Carol Spahn can help us do exactly that so that years from now there

will continue to be a presence of the American force for good in villages halfway around the world and people know what the United States stands for, and I know she will continue to carry that torch and that tradition.

Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. Thank you to both of our colleagues, distinguished members of this committee.

Let me say to all of our nominees congratulations, again, to you, to your families who are part of service in our country. We appreciate their willingness to sacrifice.

Let me just go through a few of our nominees and then we will hold—we will listen to Senator Risch and then begin testimony.

I will begin with Ms. Kavin. Is that the correct pronunciation?

Ms. KVIEN. Kvien.

The CHAIRMAN. Kvien. Kvien. Okay. I am sorry.

Who has been nominated to be the Ambassador to Armenia. It is a challenging moment for Armenia. We have seen recent attacks from Azerbaijan, videos of what appeared to be war crimes as well as a long-standing humanitarian crisis brought on by the war in Nagorno-Karabakh.

I was incredibly disappointed by the State Department's responses in our recent hearing on the South Caucasus and so, Ms. Kvien, I expect you as well as all of our nominees today to respect the committee's oversight role and be responsive to the committee's requests for information.

In the case of Armenia, it will be your responsibility to ensure that the American people do not look the other way when we uncover human rights violations and atrocities committed against Armenia.

Armenia is connected to the United States by the love and concern of countless Armenian-American families. This is a diaspora community that is on the knife edge between the hope of peace and the terror of ethnic cleansing.

Ambassador Fisher, your appointment to Cyprus comes as this important country is growing closer to the United States. Cyprus is a key part in the Western response to Russian aggression in Ukraine. Cyprus' energy resources can and should be part of the solution to Putin's energy warfare directed at Europe.

At the same time, I look forward to hearing how you plan to tackle the challenge of an increasingly belligerent Erdogan in Turkey. I want to hear your views today on Erdogan's assertiveness in Varosha as well as what you will do to ensure the sustainability of the U.N. mandate in Cyprus.

The Administration's decision to lift restrictions on the sale of U.S. military equipment to Cyprus as authorized in the Eastern Mediterranean Security and Energy Partnership Law that I authored was welcome news.

I look forward to hearing your vision on how we can take this relationship to the next level in further developing our energy and security cooperation.

I would also like to hear your views on the 3+1 regional format among the United States, Cyprus, Israel, and Greece, for which the Administration, unfortunately, has done little to promote over the past two years.

Ms. Spahn, you will take charge of the Peace Corps as you continue to return thousands of volunteers back to the field. It has been two years since the Peace Corps had to make the difficult decision to send all volunteers home due to the pandemic.

I know you have played an important role in this process, ensuring volunteer and host community safety and implementing reforms to adapt to a post-COVID world.

The Peace Corps represents one of the United States' greatest foreign policy and diplomacy tools, helping those in need around the world.

Even as competitors and adversaries try to challenge us in every corner of the globe, the Peace Corps represents the United States to the world who we truly are, a giving and generous nation.

As you know, I introduced the Peace Corps Reauthorization Act with Senator Risch. The bill passed out of our committee by voice vote in July. We need to see it enacted this year.

This bipartisan legislation supports the real-time needs of volunteers as they reenter the field as well as volunteers returning home, which are critical for a well-run Peace Corps.

So I look forward to hearing from you about your vision for the Peace Corps as it meets these challenges and seizes the opportunities as a critical arm of U.S. foreign policy.

Ms. Dyer, as director of the Office to Combat and Monitor Trafficking you will be tackling one of the most heinous crimes in the world, and despite progress in recent years modern day slavery remains prevalent.

Human trafficking remains a horrific reality for tens of millions of people around the world. We need to redouble our effort to prevent trafficking, hold traffickers accountable, and to support victims.

I expect you to be a strong, effective leader at the Office to Combat and Monitor Trafficking. You are exceptionally qualified for this position, given your extensive experience, and as a nominee of both the Bush and Biden administrations, it is clear that your commitment to the issue transcends party lines.

As you know, I was proud to pass out of the committee earlier this year a bipartisan bill with Senator Risch, the International Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act.

I urge my colleagues in the Senate to agree to its swift passage on the floor and I look forward to hearing about how you intend to elevate and advance this important fight.

With that, let me turn to the distinguished ranking member, Senator Risch, for his comments.

Senator RISCH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to the panel for being here today. Certainly, four important appointments.

On Armenia, the U.S. has a valuable role to play in resolving the tenuous relationship between Armenia and Azerbaijan. At the centerpiece of the conflict, of course, is the disputed territories and the need to find a stable solution that protects the rights of Armenians and Azeris living there.

With Russia pulling back in the region there is now a limited opportunity for the U.S. to take a stronger role and to help end the bloodshed.

With regard to Cyprus, our relationship is changing due to Cyprus' progress in cleaning up its financial sector as well as its growing ties with Greece and Israel.

Just a few months ago, the State Department waived the arms embargo that it has had on Cyprus since 1987, which will open a door to closer cooperation and, hopefully, some improvements in areas of mutual interest in the Eastern Mediterranean.

I expect that strong U.S. leadership will continue to advance this progress and closer bilateral relations will open up new opportunities for the United States to work with parties on the island to find a lasting and stable solution for reunification.

I thank Ambassador Fisher for being willing to serve the United States in Cyprus and I look forward to hearing how you will approach these complex issues.

I am glad to finally have a nominee for the important position of Ambassador-at-Large to Monitor and Combat Trafficking. Thus far, I have been disappointed with the Biden administration's communication with Congress on human trafficking and hope that filling this position will grant this important issue the attention that it deserves.

As the chairman noted, he and I worked together on the International Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act, which would reform and modernize the State Department's efforts to combat and monitor human trafficking. We look forward to progress.

I look forward to hearing from you, Ms. Dyer, on your views of how to improve U.S. efforts to combat human trafficking around the globe.

And, finally, after COVID–19 forced a total global evacuation of the Peace Corps, the organization has taken some steps to increase safety measures as well as gradual reentry to countries of service.

Additionally, it is no secret that the Peace Corps has had its share of safety and security concerns prior to this global evacuation. That is why I worked with the chairman on our Peace Corps reauthorization bill to address these challenges and ensure that today's volunteers are equipped with the best training and knowledge to reenter their countries of service.

I want to thank you, Ms. Spahn, for your prior service in the Peace Corps and for the willingness to serve in this capacity. I look forward to hearing how you will approach the ongoing safety and security issues that many volunteers should you be confirmed and I know you have had quite a bit of experience in that direction.

So, Ms. Spahn, we are looking forward to good and great and glorious things from you.

With that, I will turn it back to the chair. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Okay. We will turn to our nominees. Your full statements will be included in the record, without objection. We ask that each of you summarize your statement in about five minutes so that members of the committee can engage with you in a conversation.

We will start with you, Ambassador Fisher, and go down the line, okay?

STATEMENT OF HON. JULIE D. FISHER OF TENNESSEE, A CAREER MEMBER OF THE SENIOR FOREIGN SERVICE, CLASS OF MINISTER–COUNSELOR,NOMINATED TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS

Ms. FISHER. Thank you, sir.

Please allow me just to say a quick word of appreciation to Senator Shaheen for her kind words and for her support. She has shown so much leadership on issues on which I have worked—NATO, Belarus, now Cyprus—and she has truly been a champion for those of us in the State Department. I very much appreciate that.

Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Risch, members of this committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today as President Biden's nominee to be the ambassador to the Republic of Cyprus.

As ambassador designate for Belarus and then subsequently as Special Envoy, it was a privilege for me to work closely with the members and staff of this committee.

If given the opportunity to serve as ambassador to Cyprus, I count on our continued consultation and coordination to advance key priorities in the context of our fundamental commitment to a Europe that is whole, free, and at peace.

These objectives have defined my career and in my leadership roles I have sought to build teams with a clear view of our guiding mission to protect and advance the interests of the American people.

I know firsthand there is no greater responsibility than the safety and security of American citizens and our embassy team. If confirmed, this would be my highest priority.

So, in this context, I am committed to continuing our efforts to locate and return home three Americans still missing since the tragic events of 1974.

This committee knows well that Cyprus sits on a critical seam between the Middle East and Europe. The Republic of Cyprus is a highly valued partner, and our bilateral relationship has deepened significantly in recent years on a range of priorities from strengthening security in the Eastern Med to expanding economic and commercial ties.

The results of this cooperation have been most evident in the Republic of Cyprus' partnership in responding to Russia's brutal, full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Our National Security Strategy highlights Russia's immediate and persistent threat to international peace and stability, and calls for transatlantic unity in countering Russia's threat.

The Republic of Cyprus has had a direct impact in holding the Kremlin to account for its war of choice against Ukraine. As a result of this values-based decision, Cyprus has weathered significant economic disruption and, despite this, continues to take actions that demonstrate its commitment to stand with Ukraine, including welcoming more than 14,000 Ukrainian refugees this year.

I am pleased to see our bilateral cooperation growing in new and tangible ways. In April, we jointly opened the U.S.-funded state-of-

the-art Cyprus Center for Land, Open Seas, and Port Security to strengthen maritime and border security training across the region.

We also signed a science and technology agreement, paving the way for increased scientific collaboration between our nations, and our shared commitment to combat trafficking in persons is yielding meaningful progress.

Cyprus is an increasingly inviting market for American tech companies and American firms are leading the development of offshore hydrocarbon resources around the island.

These investments will help Cyprus become a critical contributor to Europe's energy security, countering both Russia's weaponization of energy and PRC coercive economic influence in the region.

If confirmed, I will work to ensure that American enterprise and American products are what come to mind when Cypriots look for trusted business partners, and specifically with the leadership of this committee Cyprus, Greece, and Israel plus the United States are forging new ground in the 3+1 format to promote regional cooperation on a broad range of pressing issues.

Mr. Chairman, let me say this regarding the division of Cyprus. The United States remains clear that the status quo is unacceptable.

If given the opportunity to serve, I will use the full weight of my office to support Cypriot-led U.N.-facilitated efforts to reunify Cyprus as a bi-zonal bi-communal federation with political equality for all Cypriots.

I will meet with Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots to advance our unwavering commitment to human rights and fundamental freedoms, and seek their feedback as they work to realize the benefits of reaching the comprehensive settlement which has eluded them for decades.

There is just no escaping the unjust costs of division that have fallen on all Cypriots.

In a 2014 visit to Cyprus, then Vice President Biden outlined a vision for a future generation of Cypriots who might grow up without the burden of conflict. This vision can animate new efforts towards a reunified Cyprus, creating meaningful prosperity for all Cypriots and unlocking greater stability in this critical region.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge that I am joined today by my husband, Matthew Fisher. I would not be before you without his support over my 27-year career. He has been my chief adviser on bidding, my chief morale officer on tough days, and chief of dinner procurement on late nights. I have been so very lucky to have him in my corner.

Chairman, members of the committee, thank you again for the opportunity to appear today and I do look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Fisher follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. JULIE D. FISHER

Senator Shaheen, thank you for your kind words and for the support that you have shown to my State colleagues and me over many years. I am deeply grateful for your leadership on the range of issues on which I have worked—from NATO to Belarus and now Cyprus.

Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Risch, members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today as President Biden's nominee to be Ambassador to the Republic of Cyprus.

As Ambassador-designate for Belarus and then subsequently as Special Envoy, it was a privilege for me to work closely with the Members and staff of this committee. If given the opportunity to serve as Ambassador to Cyprus, I count on our continued consultation and coordination to advance key priorities in the context of our fundamental commitment to a Europe that is whole, free, and at peace.

These objectives have defined my career. And in my leadership roles, I've sought to build teams with a clear view of our guiding mission: to protect and advance the interests of the American people.

I know firsthand there is no greater responsibility than the safety and security of American citizens. If confirmed, this would be my highest priority. So, in this context, I am committed to continuing our efforts to locate and return home three Americans still missing since the tragic events of 1974.

This committee knows well that Cyprus sits on a critical seam between the Middle East and Europe. The Republic of Cyprus is a highly valued partner, and our bilateral relationship has deepened significantly in recent years on a range of priorities, from strengthening security in the Eastern Mediterranean to expanding economic and commercial ties.

The results of this cooperation have been most evident in the Republic of Cyprus' partnership in responding to Russia's brutal, full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Our National Security Strategy highlights Russia's immediate and persistent threat to international peace and stability and calls for transatlantic unity in countering Russia's threat. The Republic of Cyprus has had a direct impact in holding the Kremlin to account for its war of choice against Ukraine. As a result of this values-based decision, Cyprus has weathered significant economic disruption and despite this, continues to take actions that demonstrate its commitment to stand with Ukraine, including welcoming more than 14,000 Ukrainian refugees this year.

I am pleased to see our bilateral cooperation growing in new and tangible ways. In April, we jointly opened the U.S.-funded, state-of-the-art Cyprus Center for Land, Open-seas, and Port Security to strengthen maritime and border security training across the region. We also signed a Science and Technology Agreement, paving the way for increased scientific collaboration between our nations. And our shared commitment to combat trafficking in persons is yielding meaningful progress.

Cyprus is an increasingly inviting market for American tech companies, and American firms are leading the development of offshore hydrocarbon resources around the island. These investments will help Cyprus become a critical contributor to Europe's energy security, countering both Russia's weaponization of energy and PRC influence in the region. If confirmed, I will work to ensure that American enterprise and American products are what come to mind when Cypriots look for trusted business partners.

Specifically, with leadership from this committee, Cyprus, Greece, and Israel plus the United States are forging new ground in the "3+1" format to promote regional cooperation on a broad range of pressing issues.

Let me say this regarding the division of Cyprus: the United States remains clear: the status quo is unacceptable. If given the opportunity to serve, I will use the full weight of my office to support Cypriot-led, U.N.-facilitated efforts to reunify Cyprus as a bizonal, bicommunal federation with political equality for all Cypriots. I will meet with Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots to advance our unwavering commitment to human rights and fundamental freedoms and seek their feedback as they work to realize the benefits of reaching the comprehensive settlement which has eluded them for decades. There is no escaping the unjust costs of division that have fallen on all Cypriots.

In a 2014 visit to Cyprus, then-Vice President Biden outlined a vision for a future generation of Cypriots who might grow up without the burden of conflict. This vision can animate new efforts towards a reunified Cyprus, creating meaningful prosperity for all Cypriots and unlocking greater stability in this critical region.

Finally, I'd like to acknowledge that I am joined today by my husband, Matthew Fisher. I would not be before you without his support over my 27-year career. He has been my chief advisor on bidding, my chief morale officer on tough days, and chief of dinner procurement on late nights. I have been so very lucky to have him in my corner.

Chairman, Ranking Member, and members of the committee, thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you today. I welcome your questions.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you for your testimony. I will just say out of all of those titles you gave your husband the dinner one is very important.

[Laughter.]

The CHAIRMAN. So as Senator Merkley has a request to speak to Ms. Spahn's nomination because he has to leave so I have agreed to do that.

Senator Merkley?

Senator MERKLEY. I am going to keep this extremely brief.

First, to all four of you, thank you very much for your service to international diplomacy. It is so important that we get you into these key positions with various challenges we have in the world.

I, unfortunately, do have a scheduling conflict and the hearing went a little longer than we anticipated. I am going to have to leave before the rest of the testimony and will not be able to ask questions, but I did want to say how pleased I am and how much I appreciate the ranking member and the chairman scheduling the hearing for the—our Peace Corps nominee, Carol Spahn.

I believe in the beautiful work of the Peace Corps around the world, what the volunteers do in so many ways to assist some of the most challenging places. It is very challenging work.

Having spent some time working in villages in different parts of the world I identify with it, though I was not a Peace Corps member, and this is an exciting time with COVID declining and the opportunity to send volunteers back into many parts of the world, and I know that one has to monitor the violence and the conflict to decide when and where one can reestablish nominees.

I am very pleased to see the first delegation having gone to Vietnam and I just want to thank you specifically, Ms. Spahn, for your—bringing your Peace Corps experience to bear. I hope that all goes smoothly and we get you on the job very quickly.

Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator Merkley.

Ms. Kvien?

STATEMENT OF KRISTINA A. KVIEN OF CALIFORNIA, A CAREER MEMBER OF THE SENIOR FOREIGN SERVICE, CLASS OF MINISTER–COUNSELOR, NOMINATED TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA

Ms. KVIEN. Thank you, Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Risch, and distinguished members of the committee for the opportunity to appear before you today.

I am honored to be President Biden's nominee for the position of Ambassador to the Republic of Armenia and I am grateful for the trust and confidence the President and Secretary Blinken have placed in me.

If confirmed, I commit to working closely with this committee and all members of Congress to advance U.S. interests in Armenia.

I am a career Foreign Service officer with 30 years of experience. Most of my career has focused on Europe, guided by my conviction that a Europe whole, free, and at peace is in the best interests of the United States.

Our successes in Europe since the breakup of the Soviet Union have created more stable and capable allies and partners, opened markets for U.S. goods and, ultimately, protected and defended the people of the United States.

I am proud to have played a role in advancing U.S. strategic interests in Europe for over five administrations. I appreciate the leadership of the members of this committee and your work across Europe to resolve conflicts and support reforms in young democracies.

I know firsthand that bipartisan support at home puts the United States in the strongest position to advance U.S. interests abroad.

My recent diplomatic experience in Ukraine has only reinforced for me the importance of supporting the right of every country to choose its own path, forge its own alliances, and defend its own economic and political interests in line with the desires and aspirations of its people.

If confirmed, I pledge to work with you to strengthen Armenia's democracy, security, and economy or, in a word, its sovereignty.

If confirmed, I would prioritize the safety and security of American citizens and our talented embassy team and their families. I would also continue the efforts of my distinguished predecessor, Ambassador Lynne Tracy, to support Armenia's anti-corruption initiatives, civil society, independent media, business development, regional integration, and efforts to counter malign influence.

I would work with Armenians to help foster an impartial independent judiciary and to safeguard respect for freedom of expression.

In doing so, I would focus on ensuring that U.S. taxpayer money is spent effectively in support of U.S. goals and objectives.

The peaceful settlement of the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict is essential to a more secure and prosperous future for Armenia and for the South Caucasus.

The United States is working through bilateral and multilateral channels to help the sides achieve a peaceful, lasting negotiated settlement of the conflict based on the principles of the U.N. Charter and the Helsinki Final Act.

If confirmed, I will support the Administration's commitment to achieving this goal.

I grew up in Fresno, California, home to one of the largest Armenian diaspora communities in the United States. My teachers and friends of Armenian heritage spoke of the Ottoman-era genocide that forced many of their families to seek new homes in America.

As President Biden said on Armenian Remembrance Day this year, "As we mourn the Meds Yeghern, let us redouble our efforts towards healing and building the better, more peaceful world that we wish for our children."

If confirmed, I commit to doing everything in my power to remember the victims of the Armenian genocide and support a peaceful future for Armenia. To this end, I will do all I can to encourage ongoing normalization discussions between Armenia and Turkey, which have made some step forward.

I want to conclude by thanking those who have made it possible for me to be here today. I am joined by my husband, Tom White,

who has been my partner through 13 moves and eight countries, and my daughter, Hanna White, who is applying what she learned in her overseas experiences as a high school teacher here in the District of Columbia.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and members of the committee, thank you again for this opportunity to appear before you today. I welcome your questions.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Kvien follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF KRISTINA A. KVIEN

Thank you, Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Risch—and distinguished members of this committee—for the opportunity to appear before you today. I am honored to be President Biden's nominee for the position of Ambassador to the Republic of Armenia and I am grateful for the trust and confidence the President and Secretary Blinken have placed in me. If confirmed, I commit to working closely with this Committee, and all Members of Congress, to advance U.S. interests in Armenia.

I am a career Foreign Service officer with 30 years of experience. Most of my career has focused on Europe, guided by my conviction that a Europe whole, free, and at peace, is in the best interests of the United States. Our successes in Europe since the breakup of the Soviet Union have created more stable and capable allies and partners, opened markets for U.S. goods, and ultimately protected and defended the people of the United States. I am proud to have played a role in advancing U.S. strategic interests in Europe over five U.S. administrations.

I appreciate the leadership of the members of this committee and your work across Europe to resolve conflicts and support reforms in young democracies. I know first-hand that bipartisan support at home puts the United States in the strongest position to advance U.S. interests abroad. My recent diplomatic experience in Ukraine has only reinforced for me the importance of supporting the right of every country to choose its own path, forge its own alliances, and defend its own economic and political interests in line with the desires and aspirations of its people. If confirmed, I pledge to work with you to strengthen Armenia's democracy, security, and economy—in a word, its sovereignty.

If confirmed, I would prioritize the safety and security of American citizens and our talented Embassy team and their families. I would also continue the efforts of my distinguished predecessor, Ambassador Lynne Tracy, to support Armenia's anti-corruption initiatives, civil society, independent media, business development, regional integration, and efforts to counter malign influence. I would work with Armenians to help foster an impartial, independent judiciary and to safeguard respect for freedom of expression. In doing so, I would focus on ensuring that U.S. taxpayer money is spent effectively in support of U.S. goals and objectives.

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I grew up in Fresno, California, home to one of the largest Armenian diaspora communities in the United States. My teachers and friends of Armenian heritage spoke of the Ottoman-era genocide that forced many of their families to seek new homes in America. As President Biden said on Armenian Remembrance Day this year—"as we mourn the Meds Yeghern, let us redouble our efforts toward healing, and building the better, more peaceful world that we wish for our children." If confirmed, I commit to doing everything in my power to remember the victims of the Armenian genocide and support a peaceful future for Armenia. To this end, I will do all I can to encourage ongoing normalization discussions between Armenia and Turkey, which have made some steps forward.

I want to conclude by thanking those who have made it possible for me to be here today. I am joined by my husband Tom White, who has been my partner through 13 moves and eight countries, and my daughter, Hanna White, who is applying what she learned in her overseas experiences as a high school teacher here in the District of Columbia.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and members of the committee, thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you today. I welcome your questions.

The CHAIRMAN. Okay. Thank you.

Ms. Spahn?

STATEMENT OF CAROL SPAHN OF MARYLAND, NOMINATED TO BE DIRECTOR OF THE PEACE CORPS

Ms. SPAHN. Thank you, Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Risch, and distinguished members of the committee. I would also like to thank you for your kind words and support of Peace Corps and Peace Corps reauthorization legislation, and a special note of thanks to Senators Van Hollen and Merkley for their very kind remarks and support of Peace Corps.

I would also like to thank my husband, Andy, who is here with me today, my daughters, Emily and Casey, my parents, Ralph and Janet, my very large, extended family for their unwavering love and support, and to my Peace Corps family, including the staff, volunteers, host families, and counterparts for the heart and soul with which they carry out our mission every day.

I am deeply honored and humbled to appear before you today as President Biden's nominee for Director of the Peace Corps at this very unique point in the agency's history.

Having started my career in the public sector, I am also incredibly grateful for the opportunity I had to serve as a small business development volunteer along with my husband, Andy, in Romania shortly after the fall of communism.

As is true for many volunteers, my Peace Corps service challenged my perceptions, expanded my worldview, and fundamentally transformed my life. Living and working alongside Romanians during their pivotal transition to democracy gave me a deep appreciation for the power of human connection and the importance of engaging across difference with intention, humility, and respect.

I carried this understanding with me as I took on various leadership roles at nonprofit organizations dedicated to supporting underserved communities around the world.

In 2014, I returned to the Peace Corps, first serving as the Country Director in Malawi for five years, then as the Chief of Operations for the Africa region and Chief Executive Officer, and now as an expert consultant. It has been an incredible journey.

But my service journey is not unique. We see time and again Peace Corps service extends well beyond a two-year commitment. It fosters a lifetime of global connection and national service.

In the presence of volunteers in the furthest reaches of other countries speaking foreign languages and honoring cultures has an impact that goes far beyond the individual contributions of any one volunteer.

I have had the distinct privilege of hearing from foreign ambassadors, ministers, and local leaders who tell me what a powerful signal of friendship it is to see Americans living in rural communities and working side by side with the people of their country, and American ambassadors regularly attest that the Peace Corps is the most cost-effective grassroots diplomacy that the United States has to offer.

The Peace Corps' mission of world peace and friendship is more important now than ever. Not only are we just beginning to recover from an unprecedented global pandemic, but we are also reeling

from the impacts of a global food crisis, climate change, and growing political and social division.

As the world confronts these compounding crises, demand for the Peace Corps has grown, both from the countries we evacuated in 2020 as well as a growing list of countries requesting Peace Corps' support today.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and members of the committee, if confirmed as Director, my first priority is to safely return Peace Corps volunteers to service abroad and I will do so in a way that helps us to maintain the flexibility necessary to navigate uncertainty and respond effectively to evolving needs.

Second, if confirmed, I will ensure that the Peace Corps remains a strong partner to communities and countries that request our support. This includes building on our long commitment to localization and people-centered development while modernizing and expanding service opportunities so that more Americans have the opportunity to serve.

Third, if confirmed, I will prioritize youth engagement. Today, there are 1.8 billion people between the ages of 10 and 24, the largest generation of youth in history, many of whom live in developing countries.

This is not a problem to be solved. It is an opportunity to be met. In partnership, we will contribute to the next generation of global leaders and change makers, a critical investment for a secure, sustainable, and prosperous future.

I would also like to, again, sincerely thank the committee, to thank you, Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member, for your leadership on the Peace Corps Reauthorization Act. This legislation offers significant changes that will help us to further strengthen our ability to represent America abroad and to bring essential skills and understanding back to the United States.

Thank you again for your support of the Peace Corps and for the opportunity to appear before you today. I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Spahn follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF CAROL A. SPAHN

Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Risch, and distinguished members of the committee, I am honored to appear today as President Biden's nominee to serve as Director of the Peace Corps during this unique moment in our agency's history.

My journey here would not be possible without my family. I want to thank my husband, Andy; my daughters, Emily and Casey; my parents, Ralph and Janet; and my entire extended family for their unwavering love and support.

I am incredibly grateful for the opportunity I had to serve as a Peace Corps volunteer with my husband in Romania shortly after the fall of communism. As is true for many volunteers, Peace Corps service challenged my perceptions, expanded my worldview, and fundamentally transformed my life. Living and working alongside Romanians during their pivotal transition to democracy gave me a deep appreciation for the importance of engaging across difference with intention, humility, and respect.

Peace Corps service also altered my career path and led to leadership roles at organizations dedicated to supporting underserved communities around the world. In 2014, I returned to the Peace Corps, first serving as the Country Director in Malawi, then as the Chief of Operations for the Africa Region, and until last week, as the Chief Executive Officer.

My journey is not unique. We see time and again that Peace Corps service extends well beyond a two-year commitment. It fosters a lifetime of global connection and national service. There are thousands of returned Peace Corps volunteers con-

tinuing to serve right here at home—in the foreign and civil service, non-profit, healthcare, education, and many more fields. The skills developed in the Peace Corps enable returned volunteers to contribute to America long after service overseas concludes.

And, the presence of volunteers in the farthest reaches of countries, speaking local languages, and honoring local cultures has an impact that goes far beyond the individual contributions of any one volunteer. Foreign Ambassadors tell me what a powerful signal of friendship it is to see Americans in rural communities, working in close partnership with host country citizens, and American Ambassadors regularly attest that the Peace Corps is the most cost-effective, grassroots diplomacy the United States has.

The Peace Corps' mission of promoting world peace and friendship is critical as we recover from the devastating effects of COVID–19. The pandemic has fundamentally changed our world and set back development progress. Its impact has been compounded by climate change, political and social division, and the global food crisis. At the same time, the pandemic has shown us how deeply connected we are. Demand for the Peace Corps remains strong, both from the countries we evacuated from in 2020 as well as from a growing list of countries requesting volunteers.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and members of the committee, if confirmed as Director, my first priority is returning Peace Corps volunteers to service abroad, while maintaining the flexibility necessary to navigate uncertainty and respond effectively to countries' evolving needs. Over the past two years, we have strengthened our systems for volunteer safety and security, including for sexual assault prevention and response; expanded medical services, including mental health support; bolstered our technology infrastructure; and invested in developing a volunteer corps and staff that represents the full diversity of America.

Second, if confirmed, I will ensure that the Peace Corps remains a strong partner around the world, retaining the critical components of our approach that drive long-term impact while modernizing and expanding service opportunities for the future. We will share our sixty-one years of expertise in localization and people-centered development and will leverage the robust network of returned volunteers, staff and host communities to build bridges and catalyze change both here and abroad.

Third, if confirmed, I will prioritize youth engagement. Today, there are 1.8 billion young people between the ages of 10 and 24, the largest generation in history, approximately 90 percent of whom live in developing countries. This is not a problem to be solved; it is an opportunity to be met. Peace Corps volunteers are uniquely suited to work alongside youth on a range of development goals, from food security and disease prevention to gender equity and economic growth. Together, we will contribute to the development of the next generation of global leaders, a critical investment for a secure, sustainable, and prosperous future.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and members of the committee, thank you for your leadership on the Peace Corps Reauthorization Act. This legislation will make a number of significant changes that will further strengthen the ability of the Peace Corps and its volunteers to represent America abroad and to bring those skills back to the United States.

Thank you for your support of the Peace Corps, and for the opportunity to appear before you today. I look forward to your questions.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Ms. Dyer?

STATEMENT OF CYNTHIA DYER OF VIRGINIA, NOMINATED TO BE DIRECTOR OF THE OFFICE TO MONITOR AND COMBAT TRAFFICKING, WITH THE RANK OF AMBASSADOR-AT-LARGE

Ms. DYER. Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Risch, distinguished senators, thank you for today's hearing to consider my nomination to be the U.S. Ambassador-at-Large to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons.

I am honored by President Biden's nomination and the support of Secretary Blinken to lead the United States' global efforts to combat human trafficking.

I want to thank my family, particularly my husband, Jason Ankele, whose support and sacrifice has allowed me to pursue a career which is also a passion. I am also thankful for my two chil-

dren, Aubrey Scott and Evie Claire Ankele, who steadfastly provide me with enough joy and laughter to counter the sometimes heartbreaking challenges that are endemic to this work. And I am grateful for my late mother, Peggy Oswald, who would be so proud to see me sitting here today.

I also want to recognize the team in the department's Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons who, thanks to sustained support from Congress, has been leading this cause for more than 20 years.

If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with this committee and across the U.S. Congress to continue advancing this important work.

I began my career more than 25 years ago as a prosecutor in the family violence unit in Dallas, Texas. For 13 years, I prosecuted cases at all levels, helping to bring justice to victims, including survivors of human trafficking, by holding offenders accountable.

When I was later appointed in 2007 as director of the Department of Justice's Office on Violence Against Women, I led federal efforts to further strengthen our nation's capacity to address violence against women.

And then, at Vital Voices Global Partnership, I collaborated with local governments and civil society organizations around the world to strengthen their capacities to respond to crimes and violence against women, including human trafficking.

Throughout my work across the local, federal, and international levels, I have learned that successfully combating these crimes requires a sustained and comprehensive approach.

In the early '90s when I first began prosecuting cases human trafficking was not recognized as a crime. We have come a long way since then, due in large part to the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 and the comprehensive framework it established to recognize human trafficking as a crime, hold traffickers accountable, and provide critical services to victims and survivors.

If confirmed, I will prioritize maintaining the balanced and comprehensive approach the TIP office has carefully developed, focusing on the full spectrum of human trafficking and supporting efforts to prevent and respond to the crime by upholding international legal standards, addressing vulnerabilities that traffickers target, and integrating an equity-based approach throughout the TIP office's work.

The role that survivors or those with lived experience of human trafficking can play in developing and informing anti-trafficking efforts is critical and it will be among my highest priorities, if confirmed, to elevate their role and integrate their input even further.

We need survivors at the table with us developing victim-centered and trauma-informed solutions to combat sex trafficking and forced labor.

If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with the U.S. Advisory Council on Human Trafficking and the President's Interagency Task Force to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons to ensure that we bring the full resources of the U.S. federal government to bear in the fight against human trafficking.

The United States' global leadership on this issue is reflected nowhere clearer than the annual Trafficking in Persons Report, the

world's most comprehensive resource on governmental anti-trafficking efforts and the U.S. Government's principal diplomatic tool to guide relations with foreign governments on human trafficking.

If confirmed, I will strive to ensure the report remains objective and accurate and that tier rankings are based solely on a country's efforts to combat trafficking.

The TIP office's targeted foreign assistance to build the capacity of governments and civil society and protect victims is integral to the department's holistic anti-trafficking approach.

If confirmed, I will leverage the resources that Congress has entrusted to the TIP office to advance programming that is informed by the TIP Report and respond to emerging threats and opportunities.

In the context of Russia's war on Ukraine, we have an opportunity and obligation to proactively address the threat of human trafficking by applying foreign assistance resources and urging governments to take steps to protect Ukrainian and third country nationals fleeing the war.

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, successfully combating human trafficking requires that we confront this crime aggressively.

If confirmed, I will draw upon the many tools available at the TIP office—diplomacy, foreign assistance, robust interagency coordination—to prevent this crime from taking place, protect the victims, and prosecute the traffickers.

Thank you for considering my nomination. I welcome your questions.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Dyer follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF CYNTHIA DYER

Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Risch, distinguished Senators, thank you for today's hearing to consider my nomination to be the U.S. Ambassador-at-Large to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons. I am honored by President Biden's nomination and the support of Secretary Blinken to lead the United States' global efforts to combat human trafficking.

I want to thank my family, particularly my husband Jason Ankele, whose support and sacrifice has allowed me to pursue a career which is also my passion. I am also thankful for my children Aubrey Scott and Evie Claire Ankele who steadfastly provide me with enough joy and laughter to counter the sometimes heart-breaking challenges that are endemic to this work. And I am grateful for my late mother Peggy Oswald who would be so proud to see me sitting here today.

I also want to recognize the team in the Department's Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons who, thanks to sustained support from Congress, has been leading this cause for more than 20 years. If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with this Committee and across the U.S. Congress to continue advancing this important work.

I began my career more than 25 years ago as a prosecutor in the Family Violence Unit in Dallas, Texas. For 13 years I prosecuted cases at all levels, helping to bring justice to victims, including survivors of human trafficking, by holding offenders accountable. When I was later appointed in 2007 as Director of the Department of Justice's Office on Violence Against Women, I led federal efforts to further strengthen our nation's capacity to address violence against women. And then, at Vital Voices Global Partnership, I collaborated with local governments and civil society organizations around the world to strengthen their capacities to respond to crimes and violence against women, including human trafficking. Throughout my work across the local, federal, and international levels, I have learned that successfully combating these crimes requires a sustained and comprehensive approach.

In the early nineties when I first began prosecuting cases, human trafficking was not recognized as a crime. We have come a long way since then, due in large part to the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 and the comprehensive framework

it established to recognize human trafficking as a crime, hold traffickers accountable, and provide critical services to victims and survivors.

If confirmed, I will prioritize maintaining the balanced and comprehensive approach the TIP Office has carefully developed, focusing on the full spectrum of human trafficking and supporting efforts to prevent and respond to the crime by upholding international legal standards, addressing vulnerabilities that traffickers target, and integrating an equity-based approach throughout the TIP Office's work.

The role that survivors, or those with lived experience of human trafficking, can play in developing and informing anti-trafficking efforts is critical and it will be among my highest priorities, if confirmed, to elevate their role and integrate their input even further. We need survivors at the table with us, developing victim-centered and trauma-informed solutions to combat sex trafficking and forced labor. If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with the U.S. Advisory Council on Human Trafficking and the President's Interagency Task Force to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons to ensure that we continue to integrate survivor expertise into anti-trafficking work and bring the full resources of the U.S. federal government to bear in the fight against human trafficking.

The United States' global leadership on this issue is reflected nowhere clearer than the annual Trafficking in Persons Report, the world's most comprehensive resource on governmental anti-trafficking efforts and the U.S. Government's principal diplomatic tool to guide relations with foreign governments on human trafficking. If confirmed, I will strive to ensure the Report remains objective and accurate, and that tier rankings are based solely on a country's efforts to combat trafficking.

The TIP Office's targeted foreign assistance to build the capacity of governments and civil society and protect victims is integral to the Department's holistic anti-trafficking approach. If confirmed, I will leverage the resources that Congress has entrusted to the TIP Office to advance programming that is informed by the TIP Report and respond to emerging threats and opportunities. In the context of Russia's war on Ukraine, we have an opportunity and obligation to proactively address the threat of human trafficking by applying foreign assistance resources and urging governments to take steps to protect Ukrainian and third country nationals fleeing the war.

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, successfully combating human trafficking requires that we confront this crime aggressively. If confirmed, I will draw upon the many tools available to the TIP Office—diplomacy, foreign assistance, robust interagency coordination mechanisms, and survivors' expertise—to prevent this crime from taking place, protect the victims, and prosecute the traffickers.

Thank you for considering my nomination. I welcome your questions.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you all for your testimony.

Before we start a round of five minutes of questions, I have questions that are on behalf of the committee as a whole and I simply need a yes or no answer to—by each of you to the following questions.

These are questions that speak to the importance that this committee places on responsiveness by all officials in the executive branch within its purview.

So the first question is do you agree to appear before this committee and make officials from your office available to the committee and designated staff when invited?

[All witnesses answer in the affirmative.]

The CHAIRMAN. Do you commit to keep this committee fully and currently informed about the activities under your purview?

[All witnesses answer in the affirmative.]

The CHAIRMAN. Do you commit to engaging in meaningful consultation while policies are being developed, not just providing notification after the fact?

[All witnesses answer in the affirmative.]

The CHAIRMAN. And, lastly, do you commit to promptly respond to requests for briefings and information requested by the committee and its designated staff?

[All witnesses answer in the affirmative.]

The CHAIRMAN. All right.

So, for the record, since not everybody had their microphone on, let me just say that all of the nominees before the committee responded yes to each and every one of the questions.

So we will start a series of five-minute rounds. Do not take the lack of members here as any negative fact that they are not concerned about your nominations or where you are headed. We have a lot of things going on. So there are different committees.

Let me start with you, Ms. Fisher.

Clearly, one of the challenges with Cyprus is that there has been an invasion and occupation that has lasted over four decades and that continues to be a challenge as we seek the reunification of the island under one nation bi-zonal bi-communal federation.

In our efforts to move towards that direction, I have—believe that President Anastasiades has actually leaned more forward than any other Cypriot president as it relates to making I will not say concessions but to trying to find a way forward to do so, and one of the things that frustrates me about the State Department is they call on all sides.

But when one side is the aggressor as, in my view, Azerbaijan is with Armenia, or in one case as in the case of Cyprus where one side is making concessions and the other is not, it is a little frustrating to be called on all sides when, in fact, when there is clarity, clarity should be ultimately called now.

So how do you view—especially with President Erdogan seeking to more aggressively take over Varosha, which is in violation of U.N. Security Council resolutions, how do you see your role in pushing back on that reality as the United States Ambassador to Cyprus?

Ms. FISHER. Mr. Chairman, thank you, and I want to start by recognizing your deep experience on these questions and I, truly, appear before you today with a tremendous amount of humility about how much experience exists on this committee on these issues and how much experience my predecessors—if I were to be confirmed, how many incredibly capable diplomats have been at work on this case over decades.

I do not underestimate how difficult the challenges are in Cyprus. I do think it is a place where there is tremendous opportunity if we can focus our energies on those on the island, those who are paying the highest price for the divisions currently and those who will benefit the most from that comprehensive settlement agreement should it be reached.

Mr. Chairman, what I hope to bring to this is the ability to create space and to bring a sense of urgency to this process. We talk about this, and I do not mean to cite it as if I am some robot reciting lines that must be said.

But the key part of these talks is that they are Cypriot led and U.N. facilitated and so, first and foremost, that is where I would look. That is where I will look to find the way forward. I think timing is absolutely critical on these issues and my experience is that we have no time to waste.

The lesson that I have learned directly in the last 15 years, being in Georgia during the Russian invasion, being on the margins of this conflict as I worked from Lithuania, and as Belarus was sup-

porting Russia's aggression against Ukraine, what I know is that seams in Europe create opportunities for our adversaries, particularly seams within the transatlantic family. And so I intend to bring a sense of urgency to this effort.

The CHAIRMAN. I appreciate that. A sense of urgency is important because this conflict has lasted way too long, and I agree with you. I have been doing this 30 years.

If Turkish and Greek Cypriots were allowed to engage with each other there would be a solution. The problem is that Ankara puts their thumb on the scale and does not allow Turkish Cypriots to find their own way, which ultimately means that they decide, at the end of the day.

And so these are some of the things that I think we need to consider as we are trying to create a sense of urgency to a resolution.

Let me ask you—I am a strong proponent, as is generated by legislation that I passed and signed into law, on the East Med, the cooperation between Cyprus, Greece, and Israel as part of the 3+1 format.

We are looking forward to the first meeting of the 3+1 inter-parliamentary group to discuss energy cooperation as well as other important issues with our allies and partners in the region.

But I have been disappointed that there has not been more support for the format from the Administration. Now, that is beyond your pay grade so I am not holding you responsible for that.

But I am just saying that I hope that the next ambassador to Cyprus is an advocate within the interagency process to say we got a tremendous opportunity here.

I mean, what opportunities do you see for us to work with Cyprus and our partners in the Eastern Mediterranean to bolster European energy security, to create a bigger ally as it relates to other security, not energy security?

I give credit to the Cypriots that they stopped the Russian ships from ports of call before the invasion—before the invasion—which is incredibly important.

So what do you see as some of those opportunities?

Ms. FISHER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I find that these kinds of formats, when we find that they work, when we find meaningful discussions in them that, truly, we have the opportunity to expand those agendas significantly.

You have cited the energy issues as sort of—and some of the Eastern Med security as central questions for the 3+1 as it is getting started.

My experience has been when we find a format where there is so much to share and so much to learn amongst a group of like-minded partners that, truly, we can expand this in a multitude of directions.

I am a—I have found these kinds of formats incredibly meaningful to building bilateral relationships. You can count on my support for this.

I would also say, Mr. Chairman, that the inter-parliamentary efforts—again, I will lean on my most recent experience—that the inter-parliamentary efforts to counter authoritarians in Russia and Belarus, the efforts of you and your counterparts and other parliaments in Europe are incredibly meaningful. They are quick, they

are responsive to situations, and if you will allow me, it is an issue on which I would very much welcome the opportunity to continue to work with you and your team.

The CHAIRMAN. All right. Thank you.

I have many other questions for the panel but I will turn to Senator Van Hollen now.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Congratulations, again, to all of you on your nominations and, Ms. Kvien, if I could start with you.

We had—as you know, our current nominee to be Ambassador to Russia has just formally been or is currently our Ambassador to Armenia and I just want to underscore some of the comments that Chairman Menendez made at that time, and I am not even going to ask a question of you at this point in time on this topic.

But I do think that in order to be a credible party to any kind of negotiations we have to call out aggression when we see it, and it was very well documented in September by independent press sources that Azerbaijan launched attacks and also engaged in different kinds of atrocities.

And we had a panel of representatives from the State Department a couple weeks ago, I think, Mr. Chairman, and some of us pressed on this very fundamental factual question, has the United States made a determination about who was the aggressor and have we made it clear that we agree with all the independent analyses that it was Azerbaijan, and we could not get a response.

I understand the importance of being a mediator. But in order to be a credible mediator, in my view, you have got to at least begin with the facts and be willing to publicly state them.

So you will be heading off to a very important country in a very conflicted part of the world, and I hope you will be willing to call out the facts as you see them.

Ambassador Fisher, great to see you and congratulations again, and thank you for bringing the report I drafted as a staff member back in, I think, 1988 entitled—I think it was "New Opportunities for U.S. Policy in the Eastern Mediterranean."

Some things do not change. I still think there are opportunities but I think opportunities, again, will only make themselves happen and even then difficultly if we are willing to put pressure on different parties here.

And I think you have followed probably very closely statements that Erdogan has made and actions he has taken. A little over a year ago he went to Cyprus. He talked about redeveloping Varosha, which, as you know, is a violation of various U.N. Security Council resolutions. And he was very brazen about how he said he did not care what others said, and he will not care as long as no action is taken.

And so Senator Menendez and I actually drafted a letter at the time urging the Biden administration to work with our EU partners to make it clear in advance that those kind of actions will be met by some form of sanctions, that there is some penalty, some price, to be paid.

And if there is not someone like Erdogan will keep on doing what he is doing. He may do it anyway. But he will, certainly, do it if there is no price to be paid.

So as you head off on this assignment, if confirmed, and I expect you will, can you just talk a little bit about your role in the interagency process? Because whether it is Armenia and related to Azerbaijan and other issues in the region or whether it is Cyprus, Turkey, Greece, Eastern Med, you are there.

We have a very good bilateral relationship now with the Republic of Cyprus and, obviously, your first assignment is to make sure we have strong bilateral relations with the Republic of Cyprus.

But beyond that, some of these bigger issues that I know you want to try to challenge—you will get the Nobel Peace Prize if you do—but, seriously, you—on some of these issues we have got to be willing to push and that means you are going to have to be a voice in the interagency process to push the Administration.

So I just—I want to know if that is something you have done previously and whether that is something you are committed to doing in this case.

Ms. FISHER. Thank you. Thank you, Senator Van Hollen.

And the report is—it, truly, is a wonderful reminder, and I am going to keep it with me. I might ask you to sign it before I leave because it really is a reminder about how many times we have seen opportunity only to be disappointed and how many people have wanted to help bring about that comprehensive settlement and have worked so hard—how many Americans have worked in support of that over decades.

And so I was—it really was actually a wonderful find and I appreciate it. Thank you.

Let me say, and I will—when it comes to the interagency process this is a particular skill set that I believe every nominee the State Department sends to you sits here with scars and scar tissue from that process. It has often been compared to a rugby scrum. I am not sure if that is sufficiently violent.

But it is—a big part of our job is to be prepared to make the case and I think every American ambassador, every chief of mission, is committed to giving the best possible advice to the interagency that they possibly can and that means, in many cases, long nights due to time changes and time zones and these kinds of questions.

I am absolutely committed to ensuring that the interagency has the full picture of what is happening in Cyprus just as I am committed to working with EU colleagues and others to ensure that there are consequences to actions.

And I hope that from my record, particularly in my most recent position as Special Envoy to Belarus, that the committee can have confidence that I will not shy away from difficult issues, particularly when they involve international law, particularly when they involve human rights and fundamental freedoms—that these are of paramount importance.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. I appreciate that, and President Biden at one point sat right there where Chairman Menendez is and I recall him many times talking about justice on Cyprus and needing to push harder.

I think if you can be a strong voice in the interagency process so it can reach the President's ears that you will have a willing partner in the President.

Mr. Chairman, can I ask one question of the nominee?

Ms. Spahn, congratulations again, and if you could just give us an update, and I apologize if you already did it. I mean, obviously, during COVID we had to bring everybody home—just about everybody, if not everybody—and I mentioned in my remarks on your behalf that you had helped deploy many of those here at home to fight COVID.

Where are we now in returning the Peace Corps personnel to countries around the world?

Ms. SPAHN. Thank you for that question. It has been a journey. We did evacuate all volunteers—almost 7,000 volunteers in eight days amidst the closing of borders and cancellation of flights, which was a real testament to the relationships that Peace Corps has on the ground and our ability to move quickly in times of emergency.

We currently have volunteers in 45 countries. We are inviting volunteers back to 56 countries and we have around 900 volunteers in the field right now. We are building up gradually and very intentionally as we test our safety and security protocols both for the volunteers and for the communities that they serve.

This is an evolving picture as we move from pandemic to endemic here in the United States. The picture is very different in every country around the world. So we have very strong systems in place to monitor those conditions.

I was just in the Philippines where they just lifted the mask mandate outdoors. So our teams there have been supporting COVID vaccination efforts and moves towards normalcy. But we are very aware that different countries have different health care systems and different abilities to respond should there be another wave that comes along.

So, I have tremendous confidence in the protocols that we have put in place and we will begin deploying more rapidly after those first groups go back.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Great. I am looking forward to that. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Let me return to Ms. Fisher—Ambassador Fisher—just on a couple of things.

One is I was pleased to see the Department of State lift defense trade restrictions on the Republic of Cyprus in accordance with the Eastern Mediterranean Security and Partnership Act that Senator Rubio and I passed.

I am also proud to see that after my recommendation the New Jersey National Guard has been selected as a new State partner for the Republic of Cyprus.

Can I get your commitment to build on this progress to further strengthen the security partnership between the United States and Cyprus?

Ms. FISHER. Mr. Chairman, absolutely.

The CHAIRMAN. Both Senator Van Hollen and I have mentioned Varosha. Turkish activity in occupied Varosha including the opening of beaches violates U.N. Security Council Resolutions 550 and 789. It is unacceptable.

This is an example of a unilateral action that I was referring to, that when you have a unilateral action you cannot tell both sides

to, ultimately, be better when only one side that has occupied Varosha is violating U.N. Security Council resolutions. It threatens the ability to achieve the goal of a bi-zonal bi-communal federation.

If confirmed, can I get your commitment to push back against Turkish violations of U.N. Security Council resolutions regarding Varosha?

Ms. FISHER. Yes, sir. Yes, sir.

The CHAIRMAN. I am pleased to see the U.N. extended the U.N. peacekeeping force in Cyprus through January of 2023. I do not know if you have ever visited Cyprus or not.

But if you have not, when you go you will see the—what we call the Green Line, the dividing line between the occupied part of Cyprus and the Republic of Cyprus. It is a rather impressive—impressive not in the positive sense, in the consequential sense.

And Turkey's continued occupation and unauthorized activities in what is called the buffer zone, the zone between the areas where the Green Line is, is a threat to peace in the area.

I hope we—I have spoken to our U.N. ambassador and—Linda Thomas-Greenfield. Appreciate that she got this extended to 2023. These are short-term extensions. They do not really solve the ultimate problem.

But will you commit to pushing for an extension of the U.N. peacekeeping force as long as we have this division at the Green Line?

Ms. FISHER. Mr. Chairman, this peacekeeping force is absolutely playing an essential role—a stabilizing role. So yes, sir, you have my commitment.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Ms. Kvien, since Azerbaijan's attack in Armenia in September we have seen reports of Azerbaijani forces shooting unarmed Armenians, executing Armenian soldiers, mutilating a female Armenian soldier.

This reports—these reports, I should say—reflect a long history of alleged Azerbaijani war crimes, including during the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh war.

Would you commit, if you are confirmed, to leading embassy efforts to support the documentation of alleged atrocities committed against Armenians during this recent aggression?

Ms. KVIEN. Thank you, Senator.

Yes, I have seen some of the horrific videos coming out recently of September and I would do my best to help with any requests the Armenians have to document.

The CHAIRMAN. Okay. I do not want requests from Armenians. I want us to be proactive so we could make a determination.

Something called Section 907 that we waive—under the Secretary's ability to waive that lets us send money to Azerbaijan. But we should know whether the Azerbaijanis are committing these types of actions so that we can make a determination whether that Section 907 should be waived or not of the Freedom Support Act.

So I want an ambassador who is going to proactively help us determine whether these executions, whether these mutilations, whether these other activities, are true or not and to be able to tell the State Department and this committee that, in fact, they are,

they are not, some of them are, some of them are not, so that then we, as policymakers, can make a decision.

Can I depend upon you to do that?

Ms. KVIEN. Yes, Senator, and I can go further to say that accountability for crimes of this nature are very important to me and I will work to make sure that there is accountability as well.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

I am glad to see a nominee who actually calls the Armenian genocide genocide. I have actually in the past, unfortunately, been in the position of having to stop nominees because they will not consider the genocide a genocide. Genocide is genocide, at the end of the day. So I am glad to hear in your remarks you refer to the genocide.

I am also deeply concerned that neither USAID nor the State Department has provided the humanitarian assistance necessary to meet the needs of almost 100,000 people displaced by the Nagorno-Karabakh war of 2020 or the current needs of the people who still reside in the region.

If confirmed, would you commit to lead a need assessment or to advocate for a needs assessment? At least we should know what the needs are. We may not be the only suppliers of the response to those needs. It might be some type of donors conference.

But we need to know what the needs are, at the end of the day. Will you support such a needs assessment with embassy—within the embassy?

Ms. KVIEN. Yes, Senator, I would.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much.

Ms. Spahn, we have talked a little bit about some of what is to come. But why do you not tell us what your priorities will be for the agency?

How will you work to address the lost development gains due to COVID–19, of course, including the increasing threat of climate change, dire humanitarian need in many parts of the globe, including as a result of Putin's ruthless aggression towards Ukraine that has affected global—some global food supplies? Talk to me a little bit about what your priorities would be.

Ms. SPAHN. Thank you. That is a very big question. In today's climate, there is a lot to address.

Peace Corps, as you well know, goes into countries at the invitation of governments and works closely with them on their national priorities at the community level.

There is tremendous value in Peace Corps' presence overseas. It is well beyond the work of the volunteers. It has symbolic presence as well.

As I said in my opening statement, we have expressions of interest, letters of invitation, from 10 new countries around the world, including several countries in the Pacific.

It is my intention to work very closely with those countries to assess their capacity and their ability to meet our safety and security—health, safety, and security conditions so that we can expand Peace Corps' presence in the Pacific, in Central America, and in other countries around the world.

It is also a priority that we make Peace Corps service an option for a broader range of people within the United States. We are

doing significant outreach into underrepresented communities, and we are looking at expanding beyond just recent graduates.

We are looking at the great resignation. We are looking at quiet quitting. We are looking to engage, whether it is a farmer in Iowa or a recent graduate in New Mexico, a businessperson in the Bronx, to give people the opportunity to serve and to be a part of this amazing enterprise.

The CHAIRMAN. And in this regard can you tell me what are your goals for restarting missions, and to the extent you have had those 10 invitations by countries how will you prioritize which countries you will send volunteers back to first?

Ms. SPAHN. So, we're returning volunteers first to the countries that we departed. So, we have invitations out to 56 countries. We have several that are facing non-COVID threats, places like the Ukraine, Moldova, Ethiopia, and others that we are looking at the safety and security situation in those countries to evaluate if and when we can go back into those countries.

As we look at new country invitations, we look holistically at the fit between the needs of the country and our ability to meet those needs; as well as the health, safety, and security considerations of those environments.

The CHAIRMAN. And, finally, obviously, we care about the safety of volunteers—Peace Corps volunteers—they are our fellow Americans—as we would care about the safety and security of anybody at an embassy.

How will you work to ensure that sites selected for volunteer placement are safe for volunteers? How will you judge where there is maybe active conflict zones and can I get your commitment that you will consult with me and my staff on oversight efforts with respect to reentry specifically in conflict areas?

Ms. SPAHN. So, first, to answer your last question, yes, you have my commitment to work with you and your teams.

We do have security personnel in every country. They liaise very closely with the embassy and the RSO at the embassy to monitor the conditions in that country in different regions of that country.

We also have regional security staff and a team at headquarters that are monitoring events. We know that there is—there are active conflict zones in a number of countries where we have traditionally had operations and we do not send volunteers back into those countries without doing an on-the-ground assessment and without the collaboration and support of the embassy.

The CHAIRMAN. Very good.

Ms. SPAHN. With respect to specific sites, I can say that those are also carefully monitored and selected with a set of criteria that are standard across all of our countries.

The CHAIRMAN. Ms. Dyer, many victims of human trafficking are migrant domestic workers. Millions of women from South Asia, Africa, and elsewhere leave their homes in pursuit of decent work to provide for their families.

Instead, many of these migrant women find themselves in conditions that amount to forced labor and experience extraordinary abuse, sometimes sexual abuse as well.

What do you believe is the role of the Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, or JTIP as we refer to, in coordinating

U.S. Government efforts to address the rights of vulnerable domestic workers and the underlying root causes that make these migrant women particularly vulnerable to forced labor, debt bondage, and other forms of human trafficking?

Ms. DYER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for that really thoughtful question, and I share your concern.

One of the things that I observed during my years of working in trafficking is that domestic servants are uniquely vulnerable because they are so very isolated. They are frequently reliant on the owner of the home to give them care, to even let them out, and they do not have access sometimes to even some of the services or access to know that those services are available. So I share your concern.

If I am confirmed, I would work closely to be sure that the Trafficking in Persons Report, which is our gold standard and our chief diplomatic and diagnostic tool, addresses these issues that each country that has this issue, and most countries do, that it is called out.

I, particularly, appreciate the fact that this is something that we have even in the United States and when we see it we need to call it out here, too.

I would especially look forward to using the Trafficking in Persons Report to not only help us determine what conversations we need to be having with other countries but specifically focusing on some countries that have visa programs that make it particularly vulnerable for migrant women who are in domestic servitude.

We know specifically that the kafala system—that employment-based system—puts trafficking victims particularly at risk, makes them very—it makes it very challenging for them to even seek assistance or leave their home to go somewhere else because doing so puts them in violation of their visa.

And I think that if I am confirmed that is definitely something that I would want to focus on and try to get some relief from.

Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. I appreciate you recognizing the kafala system as one of our big challenges that we have.

How sharp are your elbows?

Ms. DYER. You know what? I am currently working at the Department of Defense and the joke around the office is that I know when to be lapdog and I know when to be junkyard dog, and I just love junkyard dog days.

And so if I am confirmed, I would look forward to being junkyard dog whenever it is necessary.

The CHAIRMAN. I appreciate that, and here is the spirit in which I ask that question.

There was a time—and I agree with you, the Trafficking in Persons Report is the gold standard globally to be able to call out countries in which human trafficking, sex exploitation, labor exploitation, and other things can be called out and then worked on in order—and have consequences.

But that report is only as good as its integrity is, and we had a period of time in which the report really had political influences in which there were decisions that were made not on the merits of

what the facts were but because we did not want to have country A, B, or C get upset.

Well, then the trafficking report means nothing, especially when everybody knows that country A is doing all of these things but get put on a tier that does not suggest that they are violating, and country B, who may be in some respects less important to our national interest or security, ultimately gets the full wrath of the TIP report.

We need to make sure that in the process of dealing with the regional bureaus and other entities as well as the embassies, who, obviously, are on the front line of dealing with these questions, we need to have a vigorous process that guarantees that the TIP Report is preserved in its integrity.

It is what it is. Here is the law. Here are the facts. This should be on the list for whatever tier they should be. I hope we can count on you to do that.

Ms. DYER. Yes, sir. If I am confirmed, I would look forward to ensuring that the TIP Report maintains the focus on integrity, and I think that it is important not only from the U.S. because what is in the TIP Report determines what the United States does and what we are going to support.

But it is also critically important—I know this from my work at a nonprofit—to the survivors and the civil society organizations that are working in the cracks and crevices of every country in the world.

Our TIP Report speaks volumes for them because those survivors and those activists they can say, my country is not doing enough, and the country does not listen. But if the TIP Report that is issued by the United States of America says it, boy, does that speak volumes.

And so we owe it not only for ourselves but for all of those activists and survivors out there who are relying on us. So I appreciate your interest. If I am confirmed, I can commit to focusing on that.

The CHAIRMAN. I would like to be a golden retriever. Being a junkyard dog sometimes is necessary.

[Laughter.]

The CHAIRMAN. Lastly, there has been a—since 2015 there has been a reported 45 percent drop in global prosecutions. We know that prosecutions for forced labor and other forms of labor trafficking remain particularly low.

How can you as Ambassador-at-Large at JTIP increase attention and resources to combating forced labor and other forms of labor trafficking, which is very important to us as well?

We can—we will compete against anybody in the world. But if you are having your work done through labor trafficking, not only is it uncompetitive but it is humanly wrong to the individuals being labor trafficked.

Ms. DYER. Thank you so much for that—really, that very thoughtful question and as a former prosecutor I love your focus on accountability. Thank you so much.

And I think that that is really important and particularly in the forced labor sphere. I think one thing—if I am confirmed, I would look forward to participating in the Forced Labor Enforcement

Task Force in addition to the President's interagency task force and the Senior Policy Operating Group.

But I think that that Forced Labor Enforcement Task Force is a great opportunity for us to have greater interagency support because I do believe that particularly in the forced labor sphere that the State Department needs to work hand in hand with the Department of Labor and Department of Homeland Security.

And I think that, if I am confirmed, I would look forward to the opportunity to really increasing that level of cooperation and presenting a united front.

The CHAIRMAN. Very good.

Senator Van Hollen, I see you stayed. I just want to make sure you do not have anything else.

All right. I think we have covered a good part of the waterfront here.

So with the thanks of the committee for your appearance and your responses, we will have questions for the record. We urge you to respond to it expeditiously and fully because we often get members who feel their questions have not been answered except for one or two lines and then they will not agree to move the nominee forward.

So if you can address it expeditiously and fully so that we can promote your names for a business meeting in which we can vote you out and send you to the floor.

This record for the hearing will remain open until the close of business on Thursday, December 1st. Please ensure that questions for the record are submitted no later than Thursday.

With the thanks of the committee, this hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 5:13 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

Additional Material Submitted for the Record

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO HON. LYNNE M. TRACY BY SENATOR ROBERT MENENDEZ

Question. How will you use your position and voice to help lift up LGBTQ people, and support civil society organizations advocating for their rights?

Answer. If confirmed, I will maintain the United States' longstanding support for the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms in Russia, including for LGBTQI+ persons, and I will continue to demonstrate solidarity with brave activists and human rights defenders, including those who advocate for the human rights of LGBTQI+ persons in Russia. Russia's proposed expansion of the ban on information regarding LGBTQI+ issues is extremely concerning; I will not hesitate to speak out against this and other measures that limit the rights of LGBTQI+ persons in Russia, consistent with the President's memorandum directing all agencies engaged abroad to ensure that U.S. diplomacy promotes and protects the human rights of LGBTQI+ persons.

Question. How will you support those fleeing Russia as a result of persecution based on their sexual orientation or gender identity?

Answer. Russian Federation citizens fleeing persecution based on their LGBTQI+ identities can face an increased threat of violence, harassment, and discrimination. If confirmed, I commit to working with the Bureau of Population, Refugee, and Migration, the Department of Homeland Security, and other stakeholders to ensure that LGBTQI+ refugees and asylum seekers have equal access to protection and assistance consistent with the President's Memorandum on Advancing the Human Rights of LGBTQI+ Persons Around the World.

Religious Liberty

Question. The Russian government often targets those with what it calls "non-traditional" faiths with charges of "extremism." Police in Russia have targeted Jehovah's Witnesses with home raids in cities nationwide, in some cases torturing members of the community. Do you commit to use your platform to speak up for Jehovah's Witnesses and other persecuted religious groups if confirmed?

Answer. Russia's continued targeting for repression of members of minority religious groups is deeply disturbing. If confirmed, I will work closely with the Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom to continue to hold Russia accountable for violations of religious freedom including of Jehovah's Witnesses and other persecuted religious groups and will amplify the voices of those advocating for their human rights.

Three Tech Companies

Question. Tech companies like Apple and Google removed the "Smart Vote" app from their app stores in September 2021, limiting the Russian opposition's ability to organize during the Duma elections that year. Apple and Google cited specific threats against their employees as the reason for complying with a Russian government order to remove the app, but the opposition remains dependent on these types of technology companies to get their message out.

- What role should our Ambassador to Russia, and the Department of State, play in offering support to American technology companies to help them stand up to authoritarian threats?

Answer. If confirmed, I will support efforts to expand connectivity to an open, interoperable, secure, and reliable Internet that affords all people access to unfiltered and unbiased information. I will also support any measures that advocate for or assist U.S. technology companies working to stand against threats from the Russian government.

Question. What role should our Ambassador to Russia, and the Department of State, play in encouraging these technology companies not to comply with the Putin regime's orders if such orders will have a detrimental impact on the Russian opposition, civil society, journalists, or other vulnerable groups?

Answer. If confirmed as Ambassador, I will continue to work with civil society and the private sector to help amplify independent Russian voices and promote the free flow of information and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, both online and offline in Russia.

The Administration will not hesitate to call out Russian efforts to stifle Internet freedom and freedom of expression, domestically in Russia and abroad. Private sector technology companies play a crucial role in supporting these efforts, and as Ambassador, I will not hesitate to engage on their behalf if companies see it as beneficial to their efforts in opposition to Putin's threats.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO HON. LYNNE M. TRACY BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Question. Many U.S. Missions have been under enormous stress over the last few years, in large part due to COVID. What is your understanding of morale throughout Mission Russia?

Answer. Morale is good under the circumstances but requires sustained leadership attention. In addition to the challenges already posed by COVID–19, the Embassy continues to face staffing and other challenges as the result of Russian actions, including the Russian Government's decision last year to force the termination of the Embassy's local and third country staff. Embassy staff also face harassment and are often prevented from doing their work, including visiting U.S. citizens in Russian prisons. We also continue to face challenges staffing the Embassy given the ongoing impasse with the Russians on diplomatic visas.

Question. Many U.S. Missions have been under enormous stress over the last few years, in large part due to COVID. How do you intend to improve morale at Mission Russia?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work closely with the Embassy team at all levels and Washington to maintain morale and strengthen our Mission's operations, and I will engage the Russian Government to protest its actions against the Mission. Where

possible, I will seek practical solutions to enable the Mission to continue is important diplomatic work.

Question. Many U.S. Missions have been under enormous stress over the last few years, in large part due to COVID. How do you intend to create a unified Mission and vision at Mission Russia?

Answer. If confirmed, I look forward to ensuring open and continuous communication at Embassy Moscow. We are all one team working together to pursue U.S. interests, so I will ensure this collaborative service focus is central to our work. Furthermore, I am committed to supporting a diverse and inclusive workforce. Diversity makes the Embassy stronger by bringing different perspectives and enhancing creativity. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the team to maximize innovation and effectiveness.

Question. Management is a key responsibility for Chiefs of Mission. How would you describe your management style?

Answer. I believe it is important to maintain an open door to all members of the Mission team and encourage a supportive environment for the free flow of views. Although I am ultimately responsible for the Embassy as Chief of Mission, I believe the success of the Mission in advancing U.S. interests requires the effort of the entire team.

Question. Management is a key responsibility for Chiefs of Mission. Do you believe it is ever acceptable or constructive to berate subordinates, either in public or private?

Answer. No, it is never acceptable or constructive to berate subordinates, either in public or private.

Question. Management is a key responsibility for Chiefs of Mission. How do you envision your leadership relationship with your Deputy Chief of Mission?

Answer. If confirmed, I look forward to a close and productive relationship with the Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM) and will work closely with the DCM to advance the U.S. Embassy's diplomatic and consular work.

Question. Management is a key responsibility for Chiefs of Mission. If confirmed, what leadership responsibilities do you intend to entrust to your Deputy Chief of Mission?

Answer. Having been the Deputy Chief of Mission in Moscow, I know how important this role is. If confirmed, I will entrust the Deputy Chief of Mission with responsibility for the day-to-day operations of the Embassy. I will consult closely with the Deputy Chief of Mission on a range of issues to advance the diplomatic and consular work of our team at post and will remain engaged on key operational issues.

Question. In order to create and continue employee excellence at the Department, accurate and direct employee evaluation reports (EERs) for Foreign Service Officers are imperative, though often lacking. Do you believe that it is important to provide employees with accurate, constructive feedback on their performances in order to encourage improvement and reward those who most succeeded in their roles?

Answer. Yes, I believe it is important to provide employees with accurate, constructive feedback on their performance to encourage improvement and reward those who most succeed in their roles. If confirmed, I will maintain an open-door policy to discuss constructive and timely feedback to enhance and lift the performance of the entire team.

Question. In order to create and continue employee excellence at the Department, accurate and direct employee evaluation reports (EERs) for Foreign Service Officers are imperative, though often lacking. If confirmed, would you support and encourage clear, accurate, and direct feedback to employees in order to improve performance and reward high achievers?

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, I would support and encourage clear, accurate, and direct feedback to employees to improve performance and reward high achievers.

Question. It is imperative that U.S. diplomats get outside of posts abroad to meet with local actors, including host government officials, non-government organizations, and fellow foreign diplomats stationed in Russia. In your opinion, do U.S. diplomats get outside of our Embassy walls enough to accomplish fully their Missions?

Answer. I firmly believe it is imperative that U.S. diplomats get outside of the Embassy to meet with local citizens, host government officials and representatives of non-governmental organizations. The Russians have severely curtailed Embassy Moscow's ability to travel and engage with others outside of the Embassy, but if con-

firmed, I will do my best to ensure we engage with local actors to the broadest extent possible.

Question. It is imperative that U.S. diplomats get outside of posts abroad to meet with local actors, including host government officials, non-government organizations, and fellow foreign diplomats stationed in Russia. How do you intend to improve the ability of U.S. diplomats to better access all local populations?

Answer. If confirmed, I will engage the Russian Government to protest its restrictions on the Embassy and, where possible, seek practical solutions to enable Embassy staff to continue their important diplomatic work.

Question. Public diplomacy is an important aspect of U.S. foreign policy efforts. What is the public diplomacy environment like in Russia?

Answer. Criticism of the West has increased dramatically since the Russian Government launched its full-scale invasion against Ukraine, and anti-West propaganda has also ramped up over the last 10 months. Propaganda, disinformation, and a more restricted internet has narrowed the information space and discourse in regard to the war but also more broadly in regard to free speech. That, combined with limited staffing at our Embassy, has necessitated more virtual programming and more creative avenues for engaging the Russian people, including via platforms like Telegram.

Question. Public diplomacy is an important aspect of U.S. foreign policy efforts. What public diplomacy challenges do U.S. diplomats face there?

Answer. The most obvious challenge to our public diplomacy efforts are Russia's foreign agent and censorship laws, which disincentivize Russian citizens from interacting with Embassy staff and even speaking their minds. Separately, freedom of movement is also a challenge to most Embassy staff, with the Russian Government placing limitations on staff travel.

Question. Public diplomacy is an important aspect of U.S. foreign policy efforts. How do you balance the importance of Main State versus the in-country Mission when it comes to tailoring public diplomacy messages for foreign audiences?

Answer. The Russian Government expends a lot of effort to discredit U.S. Government officials. First and foremost, it is key for us to deliver accurate, truthful information from credible sources. Second, we rely on the expertise of our public diplomacy section in Moscow and our Moscow Engagement Support Office in Riga to contextualize those messages and time their delivery to ensure that they are positioned to at least be heard by the Russian people and not dismissed out of hand.

Question. "Anomalous health incidents," commonly referred to as "Havana Syndrome," have been debilitating and sidelining U.S. diplomats around the world for years. They have caused serious, negative consequences for U.S. diplomacy, yet many believe that the Department is not doing enough to care for, protect, and communicate to its personnel. If confirmed, do you commit to taking this threat seriously?

Answer. Yes, if confirmed. There is nothing I will take more seriously than the health and security of the people who will be working with me.

Question. "Anomalous health incidents," commonly referred to as "Havana Syndrome," have been debilitating and sidelining U.S. diplomats around the world for years. They have caused serious, negative consequences for U.S. diplomacy, yet many believe that the Department is not doing enough to care for, protect, and communicate to its personnel. If confirmed, do you commit to talking as openly as you can to Mission Russia personnel?

Answer. Yes. If confirmed, I commit to sharing what information I can within the bounds of privacy and security concerns with Embassy Moscow personnel.

Question. If confirmed, one of your primary responsibilities will be maintaining Embassy posture and ensuring the staff and facilities are functioning at the highest level possible. What is your familiarity with the state of Embassy Moscow's facilities?

Answer. Embassy Moscow has faced numerous difficulties in sustaining its facilities due to the lack of personnel and the difficulty of shipping key equipment to Russia. If confirmed, I will work closely with my Embassy team and Washington to ensure that we do everything we can to overcome these constraints and ensure that we sustain this vital diplomatic platform.

Question. If confirmed, one of your primary responsibilities will be maintaining Embassy posture and ensuring the staff and facilities are functioning at the highest

level possible. What are your top priorities for the improvement and/or maintenance of the facilities at Embassy Moscow?

Answer. If confirmed, one of my top priorities will be working together with Washington to ensure that we can get the human and material resources into Moscow that are necessary to ensure the safe and effective operation of our Embassy.

Question. If confirmed, one of your primary responsibilities will be maintaining Embassy posture and ensuring the staff and facilities are functioning at the highest level possible. In the event that Embassy Moscow must be vacated, do you believe that the current Embassy posture could support a full and proper shutdown of the facility, including the destruction or removal of sensitive materials? If not, how will you implement a plan to prepare for such an eventuality?

Answer. If confirmed, maintaining Embassy Moscow's ability to operate and fulfill its responsibilities will be one of my top priorities. At present, Embassy Moscow is not in a departure status and has sufficient staff to drawdown operations if necessary. If confirmed I will meet regularly with the Embassy's Emergency Action Committee to make contingency plans for evacuation and to ensure we have the personnel and resources necessary to support a full and proper shutdown of our facilities in Moscow should that be required.

Question. There are number of Americans detained in Russia, some of whom have been labeled as wrongfully detained under the Levinson Act. How will you engage with the Russian Government to ensure detainees have proper consular access, as well as access to communication with their lawyers and family?

Answer. If confirmed, I will press Russian authorities to adhere to their legal obligations to provide regular consular access to all U.S. citizens detained in Russia and ensure their health and welfare. I will also work with the Embassy team to provide support for the communication between the detained citizens and their families and lawyers. This will be one of my very highest priorities.

Question. There are number of Americans detained in Russia, some of whom have been labeled as wrongfully detained under the Levinson Act. How do you envision the working relationship and organization of efforts between Embassy Moscow and SPEHA, the Bureau of Consular Affairs, and other State Department and interagency offices on the issue of detained Americans?

Answer. The wrongful detention determination is a legal, fact-based review that looks at the totality of the circumstances for each case individually. The Department of State continuously monitors all cases for indications of a wrongful detention. If confirmed, I will work closely with SPEHA, the Bureau of Consular Affairs, and other Department and interagency offices in support of their efforts by providing regular and up-to-date information to aid the review of individual cases.

Question. The administration's Iran policy has focused on a return to the nuclear deal (JCPOA) that would enrich Russian state-owned enterprises for nuclear material swaps, enrich Russia for continued work on the Bushehr reactor, and potentially provide Russia with an avenue to launder its oil and gas through Iran and into international markets. To what extent does the Administration's Iran policy make implementation of Russia policy more difficult or problematic?

Answer. Our policies towards Russia and Iran are consistent. As we seek to isolate Russia, undermine its access to finance and technology for strategic sectors of its economy, and degrade its industrial capacity to support aggression for years to come, we are also exposing and countering Iran's contribution to that aggression. The United States is also working to expose and deter Iran's provision of weapons to Russia for use against the Ukrainian people. We will continue to vigorously enforce U.S. sanctions on both Russia and Iran.

Question. The administration's Iran policy has focused on a return to the nuclear deal (JCPOA) that would enrich Russian state-owned enterprises for nuclear material swaps, enrich Russia for continued work on the Bushehr reactor, and potentially provide Russia with an avenue to launder its oil and gas through Iran and into international markets. Wouldn't a definitive stop to JCPOA negotiations bring Russia and Iran policies more into alignment?

Answer. I am not privy to the current state of the JCPOA negotiations, but I can state that our policy is to isolate Russia and expose and counter Iran's role in contributing to Putin's aggression.

The United States is also working to expose and deter Iran's provision of weapons to Russia for use against the Ukrainian people. If confirmed, I will continue to advocate vigorously for the enforcement of all U.S. sanctions against Russia.

Question. The growing defense consortium between Iran and Russia is deeply problematic. Iran continues to provide armed drones to Russia that have been used on battlefields in Ukraine with great effect—particularly targeting energy infrastructure. Worse, Iran has advertised that it will provide technical assistance to build these drones in Russia and has opened the door to the provision of short range ballistic missiles for Russia's war effort. How does the U.S. drive a wedge in the Russo-Iranian relationship?

Answer. If confirmed, I will support all efforts to thwart Iran's provision of assistance to Russia's war and Moscow's use of these or any other military capabilities against the Ukrainian people. This includes sustained diplomatic efforts to bring multilateral pressure to bear on both Russia and Iran. The U.S. Government will continue to work to prevent such transfers from taking place and to use the full range of sanctions authorities and other accountability measures to impose costs on those involved.

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Answer. If confirmed, I will support all efforts to counter Iran's provision of assistance to Russia's war of aggression and Moscow's use of these or any other military capabilities against the Ukrainian people. This includes working with our partners and allies to identify entities and individuals for sanctions designations and other accountability measures.

Question. There are many U.S. and allied-led efforts at and within the U.N. system to hold Russia accountable for its attack on Ukraine and subsequent war crimes. How can you bolster these efforts within the USG and the U.N.? Please be descriptive.

Answer. We are supporting a range of international investigations into atrocities and other abuses in Ukraine. This includes those conducted by the International Criminal Court, the United Nations, and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. The United States has further provided robust support for Ukrainian efforts to document and investigate Russia's atrocities in Ukraine, including by coordinating direct technical support to the Office of the Prosecutor General under the framework of the Atrocity Crimes Advisory Group.

If confirmed, I will ensure that we continue to work closely with our U.S. Mission to the United Nations and departments and agencies in Washington on efforts to hold Russia accountable, such as the overwhelming U.N. General Assembly vote condemning Russia's war against Ukraine. I will support efforts to censure and isolate Russia in relevant international bodies, as well as initiatives to hold Moscow accountable for the horrendous crimes being committed in Ukraine.

Question. Do you believe that Russia is committing genocide in Ukraine? Why or why not?

Answer. I cannot speak to any future assessment of whether specific acts constitute specific international crimes. But if confirmed, I will ensure that we are continuing to call out and document Russia's horrific abuses in Ukraine, including reports of conflict-related sexual violence. We know that words matter—as do actions. If confirmed, I will work to support all efforts to hold Russia to account for its terrible actions in Ukraine, including its horrendous human rights abuses, atrocities, and war crimes.

Question. Do you believe current efforts by the U.S., allies, and partners in Europe to provide support for justice units in Ukraine are sufficient? Why or why not.

Answer. Through the Atrocity Crimes Advisory Group for Ukraine (ACA), the United States, the UK, and the EU are deploying the best subject-matter experts as mobile justice teams to support Ukraine's Office of the Prosecutor General in its investigation and prosecution of atrocity crimes. These specialists have decades of experience as war crimes investigators, international prosecutors, military analysts, and conflict-related sexual violence experts. As the demands on the domestic authorities in Ukraine grow, the ACA plans to establish more permanent field Missions to assist regional prosecutors working in other regions of the country. I believe continuing our efforts on accountability is critical, as the Ukrainian people deserve justice.

Question. In the 2022 Trafficking in Persons report, Russia remained on tier 3 for its lack of effort to combat or monitor human trafficking. In your view, how can you best support civil society actors and fight government complicity in Russia regarding anti-trafficking work?

Answer. If confirmed, I will continue to advance the Administration's work to monitor and combat human trafficking, including by maintaining an unwavering commitment to hold Russia accountable to the Trafficking Victims Protection Act's minimum standards to combat human trafficking. I will also advocate strongly for continued robust U.S. support to civil society organizations in and out of Russia working to fight this scourge.

Question. In the 2021 International Religious freedom report, Russia was listed as being wholly intolerant of religious freedom and making significant efforts to curb the rights of religious minorities. What, in your view, can be done to bolster religious freedom both inside Russia and in its spheres of influence globally?

Answer. Russia's continued targeting for repression of members of minority religious groups is deeply disturbing. If confirmed, I will work closely with the U.S. Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom to expose and speak out against Russia's violations of religious freedom, as well as amplify the voices of those advocating for their human rights.

Question. In the 2021 Human Rights Report, Russia was listed as committing and baring witness to countless human rights abuses both inside Russia and outside, particularly in Ukraine. How, if you confirmed, can you bolster human rights on the ground? What tools will you make available or use within your Mission to further the crumbling human rights of civil society in country?

Answer. If confirmed, I will maintain the United States' longstanding support for the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms in Russia and for brave activists and human rights defenders. The Administration coordinates regularly with Allies and partners to demonstrate our shared solidarity with independent Russian civil society and media.

Question. Negative attitudes towards the U.S. have increased among Russians. How do you intend to work with civil society given the restrictive environment in the country?

Answer. The United States is a beacon of freedom in the world, including in Russia. If confirmed, I will speak out proudly in the advocacy of our principles and lend my support to human rights defenders, independent civil society, and objective media. I will continue to advocate for our sustained support of organizations that protect Russians resisting Putin's repression, organizations that work to provide independent news and political analysis to Russian audiences in Russia, and other civil society elements.

Question. Negative attitudes towards the U.S. have increased among Russians. If confirmed, what form do you envision your engagement and outreach to public taking?

Answer. If confirmed, I will pursue all opportunities to communicate with the Russian people to convey to them not only the truth about what their own government is doing, but also making clear that our issues and concerns are with Russia's Government, not its people.

Question. Negative attitudes towards the U.S. have increased among Russians. Given the restrictive media and internet environment, where state-controlled television remains the main source of information across the country, what will you do to break through to the Russian people?

Answer. If confirmed, I will use all available means to provide clear and effective messaging to the Russian people. The U.S. Department of State hosts a wide variety of content across social media platforms, some of which are accessible in Russia, such as Telegram and YouTube. Russian citizens also widely use VPNs and other tools to view restricted content.

Question. Negative attitudes towards the U.S. have increased among Russians. How will you maintain dialogue between the U.S. and Russia to prevent misunderstandings or miscalculations?

Answer. Even as we seek to isolate Russia and undermine diplomatic and economic support for its war effort, we are also working to maintain our Embassy's mission to provide consular assistance, preserve channels of communication, and pursue people-to-people exchanges. If confirmed, I will spare no effort to sustain essential channels of communication with Moscow.

Question. Negative attitudes towards the U.S. have increased among Russians. What is your view of the possibility of removing Russia's permanent appointment to the U.N. Security Council? How to you think Russia would react to such an action?

Answer. The current structure of the U.N. Security Council does not provide a ready means to remove a permanent member.

Question. Negative attitudes towards the U.S. have increased among Russians. The Russian Government has previously conducted aggressive transnational repression activities abroad, including assassinations. How do you intend to raise U.S. concerns about this?

Answer. Exposure and disruption of Russia's malign activities imposes a cost on the individuals and entities that engage in these efforts. Such actors include both government officials, namely in the Russian intelligence services, and unofficial proxies. Continuing to deter the most dangerous Russian hybrid threats is critical. The United States works with likeminded Allies and partners to counter Russian malign influence and activities through a variety of multilateral and bilateral avenues. If confirmed, I will continue to report back to Washington on these Russian malign activities to help inform the ongoing interagency efforts to counter them.

Question. How do you envision coordination between the Embassy and the State Department, White House, and the rest of the interagency back in Washington?

Answer. If confirmed, I will pursue close coordination in all available communication channels with the White House, the Department of State, and the rest of the interagency to ensure the Embassy's view is factored into policy decision-making as well as to address emerging challenges. If confirmed, I will be available to Washington 24 hours a day, seven days a week to support the interests of the U.S. Government and people.

Question. Which issues will Embassy Moscow take a lead on? On which issues will the Embassy play a supporting role?

Answer. If confirmed, the Embassy team and I will coordinate with Washington and other U.S. Missions in the field on all Russia-related matters. The U.S. Embassy remains at the forefront of U.S. engagement with Russians from all aspects of society and the Government in Russia. The Embassy will feed into policy decision-making and other activities in support of a whole-of-government approach to U.S. policy toward Russia.

Question. Despite significant issues in the relationship, are there issues that the U.S. and Russia can cooperate on? If so, what are those issues, and what would cooperation look like?

Answer. As you know, the United States continues to maintain a diplomatic presence in Moscow because it is important to continue to have a channel for bilateral dialogue. The Administration engages as appropriate on issues deemed critical to national security, including nuclear nonproliferation and arms control. The Administration also engages at multilateral institutions and in treaty-based organizations to ensure that we protect and advance U.S. interests in the U.N. and elsewhere and enforce U.S. rights under bilateral and multilateral treaties.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO HON. LYNNE M. TRACY BY SENATOR JEANNE SHAHEEN

Question. How can the U.S. support democratic spaces in Russia, including free and independent media such as RFE/RL, to continue to try and convey the truth of what is happening in Ukraine to the Russian people?

Answer. The Administration coordinates regularly with Allies and partners to support and demonstrate our shared solidarity with independent Russian civil society and media, as well as to use multilateral platforms to condemn and promote accountability for the Kremlin's abuses against human rights defenders. The United States also continues to support organizations, including Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, which provide independent news and political analysis, including about Russia's ongoing aggression against Ukraine, to Russian audiences.

Question. More broadly, how will you advance the causes of Russia's pro-democracy activists and ensure continued U.S. support for the small but important democratic space in Russia that Putin and his cronies are working to quash?

Answer. If confirmed, I will support and amplify the Administration's public condemnation of Russia's deepening repression, including against pro-democracy activists, independent voices, and civil society.

I will maintain the United States' longstanding support for groups and individuals who work to protect human rights and fundamental freedoms in Russia. I also will coordinate closely with Allies and partners to demonstrate our shared solidarity with independent voices in Russia and promote accountability for the Kremlin's abuses and repression.

Question. What additional efforts can the U.S. Government undertake to deter future Russian election interference, both in the U.S. and around the world?

Answer. While the threat of foreign interference against our election infrastructure remains, our election systems are resilient. The Administration works on a whole-of-government basis—together with an integrated public-private coalition—to ensure the security of America's elections. This Administration has imposed sanctions on Russian actors for attempts at election interference. This includes multiple rounds of sanctions against Yevgeniy Prigozhin and Internet Research Agency-linked actors. We continue to denounce any attempt to influence or interfere in our electoral process and will continue to inflict serious consequences should Russia or its proxies attempt to influence or interfere in our electoral process again. If confirmed, I will continue to emphasize this point and support interagency efforts to hold Prigozhin and any other Russian malign actors accountable.

Question. What do you assess to be the risks of Russian election interference and Russian-promoted election disinformation in Eastern Europe and sub-Saharan Africa, regions that have already experienced Russian meddling? How can the U.S. more effectively combat the international reach of Russian election interference?

Answer. Russia continues to threaten nations around the world to achieve its political goals and remains committed to undermining democratic governments and processes through covert and overt means, including but not limited to election interference. By weakening election integrity, Russia hopes to shape foreign political environments in its own interests. The United States Government continues to focus on rebutting and countering Russian disinformation and exposing Russia's malign influence operations targeting democratic elections and institutions beyond. This includes through information sharing with Allies and partners and by working with partners to disrupt and impose sanctions against Russian entities and actors for attempts to influence elections, sow societal divisions, or erode trust of democratic societies and institutions.

Question. Can I receive your commitment that, if confirmed, you will work to advance the cause of Vladimir Kara-Murza, and encourage the British Ambassador in Moscow to prioritize the release of Mr. Kara-Murza, who is a British citizen?

Answer. The United States regularly speaks out against the Kremlin's targeting of those who seek to defend human rights and exercise their fundamental freedoms in an increasingly repressive and authoritarian environment. Mr. Kara-Murza has been a particularly courageous proponent for a more democratic future for Russia. If confirmed, I commit to making it a top priority to coordinate with Allies and partners on messaging and advocacy for the release of Mr. Kara-Murza and the more than 400 other political prisoners Russia imprisons unjustly.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO HON. LYNNE M. TRACY BY SENATOR MARCO RUBIO

Question. In May, Secretary Blinken said that the People's Republic of China is the "only country with both the intent to reshape the international order and, increasingly, the economic, diplomatic, military, and technological power to do it." The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) clearly holds all the reins of power in the People's Republic of China and has used this power to commit genocide in Xinjiang, flood our communities with fentanyl, and emit by far the largest quantity of greenhouse gases. As we speak, the Party is cracking down on unprecedented student protests across the country. With their absolute control of Chinese society and industry, the CCP could stop all of these destructive actions tomorrow if they so choose.

- Is the CCP a threat to the United States?

Answer. The President made it clear in his National Security Strategy that the People's Republic of China (PRC) harbors the intention and, increasingly, the capacity to attempt to reshape the international order to its benefit. As Secretary Blinken

said on May 26, we will invest in America, align with our Allies and partners, and compete with the PRC to defend our interests and build our vision for the future.

Question. Does the CCP undertake any activities that are beneficial to U.S. interests?

Answer. Although we are strategic competitors with the PRC, as the President laid out in his National Security Strategy, the United States does not seek conflict or a new Cold War. We and our Allies and partners have an opportunity to shape the PRC's external environment in a way that influences their behavior even as we compete with them. The United States' approach towards the PRC focuses on competing with the PRC where our interests and values differ and cooperating with them when they align.

Question. Do you believe there are any areas within which the CCP would constructively work with the United States in good faith?

Answer. Although we are strategic competitors, as the President laid out in his National Security Strategy, the United States does not seek conflict or a new Cold War. We and our Allies and partners have an opportunity to shape the PRC's external environment in a way that influences their behavior even as we compete with them. The United States' approach towards the PRC focuses on competing with the PRC where our interests and values differ and cooperating with them when they align.

Question. If confirmed, will you approve any joint activity with organizations or representatives from the People's Republic of China in the Russian Federation?

Answer. If confirmed, I will continue our close work with likeminded Allies and partners to benefit the United States and advance our shared security, prosperity, and values. Given our opposing policy priorities and values, I do not foresee working with the People's Republic of China on any joint activities in Russia.

Question. The United States, with NATO allies and other partners, are currently providing vital assistance to Ukraine as it defends itself against Vladimir Putin's unjustified and unprovoked invasion. The administration has levied broad sanctions on Russia's ability to wage war and requested $66 billion in supplemental funding for humanitarian and security assistance among other efforts. Ukraine's ability to repel Russian advances have been buoyed by the international community's assistance and their fierce sense of independence. This, in addition to European sanctions on Russia and assistance to Ukraine, has diminished Russia's standing on the global stage, exposed the Russian military's eroded capacity and capability, and caused the mass emigration of Russians to avoid military conscription. Throughout the conflict Russian officials have repeatedly hinted at the possibility of using nuclear weapons, while hardliners in Russia have even called for Russia to attack neighboring countries, including NATO members.

- What is your assessment of the likelihood of nuclear weapons use by Russia in the current conflict?

Answer. As President Biden has said repeatedly, any use of such weapons would be unacceptable and result in severe consequences. Putin's continued nuclear saber-rattling is highly irresponsible and destabilizing. In January 2022, Presidents Putin and Biden joined a statement by leaders of the five permanent members of the U.N. Security Council that affirmed the principle that "a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought." We have pressed Russia to live up to that statement.

Question. If confirmed, in your capacity as the primary American representative to Russia, what actions will you take to ensure the conflict in Ukraine does not evolve into a wider conflict between Russia and NATO?

Answer. Since February, the Alliance has enhanced its defensive posture along the Eastern Flank and has plussed up the readiness of our forces. NATO also made a dramatic shift at the Madrid Summit last summer to move to a centralized, strengthened, and expanded NATO force posture and command structure, which it is now working to implement. This will strengthen our overall deterrence and defense.

The Alliance is, and will be, even better equipped and more responsive to threats in the new security reality we find ourselves in.

Question. In your opinion, how will mobilization affect Russia's ability to continue its war in Ukraine?

Answer. Russia's partial mobilization shows that Russia is losing its war against Ukraine. It also has further negatively impacted Russia's economy and caused tens

of thousands of Russians to flee the country. The United States will continue to support Ukraine to defend its independence and territorial integrity.

Question. In your view, to what extent will mobilization motivate the general population against the war?

Answer. Forced mobilization has caused newfound criticism by Russian elites over Putin's prosecution of the war, which could increase domestic opposition to the war given the now increased direct costs to average Russians. It has also resulted in tens of thousands of Russian men fleeing the country to avoid mobilization, which will have impacts on both society and the economy. However, Putin still controls the main levers of information and thus propaganda to present false narratives about the war against Ukraine.

Question. What effect might popular dissatisfaction have on the Russian leadership's ability to continue to wage war?

Answer. The dissatisfaction among some elites signals dissatisfaction at high levels with the reality that Russia is losing the war in Ukraine. The more money and resources that the Russian government spends, the more dissatisfied the population could become.

Question. If confirmed, how will the American Embassy and consulates in Russia handle cases where Russian citizens apply for refuge in order to escape mobilization?

Answer. We are not aware of requests for assistance of our Embassy by Russians seeking to depart Russia. We are aware of cases of Russian citizens fleeing to other countries in which they may be able to seek protection. Under U.S. law, asylum requests can only be made by a person who is physically present in or has arrived in the United States. Requests for asylum or refugee status are considered on a case-by-case basis and in accordance with U.S. law.

Question. What is your assessment of the effectiveness of the economic sanctions imposed by the international community on Russia and how can those sanctions be strengthened?

Answer. Sanctions and export controls are having significant and long-lasting consequences on Russia's ability to wage war, in Ukraine and in the future. Since February 2022, the United States and our Allies and partners have coordinated to use export controls and sanctions to restrict Russia's access to financing, supplies and spare parts, and advanced technology, all of which have degraded Russia's ability to produce and stockpile weapons to replace those that have been destroyed in the war. The Administration continues to work with Allies and partners to develop options to tighten those sanctions while intensifying efforts to crack down on those attempting to evade our unprecedented sanctions.

Question. If confirmed, representatives of the Russian government will approach you with requests to ease sanctions on specific industries, individuals, or sectors. What is your message to Russian Government officials?

Answer. As long as the Kremlin continues its unprovoked and brutal war against Ukraine and its people, the United States will stand united with Allies and partners in imposing additional costs on Russia. We will continue to mobilize support for the tightening of restrictions on Russia until its stops its aggression and fully withdraws its troops from Ukraine's internationally-recognized borders. If confirmed as Ambassador, I will reinforce this message to Russian officials.

Question. How do you assess the current state of the Russia's bilateral relationship with the CCP and their joint efforts to diminish international norms, human rights, and laws?

Answer. Given Russia's failings on the battlefield in Ukraine, and the extensive sanctions that have been applied to segments of the Russian economy, Russia's relationship with the People's Republic of China seems to be increasingly tilted in the PRC's favor. It is likely Russia will continue working with the PRC to undermine the rules-based international order, as China is increasingly one of the few neighbors willing to engage with Russia at a time when it is most isolated.

Question. If confirmed, what can be done to increase the Russian public's awareness of Russia's growing dependence on the CCP?

Answer. If confirmed, I will continue to work with our public diplomacy staff, as well as likeminded Allies and partners, to message to the Russian people that Russia's relationship with the People's Republic of China is becoming increasingly un-

equal. We can draw on numerous examples from around the world which show the negative long-term effects of such relationships with the People's Republic of China.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO HON. LYNNE M. TRACY BY SENATOR JOHN BARRASSO

Question. Is it the position of the United States that Russia and President Putin committed war crimes in Ukraine?

Answer. The Secretary has stated that the U.S. Government assesses that members of Russia's forces have committed war crimes in Ukraine.

Question. What efforts is the United States taking to help document the war crimes being committed by Russia in Ukraine?

Answer. The United States is fully committed to ensuring accountability for all those responsible for Russia's atrocities and abuses in Ukraine. We are supporting a range of international investigations into atrocities and other abuses in Ukraine. This includes those conducted by the International Criminal Court, the United Nations, and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. The United States has further provided robust support for Ukrainian efforts to document and investigate Russia's atrocities in Ukraine, including by coordinating direct technical support to the Office of the Prosecutor General under the framework of the Atrocity Crimes Advisory Group.

Question. What is the current state of operations of the U.S. Embassy and Consulates in Russia?

Answer. The U.S. Embassy in Moscow remains our sole operating diplomatic post in Russia. Operations at the Consulates General in St. Petersburg, Vladivostok, and Yekaterinburg remain suspended.

Question. In October, the Estonian Prime Minister said Russia is near its "breaking point." She claimed Putin's allies are wavering in their support for the war in Ukraine. What countries are currently supporting Russia's war in Ukraine?

Answer. Belarus has been complicit in Russia's renewed aggression since the start, hosting Russian forces and serving as a launch pad for Russia's full-scale invasion. We continue to hold Belarus accountable for enabling Russia's war. The Administration is also concerned about Russia's growing defense relationship with Iran, including Iran's supply of unmanned aerial systems and military trainers to Russia for use against Ukrainian civilians. The DPRK's support for Russia's war is also of growing concern. The DPRK was one of the few countries to recognize the "independence" of the so-called "Luhansk and Donetsk People's Republics." Moreover, our information indicates the DPRK is covertly supplying Russia with a significant number of artillery shells.

The PRC has offered Russia diplomatic support for its war against Ukraine and has amplified Russian disinformation regarding the war. The United States has warned the PRC that any military support for Russia's war effort, or help in evading sanctions, would have serious consequences. We have not seen evidence of such activity so far.

Question. Do you believe the allies of President Putin are rethinking their support for the war in Ukraine? If so, what lead you to that conclusion?

Answer. Some leaders of states with longstanding relationships with Moscow have indicated growing concern about the war in Ukraine. For example, in September Indian PM Modi told Putin that "today's era is not of war." Russia's renewal of the Black Sea Grain Initiative likewise suggests Russian sensitivity to opinion in the "global south." The Administration is committed to diplomatic efforts to further isolate Russia and is urging more of the "fence-sitter" states to use their contacts with Russia to urge Putin to end this war.

Question. How has Russia's military mobilization impacted the view of the Russian people on Putin's war?

Answer. The fact that so many Russians voted with their feet when Putin announced the military mobilization suggests that a significant segment of the Russian public does not support this unprovoked war in Ukraine. It is estimated that as many Russians fled the country in the weeks following the mobilization announcement as were mobilized. Given the severe curtailment of expression in Russia and the steep penalties for criticizing Putin or the war, it is also likely that many more Russians disapproved of the war but remain silent.

Question. This week Russia unilaterally postponed a technical meeting with U.S. officials on the NEW START (the new Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty.) In August, Russia prevented U.S. inspections of its nuclear arms facilities while continuing to threaten to use nuclear weapons. Marshall Billingslea, the former U.S. presidential envoy for arms control at the State Department, called Russia's actions an "obvious and undeniable violation of the only arms control agreement that it hadn't been violating." Is Russia currently in violation of its New START obligations and commitments?

Answer. The United States has serious concerns with Russia's decision to exempt all of its New START facilities from inspections on an indefinite basis. There is an interagency process to evaluate any country's compliance with its arms control, disarmament, and nonproliferation obligations, which considers a variety of factors. These include the nature and precise language of the obligations undertaken in the context of international law, information regarding the country's activities—including that acquired by so-called National Technical Means of verification, cooperative verification measures, open-source information, and diplomatic means—and any information provided by the country in question over the course of implementation.

Question. If confirmed, how will you address Russia's attempts to use the New START as a bargaining chip for sanctions relief or to change its stance on Ukraine?

Answer. Russia must fulfill its obligations under the New START Treaty. The Administration will not link the requirement for Russia's full implementation of these existing obligations to unrelated issues.

Question. In August, President Biden stated he was ready to "expeditiously negotiate" a new nuclear arms control framework with Russia to replace New START when it expires in 2026. He added that it would require "a willing partner operating in good faith." Do you believe Russia is currently operating in good faith?

Answer. No. Right now, Russia does not meet that requirement, and its refusal to allow resumption of New START inspection activities on its territory.

Question. What leverage does the United States have to negotiate an extension or broader treaty agreement with Russia?

Answer. Strategic stability is in the interest of the United States and our Allies and partners. It is also in Russia's interest. Russia's refusal to resume inspections impacts its ability to monitor accountable U.S. nuclear forces and confirm declared data. As both countries modernize their nuclear arsenals, resuming inspection activity is essential.

Question. In future arms control negotiations with Russia, are you committed to ensuring that the United States is not entering into one sided arms control agreements where the United States is the only party required to actually make reductions?

Answer. The fundamental purpose of nuclear arms control is to promote nuclear stability and lower the danger of unintended escalation. The New START Treaty makes the United States, Russia, and the world safer by preserving verified restrictions on both countries' strategic nuclear arsenals and avoiding an arms race. If confirmed, I will support arms control agreements that are in the national security interests of the United States and its Allies and partners.

Question. In February, President Putin ordered his nuclear forces into special combat readiness. As the Russian army has lost ground in its war in Ukraine, Putin has increased his threats to use nuclear weapons. How close is President Putin to using a nuclear weapon?

Answer. Putin's nuclear saber-rattling is highly irresponsible. The Intelligence Community has reported that it has not seen signs of Russian preparations for nuclear weapon use and the Administration has no reason to change its strategic deterrence posture to defend itself, allies, or partners at this time.

Question. What actions would you recommend the U.S. and NATO take should President Putin use a nuclear weapon?

Answer. As President Biden has said, any use of nuclear weapons would be unacceptable and result in severe consequences.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO HON. JULIE D. FISHER BY SENATOR ROBERT MENENDEZ

Question. U.S.-Eastern Mediterranean Energy Center: When the Eastern Mediterranean Security and Energy Partnership Act of 2019 passed into law, I was hopeful that the Department of Energy and Department of State would put some effort behind this good idea. Now that we are facing serious energy deficits in Europe, it seems obvious to me that this cooperation is essential.

- Do you commit to push for the establishment of the U.S.-Eastern Mediterranean Energy Center to help promote European energy security?

Answer. Yes, I commit to supporting on-going efforts to establish a U.S.-Eastern Mediterranean Energy Center. The Department of Energy has the lead on the East Med Energy Center, and if confirmed, I will work closely with DOE colleagues to advance this effort and ensure such a Center would support the region's energy transition as well as provide opportunities to learn from each other on new energy technologies.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO HON. JULIE D. FISHER BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

State Department Manangement and Public Diplomacy

Question. Many U.S. missions have been under enormous stress over the last few years, in large part due to COVID.

- What is your understanding of morale throughout Mission Cyprus?

Answer. Like many missions, U.S. Embassy Nicosia faced challenges posed by COVID–19. I understand the Embassy team has shown great resilience in their continued service. If confirmed, I can assure you the health and safety of the Mission's personnel and family members will be my top priority. I look forward to working with the talented team and ensuring U.S. Embassy Nicosia is an environment in which all can succeed and grow.

Question. How do you intend to improve morale at Mission Cyprus?

Answer. If confirmed, I will ensure every member of the U.S. Embassy community is treated professionally and with respect. I commit to being accessible to all members of the team including U.S. Direct Hires, Foreign Service Nationals, Eligible Family Members, Members of Household, and contractors. I will work to ensure they are safe and secure, and have the resources and guidance necessary to perform their jobs successfully. We are at our best when we are supported.

Question. How do you intend to create a unified mission and vision at Mission Cyprus?

Answer. If confirmed, I will ensure open and continuous communication throughout the Mission. I will clearly and regularly outline our Mission priorities. It is critical every member of the team understands the Mission's priorities and how each individual's work contributes to the Mission's success. We are at our best when we work together as one team to protect and advance U.S. interests. Furthermore, I am committed to supporting a diverse and inclusive workforce at U.S. Embassy Nicosia. Diversity makes the Mission strong by bringing different perspectives and enhancing creativity and if confirmed, I look forward to working with the team to maximize innovation and effectiveness.

Question. Management is a key responsibility for Chiefs of Mission. How would you describe your management style?

Answer. Over my 27-year career with the Department of State, I have sought to build diverse teams with a clear view of our guiding mission. In prior leadership positions—including as U.S. Special Envoy for Belarus, as Deputy Assistant Secretary, and as Director of the Department's Operations Center—I have led teams and interagency processes with an eye to consensus building among diverse stakeholders. If confirmed, I will seek to create a space that enables and empowers all members of the team to use their voice and find success.

Question. Do you believe it is ever acceptable or constructive to berate subordinates, either in public or private?

Answer. No, it is not acceptable or constructive to berate subordinates, either in public or private. If confirmed, I commit to leading the U.S. Embassy Nicosia team

with respect and professionalism, as I have in previous leadership roles. I will not tolerate unprofessional behavior including bullying or hazing.

Question. How do you envision your leadership relationship with your Deputy Chief of Mission?

Answer. If confirmed, I look forward to a close and productive relationship with the Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM). If confirmed, I will work closely with the DCM to advance U.S. priorities in Cyprus, including protecting the safety and security of Americans, expanding our economic relationship, and advancing shared priorities.

Question. If confirmed, what leadership responsibilities do you intend to entrust to your Deputy Chief of Mission?

Answer. If confirmed, I will entrust the Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM) with responsibility for the day-to-day operations of the Mission and to serve as Chargé d'Affaires in my absence. If confirmed, I will consult closely with the DCM on a broad range of issues, recognizing the extensive experience she brings to this role.

Question. In order to create and continue employee excellence at the Department, accurate and direct employee evaluation reports (EERs) for Foreign Service Officers are imperative, though often lacking.

- Do you believe that it is important to provide employees with accurate, constructive feedback on their performances in order to encourage improvement and reward those who most succeeded in their roles?

Answer. Yes, I believe it is important to provide employees with accurate, constructive feedback on their performance to encourage improvement and reward those who succeed in their roles. If confirmed, I hope to be an inspiring leader with an open-door policy to discuss constructive and timely feedback to enhance and lift the performance of the entire team.

Question. If confirmed, would you support and encourage clear, accurate, and direct feedback to employees in order to improve performance and reward high achievers?

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, I would support and encourage clear, accurate, and direct feedback to employees to improve performance and reward high achievers, as I have done in previous roles.

Question. It is imperative that U.S. diplomats get outside of posts abroad to meet with local actors, including host government officials, non-government organizations, and fellow foreign diplomats stationed in Cyprus.

- In your opinion, do U.S. diplomats get outside of our Embassy walls enough to accomplish fully their missions?

Answer. I firmly believe it is imperative that U.S. diplomats get outside of the Embassy to meet with local citizens, including host government officials, non-governmental organizations and Americans resident in country. In my most recent role, as U.S. Special Envoy for Belarus, I was based in Vilnius, Lithuania because the Belarusian regime refused to grant my visa. I led our engagement with Belarusian citizens in Lithuania, Poland, and other neighboring countries who were fighting for their rights and fundamental freedoms from a neighboring country. If confirmed, I look forward to traveling throughout Cyprus and meeting Cypriots of all backgrounds.

Question. How do you intend to improve the ability of U.S. diplomats to better access all local populations?

Answer. If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with U.S. Embassy Nicosia's Public Affairs Section to use both social and traditional media to reach people across Cyprus. Diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility are also an important part of public diplomacy outreach to ensure efforts reflect the diversity of U.S. society and societies abroad and encourage the involvement of people from traditionally underrepresented audiences. Given the importance of language in signaling respect, I intend to study both Greek and Turkish to be able to communicate directly with the island's two communities. If confirmed, I will work with the Embassy team to leverage engagements with the media, cultural and educational exchange organizations, and individual interactions to expand the people-to-people bonds that are the foundation of our strong bilateral relationship.

Question. Public diplomacy is an important aspect of U.S. foreign policy efforts. What is the public diplomacy environment like in Cyprus?

Answer. The United States has strong academic, cultural, and professional exchanges with the people of Cyprus. As I understand it, despite significant challenges

stemming from the COVID–19 pandemic, U.S. Embassy Nicosia continues to facilitate meaningful cultural exchange across the island's ethnic and political divide. If confirmed, I will work with the Embassy team to leverage relationships with the media, cultural and educational exchange organizations, and individuals to expand the people-to-people bonds that are the foundation of our strong relationship with the Cypriot people.

Question. What public diplomacy challenges do U.S. diplomats face there?

Answer. The COVID–19 pandemic has been a challenge for U.S. diplomats to travel and fully engage face-to-face with host country nationals. As conditions improve, U.S. diplomats have re-started in-person engagements and programs. I understand shrinking media freedoms in the area administered by the Turkish Cypriots also poses a challenge to U.S. Embassy outreach. If confirmed, I look forward to utilizing both traditional and social media targeting Greek- and Turkish-speaking audiences to engage with the Cypriot people, in addition to in-person programs.

Question. How do you balance the importance of Main State versus the in-country mission when it comes to tailoring public diplomacy messages for foreign audiences?

Answer. If confirmed, I look forward to working with all offices at Main State to advance U.S. foreign policy goals in Cyprus. Throughout my career, I have worked in Washington and in the field; I know firsthand that we are one team working to advance the interests of the United States and the American people. I will work to leverage public diplomacy tools to advance bilateral economic and security cooperation, defend democratic values, and deepen people-to-people ties. I will also work to counter adverse influence and mis- and disinformation through engagements with traditional media, communication via social media, institutional outreach, and personal interactions, and through a variety of public diplomacy programming. Working with the public diplomacy team, we will tailor our messaging in a way that is most appropriate for Cypriot audiences.

Question. "Anomalous health incidents," commonly referred to as "Havana Syndrome," have been debilitating and sidelining U.S. diplomats around the world for years. They have caused serious, negative consequences for U.S. diplomacy, yet many believe that the Department is not doing enough to care for, protect, and communicate to its personnel.

- If confirmed, do you commit to taking this threat seriously?

Answer. Yes. If confirmed, there is nothing I will take more seriously than the health and security of the people who will be working with me.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to talking as openly as you can to Mission Nicosia personnel?

Answer. Yes. If confirmed, I commit to sharing what information I can within the bounds of privacy and security concerns with U.S. Embassy Nicosia personnel.

Democracy, Human Rights and International Organizations

Question. In the 2022 Trafficking in Persons Report, Cyprus was upgraded to Tier 1 for its sustained efforts to combat human trafficking.

- How will you work with both Turkish and Cypriot leaders to continue to address these issues if you are confirmed as Ambassador?

Answer. The Government of the Republic of Cyprus (ROC) fully meets the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking and was therefore upgraded to Tier 1 in this year's report. If confirmed, I will work with ROC Government counterparts, civil society activists, and non-governmental organizations to ensure the ROC continues this positive trajectory to combat trafficking. I would focus on the prioritized recommendations outlined in the 2022 report, including on the investigation, prosecution, and conviction of traffickers. I would also work with Turkish Cypriot community leaders, civil society activists, and organizations to address the serious U.S. concerns related to human trafficking in the area outside of ROC government control.

Question. Do you commit to reporting accurate portrayals of the realities of trafficking on the ground in Cyprus to Congress?

Answer. Yes. If given the opportunity to serve, accurate reporting to Congress on human trafficking will remain a priority for me.

Question. In the 2021 International Religious Freedom report, Cyprus was identified as tolerant of religious freedom.

- What is your assessment of this particular issue and if confirmed, how will you work with the Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom to bolster religious freedom in-country?

Answer. If confirmed, I will coordinate closely with the U.S. Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom and their team to advance religious freedom throughout Cyprus. Specific issues noted in the most recent report to Congress: Republic of Cyprus (ROC) officials continued to deny the right to religious practices of animal slaughter and Muslim community leaders reported the government denied community access for religious services at 13 of the 19 mosques designated as cultural heritage sites, while Greek Orthodox, Maronite Catholic, and Armenian Orthodox worshippers reported the "Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus" sometimes denied requests to access religious sites. Jewish community representatives reported authorities performed autopsies on some members of the community whose deaths were not suspicious, which violates Jewish religious beliefs and practice. If confirmed, I plan to meet with community leaders of all faiths, civil society organizations, and ROC government officials to seek their views on religious freedom and tolerance.

Question. In the 2021 Human Rights Report, Cyprus was listed as having significant human rights abuses, including refoulement of refugees, corruption, and threats of violence against minority groups.

- If confirmed, what steps will you take to address these instances with the host government?

Answer. If confirmed, I will press the Republic of Cyprus government and community leaders to address concerns regarding treatment of refugees, corruption, and safety of minority populations among other priorities concerning respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms on the island. I will utilize our annual reporting to Congress to focus U.S. Embassy Nicosia's engagement on human rights issues. I will also use the weight of my office to bring attention to the importance the United States places on these issues and amplify the voices of civil society and other leaders championing progress in those arenas, including via public diplomacy engagements.

Question. How will you direct your Embassy to work with civil society organizations to improve the human rights situation on the ground?

Answer. If confirmed, I would support and encourage my team's outreach to a broad range of civil society organizations to address human rights across the island. I would prioritize meeting with civil society organizations to learn about their work and look for opportunities to champion their contributions and achievements, including by encouraging Cypriot leaders to regularly engage and consult civil society as part of their political process. I understand third country nationals are among the most vulnerable to trafficking and other human rights abuses. Given this, I would include this community as a focus area for U.S. Embassy Nicosia's outreach and support.

Question. Please describe your assessment of the human rights situation in Cyprus.

Answer. I understand the Republic of Cyprus (ROC) government has taken steps to identify, investigate, prosecute, and punish officials who committed human rights abuses and acts of corruptions. However, as highlighted in the 2021 Human Rights Report, there are several significant remaining human rights issues in the ROC. These include substantial interference with the freedom of association of nongovernment organizations; refoulement of asylum seekers; mistreatment of migrants and asylum seekers; serious acts of government corruption; and crimes involving violence or threats of violence targeting members of national or ethnic or minority groups. In the area administered by the Turkish Cypriots, human rights remain a serious concern on many fronts, from freedom of speech and assembly to trafficking in persons. If confirmed, I commit to working with Department of State colleagues to promote human rights issues in my engagements with ROC and Turkish Cypriot counterparts, local non-governmental organizations, and victims.

Question. As Ambassador, how will you help Cyprus confront migration and refugee issues on the island, specifically regarding refugees who have been stranded in the buffer zone between the Republic of Cyprus and northern Cyprus?

Answer. If confirmed, I will partner with the Republic of Cyprus (ROC) government, community leaders, and non-governmental organizations across the island to address the migration and refugee issues on the island. Seams in Europe—including the decades-long division of the island—create serious vulnerabilities for our part-

ners on a diverse set of issues. The issue of refugees stranded in the buffer zone is just one example. If confirmed, I will engage with all relevant parties to ensure such cases are resolved expeditiously and in a manner that respects human dignity. I understand overcrowding and resource gaps are key challenges in immigration reception and detention centers. This is particularly troubling when we know that many unaccompanied children are being housed in unsuitable accommodation and do not have a clear path forward for protection and a durable solution. If given the opportunity to serve, I commit to continuing to prioritize U.S. Embassy Nicosia's participation in programs such as the Julia Taft grant program, which currently supports vulnerable populations in the ROC's primary migrant reception center.

Question. The U.N. peacekeeping mission, UNFICYP, has been in place since the early 1970s and continues to monitor the buffer zone and various points of disagreement between the Republic of Cyprus and the TRNC.

- How will you engage with the U.N. interlocutors on this issue?

Answer. The U.N. Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) plays a critical and stabilizing role on the island. If confirmed, I will continue U.S. engagement with the U.N. Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of UNFICYP to ensure their important work continues. As a member of the U.N. Security Council, the United States plays a key role in the biannual renewal of UNFICYP's mandate. If confirmed, I will work with U.S. Department of State colleagues in Washington and New York to ensure they have an accurate and timely understanding of the situation on the ground.

Question. The U.S. Mission to the U.N. has led previous efforts to streamline U.N. peacekeeping budgets and missions.

- Do you believe that UNFICYP is meeting its mandate? Why or why not?

Answer. The U.N. Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) has a three-part mandate: (1) to prevent a recurrence of fighting, (2) to contribute to the maintenance and restoration of law and order, and (3) to contribute to a return to "normal conditions." On July 28, the U.N. Security Council "expressed its full support for UNFICYP" and unanimously extended UNFICYP's mandate through January 31, 2023. Based on the Council's assessment, I believe UNFICYP is meeting its mandate. If confirmed, I will work with colleagues in Washington and New York to ensure UNFICYP continues to meet its mandate.

Reunification Efforts

Question. How can you work with the U.S. Ambassador in Turkey to assist in de-escalating the narrative around Varosha?

Answer. The United States views Turkish Cypriot actions in Varosha, with the support of Turkey, as provocative, unacceptable, and incompatible with their past commitments to engage constructively on settlement talks. If confirmed, I will work in coordination with colleagues in Washington, New York, and Ankara to continue to urge Turkish Cypriots and Turkey to reverse all steps taken in Varosha since October 2020.

The U.S. has a valuable role to play in the effort to reunify the island of Cyprus. We should work to elevate dialogue between the Republic of Cyprus and Turkish Cypriot leaders in the north, and resist meddling influence coming from Turkey.

Question. As Ambassador, how would you work to mediate discussions between Greek and Turkish Cypriot leaders and facilitate progress toward their unification?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to using the full weight of my office to support Cypriot-led, U.N.-facilitated efforts to reunify Cyprus as a bizonal, bicommunal federation with political equality for all Cypriots and consistent with relevant U.N. Security Council Resolutions. I would actively support U.N.-facilitated efforts at the technical level to expand bicommunal cooperation that improves the quality of life for all Cypriots and would seek to focus on this voices and views of those on the island. I would also meet with the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot negotiators to underscore U.S. support for progress on mutually agreeable issues.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO HON. JULIE D. FISHER BY SENATOR JEANNE SHAHEEN

Question. What efforts can the U.S. promote in Cyprus to combat Russian disinformation about the war in Ukraine?

Answer. I have seen firsthand the positive impact of U.S. leadership in countering Russia's disinformation. If confirmed, I will champion democratic values throughout my engagements, centering the Ukrainian people's fight for democracy as a fight for democracy everywhere. I will leverage public diplomacy tools to counter the Kremlin's disinformation machine through traditional and non-traditional media. I will highlight this issue as I travel across the island and get to know Cypriots of all backgrounds and as I engage with the media. Given the island's long history of political, economic, religious, and cultural ties with Russia—including through the Orthodox faith and a large Russian expatriate community in Cyprus—I will ensure the Embassy's public diplomacy team continues to tailor our messaging to reach Cypriot audiences in a meaningful way. Ensuring Cypriots see the direct, positive impact of alignment with transatlantic partners will be key to countering Russia's disinformation.

Question. What role does the U.S. have in promoting dialogue between Cyprus and Turkey?

Answer. The United States is committed to an Eastern Mediterranean region that is free, peaceful, prosperous, and stable. In this vein, the United States supports efforts to promote dialogue between our NATO Ally Turkey and our partner the Republic of Cyprus. The division of the island remains a significant obstacle to relations between these two countries. If confirmed, I commit to using the full weight of my office to support Cypriot-led, U.N.-facilitated efforts to reunify Cyprus as a bizonal, bicommunal federation with political equality for all Cypriots and consistent with the relevant U.N. Security Council Resolutions. Guarantor powers—the UK, Greece, and Turkey—will all continue to play central roles in this process; I will coordinate closely with my counterpart Chiefs of Mission in those capitals.

Question. Does the United States' current role in the Eastern Mediterranean adequately promote American energy interests?

Answer. Yes, and if confirmed, I commit to continuing to promote U.S. energy interests in Cyprus, in concert with my counterparts throughout the Eastern Mediterranean. Putin's unprovoked war against Ukraine and weaponization of gas underscores our longstanding position that energy cooperation in the Eastern Mediterranean provides a foundation for durable energy security in Europe. The United States supports efforts to develop natural gas resources in the region as part of our policy to support diversification of energy sources and routes in Europe. Currently, U.S. companies Chevron and ExxonMobil have licenses from the Republic of Cyprus (ROC) to explore and develop hydrocarbon resources in three offshore blocks south of the island. These American investments will help Cyprus contribute to European and regional energy security. The ROC also has significant solar energy potential. If confirmed, I will work to promote opportunities for U.S. businesses as Cyprus expands its use of renewable energy. Finally, if confirmed I will build on existing U.S. support for regional electricity interconnector projects—such as the EuroAsia Interconnector—that can support both natural gas and renewable energy sources.

Question. How can the U.S. work more closely with the EU, including in Cyprus, to guarantee continued broad compliance with sanctions against Russia?

Answer. Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine proved a powerful catalyst for the Republic of Cyprus (ROC) to build significantly on the progress it has made in recent years to counter illicit finance. While the ROC has supported all EU sanction packages and actions—including advocating for de-SWIFTing certain Russian institutions ahead of EU unity—enforcement capacity lags. At the request of the ROC government, the Department of State provided a series of technical workshops focused on sanctions compliance and is working with the ROC Government, regulatory authorities, and banking sector to build implementation capacity, including ability to identify sanctioned or Russian or Belarusian-linked entities operating in Cyprus, prevent establishment of new legal entities, trusts, or shell companies in Cyprus by sanctioned Russian individuals, and take appropriate enforcement or mitigating measures against actors that may be connected to the evasion of EU, U.S., or other sanctions regimes. Thus far, ROC officials closed 27 bank accounts tied to sanctioned entities, revoked passports of eight sanctioned Russians and their 27 family members, denied port access to Russian vessels, and took steps to strengthen private sector cooperation through rigorous certification programs. Due to the success of these workshops, the Department has provided similar trainings for additional EU partners vulnerable to sanctions evasion, including the Baltic states. If confirmed, I will be an advocate for continued sanctions cooperation in Cy-

prus to ensure we deny access to the ill-gotten gains of key enablers of Putin's war of choice.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO HON. JULIE D. FISHER BY SENATOR MARCO RUBIO

Question. In May, Secretary Blinken said that the People's Republic of China is the "only country with both the intent to reshape the international order and, increasingly, the economic, diplomatic, military, and technological power to do it." The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) clearly holds all the reins of power in the People's Republic of China and has used this power to commit genocide in Xinjiang, flood our communities with fentanyl, and emit by far the largest quantity of greenhouse gases. As we speak, the Party is cracking down on unprecedented student protests across the country. With their absolute control of Chinese society and industry, the CCP could stop all of these destructive actions tomorrow if they so choose.

- Is the CCP a threat to the United States?

Answer. The President made it clear in his National Security Strategy that the People's Republic of China (PRC) harbors the intention and, increasingly, the capacity to reshape the international order in favor of one that tilts the global playing field to its benefit. As Secretary Blinken said on May 26, we will invest in America, align with our Allies, and compete with the PRC to defend our interests and build our vision for the future. If confirmed, I will strengthen our partnership with the Republic of Cyprus (ROC), including working with the ROC to implement investment screening mechanisms to key technologies, data, and infrastructure from national security risks.

Question. Does the CCP undertake any activities that are beneficial to U.S. interests?

Answer. Although we are strategic competitors, as the President laid out in his National Security Strategy, the United States does not seek conflict or a new Cold War. We and our allies and partners have an opportunity to shape the PRC's external environment in a way that influences their behavior even as we compete with them. The United States' approach towards the PRC focuses on competing with the PRC where our interests and values differ and cooperating with them when they align. If confirmed, I will continue working closely with the Republic of Cyprus to strengthen our shared values of democracy and support for the rules-based order.

Question. Do you believe there are any areas within which the CCP would constructively work with the United States in good faith?

Answer. Although we are strategic competitors, as the President laid out in his National Security Strategy, the United States does not seek conflict or a new Cold War. We and our allies and partners have an opportunity to shape the PRC's external environment in a way that influences their behavior even as we compete with them. The United States' approach towards the PRC focuses on competing with the PRC where our interests and values differ and cooperating with them when they align. If confirmed, I will continue working closely with the Republic of Cyprus to strengthen our shared values of democracy and support for the rules-based order.

Question. If confirmed, will you approve any joint activity with organizations or representatives from the People's Republic of China in Cyprus?

Answer. As the United States National Security Strategy makes clear and as Secretary Blinken said in October, the People's Republic of China (PRC) is the greatest geopolitical challenge that we face because it is the only competitor with the intent, and increasingly the capability, to remake the international order. And Beijing's actions suggest PRC officials have the intention to do so. PRC companies continue to invest in Republic of Cyprus (ROC) infrastructure and the ROC's current mobile telecommunications infrastructure is dominated by Huawei. Both government and private communications companies have been reluctant to adopt measures requiring rapid replacement of this equipment but are increasingly receptive to the U.S. Government arguments about security and data privacy risks. The United States' approach towards the PRC focuses on competing with the PRC where our interests and values differ and cooperating with them when they align. If confirmed, I will support the Administration's policy on the PRC.

Question. Cyprus has been divided since 1974 and remains a source of tension in the region between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots. Turkish Cypriots administer the northern third of the island, backed by Turkish military presence. A U.N.

peacekeeping mission monitors a buffer zone dividing the two areas. For decades, the U.N. has facilitated Cypriot-led negotiations on reunification, which have been unsuccessful to date. Cyprus' foreign policy is driven by close ties to Greece and continual disputes with Turkey. The U.S. cooperates with Cyprus bilaterally through the "Greece-Israel-Cyprus + U.S." format and is at a historic high. My and Senator Menendez' 2019 Eastern Mediterranean Security and Energy Partnership Act authorizes new International Military Education Training program assistance for Cyprus. Despite closer ties, the U.S.-Cyprus relationship may be impacted by developments in the U.S.-Turkey relationship and Cyprus' traditionally close relationship with Russia.

• How do you assess the U.S.-Cyprus bilateral relationship?

Answer. The Republic of Cyprus is a highly valued partner. The United States collaborates bilaterally with the Republic of Cyprus on issues of mutual interest including combatting terrorism, enhancing maritime and border security, and promoting regional stability. Our security cooperation allows us to better respond to challenges in the region. The U.S.-funded regional training center known as CYCLOPS—the Cyprus Center for Land, Open Seas, and Port Security—is an example of bilateral cooperation that benefits the security of the broader region. Our cooperation in multilateral fora, including the 3+1 format, plays an important role in promoting regional cooperation on a broad range of issues. If confirmed, I will work to deepen our efforts in these fields and seek opportunities to expand it into others.

Question. As Ambassador, what would be your priorities for enhancing the relationship and countering Russian malign influence?

Answer. If confirmed, my top bilateral priority will be to continue building our partnership with the Republic of Cyprus (ROC) in the security and economic arenas. I will protect American interests and focus on ensuring a positive role for the ROC in advancing regional security and stability.

I have seen firsthand the positive impact of U.S. leadership in countering Russia's malign influence and disinformation. If confirmed, I will champion democratic values throughout my engagements including highlighting to government and civil society counterparts the Kremlin's malign actions in Cyprus, Europe, and around the globe. I will leverage public diplomacy tools to counter the Kremlin's disinformation machine through traditional and non-traditional media, as I have done in previous roles. I will highlight this issue as I travel across the island and get to know Cypriots of all backgrounds and as I engage with the media. Given the island's long history of political, economic, religious, and cultural ties with Russia—including through the Orthodox faith and a large Russian expatriate community in Cyprus—I will ensure the Embassy's political-economic and public diplomacy teams continue to tailor our private and public messaging to reach Cypriot audiences in a meaningful way. Ensuring Cypriots see the direct, positive impact of alignment with transatlantic partners will be key to countering Russia's malign influence. If confirmed, I will work with the ROC Government to limit the resonance of Russia's malign activity on the island.

Question. How has Russia's 2022 war on Ukraine impacted the economy and security situation of Cyprus?

Answer. Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine called for a unified transatlantic response reflecting the depth of our shared values and respect for the rules-based international order. Beyond the conflict in Ukraine, Putin's war of choice has had second and third-order impacts. Cyprus, a member of the EU since 2004, has weathered significant economic disruption, particularly in the tourism and services sector. In 2019, before the pandemic and EU sanctions following Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Russian tourists accounted for a fifth of tourists to Cyprus—780,000 out of a total of 4 million. In 2022, Russian tourists to Cyprus totaled approximately 20,000. According to the European Commission's May 2022 Economic Forecast, economic activity on the island slowed from 5.5 percent in 2021 to 2.3 percent in 2023 due to the negative impact of Russia's invasion of Ukraine and inflation. I understand the ROC Government views solidarity with Ukraine as a values-based position which will likely continue in any future government. If confirmed, I will work with the ROC Government and engage with the Cypriot people to encourage their continued solidarity with Ukraine.

Question. Cypriot banks have a disproportionately high share of Russian deposits. While Cyprus has tightened its anti-money laundering banking framework, it remains susceptible to exploitation and corruption. To what extent, if any, has the Cypriot economy's exposure to Russia changed since Russia's invasion of Ukraine?

Answer. Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine proved a powerful catalyst for the Republic of Cyprus (ROC) to build significantly on the progress it has made in recent years to counter illicit finance. While the ROC has supported all EU sanction packages and actions—including advocating for de-SWIFTing certain Russian institutions ahead of EU unity—enforcement capacity lags. At the ROC government's request, the U.S. Department of State provided a series of technical workshops focused on sanctions compliance and is working with the government, regulatory authorities, and banking sector to build implementation capacity, including ability to identify sanctioned or Russia or Belarus-linked entities operating in Cyprus, prevent establishment of new legal entities, trusts, or shell companies in Cyprus by sanctioned Russian citizens, and take appropriate enforcement or mitigating measures against actors that may be connected to the evasion of EU, U.S., or other sanctions regimes. Thus far, ROC officials closed 27 bank accounts tied to sanctioned entities, revoked passports of eight sanctioned Russian citizens and their 27 family members and took steps to strengthen private sector cooperation through rigorous certification programs. Due to the workshops' success, the Department has provided similar trainings for additional EU partners vulnerable to sanctions evasion, including the Baltic states. If confirmed, I will be an advocate for continued sanctions cooperation in Cyprus to ensure we deny access to the ill-gotten gains of key enablers of Putin's war of choice.

Question. How do you assess the Republic of Cyprus' response to the war?

Answer. The Republic of Cyprus (ROC) has a long history of political, economic, religious, and cultural ties with Russia, traditionally reaffirmed by regular senior-level visits between Nicosia and Moscow. Despite this, the ROC Government made a clear decision in the wake of Russia's invasion to stand with Ukraine. The ROC has supported all EU sanction packages and actions—including advocating for de-SWIFTing certain Russian institutions ahead of EU unity. In response to Russia's brutal war, the ROC closed its ports to Russian military vessels even before the EU-wide ban, denying refueling and servicing to vessels which engaged in destabilizing actions in Syria, harmed regional security, and contributed to forced displacement. Since February 24, the ROC has welcomed more than 30,000 Ukrainian refugees to Cyprus. Of those 30,000, more than 14,000 have sought temporary protected status in Cyprus. The ROC government provided its largest humanitarian donation in history to Ukraine, including food, medicine, and other critical supplies. The Cypriot people have demonstrated great generosity and humanity in their humanitarian outreach to Ukrainians. They have raised funds, held concerts, attended rallies, and provided food, shelter, and financial assistance to Ukrainians in need. If confirmed, I will work with the ROC Government and the Cypriot people to maintain their important support for Ukraine and international order.

Question. Absent progress by the U.N., how might the United States help reduce tensions in the region, including between Cyprus and Turkey?

Answer. The United States is committed to an Eastern Mediterranean region that is free, peaceful, prosperous, and stable. In this vein, the United States supports efforts to promote dialogue between our NATO Ally Turkey and our partner the Republic of Cyprus. The division of the island remains a significant obstacle to relations between these two countries. If confirmed, I commit to using the full weight of my office to support Cypriot-led, U.N.-facilitated efforts to reunify Cyprus as a bizonal, bicommunal federation with political equality for all Cypriots and consistent with the relevant U.N. Security Council Resolutions. Guarantor powers—the UK, Greece, and Turkey—will all continue to play central roles in this process; if confirmed, I will coordinate closely with my counterpart Chiefs of Mission in those capitals.

Question. What role should the U.S. play surrounding the East Med gas pipeline proposal, which has increased tensions between Cyprus and Turkey?

Answer. Putin's aggression in Ukraine and subsequent actions to disrupt gas supplies to European consumers underscores our longstanding position that energy cooperation in the East Mediterranean provides a foundation for durable energy security and economic prosperity in the East Mediterranean region and the rest of Europe. We remain committed to physically interconnecting East Mediterranean and Middle East energy to Europe. The Administration's stance on the Eastern Mediterranean Gas Pipeline (EMGP) has not changed. We are continuing to shift our focus to electricity interconnectors that can support both natural gas and renewable energy sources. A new pipeline such as the EMGP, which is not under construction, would not contribute to European energy security in the immediate or even medium term. The United States welcomed the agreement reached June 15 among Israel, Egypt, and the EU to provide additional gas from the East Mediterranean to Europe

via LNG. This agreement takes advantage of existing infrastructure and will directly improve Europe's energy security over the short term by reducing dependence on Russian energy sources. If confirmed, I will be an advocate for regional cooperation that can bring sustainable and durable energy security to Cyprus and the region.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO HON. JULIE D. FISHER BY SENATOR TODD YOUNG

Question. If confirmed, how would you support the ongoing efforts to unify the two Cypriot factions?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to using the full weight of my office to support Cypriot-led, U.N.-facilitated efforts to reunify Cyprus as a bizonal, bicommunal federation with political equality for all Cypriots and consistent with the relevant U.N. Security Council Resolutions. With that goal in mind, I would actively support U.N.-facilitated efforts at the technical level to expand bicommunal cooperation that improves the quality of life for all Cypriots. I would meet with the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot negotiators to underscore U.S. support for progress on mutually agreeable issues. I would also be an advocate for continued U.S. Government support for the Committee on Missing Persons, a group committed to returning home the 1,027 victims, including three U.S. citizens, still missing from the 1963-1974 periods of intercommunal violence.

Question. As recently as last month, Al Jazeera reported that Turkish-Cypriot authorities have threatened ousting U.N. peacekeeping officials from their territory. This is due in part to the U.S. decision to remove an embargo on arms sales to Cyprus. Do you agree with the decision to lift the arms embargo to Cyprus?

Answer. I agree with the Secretary's decision to lift defense trade restrictions on the Republic of Cyprus (ROC) for FY 2023. This decision is based on the U.S. Government's assessment the ROC has met the necessary legislative conditions and is consistent with our broader goals of increasing interoperability with our partners and countering potential malign influence by certain actors. I understand the decision was in no way linked to the decades long division of the island and does not signal a change in U.S. policy with respect to Cypriot-led, U.N.-facilitated efforts to reunify the island.

Specifically, the decision was based on the determination that the ROC Government has met the necessary conditions outlined in the Eastern Mediterranean Security and Energy Partnership Act of 2019 and the National Defense Authorization Act for FY 2020. The ROC Government met the first condition by continuing to cooperate with the United States on anti-money laundering regulations and financial regulatory oversight. The ROC Government met the second condition by taking steps to deny Russian military vessels access to Cypriot ports for refueling and servicing. These Russian military vessels engaged in destabilizing actions in Syria, harmed regional security, and contributed to forced displacement.

Question. How will the decision to lift the embargo and the Turkish-Cypriot reaction affect efforts to unify Cyprus?

Answer. The Secretary's decision to lift defense trade restrictions on the Republic of Cyprus for FY 2023 does not reflect a change in the U.S. position on a Cyprus settlement. The United States continues to support a comprehensive settlement to reunify the island as a bizonal, bicommunal federation with political equality for all Cypriots. If confirmed, I will work to counter false narratives related to the U.S. decision to lift defense trade restrictions and seek to build confidence in efforts to reunify Cyprus through U.S. support for issues of mutual benefit to both communities on the island.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO KRISTINA A. KVIEN BY SENATOR ROBERT MENENDEZ

Regions Impacted by Armenia's Attack

Question. Close to a third of Armenian territory was directly impacted by Azerbaijan's September attack.

- Will you commit to visiting the regions impacted by Azerbaijan's recent invasion to better understand the assistance required to help make those communities whole?

Answer. Yes. If confirmed, I will travel to the regions effected by the violence early in my tenure to assess the ongoing impact on those communities and identify resources the United States could provide to meet their needs.

Armenian Genocide

Question. I have long championed recognition of the Armenian genocide. It is important that we recognize this history not only when it is easy, but when it is hard.

- If confirmed, will you raise recognition of the Armenian genocide in regional formats that require you to interact with interlocutors from Turkey and Azerbaijan?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to doing everything in my power to remember the victims of the Armenian genocide and support a peaceful future for Armenia. I will not hesitate to raise the importance of recognizing and remembering the Armenian genocide in any appropriate forum.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO KRISTINA A. KVIEN BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Nagorno-Karabakh

Question. There is serious concern for the wellbeing of ethnic Armenians living in Azerbaijan-controlled Nagorno-Karabakh.

- Does the U.S. believe that specific rights or legal status should be guaranteed to ethnic Armenians living there? If so, what specific rights or legal status should they be guaranteed?

Answer. The ethnic Armenian population of Nagorno-Karabakh is entitled to security, human rights, and fundamental freedoms. The State Department will continue to press Azerbaijan to explain and clarify to this population and the international community, in a way that is transparent and verifiable, how this population will be protected. The State Department continues to raise the need for rights and security for the population of Nagorno-Karabakh in every engagement with Azerbaijan—including with President Aliyev.

Armenia has acknowledged that a conversation between the representatives of the population of Nagorno-Karabakh and the Azerbaijani Government is essential for securing the rights and security of the ethnic Armenian population. The United States has long supported the Helsinki Final Act (1975) principles of Non-Use of Force, Territorial Integrity, and the Equal Rights and Self-Determination of Peoples. While these can serve as guiding principles, the parties to the conflict need to have an honest, open conversation about rights and security and reach an agreement that is acceptable to all sides. This is not something the United States or any outside party can or should decide for them.

Question. What barriers remain before Turkey and Armenia can come to an agreement to open up their borders to each other?

Answer. The United States strongly supports Armenia-Turkey normalization, which would be good for the entire region, and is working bilaterally with both Turkey and Armenia to encourage progress. Both Turkey and Armenia have appointed special envoys for normalization. These envoys have met multiple times and agreed on some initial confidence-building measures. While more needs to be done to advance these negotiations and to implement agreed measures, the Department commends both Armenia and Turkey for taking initial steps in this direction.

Question. What role have we seen the Russian "peacekeepers" play in Nagorno-Karabakh?

Answer. The United States was not involved in the November 9, 2020, ceasefire brokered by Russia between Armenia and Azerbaijan that resulted in the deployment of Russian "peacekeepers" to the region for a term of five years.

A comprehensive settlement to the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan that addresses rights and security and resolves other outstanding issues would obviate the need for Russian "peacekeepers" to remain in the area.

The State Department has not seen anything to indicate that the Russian military presence in Armenia played a mediating role in fighting that broke out in Nagorno-Karabakh in March or along the Armenia-Azerbaijan border in September 2022.

Question. Has the role of Russian "peacekeepers" in Nagorno-Karabakh changed since Russia invaded Ukraine? If so, how has their role changed?

Answer. As with the Russia-brokered ceasefire, the State Department has little visibility into the Russian "peacekeepers" actions in Nagorno-Karabakh.

Armenia and Azerbaijan have both complained publicly about Russian "peacekeeper" responsiveness to developments in and around Nagorno-Karabakh.

Because the United States was not party to the 2020 ceasefire and do not have direct access to the region patrolled by Russian peacekeepers, the State Department is not in a position to independently assess any change in their behavior since February 2022.

Question. How can the U.S., and specifically of U.S. Embassy Yerevan, support conflict prevention and stabilization efforts in conjunction with the OSCE?

Answer. Direct, open constructive discussion and negotiation is essential to the prevention of conflict and the successful conclusion of a sustainable peace between Armenia and Azerbaijan. The United States is helping facilitate this through robust engagement. Recent engagements by the Secretary of State, the National Security Advisor, and other senior Administration officials highlight the extent to which the United States is committed to helping Armenia and Azerbaijan negotiate a long-term political settlement to the conflict.

The United States is engaging bilaterally, with likeminded partners such as the EU, and through international institutions like the OSCE, to facilitate direct dialogue between Azerbaijan and Armenia.

The Department and U.S. Embassy Yerevan continue to develop programs to strengthen and advance ties between the peoples of the region to foster the necessary conditions for developing a shared vision for a peaceful, prosperous, and stable South Caucasus. These programs include Track II initiatives to bring together youth, to strengthen economic ties, and to develop relationships between future political leaders.

Foreign Influence in Armenia and the Caucasus

Question. What is the U.S. doing to stop bad actors like Iran and China from taking advantage of the recent deterioration of Russian influence in the Caucasus region, especially with regard to Armenia?

Answer. While the Department recognizes Armenia's and Azerbaijan's delicate geographic position vis-à-vis Iran, it has consistently encouraged both countries to assess Iran's intentions in the region comprehensively, and to proceed with caution in all dealings involving the Iranian regime. Armenia has committed to implementing U.S. sanctions against Iran, despite the negative economic impact that could result to Armenia's economy.

While the PRC continues to seek inroads into Azerbaijan and Armenia due to its geostrategic neighborhood and its location at regional trade crossroads, so far, the PRC has a limited presence. In Armenia, the Department's priority vis-à-vis China is to urge Armenia to establish fair and reciprocal economic relationships that do not disadvantage American companies. Toward this end, the Department is advocating for passage and implementation of robust investment screening legislation to safeguard regional security and data privacy.

Question. What is your assessment of Armenia-Iran relations and its impact on US national security?

Answer. The Department is aware of efforts by Iran to make headway in the south Caucasus by expanding its political, security, and economic presence. While Armenia and Iran enjoy cordial relations, their ties are mostly official and declarative. Iran cannot offer the types of partnerships the United States can in the economic, political, security, and people-to-people spheres.

While the Department recognizes Armenia's delicate geographic position vis-à-vis Iran, we consistently encourage Armenia to assess Iran's intentions in the region comprehensively, and to proceed with caution in all dealings involving the Iranian regime. Armenia has also committed repeatedly to complying fully with all U.S. sanctions, including against Iran, and has demonstrated good faith in these efforts.

Question. What role do you believe the U.S. Ambassador to Armenia should play in negotiations between Armenia and Azerbaijan?

Answer. I believe the U.S. Ambassador to Armenia should serve as an honest broker with the Government of Armenia and provide Washington with a clear-eyed view of the position of the Government and the situation on the ground, including in the border regions. The Secretary has consistently said that direct dialogue between Armenian and Azerbaijan is the only way to achieve a sustainable peace. The

Department and our Missions in Yerevan and Baku play a critical role to facilitate that dialogue. If confirmed I will continue this effort and work with the Department, my colleagues in Baku, and the U.S. Senior Advisor for Caucasus Negotiations to help further Armenia and Azerbaijan's work toward a comprehensive peace agreement.

Question. What role do you believe the U.S. Ambassador to Armenia should play in negotiations between Armenia and Turkey?

Answer. The State Department strongly supports Armenia-Turkey normalization, which would be good for the entire region.

Both Turkey and Armenia have appointed special envoys for normalization. These envoys have met multiple times and agreed on some initial confidence-building measures. While more needs to be done to advance these negotiations and to implement agreed measures, the Department commends both Armenia and Turkey for taking initial steps in this direction.

If confirmed, I will work with the Department and my counterpart in Turkey, Ambassador Flake, to help facilitate ongoing dialogue between Armenia and Turkey and assist in the implementation of important confidence building measures that the special envoys have agreed to during their recent engagements.

Question. How can the U.S. work in conjunction with the EU efforts toward normalization between Armenia and its neighbors in the region?

Answer. As the Department has said publicly, the United States stands ready to support the peace process bilaterally, multilaterally, and together with partners. This includes our strong support for efforts by EU Council President Charles Michel to bring the leaders together in support of a lasting peace. The Department is in regular contact with our EU counterparts both in Brussels and in capitals and calibrate our bilateral efforts to work in tandem with the EU and maintain momentum for concrete progress toward peace between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Question. If confirmed, how will you leverage your experience as charge d'affaires to Ukraine, given the similarities between Armenia and Ukraine in dealing with a hostile neighbor?

Answer. I saw first-hand in Ukraine the methods Russia uses to exert malign influence and pressure on sovereign nations it considers part of its "sphere of influence," and learned lessons on effective strategies to counter them. If confirmed, I would deploy all the tools at my disposal to strengthen Armenia's ability to freely choose its partners and allies, and to counter Russian disinformation and misinformation. Areas of focus would include strengthening democracy, rule of law, and anti-corruption and other institutions; promoting a diverse energy market that does not rely on a single source; and broadening trade and investment relationships, particularly with the United States.

Question. How do you intend to combat Russian, Iranian, and Chinese disinformation and malign influence in Armenia?

Answer. The best defense against disinformation is a strong U.S. public presence that delivers accurate U.S. messages directly to the public. If confirmed, I would have an active public presence aimed at delivering and defending U.S. messages. The Department has also developed strong tools, such as journalism training and media literacy programs, to combat misinformation and disinformation. If confirmed, I would actively deploy these tools to push back on Russian, Iranian and Chinese disinformation.

Question. In your view, what can the U.S. do to help prevent future outbreaks of armed conflict in the South Caucasus?

Answer. Recent engagements by the Secretary of State, the National Security Advisor, and other senior Administration officials highlight the extent to which the United States is committed to helping Armenia and Azerbaijan negotiate a long-term political settlement to the conflict.

The United States is ready to engage bilaterally, and with likeminded partners such as the EU, and through international institutions like the OSCE, to facilitate direct dialogue between Azerbaijan and Armenia.

Both Armenia and Azerbaijan continue to seek our engagement in the peace process and have continued to engage directly in peace efforts.

Democracy, Human Rights and Reforms

Question. Given the tension between PM Pashinyan and opposition lawmakers in Armenia, how do you intend to engage with both sides to promote stability and democratic reform?

Answer. Nikol Pashinyan's election in 2018 and again during parliamentary elections in 2021 reflects the direction Armenian citizens want their country to go—towards a democratic and inclusive government. I commend PM Pashinyan's democratic reform efforts, which the United States recognized by inviting Armenia to participate in the Summit for Democracy. But I know more work is necessary to help the Armenian Government and its people realize their vision for a durable, vibrant, and inclusive democracy that is economically resilient and responsive to its citizens. If confirmed, I will engage with all stakeholders, including civil society, opposition parties in parliament, and political parties currently outside of government to help Armenia realize this vision.

Question. Reforms to strengthen democratic structures, rule of law, including constitutional reform, reform of the judiciary and combat of fraud and corruption remain tenuous in Armenia.

- In your view, what can be done to ensure systemic and institutional solutions to the governance issues that persist in Armenia?

Answer. Institutions matter. Strong democratic institutions will form the backbone for a fair and inclusive government that meets the needs of all its citizens and makes Armenia a stronger nation better able to defend its sovereignty. An effective and transparent legal and regulatory environment is essential to creating the strong institutions necessary to ensure continued democratic growth. If confirmed, I will work with the Armenian Government, civil society, and opposition leaders, to urge Armenia to adopt important constitutional reforms and enact other key legislation. This is particularly necessary to ensure judicial impartiality and independence and to help a free press grow in Armenia.

Question. What can be done in Armenia to combat gender-based discrimination, particularly gender-biased sex selection in pregnancy? Do you believe that the U.S. Government should be more active in this arena?

Answer. Having the appropriate protections under the law is an essential step in combating discrimination and ensuring equal treatment for all citizens, including women and girls. I understand that Armenia has drafted a law on ensuring equality. If confirmed I will press for Armenia to consider that draft legislation closely to make sure it protects all, including the most vulnerable among Armenian society. I will also urge Armenia to pass and implement the legislation.

Question. In the 2022 Trafficking in Persons report, Armenia remained on Tier 2 for a lack of sustained efforts to combat trafficking in persons. How will you work with civil society and the interagency to bolster anti-trafficking work in country?

Answer. I understand that the Government of Armenia is making significant strides in improving its trafficking in persons record, but more work is needed. If confirmed, I will continue the important reform assistance the Department is providing Armenian law enforcement to deliver security in a manner that is transparent and respects human rights, institutionalizing those reforms and making sure they are adopted throughout Armenia. I will also urge Armenia to adopt all of the U.S. prioritized TIP Report recommendations including making sure first responders consistently screen vulnerable populations for trafficking indicators, adequate training is provided to investigators and prosecutors, and victim-centered policies are established within the judicial process.

Question. In the 2021 Human Rights Report, Armenia was listed as having a litany of human rights abuses, including censorship, child labor, torture, and more. If confirmed, what will you do as Chief of Mission to bolster human rights in country?

Answer. I know that Armenia has taken some steps to ameliorate some human rights concerns, but progress has been uneven. If confirmed, I will work with the Government and all relevant stakeholders to better protect and strengthen the rights of all, including the most vulnerable individuals in Armenia. I will urge the Government to take all necessary steps to prevent any regression in the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Democracy, Human Rights and Reforms

Question. Do you see U.S. economic engagement with Armenia and its neighbors as a means toward building trust, interdependency, and stability in the region?

Answer. Absolutely. As a relatively small, land-locked country with large sections of its borders closed to trade and commerce, Armenia recognizes the importance of improving its economic trajectory by reducing barriers to trade and increasing broad-based economic growth by diversifying its economic and energy base and trad-

ing partners. The United States similarly seeks to expand economic prosperity and opportunity in Armenia through increased trade and investment, energy diversification, and market-oriented economic reforms. If confirmed, I would continue to work with the Government to increase competitiveness, reduce trade and investment barriers, and improve the business-enabling environment in the country. I would also seek to resolve outstanding U. S. company business disputes in Armenia. The United States seeks to deepen our engagement among regional actors by strengthening regional cooperation, advancing reconciliation efforts, resolving lingering disputes relating to international borders, and participating in independent and western-supported economic initiatives and people-to-people programs.

Question. If so, how can the U.S. support economic engagement and integration between Armenia and its neighbors?

Answer. Armenia can improve its economic trajectory by reducing barriers to trade and increasing broad-based economic growth. Promoting increased trade and investment as well as energy diversification and supporting market-oriented economic reforms will directly support regional reconciliation. If confirmed, I would support Armenia's economic resilience and inclusive economic growth by advocating for a level economic playing field and a free-market economy. I would seek to help Armenia improve its capacity to manage natural resources and work with my regional counterparts to increase energy and water security by encouraging engagement among regional neighbors. Ongoing normalization efforts between Armenia and its neighbors Turkey and Azerbaijan are key to this overall effort and have the greatest potential for a positive economic outcome for both Armenia and the wider South Caucasus region.

Question. How can the U.S. encourage investment, including from the U.S. and other countries' private sectors in Armenia?

Answer. Armenia presents a variety of opportunities for investors, and the country's legal framework and government policy aim to attract investment, but the investment climate is not without challenges. Obstacles include Armenia's small market size, relative geographic isolation due to closed borders with Turkey and Azerbaijan, weaknesses in the rule of law and judiciary, and a legacy of corruption.

In May 2015, Armenia signed a Trade and Investment Framework Agreement with the United States. This agreement established a United States-Armenia Council on Trade and Investment to discuss bilateral trade and investment and related issues. In November 2017, Armenia signed a Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement with the European Union, which aimed in part to improve Armenia's investment climate and business environment.

The U.S. supports ongoing anti-corruption efforts to encourage a transparent, fair, and predictable business climate. If confirmed, I will also support dialogue between investors and government officials to resolve problems in an expeditious manner. I would also work to resolve investment disputes between U.S. and Armenian companies, which would send a positive signal about Armenia's investment climate and benefit U.S. investors.

State Department Manangement and Public Diplomacy

Question. Many U.S. Missions have been under enormous stress over the last few years, in large part due to COVID.

- What is your understanding of morale throughout Mission Yerevan?

Answer. My understanding is that Mission Yerevan is very well managed, but morale has been adversely impacted by the 2020 and September 2022 fighting, and the COVID epidemic.

Question. How do you intend to improve morale at Mission Yerevan?

Answer. As a leader, I have found that frequent direct communication and interaction with Embassy teammates, both formal and informal, provide a platform for employees to share their concerns and suggest steps to address those concerns. If confirmed, I would prioritize engagement with all Embassy staff, and follow up quickly and fully when concerns are raised. I would also expect Country Team members to adopt a similar policy, and I would make clear that all Embassy staff must be treated with respect, and that issues of concern be proactively elicited and addressed.

Question. How do you intend to create a unified Mission and vision at Mission Yerevan?

Answer. I am a strong believer in communication and would hold regular town halls and section meetings to reinforce a whole-of-Mission approach, and regularly host informal Mission gatherings to encourage cross-section relationships.

If confirmed, I would begin my tenure by working with the Country Team to develop a clear set of objectives and actions to meet them. I would regularly review these with the Team to gauge progress and make adjustments as necessary. I would reinforce these objectives in my Embassy-wide engagements and make clear my expectation that section chiefs would do the same with their teams.

Question. How would you describe your management style?

Answer. I always strive to create an environment in which team members enjoy their work and feel supported by the Mission.

I consider my management style to be open and inclusive. I believe in engaging all members of my team directly when possible and making clear that my door is open if there is a serious problem to address. I would hold members of my team accountable for inappropriate or illegal behavior.

Question. Do you believe it is ever acceptable or constructive to berate subordinates, either in public or private?

Answer. It is never acceptable to berate subordinates, and, if confirmed, I would make clear to all managers that they are to apply this management principle.

Question. How do you envision your leadership relationship with your Deputy Chief of Mission?

Answer. I consider the relationship with a Deputy Chief of Mission to be fundamentally important, and would seek to include him/her in all decision-making, with an ability to stand in for me if needed. I consider the DCM to be an advisor and second pair of eyes on overall Embassy morale and effectiveness. I would look to my DCM to keep a close watch on Embassy operations and inform me of any significant issues so we can agree on a path forward.

Question. If confirmed, what leadership responsibilities do you intend to entrust to your Deputy Chief of Mission?

Answer. If confirmed, I would ask my DCM to meet regularly with Country Team members to track the work and operations of each Embassy section. I would ask the DCM to chair the Emergency Action Committee, the Law Enforcement Working Group, and other groups that require coordination among the interagency at Post. I would also ask the DCM to lead the First and Second Tour Officer Working Group, aimed at supporting the development of new diplomats, and identify opportunities for me to regularly engage with the members.

Question. In order to create and continue employee excellence at the Department, accurate and direct employee evaluation reports (EERs) for Foreign Service Officers are imperative, though often lacking.

- Do you believe that it is important to provide employees with accurate, constructive feedback on their performances in order to encourage improvement and reward those who most succeeded in their roles?

Answer. Yes, I strongly believe that regular feedback is vital to encourage improvement and award high performance. If confirmed, I would personally ensure the timely, complete, and accurate completion of all Embassy EERs, working with section heads and our management team.

Question. If confirmed, would you support and encourage clear, accurate, and direct feedback to employees in order to improve performance and reward high achievers?

Answer. Yes, I would work with my DCM, Management Counselor and Country Team to ensure that all supervisors provide regular feedback—whether positive or developmental—to their staff. I would also encourage supervisors to take full advantage of the Department Awards Program to recognize high achievers.

Question. In your opinion, do U.S. diplomats get outside of our Embassy walls enough to accomplish fully their missions?

Answer. I consider it imperative that U.S. diplomats get outside of the Embassy to meet with local actors, including host government officials, non-government organizations, and fellow foreign diplomats stationed in Armenia. If confirmed, I pledge to work closely with the Regional Security Office and my management team to keep our employees safe while giving them maximum flexibility to travel the country and meet regional officials and people across Armenia.

Question. How do you intend to improve the ability of U.S. diplomats to better access all local populations?

Answer. I would set an example by spending a significant portion of my time outside the Embassy conducting public diplomacy and meeting with Armenian interlocutors. I would schedule regular travel outside Yerevan to better understand views outside the capital. I would encourage all Embassy personnel to do the same, and would ensure that supervisors apply workload management practices that would allow regular outside engagement. I would leverage the five "American Corners" located throughout Armenia to conduct outreach and public diplomacy.

Question. What is the public diplomacy environment like in Armenia?

Answer. Armenia has a diverse free press and active civil society. The media environment—while rated "not free" by Freedom House—does allow for some independent voices, especially online. Armenia has strong political and economic ties to Russia and the people of Armenia are greatly influenced by Russian media. But there are abundant opportunities for engagement and public diplomacy, as Armenians maintain generally positive attitudes towards the United States and are interested in American views and opinions. Public diplomacy efforts are dedicated to strengthening civil society, exchange opportunities especially from marginalized groups, expanding STEM education and English language learning opportunities, supporting an independent media, and countering disinformation through media literacy.

Question. What public diplomacy challenges do U.S. diplomats face there?

Answer. The Armenian media and information space continues to face challenges amidst growing polarization and an increase in disinformation following Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Russia plays an outsized role in Armenia's media landscape, particularly in covering foreign news. The Public Diplomacy Section is bolstering media literacy, professional exchanges, and education to build up a cadre of professional, independent journalists essential for a functioning democracy

Question. How do you balance the importance of Main State versus the in-country Mission when it comes to tailoring public diplomacy messages for foreign audiences?

Answer. It is important to continue to train, resource, and support Public Diplomacy professionals who are best positioned to listen, engage with, and understand key local audiences, develop targeted strategic communication and outreach plans, and translate foreign policy priorities into effective, tailored messages, as well as monitor and evaluate the success of their programs. Our core Mission objectives align closely with top Department and Administration priorities—strengthening democracy, combating corruption, advancing shared security, and building prosperity—and our Public Diplomacy team creatively tailors and deploys high-level USG messaging to our local audiences. If confirmed, I will work with the Public Diplomacy Section to ensure a continued unified approach to highlighting key U.S. messages and policies in Armenia. The Public Diplomacy Section routinely engages in a wide range of public outreach—through traditional and social media, and in person engagements to inform and engage Armenians about U.S. policy; promote Embassy activities and events; enhance the image of the United States; and provide information on security, voting, and other topics of interest to U.S. citizens; and communicate with the Armenian public.

Question. "Anomalous health incidents," commonly referred to as "Havana Syndrome," have been debilitating and sidelining U.S. diplomats around the world for years. They have caused serious, negative consequences for U.S. diplomacy, yet many believe that the Department is not doing enough to care for, protect, and communicate to its personnel.

- If confirmed, do you commit to taking this threat seriously?

Answer. I take these incidents extremely seriously. I am very aware of Anomalous Health Incidents—including the interagency efforts to protect and care for our personnel and uncover the cause of these incidents. These incidents are an absolute priority for the Department, and it would be an absolute priority for me if I am confirmed.

As the President has said, the health and well-being of American public servants is of paramount importance to the Administration. On a personal level, I have no higher priority than the safety of the members of my Embassy team and their family members.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to talking as openly as you can to Mission Yerevan personnel?

Answer. Yes, I believe strongly in as open and honest communication as possible with all Embassy team members.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO KRISTINA A. KVIEN BY SENATOR JEANNE SHAHEEN

Question. How can the U.S. continue to engage with Armenia to reduce their military and political reliance on Russia, while maintaining our ongoing commitment to peace in Nagorno-Karabakh?

Answer. A strong, democratic Armenia will be in a better position to freely choose their own partners and allies. The assistance provided by the United States to support civil society, electoral processes, energy security, anti-corruption reforms, and trade expansion will all contribute to a stronger Armenia. State Department support for a durable peace agreement with Azerbaijan and normalization with Turkey seeks to broaden Armenia's options for economic and energy diversification.

We regularly discuss security issues with Armenia as part of the U.S.-Armenia Strategic Dialogue mechanism, focusing on areas where we can help Armenia improve capacity and resilience to chart a more independent course. Our assistance fosters interoperability with U.S. and NATO forces, bolsters Armenia's international peacekeeping contributions, supports Armenia's Individual Partnership Action Plan with NATO, and assists with defense reforms. Under the State Partnership Program, the Kansas National Guard works closely with the Armenian military to build capabilities and interoperability with the United States.

Question. The Collective Security Treaty Organization, or CSTO, has allowed Russia to retain influence in the post-Soviet sphere and develop its own regional military alliance, although I understand there are frustrations from the Armenian government in how Russia has reacted to the ongoing Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. The U.S. must continue to work for a peaceful and lasting solution to this conflict.

- To what extent does the CSTO allow Russia to spread disinformation and bolster its military presence in Eastern Europe, and how can the U.S. and Armenia effectively engage to reduce these malign influences?

Answer. Armenia, like every other country—regardless of their geography or history—has the right to pursue its foreign relations as it chooses, in the furtherance of its own interests, and in accordance with international law. No country should attempt to undermine that right.

Russia has utilized CSTO deployments and missions in member states, including Armenia, to create a perception of Russia being a good faith mediator to conflicts in the former USSR. The Kremlin creates and spreads disinformation in an attempt to confuse and overwhelm people about Russia's real actions in Ukraine, Georgia, and elsewhere in Europe. The United States government continues to focus on rebutting and countering Russian disinformation and on shining a light on Russia's malign influence operations.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO KRISTINA A. KVIEN BY SENATOR MARCO RUBIO

Question. In May, Secretary Blinken said that the People's Republic of China is the "only country with both the intent to reshape the international order and, increasingly, the economic, diplomatic, military, and technological power to do it." The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) clearly holds all the reins of power in the People's Republic of China and has used this power to commit genocide in Xinjiang, flood our communities with fentanyl, and emit by far the largest quantity of greenhouse gases. As we speak, the Party is cracking down on unprecedented student protests across the country. With their absolute control of Chinese society and industry, the CCP could stop all of these destructive actions tomorrow if they so choose.

- Is the CCP a threat to the United States?

Answer. The President made it clear in his National Security Strategy that the People's Republic of China (PRC) harbors the intention and, increasingly, the capacity to reshape the international order in favor of one that tilts the global playing field to its benefit. As Secretary Blinken said on May 26, we will invest in America, align with our Allies, and compete with the PRC to defend our interests and build our vision for the future.

If confirmed, I will immediately establish a China working group at Embassy Yerevan to ensure all sections and agencies are tracking and responding to coercive PRC practices in Armenia. I will work closely with the Government of Armenia to defend against these practices, including implementing a robust investment screening mechanism to protect sensitive Armenian industries and critical infrastructure.

Question. Does the CCP undertake any activities that are beneficial to U.S. interests?

Answer. Although we are strategic competitors, as the President laid out in his National Security Strategy, the United States does not seek conflict or a new Cold War. We and our allies and partners have an opportunity to shape the PRC's external environment in a way that influences their behavior even as we compete with them. The United States' approach towards the PRC focuses on competing with the PRC where our interests and values differ and cooperating with them when they align. If confirmed, I will continue working with Armenia to identify PRC attempts to undermine Armenia's security or economy, while strengthening our shared values of democracy and support for a rules-based order.

Question. Do you believe there are any areas within which the CCP would constructively work with the United States in good faith?

Answer. Although we are strategic competitors, as the President laid out in his National Security Strategy, the United States does not seek conflict or a new Cold War. We and our allies and partners have an opportunity to shape the PRC's external environment in a way that influences their behavior even as we compete with them. The United States' approach towards the PRC focuses on competing with the PRC where our interests and values differ and cooperating with them when they align. If confirmed, I will continue working with Armenia to identify PRC attempts to undermine Armenia's security or economy, while strengthening our shared values of democracy and support for a rules-based order.

Question. If confirmed, will you approve any joint activity with organizations or representatives from the People's Republic of China in Armenia?

Answer. As the United States National Security Strategy makes clear and as Secretary Blinken said in October, the People's Republic of China (PRC) is the greatest geopolitical challenge that we face because it is the only competitor with the intent and increasingly the capability to remake the international order. Beijing's actions suggest PRC officials have the intention to do so. The United States' approach towards the PRC focuses on competing with the PRC where our interests and values differ and cooperating with them when they align. If confirmed, I will support the Administration's policy on the PRC.

Question. Armenia remains in a fragile state after the end of a conflict with Azerbaijan in 2020. Armenia's dependence on Russia is a prominent feature of Armenia's foreign policy, security, and economic sector. Armenia has remained neutral to Russia's Ukraine war and has become a destination for many Russian nationals who left Russia's economy, repressive environment, and military mobilization. Some Armenians have questioned Russia's reliability as a security and economic partner, given Putin's Ukraine conflict and failure to prevent Azerbaijan from launching attacks in 2020. Since March 2022, Armenia has indicated a readiness to negotiate with Azerbaijan regarding borders and the status of Nagorno-Karabakh region. Despite the close ties to Russia, the U.S. and Armenia have enjoyed positive relations since 1991. The current government of Nikol Pashinyan had even indicated a break with Armenia's history of pro-Russian foreign policy.

- In your view, how have the events of the past year set the stage for enhancing U.S.-Armenia relations, including a break from Russia?

Answer. Russia's unprovoked, unjustified attack on Ukraine in February made clear to all of Russia's regional allies that Russia is not a reliable partner nor a force for stability in the region. Despite its economic and security ties to Russia, Armenia has not supported Russia's war against Ukraine, and has committed to upholding U.S. and European financial sanctions.

An internally strong, democratic Armenia will be in a better position to freely choose its own partners and allies. The assistance provided by the United States to support civil society, electoral processes, energy security, anti-corruption reforms, and trade expansion will all contribute to a stronger Armenia. U.S. support for a durable peace agreement with Azerbaijan and normalization with Turkey seeks to broaden Armenia's options for economic and energy diversification.

We regularly discuss regional security issues with Armenia as part of the U.S.-Armenia Strategic Dialogue mechanism, focusing on areas where we can help Armenia improve capacity and resilience to chart a more independent course. Our assist-

ance fosters interoperability with U.S. and NATO forces, bolsters Armenia's international peacekeeping contributions, supports Armenia's Individual Partnership Action Plan with NATO, and assists with defense reforms. Under the State Partnership Program, the Kansas National Guard works closely with the Armenian military to build capabilities and interoperability with the United States.

Question. In your view, should the U.S. provide more security assistance to Armenia than Azerbaijan?

Answer. If confirmed, once on the ground in Yerevan, I would carefully review Armenia's assistance needs, including in the security area, and make recommendations to Washington, working closely with Congress. I would take full advantage of the Security and Defense Working Group of our U.S.-Armenia Strategic Dialogue mechanism to address these issues.

Our security assistance fosters interoperability with U.S. and NATO forces, bolsters Armenia's international peacekeeping contributions, supports Armenia's Individual Partnership Action Plan with NATO, and assists with defense reforms. Under the State Partnership Program, the Kansas National Guard works closely with the Armenian military to build capabilities and interoperability with the United States.

Question. In your opinion, what is the future of the Minsk Group and on the status of Nagorno-Karabakh region?

Answer. The United States supports any process that will result in a durable peace. We'll continue to engage in all constructive paths forward, bilaterally and with partners like the EU or the OSCE, in support of a lasting solution to the conflict and the issues stemming from it.

The ethnic Armenian population of Nagorno-Karabakh is entitled to security, human rights and fundamental freedoms. The State Department will continue to press Azerbaijan to explain and clarify to this population and the international community, in a way that is transparent and verifiable, how this population will be protected. The State Department continues to raise the need for rights and security for the population of Nagorno-Karabakh in every engagement with Azerbaijan—including with President Aliyev.

Armenia has acknowledged that a conversation between the representatives of the population of Nagorno-Karabakh and the Azerbaijani government is essential for securing the rights and security of the ethnic Armenian population. The United States has long supported the Helsinki Final Act (1975) principles of Non-Use of Force, Territorial Integrity, and the Equal Rights and Self-Determination of Peoples. While these can serve as guiding principles, the parties to the conflict need to have an honest, open conversation about rights and security and reach an agreement that is acceptable to all sides.

Question. What is the U.S. position on Russian military forces in Nagorno-Karabakh?

Answer. The United States was not involved in the November 9, 2020, ceasefire brokered by Russia between Armenia and Azerbaijan that resulted in the deployment of Russian "peacekeepers" to the region for a term of five years. The U.S. Department of State has not seen anything to indicate that the Russian military presence in Armenia played a mediating role in fighting that broke out in Nagorno-Karabakh in March or along the Armenia-Azerbaijan border in September.

A comprehensive settlement to the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan that addresses rights and security and resolves other outstanding issues would obviate the need for Russian "peacekeepers" to remain in the area. If confirmed, I would do all in my power to support such a settlement.

Question. What is your assessment of Armenia's position and policies with respect to Russia's war against Ukraine?

Answer. The Armenian government has not supported Russia in recent U.N. Security Council Resolutions condemning Russian actions. Armenia has also committed to complying with all financial sanctions against Russia. It is doing so even though these sanctions are potentially detrimental to Armenia's own economy.

I saw first-hand in Ukraine the methods Russia uses to exert malign influence and pressure on sovereign nations it considers part of its "sphere of influence," and learned lessons on effective strategies to counter them. If confirmed, I would deploy all the tools at my disposal to strengthen Armenia's ability to freely choose its partners and allies, and to counter Russian disinformation and misinformation. Areas of focus would include strengthening democracy, rule of law, and anti-corruption and other institutions; promoting a diverse energy market that does not rely on a

single source; and broadening trade and investment relationships, particularly with the United States.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO CAROL SPAHN BY SENATOR ROBERT MENENDEZ

Congressional Notifications

Question. Do you commit to ensuring that the Peace Corps keeps the Senate Foreign Relations Committee fully and currently informed of its activities and to ensure that the Congressional Notifications the agency transmits to the committee are not older than two years?

Answer. Yes

Question. Do you commit to instructing the Peace Corps to discard any Congressional Notification (CN) of more than two years of age so as to ensure that CNs are current when transmitted to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee?

Answer. Yes

Peace Corps Return to Service

Question. In March 2020, Peace Corps made the difficult decision to suspend volunteer operations overseas due to the pandemic. This year, Peace Corps has successfully sent over 750 volunteers and Trainees to serve in 32 countries.

- What are your plans for returning to a full cohort of volunteers?

Answer. As of December 2022, the Peace Corps has returned volunteers to service in 45 countries with approximately 900 volunteers on the ground. Currently, the Peace Corps is issuing invitations for volunteers to serve in 11 additional countries, bringing the total up to 56. The agency's top priority is returning volunteers to service overseas in a way that is safe for them, our staff, and the host communities in which volunteers live and work. To that end, that is why the Peace Corps has developed and applied a comprehensive re-entry strategy and assessment process and began service return with small cohorts to ensure systems function effectively to support scale-up.

The Peace Corps is making every effort to return to pre-pandemic service levels. The agency is keenly aware of areas of attention and monitoring that may impact our immediate success, such as recruitment challenges and conflict in countries where the Peace Corps maintains a presence.

Like other employers, including service-oriented organizations, the Peace Corps is facing challenges with recruitment of qualified candidates. This is exacerbated by continued uncertainty related to COVID–19 and its impact around the world. To attract new candidates, the Peace Corps has launched a robust social media campaign, is reinvigorating its in-person recruiting schedule, and will begin a new marketing campaign specifically designed to target the young Americans that make up the bulk of our volunteer cohorts.

As we navigate the challenges of conflict and instability in some countries where the agency has had a strong presence in the past, we are also working on country agreements for a return to Solomon Islands and El Salvador. We have also received and are assessing formal invitations from additional countries that have requested Peace Corps presence.

The agency is moving ahead with returning volunteers to service and I am confident that the Peace Corps will have a robust cohort of qualified volunteers serving globally by 2025.

Question. What do you believe are the appropriate health and safety protocols in order to continue sending volunteers abroad and how do you plan to implement these protocols?

Answer. The health, safety, and security of Peace Corps volunteers are the agency's highest priorities. The Peace Corps has traditionally operated in some very challenging environments across the globe, and the very nature of Peace Corps service entails risk. The Peace Corps' approach to safety and security is an engaged partnership involving the agency, the volunteer, and the communities we serve. Each entity plays a unique and important role in enhancing the safety of the volunteer. Therefore, we devote significant resources to train staff, community members and volunteers; a robust site selection process; and the implementation of comprehensive emergency response systems. We engage and coordinate closely with the United States Embassy in each Peace Corps country, as well as with our local and commu-

nity partners who play a fundamental role in assisting our volunteers to identify risks and adopt culturally appropriate strategies to enhance their own safety and security, reducing risk where possible.

To ensure that the agency is ready to meet today's security challenges, the Peace Corps has made a number of systemic improvements to our safety and security tools including: enhanced site development and site selection criteria; a comprehensive review and update of our emergency action planning process; updated global safety and security core training sessions; and a new security management system to track crimes committed against volunteers and the support services offered by the agency. The Office of Safety and Security (OSS) at headquarters has invested significant time to train Safety and Security Managers at each post on the updated policies, systems, and operational changes. Additionally, the agency provides applicants with safety data specific to their proposed country of service, so that applicants can make informed decisions before accepting the invitation to serve.

In response to the ongoing COVID–19 pandemic, the Peace Corps has taken concrete steps to improve its capacity to anticipate and meet challenges associated with public health emergencies. These steps include establishing new and alternative medical evacuation options, devising specific protocols and emergency plans for volunteers to prevent or address infection, adapting medical clearance requirements to take into consideration COVID risk factors, and reengineering virtually every aspect of programming and operations to mitigate risk, wherever possible. As anticipated, volunteers have tested positive for COVID–19 since returning to service; however, all individuals have experienced mild symptoms, and the impacts to the local community have been minimized, largely due to protocols and emergency plans in place.

The agency also recognizes the need for expanded mental health support for volunteers following the pandemic. The agency has enhanced our capabilities to provide coaching and support available to volunteers. The Peace Corps will rely on our decades of experience in emergency response to continuously monitor COVID–19 conditions and make informed decisions. If confirmed, I will continue to support these efforts with a keen focus on agility and adaptability, which have always been central to how the Peace Corps operates.

Question. What specific steps will you take to ensure that all sites selected for volunteer placement are safe for volunteers? What criteria would you use?

Answer. The Peace Corps devotes significant resources toward the identification, review, and selection of sites for volunteer placements. Each Peace Corps post ("post" is the term for a Peace Corps office in a host country) has country-specific criteria and procedures that it uses to assess prospective sites that address local safety, security, housing standards, communication, transportation, and emergency medical services. In 2021, in a major enhancement of our information technology with regard to security, the agency implemented our Site Incident Management System (SIMS), which allows us to better document and analyze crimes and specifically match them with individual sites to ensure that proposed sites do not have a history of crime incidents that would preclude placement of future volunteers. SIMS also enables the Peace Corps to provide a complete record of support and services provided to volunteers who experience any crime during service. Each site is reviewed and approved by a multi-disciplinary team that consists of security, medical, and programming staff. Furthermore, site-specific information collected during this process is stored in our online database for future use and reference. If confirmed, I will continue to support the offices involved in site selection to ensure that all of our sites meet the agency's criteria for our volunteers.

Our staff are trained in their roles and responsibilities within this process and the Peace Corps' regional Safety and Security Officers routinely visit each post to evaluate local systems and work with local staff to enhance and strengthen the overall process where needed. On a broader level, Peace Corps Country Directors at each post are part of the U.S. Embassy's Emergency Action Committee and work closely with State Department officials and local and community partners to stay abreast of new or emerging trends.

Question. As Peace Corps volunteers return to conflict ridden countries, how will you assess whether volunteers are safe to return and what safety mechanism will you put in place in case of an emergency while volunteers were in-country?

Answer. Our top priority is returning volunteers to service overseas in a way that is safe for them, our staff, and the host communities in which they will live and work. Since the global evacuation of Peace Corps volunteers, the agency has developed and applied a comprehensive re-entry strategy and assessment process, that includes specific medical, security, programmatic, administrative, and logistical criteria that each post must meet prior to consideration for re-entry. As part of this

process, the Peace Corps coordinates closely with post staff, host country partners and government officials, as well as with our interagency partners, to continuously monitor conditions on the ground and guide site placement.

The Peace Corps has significant experience working in a variety of complex settings and has robust systems to identify and respond to risk. For example, each Peace Corps post has a comprehensive Emergency Action Plan (EAP) that is designed to address threats specific to that country. These plans provide in-depth guidance and instructions to both staff and volunteers on how to plan for and respond to emergency situations. Staff and volunteers are trained on their roles and responsibilities within the EAP. The U.S. Embassy in country is also provided with a copy of the Peace Corps EAP.

If conditions in a country deteriorate from the time of initial invitation to a volunteer's enter-on-duty date, such that it is no longer safe for volunteer service the Peace Corps works with invitees to offer an alternate placement.

Question. What are the strategies that you are implementing to ensure that volunteer recruitment is both robust and high quality, so that it meets the needs of our partners abroad and our goals for an agency that advances core equity and inclusion goals?

Answer. As a people-to-people development agency operating in a complex global environment, understanding and respecting other cultures while representing the diversity of the U.S. is crucial to the Peace Corps' success in fulfilling its mission to promote world peace and friendship. The Peace Corps will continue to prioritize the recruitment of, and support for, volunteers who represent the full diversity of the United States and who can support the development priorities of host communities. The Peace Corps' Office of volunteer Recruitment and Selection (VRS) prioritizes attracting applicants that meet the needs of posts and the local communities we serve. To that end, we work to match potential volunteer skillsets with host community requirements. Recruiters work with applicants to successfully navigate and address each element of the application to be as competitive as possible. Furthermore, placement staff carefully review and assess each application to ensure they are invited to serve in a country where their skills and experience are best suited.

One of our focus areas, as outlined in the agency's strategic plan, is to recruit and retain a volunteer cadre that reflects the diversity of America. To meet that goal, VRS is executing a targeted recruitment strategy designed to increase the Peace Corps' presence and awareness in underrepresented and underserved communities. Ultimately, this work will help build a pipeline of individuals from diverse backgrounds, who will become future Peace Corps volunteers. VRS fosters formal partnerships and pursues other engagement opportunities with educational institutions, including several Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs). This calendar year, VRS has placed an emphasis on greater engagement with smaller, often less resourced MSIs, to learn more about the needs of each institution and their unique student body. To this end, we are working to establish and sustain university partnerships that are instrumental to introducing the opportunities that exist in international service through the Peace Corps to diverse student audiences and prepare them for success in the application process and eventual service.

At the interagency level, the Peace Corps also actively participates in the White House Initiative on Advancing Educational Equity, Excellence and Economic Opportunity through Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). Through this initiative, the Peace Corps promotes service opportunities within the HBCU community by engaging directly with faculty and staff to develop and sustain mutually beneficial relationships.

Additionally, VRS is working to build strong partnerships with organizations, institutions, and community groups that support and reflect the diversity of our nation. VRS is training the entire recruitment team to effectively recruit future volunteers from all backgrounds. This ensures that every Peace Corps recruiter has the language, tools, resources, and strategies necessary to successfully conduct outreach to underrepresented populations in communities across the nation.

The agency is also working to attract Americans of all socioeconomic backgrounds to Peace Corps service, which requires intentional work to reduce financial barriers in the application process. In support of this effort, the Peace Corps has determined that applicants can be fully reimbursed for all eligible expenses required for medical clearance. Additionally, in calendar year 2023, the Peace Corps will conduct a barrier analysis, as called for in our strategic plan, and use the resulting data to determine how to identify and reduce barriers along the path to and through service., including socioeconomic ones.

As the Peace Corps returns to service in an uncertain environment, I am committed to continuous review and evaluation of our strategies and structures to attract a robust and diverse cadre of volunteers.

Safety of Peace Corps Volunteers

Question. A key provision in the Sam Farr and Nick Castle Reform Act, passed by Congress in 2018, outlines seven criteria to be met in the hiring of well-qualified and capable medical officers and support staff for overseas Peace Corps posts, and for the Agency to review and evaluate performance and health care delivery of all Peace Corp medical staff.

- How would you assess the success rate of the agency hiring overseas medical staff who meet the criteria outlined in this legislation? If you are facing difficulties, what are the challenges in fulfilling this provision?

Answer. The Peace Corps has been able to hire candidates who meet the criteria set forth in the Farr-Castle Act through the agency's improved Peace Corps Medical Officer (PCMO) hiring process, employing a multi-faceted recruitment strategy and a rigorous interview and credentialing process that establishes standards for the review and verification of the education, training, expertise, and license of PCMO candidates. To date, 100 percent of the PCMO roles are filled in an average time of 7 months from vacancy to start date.

New PCMOs participate in an intensive mentoring process, whereby an experienced PCMO provides guidance to the new PCMO for a minimum of three months. New PCMOs also attend Overseas Staff Training where they receive an in-depth overview of key Peace Corps' policies and procedures. They are required to obtain 50 hours per year of continuing medical education and participate in annual Peace Corps Continuing Medical Education conferences. PCMOs receive annual evaluations, which include an assessment of their professional performance, and clinical and technical skills.

The agency has developed a formal process to assess the health staffing needs of each post based on criteria such as the number of volunteers, the number of medical accommodations, country conditions, and health care services available in the country.

The primary challenge in filling vacancies is the length of time required to recruit, credential, train, and clear new PCMOs for service. To ensure compliance with requirements to have two PCMOs at each post, the agency utilizes temporary assignments, rovers, and intermittent experts.

Question. There is an apparent need to update and codify many reforms and improvement to the agency's work. What is your view of the Peace Corps Reauthorization Act of 2022, and what are the benefits to the Peace Corps that this legislation will bring?

Answer. I welcome the committee's bipartisan leadership to strengthen the Peace Corps by addressing a number of issues through the Peace Corps Reauthorization Act of 2022. This legislation will make several significant changes that will further enhance the ability of the Peace Corps and our volunteers to represent America abroad and to bring those skills back to the United States. Some of the specific benefits to the agency and volunteers in the bill include:

- Increasing the statutory minimum for volunteer monthly readjustment allowance from $125 to $375;
- Codifying the suspension of loan payment obligations and accrual of interest on certain federal student loans during service by volunteers and granting credit for any federal loan forgiveness program;
- Making it easier for volunteers whose service has been disrupted by emergencies to resume service;
- Enhancing post-service support for volunteers, which will help their transition back to the United States;
- Codifying the extension of non-competitive eligibility for federal employment for returned volunteers, which can strengthen recruitment of volunteers and should also benefit the State Department, U.S. Agency for International Development, and other federal agencies by making it easier for returned volunteers to continue their public service at those agencies;
- Renewing the Sexual Assault Advisory Committee, which, if confirmed, I will continue even in the absence of legislation;
- Codifying and enhancing existing policies protecting volunteers against reprisal or retaliation; and

- Issuing authority to suspend employees without pay pending investigations leading up to final decisions on cases of removal for misconduct (an authority the Peace Corps currently does not have).

OIG Semi-Annual Report

Question. The most recent Peace Corps Office of Inspector General semi-annual report outlined two areas of concern: the incomplete migration of crime data to the new volunteer Information Database Application system due to technical issues and its potential impact on volunteer safety and the need to establish a comprehensive Enterprise Risk Management program and develop a strategy and structure that integrates information security into business operations:

- Do you commit to working to implement the recommended changes from the Peace Corps Office of the Inspector General semi-annual report?

Answer. Yes. I will also note that during the time that I served as Acting Director or Chief Executive Officer of the Peace Corps, starting in January 2021 until November 2022, the agency reduced the number of open recommendations from the Office of the Inspector General by 80 percent. I am committed to continuing this effort, if confirmed.

Ethiopia Re-Entry

Question. The Peace Corps recently notified Congress of its intention to resume the mission to Ethiopia, where there is ongoing unrest in various parts of the country, and the Abiy Ahmed regime's record of governance and human rights violations is troubling.

- Can you explain how the Peace Corps reached its decision to resume the Peace Corps mission to Ethiopia?

Answer. In April of this year, Peace Corps security staff conducted an in-depth, on-theground assessment that focused on the conflict, terrorism, crime, environmental threats, and emergency planning. During the assessment, Peace Corps security staff met with U.S. Embassy officials, local and regional law enforcement, local partners, United Nations officials, and international non-governmental organizations. The 2022 assessment included significant travel in the areas around the Peace Corps regional offices in Jimma and Hawassa, as well as the Butajira training site. Based on the information gathered during the assessment, the Peace Corps security staff recommended restricting volunteer travel and site placements to these regions in the southern half of the country, along with sites that could be supported out of the main Peace Corps office in Addis Ababa.

The overall security situation in the country deteriorated after our assessment was concluded and after a Congressional Notification was submitted to Congress to begin the re-entry process of volunteers. As a result, the Peace Corps has paused the reentry process. We have identified a series of decision points to assist in monitoring developments on the ground to determine when and if conditions permit the return of volunteers. These include, but are not limited to, the successful implementation of the peace treaty, a prolonged and sustained cease-fire, resumption of humanitarian aid to the north, and withdrawal of Eritrean forces.

I commit, if confirmed, to continued consultation with you, the Ranking Member, and your respective staff regarding the Peace Corps' presence in Ethiopia.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO CAROL SPAHN BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Management

Question. What is your understanding of morale throughout the Peace Corps?

Answer. Volunteer morale is an area we closely monitor. In the last available five years of data (20142019), we have seen a high level of satisfaction among volunteers, with more than 80 percent saying they would recommend Peace Corps service to others. Voluntary resignations have remained relatively stable and at a low level, with between 6 percent and 7 percent of volunteers resigning annually between 2015 and 2019.

We prioritize staff morale; it is critical to the success of the agency. Based on the 2021 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS), 82 percent of Peace Corps staff say it is a good place to work and 75 percent say they are very satisfied or satisfied with their job.

Question. How do you intend to improve morale within the Peace Corps?

Answer. Since the global evacuation, the Peace Corps has received feedback from a variety of stakeholders, including staff, returned volunteers, and the National Peace Corps Association. This feedback encompassed a broad range of topics that impact our stakeholders at a deeply personal level, including diversity, equity, inclusion, accountability, and sexual assault. As I was serving as Acting Director and Chief Executive Officer, we embraced this feedback, listened, and adjusted our training, systems, and policies accordingly to ensure that all volunteers not only have a positive service experience in the communities in which they serve, but also have a positive experience with the Peace Corps, as an agency.

To date, our work to improve morale has included extensive training with staff to expand skill sets in diversity, equity and inclusion as well as in active listening and trauma-informed care. As an agency, we are also acutely aware of the challenges brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic and how it may impact the volunteer experience. To that end, we have expanded mental health and coaching services. In addition, we have established a return to service working group that is continuously evaluating reentry challenges that may impact volunteer morale, and proposing policy and other changes, when appropriate.

Robust training, effective site management, and responsive, empathetic volunteer support also contribute to a productive and rewarding service experience. During the period without volunteers abroad, the Peace Corps intensified implementation of process improvements, training, and quality checks in these areas. This includes the culmination of a multi-year project, in collaboration with host country partners and volunteers, to implement logical project frameworks, streamline reporting, and roll out a new competency-based training model.

While the agency made significant, meaningful reforms and engaged in urgent COVID-19 response and recovery efforts during the period with no volunteers in the field, it has been a challenging time for Peace Corps staff. In addition to managing significant uncertainty on a personal and professional level, it has required constant adaptation. During this period, I have prioritized proactive and transparent communication, implemented remote and hybrid work structures, and ensured broad engagement in strategic planning and implementation. We have also engaged staff across functions and across borders in new communities of practice, supported staff development, celebrated the accomplishments of teams across the agency, and focused on wellness. To guide this work, we utilized FEVS and host country staff surveys to ensure that staff in the U.S. and overseas are supported and have the tools they need to do their jobs effectively and efficiently.

If confirmed, I am committed to a continuous process of proactive engagement and learning as we navigate the complexities of operating in today's environment, and to adapt, as necessary, to the evolving needs of a global workforce to attract and retain talent.

Question. How do you intend to create a unified mission and vision at the Peace Corps?

Answer. The Peace Corps' mission and three goals are codified in the Peace Corps Act and are incorporated into everything we do as an agency. I have never served in an organization whose mission is so clear and whose staff, volunteers, returned volunteers and other stakeholders identify so closely with the values that drive the implementation of that mission.

When I was serving as Acting Director, the agency engaged staff at all levels in the development of the agency's Fiscal Year 2022-2026 Strategic Plan. This process allowed us to collaborate and identify shared priorities for how we will further our mission over the next four years. Progress towards the plan is reviewed quarterly to ensure focus and prioritization. If confirmed, I will continue efforts to engage broadly as we adapt and innovate to meet the evolving needs of volunteers and host countries.

Question. Management is a key responsibility for agency executives. How would you describe your management style?

Answer. I would describe my management style as adaptive. The uncertainty inherent in today's global environment requires continuous evaluation and adjustment in response to a rapidly changing context.

The Peace Corps is a very dynamic agency working in complex environments around the world. Strong systems and clear decision making are essential. Having managed in a variety of functional and programmatic areas, cross-cultural settings, and external environments, I am able to manage holistically and strategically.

Question. Do you believe it is ever acceptable or constructive to berate subordinates, either in public or private?

Answer. No.

Question. How do you envision your leadership relationship with your deputy?

Answer. I envision my leadership relationship with my deputy to be driven by deep trust and strategic and operational alignment; and I would invest significant time and energy into developing a seamless working relationship.

Question. If confirmed, what leadership responsibilities do you intend to entrust to your deputy?

Answer. I believe in fully leveraging complementary skill sets to maximize the effectiveness of leadership teams. Generally speaking, I would entrust significant day-to-day management responsibilities to the deputy and would focus primarily on strategic and representational duties of the Director, if confirmed.

Question. "Anomalous health incidents," commonly referred to as "Havana Syndrome," have been debilitating and sidelining U.S. diplomats around the world for years. They have caused serious, negative consequences for U.S. diplomacy, yet many believe that the Department is not doing enough to care for, protect, and communicate to its personnel.

- If confirmed, do you commit to taking this threat seriously?

Answer. Yes.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to talking as openly as you can to Peace Corps employees and volunteers about this serious issue?

Answer. Yes.

Question. As you may be aware, there is significant congressional concern in reopening the Peace Corps in Ethiopia. However, due to the unpredictable nature of the conflict and serious security concerns, it is my opinion that this not go forward at this time. Therefore, I have placed a formal hold on the Congressional Notification (CN) currently before the committee.

- Do you commit to honoring this hold and pausing re-entry protocol into Ethiopia?

Answer. Given the change in the overall security situation in the country after the CN was sent to the Committee, the Peace Corps has paused the re-entry process, and will not contest the hold. I commit, if confirmed, to continued consultation with your staff and that of the Chairman should conditions change on the ground, as indicated in the response to the next question.

Question. What criteria did the Peace Corps use to assess the safety and security of volunteers in the country? Please be detailed.

Answer. In April of this year, Peace Corps security staff conducted an in-depth, on-the-ground assessment that focused on the conflict, terrorism, crime, environmental threats, and emergency planning. During the assessment, Peace Corps security staff met with U.S. Embassy officials, local and regional law enforcement, local partners, United Nations officials, and international non-governmental organizations. The 2022 assessment included significant travel in the areas around the Peace Corps regional offices in Jimma and Hawassa as well as the Butajira training site. Based on the information gathered during the assessment, the Peace Corps security staff recommended restricting volunteer travel and site placements to these regions in the southern half of the country, along with sites that could be supported out of the main Peace Corps office in Addis Ababa.

Given that the overall security situation in the country changed after our assessment was concluded and the CN was submitted, the Peace Corps has paused the re-entry process. We have developed a series of decision points to assist us in monitoring developments on the ground to determine when and if conditions permit the return of volunteers. These include, but are not limited to, the successful implementation of the peace treaty, a prolonged and sustained ceasefire, resumption of humanitarian aid to the north, and withdrawal of Eritrean forces.

I commit, if confirmed, to continued consultation with you, the Chairman, and your respective staff regarding the Peace Corps presence in Ethiopia.

Question. There have been several public incidents presenting major safety and security concerns regarding Peace Corps volunteers. What steps has the Peace Corps taken in the last two years (since the global evacuation in March 2020) to address this short fall, and how have safety and security measures improved for those re-entering service? Please be detailed.

Answer. The health, safety, and security of Peace Corps volunteers are the agency's highest priorities. The Peace Corps has traditionally operated in some very challenging environments across the globe, and the very nature of Peace Corps service entails risk. The Peace Corps approach to safety and security is an engaged partner-

ship involving the agency, the volunteer, and the communities we serve. Each has a unique and important role to play in enhancing the safety of the volunteer.

Therefore, we devote significant resources towards the training of our staff, community members and volunteers, a robust site selection process, and the implementation of comprehensive emergency response systems. We engage and coordinate closely with the United States Embassy in each Peace Corps country, as well as with our local and community partners who play a fundamental role in assisting our volunteers in identifying risks and adopting culturally appropriate strategies to enhance their own safety and security, reducing risk where possible.

To ensure that the agency is ready to meet today's security challenges, the Peace Corps has made a number of systemic improvements to our safety and security tools including: enhancing our site development and site selection criteria; conducting a comprehensive review and update of our emergency action planning process; updating our global safety and security core training sessions; and rolling out a new security management system to track crimes committed against and services offered to volunteers. We have also devoted significant time to providing our onthe-ground Safety and Security Managers with training on these updates and we are providing applicants with crime data specific to their proposed country of service prior to service.

Question. Sexual assault of volunteers continues to generate significant public and congressional attention. Thanks to the 2011 Kate Puzey Act and the Farr-Castle Act, the Peace Corps was given new tools to curb this scourge. Please explain the Peace Corps efforts to continue to combat sexual assault of volunteers in the field.

Answer. The health, safety, security, and wellbeing of volunteers is paramount and lies at the center of all our operational decisions; any crime against a volunteer is one too many. Our work in sexual assault prevention, risk reduction, and response is rooted in the fundamental values of equity and human dignity. volunteers who are victims of sexual assault during their service receive extensive support as it relates to their safety, medical and psychological care, legal options, and continued service with the Peace Corps. This is a whole-of agency effort and our work to continuously improve the program is an agency priority.

I am grateful for the support of Congress for the Peace Corps' work in this regard and particularly for the authorities provided in the Kate Puzey and Farr-Castle Acts. In fact, as Acting Director, I utilized the authorities provided by the Farr-Castle Act to exempt key personnel in the Office of Health Services, including our behavioral health team, from the time limits placed on career staff service under the Peace Corps Act.

In March 2022, we released a roadmap, Peace Corps Commits to Broadening its Approach to Sexual Assault Prevention in New Brief and Roadmap, detailing the agency's commitment to further strengthening our systems, programming and approach to sexual assault prevention and to improving trauma-informed approaches to supporting survivors. This approach expands beyond the safety and security of individuals and takes into account the health, safety, and wellbeing of entire populations. With a public health lens, practitioners consider how context, norms, and social determinants impact behavior, such as perpetrating sexual violence.

Since the evacuation, and in preparation for returning volunteers to service abroad, the Peace Corps rolled out a new post-level case management process that ensures our overseas staff proactively and formally review sexual assault cases, identify challenges and areas for improvement with every documented case, and confirm that all appropriate measures are followed. We have improved our systems to ensure that volunteers who experience sexual assault and request counseling services receive timely follow-up and care through telehealth services to ensure rapid access to clinical care. We have also enhanced orientation of host families, standardized vetting protocols, and implemented a number of new policies and procedures. This has included significant new training for post staff, including Peace Corps Medical Officers and Sexual Assault Response Liaisons.

Earlier this year, the Peace Corps hired a Prevention Specialist who is currently developing a formal, comprehensive sexual assault prevention and response strategy by evaluating agencywide activities and applying promising practices and evidence-based research. The specialist is conducting a gap analysis and needs assessment to inform our overall prevention strategy.

The intra-agency team has also prioritized and worked diligently to resolve all of the Office of Inspector General's outstanding recommendations related to sexual assault. The closure of each of these recommendations represents a new approach to enhance the safety and security of our volunteers.

Sexual assault is a pervasive global issue, and it is every individual and organization's responsibility to do everything possible to prevent sexual violence, challenge

norms, and provide trauma informed responses when it occurs. If confirmed, I commit to continuing to work with our Sexual Assault Advisory Committee to ensure that we are staying abreast of best practices and are implementing them consistent with the unique operating environments in which Peace Corps volunteers serve.

Question. If confirmed, how will you engage with new countries who are asking for the Peace Corps to return to their communities?

Answer. The Peace Corps serves at the invitation of the host governments from countries around the world. If confirmed, I will work closely with countries that have expressed interest in the Peace Corps, whether for the first time or to return to their communities.

As part of the agency's Country Portfolio Review process, the Peace Corps regularly assesses and prioritizes potential new country entries based on preliminary reviews of safety and security conditions; quality of available medical care for volunteers; host country need; host country commitment and engagement; potential programmatic impact; and post management and cost.

For selected countries, the Peace Corps Director authorizes discussions with the Department of State, other relevant U.S. agencies, and the host country government. A positive outcome from these discussions leads to a field-based, multi-functional assessment designed to answer two questions:

- Given the mission of the Peace Corps and its current portfolio of country programs, should the Peace Corps open a post in the identified country?
- Given sufficient resources and current agency standards and practices, could the Peace Corps open a safe and effective program in the identified country?

After review of the assessment report, the agency holds consultations with the Department of State, the Office of Management and Budget, and other relevant agencies and sends a Congressional Notification to the appropriate Congressional committees prior to finalizing the decision to move forward with opening or re-establishing a Peace Corps program. The potential opening of a new post has budgetary implications that will be carefully considered in the context of the overall scope and scale of operations and as a part of those consultations.

Question. There has been significant Congressional concern about the Peace Corps returning to closed and/or unsafe missions. Please explain the safety protocol for such decisions.

Answer. Our top priority is returning volunteers to service overseas in a way that is safe for them, our staff, and the host communities in which they will live and work. That is why we developed and have applied a comprehensive re-entry strategy and assessment process that includes specific medical, security, programmatic, administrative, and logistical criteria that each post must meet prior to consideration for reentry. As a part of this process, the Peace Corps coordinates closely with post staff, host country partners and government officials as well as with our interagency partners.

Volunteers have not been, and if confirmed I will continue to ensure they will not be, returned to a post that does not meet Peace Corps safety and security criteria.

Question. Do you commit to informing Congress appropriately of any safety and security issues in a timely and efficient manner?

Answer. Yes.

Question. What do you believe is the Peace Corps biggest challenge in 2023?

Answer. The Peace Corps is returning to service following one of the most significant shocks to the global system in recent history. It is a liminal moment and one that requires every individual, institution, and country to reexamine their values, operating modalities and priorities. I believe our biggest challenge in 2023 will be attracting qualified applicants given the disruptions caused by COVID-19, ongoing economic uncertainty, and increased demand and competition for talent.

Question. In your view, is the Peace Corps principally an international development program that also builds cultural ties within its areas of operation, or a cultural exchange program that also advances international development within its areas of operation?

Answer. The beauty and strength of the Peace Corps' three goals, and a reason they withstand the test of time, is that they are so interdependent. Through its people-to-people model, the Peace Corps' development impact is not structured to drive large scale, short-term results. Rather, the Peace Corps' long-term development impact is linked to capacity building, leadership development, and the power of human connection. Diplomatically, the presence of Peace Corps volunteers living and work-

ing in communities around the world sends a powerful signal of friendship and goodwill.

Question. The Peace Corps is funded by a direct appropriation, but also received significant levels of programmatic support through transfers from other agencies. If confirmed, how will you account for all of the funds managed by the Peace Corps?

Answer. The Peace Corps manages interagency transfers consistent with the law and closely monitors, tracks, and reports all expenditures in accordance with federal accounting standards. For the 16th consecutive year, the external auditors issued an unmodified (clean) audit opinion on our FY 2022 financial statements. Funds received from other agencies are included in the Congressional Budget Justification as well as the Agency Financial Report, which demonstrates to the President, Congress, and the American public how fiscal funds entrusted to the Peace Corps have been used to achieve the agency's mission. If confirmed, I will ensure the Peace Corps' budget execution continues to be in compliance with the law and that we continue to be fully transparent in reporting of fiscal resources received and spent.

Question. If confirmed, will you commit to ensuring full and complete compliance with current law, which prohibits the use of U.S. foreign assistance to perform or promote abortion as a method of family planning, support involuntary sterilizations, or lobby for or against the legalization of abortion overseas? Will you commit to ensuring volunteers are both aware of and compliant with these statutory restrictions?

Answer. Yes.

Question. If confirmed, will you commit to ensuring that Peace Corps staff, country directors, and volunteers consistently uphold the highest ethical standards, including by holding them personally accountable for violations of U.S. and local law?

Answer. Yes. In 2022 the Peace Corps updated its core expectations of both staff and volunteers. Volunteers are required to sign a statement acknowledging that they have received and will abide by all policies contained in their post's volunteer handbook, which includes the core expectations. Likewise, U.S. Direct Hire staff must sign a similar statement when they join the agency. All staff must complete a comprehensive onboarding course. The core expectations module is required to be taken within one month of joining the agency. Core expectations are reinforced throughout the life cycle of service and employment. Failure to comply with relevant policies and core expectations may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination.

If confirmed, I commit to ensure that staff and volunteers consistently uphold the highest ethical standards as representatives of the Peace Corps.

Question. As written in the (but not-yet-passed) Peace Corps Reauthorization Act (S.4466), there is currently a provision providing suspension without pay for any Peace Corps employee or volunteer who engages in serious misconduct. If confirmed, do you commit to adhering to this policy regardless if the Act becomes law? Please explain.

Answer. The Peace Corps currently does not have the legal authority to suspend employees without pay pending investigations on cases of removal for misconduct. Unlike federal employees appointed under the various authorities of title 5 of the United States Code, Peace Corps employees are appointed under provisions of the Foreign Service Act, which does not contain the same broad authority. This is why I was grateful to see the suspension provision included in S. 4466. If confirmed, I commit to enforcing the legal measures available to the agency in cases where employees have engaged in serious misconduct and to working through due process requirements while ensuring prompt resolution of such cases.

With regard to volunteers, they serve exclusively under terms established by the Peace Corps Act and agency policy and can be removed through internal processes that do not include any suspension (with or without pay). Volunteers are informed of these processes during their preservice training. If confirmed, I plan to remain committed to our agency's process of terminating the service of volunteers who engage in serious misconduct.

Question. Please provide your views on virtual service and if such service will continue should you be confirmed.

Answer. Soon after the evacuation of all volunteers in 2020, the Peace Corps began receiving inquiries from host country partners and evacuated Returned Peace Corps volunteers about the possibility of collaborating remotely. Committed to our mission and our returned volunteers and partners, the agency moved quickly to stand up a pilot initiative to match evacuated volunteers with partner requests for specific virtual support. We quickly learned that it was not only possible to support

our partners and foster intercultural exchange and collaboration virtually, but that partner demand for virtual engagement was high and increasing.

The Peace Corps Act provides the agency with legal authority to establish and conduct such pilot projects under 22 USC 2501(a) and 22 USC 2502(a). Because the evacuated volunteers had closed their service, and were now private citizens, the agency determined that they could participate in the pilot initiative only by serving as donors of voluntary services to the agency, which the Peace Corps has the authority to accept under its existing gift acceptance authority, which is in 22 USC 2509(a)(4). The authority that the Peace Corps does not have, but that is included in the House version of the Peace Corps reauthorization legislation (HR 1456), is the ability to recruit individuals as Peace Corps volunteers who may conduct their volunteer service virtually from outside a host country. While the donor model has proved sufficient for virtual service proof-of-concept testing purposes, a more viable long-term mechanism would be to provide virtual service as a form of volunteer service. Authorizing the recruitment of volunteers for the purposes of virtual service would enable the agency to recruit, train, and manage them and their programmatic work through its established systems and allow us to meet our partners' requests.

Since October 2020, when the Virtual Service Pilot was formally launched and after the relevant Congressional committees were informed of the effort in September 2020, the Peace Corps has had over 500 Virtual Service Pilot Participants engaged in nearly 45 countries. Virtual service has enabled us to respond to the evolving needs of our host country partners, including requests for highly skilled volunteers like epidemiologists. It has also allowed us to remain active in places where it is currently unsafe to place volunteers on the ground. For example, there are currently 18 Virtual Service Pilot Participants supporting local partners in Ukraine. It has also been utilized effectively to pair an in-person volunteer with a highly skilled Virtual Service Pilot Participant.

In addition to enabling us to support partners in new ways and in new areas, virtual service can reduce barriers to service and enhance the diversity of our volunteer corps by enabling Americans to serve who cannot pass medical clearance, or whose financial or family obligations prevent them from serving abroad for two years. It is also an opportunity for those who are unable to complete their in-person service, due to circumstances beyond their control, to continue to support their communities, where possible.

To be clear, virtual service will never replace in-person service. Rather, virtual service can complement the in-person model, providing an option for Americans to serve who cannot do so in person, or where in-person service is impossible. I commit, if confirmed, to working with the Committee and Congress to continue to explore the opportunities presented by virtual service.

Question. If confirmed, will you support the re-opening of Peace Corps Mission China? Please explain why or why not.

Answer. The Peace Corps post in China is closed. If confirmed, I will not support reopening the post in China. High demand for the Peace Corps in other countries, as reflected in several formal invitations to open new programs, necessitates the use of the agency's limited resources to explore those options.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO CAROL SPAHN BY SENATOR JEANNE SHAHEEN

Question. The Peace Corps Reauthorization Act will provide the agency with its first funding increase in almost seven years. In March, the Peace Corps released a brief detailing the agency's commitment to strengthen its response to sexual assault for volunteers and returned Peace Corps volunteers.

- Can you provide an update on the implementation of the measures outlined in the brief, such as the hiring of new personnel and the development of more rigorous assault monitoring and response resources?

Answer. The health, safety, security, and wellbeing of volunteers is paramount and lies at the center of all our operational decisions; any crime against a volunteer is one too many. Our work in sexual assault prevention, risk reduction, and response is rooted in the fundamental values of equity and human dignity. Volunteers who are victims of sexual assault during their service receive extensive support as it relates to their safety, medical and psychological care, legal options, and continued service with the Peace Corps. This is a whole-of agency effort and our work to continuously improve the program is an agency priority.

I am grateful for the support of Congress for the Peace Corps' work in this regard and particularly for the authorities provided in the Kate Puzey and Farr-Castle Acts. In fact, as Acting Director, I utilized the authorities provided by the Farr-Castle Act to exempt key personnel in the Office of Health Services including our behavioral health team, from the time limits on career staff service under the Peace Corps Act.

As noted, in March 2022, we released a roadmap, Peace Corps Commits to Broadening its Approach to Sexual Assault Prevention in New Brief and Roadmap, detailing the agency's commitment to further strengthening our systems, programming and approach to sexual assault prevention and to improving trauma-informed approaches to supporting survivors. This approach expands beyond the safety and security of individuals and takes into account the health, safety, and well-being of entire populations. With a public health lens, practitioners consider how context, norms, and social determinants impact behavior, such as perpetrating sexual violence.

Since the evacuation, and in preparation for returning volunteers to service abroad, the Peace Corps rolled out a new post-level ("post" is the term for a Peace Corps office in a country) case management process that ensures our overseas staff proactively and formally review sexual assault cases, identify challenges and areas for improvement with every documented case, and confirm that all appropriate measures are followed. We have improved our systems to ensure that volunteers who experience sexual assault and request counseling services receive timely followup and care through telehealth services to ensure rapid access to clinical care. We have also enhanced orientation of host families, standardized vetting protocols, and implemented a number of new policies and procedures. This has included significant new training for post staff, including PCMOs and Sexual Assault Response Liaisons.

Earlier this year, the Peace Corps hired a Prevention Specialist who is currently developing a formal, comprehensive sexual assault prevention and response strategy by evaluating agencywide activities, applying promising practices and evidence-based research. We are conducting a gap analysis and needs assessment to inform our overall prevention strategy.

The intra-agency team has also prioritized and worked diligently to resolve all of the Office of Inspector General's outstanding recommendations related to sexual assault. The closure of each of these recommendations represents a new approach to enhance the safety and security of our volunteers.

Sexual assault is a pervasive global issue, and it is every individual and organization's responsibility to do everything possible to prevent sexual violence, challenge norms, and provide trauma informed responses when it occurs. If confirmed, I commit to continuing to work with our Sexual Assault Advisory Committee to ensure that we are staying abreast of best practices and are implementing them consistent with the unique operating environments in which Peace Corps volunteers serve.

Question. Is the Peace Corps prepared to execute some of the new funding the agency will receive to bolster support for sexual assault monitoring and response?

Answer. The Peace Corps' agency-wide Sexual Assault Prevention and Response program (SAPR) incorporates best practices in the field and applies them to new, proactive training materials for volunteers and staff, and to new protocols and guidelines for preventing and responding to sexual assaults that are trauma informed and survivor centered. The agency is consistently evaluating the SAPR program, and I commit to ensuring it is funded to achieve its mission.

Question. How is the Peace Corps ensuring a rigorous and inclusive recruitment process as volunteers return to service, and how is the agency ensuring that these volunteers are prepared to meet partner needs that continue to evolve as the world recovers from the pandemic?

Answer. As a people-to-people development agency operating in a complex global environment, understanding and respecting other cultures while representing the diversity of the U.S. is crucial to the Peace Corps' success in fulfilling its mission to promote world peace and friendship. The Peace Corps will continue to prioritize the recruitment of, and support for, volunteers who represent the full diversity of the United States and who can support the development priorities of host communities.

The Peace Corps' Office of Volunteer Recruitment and Selection (VRS) prioritizes attracting applicants that meet the needs of posts and the local communities we serve. To that end, we work to match potential volunteer skillsets with host community requirements. Recruiters work with applicants to successfully navigate and address each element of the application to be as competitive as possible. Furthermore,

placement staff carefully review and assess each application to ensure they are invited to serve in a country where their skills and experience are best suited.

One of our focus areas, as outlined in the agency's strategic plan, is to recruit and retain a volunteer cadre that reflects the diversity of America. To meet that goal, VRS is executing a targeted recruitment strategy designed to increase the Peace Corps' presence and awareness in underrepresented and underserved communities. Ultimately, this work will help build a pipeline of individuals from diverse backgrounds, who will become future Peace Corps volunteers. VRS fosters formal partnerships and pursues other engagement opportunities with educational institutions, including several Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs). This calendar year, VRS has placed an emphasis on greater engagement with smaller, often less resourced MSIs, to learn more about the needs of each institution and their unique student body. To this end, we are working to establish and sustain university partnerships that are instrumental to introducing the opportunities that exist in international service through the Peace Corps to diverse student audiences and prepare them for success in the application process and eventual service.

At the interagency level, the Peace Corps also actively participates in the White House Initiative on Advancing Educational Equity, Excellence and Economic Opportunity through Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). Through this initiative, the Peace Corps promotes service opportunities within the HBCU community by engaging directly with faculty and staff to develop and sustain mutually beneficial relationships.

Additionally, VRS is working to build strong partnerships with organizations, institutions, and community groups that support and reflect the diversity of our nation. VRS is also working to develop and train the entire recruitment team to effectively recruit future volunteers from all backgrounds. This ensures that every Peace Corps recruiter has the language, tools, resources, and strategies necessary to successfully conduct outreach to underrepresented populations in communities across the nation.

The agency is also working to attract Americans of all socioeconomic backgrounds to Peace Corps service, which requires intentional work to reduce financial barriers in the application process. In support of this effort, the Peace Corps has determined that applicants can be fully reimbursed for all eligible expenses required for medical clearance. Additionally, in calendar year 2023, the Peace Corps will conduct a barrier analysis as called for in our strategic plan and use the resulting data to determine how to identify and reduce barriers along the path to and through service, including socioeconomic ones.

As the Peace Corps returns to service in an uncertain environment, I am committed to continuous review and evaluation of our strategies and structures to attract a robust and diverse cadre of volunteers.

Peace Corps volunteers serve at the invitation of host countries, and volunteer projects and activities are host community-identified and community-led. As volunteers return to service abroad, they are supporting a range of COVID–19 response and recovery activities, such as combating COVID–19 mis- and disinformation; teaching good hygiene practices; and working with teachers to develop or pilot educational resources that mitigate educational disruption resulting from the pandemic.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO CAROL SPAHN BY SENATOR MARCO RUBIO

Question. In May, Secretary Blinken said that the People's Republic of China is the "only country with both the intent to reshape the international order and, increasingly, the economic, diplomatic, military, and technological power to do it." The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) clearly holds all the reins of power in the People's Republic of China and has used this power to commit genocide in Xinjiang, flood our communities with fentanyl, and emit by far the largest quantity of greenhouse gases. As we speak, the Party is cracking down on unprecedented student protests across the country. With their absolute control of Chinese society and industry, the CCP could stop all of these destructive actions tomorrow if they so choose.

- Is the CCP a threat to the United States?

Answer. The President made it clear in his National Security Strategy that the People's Republic of China (PRC) harbors the intention and, increasingly, the capacity to reshape the international order in favor of one that tilts the global playing field to its benefit. As Secretary Blinken said on May 26, the Administration's strat-

egy is to invest in America, align with our allies, and compete with the PRC to defend our interests and build our vision for the future.

Secretary Blinken also highlighted in his May speech the importance of diplomacy in building a shared vision for the future. One of the most powerful aspects of the Peace Corps model is that our volunteers are American citizens who live and work for two years within host communities. They learn the local language and customs, they work on projects that are co-designed by the communities, and they treat their hosts with dignity and respect.

This builds enormous goodwill and has long-lasting—even generational—impacts. Foreign Ambassadors tell me what a powerful signal of friendship it is to see Americans in their communities, working in close partnership with host country citizens, and American Ambassadors regularly attest that the Peace Corps is the most cost-effective, grassroots diplomacy the United States has.

Question. Does the CCP undertake any activities that are beneficial to U.S. interests?

Answer. Although the U.S. and the PRC are strategic competitors, as the President laid out in his National Security Strategy, the U.S. does not seek conflict or a new Cold War and can instead influence the PRC's behavior even while competing with them. Thus, the U.S. approach towards the PRC focuses on competing with the PRC where our interests and values differ and cooperating with them when they align.

Question. Do you believe there are any areas within which the CCP would constructively work with the United States in good faith?

Answer. Although the U.S. and the PRC are strategic competitors, as the President laid out in his National Security Strategy, the United States does not seek conflict or a new Cold War and can instead influence the PRC's behavior even while competing with them.Thus, the U.S. approach towards the PRC focuses on competing with the PRC where our interests and values differ and cooperating with them when they align.

Question. If confirmed, will you approve any joint activity with organizations or representatives from the People's Republic of China and the Peace Corps?

Answer. The Peace Corps has closed its program in China, and if confirmed, I will not support reopening the program in China. The Administration's approach towards the PRC focuses on competing with the PRC where our interests and values differ and cooperating with them when they align. If confirmed, I will support the Administration's policy on the PRC.

Answer. The Peace Corps is an independent executive branch agency that sends American volunteers to developing countries to meet its mandate: promote world peace and friendship by improving the lives of those the volunteers serve; help others understand American culture; and share volunteers' experiences with Americans back home. More than 241,000 volunteers have served in 143 countries since the agency's founding in 1961. In March 2020, COVID–19 led to the evacuation of nearly all volunteers then serving in approximately 60 countries. The Peace Corps continues to work on a reform agenda prompted by two separate congressionally-directed efforts at simplifying its recruitment process, establish periodic global portfolio review process, improvement on volunteer safety and health protocols, including reports of sexual assault of volunteers. The agency's annual funding has remained at approximately $410 million since 2016. The agency has not been fully reauthorized since 1999.

- How do you assess the success rate of the agency in addressing volunteer concerns regarding overseas health and safety concerns?

Answer. The health, safety, and security of Peace Corps volunteers are the agency's highest priorities. The Peace Corps has traditionally operated in some very challenging environments across the globe, and the very nature of Peace Corps service entails risk. The Peace Corps' approach to safety and security is an engaged partnership involving the agency, the volunteer, and the communities we serve. Each entity plays a unique and important role in enhancing the safety of the volunteer.

Therefore, we devote significant resources to train staff, community members and volunteers; have developed a robust site selection process; and have implemented comprehensive emergency response systems. We engage and coordinate closely with the United States Embassy in each Peace Corps country, as well as with our local and community partners who play a fundamental role in assisting our volunteers to identify risks and adopt culturally appropriate strategies to enhance their own safety and security, reducing risk where possible.

The Peace Corps has developed a robust mechanism to track crimes committed against volunteers, and on an annual basis, each post (the term for a Peace Corps office in a country) engages in an in-depth review of both reported and non-reported crimes to identify trends as well as potential mitigation strategies aimed at preventing crime and reducing risk. Mitigation strategies are revisited throughout the year and revised as needed.

In response to the ongoing COVID–19 pandemic, the Peace Corps has taken concrete steps to improve its capacity to anticipate and meet challenges associated with public health emergencies. These steps include establishing new and alternative medical evacuation options, devising specific protocols and emergency plans for volunteers to prevent or address infection, adapting medical clearance requirements to take into consideration COVID risk factors, and reengineering virtually every aspect of programming and operations to mitigate risk, wherever possible.

The agency also recognizes the need for expanded mental health support for volunteers following the pandemic. The agency has enhanced our capabilities to provide coaching and support available to volunteers. The Peace Corps will rely on our decades of experience in emergency response to continuously monitor COVID–19 conditions and make informed decisions. If confirmed, I will continue to support these efforts with a keen focus on agility and adaptability, which have always been central to how the Peace Corps operates.

Finally, the Peace Corps engages in a continuous quality improvement process in all aspects of our volunteer safety support systems to ensure that our focus and interventions are targeted and effective. In particular, we have done considerable work over the past two years to enhance our policies, procedures, systems and training. If confirmed, I commit to continuing to monitor and adapt our systems, as necessary.

Question. What are the most important recent steps taken by the Peace Corps to enhance safety for volunteers?

Answer. The health, safety, and security of Peace Corps volunteers are the agency's highest priorities. The Peace Corps has traditionally operated in some very challenging environments across the globe, and the very nature of Peace Corps service entails risk. The Peace Corps' approach to safety and security is an engaged partnership involving the agency, the volunteer, and the communities we serve. Each entity plays a unique and important role in enhancing the safety of the volunteer.

Therefore, we devote significant resources to train staff, community members, and volunteers; a robust site selection process; and the implementation of comprehensive emergency response systems. We engage and coordinate closely with the United States Embassy in each Peace Corps country, as well as with our local and community partners who play a fundamental role in assisting our volunteers to identify risks and adopt culturally appropriate strategies to enhance their own safety and security, reducing risk where possible.

To ensure the agency is ready to meet today's security challenges, the Peace Corps has made a number of systemic improvements to our safety and security tools including enhanced site development and site selection criteria; a comprehensive review and update of our emergency action planning process; updated global safety and security core training sessions; and a new security management system to track crimes committed against volunteers and the support services offered by the agency. The Office of Safety and Security at headquarters has invested significant time to train Safety and Security Managers at each post on the updated policies, systems, and operational changes. Additionally, the agency provides applicants with safety data specific to their proposed country of service, so that applicants can make informed decisions before accepting the invitation to serve.

In 2021, the agency carried out a major enhancement of its information technology systems, by developing and implementing a new Site Incident Management System (SIMS), which allows the Peace Corps to better document and analyze crimes and specifically match them with individual sites to ensure that proposed sites do not have a history of crime incidents that would preclude placement of future volunteers. SIMS also enable the Peace Corps to provide a complete record of support and services provided to volunteers who experience any crime during service.

Question. How successful has the agency been in hiring overseas medical staff?

Answer. The Peace Corps has been able to hire candidates who meet the criteria set forth in the Farr-Castle Act (PL 115-256) through the agency's improved Peace Corps Medical Officer (PCMO) hiring process, using a variety of recruitment methods, robust interviewing process, and a rigorous credentialing process. The Peace Corps has been able to fill 100 percent of the PCMO vacancies with an average time

from vacancy to start date of 7 months. The Peace Corps' credentialing policy establishes processes for the review and verification of the education, training, expertise, and license of PCMOs.

The agency also developed a process to assess the health care needs of each post based on criteria, such as the number of volunteers and health care services available in the country. This ensures that health unit staffing (both PCMOs and support staff) accounts for the number of Peace Corps volunteers/Trainees, the health capacity of the country, and the number of medical accommodations.

New PCMOs participate in an intensive mentoring process, whereby an experienced PCMO provides guidance to the new PCMO for a minimum of three months. New PCMOs also attend Overseas Staff Training where they receive an in-depth overview of key Peace Corps policies and procedures. Lastly, PCMOs receive an annual evaluation, which includes an assessment of their professional performance, clinical and technical skills, and they are required to obtain 50 hours per year of continuing medical education. In addition to the annual performance evaluation, if a PCMO's performance is deemed inadequate, their contract is terminated.

Question. What skills, if any, do countries request most that the Peace Corps does not currently provide?

Answer. Demand for the Peace Corps is strong and we are fielding requests for more volunteers, particularly in the area of English education. We have had countries request upwards of a thousand volunteers to have teachers in every school. In addition, we are receiving an increasing number of requests for highly skilled volunteers, which are managed by our relatively small, specialized Peace Corps Response Program.

Question. Where do you see the greatest demand for new volunteers?

Answer. As of December 2022, the Peace Corps has returned volunteers to service in 45 countries with approximately 900 volunteers on the ground. We are also excited that the inaugural cohort of volunteers recently arrived in Viet Nam—an historic first for the agency, and we have re-established a program in Kenya. Currently, the Peace Corps is issuing invitations for volunteers to serve in 11 additional countries, bringing the total up to 56. The agency is also working to re-establish programs in Sri Lanka, El Salvador, and Solomon Islands. There is significant demand, not only from the countries that were evacuated in 2020, but also from countries around the world that have been impacted by COVID–19. These requests include countries in Africa, Eastern Europe, Central Asia, Central America, and the Pacific. Three Pacific island nations have formally invited the Peace Corps to return, in addition to Solomon Islands, and the agency is exploring the logistical, programmatic, and budgetary options for doing so.

Question. How is the Peace Corps approaching its return to overseas operations?

Answer. The Peace Corps has worked carefully and intentionally to return volunteers to service overseas in a way that prioritizes their safety and that of our staff and the host communities in which volunteers will live and work. That is why we developed a comprehensive re-entry strategy based on medical, security, programmatic, administrative, and logistical criteria that will allow the agency to determine when conditions are conducive to welcome volunteers back to service. We are in constant discussions with post staff, our host country partners, and interagency partners such as the Department of State. We began our return to service strategically slowly but have quickly ramped up to volunteers serving in 45 countries with about 900 volunteers and invitations going out for 11 more countries.

Question. Any unexpected issues with volunteers' returning to overseas locations since COVID began?

Answer. The Peace Corps has worked carefully and intentionally to return volunteers to service overseas in a way that prioritizes their safety and that of our staff and the host communities in which volunteers will live and work. While the evolving nature of the pandemic is not without its challenges, the Peace Corps' cautious, adaptable, and pragmatic approach to re-entry helps to ensure the appropriate timing and cadence of volunteer return and their continued safety during their service. We have not had any unexpected issues but are constantly vigilant with volunteer safety.

We are working closely with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, U.S. Embassy partners, and host countries' Ministries of Health to determine each country's epidemiological status, readiness for volunteers to return, medical system, and ability to address health emergencies. We have also expanded our emergency medical capabilities by identifying alternative locations to evacuate volunteers in addition to our existing medical hubs, given border closures associated with the pan-

demic. To treat any COVID–19-positive volunteers with risk factors for severe COVID–19, the Peace Corps stocks Paxlovid (oral COVID–19 medication) at every post. As anticipated, volunteers have tested positive for COVID–19 since returning to service; however, all individuals have experienced mild symptoms, and the impacts to the local community have been minimized, largely due to protocols and emergency plans in place.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO CYNTHIA DYER BY SENATOR ROBERT MENENDEZ

Trafficking of Cubans

Question. For the last several years, the State Department has elevated concerns about trafficking practices related to Cuba's foreign medical missions, which are present in at least 20 countries, in its annual Trafficking in Persons report.

- As the State Department has noted, these medical missions employ documented forced labor practices that subject Cuban doctors and medical personnel to conditions akin to human trafficking. What is your assessment of Cuba's foreign medical missions? Do you believe they constitute forced labor? If confirmed, what steps would you take to ensure the TIP Office can counter this state-sponsored trafficking scheme?

Answer. I understand the U.S. Government continues to have serious concerns about the human rights and labor rights of Cuban workers in labor export programs, including medical workers. Since 2010, the TIP Report has identified indicators of forced labor in Cuba's medical missions overseas, and over the last three years the Department found a policy or pattern that the Cuban Government profited from the labor export program amid strong indications of forced labor. If confirmed, I will work with allies to call out forced labor in this program and collaborate within the State Department to continue to press foreign governments and other international partners to protect Cuban workers, including medical professionals. I will encourage countries to put measures in place to prevent forced labor and proactively monitor these programs, given persistent allegations surrounding it.

Question. Do you commit to support targeted foreign assistance programs to address the Cuban regime's foreign medical missions, use diplomatic channels to urge our allies and international partners to end their participation in such trafficking schemes, and to elevate the voices of victims of the Cuban regime's human trafficking within the TIP Office's work?

Answer. If confirmed, I will encourage and work with civil society actors in countries with Cuban workers to assist this vulnerable population and share their concerns so that we can continue to understand the nuances of the Cuban labor export program and promote the voices of those who have been exploited in it. I will use diplomatic channels to shed light on the labor exploitation and forced labor of these vulnerable workers at the hands of the Cuban Government, and I will work diligently to ensure the Department continues to document allegations of forced labor in the annual Trafficking in Persons Report.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO CYNTHIA DYER BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Question. What is your understanding of morale throughout JTIP Bureau?

Answer. I understand that the morale in J/TIP is positive. As I said in my hearing, I am lucky to work on an issue that I am passionate about, and I know that J/TIP staff feel the same. I see that they are deeply dedicated to the mission of combating human trafficking. I am also aware of the strong support Congress has provided the TIP Office over the years, including through oversight and appropriations, which has strengthened the Office's mission and staff resolve. If confirmed, I will fully support staff professional development, training, and workplace flexibilities, in line with OPM and Department policies and directives, to ensure that morale in J/TIP remains high.

Question. How do you intend to improve morale at JTIP Bureau?

Answer. I see how dedicated the team at the TIP Office is to this work and that morale there is already positive. If confirmed, I would meet with the staff to understand ways they think we can further raise morale and improve their job satisfac-

tion. For example, I might recommend a more formal long-term mentorship program within the office, potentially as part of the onboarding process, to help new employees develop as professionals. I would also look for ways to promote collaboration and connection amongst TIP Office staff, which I imagine was challenging during the pandemic and continues to be a factor as agencies adapt to hybrid work postures.

Question. How do you intend to create a unified mission and vision at JTIP Bureau?

Answer. If confirmed, I would work with the leadership team to ensure clarity of mission and vision across the office. I believe the TIP Office has a clear and important mission to which its staff is dedicated—combating human trafficking around the world. As the nature of human trafficking and TIP Office mandates and staff continue to grow, it is important to set clear priorities and unity of efforts to advance them. To that end, if confirmed, I intend to hold an offsite with the leadership team to clarify the office's priorities, mission, and vison for the next two years and the roles of each team. I would also extend that planning to all staff through an office-wide offsite to ensure unity and focus of purpose.

Question. How would you describe your management style?

Answer. I believe in a collaborative management style with both the supervisor and the employee playing an important role in the relationship. Supervisors should strive to be both professional and kind, willing to receive feedback and suggestions, and be both clear and realistic in their expectations and directions. Employees should seek to do their best work, display initiative and perseverance, and ask for assistance or clarity when necessary.

Question. Do you believe it is ever acceptable or constructive to berate subordinates, either in public or private?

Answer. No. It is never acceptable to berate subordinates, either in public or in private. This type of behavior is completely inappropriate and counter-productive.

Question. How do you envision your leadership relationship with your deputy?

Answer. If I am confirmed, I envision my relationship with my deputy to be one of mutual admiration and respect. I am incredibly fortunate to have a deputy with such deep institutional knowledge and experience in both the TIP Office and Department of State. I believe that our extensive, but different, experiences and talents will be truly complementary and that our combined leadership will be beneficial to our colleagues and to the Department.

Question. If confirmed, what leadership responsibilities do you intend to entrust to your deputy?

Answer. Rather than separating and delineating responsibilities between my deputy and I, I anticipate that, if I am confirmed, many of the most critical responsibilities and decisions will be made with a contribution from both of us. My deputy and I each bring extensive and different experience, and our combined perspectives will ensure a thoughtful decision for the most challenging priorities. If I am confirmed and we have the opportunity to work together, we will likely determine that some of the day-to-day responsibilities are more efficiently overseen by one or the other; however, I anticipate that we will be a united and complementary force for the most important decisions of the office.

Question. In order to create and continue employee excellence at the Department, accurate and direct employee evaluation reports (EERs) for Foreign Service Officers are imperative, though often lacking.

- Do you believe that it is important to provide employees with accurate, constructive feedback on their performances in order to encourage improvement and reward those who most succeeded in their roles?

Answer. Yes, and I believe it is important to give this information immediately, whether positive or negative, rather than waiting to provide this information in the official performance reviews. Those reviews should truly be an opportunity to review the comments, encouragement, compliments, and coaching that have occurred continuously throughout the year. I believe both the supervisor and the employee play an important role in the management relationship. If the first time that an employee receives feedback, either positive or negative, is during the performance review, then the supervisor has not fulfilled their responsibilities.

Question. If confirmed, would you support and encourage clear, accurate, and direct feedback to employees in order to improve performance and reward high achievers?

Answer. I understand the critical role that clear, accurate, and direct feedback plays in performance management and employee recognition. If confirmed, I will support a culture of constructive feedback and accountability, and I will partner with TIP Office supervisors and human resources professionals to advance policies that support our staff. I would also ensure excellent performance and accomplishments are acknowledged and rewarded.

Question. Some members of Congress and human rights groups have raised concerns that the TIP Report's ranking process lacks transparency and may be subject to political pressure. What are your views on these assertions?

Answer. The annual TIP Report reflects the State Department's assessment of government efforts to meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking in persons established under the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA). I understand the Department is committed to focusing on governments' anti-trafficking efforts under the TVPA minimum standards.

If confirmed, I will support the TIP Office's dedicated staff in its efforts to gather and evaluate a broad range of information from foreign government officials, nongovernmental and international organizations, and a full array of open sources and to apply the minimum standards to each country as outlined in the TVPA.

Question. If confirmed, how might you address these concerns and increase the perceived credibility and objectivity of the TIP Report findings?

Answer. A country's tier ranking reflects the State Department's assessment of that government's efforts during the reporting period to meet the minimum standards under the TVPA. If confirmed, I will support the State Department's efforts to make the Report as accurate and objective as possible, documenting the successes and shortcomings of government anti-trafficking efforts assessed according to those standards applied consistently across the globe and to avoid making assessments based on political considerations. My goal will be to ensure that the annual TIP Report continues to be a thorough and fact-based assessment. Maintaining its credibility will be a key priority among all my duties, if confirmed.

Question. How will you respond to pressure from both within and outside the Department regarding country rankings?

Answer. If confirmed, I will strive to ensure the TIP Report continues to be as objective and accurate as possible, and that tier rankings are based solely on a country's efforts to combat trafficking. Protecting the integrity of the TIP Report and its fidelity to the TVPA's minimum standards will also guide my recommendations to the Secretary regarding tier rankings. The TIP Report is the world's most comprehensive resource on governmental anti-trafficking efforts and remains the "gold standard," accurately reflecting the characteristics and types of human trafficking that exist and the efforts governments are taking to combat the crime. If confirmed, I will work with officials across the Department to maintain this standard.

Question. What is your sense of the TIP Office's relationship with the regional bureaus?

Answer. I understand the State Department has dedicated staff working on human trafficking issues in Washington, including in the TIP Office and regional and functional bureaus, and at U.S. embassies and consulates around the world. I note the findings in last year's inspection of the TIP Office conducted by the Department's Office of Inspector General (OIG) found that stakeholders across the Department, including regional bureaus and overseas embassies, believe the office to be a collaborative partner and a leader in U.S. anti-trafficking efforts. If confirmed, I will strive to ensure that the TIP Office continues to work collegially and successfully with colleagues throughout the State Department.

Question. In your view, does the TIP Office have sufficient institutional influence within the State Department?

Answer. Yes. I believe the TIP Office has made great strides over the years to deepen relationships throughout the Department and to build support for a comprehensive, whole-of-Department approach to combating human trafficking. Specifically, I note the findings in last year's inspection of the TIP Office conducted by the Department's Office of Inspector General (OIG). The OIG found that stakeholders across the Department believe the office to be a collaborative partner and a leader in U.S. anti-trafficking efforts. If confirmed, I commit to continue the work of the TIP Office in this regard and further deepen alliances to combat human trafficking around the world.

Question. Do you commit to accurately reporting the realities of trafficking and anti-trafficking efforts to Congress? Please explain your answer.

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, I fully commit to accurately reporting the realities of trafficking and anti-trafficking efforts to Congress. If confirmed, I will prioritize ensuring that the TIP Office's reporting, including through the congressionally mandated Trafficking in Persons Report, continues to objectively and accurately report the realities of trafficking and anti-trafficking efforts to Congress, through documenting both the successes and shortcomings of government anti-trafficking efforts around the world, including the United States.

Question. What is your assessment of global anti-trafficking work and the subsequent U.S. response to fight traffickers globally?

Answer. I believe the United States has always been a global leader in the fight against human trafficking, and the Trafficking in Persons Report (TIP Report), our multilateral work, and the use of our foreign assistance are some of the most important diplomatic tools we have. The Report helps us strengthen anti-trafficking efforts worldwide, shapes the TIP Office's foreign assistance priorities, and reflects the U.S. Government's commitment to global leadership on this issue, including by assessing its own efforts through the U.S. narrative. If confirmed, I will work to continue to strengthen U.S. leadership in these and other areas, including on ensuring survivors' expertise is integrated to improve anti-trafficking policies and programs and eliminating trafficking in government procurement.

Question. Child Protection Compacts (CPCs) are a tool the J/TIP office has to further advance anti-trafficking work in country-specific contexts. What is your assessment of the program, and do you believe any/some of current CPC countries have met their thresholds under the original auspices of their agreements? Why or why not?

Answer. CPC Partnerships are one of J/TIP's cornerstone programs. I understand close engagement with governments that have the political will to address child trafficking, longer performance periods that promote sustainability of efforts, and support to local civil society have advanced CPC Partnership objectives and supported partner countries in meeting the goals as defined in in the partnership. For instance, in Mongolia, improving interagency coordination was a key goal. I understand that within the first year of the partnership, civil society implementing partners worked with the government to establish the first Multidisciplinary Task Force on Trafficking in Persons which includes all relevant stakeholders.

Question. The JTIP office produces one of the most important diplomatic tools each year, the Trafficking in Persons report. This report is invaluable to Congress in our various engagements each year. Do you believe this report could be improved? Why or why not? Does it provide a completely full picture of each country and their willingness to commit to anti-trafficking work?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with J/TIP to ensure the Trafficking in Persons Report continues to be the world's most comprehensive resource on governmental anti-trafficking efforts and remains the "gold standard," accurately reflecting the characteristics and types of human trafficking that exist and the efforts governments are taking—a reflection of their will—to combat the crime. There is always room for improvement, and I will strive to ensure the Trafficking in Persons Report continues to be as objective and accurate as possible, and that tier rankings are based solely on a country's efforts to combat trafficking, consistent with the Trafficking Victims Protection Act.

Question. Do you view aid restrictions to Tier 3 countries as an effective tool for encouraging the government of such countries to improve their anti-trafficking efforts? Why or why not?

Answer. Congress created several tools to effect progress on human trafficking in the TVPA. Aid restrictions for countries on Tier 3 are an important one of those tools. I understand the President makes the determination to impose restrictions as a means to motivate governments to address human trafficking and to signal the importance of countering human trafficking, while carefully balancing other critical foreign policy priorities where it is in our national interest to continue providing assistance. I believe this tool is working. I understand many governments facing restrictions elevate their understanding and actions against human trafficking.

Question. Please discuss the TIP Office's relationship with other departments and offices engaged in anti-trafficking programs. How effective are the President's Interagency Task Force to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons (PITF) and Senior Policy Operating Group (SPOG) for encouraging interagency coordination to combat human trafficking?

Answer. The PITF, composed of 20 agencies and departments, is the highest interagency body solely focused on advancing U.S. Government anti-trafficking efforts through a model whole-of-government approach. Its regular Cabinet-level meetings are effective action-forcing events, establishing priorities and commitments. I understand the TIP Office works with interagency partners throughout the year, supporting the work of the SPOG's committees and ad hoc working groups and collaborating on the U.S. narrative in the annual TIP Report. As chair of the SPOG, if confirmed, I will continue to bring together federal agencies to discuss timely, relevant issues for coordination to advance our anti-trafficking efforts across the federal government.

Question. In your view, does the TIP Office have sufficient institutional clout and access across the interagency?

Answer. My understanding is that the TIP Office has excellent relationships with its interagency partners. I note the findings in last year's inspection of the TIP Office conducted by the Department's Office of Inspector General (OIG) found that stakeholders across the interagency believe the office to be a collaborative partner and a leader in U.S. anti-trafficking efforts. As our understanding of human trafficking and its far-reaching impact on our lives and society grows, so does our need to leverage different agencies' expertise and resources and to promote efficiency and collaboration. If confirmed, I will work to advance those goals and preserve strong interagency relationships.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO CYNTHIA DYER BY SENATOR JEANNE SHAHEEN

Question. How can the U.S. continue to engage with Armenia to reduce their military and political reliance on Russia, while maintaining our ongoing commitment to peace in Nagorno-Karabakh?

Answer. A strong, democratic Armenia will be in a better position to freely choose their own partners and allies. The assistance provided by the United States to support civil society, electoral processes, energy security, anti-corruption reforms, and trade expansion will all contribute to a stronger Armenia. State Department support for a durable peace agreement with Azerbaijan and normalization with Turkey seeks to broaden Armenia's options for economic and energy diversification.

We regularly discuss security issues with Armenia as part of the U.S.-Armenia Strategic Dialogue mechanism, focusing on areas where we can help Armenia improve capacity and resilience to chart a more independent course. Our assistance fosters interoperability with U.S. and NATO forces, bolsters Armenia's international peacekeeping contributions, supports Armenia's Individual Partnership Action Plan with NATO, and assists with defense reforms. Under the State Partnership Program, the Kansas National Guard works closely with the Armenian military to build capabilities and interoperability with the United States.

Question. The Collective Security Treaty Organization, or CSTO, has allowed Russia to retain influence in the post-Soviet sphere and develop its own regional military alliance, although I understand there are frustrations from the Armenian Government in how Russia has reacted to the ongoing Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. The U.S. must continue to work for a peaceful and lasting solution to this conflict.

- To what extent does the CSTO allow Russia to spread disinformation and bolster its military presence in Eastern Europe, and how can the U.S. and Armenia effectively engage to reduce these malign influences?

Answer. Armenia, like every other country—regardless of their geography or history—has the right to pursue its foreign relations as it chooses, in the furtherance of its own interests, and in accordance with international law. No country should attempt to undermine that right.

Russia has utilized CSTO deployments and missions in member states, including Armenia, to create a perception of Russia being a good faith mediator to conflicts in the former USSR. The Kremlin creates and spreads disinformation in an attempt to confuse and overwhelm people about Russia's real actions in Ukraine, Georgia, and elsewhere in Europe. The United States Government continues to focus on rebutting and countering Russian disinformation and on shining a light on Russia's malign influence operations.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO CYNTHIA DYER BY SENATOR MARCO RUBIO

Question. In May, Secretary Blinken said that the People's Republic of China is the "only country with both the intent to reshape the international order and, increasingly, the economic, diplomatic, military, and technological power to do it." The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) clearly holds all the reins of power in the People's Republic of China and has used this power to commit genocide in Xinjiang, flood our communities with fentanyl, and emit by far the largest quantity of greenhouse gases. As we speak, the Party is cracking down on unprecedented student protests across the country. With their absolute control of Chinese society and industry, the CCP could stop all of these destructive actions tomorrow if they so choose.

- Is the CCP a threat to the United States?

Answer. The President made it clear in his National Security Strategy that the People's Republic of China (PRC) harbors the intention and, increasingly, the capacity to reshape the international order in favor of one that tilts the global playing field to its benefit. As Secretary Blinken said on May 26, we will invest in America, align with our Allies, and compete with the PRC to defend our interests and build our vision for the future. If confirmed, I will continue to ensure that the Trafficking in Persons Report accurately records and assesses the human trafficking record of the People's Republic of China. The Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) requires the Department to make an objective assessment of government anti-trafficking efforts, not assessments based on political considerations. If confirmed, I will continue to urge the PRC to end all state-sponsored forced labor.

Question. Does the CCP undertake any activities that are beneficial to U.S. interests?

Answer. Although we are strategic competitors, as the President laid out in his National Security Strategy, the United States does not seek conflict or a new Cold War. We and our allies and partners have an opportunity to shape the PRC's external environment in a way that influences their behavior even as we compete with them. The United States' approach towards the PRC focuses on competing with the PRC where our interests and values differ and cooperating with them when they align. As recorded in the 2022 Trafficking in Persons Report, I understand the People's Republic of China initiated its first reported prosecution of a domestic case of trafficking without transnational elements since 2017 and approved a new national action plan for 2021-2030. However, a government policy or pattern of widespread forced labor persisted. If confirmed, I will work with allies to highlight the PRC's complicity in human trafficking crimes.

Question. Do you believe there are any areas within which the CCP would constructively work with the United States in good faith?

Answer. Although we are strategic competitors, as the President laid out in his National Security Strategy, the United States does not seek conflict or a new Cold War. We and our allies and partners have an opportunity to shape the PRC's external environment in a way that influences their behavior even as we compete with them. The United States' approach towards the PRC focuses on competing with the PRC where our interests and values differ and cooperating with them when they align. If confirmed, I will continue to work with like-minded counterparts in governments and industry around the world to strengthen international efforts against the importation of goods produced by state-sponsored forced labor in the PRC and I will continue to consider all available tools and actions to promote accountability for those responsible for these abuses.

Question. If confirmed, will you approve any joint activity with organizations or representatives from the People's Republic of China and the Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking?

Answer. As the United States National Security Strategy makes clear and as Secretary Blinken said in October, the People's Republic of China (PRC) is the greatest geopolitical challenge that we face because it is the only competitor with the intent and increasingly the capability to remake the international order. Beijing's actions suggest PRC officials have the intention to do so. If confirmed, I will work with NGOs and government representatives willing to undertake genuine, credible efforts to address human trafficking, including in the areas of prevention, protection, and the pursuit of criminal accountability, including for government officials. I will continue to look for ways to support civil society and diaspora organizations involved in holding the PRC accountable and protecting the victims of its state-sponsored forced labor campaigns.

Question. Members of Congress, and human rights groups, have raised concerns that the TIP Report's ranking process lacks transparency and is subject to political pressure. For example, this year, in the Report's first annual list of "State Sponsors of Human Trafficking,';' the People's Republic of China was "inadvertently" left off, until I released a statement and the Department subsequently corrected the report. This is especially egregious as the CCP's ongoing genocide and forced labor programs of Uyghurs most likely make it the worst perpetrator of human trafficking.

- If confirmed, how might you address these concerns and increase the perceived credibility and objectivity of the TIP Report findings?

Answer. The annual TIP Report reflects the State Department's assessment of government efforts to meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking in persons established under the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA). The Department of State is committed to focusing on governments' anti-trafficking efforts under the TVPA minimum standards.

If confirmed, I will support the TIP Office's dedicated staff in its efforts to gather and evaluate a broad range of information from foreign government officials, nongovernmental and international organizations, and a full array of open sources and to apply the minimum standards to each country as outlined in the TVPA.

Question. The U.S. has taken a range of policy actions in response to mass arbitrary detention and forced labor by the CCP in Xinjiang, including targeted sanctions, export controls, and import restrictions. Nonetheless, the 2021 TIP Report, state-sponsored forced labor was "intensifying" in Xinjiang and "increasingly prevalent" in China. What additional steps, if any, should the U.S. take to combat human trafficking by the CCP?

Answer. The United States must continue to take strong action to promote accountability for the PRC's actions and strengthen market defenses against the import of goods produced through forced labor in Xinjiang. If confirmed, I will continue to work with the international community to alert businesses and other entities to the reputational, economic, and legal risks of involvement with entities in or linked to Xinjiang. I will promote coordination efforts within international business specific to tracing supply chains and identifying high risk sourcing from companies linked to abuses in the Xinjiang region to support our shared interest of eradicating forced labor from global supply chains.

Question. What is the proper role of the TIP Office in these efforts?

Answer. The TIP Office works across the Department and with federal agencies and civil society to monitor allegations related to the Xinjiang region and respond to the priorities laid out in both the National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking and the National Security Strategy. If confirmed, I will ensure that the TIP Office fosters and partners with a robust civil society that includes shelter organizations, direct service providers, watchdog groups, survivors, and nongovernmental organizations conducting awareness raising to end the use of forced labor in Xinjiang.

Question. The Biden administration has waived security assistance restrictions for Child Soldiers Prevention Act-listed countries, allowing for the provision of hundreds of millions of dollars in otherwise restricted assistance. Critics contend that such waivers undermine U.S. efforts to deter countries from using child soldiers. Please describe the approach you would take toward issuance of these waivers, if confirmed.

Answer. I understand that the President waives the Child Soldiers Prevention Act (CSPA) restrictions to motivate governments to cease the recruitment or use of child soldiers and, if applicable, their support to nongovernmental groups engaging in such practices. If confirmed, I would coordinate closely with colleagues in the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, which is the bureau responsible for implementing the CSPA for the Department, to help inform the recommendations to the Secretary and President and ensure compliance with existing authorities.

Question. Under what conditions might such waivers be appropriate? Would you advocate that frequency of waivers be generally decreased? Why or why not?

Answer. After the publication of the Child Soldiers Prevention Act (CSPA) list in the annual Trafficking in Persons Report, I understand that the President decides whether to waive the CSPA restriction on affected security assistance on a case-by-case basis. The President is authorized to waive the CSPA restriction if he determines it is in the national interest of the United States and certifies that the government of the country is taking effective and continuing steps to address the problem of child soldiers. This year, I understand the President waived the CSPA re-

striction on the fewest number of governments since the initial enactment of the CSPA, with no full waiver provided to any country.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO CYNTHIA DYER BY SENATOR TODD YOUNG

Question. Oftentimes daylight is the best disinfectant, and the annual Trafficking in Persons report can serve to hold guilty parties or even other governments accountable. Can you point to any significant policy shifts in other countries that occurred as a result of being cited in the Trafficking in Persons Report?

Answer. The Department uses the Trafficking in Persons Report (TIP Report) as a diplomatic tool to engage governments on trafficking. As a result, I believe governments around the world have strengthened anti-trafficking efforts. I understand the TIP Report and the Department's sustained engagement helped Uzbekistan strengthen anti-trafficking efforts over the past five years, enough to progressively merit upgrades from Tier 3, Tier 2 Watch List, and now Tier 2. These efforts included taking substantive actions toward ending the use of forced labor of children and adults during the annual cotton harvest. In 2021, noted in this year's Report, many governments undertook renewed efforts to increase convictions, such as Ireland and Bahrain.

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