

## NOMINATIONS

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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's 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 malign 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 dependence 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 dependence 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-

urity 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 Romania'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 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 co-created 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 Bulgarian 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 cliché, 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. KAVALLEC. 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 Estonia. 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 com-

mitments 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 crack-down 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 ef-

forts 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 subcommittees 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 of 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 regions 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 inter-agency 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 non-tariff 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 exacerbated 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.

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 regional peace, and tackle climate change.

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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 the Seychelles showed the world that the Seychellois are fiercely committed to democracy, while 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 example elsewhere.

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 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.

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 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, 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, 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 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 anti-semitism 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. 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, 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.

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 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 a 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 countries 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 multi-lateral 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 programming 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.]

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### **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 Lat-

vian 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 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 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 under-represented 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 anti-Semitic 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.

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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.

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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 commit-

ment 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 en-

ergy 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 re-

sources, 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. diplomats, 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 anti-Semitic 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 Military 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.

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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](http://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.

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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 Bul-

garia'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.

- 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 invasion 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.

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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. Currently, 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 countries?

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.

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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 pan-

demographic 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 foreign 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.

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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 traditional 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 as 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 an 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 eligibility 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.

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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 Romania. 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.

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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.

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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 higher 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 par-

ticular 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 commit 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 UN 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.

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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.

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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.

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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 practices 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 sys-

tems 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 UN 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 UN 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.

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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 innova-

tive 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 top-line 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 efforts 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.

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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.

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.

*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.

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 Government's 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.

*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.

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 threat-

ens 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.

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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 inter-agency 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 practices 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 2030. 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.

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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.

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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 importance 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 hear-

ing, 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.

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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 penetration 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 com-

municate 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.

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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.

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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 impacts 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.

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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.

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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 devel-

oping 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 non-profit 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 poverty 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 UN 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 institutions 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 FY2020 to FY2025, 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 above 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 Government 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.

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.

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.

Answer. 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 implica-

tions 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.

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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.

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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 exacerbates the global inequities of energy. To achieve its mission, the EBRD must embrace, not exclude, affordable en-

ergy 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 sector-led 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 Board-approved 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 China'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.

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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.

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RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD  
SUBMITTED TO MANUEL P. MICALLER BY SENATOR ROBERT MENEDEZ

*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.

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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. inter-agency 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 and undemocratic models from Russia and China, and I commit to prioritizing these efforts.

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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 secu-

rity 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.

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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.

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