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AMERICAN DIPLOMACY AND GLOBAL LEADERSHIP: REVIEW OF THE FISCAL YEAR 2023 STATE DEPARTMENT BUDGET REQUEST

HEARING

BEFORE THE

**COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS
UNITED STATES SENATE**

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AMERICAN DIPLOMACY AND GLOBAL LEADERSHIP: REVIEW OF THE FISCAL YEAR 2023 STATE DEPARTMENT BUDGET REQUEST

TUESDAY, APRIL 26, 2022

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

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:12 a.m., in room SD-106, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Robert Menendez, chairman of the committee, presiding.

Present: Senators Menendez [presiding], Cardin, Shaheen, Murphy, Kaine, Markey, Merkley, Booker, Schatz, Van Hollen, Risch, Rubio, Johnson, Romney, Portman, Paul, Young, Barrasso, Cruz, Rounds, and Hagerty.

**OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. ROBERT MENENDEZ,
U.S. SENATOR FROM NEW JERSEY**

The CHAIRMAN. This hearing of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee will come to order. Mr. Secretary, welcome back to the committee. We appreciate you being here with us today.

As we look across the world from Cuba, to Mali, to Iran, to China, and, of course, Russia, authoritarians are crushing free speech, arresting dissidents, utilizing technology to control their citizens, relying on mercenaries and illicit weapons to target innocent civilians and topple governments. This is a confrontation between violent autocrats and those of us fighting for a rules-based international order for democracy, human rights, and the cause of freedom around the world. Our diplomats, and development professionals, and our budget for these efforts, which we are examining today, are our front lines in this fight. With that in mind, I would like to take a moment to highlight some of our most pressing areas of concerns. I am sure members on both sides will want to talk about these and others.

In Europe, we must maintain absolute unity, as President Biden has said, and I believe your recent trip to Kyiv with Secretary Austin to show support for President Zelensky and the Ukrainian people, and to continue shining a light on Russia's military brazen abuse of civilians that certainly amount to war crimes, was a critical display of that unity, and we salute you for that visit. More broadly, this means countering Russian aggression with security assistance that aligns with our foreign policy, combatting disinformation and election interference, delivering humanitarian relief, and helping neighboring countries with a huge influx of

Ukrainian refugees fleeing violence. We have a responsibility to the American people and to the Ukrainians themselves to ensure that we are effectively spending the \$13.6 billion package Congress approved back in March.

With only a minor increase in foreign military financing funds, I would like to hear the Administration's plans for countries in NATO's Eastern flank and for Taiwan for that fact, which is facing a similar threat from China. Whether it is Japan, South Korea, or Australia, when it comes to countering China, a strong alliance with our partners is vital. Xi Jinping's hypernationalism is more assertive around the globe than ever before. The State Department must work on a pragmatic appraisal of how to best combat China's predatory economic and trade practices so we have the ability to outcompete China in the generation ahead, bilaterally and through robust presence and action in regional and international institutions.

Authoritarianism also threatens Latin America and the Caribbean in a part of the world hit hard by the COVID pandemic. From Cuba, to Venezuela, and even Nicaragua, we are seeing arbitrary detentions, the dismantling of civil society, the weaponization of hunger and migration, all as Maduro carries out systematic extrajudicial executions. On top of this, an epidemic of criminal violence, stretching from Mexico, to Haiti, to El Salvador is fueling a serious refugee and migration crisis. The Americas now host more than 18.4 million displaced people. This budget is a good down-payment, but more will be needed to address these challenges across the hemisphere.

Countering authoritarianism also requires serious investment across Africa where Moscow has reasserted itself over the past several years and democracy seems on the retreat. Civilians from the Central African Republic to Mali have paid a heavy price with Russian Wagner mercenaries reportedly committing human rights abuses. Despite concerted diplomatic efforts by the Administration, the democratic aspirations of the Ethiopian and Sudanese people have yet to be realized. Looking further north from there, I am also expecting an update on what is happening with the JCPOA and negotiations with Iran. We were told that the end of February was the date in which we needed to conclude an agreement. It is going to be end of April, so we look forward to hearing about that as well as Iran's malign actions across the region.

I am pleased that the security of our important ally, Israel, is fully funded in this request, and I am supportive of the funding request for Jordan, but I am concerned by cuts to security assistance in Iraq as we transition away from combat operations to bilateral diplomacy. In Tunisia, we would love to hear a strategy confronting democratic backsliding, and in South and Central Asia, we need clarity on whether the Administration will waive CAATSA sanctions for India's purchase of the Russian S-400 missile defense system and what role, if so, are they going to continue to play in the Quad. Also, in the wake of the Taliban's broken promise to allow girls to attend secondary school, their media crackdown, and the unfolding humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan, we need a better sense of the Administration's diplomatic strategy.

Across the globe today, we are facing multiple humanitarian challenges, refugee crises on several continents, and one of the worst food insecurity crises we have seen in a generation. Considering all of this, I do not think the Administration's budget requests to address humanitarian and resettlement needs reflects current global realities. The United States must elevate the needs of women, girls, and other at-risk populations. We must document war crimes. Added to this, climate change is a force multiplier, which will exacerbate humanitarian crises and conflicts around the world. It requires us to rethink how we prepare for the future, from the energy security crisis in Europe and Ukraine, to increasing sea-level severe weather and drought, including working multilaterally to help partner countries advance clean, sustainable energy solutions. We must also think about how to better prevent, detect, and respond to future pandemics.

I want to applaud the State Department's push to modernize and increase diversity by adding internships, a chief diversity and inclusion officer across foreign affairs agencies, and equity strategies in our overseas policies and programs, including the Department's high-level representative on racial equity. The Senate Foreign Relations has also taken steps to join in that effort. Finally, I would like to congratulate the Department on launching the Bureau of Cyberspace and Digital Policy, which will be essential in our diplomacy on cyber and technology issues.

There is a lot to discuss, Mr. Secretary. We look forward to hearing your thoughts on how you see the Department tackling some of these issues and challenges we face as a Nation. I certainly want to say that we appreciate your service to our country, and with that, let me turn to the distinguished Ranking Member, Senator Risch, for his opening remarks.

**STATEMENT OF HON. JAMES E. RISCH,
U.S. SENATOR FROM IDAHO**

Senator RISCH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and, Mr. Secretary, thank you for visiting with us today. On a personal note, thank you for visiting with Senator Menendez and I earlier and giving us your thoughts on your visit there and the systems that are operating in the Ukraine.

At the present time, as the world becomes more dangerously complicated, we need the State Department to prioritize national security diplomacy and effectively spend taxpayer money to defend U.S. national interests. Now is the time for the Department to rebalance its risk calculus and get our diplomats back in the field, particularly in the Ukraine, advance U.S. values and interests, and compete against adversaries across the globe.

However, in certain places like China, the Administration appears to be recalcitrant, giving up the privileges and immunities that keep them and their families safe in order to appease Beijing's extreme response to COVID. I have heard reports of U.S. diplomats forced into government-run fever hospitals for lengthy periods, living in squalid conditions, and being forced to take medical tests for no legitimate reason. In response, the Administration has not moved on this, and it should.

Against this backdrop, we have been asked to consider whether the funding priorities set out in the President's FY 2023 budget request align with our most pressing national security interests. Just as last year, there are bright spots. For example, while I have major concerns about the ambiguous request for \$6.5 billion in mandatory spending, I do appreciate the emphasis on global health security within the discretionary budget. Chairman Menendez and I continue to advance legislation to improve international pandemic preparedness and response, and I urge the Administration to help us align those efforts.

I am disappointed by the failure to present a concrete proposal to reform U.S. international food aid, particularly in light of the global food crisis exacerbated by Russia's brutal war in Ukraine. I am, however, pleased to hear the President and Administration is open to ideas. Let us get to work on that. However, overall, the request continues a destructive pattern of asking for more resources to advance policies that run counter to U.S. interests, including for energy projects utilizing slave labor from Xinjiang, providing billions of dollars to an unaccountable green climate fund, and proposing to increase U.S. contributions for U.N. peacekeeping in contravention of the historic Helms-Biden Agreement. Meanwhile, this budget request undercuts security and humanitarian assistance.

Mr. Secretary, I am very glad that you and Secretary Austin went to Kyiv just a few days ago to show U.S. support for Ukraine. Our embassy needs to open up again. All our European partners are already back there. We need people on the ground to help Ukraine meet its needs immediately, and I was impressed by your description of what you found there that would certainly open the door for us to reopen our embassy there. Despite the unprecedented military assistance the U.S. and our allies have sent to Ukraine, there is still more we can do. The tenor of this war has changed, and Ukraine needs different items than they did just 1 month ago. I urge the Administration to transfer more advanced capabilities, including U.S.-origin multiple launch rocket systems, medium-range air defense systems, and anti-ship cruise missiles, among other things, and I was impressed with what you reported to us in confidence this morning. During the Korean and Vietnam Wars, Russia provided our enemies with aircraft and trained our enemy's pilots. It is high time we return that favor.

Further, we must see expedited production of our new systems to backfill our allies to deter Russia, new sanctions, and tighter export controls to starve the Russian war machine and expand humanitarian assistance. It is time to act aggressively, not perform another deep dive that will take months to complete. After its victory, Ukraine will need extensive support to rebuild the country. The State Department should plan now for this huge undertaking, which will require participation from the entire civilized world.

This all relates in a very real way with U.S. response to China's ambitions, the most important challenge facing the United States today. We started too late in providing security assistance to Ukraine. We cannot make the same mistake with Taiwan. Supporting an island during a war is much more difficult. Our assistance must be there beforehand. We must accelerate existing foreign military sales to Taiwan so they get there quicker, and we should

use security assistance to help Taiwan acquire additional capabilities. I have introduced language to do this, and we need it now. In March, Chairman Menendez and I spearheaded an effort to get funding into the appropriate package for security assistance to Taiwan, and I fully agree with Senator Shelby's recent comments that we should absolutely spend more to help with Taiwan's defense. Secretary Blinken, I hope you can commit to that during today's hearing.

Turning to the Middle East, it is clear that America's relationship with our Middle East partners is in desperate need of some work. These are longtime partnerships that we really need to maintain. Instead of America as a steadfast partner, our Middle Eastern friends have seen increasingly restrictive security assistance policies, the botched Afghanistan withdrawal, and an Iran policy that fails to deter regional terrorism and a previously lukewarm embrace of the Abraham Accords. The Biden administration's Middle East policies have reinforced a claim of American disengagement and pushed our longstanding partners towards China and Russia. This cannot happen.

In Syria, we have seen a lack of seizure sanctions enforcement. While our Administration is not explicitly encouraging normalization with Assad, it is clear there are no repercussions for others doing so. We cannot ignore this or teach the world that a despot and a murderer can be rehabilitated just by hanging on for a long period of time. On Iran, we have been on the cusp of a nuclear deal for several weeks apparently. Given the sunsets and short-term gains of rejoining the JCPOA, Israel, the Gulf, and other members of Congress have voiced loud opposition to rejoining the 2015 accord.

Our Iran policy must be one that can survive successive Administrations and one both parties can support. To accomplish this, you need to get it right. From what we are seeing and what we are being told right now, you are in the process of getting it wrong again. No other issue divides this Administration from Congress and U.S. allies than this issue. If you cannot get it right, and it looks like you are not, walk away from this. That will be a victory, and you will be applauded for that. No agreement is far better than a bad one. Israel will see that Iran never completes a nuclear weapon.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator Risch. With that, Mr. Secretary, the floor is yours. Your full statement will be included in the record, without objection.

**STATEMENT OF ANTONY J. BLINKEN, SECRETARY OF STATE,
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON, DC**

Secretary BLINKEN. Thank you very much. Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Risch, thank you. It is very good to be with you, to be with every member of this committee today. Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you about the Administration's proposed budget for the State Department. As both of you noted, I just returned from Kyiv with Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, where, together, we demonstrated the United States' commitment to the Government and to the people of Ukraine.

I have to tell you, the trip left an indelible impression. We had a chance to talk about it a little bit before the hearing. As we took the train across the border and rode westward into Ukraine, we saw mile after mile of Ukrainian countryside, territory that, just a couple months ago, the Russian Government thought that it could seize in a matter of weeks. Today, it is firmly Ukraine's. In Kyiv, we saw the signs of a vibrant city coming back to life, people eating outside, sitting on benches, strolling. It was right in front of us. The Ukrainians have won the battle for Kyiv.

For all the suffering that they have endured, for all the carnage that Russia's brutal invasion continues to inflict, Ukraine was and will continue to be a free and independent country. It is impossible not to be moved by what the Ukrainians have achieved. It is also impossible not to believe that they will keep succeeding because they know why they fight. Seeing this, I have to tell you I felt some pride in what the United States has done to support the Ukrainian Government and its people, and an even firmer conviction that we must not let up.

Moscow's war of aggression against Ukraine has underscored the power and purpose of American diplomacy. Our diplomacy is rallying allies and partners around the world to join us in supporting Ukraine with security, economic, humanitarian assistance, imposing massive costs on the Kremlin, strengthening our collective security and defense, addressing the war's mounting global consequences, including the refugee and food crises that you both alluded to. We have to continue to drive that diplomacy forward to seize what I believe are strategic opportunities, as well as address risks presented by Russia's overreach as countries are reconsidering their policies, their priorities, their relationships. The budget request before you predated this crisis, but fully funding it is critical, in my judgment, to ensuring that Russia's war in Ukraine is a strategic failure for the Kremlin and serves as a powerful lesson to those who might consider following its path.

As we are focused intensely on this urgent crisis, the State Department continues to carry out the missions traditionally associated with diplomacy, like responsibly managing a great power competition with China, facilitating a halt to fighting in Yemen and Ethiopia, pushing back against the rising tide of authoritarianism and the threat that it poses to human rights. We also face evolving challenges that require us to develop new capabilities, such as the emergence and reemergence of infectious disease, an accelerating climate crisis, and, of course, a digital revolution that holds both enormous promise, but also some peril.

Last fall, I had an opportunity to set out a modernization agenda for the Department and for U.S. diplomacy to respond to these complex demands. In no small part thanks to the FY22 budget approved by Congress, we have been able to make real progress on this agenda, though much remains to be done. To give just a few examples, we have strengthened our capacity to shape the ongoing technical revolution so that it actually protects our interests, it boosts our competitiveness, it upholds our values. With bipartisan congressional support and encouragement, we recently launched a new Bureau for Cyber Station Digital Policy with 60 team members to start, and I am grateful to Congress, to this committee, for

long supporting this effort, for the ideas that you shared in how best to do it.

We are also making headway in ensuring that our diplomats reflect America's remarkable diversity, which is one of our greatest strengths, including in our diplomacy. We have, as the chairman notes, our first-ever chief diversity inclusion officer, who is spearheading an effort to analyze and address the obstacles that prevent underrepresented groups from joining and advancing at State. We have expanded the Pickering and Rangel fellowships and created, for the first time, thanks to the support of Congress and this committee, paid internships at State, along with strong congressional input and support for all of these efforts, and we are showing results. We recently welcomed a new cohort of 179 exceptional Foreign Service professionals. That is putting our Department on track for its largest annual intake in a decade.

My first 15 months in this job have only strengthened my own conviction that these and other reforms are not just worthwhile, they are essential to our national security and to delivering for the people we represent. Today's meeting marks, by our count, the 100th time that I have had an opportunity to brief Congress, which is one of the ways I have worked to meet the commitment that I made in my confirmation before this committee: to restore Congress' role as a partner, both in our foreign policymaking and in revitalizing the State Department. Ensuring that we can deliver on the agenda will require sustained funding, some new authorities, and maybe, most important of all, partnership from Congress. That is why I am grateful for the chairman and ranking member's request to establish a formal dialogue on the State Department authorization, a request that we have delivered on, and we are going to look forward to working in detail with you as the authorization process moves forward.

If we want to deepen our capability in key areas like climate, like pandemic preparedness, like multilateral diplomacy, if we want to expand on Secretary Powell's vision of a Foreign Service training float and equip our workforce with the training, with the tools, with the technology that we need for today's challenges, we need some additional resources, and those are set out in the budget. If we want to be able to swiftly stand up new missions, deploy diplomats when and where they are needed, and I very much agree with the ranking member on this, and make those decisions based on risk management rather than on risk aversion, we need to reform the State Embassy Construction and Counterterrorism Act and the Accountability Review Board statute. That is laid out as well.

If we want to rapidly scale up our response to crises, like refugee surges and epidemics, while also avoiding costly overhead, we need more flexible domestic hiring authorities. This is not about advancing the goals of any one Administration, any one party. It is about refocusing our mission and purpose on the forces that really affect the lives of our fellow citizens, their livelihoods, their security for decades to come.

I very much appreciate this opportunity to speak today about why this matters and look very much forward to continuing to

make this committee and Congress a full partner in these efforts. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Secretary Blinken follows:]

Prepared Statement of Secretary Antony J. Blinken

Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Risch, I'm grateful for the opportunity to speak with you about the Administration's proposed budget for the State Department.

I just returned from Kyiv, where Secretary of Defense Austin and I demonstrated the United States' stalwart commitment to the Government and people of Ukraine.

Moscow's brutal war of aggression against Ukraine has brought into sharp focus the power and purpose of American diplomacy, and why it's more crucial than ever to our national security and the interests of the American people. Our diplomacy is rallying allies and partners around the world to join us in supporting Ukraine with security, economic, and humanitarian assistance, imposing greater costs on the Kremlin, strengthening our collective security and defense, and addressing the war's mounting global consequences, including the refugee and food crises.

President Putin's war of choice has achieved the exact opposite of his objectives. Uniting, rather than dividing, Ukrainians. Strengthening, rather than weakening, NATO and the U.S.-EU partnership. Undercutting, rather than asserting, the Kremlin's claims of military might. And that's not only because of Ukraine's bravery and resilience. It's also because of effective U.S. diplomacy.

We must continue to drive that diplomacy forward to seize the strategic opportunities and address risks presented by Russia's overreach, as countries reconsider their policies, priorities, and relationships. The budget request before you predated this crisis, but fully funding it is critical to ensuring Russia's war in Ukraine is a strategic failure for the Kremlin and serves as a powerful lesson to those who might consider following its path.

As we focus on this urgent crisis, the State Department continues to carry out the missions traditionally associated with diplomacy, like responsibly managing great power competition with China, facilitating a halt to fighting in Yemen and Ethiopia, and pushing back against the rising tide of authoritarianism and the threat it poses to human rights.

We also face evolving challenges that require us to develop new capabilities, such as the emergence and reemergence of infectious diseases, an accelerating climate crisis, and a digital revolution that holds both enormous promise and peril.

Last fall, I set out a modernization agenda for the State Department and U.S. diplomacy to respond to these complex demands, built on five pillars. Deepening our expertise in areas that are critical to the future of America's national security. Continuing to attract, retain, and develop the world's best diplomats. Fostering greater innovation and feedback. Modernizing our technology, communications, and analytical capabilities. And reinvigorating in-person diplomacy and public engagement—to get our diplomats beyond embassy walls and engage the people we need to reach most.

In no small part thanks to the significant FY22 budget approved by Congress, we've been able to make real progress on this agenda, though much remains to be done.

To give just a few examples, we've strengthened our capacity to shape the ongoing technological revolution, so it protects our interests, boosts our competitiveness, and upholds our values. With bipartisan Congressional support and encouragement, we recently launched a new bureau for cyberspace and digital policy, with 60 team members to start.

We're also making headway on ensuring our diplomats reflect America's remarkable diversity, which is one of our nation's greatest strengths. Our Department's first ever Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer, Ambassador Gina Abercrombie-Winstanley, has spearheaded an effort to analyze the obstacles that prevent underrepresented groups from joining and advancing at State, and will soon release a 4-year strategic plan to tackle these problems. We've expanded the Pickering and Rangel fellowship programs, and created, for the first time, paid internships at State, also with strong Congressional input and support.

These efforts are showing results. We recently welcomed a new cohort of 179 exceptional Foreign Service professionals, putting the Department on track for its largest annual intake in a decade.

My first 15 months in this job have only strengthened my conviction that these and other reforms are not just worthwhile, but essential to delivering for the American people.

Today's meeting marks the 100th time I've briefed Congress in meetings or calls, which is one of the ways I've worked to meet the commitment I made in my confirmation hearing to restore Congress's role as a partner both in our foreign policy-making and in revitalizing the State Department. These engagements have also helped further refine and strengthen our modernization agenda.

Ensuring we can deliver on that agenda will require sustained funding, new authorities, and most importantly, partnership from Congress. That's why I was grateful for the Chairman and Ranking Member's request to reestablish a formal dialogue on the State Department Authorization, a request we've delivered on. Last month, we sent your staff the first package of legislative authorities required to meet the complex challenges we face, and we expect to send another in the coming weeks.

If we want to deepen our capability in key areas like climate, pandemic preparedness, and multilateral diplomacy; expand on Secretary Powell's vision of a foreign service training float; and equip our workforce with the training, tools, and technology that today's challenges demand—we need additional resources.

If we want to be able to swiftly stand up new missions . . . deploy diplomats when and where they're needed . . . and make those decisions based on risk management rather than risk aversion—we need to reform the Secure Embassy Construction and Counterterrorism Act and Accountability Review Board statute to enable greater flexibility, while meeting important security standards.

If we want to rapidly scale up in response to crises like refugee surges and epidemics, while also avoiding costly overhead, we need more flexible domestic hiring authorities.

This is not about advancing the goals of any one administration or party. It's about refocusing our mission and purpose on the forces that will affect Americans' lives, livelihoods, and security for decades to come.

So I appreciate the opportunity to speak today about why this matters, and look forward to continuing to make this committee, and Congress as a whole, a partner in these efforts.

Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, thank you, Mr. Secretary, for your opening statement. I will start a round of questions. I will start, myself.

Your visit to Ukraine, I am sure members of the committee will want to hear, in terms of President Zelensky's request for assistance, both militarily and otherwise, are we aligned with his requests? Are we going to move forward and seek to fulfill his request? In that regard, what can you tell us about your several-hour meeting with him?

Secretary BLINKEN. Mr. Chairman, in short, yes, and let me speak very briefly to this. First, we started making sure that the Ukrainians have the equipment that they needed to repel potential Russian aggression way back before the aggression started. The first presidential drawdown was back Labor Day of last year, a very significant drawdown, a second one of about \$200 million around Christmas time, again, well before the aggression, and then, of course, we are now on our eighth drawdown. We have tried to focus these drawdowns on the equipment that we believe the Ukrainians need and can most effectively use right away to repel the Russians. Indeed, their success is primarily because of their incredible courage and determination, but it is also because we were able to equip them with what they needed.

For every tank that the Russians have had in Ukraine, we have managed, with 30 allies and partners in one way or another, to provide about 10 anti-armor systems. For every plane that the Russians have flown in the skies, there have been about 10 anti-aircraft munitions of one kind or another, but as you point out, the nature of this battle is changing to Eastern and Southern Ukraine. They are adapting to that. We are adapting to that. We spent a great deal of time with President Zelensky, the chief of his mili-

tary, their defense secretary going through what it is they believe they need to effectively prosecute the battle going forward.

Secretary Austin is in Germany today with representatives from, I think, close to 40 countries, focused on making sure that we are either delivering ourselves or finding the countries to deliver what it is the Ukrainians need. I can just say broadly, and we can go in more detail in a different setting, I think we are largely aligned in what they say they need and what we think we are able to provide.

The last thing I would say, Mr. Chairman, we are doing this very quickly. In the past, it has taken, from the time a President made a drawdown decision to getting equipment into the hands of the people who needed it, weeks. Now, often it is 72 hours, from the time of the drawdown decision to the time that equipment is actually in the hands of the Ukrainians.

The CHAIRMAN. Let me ask you this. Based upon that, I will assume that we will be looking at a supplemental request because this budget, as you said, was drawn together before, and I think there is bipartisan support for such a supplemental request. Is that something we should be expecting shortly?

Secretary BLINKEN. Yes. Yes, it is.

The CHAIRMAN. Okay. As we move forward, my final question is, keeping our allies engaged with us, and putting the sanctions pressure on Russia, and continuing an all-out effort to try to tighten the noose around Putin's neck, is it your sense at this point in time that we will be able to keep the allies on board in the longer term?

Secretary BLINKEN. I believe so, yes. We have had remarkable solidarity to date. A lot of work went into this. One of the advantages, in the sense of having a long lead into this, because we, as you know and we told the world, we saw this coming for some months, is we were able to prepare effectively, not only in terms of the military assistance, but also in terms of getting countries together to be prepared to impose massive consequences on Russia. Back in October of last year, President Biden got together with the leaders of France, the United Kingdom, and Germany, including the incoming chancellor as well as the outgoing chancellor, and showed them in detail the information that we had about the looming Russian aggression. This really concentrated minds on the need to be prepared. We spent several months working intensely with allies and partners, including on sanctions. That is why, in December, we were able to say that there would be massive consequences and mean it, know that we could back it up, and there have been. The challenge now is making sure that we not only sustain that, but that we build on that, and I believe we will.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. Now, let me turn to a different topic: Iran. Your negotiator on the Iran nuclear deal said back in February if there was no deal by the end of February, the benefits we would receive would be dramatically diminished. It is now the end nearly of April, 2 months later. Can you give us where we are at on that, and, importantly, can I get a commitment from you on holding an open Iran hearing before the Memorial Day recess?

Secretary BLINKEN. On the latter question, in short, yes. We will make sure that we get that done. Second, in terms of where we are, without belaboring it, we inherited a very challenging situation—

an Iranian nuclear program that was galloping forward, Iranian provocations and malicious activities that had ramped up throughout the region, the decision to pull out of the agreement—and the effort to exert maximum pressure on Iran, whatever the intent, did not produce results. On the contrary, it produced a more dangerous nuclear program, a breakout time that went from a year to a matter of weeks. Iran was acting with an even more destabilizing effect throughout the region, including endangering and attacking our own forces in ways that it had not before. That is what we have to deal with.

We continue to believe that getting back into compliance with the agreement would be the best way to address the nuclear challenge posed by Iran and to make sure that an Iran that is already acting with incredible aggression does not have a nuclear weapon or the ability to produce one on short notice.

The CHAIRMAN. Here is the challenge we have, Mr. Secretary, because my time is running out.

Secretary BLINKEN. Please.

The CHAIRMAN. I have been generous and want to make sure your answers are full.

Secretary BLINKEN. Yes, thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Six months, which is what I hear is the ability to get into an agreement of breakout time, is far less than it was a year ago, and I understand why.

Secretary BLINKEN. Yes.

The CHAIRMAN. It will do nothing in terms of Iran's missile program, which the CENTCOM commander already says it has overmatched in the region their abilities between themselves and their proxies. It will do nothing about the destabilization of the region. At the end of the day, while I understand the breakout time now is maybe a matter of publicly reported, a week or two, that, at the end of the day, it is not going to meet the essential challenge that we have with Iran. It has its missile capacities, which is one of the third parts of the bomb delivery. It has the fissile material capability whether we push it back 6 months or not, and recreating the sanctions regimes if it were to violate, but with the knowledge it has, that 6 months will be nothing. Then finally, the weaponization element of that, which is the one point that we still believe they are not at.

When you look at the totality of it, 2022 is not 2014 or 2015, and the sunsets are on the horizon even if a deal was to be made, and that is part of the challenge that I see. I appreciate your commitment to come before the committee, either because we have an agreement, in which case you will testify about that agreement, or if there is no agreement, to understand what is our strategy moving forward on Iran.

Senator Risch.

Senator RISCH. Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. I did not intend to start with Iran, but I will since that is where you finished. Mr. Secretary, you can see there is little, if any, daylight between myself and the chairman on this issue. I think he has stated for you as clearly and concisely as he can the lack of benefits of entering into an agreement at this point in time, particularly as it relates to the bad activities of Iran aside from its nuclear ambitions. As

I have said, I believe that the Israelis when they say publicly that Iran will never complete a nuclear weapon, and they will see to it. The question for you is here, do you think the Iranians believe that today?

Secretary BLINKEN. Ranking Member Risch, I think that what we have seen and have assessed over many years is that the Iranians have sought to move forward with their fissile material program, which is exactly what the JCPOA stopped, and, if we were to resume compliance, would continue to stop and would buy us a decade on the critical sunsets in terms of the stockpile of fissile material in terms of the enrichment level. At the same time, their efforts to actually weaponize, based on public information, paused, stopped some years ago, but, of course, we look very carefully to see if they resume. We would be focused on this like a hawk either way.

To your point and to the chairman's point, which I agree with, the agreement does not address their other malicious activities. We have two premises. One is that when it comes to those activities, things would be even worse if they had a nuclear weapon or the ability to get one on short notice. It would encourage them to act with even greater impunity. Second, an agreement, were we to reach one, does not take away—in any way from our ability and determination to go at them in all these other areas in concert with allies and partners. We have spent a lot of time working with them on exactly that, everything from sanctions, to interdictions, to stopping the money flow that they need to produce these weapons and to move these weapons about. All of that would continue.

Senator RISCH. Well, thanks. That did not really answer my question directly. I am going to gather from what you said that you at least have some agreement with me that the Iranians do believe the Israelis when they say what is going to happen if they move towards weaponization, and if that is the case, look, they are going to do that. The Israelis are going to act, and they have said so, regardless of what the agreement says. We can make any agreement we want. They are going to act in their national interest. If that is the case, then we really need to focus on the other bad activities that Iran engages in as were laid out by the chairman, and this agreement, I think you would have to agree, does not cover that, and it seems to me that that is really where we ought to be focused. In any event, I come back to no agreement is better than a bad agreement, and I would urge you to move on. They have given us every indication that that would be appropriate for us to do, and I would encourage you to do that.

Let us talk about Ukraine for a moment. We have an ambassador in place in Russia still on the ground. Without obviously disclosing any classified material, what can you tell us about the cables that are coming back from Russia about the conditions on the ground in Russia and what is happening there, what people are thinking there? Can you enlighten us on that publicly at all?

Secretary BLINKEN. It is very challenging because what Putin has done over many, many years is set up, among other things, a state propaganda system that is such that whatever he says, whatever he communicates, a lot of people believe. Never mind the facts, never mind what is actually going on, so penetrating that in-

formation system is incredibly challenging. Having said that, I think what we are seeing is that people increasingly in Russia are feeling the effects of the disastrous decision by Putin to attack Ukraine. For example, upward of 600 companies have left Russia, including many of the major consumer brands that we all know and are familiar with. Increasingly, Russians are finding the things they thought they could take for granted, they cannot. They cannot buy the things they have been used to buying for the last almost 30 years.

Their economy is contracting in a dramatic way. We see about a 15-percent contraction. The gains of the last 15, 20 years of opening are being erased. That is being increasingly felt in people's lives. The Russians' ability to modernize key sectors of their economy as a result of the export controls, that increasingly is biting. They are not going to be able to do it. All of this is going to be felt more and more. There is a tension between the information and propaganda system that Putin has set up that is very effective and the actual facts. I think the facts increasingly will encroach and make themselves felt, but for now, I think what we are seeing is Russian people, to the extent that they are informed, continue to support, for the most part, President Putin.

Senator RISCH. Well, thank you for that. I would encourage you to continue to tighten that screw. That is going to make a lot of difference as far as what actually happens on the ground in Russia. You are right. At least people publicly proclaim that they support Putin and want to go along with the war effort. I am not so sure that actually exists privately, but—

Secretary BLINKEN. Well, that is a very good point because, to your point, there are severe penalties for doing or saying anything in opposition to Putin's war, including 15 years in prison. To the extent we are able to read public opinions, some portion of that is definitely colored by the fact that people are afraid to speak their minds. The final thing is, this gets to the heart of the Achilles heel of any autocracy, which is the inability of anyone to speak truth to power, and this has severely misinformed Putin himself about what is actually going on.

Senator RISCH. Well, I appreciate that. Briefly, since my time is almost up, obviously we need to focus on China. Over this century, China is going to continue to be the major challenge that we have. With what we have just gone through with Ukraine, I think it is important that we walk and chew gum at the same time and understand that the Taiwan issue is there and that we ought to be thinking about that as we go forward, and obviously, the chairman and I have worked on bolstering Taiwan's defense. We are going to continue to do that. We look for you as a partner in that. It is certainly important as we go forward. It is going to be another challenge.

With that, my time is up. Thank you.

Senator CARDIN [presiding]. Thank you, Senator Risch.

Let me follow up first on one of Senator Risch's points, and that is what is going on in Russia. We saw that Vladimir Kara-Murza was just recently arrested—

Secretary BLINKEN. Yes.

Senator CARDIN. —following in the path of what happened with Alexei Navalny and Sergei Magnitsky, and the list goes on and on and on. Mr. Secretary, I hope that you will be following that case very closely, recognizing that those responsible for his illegal detention, we do have tools available as a result of the Magnitsky statute, and I hope that that will be considered in regards to what is happening and that we will speak out strongly in support of Mr. Kara-Murza.

Secretary BLINKEN. In short, yes. First of all, let me just say how much we appreciate your leadership for many years on this, including on Global Magnitsky, including as part of the Helsinki Commission. We are very focused on this, very focused on making sure that Russia continues to be held to account for its human rights abuses, not only in Ukraine, but in Russia itself.

Senator CARDIN. Thank you. I appreciate that. Let me focus on Ukraine for one moment. Senator Hagerty and I have sent you a letter in regards to the subcommittee on the management of the State Department in regards to returning our mission to Kyiv. You have indicated that we are trying to comply with all the requests that are being made by President Zelensky. One is certainly to have our mission locate again in Kyiv. It is critically important. We have a new ambassador that has been named. We would like her to be stationed in Kyiv.

We recognize that you are doing some work in Lviv, but Kyiv is the capital. Can you just tell us your plans on returning our mission to Kyiv and whether you will comply with the request we made, that we have a briefing as to the steps necessary to make sure that our mission is safe in Kyiv?

Secretary BLINKEN. Yes. First of all, when it comes to a briefing, yes, we will certainly do that. I appreciated your letter, the letter from you and Senator Hagerty. There are two things. We are sending diplomats back to Ukraine this week, and they will begin to assess how we can most effectively and securely reopen the embassy in Kyiv. Without going into too much detail in this setting, I anticipate that we will be in Lviv and then head to Kyiv, subject to the President's final decision on that, but we are moving forward on that. We want to have our embassy reopened, and we are working to do that.

Senator CARDIN. Let me switch to the war crimes issues. There was a report today in *The Washington Post* as to the cooperation the United States is giving—I am glad to hear this—in regards to the—how to collect the necessary evidence, and how to interview, and what is necessary in order to proceed with war crimes against those who have perpetrated those in Ukraine under Mr. Putin's guidance. Could you just briefly tell us what additional steps we need to take? We recognize we have a challenge in regards to the ICC, but what steps is America taking to make sure there will be accountability for these atrocities that are taking place in Ukraine?

Secretary BLINKEN. Senator, we are working on this on multiple fronts. First and foremost, we are supporting the work of the Ukrainian prosecutor general to build the cases necessary, and we are doing that with bringing tremendous expertise in support of that effort. Technical advice, we have people on the ground in surrounding countries working on this, working with the Ukrainian

investigators and prosecutors. We are compiling, collecting information that we will share with the Ukrainians. That is one major line of effort. Second, we have a commission of inquiry that we helped establish through the Human Rights Council at the U.N. We are supporting its efforts as well and, again, providing information, advice as that work moves forward.

Finally, we welcome the fact that the ICC is seized with this, and we have in the past supported work by the ICC. Just recently, in fact, the prosecution of a Janjaweed human rights violator went forward successfully, in part, as a result of information that we supplied to the ICC. We will look to do that as well.

Senator CARDIN. If there is anything that Congress needs to do in order to support these efforts—we recognize the challenges that you may have, so if there is a role for us to play, please let us know. I think there is just about unanimous support here in Congress to make sure that, at the end of the day, there is accountability for these atrocities and war crimes that have been committed.

Let me go to the budget for one moment. You mentioned that you just recently had close to 200 new Foreign Service officers. That is certainly good news. The budget, if I am correct, provides for 570 additional personnel. We have been concerned in the Subcommittee on the State Department in regards to the ability for training for our Foreign Service officials. In order to do that, you have to have a training float. We have put in a 15-percent goal on the training float in order that you can have individuals assigned for training without a loss of their capacity within the mission. Can you tell us how well we are doing in regards to meeting that objective and what additional resources are necessary in order to achieve that level?

Secretary BLINKEN. First of all, I really want to thank Congress, this committee, as well as the appropriators last year as well as hopefully this year, in to giving us the resources we needed to bring in a record number of new people to the Department, and this budget would fund an additional 500-plus new positions. This would allow us to have a float of about 250 people, which would get us to pretty much where we need to be in making sure that we have that. This is—to your point, it is something that you have worked on for some time for the Department. This would be an extremely meaningful way of making sure that we have the flexibility to continuously train and modernize the Department, allow people to have opportunities for—not only for training, but for different ways to expand their capacities with mid-career abilities to come here, for example, as well as to universities, et cetera, to do that while maintaining the full operations of the Department. In short, the budget that we are proposing would allow us to get the float that we think that we need to really move forward and have the flexibilities for ensuring that we are continuously professionalizing the Department.

Senator CARDIN. I appreciate it. This committee has passed two bills in regards to improving the training capacity of the State Department, so you need to have the personnel in order to take advantage of that. I am glad to see that we are going to track in order to accomplish that.

Next will be—Senator Romney is recognized.

Senator ROMNEY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Secretary, it is good to see you and appreciate your willingness to be here today, and appreciate, in particular, your visit to Kyiv, making clear to the people of the world our commitment to the people of Ukraine and to its leadership. This follows on the heels of what I and many others across the country had to feel was the disastrous departure from Afghanistan and obviously the diplomatic, and military, and human crisis continues, stories of hundreds of people who worked with us in Afghanistan being murdered by the Taliban, girls not being able to go to school. These things are obviously very troubling, and I think I and others were apprehensive about how we would deal with Ukraine given how badly we had dealt with the situation in Afghanistan.

Credit where credit is due. I think you and the Administration deserve a great deal of credit for how well we have acted, providing intelligence to our allies early on, collaborating with our allies to have a united front on sanctions, and our military support. I am sure that, looking back, there are things that we will say we did not get it exactly right, but, overall, it has been a success so far and want to compliment you on that. I think it was unfortunate that one of the headlines that came back from your trip was that our purpose was to diminish the Russian military capacity. That may be a byproduct, but our mission there is to help the people of Ukraine have freedom and sovereignty, which they richly deserve.

One of the great challenges that has already been mentioned is with regards to China. You know that they have a comprehensive strategy, that China's economic power is continuing to rise. Their military power likewise. Their investments both in ICBMs over the coming years and their navy and so forth is really daunting. They have attempted to pacify the world. They, of course, monitor and pacify their own citizenry and propagandize their own citizenry. One of the things that Chairman Menendez and I made part of the NDAA this last year was a provision requiring the Administration to develop a comprehensive strategy to deal with the emergence of China as a great power. Your Department, along with other departments, will be tasked with that as soon as the National Security Strategy is released. I just want to underscore how important that is, and I do believe that we are still not making the kind of progress strategically we would like to on that front.

I was concerned with the report about the Solomon Islands entering into a military agreement with China. That is alarming. I wonder if you have a perspective on that, whether you know whether there is a military component. It is a military agreement, but will there be potentially a military presence in the Solomon Islands by the Chinese? What is your sense of that, and is there a way of recovering?

Secretary BLINKEN. Thank you very much, Senator Romney. First, with regard to the strategy, we very much agree with you, and I will have an opportunity, I think, very soon in the coming weeks to speak publicly and in some detail about the strategy. We appreciate the work that, in many ways, Congress has done to give us some of the tools that we need to make that strategy effective.

I look forward to having an opportunity to lay that out in some detail and then continuing to refine it with you and others.

With regard to the Solomon Islands, yes, we share the concern about this agreement. We sent a very high-level delegation to the Solomons just a few days ago. Our lead China expert at the White House, Kurt Campbell, along with the assistant secretary for the region, Dan Kritenbrink, led a delegation to the Solomon Islands. I had previously announced some months ago that we intend to open an embassy there that we are moving forward on. We want to have day-in, day-out presence there. We are moving forward on that. The delegation met with the Prime Minister. He vowed publicly, as well as privately, that there would be no Chinese military base, no long-term presence, no power projection capability. We will be watching that very, very closely in the weeks and months ahead.

Senator ROMNEY. Thank you, Mr. Secretary. I want to conclude in the brief time I have with indicating my support with the comments of Ranking Member Risch and Chairman Menendez with regards to Iran. I happen to believe that Iran will be hellbent on having a nuclear weapon at some point, that they will negotiate and delay as long as they can the negotiations with us, but that they ultimately intend to have a nuclear capacity. I do hope that that is not going to be the case, but I believe that in that circumstance, that giving into them is not the right course, but instead that there needs to be a very heavy price paid for them pursuing that path, and not only to hope in some way to delay them or dissuade them, but, more importantly perhaps, to dissuade anyone else in the world from taking a path to become a nuclear power because the cost of doing so would be demonstrated by what we do with Iran.

I would encourage the Administration to once again bring this matter to Congress for an up or down vote for a level of support on the part of the national interest. This is, I think, critical for—not just for what is happening in Iran and the Middle East, but around the world. As more and more nations are looking at becoming nuclear powers, I think they have to see that the cost is enormous for doing so and would hope that we do not in any way lessen the cost in negotiations. I would be more than happy to hear that we have walked away. Iran asks for more and more and more, the answer is no, and that we need to show extraordinary backbone and make a solid commitment that America will not stand still as they or other nations seek to become nuclear powers.

Secretary BLINKEN. Thank you, Senator. I can simply say that we share the same objective, which is to make sure that Iran never acquires a nuclear weapon. The question is what is the most effective way to do that. We have now tested two propositions. One was the nuclear agreement that was originally reached and that significantly set back Iranian capabilities to pursue a nuclear weapon, particularly the fissile material for such a weapon, and that agreement was working by all objective accounts. In fact, now we have many Israeli colleagues from the security establishment who have come and said publicly that it was a huge mistake to pull out of the agreement because, on its own terms, preventing Iran from acquiring the fissile material necessary for a weapon, it was succeeding. That does not address the other concerns that you rightly and we rightly have with Iran, but on its terms, it was working.

We have tested the other proposition, which was pulling out of the agreement, trying to exert more pressure, and we have also seen the result. The result has been that that nuclear program, which had pushed back the breakout time to a year in terms of being to produce fissile material for a weapon, that is now down to a matter of weeks. Their program has galloped forward—more sophisticated centrifuges are spinning, a greater stockpile of fissile material—and Ranking Member Risch was talking about this earlier. I think it is important to underscore the reason the agreement originally reached—focused on fissile material is because this is something we can see. With the most intrusive inspections regime ever in an arms control agreement, we could see it, and if there was breakout, do something about it.

The problem with focusing on weaponization is, which we believe that they halted in the early 2000s, but could resume if there is a decision. The problem with that is, that work happens in a room a tenth of the size of this one at a computer in ways that we or the Israelis may not be able to see immediately in real time, may not be able to track. Hanging your hat on the peg of weaponization is a very risky one. That is why this agreement was designed around fissile material, and we continue to believe that whatever the imperfections, if, on its own terms, we can back into the agreement, it would be, of all of the answers that we have, the best one for the nuclear issue. However, we are not there, and I could not agree with you more, first of all, on the overriding objective that we have and also with both the chairman, the ranking member, and you, the need to confront Iran on its other malicious activities.

Senator CARDIN. It is our understanding we will have a separate opportunity in regards to the Iran agreement, and we appreciate the Secretary's willingness to work with our committee in that regard.

It is my understanding Senator Murphy is available through Webex.

Senator MURPHY. Good morning, Mr. Secretary.

Secretary BLINKEN. Senator.

Senator MURPHY. Thank you for taking the time with us. I am sorry that I cannot be there with you in person. I do not share my colleagues' skepticism of a renewed nuclear agreement with Iran, in part, because the whole world has watched how difficult it is to craft a Western response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine given Russia's status as a nuclear power. I simply cannot imagine why we would wish for a policy that will allow Iran to be weeks, maybe months away from a nuclear weapon given all of their malevolent activity in the Middle East. What about the last 2 months has been an advertisement that we would be better off if more of our adversaries had nuclear weapons?

I appreciate the clarification you made to Senator Romney's question because it is true: we have tried the alternative. We have indeed attempted to apply significant costs on the Iranian economy and through President Trump's maximum pressure campaign, and, in fact, the result was not that Iran came to the table on all of their other behaviors in the region. It was not that they held firm on the commitments that they had made in the JCPOA. It was, in

fact, that they moved faster towards a potential nuclear weapon. They accelerated their research program.

I want to maybe ask you one more sort of question to level set where we are today. You have stated, I think very effectively, that the maximum pressure campaign did not, in fact, have the effect of constraining Iran's nuclear weapon program, but for my colleagues that have significant concerns, rightly so, about Iran's support for terrorist organizations, for regional proxies, the money they put into their ballistic missile program, is there any evidence that during the period of time in which we have been out of the nuclear agreement, during the period of time in which we have applied these significant sanctions, including sanctions on the IRGC, that Iran has lessened their support for terrorist organizations or proxy organizations or lessened the amount of money that they put into their ballistic missile program?

Secretary BLINKEN. Senator, to the contrary, no. What we have seen is two things. First, during the period of time when the original agreement was being negotiated—go back to 2012—through its entry into Force and the time when the Trump administration pulled out—2018—2012 to 2018, there were virtually no attacks on American presence in the Middle East. When we pulled out of the agreement, when we imposed the foreign terrorist organization designation on the IRGC, and when Soleimani was killed, and no one is shedding any tears for his demise, but I am just stating the facts, when those things happened, the attacks on our forces, on our personnel, on our people went up dramatically. In fact, from 2019 to 2020, they went up 400 percent, so we have seen that effect.

Similarly, and it is an unfortunate fact of life that Iran is willing to dedicate what resources it has to supporting its military, to supporting its various tools of destabilization and terror, including the IRGC Quds Force, irrespective of what its revenues are from other sources. We have seen sustained support for those forces even during maximum pressure. Again, we share the same objectives. The question is how do we most effectively reach those objectives? That is what we are concerned with.

Senator MURPHY. Well, thank you for that response, and I think you will find many of us on this committee very supportive of your efforts to re-enter that agreement. Let me turn to one other topic, and that is the topic of human rights. The assault on Ukrainian democracy, I think, has elevated the need for us to be incredibly consistent between our words and our actions on supporting human rights and democracy. You and I have had a number of conversations about the pace of reform in Egypt, a country that enjoys more direct U.S. military support than almost any other in the world prior to the war in Ukraine

Buried inside your budget request is a curious proposal; that is, a proposal to de-link human rights conditions from military aid to Egypt. I worry about the message that this would send to Sisi, but also the world. They have made tepid progress even when presented with fairly minimalist requests for reforms, and I wonder why this would be a moment that the Administration would be asking to separate the money we send to Egypt for military support

from our human rights requests and our human rights work in Egypt.

Secretary BLINKEN. Senator, first, I really appreciate your focus on human rights. Indeed, it is central to President Biden's foreign policy, and that applies across the world, including when it comes to Egypt. Let me just say quickly a couple of things. First, Egypt is a vital partner for us. It is a vital partner in trying to sustain and advance stability in the Middle East to combat terrorism. It played a critical role last year when tensions rose dramatically in Gaza, and it has played an important role now in trying to keep things in check as well. In many ways, it is a vital partner. It is also an important economic partner for us. At the same time, that does not divorce from our policy and our approach the need to focus on human rights and the concerns that we have about the Egyptian approach when it comes to civil society, when it comes to freedom of expression, freedom of assembly, political detentions, abuses, et cetera.

I have engaged President el-Sisi directly on this at some length, including the first meeting that we had. We continue to meet and engage with human rights defenders, with civil society. Last year, we signed the Human Rights Council statement at the U.N. expressing our grave concerns for the first time since 2014, and reprogrammed some of the foreign military financing this past year because Egypt did not meet some of the objectives that we set out in terms of making progress on human rights, and that will continue to be the case going forward. It is, however, important to us to have maximum flexibility in being able to deal with this and deal with this effectively.

I would also say that, going back to the conversation on Russian and Ukraine, this is a critical time, too, in the relationship with a number of countries, particularly countries that may be reconsidering their own relationships and potential dependencies on Russia. They are seeing how Russian military equipment is performing or not performing in Ukraine. They are seeing growing challenges to Russia being able to sustain and ultimately export its military equipment. They are making different decisions about the future. That presents a strategic opportunity for us, one we want to make sure that we also have flexibility to take advantage of.

I completely share your focus on and concern about human rights, including in Egypt. It is and it will remain a central part of our policy even as we work to strengthen what is a vital partnership for us.

The CHAIRMAN [presiding]. Thank you.

Senator MURPHY. Well, very briefly, just count me amongst those who think it would be unwise at this moment to de-link our human rights conditions from military aid. This is a country that still has more political arrests than Russia does. Sixty thousand people have been arrested for political crimes in Egypt. That is a stunning number. As to your point, finally, about countries that are rethinking their traditional association with Russia; Senator Shaheen, Tillis, and I are just back from a trip to the Balkans. I think Assistant Secretary Donfried was there this week. Tremendous opportunities in the Balkans to try to shift alliances and allegiances there. Bosnia is a place where there is a rapid deterioration of the

security situation. We have to pay close attention there, but many opportunities around Russia's periphery to convince folks that it is time for them to stop sitting on two chairs—

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. The senator's time has expired. Thank you.

Secretary BLINKEN. Thank you. I look forward to working with you on that.

The CHAIRMAN. I would ask the clerk to make sure he starts the clock because we have a lot of members who want to ask questions.

Senator Portman.

Senator PORTMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Secretary Blinken, for appearing before us again. It is very important you went to Kyiv both to meet with President Zelensky and, importantly, to demonstrate our support for the people of Ukraine. It has now been 2 months since the war in Ukraine began, and with our help, they are fighting with heart, with conviction, with some success, and with our help, we can win this thing, but it needs a lot more help. I am glad we are returning the U.S. embassy to Kyiv. I am pleased the Administration just appointed a Ukraine security assistant coordinator. As you know, some of us had called for that. We continue to be concerned about some of the red tape that is involved in some of the military transfers, so this should help quite a bit.

We must continue to address Russia's barbaric actions with speed, with urgency, and with confidence that the right weapons can contribute to a victory. The Kremlin must know that the free world stands united against them. I am also pleased the Administration has finally nominated a U.S. ambassador to Ukraine. As you know, I believe this is long overdue, and I look forward to Bridget Brink's testimony before this committee as soon as possible. I want to talk to the chairman about that.

Energy revenues continue to be the main source of income fueling Russia's war machine. As you know, energy is their top export. In fact, receipts from energy alone accounts for about 40 to 50 percent of the Russian budget. We have got to cut off this funding if we want to stop the increasing war effort from Russia. I was pleased that the Administration banned the import of Russian oil, natural gas, and coal in the United States in early February, but that was only about 8 percent of our total petroleum imports. Other countries import a lot more. The larger issue at hand, of course, is the EU and their reliance on Russian energy. Approximately 40 percent of EU gas comes from Russia as well as more than a quarter of its oil. This means, Mr. Secretary, Europe is continuing to send Russia—roughly \$870 million a day—\$870 million a day in energy revenues compared to about \$50 million a day the U.S. was purchasing on a daily basis. Again, money used to fuel the Putin war machine.

Last month, I was pleased with the announcement of the joint task force with the EU on energy security for better coordination. It has now been exactly a month since this task force was established. Can you please provide us today with an update on the efforts and progress as it relates to reducing European reliance on Russian energy, and when can we expect a plan detailing the objectives of the task force and a strategy to achieve them?

Secretary BLINKEN. Senator, thank you very much. Can I first just start by applauding your leadership on Ukraine, both as head of the caucus here, but also just your continuous engagement going back from the Munich Security Conference and well before that. It is greatly appreciated. It has made a real difference.

With regard to energy, you are right. This is one of the critical areas where we have to continue to move forward, and we are and we will. The big challenge is, of course, European dependence on Russian energy that has built up over decades, particularly natural gas, but also oil, and let me say a couple of things very quickly. First, the Europeans have, I think, genuinely ambitious plans to move away from this reliance on Russian energy. The challenge is to put them into effect, and the other challenge is that, in some cases, this is not—no pun intended—like flipping a light switch. It is a process, and that is what we are working with them on implementing.

A few things to that end. First, I think you are likely to see in the coming weeks further progress on the oil side of the equation in terms of Russian imports. Gas is a bigger challenge. It is particularly acute for certain countries, including, notably, Germany, but also others. We have redirected significant amounts of LNG to Europe in the short term to help them compensate for any losses that they might have in moving away from Russian gas. That process is continuing, and we want to make sure that as they do that, there is backfill and there is a significant amount that is going to that.

Senator PORTMAN. Mr. Secretary, just two quick questions, one, with regard to the task force. When can we expect a report from the task force detailing what the objectives are and what the strategy is? Then second, with regard to LNG shipments, you just mentioned that actually this is a central component of the initiative. The U.S. is now saying that we are going to give them 15 billion cubic meters this year—

Secretary BLINKEN. That is right.

Senator PORTMAN. —an additional 50 over the next decade. How has the Administration and the task force engaged with energy producers in the United States to follow through on those commitments? Your budget increases taxes on natural gas production. As you know, the Administration continues to take steps to discourage new leasing for oil and gas development on public lands and waters. These and other policies have stifled domestic natural gas production are going to make it difficult, it seems to me, to meet our objectives. How can we keep our EU commitment and reduce this massive flow of funds into Russia?

Secretary BLINKEN. Senator, I am not an expert on the domestic policy component of this. I will say a couple of things. First, we have doubled the LNG exports to Europe since last year—actually since early this year. They have already doubled. The President has urged domestic producers to speed up production. There are, as you know, thousands of licenses that have gone unused, and hopefully they will be used to increase production. The task force—let me come back to you on when we can anticipate providing a report, but it is focused on diversification. It is focused on curbing demand and making sure that the backfill is there. It is also necessary to

focus on an energy transition because, ultimately, that is going to be the most effective way, over time, in making sure that there is genuine energy security. One thing that you cannot do—

Senator PORTMAN. Secretary Blinken, I want to ask you, let me just say the obvious, which is that you have a strong interest in these domestic policy issues now because to stop the Russian war machine getting all this funding, which is your strong interest I know, you are going to have to be a voice for some reason in terms of an all-of-the-above energy strategy, including not stifling fossil fuels at this point because we need them in terms of natural gas to Europe.

On the coordinator, Lieutenant General Terry Wolff has now been appointed. I was glad to see that.

Secretary BLINKEN. Yes.

Senator PORTMAN. As you know, I am delighted we have somebody to be there as a coordinator. How is the State Department going to coordinate with him on improving the arms transfer process, which is your bailiwick, and does he report to you, the President, or the national security advisor?

Secretary BLINKEN. Terry is someone that I have worked with for a long time. He, as you may remember, was one of the lead coordinators for the counter-ISIL coalition that was established back in 2015, 2016. We worked very closely together. We will continue to work very closely together in this effort, and he will be working both with us at the State Department as well as reporting to the White House, but we have a long history of working closely together.

Let me say—just repeat very quickly something I said earlier, which is that this process of transferring equipment to the Ukrainians is moving, in my judgment, very effectively and very efficiently. The drawdown authorities that we have used now eight times, whereas it used to take sometimes weeks to get equipment to the Ukrainians, we are now getting things from the point the decision is made to draw down to getting it into Ukrainian hands in as little as 72 hours, so this is moving quickly. We have cut through a lot of red tape. At the same time, we have been going around the world looking for other countries that may have equipment that Ukraine can find useful. When it has come to authorizing the transfer of that equipment if it has U.S. origin technology in it, I have done those authorizations in 24 hours or less to make sure, to your point, that we are moving things quickly.

Having said all of that, we want to make sure that we continue to drive this as effectively and efficiently as possible. Terry will focus on that. I will work directly with him. So will the White House and the Pentagon.

Senator PORTMAN. Who will General Wolff report to? Who will he report to is the question?

Secretary BLINKEN. Let me come back to you on exactly what the reporting line is. I do not know what the exact reporting line is, but I can tell you that he will work directly with me as well as with the White House, and, of course, the Pentagon.

Senator PORTMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. Senator Van Hollen.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and, Mr. Secretary, welcome. Thank you for taking that trip to Kyiv with Secretary Austin. I was just listening to Secretary Austin address some of our NATO partners about the need to continue to push and coordinate more weapons into Ukraine, and I do want to commend you for accelerating that process as the war has gone on.

I want to start with a question about the Foreign Service Families Act. This was legislation that I teamed up with Senator Sullivan on. We co-chair the Foreign Service Caucus here. I want to thank the chairman and ranking member for working with us to include that in the passage of the last national defense authorization bill. It extends to Foreign Service officers some of the same benefits we extend to our military folks deployed overseas and also includes more opportunities for family members in order to continue to attract and retain a world-class Foreign Service. Thank you for your input as we worked on that passage. We are trying to implement the provisions now, and I am not going to go through the entire list, Mr. Secretary, but just to give you one example. The legislation allows Foreign Service officers who are getting orders to deploy—

Secretary BLINKEN. Yes.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. —and who go to their missions overseas to be able to terminate contracts, leases, that kind of thing, but in order to make that work in the real world, we need a system to make sure that landlords, for example, can verify that a Foreign Service officer does have, in fact, those orders to go overseas. The military has created a successful system to do that. We have been working with your team to try and do it. I want your commitment that we can accelerate this process.

Secretary BLINKEN. You have got it.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Okay.

Secretary BLINKEN. First of all, you have been an incredible champion for the Foreign Service for a long time, and that is appreciated very much by the men and women of the State Department. Second, we want to make sure that we are putting in place these necessary tools and efficiencies to do right by the men and women who work for us. Yes, in short, we will try to move forward on that as expeditiously as possible.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Thank you, Mr. Secretary. Yes, there are series of things. It is just question of implementation, but the sooner we can get them in effect, the sooner the benefits will flow to the men and women of the Foreign Service.

I want to follow up a little bit on Senator Portman's line of questioning with respect to sanctions and the issue of Russian exports of oil, and gas, and other commodities, and, again, salute the Administration for working with our allies to put in place punishing sanctions right away, and we have expanded those sanctions over time. To my knowledge, and correct me if I am wrong, we have not used any of the existing authorities to date to apply secondary sanctions to institutions overseas that may be aiding and abetting Russian oligarchs and others who may be aiding and abetting Putin. Is that right?

Secretary BLINKEN. I do not believe that we have, but that does not mean that we will not. Thanks to this committee, we now have

at the State Department a senior sanctions coordinator, Jim O'Brien, a deeply experienced diplomat. One of the things that he is looking intensely at is sanctions evasion by other countries or entities. This is something that we are going to focus on relentlessly as we move forward.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. I am glad to hear that, Mr. Secretary, because I think leakage in the sanctions only hurts our alliances and helps Putin. I recognize that a lot of our European partners are working to reduce their reliance on Russian oil and gas, and that we are working with them to do that, and obviously we want to accelerate that process as much as possible. What I am worried about is reports of certain countries that are increasing their imports of Russian oil, and gas, and commodities. Are you aware of countries that are doing that?

Secretary BLINKEN. We have been watching this carefully, and we have engaged with some countries where we have had concerns that they might be increasing their purchases, taking advantage of discounted prices that Russia has been forced to offer in order to get anyone to take this. In short, yes, there are few countries that we have engaged with to dissuade them from doing that.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Well, Mr. Secretary, we have not been successful doing that, right? According to the information I have got, in the month of March, China increased its trade with Russia by 12 percent in terms of actually additional goods being imported to China from Russia, and there are a number of countries. The question is, we made the right decision by saying that the United States is not going to continue to import Russian gas and oil, but if that oil is just on the international market and Putin is able to sell it to somebody else, it obviously does not do us any good at all. I guess my question is very blunt: why are we not applying secondary sanctions against countries that are increasing their imports from Russian commodities?

Secretary BLINKEN. I would say two things. First, where we can, it is far preferable to get countries to voluntarily not engage in these practices, and that is where our diplomacy is focused. Second, as we are dealing with the energy piece of this, and, again, I agree with the general tenor of Senator Portman's remarks, we have to do it not only effectively, we have to be as smart as possible about how we do it and when we do it. For example, we want to be sure that we are not taking actions in the near term that may have the result of spiking energy prices and, thus, lining Putin's pockets instead of taking resources away.

The more that we can do things voluntarily, deliberately, make sure that we have the necessary backfill, including from our own sources, make sure that energy is on the market. The President, as you know, did a historic release from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve on that front. We have got a million barrels a day over 6 months. We have got many countries to join in doing the same thing. We have to do it in a deliberate way so that we do not have an effect contrary to the one that we are trying to achieve.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. I agree with that, Mr. Secretary, but as you point out, there are countries that are taking advantage of discounted Russian oil prices. They are able to unload it at lower prices, and they are taking advantage of it, which only helps Putin.

Just a statement in closing which is, one of the consequences of Putin's invasion of Ukraine has been our European partners have watched China's response, and I think that they have been extremely concerned with the fact that China first said that we are all in together. I do think this is an opportunity to work even more closely in practical ways with our European and other allies with respect to a coordinated approach with respect to China.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Secretary BLINKEN. I very much agree with you. Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman was just in Europe for a dialogue that we established with the European Union on China. She had a very, I think, productive session with the EU. You saw the results of the summit between the EU leaders and President Xi Jinping, which, I think, did not go to China's benefit because of the increasingly deep skepticism about China in Europe. China is paying a reputational cost for, to be charitable about it, sitting on the fence when it comes to Russia's aggression against Ukraine, never mind falling on the Russian side of the fence, something that it has to factor in. I think it is seeing that play out in its relationships with other countries, notably in Europe.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. Senator Paul.

Senator PAUL. While there is no justification for Putin's war on Ukraine, it does not follow that there is no explanation for the invasion. John Mearsheimer writes that the trouble over Ukraine actually started in NATO's Bucharest Summit in 2008 when the George W. Bush administration pushed the alliance to announce that Ukraine and Georgia will become members. Even with this 2008 announcement, though, most analysts acknowledge that it was unlikely that either country would ever be admitted to NATO because of opposition from France and Germany. Nevertheless, the U.S., including the Biden administration, insisted on beating the drums to admit Ukraine to NATO.

Just last fall, you signed the U.S.-Ukraine Charter on Strategic Partnership, which renewed a commitment to the 2008 Bucharest Declaration supporting Ukrainian admission to NATO. Knowing full well that Ukraine was unlikely to ever join NATO since it had already been 14 years since they said they were going to become members, why was it so important last fall before this invasion to continue agitating for Ukraine's admission to NATO?

Secretary BLINKEN. Thank you, Senator. Not a question of agitating for Ukraine's admission. It is a question of standing up for the basic principal that we strongly adhere to that there should be and will be an open-door policy when it comes to their membership. These are sovereign decisions for European countries to make, and, of course, a decision for the NATO alliance to make in terms of making sure that a country that wishes to join actually adds value to NATO. This goes to the heart of the international system and the international order, and part of that is a basic principal that one country cannot dictate to another the choices it makes about with whom it allies. It is foreign policies. It is a decision or not to try to engage with the European Union, with NATO.

The other thing—

Senator PAUL. Yet, as we speak and we see the destruction of Ukraine, we also hear pronouncements from President Zelensky saying, well, you know what? Maybe we might consider a neutrality as a possibility. There could have been voices before this invasion instead of agitating for something that we knew our adversary absolutely hated and said was a red line. As recently as last September, before you signed the agreement, once again, agitating for NATO, Russia said that it was a red line. Now, there is no justification to the invasion. I am not saying that, but there are reasons for the invasion, and I think it has added nothing. In fact, had Ukraine been in NATO, as you have advocated for and many others have advocated for, we would now have troops in Ukraine. We may still have the destruction, but we would also have troops in Ukraine.

If you were to put them in now, if it is still your policy that you want them in now, that means American troops go. The one good thing about them not being in is the most bellicose of our members here are not advocating for U.S. troops right now. That is a good thing. We have not had advocacy for U.S. troops because they are not part of NATO. Had they been or are they to become part of NATO, that means U.S. soldiers will be fighting in Ukraine, and that is something I very much oppose.

Secretary BLINKEN. Senator, could I just say to that, because, look, these are important conversations and arguments. My judgment is different. If you look at the countries that Russia has attacked over the last years—Georgia, leaving forces in Transnistria and Moldova, and then repeatedly Ukraine—these were countries that were not part of NATO. It has not attacked NATO countries for probably—

Senator PAUL. You could also argue the countries they have attacked were part of Russia.

Secretary BLINKEN. Well—

Senator PAUL. Were part of the Soviet Union or whatever.

Secretary BLINKEN. Yes, and I firmly disagree with that proposition. It is the fundamental right of these countries to decide their own future and their own destiny.

Senator PAUL. I am not saying it is not, but I am saying that the countries that have been attacked—Georgia and Ukraine—were part of the Soviet Union, were—

Secretary BLINKEN. That does not give Russia the right to attack them.

Senator PAUL. They were a part of the Soviet Union since the 1920s.

Secretary BLINKEN. That does not give Russia the right to attack them. On the contrary—

Senator PAUL. No one is saying it does, but it really has nothing to do—

Secretary BLINKEN. They were liberated from being part of this empire by force. Let me just say this because I do think it is important. If you look at why President Putin went into Ukraine this time, we took very seriously the arguments that some Russians were putting forward back last fall that they had concerns about Ukraine's eventual membership in NATO in terms of Russia's security posture. What would this mean in terms of the placement of

forces near Russia, weapons systems, et cetera? We sought to engage them on those issues in real seriousness as well as engage them on deep concerns we have about many of the things that undermine our security.

When everything came to a head, it is abundantly clear, in President Putin's own words, that this was never about Ukraine being potentially part of NATO, and it was always about his belief that Ukraine does not deserve to be a sovereign, independent country, that it must be reassumed into Russia in one form or another, and that is not something we can let—

Senator PAUL. Yet the discussions between Zelensky and the Russians have included discussions of them assuming an unaligned or neutral posture. That has been part of the discussion.

Secretary BLINKEN. This is a sovereign decision for Ukraine to make.

Senator PAUL. Yes, but at the same time, we are all over the place thinking we are coming to the rescue, and then maybe sometimes we are not. Maybe sometimes we are agitating for something, like admission to NATO, that makes it worse. Maybe Ukraine has more of an ability to make this decision if they are not being pushed and goaded by half the members of the Senate who want them in NATO. Perhaps it is not useful to be pushing them into NATO, and perhaps they will come to an agreement. The other thing to remember about war is war very rarely ends in complete victory by either side.

I am proud of how well the Ukrainians have fought. I am supportive of their cause, but I would say it is very unlikely they are going to now invade—take over Russia and depose Putin. I think the most likely and the best outcome would be some sort of stalemate, perhaps pushing them completely out of Ukraine, but even pushing them out of Ukraine is still a great step from where we are now. There may well be a negotiated peace. Would the U.S.—would President Biden be open to accepting Ukraine as an unaligned, neutral nation?

Secretary BLINKEN. We, Senator, are not going to be more Ukraine than the Ukrainians. These are decisions for them to make. Our purpose is to make sure that they have within their hands the ability to repel the Russian aggression and, indeed, to strengthen their hand at an eventual negotiating table. We have seen no sign to date that President Putin is serious about meaningful negotiations. If he is and if the Ukrainians engage, we will support that.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. Senator Kaine.

Senator KAINE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Secretary Blinken. With a 7-minute round, I am going to start with three compliments and then get to my tougher questions about a region in the world that nobody has yet talked about, which is Central America. Three compliments. First, in my time on this committee and in the Senate, I have not seen an instance where the gap between U.S. prediction of activity and our European allies' prediction of activity was wider than with respect to Ukraine, what was Russia's intent amassing troops on the border, and we could see this going back into about October. Everyone had the same

facts, but the prediction of what Russia's behavior would be from the U.S. and many of our allies was very, very different.

The compliment that I want to give you and the Administration is you basically took the position with European nations that said there is not going to be an invasion, we hope you are right, but if we are right, what can we set up in advance so that if there is an invasion, Nord Stream 2 can be closed down, sanctions can be immediately put in place, we can pursue humanitarian and military aid. I think that was very, very adept diplomacy. Recognizing that there was a difference of opinion about what was going to happen, you nevertheless put the plans in place before February 24 that enabled you to assemble a quite significant coalition not only of NATO nations, but others to really put pressure on in multiple domains. That is compliment one.

Compliment two. The U.S. vaccine diplomacy in the world has been extremely successful, and this bears on a matter we are talking about now, whether in a COVID bill we should do more vaccine diplomacy in the world, and I want to focus just particularly on the Americas. I took six of us—bipartisan delegation to South and Central America in July, right at the time that U.S. vaccines were being delivered. These are nations that have felt like the U.S. has kind of ignored them. China and Russia are paying a lot of attention to them. They do not really feel like we are, but for the first time, I could really see they love the U.S. vaccines, high quality. We were not charging him. They thought the Russian and Chinese vaccines were substandard quality, and they were being charged for them. The shipments were being delayed, and if they happen to say something nice about Taiwan, suddenly the contract would expire.

We really did good work in vaccine diplomacy in the Americas. I would argue we still probably did not allocate enough there. With 30 percent of the world's deaths, they only got 8 percent of our vaccine distribution, but we built up a lot of good will. I would argue that thinking forward, it would be a really smart investment in the Americas and elsewhere if we could continue to be great partners in nations that are still trying to find more vaccines.

Then the third compliment is, I think it was my first hearing when I was on Foreign Relations was about the ARB, the Accountability Review Board, report on the Benghazi attack, and it was in 2013, and what should we be doing to provide more security for State Department personnel. One of the recommendations was dramatically increasing the security training of our FSOs. I just had the chance last Friday to go see this state-of-the-art FASTC Center at Fort Pickett and watch a final exercise. Forty-one weeks a year we put cohorts of FSOs through a 1-week-long security training facility that they have to repeat during their career, and it culminates with a fairly adrenaline-producing and shocking exercise where people get to put in place what they have learned during the week, so that if it ever happens on a post overseas, it is not the first time they are seeing it. I was in the facilities as this was happening, and even though I knew what was going to happen, I will say it made a huge impression on me, but the fact that you are investing in that kind of training for our folks is really important.

Okay. Now, on to the Americas. I still do not think we are paying the attention to the region that we should. Now, this is a budget hearing, and I applaud the fact that you have sought significantly more funds for Central America to help them deal with their own issues, but also deal with this push that has led so many to leave the Northern Triangle to come to the United States. We will not deal with this migration question effectively unless we deal with root causes, but let us be honest. We have got some real weak partners there, so you have proposed a bulk-up investment, but in both El Salvador and, to a lesser degree, Guatemala, we see real backsliding toward authoritarianism. The Honduran elections were fair, and there was a clear outcome, which is positive. President Castro is fairly new in. How do you propose to increase investments in the Northern Triangle to make a difference for people there and on this migration challenge when at least two of the three governments are probably getting to be less reliable partners rather than more reliable partners?

Secretary BLINKEN. Thank you, and let me just start by thanking you for the visit that you made on Friday. It was greatly appreciated, and, indeed, we have really bulked that up, bolstered that up. We have also, thanks to Congress, been able to invest greater resources in diplomatic security, which plays a vital role in enabling us to do our job. I thank you for that.

When it comes to our own region, and I personally have been intensely engaged on a number of fronts. I just came back, even in the midst of Ukraine, from a conference that brought together most of the foreign ministers in the region in Panama, focused on migration, which is obviously an immediate challenge for everyone, as well as a long-term challenge, and we can speak more about that. The bottom line there is, as a result of a lot of work that we have done over the last year, including getting together in Panama, and Colombia before that, at the United Nations, we are building a generally-shared sense of responsibility when it comes to dealing with what is a historic migration challenge that is affecting, in one way or another, every country in our region, whether they are countries of origin, countries of transit, countries of destination. We have now bilateral agreements with Costa Rica and Panama with more to come. We have the Summit of the Americas that the President will be hosting over the course of a week in Los Angeles in June where on migration, I anticipate there will be a declaration of shared principles on how we work this together, but also, on virtually every other aspect of the relationship with our closest neighbors.

Second, when it comes to these—I could not agree with you more that even as we take near-term steps to deal with what is a historic migratory flow in our own region and around the world, the ultimate answer has to be addressing the so-called root causes, because it takes a lot for someone to decide that they want to pick up, give up everything they know, leave their families, leave their friends, their communities, their culture, their language, and make a hazardous journey to the United States or anywhere else in the region. One of the things that we have seen in our own region is the primary driver, not the only one, but the primary driver is the

lack of economic opportunity. We know that, and so what we have to do is help these countries create greater opportunities.

The Vice President, who has been leading these efforts, did a call to action some months ago with the private sector that resulted in \$1.2 billion in new investments in the Northern Triangle countries that will create job opportunities over time and give people a means to stay. We have a series of programs reflected in this budget to work in that way to create opportunities for people, also to address, of course, many of the other challenges that are drivers of migration, including corruption, including poor governance, including insecurity. In many cases, we have to work around some of the governments or individual leaders. We are doing that effectively with the private sector, with NGOs, with civil society, with components of governments that we can work effectively with. I think it varies from country to country, but we are deeply engaged on that.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Senator KAINE. Thank you, Mr. Secretary. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Rounds.

Senator ROUNDS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Secretary, first of all, thank you for your service to our country.

Let me just begin by bringing back in a discussion that Senator Portman began and that you have shared. I think it has been a pretty frank discussion regarding the need to have additional energy production and the impact that that would have on your ability to work with our allies in Europe. It seems to me that not only does it impact the foreign policy, but with regard to our domestic policy and with regard to our economy, it would seem that the production of those products—energy products here—fossil fuels, natural gas, and so forth—from North America would make your job a lot easier with regard to not only would it be good in terms of—it is such a large part of the inflationary trends that we are seeing right now, in terms of cost of supply chains and just basically the cost of basic services and transportation here. The fact that, as you stated, Mr. Putin receives significant dollars from energy, and when you inflate the value of those commodities, that goes to his bottom line and makes it easier for him to wage war.

Are you sensing that the Administration or the people that you work with within the White House are recognizing the need to increase that, not just for domestic purposes, but also because of what is going on in Europe right now?

Secretary BLINKEN. Yes. In short, yes. As I mentioned, Senator, just when it comes to making sure that we could try to create some flexibility for Europeans to really start this move away from dependence on Russian energy in the short term, as I noted, we have doubled our LNG exports to Europe just in the past 3 months from where they were a year ago. That is significant. We are committed to adding to that to make sure that there is some cushion as they engage in this process. It has to be a process, though, because, as you know, this has built up over many decades. Overall, European dependence on Russian gas is about 40 percent, but in individual countries, it is a lot higher than that. That is part of the challenge.

Second, we want to make sure that as we do this, we are doing it in a way that does not create the effect that you just cited, which

is to actually inflate energy prices and line Putin's pockets. That is one of the reasons the President did this historic release from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve that will extend over 6 months. We got other countries to join in doing that. At the same time, he has called, as you know, for increased production in the United States. We are doing that.

The last thing, if I could quickly, is this: we also have to do this in a way that does advance, in my judgment at least, the transition over time to renewables because one of the things that is true about renewables is you cannot weaponize the sun, you cannot weaponize the wind. Both as a matter of climate, but also as a matter of strategy, I think we have a good reason to reinforce that effort, even as we are making sure that there is sufficient energy on the market now and in the near term for Europeans to really start this transition.

Senator ROUNDS. I think the all-of-the-above approach is a very good approach.

Secretary BLINKEN. Yes.

Senator ROUNDS. I do not think it should exclude those consistent, conventional energy sources that we have got, and I appreciate your comments on that. I also think the one thing that is missing in this discussion is the fact that we have to have a stable, long-term plan of not having those go up, or our European allies will not trust us. If they think that our policy is going to change in 6 months, they are probably not going to be interested in having a short-term LNG proposal and then find out that, well, we are going to change it again. I think it has got to be consistent, and I think you are in agreement with that.

Secretary BLINKEN. That is a very fair point, and part of the reason we have this task force with the EU is precisely to address that, to make sure that there is a long-term plan in place, not just one that meets the immediate needs.

Senator ROUNDS. Thank you, sir. I would like to change subjects here for just a minute on something that has been very important, and we have been trying to work with the State Department on. There was a huge, very challenging time period in which the Department was working on processing special immigrant visas, specifically coming from Afghanistan. Unfortunately, this process is excruciatingly slow, and Afghans who risked their lives for our service members do remain in grave danger. For one example, we have an applicant that I had brought to your attention that received a chief of mission approval the day before your September hearing, yet he was stuck in Afghanistan until early March and just received his visa last week. This outcome would not have been even possible had it not been for his risky move to flee to a third country. Yet he and his family still remain in a fourth country waiting for travel orders, and the final resolution of an application submitted in 2018. A second individual received a denial the day of your hearing, but his appeal, which was submitted in December, still has not been viewed by the State Department office which adjudicates these requests.

Mr. Secretary, I and my staff have asked your people on multiple occasions if the Department has the resources to execute this mission, and the answer I have always received has been "yes." I just

want to be specific. I am looking to be of assistance in terms of making sure that the appropriate resources are made available, and it seems to me that right now, when we cannot get these completed in a timely fashion, there has got to be a reason for it. If it is resources, we need someone to say it is resources. If it is something else, we need to know. I do not think we are talking about the issue of just we need background checks. I think there is more to it.

Could you help us understand what the resources are that would be needed to expedite appeals within, say, 30 days, because right now, it does not seem to be working.

Secretary BLINKEN. Senator, let me first start just by thanking you for your personal and sustained engagement on this issue, on the SIVs, in general, and on specific cases, in particular. It is greatly appreciated. I know it is especially appreciated by the people on behalf of whom you have been advocating. We want to continue to work closely with you, with your staff, on this. Let me just say a couple of things about this.

This committee knows very well the very laborious and multi-step proposal that goes into the SIV Program that was legislated and then regulated over many years. It involves six different agencies, not just the State Department, that has more than a dozen steps involved in it. Of course, it has been made more complicated by the fact that we are not on the ground in Afghanistan.

There are two things I want to focus on. First, the process of getting chief of mission approval, that authority, that is the most critical step because what we have found historically, well back before leaving Afghanistan, was that of those who applied for an SIV, about 40 percent did not ultimately get the approval from the chief of mission because they did not qualify in one way or another, sometimes, tragically, because the documentation necessary and required, they could not produce. We have worked very hard to expedite that process. We have cut the processing time for chief of mission approval in half in recent months. We are doing it much faster than we did when we were actually in Afghanistan, but we are looking to see if we can make it even faster, and we would like to work with you on that.

Second, a big part of the challenge that we have is for those who are in Afghanistan and actually have SIVs or are well along in the process and have chief of mission approval, part of the challenge is being able to make sure that they can leave the country. We are working on that day-in, day-out to try to encourage the Afghans to regularize transportation out so that people can leave. We have a processing facility now, as you know, in Doha where we have the capacity, once someone has chief of mission approval, to process about 1,000 a month, and that is there. It is active. We are working on it, but we need the in-flow, if you will, to make that real.

We have dedicated increasing resources to this. I will go back and triple check that I am confident that we actually have the resources we need given the constraints of the program to do this as efficiently as possible. I commit to you if, in my judgment, we do not, we will come to you and ask for more resources.

Senator ROUNDS. Thank you, sir. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Markey.

Senator MARKEY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, very much. Thank you, Mr. Secretary, for the work which you are doing and to Secretary Austin, the President. I think it is first-class work. Thank you.

Senator Booker, and Senator Kelly, and Senator Gillibrand, and I visited the Polish-Ukrainian border at Rzeszow, and we saw all the work the 82nd Airborne is doing to facilitate the transfer of our assistance to the Ukrainians into that country, and it is absolutely a first-class operation. We were in Krakow as well, and we could see the humanitarian effort in place, and, again, very impressive. I just think that, in general, we should just roll out the red carpet and just say however many Ukrainians want to come to our country, they should come here. As a Congress, we should finance that resolve so that we help the Ukrainians to ultimately defeat the Russians. I just wanted to congratulate you on that.

I appreciate the commitment which the Biden administration is making for our country to be a leader in vaccinating the world, but we are falling far behind. The world has a goal of 70 percent vaccination by the fall of this year. That is not happening, and, as we know, we are just going to be setting ourselves up for a boomerang effect in terms of it coming back to us. As the co-chair of the COVID-19 Global Vaccination Caucus, I have been repeatedly calling for a significant Federal investment in those efforts. We have called for inclusion of a substantial global COVID-19 response funding and any COVID-19 supplemental. That funding remains stalled.

Mr. Secretary, a recent Harvard study indicated that the economic toll of COVID-19 so far is \$16 trillion. We just cannot afford to keep repeating history. Could you talk about how important it is for the Congress to pass a global COVID relief package so that the funding is there to put shots in the arms of people around the world so that, once again, a variant does not come back to haunt us in the United States?

Secretary BLINKEN. Senator, I could not agree with you more, and I appreciate your comments on this and leadership on this as well as Senator Kaine's. Let me say a few things quickly. First, substantively I am absolutely convinced this is the necessary and right thing to do for the very reasons that you say, which is that we know that as long as COVID is somewhere, it could produce a variant that ultimately undermines everything that we have done and even defeats the vaccines that we have developed or the therapeutics that we put in place. We have, I think, a very strong national interest and incentive to make sure that we are doing everything we can to put an end to this, not only in our own country, but around the world. Second, what we seen is this. As Senator Kaine said, this has been also a tremendous benefit to our foreign policy and to our standing in the world. The fact that the President has committed to donate 1.2 billion vaccines around the world, and we are now over 500 million that have actually been delivered, to do it primarily through COVAX to make sure that it is done equitably, to do it with no strings attached in stark contrast to other countries like China. That has inured to our benefit and to our standing in palpable ways. I get this virtually every place I go. It is good for our foreign policy and our standing.

Here is the challenge that we have, and it goes to your question. Right now, we have a relative abundance of actual vaccines. The challenge that we have is, as you said, getting shots into arms. There are in many places around the world, nowhere more so than in Africa, real challenges in making sure that there is cold storage, that there are distribution networks, that there are healthcare workers, and other experts who can administer the vaccines to deal basically with the last mile. We also have real information or misinformation problems, and that contributes to vaccine hesitancy, so we need to be doing work on that.

Senator MARKEY. Is it critical that we pass funding?

Secretary BLINKEN. It is, in my judgment, absolutely critical that we do this because if we do not, we will not have the resources we need to see this through.

Senator MARKEY. Thank you. Yes, this disease, because of global travel and trade, is just a flight away from our country.

Secretary BLINKEN. That is correct.

Senator MARKEY. The more that we build barriers further away from us, the way we are trying to do with confronting the Russians so that it does not go any further in terms of its incursion into other countries, we have to do the same thing with COVID. We are not doing it. We just cannot allow this Congress to not fund a global explanation program.

Earlier, we heard my colleagues on the committee suggest that we should walk away from the negotiating table with Iran. Let us be clear. Plan B is really plain bad. That is what it stands for. It means that Saudi Arabia's nuclear program will accelerate. It means that Iran's nuclear facilities that are above ground will go underground. It means our troops in the region will face increased threats which could require sending our brave men and women in the armed forces into another conflagration in the Middle East. Secretary Blinken, you just covered this before, but before Trump and Bolton blew up the deal, how far was Iran towards acquiring enough material for a nuclear weapon?

Secretary BLINKEN. A year or more.

Senator MARKEY. How far away is Iran today?

Secretary BLINKEN. By public records, it is a matter of weeks.

Senator MARKEY. Based on experience, would kinetic or non-kinetic attacks on Iran prevent an Iranian nuclear weapon?

Secretary BLINKEN. The judgment of our military over many years is that the military could certainly set back the program, but Iran would rebuild it, rebuild it probably even more underground and rebuild it a lot faster than a nuclear agreement would allow the Iranians to resume.

Senator MARKEY. Has not Mohammed bin Salman pledged that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia would acquire a nuclear weapon if Iran did so?

Secretary BLINKEN. I think the Saudis and other countries have made clear in one way or another that they would be likely to pursue nuclear weapons in the event that Iran actually gets one, yes.

Senator MARKEY. Did the Trump administration's campaign of maximum pressure lead to an increase or decrease of Iran's attacks on its neighbors in the region?

Secretary BLINKEN. We have seen what the causality is. People can make their judgments, but as I mentioned earlier, what we have seen is this: from 2012 to 2018 when we were negotiating the agreement, then when we had the agreement and it was in effect, there were very few attacks on our forces in the region. After we pulled out of the agreement, designated the IRGC, and killed Soleimani, we saw the attacks go up dramatically. From 2019 to 2020, they went up 400 percent on our personnel and our forces in the region.

Senator MARKEY. Thank you. It is clear, I think, to any objective analysis that we just cannot listen to the same voices who rejected a good deal in search of the impossible and who preached brinksmanship over diplomacy. The Iran deal is not perfect, but it is our best path to prevent Iran from acquiring the ultimate weapon to back its coercion in the region, a nuclear bomb. We are seeing right now the saber rattling in Russia because they have a nuclear program. We have to avoid that in Iran. The ripple effect would be catastrophic. We are either going to live together, or we are going to die together.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. Senator Hagerty.

Senator MARKEY. We are either going to know each other. Are we going to exterminate each other? We have to put a new regime in place to make sure Iran does not get this bomb. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. Senator Hagerty.

Senator HAGERTY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, thank you, Ranking Member Risch, and thank you, Secretary Blinken, for taking the time with our committee today.

First, I would just like to note that Chairman Cardin is the ranking member of the Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on the State Department. I am sorry. He is the chairman. I am the ranking member. We both sent you a letter last week encouraging you to reopen diplomatic relations in Ukraine. I want to thank you for taking the steps in that direction to do that, and I appreciate your willingness to brief us as that moves forward. I wanted to say thanks again for that acknowledgement.

I would like to turn to the Indo-Pacific, if I might. Recently, I led the first congressional delegation to Japan since the pandemic began in early 2020, and I was honored to be joined by Senator Benjamin Cardin and by Senator John Cornyn. I want to first thank you, Ambassador Emanuel, and the entire staff at the State Department for helping make that trip a success. I also want to thank you personally for your efforts to bring home my constituent, Greg Kelly, who was wrongly detained there in Japan, and you were very helpful in making that happen and it made a very big difference. Thank you, Mr. Secretary, for that.

During our week in Japan, our Senate delegation met with Prime Minister Kishida with his senior officials there. We met with former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. We met with a number of Japanese parliamentarians and also with leaders of some of the most formidable and innovative companies in the Japanese private sector. In each of our meetings, we saw a great deal of promise in terms of the United States' ability to further strengthen our alliance with Japan, and they want an increasingly special relationship with us, and we see that possibility. Secretary Blinken, I think

you would agree with me that the U.S.-Japan alliance is one of our most important strategic and special relationships.

Secretary BLINKEN. I would. Absolutely.

Senator HAGERTY. Amid Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Japan has shown leadership and proactively supported the international pressure campaign against Vladimir Putin's war machine. I also want to note that that Yoshimasa Hayashi, your counterpart there as the foreign minister, became the first Japanese foreign minister to attend a NATO ministerial when he traveled to Brussels on April 7. As other international conflicts and crises emerge, I believe the United States will need to be even more aligned and move in lock-step with our ally, Japan. There is a real appetite that I could sense there to do that with us, and I would like to encourage you along those lines to see that the United States can proactively ensure that Japan, as the world's third-largest economy after the U.S. and China, can be a pillar of peace and security. They always would like a seat at the table in discussions on how we can increase multilateral pressure. If we can include them in as many critical issues as we can, I think it will go a long way to deepen that relationship.

After Foreign Minister Hayashi broke new ground by attending the NATO ministerial in April, would you support the United States exploring opportunities for Japan and NATO to have further high-level interactions and more formal information sharing?

Secretary BLINKEN. Yes, absolutely, and I want to address that just a little bit more, but first to say thank you. You have been an extraordinary leader in building this relationship, first as ambassador to Japan and now as a member of this committee. I could not agree more on the strategic imperative of this for us.

Senator HAGERTY. Yes.

Secretary BLINKEN. This partnership is vital, and, as you said, Japan has stood up in remarkable ways on the Ukraine crisis. When it comes to NATO and Japan, we are doing a few things. First, one of the things we have been advancing is increasing NATO focus on working with partners that are not part of NATO, including what we call the Asia-Pacific Four, and that, of course, includes Japan. We just had a foreign ministers meeting of NATO where we had the AP Four, including my good friend and colleague, the foreign minister. At the NATO summit that the President will attend the AP Four and Japan will be there.

Senator HAGERTY. Yes.

Secretary BLINKEN. The President is going to have an opportunity, I think, in the coming weeks to visit. I think his first actual visitor was the former Prime Minister Suga, and this is something we are very focused on and really are eager to continue to work with you on.

Senator HAGERTY. I appreciate it.

Secretary BLINKEN. By the way, I am very glad that Rahm received you in the appropriate fashion when you were in—

Senator HAGERTY. Oh, he absolutely did, and he and I agreed that he would work hard to deliver Greg Kelly at the airport, and I would be on the other side to receive him, and with your help and the help of many others, that is exactly what happened. I very, very much appreciate that. If I could turn just a little bit more to

the role that we are playing to advance the vision of a free and open Indo-Pacific, I support the Biden administration's efforts to build on that legacy, including the AUKUS Agreement that really enhances trilateral security between Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States. I was very glad to see that NSC coordinator for the Indo-Pacific, Kurt Campbell, and your assistant secretary for East Asia and Pacific Affairs, Ambassador Dan Kritenbrink, recently led an interagency delegation to the Solomon Islands and met with both ruling party and opposition party members. I appreciate those actions, and I sincerely hope that our efforts can help the Solomon Islands reach the right conclusions, that granting China a military base in the middle of the Pacific Ocean would really undermine the security and stability of the entire region.

During our congressional delegation visit to Japan, many of our Japanese interlocutors, both the Japanese Government side and the business side, expressed concerns about the broader trends in the Indo-Pacific. Our bipartisan delegation sought to instill confidence and optimism that the United States remains committed to advancing the vision of a free and open Indo-Pacific. Amid recent international shocks, I believe the United States should really work to strengthen energy security in the Indo-Pacific region, particularly among the Quad countries.

Like the rest of the world, the Quad countries seek reliable access to cost-effective sources of energy. Energy security is inextricably linked with economic security and national security. I worked on this a great deal in my previous position when I served at Embassy Tokyo. I worked on the Japan-U.S. strategic energy partnership. They call that JUSEP. The idea there, the goal, to promote universal access to affordable and reliable energy in the Indo-Pacific. The Quad should have a similar mechanism, in my view, to strengthen energy security in the Indo-Pacific, especially since the Quad includes Japan, which is the world's third-largest economy, India, the world's most populous democracy, and Australia, which is a significant industry exporter. I would just like to ask you to consider supporting the idea of the Quad standing up a working group on energy security that would help ensure reliable access to cost-effective energy sources, especially from like-minded partners.

Secretary BLINKEN. That is a really interesting idea, Senator. I will take that back and then come back to you on it.

Senator HAGERTY. I would be happy to work with your team and share the experience that I had earlier, but I do think that there is a real opportunity, but also a concern, right now.

Secretary BLINKEN. Yes.

Senator HAGERTY. The Japanese reflected the concerns in a very blunt term to me because I worked hard to get them positioned, particularly with billions of dollars of infrastructure investment, to bring in more LNG to that area. They see a worldwide market. They see the challenges that Europe is facing being dependent on Russia in LNG from there. They are very concerned that there could be, in some respect, a diversion of exports that would be harmful from them.

Secretary BLINKEN. Yes.

Senator HAGERTY. I think a focus and an intent focus there, again, assets in the region that we could help with, but I think it would be extremely helpful. Thank you.

Secretary BLINKEN. Thank you.

Senator HAGERTY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. Senator Schatz.

Senator SCHATZ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Secretary, thank you for being here. Let us stay in the Pacific. I want to follow up on the COFA negotiations. The U.S. agreements with the freely-associated states expire soon. The current agreements with the RMI and FSM expire in 2023, and the agreement with Palau expires in 2024. GAO estimates that the assistance that the United States provides constitutes about one-third of FAS' annual budgets, making them heavily reliant on U.S. support promised through the current compacts. As you know, FAS countries and island nations are aligned with us, but that is not a permanent situation. Senator Rubio and I wrote a letter expressing some concern about the pace of negotiations, especially since you are dealing with small nations, but they are nations so, and you are dealing with your own Department of Defense. Can you reassure me that we are either on track or about to be on track for a compact renegotiation and ratification, 2023 and 2024?

Secretary BLINKEN. Senator, in short, yes. This is something that I have been focused on. I have met with the leadership in a variety of ways, the Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Palau. I was in the region just a couple of months ago. We have appointed a very experienced diplomat, Ambassador Joseph Yun, as the negotiator for this. I know you know that. We are very focused on the pieces that expire in FY23 and FY24. I want to make sure that these get done. We need support from Congress for this. There may be some appropriations, as you know, that need to go along with this, but I am committed to getting this done.

We have, I think, a longstanding obligation/responsibility. It is also in our strategic interest to do this. I look forward to working with you to make sure that we have what we need to try to bring this to closure as rapidly as possible.

Senator SCHATZ. Thank you. Back to NATO. Article 6 of the NATO treaty states in part that, "For the purpose of Article 5, an armed attack on one or more of the parties is deemed to include an armed attack on the territory of the parties in Europe or North America, on the Algerian Department of France, on the Territory of Turkey or on the islands under the jurisdiction of any of the parties in the North Atlantic area north of the Tropic of Cancer." The 1949 treaty excludes Hawaii. Now, if Hawaii were ever attacked, it is an attack on the free world. I do not have any doubt that the entire free world would rally to our defense, but this is no small problem. Alaska is covered. All other 49 States are covered. Hawaii is not covered because statehood came afterwards. What are we going to do about that, Mr. Secretary?

Secretary BLINKEN. You are right about Article 6 of the treaty. It does define the alliance area exactly as you suggested. I think a few things. First, to emphasize the most important part, any attack on the United States or its territories, even if outside the geographic scope of Article 5, would almost certainly, of course, garner

our reaction, but would almost certainly, in my judgement, draw allied reaction to include via the consultation procedures that exist under Article 4 of the treaty. I am very confident about that.

I think an effort to, for example, amend the treaty to cover Hawaii and/or other U.S. territory would be unlikely to gain consensus because we are not the only ally, as you know, that has territory that is outside the geographic scope of Article 6. This would open something of a Pandora's box that, I think, would be very difficult to get a safe landing on because so many other allies have territories that would then potentially claim to want to be covered, so I am not sure that we could get there. I would also refer you to our colleagues at DoD to talk about military considerations raised by this question.

The main thing I want to emphasize is I am very confident, of course, not only about our own response, but also confident about the response of allies and partners were something of that nature to happen.

Senator SCHATZ. So am I, but I am not satisfied with your—I understand the Pandora's box argument, and you are probably right, but there has got to be something in between leaving this alone and endeavoring to change it in a failed way. Look, we are the 50th State. We ought to be covered, and if we cannot amend Article 6, then we got to do something here. Let us explore—

Secretary BLINKEN. I am happy to continue the conversation and see if there are ideas that make sense.

Senator SCHATZ. Thank you. During a March 2021 SFRC hearing, I asked the Deputy Secretary of State about integrating an emphasis on climate action throughout the Department, and he replied that it is not just going to be Secretary Kerry's team. Can you update me on how the Department is fully integrating climate action throughout the organization? I am specifically interested in the extent to which we can depoliticize climate action. Climate adaptation seems to be a space where we can all work together. I just do not think American foreign policy and the State Department as its instrument ought to be swinging wildly back and forth on the question of whether or not the sea levels are rising, or whether or not storms are becoming more frequent and severe, and whether or not the United States should continue to lead in this space. I am wondering what you are doing to institutionalize climate action throughout the Department.

Secretary BLINKEN. Thank you. First, we thought that it was vital not only to institutionalize, but to elevate, climate in everything that we are doing. The reason that the President asked former Secretary Kerry to take it on was to do exactly that, to make sure that as we headed into an incredibly challenging period, that we were doing everything possible to reengage the United States in leading these efforts, and we did through reengaging Paris, through the summit the President held, through COP26 and the successful parts of that endeavor, through sustained diplomacy that John Kerry has been leading.

To your point, we also wanted to make sure that this is truly institutionalized throughout the Department, and we are doing that in a number of ways. First, every regional bureau has within it someone who is focused and expert on these issues and is fully co-

ordinated with the climate office that John Kerry is leading to make sure that in all of our engagements with allies, partners, and those who are not, the climate issues are very much a part of the agenda, and that has been institutionalized. Second, we have a bureau, OES, that, as a general matter, is the locus of focus, if I can, on climate. We have very strong leadership of that bureau in Monica Medina, who has been partnered closely with John Kerry on a lot of these efforts. That bureau and its work will continue well into the future.

We are also making sure as well, as part of our training and the efforts that we are putting into that, that climate factors in and features in so that as officers, no matter where they are serving, take on their responsibilities, this is part of their thinking.

Senator SCHATZ. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. Senator Cruz.

Senator CRUZ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Secretary, welcome.

Secretary BLINKEN. Nice to see you, Senator.

Senator CRUZ. Let us talk Iran. As you know, Iran is the world's top state sponsor of terrorism, and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps is their premier terrorist organization. As the State Department noted in 2019, "Iran is an outlaw regime that uses terrorism as a key tool of statecraft, and the IRGC has engaged in terrorist activity or terrorism since its inception 40 years ago." The IRGC's support for terrorism "is foundational and institutional." The IRGC has killed over 600 Americans in Iraq. They control vast parts of the Iranian economy, and they use them for financing terrorism.

Right now, the IRGC is actively trying to murder additional Americans, including former Trump administration officials. We know from public reports that the State Department spends \$2 million every month protecting former officials, including former Secretary of State Pompeo, and the Secret Service is providing similar protection to protect former National Security Advisor Bolton. Because of such activities, the Trump administration rightly designated the IRGC as a foreign terrorist organization, an FTO.

As you know, the FTO designation is the most powerful we have. It includes a criminal prohibition on knowingly supporting the IRGC up to life in prison. It imposes vast immigration restrictions. It allows victims, including the Gold Star families of those killed in Iran, to sue for civil damages from such support. Just as importantly, it is a signal to our allies in the Middle East and across the world that we will use our most powerful tools to counter the threats that Iran poses to them, including existential threats.

The Iranian regime knows all of this, of course, which is why they have refused to reenter a nuclear deal unless the Biden administration agrees to lift the FTO designation. According to public reports, the negotiations have stalled over this issue. To advance the talks, American negotiators and the Biden administration officials have tried to find ways to rationalize meeting Iran's demands. You, yourself, have downplayed concerns over such a move by saying the IRGC would remain designated under other weaker sanctions. Back in Vienna, American negotiators have also reportedly asked Iranians to make commitments to stop conducting terrorism

in exchange for removing the FTO, and, specifically, to stop trying to murder former American officials. According to these reports, the Iranians told you “no.”

I have to admit it is flabbergasting that the Biden administration would take such Iranian commitments at face value, let alone consider dismantling terrorism sanctions. I want to ask you is it true that American negotiators made specific requests for a commitment that the IRGC will stop trying to murder former American officials, and is it true that they said no?

Secretary BLINKEN. Senator, I am not going to get into the details of any discussions or negotiations in a public forum. I am happy to come back and talk privately about that. Let me address a few things that you have raised because I do think that they are important.

First of all, I share your views on the IRGC and, especially, a number of its component parts, notably the Quds Force, which is primarily responsible for the egregious actions that it has taken in terms of targeting Americans, and, as you rightly say, continuing to do so. We very much share with that view. I agree with you. We have over the course of this Administration, of the sanctions we have issued, 86 of the 107 designations by this Administration have been against the IRGC or its component parts, again, for the reasons you cite. None of this is inconsistent with the nuclear agreement, whether it was enforced or not enforced. There are myriad sanctions as you know, as you have cited, against the IRGC in one way or another, both the entity as a whole, its component parts, individual members that will remain on the books, irrespective, but there are a few other factors that are worth at least considering, and I will come to the bottom line in a moment if I can.

First, when the question of designating the IRGC as a whole first came up the Bush administration many years ago——

Senator CRUZ. Mr. Secretary, as you know, we have limited time.

Secretary BLINKEN. Well, no, but it is important——

Senator CRUZ. I am going to try to focus on the specific question I asked. Let me start off with this. Is it true that the IRGC is actively trying to murder former senior officials of the United States?

Secretary BLINKEN. I am not sure what I can say in an open setting, but let me say generically that there is an ongoing threat against American officials, both present and past, and——

Senator CRUZ. Is it true that the State Department is spending roughly \$2 million a month to protect those officials?

Secretary BLINKEN. —we are making sure and we will make sure for as long as it takes that we are protecting our people, present and former, if they are under threat.

Senator CRUZ. I am assuming you would agree that attempting to murder a Secretary of State or a former Secretary of State is a pretty damn big deal.

Secretary BLINKEN. I would certainly agree with that, yes.

Senator CRUZ. There have been multiple public reports that we asked them to make the simple promise to not murder a former Secretary of State, and they refused. There is nothing classified about that. If they are actively refusing, saying, no, we are going to keep trying to murder your former Secretary of State, the idea that our negotiators are sitting in Vienna saying, okay, that is

great, so how many more billions can we give you, that does not make any sense. I just want to know the factual question. Did you ask them to stop trying to murder the former Secretary of State, and did they sit there and tell you, no, we are going to keep trying to murder him?

Secretary BLINKEN. Of course within the context of any engagements that we have, directly or indirectly, with Iranians, one of the strong messages we send to them is they need to stop targeting our people, period, and here are the facts, as I mentioned a few minutes ago.

Senator CRUZ. Did they tell you no?

Secretary BLINKEN. Again, I am not going to characterize what they said. They know what they would need to do to address this problem, and that is pretty straightforward. We have seen these attacks go up 400 percent from 2019 to 2020 after we got out of the nuclear agreement, after we designated the IRGC, after we killed Soleimani for whom no one is shedding any tears. Those are the facts. We have to deal with the facts in terms of what represents a threat to our people and how we can most effectively—

Senator CRUZ. Let me ask a final question just because my time has expired on a topic you and I have talked a great deal about, Nord Stream 2. We have finally gotten to sanctioning Nord Stream 2. Nord Stream 1 continues to deliver an enormous amount of natural gas. Stopping Nord Stream 1 would benefit our Ukraine allies significantly. What are we doing to urge Europe to stop taking deliveries on Nord Stream 1, which, in turn, would benefit Ukraine substantially?

Secretary BLINKEN. Senator, we are working across the board to help Europeans move away from dependency on Russian oil and, especially, on Russian gas, including gas that is coming through Nord Stream 1. I am glad we got to where we got on Nord Stream 2. I think we went about it the right way. We did it in a way that kept the Germans fully allied with us. They made that decision, as you know, like that after the Russian invasion. That has been very, very meaningful, and we are looking across the board at steps that we can take to support them as they continue to move away from a reliance on Russian gas wherever it is coming from, including the Nord Stream 1 population.

Senator CRUZ. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. Senator Merkley.

Senator MERKLEY. Mr. Secretary, thank you for being here today. I am going to touch on a number of issues very quickly. I will submit follow-up questions, and then I want to turn to in terms of your thoughts, address transnational repression.

First on Burma, thank you for the genocide determination. I know that that was a long, lengthy, complicated process, but the State Department did reach a conclusion. I think it is incredibly important for our position in the world that when genocide occurs, that we call it out clearly and effectively. Otherwise, the other times that we criticize human rights, it is ineffective. I will follow-up in questions regarding some of the budgeted funds for Burma. I want to make sure they are going to support civilian groups and in no way assists the government of that country.

Second, turning to Honduras. Thank you for the strategic dialogue that was begun yesterday and will continue in regards how to support their anti-corruption agenda and, in general, how to support the resetting of that relationship. Congress sent a strong message by zeroing out the foreign military financial assistance to the Northern Triangle countries and making 60 percent of the rest contingent upon completion, implementation of an anti-corruption agenda. If we do not tackle the corruption successfully there, we will not successfully address any of the issues we are trying to help with.

Third, Uyghur Force Labor Protection Act, I was very pleased to partner with my colleague from Florida, Senator Marco Rubio, to do that. I know the Administration is asking for more funds to implement it, support that. Thank you very much. Ethiopia, we pressed hard to get the truckloads of food into Tigray Province. Thank you for doing that. Finally, there were three successful convoys in April, but they amount to 200 truckloads. We are told there needs to be 2,000 per month, that there are some 700,000 families in famine-like condition. Please keep pressing hard. They need to get those convoys through basically every couple days in order to alleviate that famine.

Philippines. New election is coming up. I am pleased that we have not supported the Philippine National Police, and there have been some estimated 20,000 extrajudicial killings, really violating human rights in a massive way. We have a chance to reset that relationship with the upcoming election. I know you are aware of that. I know your team is working to prepare for that. Thank you. I echo my colleagues' statements of support for your actions on Ukraine. I will follow up in terms of our help for very poor countries affected by the increased cost of wheat and fertilizer. There will be profound reverberations. Then I will follow up a lot on climate issues.

Secretary BLINKEN. Yes.

Senator MERKLEY. Complicated world. Many things to touch on, but I wanted to take your time today on a topic that I did not hear addressed, and that is transnational repression. We are seeing more and more countries engaged in retaliation for both what companies do outside of their borders, what countries do, what individuals do, basically compromising freedom of expression, freedom of assembly. Those nations include China, and Turkey, and Russia, and Saudi Arabia, and Rwanda, and a couple dozen more at a lower scale. It is a growing strategy of authoritarian-leading countries to not just new technologies, surveillance technology for repression at home, but to do repression abroad.

The worst country in this regard is China, and think about kind of this long list of things that they have done. They took up economic measures against Mongolia for hosting the Dalai Lama; South Korea for deploying U.S. missile defense; Canada for Huawei's arrest—the arrest of the Huawei CFO; to Sweden for giving a human rights prize to a Swedish dissident under detention in China; Taiwan for refusing to acknowledge that it is part of China; United Kingdom for supporting pro-democracy protestors; Australia for calling for an independent inquiry into the origins of

COVID; Lithuania for establishing a Taiwanese representative office in its capital. That list goes on.

Then in terms of individuals, the China Commission held a hearing, and we heard from folks from Hong Kong, from Tibet, from Shenyang Province talk about the impact on their families, being impacted. Just to give you one example, there is a Uyghur activist who had encouraged the development of mother tongue schools. His name is Abduweli Ayup, and initially there was some significant support for this concept, and then China evolved its policy and said we don't want these native language schools. We want to force everyone into, if you will, the major Chinese dialect, and he had to flee to Norway. His in-laws were threatened. They were pressured to bring their daughter home, his niece home, back to China where she was detained, and she died in detention. The parents were threatened with imprisonment if they said anything to the world about her death. I just was amazed at his courage to continue to speak out against repression with his family being threatened. It is an incredibly effective tool.

We see China undertaking these massive strategies both with trade policy and with deliberate strategies targeting dissidents abroad and family members at home. Huge threat to the vision of democracy and freedom of speech, freedom of assembly. Big issue for the State Department to undertake. Could you expand on your efforts?

Secretary BLINKEN. Thank you, Senator. First of all, let me say I appreciate the comments you made briefly about Burma, about Honduras, about Ethiopia, about the Uyghurs, and also about food security, all things that we look forward to coming back to you with and on because all are very important, very much a focus of what we are doing. I very much share your concern about the growing practice of using tools of transnational repression to attack those, in one way or another, who are speaking up, speaking out on behalf of human rights, on behalf of democracy, on behalf of basic freedoms.

We have put in place a number of measures to try to address this problem. You will recall that with regard to Saudi Arabia, for example, the so-called Khashoggi ban specifically goes not just with regard to Saudi Arabia, but around the world. It goes at countries that engage in this practice, to include visa bans, to include sanctions, so that if they are trying to use tools of transnational repression, we have means to go at them. More broadly, we are seeing this, as you rightly cited, being used in different ways in different places. This is very much a part of the conversation that we are having with other likeminded countries who share the concern, and we are looking at tools that we can put into place to push back effectively against this.

You cited the example of Lithuania and China using coercion with Lithuania. I think we have supported them along with other countries in the European Union effectively to help them resist. We had a Summit for Democracy, as you know, a few months ago. Part of that was doing exactly what you suggest, which is developing tools for pushing back against this kind of coercion and providing support to those who may be on the receiving end of it. I am happy to share with you some of the specific initiatives that we are work-

ing on with other countries to try to, in effect, arm ourselves and others against this practice.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. Senator Barrasso.

Senator MERKLEY. Thank you.

Senator BARRASSO. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Secretary, welcome back from the Ukraine. You have obviously dealt with issues relating to energy. You have heard a lot from the members of the Republican side today, energy—the way Russia uses energy as a weapon and the impact it has brought to Ukraine. Senator Rounds asked a question on energy, and you stated that we need to accelerate transition to renewables, and you said you cannot weaponize the sun, you cannot weaponize the wind, but you also cannot run a modern economy on sunshine and whether it is a windy day or not. I would say from the first days in this Administration, the Biden administration has failed to prioritize energy security, which I have always said is part of our national security.

Now, under your leadership, the State Department is looking to cut deals with dictators in order to access more energy resources. The State Department is in negotiations to remove sanctions on Iran's energy sector as part of the Iran nuclear deal. The State Department officials have traveled Venezuela to meet with Maduro to discuss removing sanctions to access additional crude oil. You personally called on OPEC Plus to increase production to “stabilize global energy markets” to make sure that there remains an abundant supply of energy around the world. Your State Department then went to Qatar and other foreign countries to ask them to export more liquefied natural gas to Europe. Now, all this happening at the same time that the Administration that you serve on has made it harder to produce American energy, and I heard about it again this week back home in Wyoming.

To me, energy security is critically important. Our adversaries would love to see us even more dependent upon them to meet our own energy needs at home in America. I think we should not be removing energy sanctions on brutal dictators. It is unacceptable to bankroll the terrorist activities of Iran. It is a mistake to go to Venezuela and ask for more energy, and I think it is dangerous to rely on Russia for energy resources—oil, gas, coal, and uranium. I think we need to increase production of American energy resources. Our Nation has plenty of energy to power our Nation and to provide our allies and friends with a stable energy supply.

Could you just explain why the Administration is more focused on buying energy from our enemies than finding ways to increase American energy exports and production here?

Secretary BLINKEN. Thank you, Senator. A few things. First, we are focused primarily in the near term in making sure that there are abundant supplies of energy on world markets to our benefit, to the benefit of American consumers so that prices are held in check, also to help Europeans to make this transition, especially in the midst of the Russian aggression against Ukraine. We want to make sure that we are doing that in a way, as I said, that does not spike prices and line President Putin's pockets. That makes, I think, good sense.

We have taken a number of steps, as I mentioned, to support this effort, including doubling our LNG exports to Europe just in the

last few months. The President has called as well for increased domestic production. As you know well, there are thousands of licenses that have not been used that exist, and we will see if production increases as a result. As it comes to renewables, we have been very clear all along that this is a process and a transition. It is not flipping a light switch, and so we have to have abundant sources of energy of various kinds going forward even as we make the transition. There are tremendous opportunities over time in this transition, particularly when it comes to American technology, in leading this effort and having vast new markets, but it is a process. It is a transition, and we need to make sure that we have abundant supplies of energy on the market.

When it comes to other countries, first of all, with regard to Venezuela, the visit to Venezuela was made with the objective of getting released Americans who are being unjustly detained, and, in fact, we were able to bring home two of those Americans as well as to press the Venezuelans to reengage in talks with the united opposition on moving back to free elections and democracy. That was the focus of the visit. With regard to Iran, the purpose of the negotiations with Iran is to see if we can get the Iranians back into compliance with the Iranian Nuclear Agreement, which has clear benefits to the United States and making it much more difficult for Iran to get fissile material for a nuclear weapon. That is the purpose of that engagement. The purpose is not to get more Iranian oil on the markets.

Senator BARRASSO. Let me move to the crisis at the Southern border. Last month, 220,000 illegal immigrants apprehended at the U.S.-Mexico border, 2021, after President Biden was sworn into office, 1.9 million apprehensions. Currently on pace for 2 million this year. President Biden tasked the Vice President with addressing the crisis at the Southern border. The President is talking about removing Article 42 because apparently COVID is behind us, although since you started testifying this morning, there has been news reports that Senator Wyden, Senator Murphy from this committee, and the Vice President are all right now with COVID.

Secretary BLINKEN. Yes.

Senator BARRASSO. During the Vice President's visit to Guatemala last year, Vice President Kamala Harris sent a message to illegal immigrants attempting to enter the United States. She said, "I want to be clear to folks in this region who are thinking about making this dangerous trek to the United States-Mexico border. Do not come. Do not come." She went on to say, I believe, if you come to the border, you will be turned back. Well, do you agree with those statements by the Vice President that if you come, you will be turned back?

Secretary BLINKEN. I would agree. If people come to the border and cannot show a legal basis for coming into the United States under asylum or other rules, they will be removed. That is the policy. Let me just say when it comes to Title 42, as you know, Senator, this is a CDC authority. It is not immigration policy. The CDC will make its judgment. They made a judgment to terminate the Title 42 next month, but if that happens, as I said, what will happen as a practical matter, if people come to the border and try

to get in without the necessary legal basis to do so, they will be sent away.

Senator BARRASSO. That is not happening, and it is not going to happen, and that is how you go from more illegal immigrants coming into the country in the first 14 months of President Biden in office than over the previous 4 years with President Trump in the White House. Now we are at a point where we are facing a crisis that the Administration appears to be sending a different message with this revoking Title 42. I think it is an important border control tool. It is a critical border control tool. As you mentioned, it is a public health—to protect the public. It is going to result—what we are going to see, I think, is a massive surge. The head of Homeland Security from this Administration said they are not prepared. The head of the Homeland Security from President Obama's term said we are not prepared to handle what is coming this way.

Elizabeth Warren explained on CNN this weekend, and, Mr. Chairman, this will be my final question. She said, "The Biden administration is putting plans in place to deal with people who are asking for amnesty and relief at the border." Would you please describe the plans that the Biden administration is putting in place, that Senator Warren alluded to, to deal with this surge of migrants attempting to enter our country illegally?

Secretary BLINKEN. Senator, I would refer you to DHS, which is responsible for the border and for those plans. The focus that I am bringing to this is making sure that, to the best of our ability, we are getting countries throughout our hemisphere, where we have an unprecedented situation. We have not only migrants from the Northern Triangle. We have, as you know, Venezuela, Nicaragua, Haiti, Cuba, and then other countries that have had populations from some of these countries who are also seeing them move north. What is vital from the perspective of the State Department is to build a sense of shared responsibility for dealing with this. That is exactly what we have been doing.

I just got back from Panama where we had the foreign ministers from virtually of the all concerned countries in place to take practical steps to deal with this. For example, we have bilateral arrangements now with Costa Rica and Panama, and we are working on more, where countries will take steps, for example, to put in place transit visas so that people cannot go through their countries to try to come to the United States, to do repatriations themselves, to treat people humanely, to apply protections, to grant asylum themselves as opposed to having people come to the United States to seek it. All of these things are practical steps that we are working on and putting into effect as the State Department to help deal with what is an unprecedented situation. In addition, there is going to be a Summit of the Americas, as I mentioned earlier, led by President Biden in a couple of months, where this will be a major topic of issue.

Look, I would, again, refer you to DHS. We obviously have over many years challenges in effectively, humanely, and efficiently processing those who come to our country and make claims of asylum. We need more resources to do that effectively, efficiently so that their cases can be adjudicated very quickly, and if they do not have a legal basis for being here, they are returned.

Senator BARRASSO. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. Senator Booker.

Senator BOOKER. Thank you very much. It is good to see you, Mr. Secretary. Thank you for taking so much time to endure all of our questioning and being so responsive.

I just want to jump right in. I am just back from a long 8 days overseas going from Poland all the way to Nepal and India. One thing, when I was in Germany, which was our last stop, we just really pressed both German officials we met with as well our State Department folks about, as we all are focused obviously on Ukraine, not losing focus on China's influence in the region. Germany is obviously now after Brexit the center of economic power in the EU. Our relationship with them is critical. I was stunned as I probed our officials there about how China's influence is just growing in their country, and we are not, I do not believe, just allocating the necessary resources to really counter Chinese influence in Europe.

I know you are doing a lot of things already. Your budget proposal includes funding for new initiatives to counter Chinese influence globally, such as increasing the number of China watchers, but I want to make sure that this includes adequate funding for countering China in Europe. I was alarmed when I started asking questions to find out, for example, that China's COSCO Shipping has struck a deal to take a 35 percent stake in Hamburg's Tollerort Terminal, one of Germany's largest ports. When I started asking our ambassador there, she was telling me we have actually plans to sell American property there, and none of them could tell me anything when I started probing them with questions, other than the fact that they all think it would be a terrible mistake to sell that property there because it sends the exact wrong message in Hamburg, that the Chinese are buying everything up they can, and we are selling property that might just be bought by the Chinese. When I pressed even further, and they could not escape my questioning, they had to admit to me that they are threadbare there in our consulates in the second- and third-largest cities, and agreed with me that when it comes to countering China, one of the most important economic powers, we are not keeping up. In fact, we are losing ground.

The first thing I just want to offer you an opportunity is, why does your budget not reflect the importance of adding investment in Germany? Why are we selling critical property there? That makes no sense whatsoever.

Secretary BLINKEN. Thank you, and I will look into the specifics that you mentioned just to make sure that I fully understand.

Senator BOOKER. Could you get back to me in writing or call me, one of the two?

Secretary BLINKEN. I am happy to. Sure. No, happy to do that.

We are focused on this relentlessly, including in Europe, both at the level of the European Union and with individual countries. We have done a number of things to make sure that we not only are focused on it, but we are doing something about it. We established a dialogue with the European Union on China and all of the aspects of its engagement in Europe that the Deputy Secretary of State, Wendy Sherman, just came back from. One of the things

that it is focused on is Chinese investment that poses potentially a strategic challenge or threat to us.

We have been going across the continent and urging countries to adopt investment screening tools. I have done that personally. It is in virtually all of my engagements with countries that do not have them, for the purposes of making sure that they can identify and, as necessary, do something about potential investments by China that could pose a security threat. The purpose is not to cut off trade or investment from or with China. That is not the issue. The issue is focusing in on specific areas of strategic importance, including ports as well as telecommunications and other things, that we have eyes on it, and that we or they have the tools to do something about it.

Senator BOOKER. So please—

Secretary BLINKEN. Third, we also reorganized the Department to have a whole-of-enterprise focus on China, again led by the deputy secretary. Part of our instruction to all of our embassies around the world, including in Europe, is to focus on and report on the kinds of potential investment—

Senator BOOKER. I am grateful for that. I will probably have a conversation with the deputy secretary as well.

Secretary BLINKEN. Yes.

Senator BOOKER. It is just tough when I talk to the staff over there face-to-face that they do not seem to have the resources they need to do the work that you are talking about. As I said to them, as Secretary Mattis once said, if you cut my State Department, buy me more bullets. Well clearly, it is a pivotal country that we just watched a decade or two of terrible policy with the Russians, with increased engagement, I do not want to see the same story repeated with China. Talking to my peers in that country, they really needed to hear from us and see from us that this was a priority for us, that we were going to be holding them to account, and that we were not retracting from Germany, but actually upping our investments across the board. I understand that you value this. I have only got a minute and 55 seconds.

Secretary BLINKEN. I would love to pursue this with you because we have expanded the regional China Officer Program so that in each of our regional bureaus, we have people who are expert in this, who expanding our capacity to engage on economic issues. This is part of my modernization agenda, in part, to be able to do—

Senator BOOKER. I appreciate that. Real quick. I see this every time I travel abroad, the lack of diversity in our State Department. It does not reflect America.

Secretary BLINKEN. Yes.

Senator BOOKER. It is stunning to me at times where I sit in rooms with no diversity whatsoever in a large group of a State team with me. You have increased the funding for the paid internship programs. I think that is important.

Secretary BLINKEN. That is right.

Senator BOOKER. There are \$10 million in addition to the \$8 million in fiscal year 2022. Just it is something that is a priority to me and other members of this committee. I just really hope that is enough, and I hope we do more because it is disappointing to me

whenever I come back from traveling abroad. Then when I talk to people of color that do serve in our embassies, they sort of feel like I do, and Warnock, and perhaps Tim Scott probably does here in the Senate, like, wow, we need more diversity. I am hoping that—I know that is a priority for you from private conversations. I am just hoping we can do something about it.

My last point. I am so concerned about food security globally. This, to me, is stunning that we are—we do not understand the connection, besides a moral urgency, everywhere from Yemen, to Afghanistan, to the Horn of Africa, the moral urgency to do something about this, how critical it is for global security to meet this food crisis because, if not, as we have learned and I talked with obviously Mr. Beasley from the World Food Programme, just to calculate for me that dollars invested in food security now save us hundreds of dollars in terms of the instability that is created when we do not meet these crises.

I am hoping that the Biden administration in their next Ukraine package, because these are related issues, is asking for the resources necessary to meet this crisis. We know that there is probably about a \$10 billion urgent need for resources to meet the food crisis alone, and I would like you just to conclude by maybe giving me, which I know does reflect my sense of urgency, of the gravity of this crisis and the need for us to put in \$5–7 billion of American resources, especially to trigger other of our allies to join us in trying to meet this crisis, further exacerbated by the crisis in Ukraine.

Secretary BLINKEN. Let me—very quickly, I fully share that concern. This is an area of intense focus for us. We are going to use our presidency of the U.N. Security Council next month to focus on food security. We will be looking to work with Congress to provide \$11 billion over 5 years for programs like Feed the Future. We are working right now with countries around the world to get them to increase the donations they are making and resources they are giving to the World Food Programme, to the Food and Agriculture Organization.

We are pressing on countries that have large stockpiles of food to make those available, not to put in place export restrictions. We are—the President has made—created incentives for fertilizer production in the United States to make sure that more of that is getting on the market because as you know, that goes to making sure that next year's crops and the years after are abundant and prices do not further go up. We have given an additional—more than \$100 million just recently to—from the Humanitarian Assistance Fund to Ethiopia, to Kenya, to Somalia to deal with their acute problems.

I could not agree with you more, and we are intensely focused on it.

Senator BOOKER. Mr. Secretary, I am sure this was said, but I want to thank you for your courageous trip you just took, coming from a meeting with Ukrainians when I was in Poland. Your extraordinary leadership, in my opinion, has been a light during this crisis, and I want to thank you for that and the entire State Department staff and what they are doing under difficult circumstances.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. Senator Johnson.

Senator JOHNSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Welcome, Mr. Secretary.

Can you describe to me what your and what the Administration's definition of, is a "win" in Ukraine?

Secretary BLINKEN. Senator, on the terms that President Putin himself set, Ukraine has already succeeded and Russia has failed. The terms that Putin set was to eliminate the sovereignty and independence of Ukraine and to subsume it back into Russia. I can state with confidence that that has failed and that will fail. I do not see a scenario by which that happens. As we are speaking, the Ukrainians are doing an extraordinary job, thanks to their courage, but also because of the support that we have led in providing in pushing back the Russians. They have done that from Kyiv, and Western Ukraine, and Northern Ukraine.

They are now engaged, as you know, in a ferocious battle in the East and South. We are doing everything we can to make sure that they have the means to continue to do that. Ultimately, it will be up to them, the Ukrainians, as a sovereign, independent country, how they want to resolve this, and we will see if President Putin ever gets to the point of being willing to engage in any meaningful negotiation about that. That will be up to the Ukrainians. They will have our full support as they do now.

Senator JOHNSON. You are not really willing to lay out what the Administration's view of what the end state ought to be to consider it a win?

Secretary BLINKEN. The end state should be determined by the Ukrainians as a sovereign, independent country. We will back that. We will continue to back that, however they choose to do it.

Senator JOHNSON. When you were with President Zelensky, did he talk to you about what he considered his objectives are, and I would say his objectives would be probably the definition of what he would consider a win.

Secretary BLINKEN. Senator, I do not want to put words in his mouth. I think what it would be fair and safe to say is that his objective would be to push the Russians out of the territory that they are trying to occupy in Eastern Ukraine. Also, let me add to this because I think it is important, to try to make sure that when that is accomplished, Russia is not in a position to repeat this exercise next month, next year, or in 5 years. That goes to making sure that Ukraine has the effective capacity to deter and defend itself, and it also goes to something that Secretary Austin said yesterday, was also making sure in various ways that Russia does not have the effective means to do this again.

Senator JOHNSON. Putting your two answers together, President Zelensky would view his objective is to push Russia out, certainly out of Eastern Ukraine, and you said the Administration will support President Zelensky in his objectives. Are you willing to state that that is the U.S. objective, as well? That that aligns with President Zelensky that we will provide the support? Our goal is for them to win, according to the definition of the Ukrainians and President Zelensky. We will support them in their efforts to win in Ukraine, which means pushing Russia out of at least Eastern Ukraine?

Secretary BLINKEN. If that is how the Ukrainians continue—let me just say again, I do not want to put words in his mouth, but if that is how they define their objectives as a sovereign, democratic, independent country, that is what we will support. I come back to my initial proposition, which was that on Putin's own terms, which was trying to subjugate Ukraine fully to Russia and eliminate its sovereignty and independence, that has already failed.

Senator JOHNSON. I understand. Now it appears that Putin's goal is establishing a land bridge at least between Eastern Ukraine to Crimea.

Secretary BLINKEN. Yes.

Senator JOHNSON. Is that a very—are you willing to state that is definitely the U.S. objective, our NATO partners' objective, to deny him that land bridge?

Secretary BLINKEN. Our objective is to make sure that the Ukrainians have the means to repel and deal with this Russian aggression wherever it is taking place in Ukraine, including in Southern Ukraine, and that is exactly what we are doing.

Senator JOHNSON. Again, I was at a subcommittee investigation hearing on the way, we still have not addressed military housing, so I missed some of the testimony, so maybe you already covered this, but are we going to provide them the types of weaponry they need, recognizing that what worked when Kyiv was surrounded, and now it is flatter terrain, in some cases almost trench warfare, are we committed to providing the type of weaponry that President Zelensky was asking for?

Secretary BLINKEN. In short, yes, and the point you make is an important one. The nature of the battle has changed from what was necessary for Western Ukraine and Kyiv to where things are now. We spent 3 hours with President Zelensky, with the Secretary of Defense. A big focus of that conversation was what it is that Ukraine needs to deal with the current state of the Russian aggression. The Secretary of Defense, as we speak, is actually in Germany with the ministers of defense from about 40 countries focused on making sure that we are all providing to Ukraine what it needs to deal with this aggression.

Senator JOHNSON. To what extent are we aware that China is helping Russia in their aggression against Ukraine? Is the Russian—do we know if they are using Chinese drones?

Secretary BLINKEN. We are very focused on this in a number of ways. President Biden made directly clear to President Xi Jinping that it would not be in China's interest to materially support Russia in this aggression or, for that matter, to undermine sanctions. This is something we are looking at very, very carefully. I think you are seeing that China is having to deal with the significant reputational risk that it is already incurring by being seen as, in the most charitable interpretation, on the fence and, more practically, supportive of Russia. We can in a different session get into more detail, but for now, we are not seeing significant support by China for Russia's military actions.

Senator JOHNSON. Finally, in the remaining seconds I have, I have been attempting to get from the State Department a report that the State Department conducted on an inspection from the Wuhan Lab. I think we understand that the overall thrust of that

report is it was not a lab that had the type of safety standards that we would have expected. I am somewhat baffled that is a report that I am simply not able to get my hands on. This report came from—it is April 19, 2018. The cable describing it was January 19 of 2018. Is that something you will commit to me today to turn over to my committee?

Secretary BLINKEN. Senator, I will look back into that. My recollection is this. There was a program that ended in 2019. There was no funding of that program since, and I think any—there was a report that may have been done by an outside contractor that, I think, was seen as problematic in its methodology. In any event, I will follow up. I do not know the status of that, but we will come back to you with it.

Senator JOHNSON. Okay. I would appreciate that, and I will expect that response. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. Senator Shaheen.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Mr. Secretary, for your testimony this morning and for your trip to Ukraine. I think it was something that the entire world watched with great appreciation.

I really want to start this afternoon with the Western Balkans because I think Senator Murphy mentioned that he, and I, and Senator Tillis traveled through Serbia, Kosovo, and Bosnia-Herzegovina last week. I think it is fair to say that if Putin has stalled in Ukraine, he may look elsewhere to sow chaos and that his fingerprints of malign influence could be found throughout the Western Balkans. I am particularly concerned about the situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina, which has been plagued by corruption, a lack of leadership, and a tripartite presidency that is at war with itself, but there is also a very troubling security outlook there. We had a chance to meet with representatives from the EUFOR and NATO mission there, the European Union Force and BIH, and everyone we talked to indicated a growing concern about the potential for Russia to play games with reauthorization of the EUFOR Force when it comes up this fall. It does not appear that there is any Plan B for what to do about that. We raised this concern with our ambassador. Obviously, we heard from a number of people, and we raised it when we were at NATO headquarters in Brussels as well.

Can you tell me whether we have a plan in place to maintain a peacekeeping presence?

Secretary BLINKEN. First, let me just say thank you for your engagement and for your leadership on these issues, not only your recent trip, but just across the board. I remember well from my days working for this committee—

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you.

Secretary BLINKEN. —Senator Voinovich was the sort of flag bearer and really appreciate the fact that you have sort of taken the flag on the Western Balkans, and it remains very important.

Let me say two things very quickly. First, I think, generally speaking, the situation with the Russian aggression against Ukraine only underscores the broader urgency of integration for all of these countries into European structures, something that, in a variety of ways, we are continuing to encourage, work on, support.

We have a number of programs that try to help them advance their candidacies and qualifications and meeting criteria for these things that I know that you know very well. That is just as a general proposition. Diplomatically, we have been engaged in every aspect of this, whether it is the relationship between Kosovo and Serbia, whether it is helping get North Macedonia and as well as Albania across the line in the direction of the EU. Finally, Bosnia-Herzegovina, where I very much share all of the concerns that you have cited.

When it comes to the Force, I would say two things. First, I very much agree with you that some kind of international force with an adequate mandate is essential to trying to maintain a safe and secure environment in Bosnia and Herzegovina. What I can tell you about where we are is this is a work in progress we are—because of the concerns that you have raised about the mandate and whether it will be blocked, in effect, and not continued. We are engaged with a variety of stakeholders in this on contingency planning in the event that the Security Council is not in a place where it renews the mandate or it expires, which is, I think, in November. We are trying to make sure that we have something to back this up if that happens. Very happy to work with you on that and share ideas on how we can do that.

Senator SHAHEEN. I would very much appreciate that, and we were able to speak with Deputy Secretary Donfried, who is in the Balkans this week I know and share with her what we had heard and our concerns about what is happening there. I look forward to that because I—you mentioned Senator Voinovich. I first traveled with him to the Western Balkans in 2010. I think it is fair to say that in each of the countries we visited, I was more concerned about the political situation today than I was in 2010.

We need to pay attention, and I know that there are people within the Department who are trying to do that. I want to go now to the Office of Global Women's Issues because I was pleased to see that the budget increased funding for that office, which is long overdue. I wonder if you could talk a little bit about why you think this is important and really the gender lens with which we should be looking at foreign policy in many ways.

Secretary BLINKEN. Thank you, and, again, thank you as well for your ongoing leadership on this. I think the budget request is substantial and by design. We are looking overall for about \$2.6 billion to try to do a number of things to advance gender equality, to prevent and respond, as necessary, to gender-based violence, and to promote women peace and security. Simply put, all of these things are not only, in my judgment, the right thing to do, they are also the necessary thing to do if we are going to have societies that are making the most of their potential with the full inclusion of women across the board—economically, politically, et cetera.

It is necessary as well in terms of, I think, effectively dealing with conflict and making sure that women's voices and women's leadership is engaged to both prevent and deal with that. We know the track record when that happens is much better than when it does not, and because there are significant and severe threats, some of which have been accentuated by COVID-19 where we know that vulnerabilities, for a variety of reasons, have increased,

not decreased, in recent years. We have a number of things that we are trying to do that are reflected in the budget and in our programs.

With regard to gender-based violence, there are a series of programs that would be funded by this request to offer support, to offer services, to use our foreign assistance as well as our diplomatic action, again, to prevent and to deal with, as necessary. One of the critical aspects of this that I know you know very well and that you have spoken about is, for example, making sure that we have, in refugee situations, a gender-based approach to making sure that there is safe access to food, water, medicine, sanitation, hygiene, and that these are factored in not only into our programs, but into the work that we are doing with the organizations that provide these services, and the budget and our programs reflect that. We also are very focused, again, on women peace and security and working to support the participation, the leadership, the empowerment of women in decisionmaking on peace and security issues. This is very much a part of our diplomacy, again, because we know that it produces better outcomes.

We are pushing with diplomacy, with public diplomacy, amplifying voices of local women, women-led organizations. All of these things have programs and the programs, of course, have a price tag attached to them.

Senator SHAHEEN. Well, thank you very much. I am out of time, but I hope we are keeping the women and girls of Afghanistan—

Secretary BLINKEN. Yes.

Senator SHAHEEN. —included in that equation as well. Thank you very much.

Secretary BLINKEN. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. Senator Young.

Senator YOUNG. Thank you, Chairman. Good to see you, Secretary.

Secretary BLINKEN. Thank you.

Senator YOUNG. As a former staff member to this committee, I know you agree that robust oversight of the workings of the Department is incredibly important. With that understanding, I have been disappointed in the Department and the Administration's communication with and transparency to Congress as it relates to the negotiations with Iran. Any sort of deal, so to speak, that might be cut with the Government of Iran that inadequately curbs Iran's appetite to develop nuclear weapons, to continue to carry out malign activities within the region and beyond, will not be in American interests, that of our allies, or, I believe, of the Iranian people themselves. I was encouraged earlier that you gave a commitment to the chairman to work with the committee on an open hearing at some point in this work period to discuss negotiations. I would just build on that and ask you, sir, if you commit to making Special Envoy Malley, our chief negotiator, available to appear before this committee before an agreement is announced and agreed to.

Secretary BLINKEN. Senator, thank you, and, look, I want to make sure that we are doing exactly as you say, which is to be communicating effectively and in as real a time as possible on this issue and, for that matter, on virtually every other issue. I know that Special Envoy Malley has been engaged in, one way or an-

other, with members of this committee and Congress throughout the course of these negotiations as well as, of course, with allies and partners. I want to make sure that that continues to happen, so we will look for an opportunity to make sure that people are brought as up-to-date as we possibly can, including by him or other members of his team. We are happy to work with you on that.

Senator YOUNG. I understand the sensitivities of negotiations and the practical realities that would prevent an hour-by-hour, perhaps even a day-by-day update, but in light of the gravity of this situation and the news reports that a deal may be forthcoming soon, could we have Special Envoy Malley appear before this committee—can I have an agreement from you to that end, if not before this work period has ended, certainly before an agreement is announced and agreed to?

Secretary BLINKEN. I will go back and see what we can do to make something happen. Now, I will say that I would assume that for that purpose, we would probably need to do something in a closed session because this is in the midst of a negotiation, but let me come back to you on that. I want to find a way to make that happen.

Senator YOUNG. Okay. Thank you very much. I appreciate that. Staying on Iran just briefly, do you commit that the IRGC's foreign terrorist organization designation will not be lifted as part of any agreement the Administration reaches with Iran?

Secretary BLINKEN. The only way I could see it being lifted is if Iran takes steps necessary to justify the lifting of that designation. It knows what it would have to do in order to see that happen.

Senator YOUNG. Do you agree that IRGC's FTO designation will not be lifted merely at the negotiating table, meaning not just concessions made at the negotiating table. A pattern of constructive behavior would have to occur over a period of time. I can speak vaguely only to this matter in order for the FTO designation to be removed.

Secretary BLINKEN. Yes, this would—irrespective of the nuclear negotiation, just with regard to the FTO, it would require Iran to take certain actions and to sustain them. Of course, if it purported to do something and then did not, and a designation—any kind of designation were lifted, it can always be reimposed. As you know, there is a long history to this when it comes to the IRGC designation. The Bush administration looked at it, did not do it. The advice was not to do it because it did not gain anything, but might create actually more dangers for our people and forces in the region. The Obama administration came to the same conclusion. When President Trump decided to do it, it was against the advice of his chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, his military, and the intelligence community, because in the judgment of those—the two administrations and senior leadership in President Trump's administration, the gain was minimal and the pain was potentially great.

Again, as a practical matter, the designation does not really gain you much because there are myriad other sanctions on the IRGC. The primary sanction when it comes to the FTO designation actually is a travel ban, and the people affected by that ban when it comes to the IRGC, as you know, the IRGC is a large—

Senator YOUNG. Yes.

Secretary BLINKEN. —force that has a lot of conscripts in it. They would not be able to travel. The people who are the real bad guys have no intention of traveling here anyway.

Senator YOUNG. I am going to move on to Burma because I have a very large Burmese-American diaspora community, and I care a lot about this issue. I applaud the Administration's decision to formally declare the persecutions and killings of Rohingya people by the Burmese military a genocide. It is something Senator Merkley, Cardin, and many of my colleagues on this committee have pushed for, and I commend the Administration for that. The situation in Burma following last year's coup continues to inflict deep suffering on the people in the country and many diaspora families, like those in Indiana.

As you know, the FY22 NDAA required a briefing to Congress within 60 days of passage examining a variety of policy options as it relates to the United States' response to the ongoing crisis in Burma. Among those issues are a determination on the legitimacy and recognition of the national unity government, holding those in the military accountable for their crimes, including sanctions, and looking into strategic interests and actions of the People's Republic of China. We are long overdue for said briefing, and legislative response is, of course, suffering on account of this. I fully acknowledge how many challenges the Administration is tending to, but we do need action here, and so I just ask you, Mr. Secretary, would you commit to working with others in the Administration to follow the law and brief Congress on these matters as soon as possible?

Secretary BLINKEN. Yes.

Senator YOUNG. Thank you. I will be following up.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. Well, Mr. Secretary, just some final questions to wrap up. I just came back from a trip with a series of colleagues, both on this committee and off, on Australia, Japan, and Taiwan, and what became clear to me, not only on this trip, but with all of the ambassadors that we hosted of the ASEAN nations here in Washington, is that unless we have an economic and trade agenda, we will not meet the strategic competition challenge that we have with China, and we will not necessarily meet the reach for some of these countries to engage in a way that we want them on the security question, because they just feel that we are not engaged.

In the interagency process—I know you do not drive this agenda on your own, but in the interagency process, I hope that you are advocating for some robust economic, which is not necessarily a trade agenda, but economic and/or plus a trade agenda, because in the absence of that, even though we consider China our single-biggest geostrategic threat, we cannot win it without this dimension.

Secretary BLINKEN. I strongly agree with you, Mr. Chairman. I think that is exactly right. We are pursuing that. We are launching what we call the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework that addresses, I think, part of this challenge. It includes a number of things. It includes trade facilitation. It includes standards for the digital economy and technology. It includes building supply chain resilience, infrastructure investments, including in clean energy, worker standards. There are a number of—

The CHAIRMAN. It does not include market access, which is probably the single-most significant thing they are looking for. Look, this is a good initiative. I said it in the Finance Committee to our trade representative.

Secretary BLINKEN. Yes.

The CHAIRMAN. All of these nations, when we have talked to them, have suggested their aspiration for a much more robust engagement by the United States is necessary. That is why I add the economic equation, which is not necessarily a trade agenda, because whether it is the DFC, or whether it is Millennium Challenge, or whether it is USAID, or whatever else, we cannot meet something with nothing.

Secretary BLINKEN. Again, I very much agree with your premise.

The CHAIRMAN. I hope you will just be a strong voice within the interagency process. I intend to make that point to the President and others as well. In that context, in our visit to Taiwan, it is very clear to me that if China could ultimately overcome Taiwan, which produces 90 percent of all the high-end semiconductors in the world, which means, for the average American who may be watching, in everything that we use—the phone that we have, the car that we drive, the refrigerator we keep our food in, and I could go on and on—there are semiconductors. If, in fact, China could overwhelm and take Taiwan and now have control of 90 percent of the world's semiconductors, the world would be in a world of hurt, and that is just one dimension.

Secretary BLINKEN. Yes.

The CHAIRMAN. Not to mention the message that we heard it would send within the region if, in fact, we do not come to Taiwan's assistance here because other countries will say, well, if they did not do it for Taiwan, they are not going to do it for us. Do we have that sense of urgency?

Secretary BLINKEN. Mr. Chairman, we do, and we are focused on this in a number of ways. First of all, with regard to semiconductors themselves, we have a significant advantage right now over China in the ability to produce the highest-end semiconductors and the chips. As you know very well, a small number of countries, to include Taiwan, are at the forefront of that, and we are taking very significant steps with Taiwan, with Japan, with the Netherlands which is critical to this, and a few other countries, to make sure that when it comes to the highest-end semiconductors, they are not transferred to China or China does not get the technology to manufacture them. Taiwan is integral to that.

At the same time, when it comes to Taiwan itself, we are determined to make sure that it has all necessary means to defend itself against any potential aggression, including unilateral action by China to disrupt the status quo that has been in place now for many decades. I think there have been, in foreign military sales, close to \$20 billion in such sales since 2017. That is ongoing as we speak. There has been another almost \$2½ billion in direct commercial sales that we have authorized or facilitated. We have been expediting third party-transfers to Taiwan. We have been supporting an indigenous industrial defense capability, and we are focused on helping them think about how to strengthen asymmetric capabilities, again, as a deterrent—

The CHAIRMAN. I think we are now aligned between our views of what their asymmetric capabilities need to be and their views, which is an important thing. I look forward to our robust engagement to help them have the capacity capabilities of that asymmetric capability.

Secretary BLINKEN. Yes.

The CHAIRMAN. Finally, I requested a GAO report on the State Department's annual waiver of Section 907 of the Freedom Support Act, which was released in March. The report found that the State Department's reporting to Congress on fulfillment of waiver conditions did not address required elements, including the impact on proposed assistance on the military balance between Azerbaijan and Armenia over a 7-year period. It also found that State did not provide detailed instruction to agencies about reporting requirements, and that state and DoD did not document their consideration of waiver requirements over a 6-year period.

I look at this budget now, and I see a \$1.4 million discrepancy between the support for Armenia and Azerbaijan. I see what the Azerbaijanis are doing in Nagorno-Karabakh, including trying to eradicate the presence of Armenians who have lived there. How is it that we are going to provide more money, which, in my mind, is in violation—forgetting about the waiver—is in direct violation of Section 907? That is not something I am going to support, just to have you know.

Secretary BLINKEN. Mr. Chairman, I am happy to go back and take a look at that—the specifics of the concerns you have raised about the adequacy of the reporting. I will take that on. Section 907 is, as you know, an annual decision. We have interagency review going on, and that review is underway, but I take what you say seriously, and I will take a look at that. More broadly, I have been very actively and directly engaged with leadership in both Armenia and Azerbaijan, including, just as recently as a week ago, phone calls with Prime Minister Pashinyan and with President Aliyev, as well as their foreign ministers, trying to help advance prospects for a long-term political settlement. With regard to Nagorno-Karabakh, we have been developing and promoting various confidence-building measures. We have been trying to push back on any unilateral actions, particularly by Azerbaijan, that would only inflame the situation, and we have a number of programs in place that are part of the budget to try to help advance more peaceful prospects.

That is very much on my agenda. Happy to work closely with you and your team on that.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, we look forward to working with you on it. Finally, let me just say, and, listen, you have a difficult job. I think the breadth and scope of—and the depth that you have exhibited today is one of the reasons you make a great Secretary of State, and we appreciate you have spent here nearly 3 hours, but I have to tell you something. We see—we cannot seem to get—to call things as they are sometimes.

The State Department put out a statement with reference to the decision to convict Osman Kavala in Turkey that we are troubled and disappointed. This is why authoritarian figures like Erdogan, they get away with continuing to do what they are doing. We

should have condemned the conviction. The Department goes on to say that he should be released in keeping with the European Court of Human Rights rulings as well as to free all other arbitrary incarceration. It goes on to talk about the harassment of civil society, media, political and business leaders in Turkey to prolonged detention. It goes on to talk about—there are more lawyers and journalists in prison in Turkey than any other place in the world. That says something considering some of the terrible places in the world.

We express trouble and disappointment. Our ally, India, that is in the Quad, they go buy oil from Russia. They buy the S-400. They abstain at the United Nations, but they are a member of the Quad. At some point, messages that we send globally here are inconsistent. I have heard President Biden say that he stands up for human rights and democracy in the world. I believe him. That is his history from the time he sat where I am sitting today, but, man, when we say we are troubled and disappointed, that does not cut it.

When we allow someone who we have invited to be part of the Quad to go ahead and purchase the S-400, go ahead and purchase Russian oil in violation of the global sanctions we are creating, go ahead and vote against our position and most of the world's position at the United Nations, if you think you can do all those things and still get whatever it is that we give, which is a lot, then you will. I just hope that, Mr. Secretary, you will look at some of the positions that we take, and equivocate less, and be more forcefully directed as to what people should or should not be able to do.

Secretary BLINKEN. Mr. Chairman, first, I take your point about that specific statement, and I will go back and have a look at that myself. More broadly, and I said this at the outset, I think we are at a very important strategic moment as various countries, to include the countries you have cited, are thinking about and possibly reconsidering some of their other relationships, including with Russia. As a strategic proposition, I think it is very much in our interest to encourage that, and work with that, and see what we can do to make sure that, along with success for Ukraine in Ukraine, we also take advantage of other strategic opportunities that may present themselves as a result of Russia's aggression, as well as dealing with some of the new challenges we face.

I think that also has to factor into our thinking about how we approach things. Some countries have had decades-long relationships, as you know very well, with Russia that take time to change and to adjust. I hope that as we do this, we want to be as effective as we can in getting the right strategic result, even as, to your point, we keep faith with our basic principles, especially when it comes to human rights.

The CHAIRMAN. Listen, I agree with you. Look, on India, I want India to be aligned not with us, is the final point I make. As I traveled all over this region and to receive foreign dignitaries here, I say the choice is not between the United States and China. The choice is what type of world do you want to live in?

Secretary BLINKEN. Yes.

The CHAIRMAN. One that is ultimately governed by the rule of law where you get to choose who governs you, where you get to worship as you please, where you get to ultimately achieve eco-

conomic success by the use of your intellect or the sweat of your brow, or is it a world where you are minded, where you do not get to choose who governs you, where you do not get to worship as you please, where you are put in a concentration camp because of who you are, and the list goes on. That is the choice. At the end of the day, in the pursuit of making that choice clear, I hope that we will hold higher expectations of some of those who we describe as allies because, historically, some of these countries who view themselves as non-aligned, ultimately, if they can have it both ways, they will. At some point, there has to be a definition of which type of world do you want to live in.

With the thanks of the committee for your very extensive responses to everybody's questions here and your service to our country, this record will remain open until the close of business tomorrow. This hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 1:31 p.m., the committee was adjourned.]

ADDITIONAL MATERIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

RESPONSES OF SECRETARY OF STATE ANTONY J. BLINKEN TO QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR ROBERT MENENDEZ

Question. China: Russia is an urgent threat, but China clearly remains a serious long-term competitor for the United States, with global ambitions to overturn the rules-based order that has benefited the entire international community—perhaps, ironically, no one as much as China—for the past 75 years. Given the imperative of responding to Putin in Ukraine, how can the United States best position itself to work with partners and allies to assure that Xi does not exploit our attention in Europe?

Answer. The February 4 joint statement between the People's Republic of China (PRC) and Russia signals alignment between Beijing and Moscow in challenging the rules-based international order. The statement endorsed spheres of influence and rejected democracy and broadly recognized human rights. Investing in our network of allies and partners is a critical part of our approach to the PRC, and we are coordinating our response with allies and partners to ensure the PRC learns the right lessons from Russia's war against Ukraine as it considers its own foreign policy actions. Working with allies and partners to respond to Putin's war of aggression against Ukraine has not distracted us from strategic competition with the PRC, but is instead a part of these important efforts.

Question. Are there particular issues—with Taiwan, in the Pacific, China's export of its model of digital authoritarianism, or elsewhere—where you believe China is stepping up pressure and where a more concerted U.S. response is needed?

Answer. Beijing uses cutting-edge technology for control and oppression domestically and indiscriminately exports these tools to those that would like to replicate the People's Republic of China's (PRC) model of digital authoritarianism. The Administration is coordinating with allies and partners to ensure technology advances reflect democratic values and to support an Internet that remains interoperable, secure, and reliable, including through the recent Declaration for the Future of the Internet (DFI). Taiwan, Micronesia, Palau, and other key Indo-Pacific partners are among the more than 50 DFI signatories.

Question. Climate Preparedness: The time that we have to address the climate crisis contracts with each passing year. The Administration's Climate Adaptation and Resilience Plan represents a pragmatic approach to the reality that climate change, as a threat multiplier, must be accounted for across U.S. diplomatic missions. This is something that my U.S. CLIMATE Act calls for and I'm glad to see that the Administration is making efforts to regularize the practical application of climate change forecasting data into our national security planning. The Administration has said that the Budget's request for international investment in climate change programming, assistance, and contributions go to help those at risk, but can you please expand on how this broad cross-cutting initiative informs these investments and if executed properly, could help reduce costs in the future?

Answer. In our 2021 Climate Adaptation and Resilience Plan, the Department committed to assessing its exposure to climate hazards and developing a priority list of locations for action. From droughts in South Africa to wildfires in Australia, our diplomats and their families are all too aware that we need to prepare for worsening disasters caused by climate change. If resourced, this analysis and preparedness work will help reduce risk to our staff and their families, and avoid costs and financial risks from disrupted operations, poor siting, and equipment failures. Further, as a cross-cutting emerging issue, this analysis will also enable us to prioritize work with host governments on climate adaptation and resilience projects that both benefit the local population and our operations.

Question. What additional resources does the Climate Adaptation and Resilience Plan initiative require?

Answer. The FY 2023 Presidential Budget Request includes more than \$11 billion government-wide in international climate finance, including \$2.28 billion in foreign assistance for State Department and USAID climate programs, underscoring the President's commitment to tackling the climate crisis. A key initiative supported by these investments includes the President's Emergency Plan for Adaptation and Resilience (PREPARE), for which the request more than quadruples adaptation finance government-wide from the U.S. FY 2013–2016 average. If enacted, the FY 2023 request will ensure that PREPARE remains on track to meet the U.S. pledge of \$3 billion in annual adaptation finance by FY 2024.

Question. What can the United States do to better lead on the global stage and fund U.S. foreign assistance for energy and resilience programs?

Answer. Our foreign assistance programs tangibly demonstrate the benefits of establishing open, transparent, and market-based energy and mineral sectors and building low-carbon, resilient economies. We are carrying out assistance programs to help governments develop their regulatory environment, technical capacity, and governance structures to become reliable contributors to the global clean energy technology market and improve supply chain resilience. Our targeted assistance promotes competitive procurement of energy assets and creates opportunities for U.S. companies to compete on a level playing field.

Question. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: I have long championed a diverse workforce at the Department and equity in the implementation of U.S. foreign policy, which is why I commended last year's appointment of the Department's first Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer—Ambassador Gina Abercrombie-Winstanley. Given longstanding racism around the globe affecting numerous communities and our American troops, diplomats, students, and business professionals living and working overseas, I also welcomed the Department's announcement of a Special Representative for Racial Equity and Equity Action Plan last week. Both efforts demonstrate our commitment to democratic values and are critical to the long-term success of our foreign policy interests overseas, which is why I would like to work closely with you to ensure their success. Given the Department cited equity as a "strategic National Security imperative" and included equity in the Joint Strategic Plan with USAID, will the Special Representative for Racial Equity sit in the Secretary's front office and hold the status of Ambassador similar to others appointed to lead critical efforts of the Department?

Answer. The Special Representative for Racial Equity and Justice (SRRE), a Senior Executive Service-level position, will be located in the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor's Front Office, given DRL's responsibility for a range of equity, social justice, and human rights. The SRRE will work with the Secretary and State Department leadership multilateral institutions, civil society, and host governments worldwide to combat systemic racism and advance the human rights of members of marginalized racial and ethnic communities. The SRRE is responsible for successfully integrating E.O. 13985 into all aspects of the Department's foreign affairs mission.

Question. While the work of the Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer was included in this year's budget request, I did not see a funding request for the Department's large-scale equity efforts, from increasing procurement opportunities for minority-owned businesses to establishing a new Special Representative for Racial Equity's office and work. Will you be submitting a budget request for this important equity work to this Committee?

Answer. The Department Congressional Budget Justification includes a table on page 10 outlining DEIA priorities included in the FY 2023 Request. The Department intends to create the Special Representative for Racial Equity and Justice based in DRL to embed racial equity in State's policies and programs and support E.O.

13985. Similar equity-based efforts include work of the Office of Global Women's Issues, Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Antisemitism, Special Envoy for the Human Rights of LGBTQI+ Persons, Special Advisor for International Disability Rights, Agency Equity Team, and CDIO Officer.

Question. We understand you completed your new Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan as required by Executive Order 14035 in March. We have not yet received this Plan. When do you anticipate providing us with this Plan?

Answer. Pursuant to the executive order, the Department submitted its 5-year diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility strategic plan. We look forward to sharing the plan once it is released by the White House.

Question. Do you intend to release it to the public?

Answer. Yes, I intend to share the Department's diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility strategic plan with the public once it is released by the White House.

Question. What steps are you taking to ensure that everyone in the Department is held accountable for the goals in this Plan?

Answer. The Office of Diversity and Inclusion will lead the Department's diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) implementation team composed of senior officials from the various action offices and bureaus. The implementation team will meet quarterly, starting in the summer of 2022, to identify new DEIA initiatives for action that will help the Department achieve the goals established in the plan, measure Department-wide progress on the plan's DEIA goals, and update the Department's Diversity and Inclusion Leadership Council (DILC).

Question. You've talked about the need to track progress in advancing DEIA—how does State plan to track and measure progress in advancing its DEIA goals?

Answer. The Department recently established the first-ever demographic baseline of its direct-hire Foreign Service and Civil Service workforce. It is the most detailed picture the Department has ever had of the demographic composition of the organization—broken down by race, gender, and disability status across bureau, employment category, and rank. We just launched the first-of-its-kind Department-wide DEIA climate survey, which, among other analyses, assesses how employees' experiences differ by demographic group, for all direct-hire Foreign Service and Civil Service personnel. We will update this baseline annually and conduct the DEIA climate survey biennially to track the Department's progress on advancing its DEIA goals.

Question. Authoritarianism in the Americas: As President Biden has rallied our democratic allies and partners against the threats posed by authoritarian regimes globally, we must be candid about the challenges we face from dictatorships in our hemisphere. The Díaz-Canel regime is sentencing Cuba's citizens, including children, to lengthy prison terms for protesting peacefully. In Venezuela, Maduro is perpetrating crimes against humanity and deepening a humanitarian crisis that has forced over 6 million people to flee the country. The Ortega regime has jailed presidential candidates and political opponents in Nicaragua, and even expelled the Pope's chief diplomat from the country. These campaigns of repression have enabled the worst forms of lawlessness and the rise of illicit activities, directly threatening regional stability and U.S. national security interests. What additional resources are needed to support civil society, democratic activists, and human rights defenders in these three countries as a counter to the authoritarian resurgence we've seen in our hemisphere?

Answer. The FY 2023 Request includes robust funding to continue supporting civil society, independent media and journalists, democratic actors, and human rights defenders in Cuba, Nicaragua, and Venezuela. The United States will continue to stand with the people of all three countries, where authoritarian governments continue to suffocate democratic aspirations and access to information and have failed to protect human rights. We work to counter these threats to the region in all three countries and will seek to intensify our efforts.

Question. Ukraine: What is the Administration's perspective on what circumstance might trigger Putin to use nuclear weapons?

Answer. Russia's provocative rhetoric about nuclear weapons is the height of irresponsibility. It is dangerous and it adds to the risk of miscalculation. That said, there are no indications Russia has changed its nuclear posture in any way.

Question. How will the Administration respond to a Russian demonstration of its nuclear capabilities or in the worst circumstances, a nuclear strike in Ukraine?

Answer. There are no indications Russia has changed its nuclear posture in any way. That said, we have been very clear to Russia that there would be a very seri-

ous and severe response not just from us, but from the international community, if Russia uses a nuclear weapon. This Administration takes this risk very seriously and is actively engaged in planning for all contingencies.

Question. President Biden warned of a “response in kind” to a Russian chemical or biological weapons attack in Ukraine; what sort of response is the Administration considering?

Answer. As President Biden has said repeatedly, any use of chemical or biological weapons is unacceptable. If Putin does launch a chemical weapons attack, Russia would pay a severe price as such use would both be inhumane and contrary to Russia’s international legal obligations. We will continue to make clear that there is no benefit for Russia to use such weapons in Ukraine or elsewhere and will coordinate closely with our allies and partners on any response. Additionally, we would impose sanctions on Russia for any confirmed use of chemical or biological weapons as required by U.S. law.

Question. Do you anticipate Russian cyber tactics changing in the next phase of the invasion?

Answer. Russia’s cyber activities targeting Ukraine may be less visible than its missile and artillery bombardments, but they are key pieces of the Kremlin’s unjustified war. I believe Russia will continue to use cyber operations in support of its strategic objectives in Ukraine and to influence public opinion regarding the conflict. Russia views cyber disruptions as a foreign policy lever to shape other countries’ decisions, as well as a deterrence and military tool.

Question. And what measures is the State Department taking to prepare other Eastern European countries for potential Russian cyberattacks?

Answer. We are actively working with Allies and partners to ensure that crisis response mechanisms are in place in the event of major cyber incidents affecting critical infrastructure. Additionally, since FY 2016, the United States has provided more than \$63 million in foreign assistance to support cybersecurity capacity development across Europe and Eurasia, prioritizing front-line states facing the greatest threat from Russia, including Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia. Our work has already improved cyber resilience and public-private partnership across the region. Cybersecurity capacity development and cooperation with Eastern Europe will remain a critical priority for the foreseeable future, and we will continue to prioritize this support.

Question. How are you prioritizing the protection of women and girls in Ukraine as a central component of our assistance efforts?

Answer. The U.S. Department of State’s programs emphasize the protection of women, girls, and other vulnerable populations in Ukraine, in countries in Europe receiving refugees from Ukraine, and around the world. Whether through direct assistance or by funding international organizations and third parties, our programs have built in mechanisms to prevent and deter violence against women and girls, discrimination, and human trafficking in Ukraine. We also provide support to Ukraine’s Office of the Prosecutor General to investigate and prosecute war crimes involving sexual violence. We plan to increase support for projects that prevent and respond to gender based violence (GBV) and conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) in the context of the Ukraine war, including provision of emergency assistance to individuals at threat of and survivors of GBV and CRSV. Programming will support survivor-centered, trauma-informed approaches that foster survivor and community resilience during and after the conflict.

Question. Western Hemisphere Migration: The international community’s collective inability, across successive U.S. administrations, to preserve democracy, curb criminal violence, alleviate poverty, and reverse climate change in the Americas, has led untold numbers of people to flee their homes. At our Southwest border, Venezuelans, Cubans, Mexicans, Central Americans, and Haitians, are hopeful that the imminent end of Title 42 means that they will again have a fair chance at having their asylum cases heard. But, the combined effects of the pandemic, deepening poverty, and protracted violence mean that many more will likely attempt the dangerous journey to the United States. While the Department’s budget is a notable down payment to address the root causes of migration from El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras, we need much larger, hemisphere-wide programming, to address the factors driving migration from other countries. So my question is two-fold: First, beyond the funding for Central America, can you please describe how this budget will expand our approach to address the “root causes” of migration across the Americas?

Answer. The request includes nearly \$100 million in bilateral and regional funding for hemispheric migration management to support the Administration's Collaborative Migration Management Strategy, the new Regional Migration Framework, and bilateral migration arrangements to reduce the number of encounters with irregular migrants at the U.S. southern border and to expand Colombia's model of supporting the social and economic integration of long-term migrants into host communities. Funding would expand bilateral and regional support to stabilize communities and reduce push factors and repeat irregular migration, including through community-based interventions and lawful pathway referral mechanisms.

Question. And second, given the hemisphere-wide nature of the challenge, will you commit to ensuring that the Department of State—not DHS—remains firmly in the lead of any discussions and/or negotiations with international partners on addressing regional refugee and migration challenges?

Answer. The Department of State continues to lead hemispheric cooperation on humanely managing migration. I co-hosted the Migration Ministerial in Bogota in October 2021, and the Ministerial Conference on Migration in Panama in April 2022. The Under Secretary for Civilian Security, Democracy, and Human Rights traveled to the region to make progress on humanely managing migration, increasing access to protection, and discussing legal pathways with our regional partners. The Department of State remains the leader on all aspects of our bilateral relationships with foreign partners.

Question. India-Russia: Since the Russian invasion of Ukraine, we have seen India fail to join with the rest of the international community in imposing punitive costs on the Kremlin. While I understand the shared history between Moscow and New Delhi, India has long championed the principles of territorial integrity and non-aggression in its foreign policy. As the world's most populous democracy, India must now stand up for those principles when it comes to Ukraine. What concrete steps has the Administration taken to make clear that further Indian purchases of discounted Russian oil or setting up a rupee-ruble exchange mechanism would be unacceptable?

Answer. I am encouraging steps to reduce long-term dependence on energy supplies from Russia and coordinating with India to mitigate the impact of Russia's invasion of Ukraine on global energy markets. I have also engaged with India at senior levels to discourage any steps to set up alternative payment mechanisms or other measures that could undermine the impact of global sanctions on Russia. In those conversations, I relayed the United States' readiness to serve as a reliable supplier of energy and to support India in diversifying its imports.

Question. When will the Administration provide Congress an update on whether it will provide a CAATSA sanctions waiver for New Delhi's acquisition of the S-400?

Answer. We have not yet made a determination pursuant to CAATSA Section 231 regarding India's S-400 acquisition. The Administration will continue to provide updates to Congress as there are further developments. The Department continues to urge Indian counterparts to refrain from new purchases of Russian military equipment, given the potential impact of CAATSA and other sanctions authorities.

Question. North Korea: Since the start of 2022, North Korea has conducted at least nine ballistic missile test, including two that the United States Government has determined to be part of a "new" intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) systems. Experts contend that the most recent ICBM launch was the heaviest ICBM North Korea has ever tested, capable of carrying one nuclear warhead to anywhere on Earth or two warheads to the United States. How is the Biden administration responding to these developments?

Answer. The Biden administration has made clear that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's (DPRK) unlawful and destabilizing ballistic missile launches have consequences, that the international community will not accept these actions as normal, and the only viable path forward for the DPRK is through diplomacy.

We have no hostile intent toward the DPRK and remain open to meeting without preconditions. However, we also have a responsibility to address the DPRK's continued efforts to advance its unlawful WMD and ballistic missile programs, including by implementing existing UN Security Council resolutions (UNSCRs).

Question. While U.S. officials have offered to meet with North Korea without preconditions, suggesting that "the ball is in their court," what active steps are we currently taking to achieve the complete denuclearization of the Korea peninsula?

Answer. We have condemned the DPRK's 20 ballistic missiles launches as of May 18, all of which violated multiple UN Security Council resolutions (UNSCR) and

demonstrated that the DPRK continues to seek to advance the capabilities of its unlawful WMD and ballistic missile programs.

UN sanctions on the DPRK remain in place, and we will continue to press all member states to fully implement them, including through diplomacy at the UN and with the DPRK's neighbors. We are also in the process of negotiating a new UNSCR to restrict the DPRK's ability to advance its unlawful WMD and ballistic missile programs, streamline sanctions implementation, and further facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid.

Question. Afghanistan: The reports coming out of Afghanistan now—of Taliban executions of former government officials, street thugs beating female protesters, young girls prevented from attending school—prove what I told you last fall, Mr. Secretary. There is no such thing as a reformed Taliban. What we are seeing in terms of the regression of the rights of women and girls in Afghanistan is truly horrific. What is the Administration's diplomatic strategy toward Afghanistan in the wake of the Taliban's broken promise to allow girls to attend secondary school?

Answer. Within hours of the Taliban's March 23 decision to ban girls' access to secondary school, we were undertaking energetic and focused diplomacy with our allies, regional partners, and Muslim majority countries and organizations to ensure that the world would stand united and vocal in its abject opposition to this indefensible decision. G7 Foreign Ministers, joined by counterparts from the United States, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Norway, the United Kingdom, and the High Representative of the European Union condemned this move against Afghan women and girls' fundamental rights. Qatar, Turkey, Indonesia, Pakistan, and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation also condemned the decision. Within days, ulema leaders from across Afghanistan, as well as leaders in Pakistan, likewise called on the Taliban to reverse their decision. The United States cancelled a high-level session on economic stabilization with Taliban leaders that was to take place on the margins of the Doha Forum March 26–27. We also issued instructions to our missions abroad to discourage any further steps by any country toward normalized relations with the Taliban in the wake of the March 23 decision. We will continue to work with allies, regional partners, and the Muslim world to ensure we are all undertaking concerted public and private action that leads to a reversal of the Taliban's ban. I cannot commit that this engagement will produce the reversal we all wish to see, but it is essential that the world speak and act with one voice on this basic human right for half of Afghanistan's population.

Question. What is the status of the Administration's review of its Pakistan policy that it promised to conduct after the fall of Kabul last summer?

Answer. The Department continuously reviews its policies and adjusts priorities for engagement with Pakistan, including during the period following the August 2021 Taliban takeover of Kabul and through the April 2022 political transition in Islamabad. We view our partnership with Pakistan as critical to our broader regional and global interests, including counterterrorism, stability and inclusive governance within Afghanistan, relocations of U.S.-affiliated Afghans, health security, and climate action. We will continue to brief you and your staff on our evolving policy towards Pakistan.

Question. *Cyber Bureau:* I was glad to see the official launch of the Bureau of Cyberspace and Digital Policy a few weeks ago—and to see that building capacity in cyberspace and emerging technologies is a priority for this year's budget; these steps will be essential in addressing some of the most critical challenges in the coming decades. What will be the key priorities for this new bureau in the next year? The next 5 years?

Answer. I see building an integrated team, while also advancing our diplomatic objectives, as crucial to our success over the next year. That means hiring the right leadership and staff throughout the bureau, as well as coordinating and advancing the security, economic, and values-based elements of cyberspace policy and diplomacy. Within the next 5 years, the Cyberspace and Digital Policy Bureau will be leading and coordinating, at State and throughout the interagency, on work with foreign and domestic counterparts to prove that the United States can build the open digital future essential to preventing cyberattacks that target our businesses, regulating technology that threatens our privacy, and defending our democratic values.

Question. Will you commit to keeping this Committee apprised of the new bureau's work and to consult with this Committee on significant developments and decisions?

Answer. Yes, we are committed to maintaining open and regular communications with the Hill on issues related to the Cyberspace and Digital Policy Bureau's mission, objectives, and progress. In introductory conversations with authorizing committees, the Bureau leadership will discuss its plans for proactive, regular Hill engagement in coordination with the Legislative Affairs Bureau. We are grateful for the bipartisan support as the Department re-organized to elevate and institutionalize these critical foreign policy issues.

Question. Will you commit to the same [to keeping this Committee apprised of the new bureau's work and to consult with this Committee on significant developments and decisions] with respect to the planned Special Envoy for Critical and Emerging Technologies?

Answer. Yes, my team will continue to keep the Committee informed about significant developments in the process for establishing the Office of the Special Envoy for Critical and Emerging Technology.

Question. Foreign Military Financing: The vast amount of Foreign Military Financing (FMF) funds are committed every year to just three countries, leaving little available for the entire rest of the world. While this funding for those countries is important and should not be reduced—except, maybe, for Egypt—earmarking over 80 percent of those funds leaves the State Department little to allocate to other friendly states and partners, and little flexibility. Would you support moving the funding for those three countries to a new appropriated fund—to be used for the same purposes as FMF—and plus-up the general FMF fund accordingly?

Answer. Our recent experiences with security cooperation are driving the Department to take a new look at possible changes to our authorities and our current security sector assistance framework. FMF remains a vital tool for the Department within this framework. But as you rightly point out, there is a tension between the need to signal U.S. commitment to certain partners through the provision of predictable resources that allow for long-range planning, and the availability of more flexible resources to respond to emerging crises and the changing needs for building military capabilities. This tension results in budgetary tradeoffs within the FMF account that may decrease the effectiveness of both priorities. I fully support our ongoing discussions with the oversight committees to explore wholesale modernization of our security assistance authorities.

Question. Russia/New Start: Earlier this month, the State Department published the unclassified bits of the data exchange about the status of the U.S. and Russian nuclear forces as required under New START. The publication confirms that Russia and the United States continue to abide by the treaty. Further, the United States has paused its Strategic Stability Dialogue with Russia following its invasion of Ukraine. While I am pleased that the data exchange confirms that the United States and Russia continue to abide by the New START treaty, does the Department expect New START inspections to resume when the COVID-related suspension expires in June?

Answer. Although inspections have been paused by mutual understanding because of pandemic conditions, we are actively working to resume inspections as soon as possible.

Question. Under what conditions would the United States consider returning to the Strategic Stability Dialogues?

Answer. Due to Russia's unprovoked and unjustified war on Ukraine, we suspended the Strategic Stability Dialogue with Russia and are not planning another session. Our objectives for next steps in nuclear arms control have not changed, nor has the expiration date for New START. We will continue working internally to be prepared to engage Russia on follow-on measures to New START when we assess such measures as serving the U.S. interest.

Question. East Africa: East Africa is in the midst of an unprecedented wave of instability, including in Somalia and South Sudan, but particularly in Sudan and Ethiopia. The United States has been active in responding to the major crises of the moment by naming a Special Envoy early in the Administration, among other actions. However, fairly or not, actors on the ground point to the departure of Ambassador Satterfield—the second Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa to resign in 3 months—and the lack of a confirmed Ambassador in Addis as signs of policy disarray. What are the next steps in terms of U.S. efforts to help resolve the conflicts in Tigray, Oromia and elsewhere in Ethiopia?

Answer. U.S. policy toward Ethiopia has been consistent across the interagency and not dependent on any one actor. Normal personnel changes should not indicate

a policy in disarray. Our policy will maintain course to secure a durable ceasefire, unhindered humanitarian access, transparent investigations into human rights abuses, and a negotiated resolution to the conflict.

Question. Iraq: The Administration's move to end combat operations and transition the U.S.-Iraq relationship to a strategic one centered on bilateral diplomacy are positive steps, which I fully support. However, I am concerned that the Administration's proposed cut to Iraqi FMF comes at a time when ISIS is trying to reconstitute itself while attacks on U.S. facilities by Iranian-backed proxy forces continue. What Iraqi priorities would no longer be funded if FMF to Iraq is funded at the level of the Administrations' request?

Answer. FMF is part of the U.S. Government's strategic effort to build effective, civilian-controlled, self-sustaining Iraqi forces, to include the Peshmerga, that operate in accordance with the rule of law. FMF provides equipment and tactical counterterrorism training for the continued development and professionalization of the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) and to improve their interoperability with U.S. and regional forces. It also allows for the sustainment of U.S. systems purchased to date and assists the ISF in maintaining critical capabilities and previous U.S. Government investments, while providing training, assistance, and time for the ISF to generate self-sufficient sustainment capabilities.

Question. Do you believe that Iraqi Security Forces have reached a level of professionalism and capability that the previous level of FMF is no longer warranted? If so, what led you to that assessment?

Answer. The Iraqi Security Forces have historically received a range of assistance from several authorities. FMF plays an important—but not sole—part in the U.S. Government's strategic effort to build effective, civilian-controlled, self-sustaining Iraqi forces that operate in accordance with the rule of law. I support continuing military assistance to Iraq in support of building capabilities and professionalism, and we are working to ensure that the resources are commensurate with validated requirements.

Question. Embassy Baghdad Staffing: I remain concerned that the drawdowns of the previous Administration left Embassy Baghdad understaffed, relative to the size and scope of its mission. While the safety and security of U.S. personnel is always paramount, I believe that a robust diplomatic presence, including in southern Iraq, will be key to this new phase of the U.S.-Iraq relationship that is centered on bilateral diplomacy. What is your assessment of current staffing levels at Embassy Baghdad and what do you need to see on the ground before considering an increase to those levels?

Answer. I and the team at Embassy Baghdad are committed to ensuring the Embassy is not only secure, but appropriately staffed to meet Department goals. While current in-country staffing levels in Iraq are temporary and reversible, they are consistent with the existing Ordered Departure status. As with all our posts, we continue to assess both the security and health environment in Iraq and hope to revert to higher in-country staffing levels as soon as circumstances permit.

Question. Similarly, what would you need to see on the ground before reopening the U.S. Consulate in Basrah?

Answer. The Department suspended operations at U.S. Consulate General Basrah in 2018 as a result of heightened security threats. We continue to evaluate the security situation in Basrah and will, of course, keep Congress apprised of any decisions.

Question. Jordan: The Administration's request for assistance to Jordan is the highest such request by any administration to date and reflects a strong and continuing commitment to an incredibly valuable U.S. partner in the Middle East. I appreciate this Administration's commitment to helping the Jordanian Government reach a sound fiscal footing and would appreciate further details on how U.S. economic assistance will be used to incentivize important reforms by the Jordanian Government.

Answer. Negotiations are ongoing with the Jordanians on the new assistance MOU, which we expect will include consistent annual request levels for Foreign Military Financing and Economic Support Fund (ESF) assistance, including for direct budget support. The MOU is also intended to include ESF-funded assistance to be provided if Jordan implements meaningful and achievable reforms in key sectors, which will be developed in consultation with the Jordanians and are intended to bolster Jordan's long-term fiscal health.

Question. Syria: Eleven years on, the conflict in Syria still has no clear end in sight. While fighting is down, the Assad regime continues to escape true accountability for its heinous crimes against the Syrian people. Additionally, it is enabled by its support from Iran and Russia, which continues to threaten to veto the cross-border provision of desperately needed assistance, while also being emboldened by renewed outreach from countries like the UAE. Given the ongoing deadlock on a political solution under the auspices of UN Security Resolution 2254, what are the Administration's priorities for its \$125 million request for Economic Support Funds for Syria?

Answer. U.S. stabilization activities are vital to preventing the resurgence of terrorist groups, keeping violence levels low, promoting accountability for the Assad regime's atrocities, and supporting an inclusive political solution to the conflict consistent with UN Security Council Resolution 2254. President Biden's budget requests for Syria stabilization assistance in both FY 2022 and FY 2023 reflect the urgent need to address the impacts of drought and food insecurity, deteriorating economic conditions, and the lingering impacts of COVID-19. Stabilization assistance also provides critical support for the reintegration of displaced Syrians returning home to areas liberated from ISIS, and for the communities receiving them, promoting social cohesion and preventing cleavages that could drive conflict.

Question. What steps is the Administration taking to renew or expand the UN cross-border assistance mandate this summer?

Answer. We are working with our allies and partners, as well as the United Nations and fellow members of the Security Council, in support of the renewal and expansion of the cross-border mechanism. As part of this effort, Ambassador Thomas-Greenfield attended the Brussels VI Conference on Syria on May 10, during the United States' presidency of the UNSC, to emphasize that continuing and expanding UN-facilitated cross-border aid is a top U.S. priority. She also conveyed this message at a separate, Syria-focused ministerial meeting convened by the United States, which was attended by several UNSC members. Ambassador Thomas-Greenfield plans to travel to Bab al-Hawa, the last remaining UN border crossing, in the next few weeks to highlight the importance of renewing the mandate. We will continue to coordinate with like-minded members of the UNSC to seek the support of all others for the renewal, including by explaining the humanitarian repercussions of a non-renewal.

Question. What will the Administration do if Russia vetoes that mandate?

Answer. We will use all means available to advocate for continued humanitarian access and to deliver U.S. humanitarian assistance to the Syrian people, including in the northwest, in coordination with the UN, NGOs, other donors, and partners. Preparations to date have confirmed our assessment that any contingency operations in the event of a non-renewal will only cover a fraction of the UN's current caseload of assisting 2.4 million people per month through cross-border aid. The Department is available to provide further details in response to this question in an appropriate setting.

Question. Tunisia: President Saied's continued consolidation of executive powers has raised many concerns that Tunisia is rapidly sliding back into a state of authoritarian rule. President Saied must recommit to the democratic principles that underpin longstanding U.S.-Tunisia relations and work constructively with all Tunisians to further an inclusive and transparent reform process. Economic support funds (ESF) are dedicated to programs that strengthen independent judiciaries, protect human rights and freedom of the press, combat corruption, and increase public accountability and access to justice. The \$45 million ESF request for Tunisia is nearly a 50 percent decrease from the requested FY22 amount. Given that Tunisia may be holding elections in December and is currently facing increasing economic problems, can you elaborate on the reasoning for the proposed cuts to Tunisia's economic support funding, which could be used to support rule of law and improved governance?

Answer. I share your concerns about Tunisian democracy and have relayed them to President Saied. Reductions in the FY 2023 Request for economic assistance, in comparison to the FY 2022 Request, reflect these concerns and the priority the Administration places on democracy and human rights. Through our FY 2023 request, the United States will continue to support programming that strengthens civil society, government accountability, inclusive economic growth, and access to higher education—programming designed to help Tunisians preserve their democratic institutions and promote inclusive economic reform.

Question. Lebanon: The economic crisis gripping Lebanon continues to push Lebanese deeper into poverty while eroding the ability of the government to provide services, including for upcoming elections, and straining the readiness of the Lebanese Armed Forces. The Administration's reduction of FMF for Lebanon from last year's request is significant, especially in light of the amount ultimately obligated and re-programmed to assist the LAF last year. What is the Administration's assessment of the LAF's readiness and capacity used to justify the FMF reduction in this year's budget request?

Answer. Despite facing the greatest challenges to operational readiness and internal cohesion since the Lebanese civil war, the LAF continues to play a critical role in mitigating further instability in Lebanon, without which conditions in Lebanon would certainly worsen. U.S. assistance bolsters the LAF's ability to maintain operational readiness while continuing to develop its capabilities. The Department works with the LAF to maintain a 5-Year Security Assistance Roadmap that aligns State and DoD funding with the LAF's prioritized needs. The FY 2023 FMF request for Lebanon rebalances FMF support to other vital needs globally, but maintains steadfast support for the LAF, which remains one of our most important partners in the region.

Question. What steps, including funding, is the Administration taking to support upcoming elections in Lebanon and implement reforms for subsequent elections in Lebanon?

Answer. Senior U.S. officials frequently emphasize to Lebanese leaders the importance of free, fair, and transparent elections, including the parliamentary elections which took place on May 15. The Administration also provides robust assistance to Lebanon. For example, USAID provided \$2 million through the UN Development Programme's Lebanese Elections Assistance Project to strengthen elections management and promote inclusive public participation. The Administration also continues its support to the Lebanese Armed Forces and Internal Security Forces, key partners tasked with securing polling stations and ballot boxes. The Administration will review official election observation reports to guide any efforts related to reforms for future elections in Lebanon.

Question. Food Security: As many countries in the MENA region heavily depend on Black Sea grain and other food commodity imports, Russia's continued illegal invasion of Ukraine threatens to have serious short- and long-term ripple effects in the region. In countries such as Syria and Yemen, who rely on food aid from the U.N. and USAID programs, the surging prices and shortage of essential food supplies risks further exacerbating food insecurity, while in other countries such as Lebanon, Tunisia and Egypt, increasing prices have led to widespread public anger and social unrest. What is the U.S. doing to address the worsening food security crisis in the MENA region?

Answer. President Putin's brutal war against Ukraine has had a devastating effect on food security in the MENA region. Since February, the United States has provided more than \$2 billion in emergency food assistance globally, including more than \$450 million for Yemen and \$64 million for Lebanon. We announced an additional \$337 million in emergency food assistance for Syria on May 10 at the EU Donor's Conference in Brussels. We hosted a UN Global Food Security Ministerial on May 18, with high level MENA representatives attending. I will discuss with the UN Secretary General our shared concerns about the growing humanitarian crisis exacerbated by Putin's war and encourage multilateral organizations to swiftly address the situation.

Question. How are you considering emergency or other authorities to address the emerging food crisis in MENA countries that as of now are not considered recipients of humanitarian assistance?

Answer. We are working with multilateral organizations including the World Bank and UN World Food Program to identify near term food security solutions. To that end, the President has also submitted a supplemental appropriations funding request that contains \$1.6 billion in additional humanitarian and food security assistance to people around the world, including the MENA region, facing increased food insecurity due to Putin's war in Ukraine and other drivers. The supplemental request also includes additional requested funds for the Departments of Agriculture and Treasury to address global food insecurity.

Question. Are there mechanisms that can be used to address this gap?

Answer. The Department believes that multilateral institutions such as the UN World Food Program oversee the most effective mechanisms to deliver immediate and coordinated food assistance.

Question. How does the U.S. plan to use the presidency of the U.N. Security Council to address the global food security crisis?

Answer. We have used our presidency of the U.N. Security Council actively to address the global food security crisis exacerbated by Russia's brutal further invasion of Ukraine. For example, on May 18, I hosted a Ministerial at the U.N. attended by the Secretary General and a diverse group of 46 Member State Ministers, Permanent Representatives, and heads of multilateral agencies. Dozens of Member States endorsed the resulting global food security call to action, which reaffirms our commitment to respond to the urgent food security and nutrition needs of millions of people around the world. In addition, on May 19, I chaired an open debate in the UN Security Council to discuss the relationship between conflict and global food insecurity.

Question. Russian Influence in Africa: Russia has expanded its influence in Africa through particularly insidious activities—including the deployment of mercenaries and trainers to conflict zones, the use of disinformation campaigns, unscrupulous arms sales, and corrupt business practices. Most shocking has been the alleged participation of Wagner Group mercenaries in human rights abuses, including massacres in Mali and the Central African Republic. However, there seems to be surprisingly little in the budget request to deal specifically with the threat of malign Russian influence in Africa. How serious of a threat do Russian activities pose to Africa and to our interests on the continent?

Answer. Russia has increasingly exploited insecurity in order to expand its presence in Africa, threatening African and U.S. interests of promoting stability, good governance, and human rights in the process. For example, Kremlin-backed Wagner Group and other elements of Yevgeniy Prigozhin's enterprise have stoked conflict; obstructed UN missions; engaged in human rights abuses; and eroded African leaders' control of their national security forces in several countries. We are addressing Russia's malign activities by maximizing Department resources and diplomatic tools, including through sanctions, multilateral fora, countering disinformation, and bilateral engagements.

Question. What are we doing to counter Russian malign influence?

Answer. We are countering Russian malign influence in Africa in several ways, including support for UN and other investigations into allegations of wrongdoing, messaging around sanctions, and a large-scale diplomacy campaign to warn those considering engaging with the Kremlin-backed Wagner Group and other elements of Yevgeniy Prigozhin's enterprise on the threats to regional stability. For example, we are coordinating with partners to maximize the impact of our sanctions against the Wagner Group and related entities to disrupt its operations in Central African Republic, Mali, and elsewhere. Meanwhile, we are working with African partners to strengthen governance and security institutions, along with exposing, countering, and building resiliency to Kremlin-sponsored disinformation aimed at undermining the stability and the integrity of African democratic systems.

Question. Suspension and Reprogramming of Assistance to Central America: According to a recent GAO report, the 2019 suspension and reprogramming of assistance to the Northern Triangle adversely affected implementation of many State projects. Specifically, 65 of State's 168 projects were adversely affected. State reported that commonly experienced adverse effects on project implementation were delays from planned timeframes and decreased frequency, quality, or types of services provided to beneficiaries. (GAO-21-104366). What is State doing to overcome the effects of the suspension and reprogramming of assistance on the implementation of projects?

Answer. The Department used existing prior year funding and FY 2019 and FY 2020 funds to continue implementing programs consistent with U.S. Government priorities in Central America and to expand programs delayed and reduced due to the reprogramming.

Question. Will you provide an update on the level of assistance State is currently providing compared to prior to the suspension?

Answer. The Department and USAID allocated nearly \$804 million in FY 2021 bilateral, regional, and humanitarian assistance for Central America, and the President's FY 2022 Request included nearly \$861 million to support the U.S. Strategy for Addressing the Root Causes of Migration in Central America. Prior to the reprogramming of assistance, the Department and USAID allocated approximately \$807.5 million in FY 2016 and \$769.3 million in FY 2017 bilateral, regional, and humanitarian assistance to Central America.

Question. Democracy Assistance: Multiple State bureaus are involved in providing democracy assistance around the world. In 2020, GAO reported that State officials in its case study countries said they generally lacked information about the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor's (DRL) democracy assistance projects, including project descriptions and funding amounts. State's existing information-sharing mechanisms, including data systems and strategies, do not consistently address these gaps (GAO-20-173). What actions has State taken to improve information sharing on democracy assistance projects between the HQ-based DRL bureau and embassies abroad?

Answer. DRL coordinates closely at all stages of the procurement cycle with relevant stakeholders, including regional offices, embassies, and USAID. As part of the Office of Foreign Assistance-led planning process, all Department offices and bureaus, including regional offices and embassies, can review and request changes to DRL's intended programming. Per DRL policy, all program solicitations require regional office and embassy clearance and, in consultation with the relevant embassy, regional desk officers serve as voting members on all application review panels. DRL strives to improve information flows with embassies by sharing information bi-annually regarding on-going programming to address knowledge gaps due to turnover at posts.

Question. U.S. Assistance to the Saudi-led Coalition in Yemen: Since 2015, the United States has provided intelligence, military advice, and logistical support to the Saudi Arabia-led Coalition in Yemen. In February 2021, the President announced an end to all American support for offensive operations in the war in Yemen, including relevant arms sales. How, if at all, has State sought to determine whether requested equipment is offensive or defensive in nature?

Answer. The Department adheres to the President's February 2021 guidance that suspended arms sales relevant to offensive operations in Yemen while maintaining support for Saudi Arabia's capabilities to defend its territory, where more than 70,000 U.S. citizens reside.

Based on this guidance, the Administration evaluates proposed arms transfers on a case-by-case basis and consistent with previous use.

Question. We understand that the Administration plans to release a new version of the Conventional Arms Transfer Policy in the near future. How, if at all, does State plan to use this policy to guide its Foreign Military Sales (FMS) transfer decisions in a way that aligns with the Administration's policy not to support offensive operations in the war in Yemen?

Answer. The Conventional Arms Transfer (CAT) Policy provides a global framework under which U.S. Government agencies review and evaluate proposed transfers of military articles, defense services, and certain commercial items, to foreign countries or organizations. Under the CAT Policy, proposed arms transfer decisions continue to be reviewed on a case-by-case basis to ensure transfers align with U.S. foreign policy and national security interests. The Administration will continue the policy of denying arms transfers where we believe there is significant risk of diversion, civilian harm, or misuse, including human rights abuses. While the CAT Policy does not specifically address the conflict in Yemen, we apply the same standards to those partners who are operating in Yemen.

In reviewing and updating the CAT Policy, the Biden-Harris administration is working to emphasize our foreign policy priorities, including leading with diplomacy, elevating human rights, and renewing and revitalizing America's alliances.

Question. Promoting Equity Abroad: Protests around the world against racism and injustice have highlighted opportunities for U.S. leaders to advance racial and ethnic equity and to support historically marginalized groups around the world. To this end, in 2021, the President issued several executive directives that outlined policy commitments for his Administration. These include advancing racial equity and support for underserved communities, preventing and combating discrimination based on gender identity and sexual orientation, and promoting and protecting the human rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, queer, and intersex (LGBTQI+) persons. The 2023 Budget request provides \$2.6 billion to advance gender equity and equality and to support underserved communities across a broad range of sectors. This includes \$200 million for the Gender Equity and Equality Action Fund to advance the economic security of women and girls. How does State plan to spend the remaining \$2.4 billion?

Answer. The FY 2023 President's Budget Request includes an historic request of \$2.6 billion for gender equity and equality across the Department of State and U.S. Agency for International Development, more than doubling such funding over the

FY 2022 Request. In addition to the Gender Equity and Equality Action Fund (GEEA Fund), the request includes funding with a primary purpose of advancing gender equality and women's empowerment, preventing and responding to gender-based violence, and promoting Women, Peace, and Security. The request also includes funding for other assistance programming across development sectors and security assistance that will integrate gender equality and women's empowerment.

Question. Given the Administration's focus on racial equity and equity for all, how does State plan to promote equity amongst other underserved populations?

Answer. The Department of State employs a range of diplomatic and programmatic tools to address the intersectional barriers that limit members of all marginalized communities from fully participating in civic and economic life, including by integrating racial equity and support for underserved communities into the Department's strategic plans at the mission, bureau, and agency levels. For example, DRL champions the access, inclusion, and equality of all people by leading and supporting Department efforts to identify and address barriers for marginalized and underserved groups within a society, including those experiencing discrimination, violence, or other forms of injustice, through both diplomacy and programming.

Question. Definitions for marginalized groups are somewhat expansive due to the need to include all those who may experience marginalization. Do you anticipate any challenges with directing sufficient resources to any particular group due to the number of populations covered by expansive definitions?

Answer. As the lead for democracy and human rights in the Department, DRL supports programs that contribute to the promotion, protection, and advancement of nondiscriminatory practices and laws around the globe through strategic resource allocation to ensure that we are meeting the needs of all marginalized populations. DRL prioritizes inclusive and integrated programming to address the barriers to access for individuals and groups based on their unique needs, including communities that experience intersectional discrimination. Our resources are targeted based on connections between discrimination and the weakening of democratic institutions, and where specific types of marginalization are a global issue.

Question. Your budget request expands programs to foster diversity and inclusion. In support of the President's DEIA-related Executive Orders, the Department's request is \$65.6 million, which includes funding for 30 new positions for DEIA efforts. What efforts and how many positions, if any, will be directed to promoting DEIA in State's foreign assistance provided abroad?

Answer. As outlined in the Department's recently released Equity Action Plan, the United States is addressing systemic racism and strengthening democracy and human dignity worldwide as a core tenet of President Biden's foreign assistance. In addition to orienting our external work around the values of diversity, equity, inclusion, and access, we are placing just as much emphasis on bolstering Department leadership to amplify and accelerate assistance that is comprehensive in its approach to advancing equity for all. Accordingly, we expect to see new and enhanced leadership across sectors and regions, the details of which will correspond to Department personnel announcements and staffing timelines.

Question. State has taken numerous actions in response to E.O. 13985, such as creating the Agency Equity Team and increasing the focus on equity in new strategy documents. How does State plan to institutionalize these changes, such as through multi-year funding or permanent dedicated staffing?

Answer. The Department created an equity action plan outlining actions, commitments, and accountability mechanisms to integrate equity across our foreign affairs work. We will institutionalize this plan by prioritizing engagements with diplomatic partners from underrepresented and underserved communities, establishing reporting requirements and equity analysis tools for international aid, embedding the executive order principles into public diplomacy programming and communications strategies, updating the interpretation and application of the Immigration and Nationality Act, and requiring reviews under current federal contracting processes to provide more equitable access to underserved and small business partners.

Question. Child Trafficking Programs: In 2013, Congress authorized Child Protection Compacts (CPCs), multi-year bilateral agreements between the U.S. Government and selected partner countries that are managed by the Department of State's Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons (J/TIP). These compacts focus on bilateral efforts to prevent child trafficking, protect victims, and prosecute cases of child trafficking. Since 2015, J/TIP has selected five CPC partner countries to work collaboratively with the government through a joint commitment (with a sixth

CPC to be negotiated soon). How, if at all, are these bilateral government partnerships more effective than individual State awards/projects in combatting trafficking?

Answer. Child Protection Compact (CPC) Partnerships are negotiated with the partner government and are multidisciplinary in nature, engaging a wide variety of governmental institutions and systems across the three “Ps” of prevention, protection, and prosecution to reduce child trafficking and protect victims. Unlike our typical foreign assistance, foreign governments make formal commitments to address child trafficking and often their own investments to advance the goals of the partnership. This level of coordination with the CPC partner government is deeper than typical bilateral programs, which tend to focus on one or two issues or institutions within a country and are not intended to take the multidisciplinary approach that the CPC program does.

Question. Does State believe it would be useful to adopt this type of compact partnership model for delivering foreign assistance in other areas?

Answer. The Department is constantly examining new and innovative ways to be more effective with our foreign assistance funding. We examine each proposal on a case-by-case basis to determine what is most appropriate for a given program and account. However, per our response to your earlier question about Child Protection Compact Partnerships, the TIP Office has found that programs can have particularly strong and sustainable impacts when there is a multidisciplinary approach that includes increased engagement with government stakeholders at all levels.

Question. Global Health Programs Funds: The Global Health Programs (GHP) account funds health-related foreign assistance to control the HIV/AIDS epidemic, prevent child and maternal deaths, and combat infectious disease threats. Between fiscal years 2018 through 2020, State typically carried over an average of about \$9 billion in unobligated balances. In fiscal year 2021, Congress appropriated \$4 billion in emergency funds to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. Please provide an update on State’s GHP obligations and describe how, if at all, the global pandemic is affecting your ability to obligate and distribute funding before available GHP funds expire.

Answer. Please see the chart below for an update on unobligated GHP balances.

| Global Health Programs Obligation Status as of 5/13/2022 | | | | | | |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------|
| | Appropriated | Obligated | Unobligated | Unobligated as % of Appropriation | Global Fund Unobligated | Non-Global Fund Unobligated |
| Total GHP | 26,515,950,000 | 21,492,298,091 | 5,023,651,909 | 18.9% | 1,809,656,946 | 3,213,994,963 |
| GHP-USAID | 3,265,950,000 | 1,814,635,922 | 1,451,314,078 | 44.4% | - | 1,451,314,078 |
| FY 2021/2022 | 3,265,950,000 | 1,814,635,922 | 1,451,314,078 | 44.4% | - | - |
| GHP-State* | 23,250,000,000 | 19,677,662,169 | 3,572,337,831 | 15% | 1,809,656,946 | 1,762,680,885 |
| FY 2018 /2022 | 5,670,000,000 | 5,642,542,751 | 27,457,249 | 0.5% | - | 27,457,249 |
| FY 2019/2023 | 5,720,000,000 | 5,516,678,935 | 203,321,065 | 3.6% | - | 203,321,065 |
| FY 2020/2024 | 5,930,000,000 | 5,165,835,452 | 764,164,548 | 12.9% | 249,656,946 | 514,507,602 |
| FY 2021/2025 | 5,930,000,000 | 3,352,605,031 | 2,577,394,969 | 43.5% | 1,560,000,000 | 1,017,394,969 |

*Includes unobligated amounts reported by PEPFAR Implementing Agencies and State Department

Thus far, the pandemic has not significantly impacted PEPFAR’s ability to obligate funds before they expire. While there have been some costs that decreased (e.g. travel, certain program interventions like Voluntary Male Medical Circumcisions), there have been other costs that increased (e.g. virtual platforms, increased internet bandwidth, increased need for personal protective equipment, and increased supply chain costs). One significant program disruption has been to our Peace Corps programming given that volunteers departed most programs during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, this has not yet specifically resulted in the expiration of funding.

USAID fully obligated the \$4 billion in FY 2021 COVID-19 emergency funds during FY 2021. While there continue to be challenges in the programming, obligation, and implementation of GHP funds as a result of the global pandemic, USAID remains committed to the timely obligation of GHP funds to achieve our three strategic global health goals. USAID doesn’t foresee any insurmountable challenges to fully obligating FY 2021 funds this fiscal year.

Question. Migration and Refugee Assistance Funds: The Migration and Refugee Assistance (MRA) account funds assistance programs to protect vulnerable people

around the world, including refugees, conflict victims, internally displaced people, stateless persons, and vulnerable migrants. The fiscal year 2022 request included \$550 million for refugee admissions and resettlement efforts that would be used to rebuild the refugee resettlement infrastructure within the United States and admit up to 125,000 refugees in fiscal year 2022. Is State on track to admit the planned 125,000 refugees into the United States?

Answer. In the FY 2022 Presidential Determination on Refugee Admissions, President Biden established a refugee admission target of 125,000 individuals. After several years of decreasing arrivals and a significant reduction in the global resettlement infrastructure, we expect to see increased refugee arrivals this year, but do not expect to reach 125,000 arrivals. This ambitious goal requires significant effort to rebuild and expand the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program, which the Administration remains fully committed to undertaking this work across the Departments of State, Homeland Security, and Health and Human Services. As we rebuild, we are prioritizing efforts to restore the program's infrastructure and staffing, address historic backlogs of pending applicants, invest in new innovations to make the program more efficient, and increase public outreach.

Question. Does State have allocations on the number of refugees it plans to admit from different geographic areas?

Answer. In the Presidential Determination on Refugee Admissions, President Biden approved a refugee admissions ceiling of 125,000 individuals, with regional allocations as follows:

| | |
|-------------------------|--------|
| Africa | 40,000 |
| East Asia | 15,000 |
| Europe and Central Asia | 10,000 |
| Latin America/Caribbean | 15,000 |
| Near East/South Asia | 35,000 |
| Unallocated Reserve | 10,000 |

At this time, we cannot project how many refugees in total will arrive under each regional allocation in FY 2022.

Question. Specifically, how many refugees from Europe, Africa, and Latin America does State plan to admit to the United States?

Answer. At this time, we cannot project how many refugees in total will arrive under each regional allocation in FY 2022.

RESPONSES OF SECRETARY OF STATE ANTONY J. BLINKEN TO QUESTIONS
SUBMITTED BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Question. On October 29, 2021, I and Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Robert Menendez wrote a letter expressing concern over the political and economic crisis facing Lebanon and urging the Administration to complement the European Union's announced sanctions framework. When will I receive a response to this letter? Please be specific.

Answer. The Administration shares your concern over the compounding crises facing Lebanon and coordinates closely with our like-minded partners, including the European Union, to urge implementation of political and economic reforms and promote accountability for corruption in Lebanon. On October 28, 2021, the Department worked closely with the Department of Treasury to sanction two Lebanese businessmen and a member of Parliament whose actions contributed to the breakdown of good governance and the rule of law in Lebanon under Executive Order 13441. The Department takes seriously the responsibility to respond to Member inquiries. The Department has not received the letter referenced and will respond upon receipt. Please send the letter to CongressionalCorrespondence@state.gov.

If you have records to indicate that the letter was sent to the Department, please notify us on where it was sent so we can remedy this issue ASAP.

Question. Why has a response to my October 29, 2021 letter taken over 180 days?

Answer. The Department has not received the letter and will respond upon receipt. Please send the letter to CongressionalCorrespondence@state.gov.

Question. On February 1, 2022, I and House Foreign Affairs Committee Ranking Member McCaul wrote a letter to express serious concerns regarding the energy deals the Biden administration is facilitating between Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and Egypt that would enrich the Assad regime and trigger U.S. sanctions under the Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act. When will I receive a response to this letter? Please be specific.

Answer. I understand that the Department received your letter and is working to finalize the response to it. We apologize for the delay, but given newly-confirmed leadership in the NEA bureau, we expect to send this letter to you very soon.

Question. Why has a response to my February 1, 2022 letter taken over 85 days?

Answer. The Department endeavors to respond to all correspondence from the Congress in a timely manner. We also want to make sure that our response appropriately addresses the concerns you have raised. We apologize for the delay, but given newly-confirmed leadership in the NEA bureau, we expect to send this letter to you very soon.

Question. On April 20, 2022, I wrote a letter concerning U.S. diplomats in the People's Republic of China (PRC), their families, and other U.S. Government personnel under Chief of Mission authority being subjected to unacceptable treatment by Chinese authorities under the PRC's COVID-19 laws. When will I receive a response to this letter? Please be specific.

Answer. The United States has no higher priority than the safety, health, and well-being of U.S. citizens overseas, including U.S. diplomats, their families, and other U.S. Government personnel. We are actively working with and assisting our citizens, including Mission personnel and their families, experiencing disruptions related to recent COVID-19 outbreaks in China. The Department takes seriously the responsibility to respond to Member inquiries. The Department has not received the letter referenced and will respond upon receipt. Please send the letter to CongressionalCorrespondence@state.gov.

If you have records to indicate that the letter was sent to the Department, please notify us on where it was sent so we can remedy this issue ASAP.

Question. I have also sent two letters to Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield who represents the United States to the United Nations and have not received a response. On June 14, 2021, I and three other senators wrote a letter to express serious concern over the systematic and widespread human rights abuses perpetrated by the Iranian-backed Houthis in Yemen. When will I receive a response to this letter? Please be specific.

Answer. The Department of State makes every effort to respond substantively and expeditiously to the many communications it receives from Members of Congress. With regard to your letter expressing well-founded concerns about the human rights environment in Yemen, I understand a response from the Acting Assistant Secretary for Legislative Affairs was sent to your office on October 28 of last year. We are attaching that letter here.



United States Department of State

Washington, D.C. 20520

October 28, 2021

The Honorable
James E. Risch, Ranking Member
Committee on Foreign Relations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Risch:

Thank you for your June 14 letter to Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield regarding human rights abuses perpetrated by Houthis in Yemen. The Department shares your strong concerns, and has repeatedly highlighted Houthi abuses, including the military offensive in Marib. The U.S. Mission to the United Nations has raised these issues in every UN Security Council meeting on Yemen this year, highlighting the grave impacts the Houthi offensive has had on civilians, including those who are internally displaced. We will continue to do so and to call on the Houthis to cease their offensive actions.

The U.S. Mission to the United Nations has also addressed the mass indoctrination of Yemenis, which undermines efforts to foster peace and a stable, secure Yemen. In her August 23 address to the UN Security Council on Yemen, Ambassador Thomas-Greenfield made clear the United States' alarm at reports that the Houthis continue to recruit thousands of children into military and indoctrination camps.

In similar fashion, we have stressed to the UN Security Council the dangers the Houthis pose to the wider region. On September 10, during the most recent Security Council meeting on Yemen, U.S. Deputy Permanent Representative to the UN Ambassador Richard Mills noted for the Security Council that in 2021 alone, the Houthis had launched more than 240 attacks into Saudi Arabia. Ambassador Mills argued forcefully that these attacks had endangered civilians throughout the country, including the 70,000 American citizens who reside there.

The Department of State, the U.S Mission to the United Nations, and the U.S. Special Envoy for Yemen, Timothy Lenderking, are seized with the matter of Houthi abuses and destabilizing actions. The Department will continue to take advantage of every opportunity to call upon the Houthis to cease these activities. We will also continue to highlight the need to allow principled and independent humanitarian action throughout Yemen, including calling on the Houthis to allow unhindered humanitarian access.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Naz Durakoğlu". The signature is written in a cursive, fluid style.

Naz Durakoğlu
Acting Assistant Secretary
Bureau of Legislative Affairs

Question. Why has a response to my June 14, 2021 letter taken over 317 days?

Answer. The Department of State makes every effort to respond substantively and expeditiously to the many communications it receives from Members of Congress. With regard to your letter expressing well-founded concerns about the human rights environment in Yemen, I understand a response from the Acting Assistant Secretary for Legislative Affairs was sent to your office on October 28 of last year. We are attaching that letter here.



United States Department of State

Washington, D.C. 20520

October 28, 2021

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James E. Risch, Ranking Member
Committee on Foreign Relations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

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Sincerely,

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Naz Durakoğlu
Acting Assistant Secretary
Bureau of Legislative Affairs

Question. On August 9, 2021, I and Senator Richard Durbin wrote a letter to propose further action by the United States Government to respond to the increasingly concerning situation in Belarus. Given Russia's invasion of Ukraine from Belarussian territory, how will you respond to their actions and when will I receive a response to this letter? Please be specific.

Answer. We are committed to hold Alyaksandr Lukashenka and his regime to account for their role in supporting Russia's war in Ukraine. This has included sanctions action on Belarussian enterprises and individuals, as well as export controls and visa restrictions. With regard to your letter, I understand a response from the Acting Assistant Secretary for Legislative Affairs was sent to your office on October 27 of last year. We are attaching that letter here.



United States Department of State

Washington, D.C. 20520

October 27, 2021

The Honorable
James E. Risch, Ranking Member
Committee on Foreign Relations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Risch:

Thank you for your August 9 letter to Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield on the situation in Belarus and your request for a UN General Assembly resolution condemning human rights violations by the Lukashenka government.

We deeply appreciate bipartisan Congressional support for a UN General Assembly resolution on Belarus. Unfortunately, there are multiple factors that make it difficult to pass a resolution on this issue in the General Assembly, particularly one urging a cultural boycott of a country. There are, however, a number of other mechanisms in which we have highlighted, and will continue to highlight, this important issue.

The Department has strongly supported multiple UN Human Rights Council resolutions on Belarus, which resulted in the appointment of three high-level experts on Belarus to support the work of the UN High Commissioner on Human Rights and the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Belarus.

We have also catalyzed actions in the UN General Assembly Third Committee and the Human Rights Council to condemn the regime's brutality, establish formal investigation mechanisms, and seek access into the country to monitor the human rights situation. We have also supported the International Accountability Platform for Belarus, a coalition of NGOs that supports the work of these UN bodies.

Additionally, we have issued multiple joint statements on Belarus in the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and were proud to join a coalition of states to invoke the OSCE's Moscow Mechanism against Belarus for abuses that took place during the post-election crackdown.

We appreciate your attention to this vital issue, and we look forward to continuing to work with you and your staff.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Naz Durakoglu". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Naz Durakoglu
Acting Assistant Secretary
Bureau of Legislative Affairs

Question. Why has a response to my August 9, 2021 letter taken over 261 days?

Answer. The Department of State makes every effort to respond substantively and expeditiously to the many communications it receives from Members of Congress. With regard to your letter expressing well-founded concerns about the situation in Belarus, I understand a response from the Acting Assistant Secretary for Legislative Affairs was sent to your office on October 27 of last year. We are attaching that letter here.



United States Department of State

Washington, D.C. 20520

October 27, 2021

The Honorable
James E. Risch, Ranking Member
Committee on Foreign Relations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

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We appreciate your attention to this vital issue, and we look forward to continuing to work with you and your staff.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Naz Durakoglu". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Naz Durakoglu
Acting Assistant Secretary
Bureau of Legislative Affairs

Question. I have submitted questions for the record to State Department officials for previous hearings for which I have not received responses, despite officials from more recent hearings having submitted their answers to my questions. On March 9, 2022, I submitted a series of questions for the record to Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs Victoria Nuland regarding Russia's invasion of Ukraine. When will I receive a response to these questions? Please be specific.

Answer. The Department of State makes every effort to respond substantively and expeditiously to questions for the record submitted by Members of Congress. The Department provided the questions for the record from Under Secretary Nuland's hearing to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee May 9, 2022, prior to the May 10, 2022 hearing for Ambassador Bridget Brink.

Question. The Biden administration continues to finalize and prepare for the public roll-out of elements of its interagency 'Africa strategy.' Will this strategy be accompanied by a review of and, where necessary, a request to Congress for the resources necessary to ensure its successful implementation?

Answer. Aligning our resources to the "U.S. Strategy toward Sub-Saharan Africa" is critical to ensuring the strategy's successful implementation. We will conduct this alignment and resource review through our regular strategic planning processes and budget requests. I look forward to continued consultations with Congress on the resources needed to advance U.S. interests in Africa, including staffing requirements.

Question. On March 9, 2022, Senator Durbin and I introduced S. Res. 538, a bipartisan resolution expressing support for a second U.S.-Africa Leaders' Summit, which would provide a significant opportunity to strengthen ties with our African partners and build upon areas of mutual interest. S. Res. 538 sought to build upon a speech you delivered in Nigeria on November 19, 2021, in which you declared the Biden administration's intention to host a second U.S.-Africa Leaders' Summit "to drive the kind of high-level diplomacy and engagement that can transform relationships and make effective cooperation possible."⁵ Our resolution also reflected concern for the lack of publicly available information about the Summit and the failure to include Congress and other stakeholders in planning. What steps is the Administration taking to build upon the first U.S.-Africa Leaders' Summit, hosted during the Obama administration in 2014, and create more regular, sustainable, and enduring engagement between top U.S. Government, NGO, and private sector leaders, and those of our partner African nations?

Answer. The next U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit will be hosted by President Biden with whole-of-cabinet participation, as well as bipartisan engagements with Members of Congress and official events with civil society and the private sector. In line with the format of the first U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit hosted in 2014, President Biden will convene select heads of state from both North and sub-Saharan Africa, including the African Union Commission Chair. We believe it is critical to engage various stakeholders and partners by starting with a series of listening sessions early in the process, and these discussions have already been undertaken. Exact timing of the Summit is still being evaluated and we look forward to a public announcement very soon.

Question. How exactly has the Biden administration coordinated with African leaders, the African Diaspora, and U.S. and African educational institutions, private sector and civil society organizations, and public policy institutions in planning for the Summit?

Answer. We, along with other members of the interagency, have had listening sessions with members of the African diplomatic corps; the African Union; members of the African diaspora; representatives from educational institutions, including youth from the U.S. and the African continent; and representatives from think tanks that focus on issues pertaining to the African continent to hear their concerns for a new and innovative leadership summit. Additional sessions are planned with the private sector and civil society organizations. Their input will help us develop a more innovative set of sessions for the summit.

Question. How does the Administration plan to engage governors, mayors, and other leaders from U.S. states to ensure their active participation in the Summit, with a view toward transforming our relationship with our African partners, particularly in areas of trade and investment?

Answer. We, along with other members of the interagency, have had listening sessions with members of the African diplomatic corps; the African Union; members of the African diaspora; representatives from educational institutions, including youth from the U.S. and the African continent; and representatives from think tanks that focus on issues pertaining to the African continent to hear their concerns

for a new and innovative leadership summit. Additional sessions are planned with the private sector and civil society organizations. Their input will help us develop a more innovative set of sessions for the summit.

Question. What areas were identified by the Administration during the EU–AU Summit in February as opportunities for the United States to work with our transatlantic partners to tackle massive challenges, including countering global malign actors, and building on the enormous opportunities ahead for the African continent?

Answer. The United States and EU coordinate regularly to leverage efforts and maximize impact. We are working with the EU to expand cooperation on countering malign actors; responding to the COVID–19 pandemic; supporting peace and security, on the principal of strengthening African defense capabilities; addressing the climate crisis and facilitating energy transition from fossil fuels; fostering economic development, including infrastructure and the digital economy; and promoting democratization, good governance, and respect for human rights, including gender equity.

Question. What resources does the Administration plan to commit, and what mechanisms does it plan to create, to ensure that the U.S.-African Leaders Summit is not merely an episodic event, but rather a sustained initiative?

Answer. In the FY 2023 Budget, the Administration has requested \$230 million to projects to sustain initiatives related to ALS.

Question. The United Nations currently has six active peacekeeping operations on the African continent: in Western Sahara (MINURSO); Central African Republic (MINUSCA); Mali (MINUSMA); the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO); the disputed area of Abyei (UNISFA); and South Sudan (UNMISS). The Biden administration’s FY2023 budget includes \$730 million to pay down “arrears” and requests authority to waive the statutory 25 percent cap on U.S. contributions for United Nations peacekeeping. While each UN mission in Africa plays an important role in the maintenance of peace and security in a particular country or sub-region, the United States is seeking to increase its investment at a time when security dynamics are shifting rapidly. Several peacekeeping operations remain the only viable option for international or African regional responses to the peace and security challenges. What are the most significant challenges facing existing UN peacekeeping operations in Africa?

Answer. Peacekeeping missions facilitate post-conflict recovery by protecting civilians, preserving security, and creating the space for political solutions. While the UN Secretary-General and many Member States stress the importance of peacekeeping missions supporting political solutions, these are long-term endeavors that require persistence, political will, and resources that are provided in a timely manner. Political solutions to complex, recurring, and often intractable conflicts in Africa take years to achieve and can challenge the competing imperative to measure progress and plan an exit strategy for peacekeeping missions. Disinformation, intercommunal conflict, and armed group spoilers threaten to undermine progress in many African peacekeeping missions.

Question. To what extent is the Department working with counterparts at the United Nations to reform UN peacekeeping, including by ensuring that operations are instruments that respond to immediate needs and opportunities rather than as permanent fixtures?

Answer. The United States prioritizes peacekeeping effectiveness, performance, and accountability to ensure that missions have realistic and achievable mandates, host country cooperation, and the resources and trained personnel to carry out their mandates. We actively led efforts to adopt UN Security Council resolutions (UNSCR) 2272 (2016) on sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) and 2436 (2018) on performance. UNSCR 2436 called for development of a comprehensive and integrated performance policy framework to hold peacekeepers accountable for patterns of underperformance and misconduct, including SEA. That framework has been developed, and we are now pressing the UN to implement it fully and consistently.

Question. How is the Administration working to ensure that peacekeeping missions in Africa cooperate more closely with the continent’s multilateral bodies and host countries to ensure more equitable burden sharing and timely transitions?

Answer. We support close cooperation between the UN, the African Union (AU), and the AU’s subsidiary Regional Economic Communities (RECs), to advance more equitable burden sharing on peace and security efforts in Africa. We also support cooperation and coordination between UN peacekeeping missions and other UN

agencies, funds, and programs, which helps provide the foundation for sustainable transitions to a Special Political Mission or UN Country Team.

Question. How does the Department measure the effectiveness of the UN peacekeeping operations, and how does this factor into planning and budgeting for related bilateral and regional U.S. peace and security programs for Africa?

Answer. We use a variety of tools to measure the effectiveness of UN peacekeeping operations, including valuable reporting from our posts, the U.S. Mission to the UN, and, where appropriate, the U.S. Mission to the African Union. We also conduct annual monitoring and evaluation visits to missions to meet with stakeholders across all levels and all functions of the mission, the host nation government, other international actors, and civil society representatives to assess the performance and effectiveness of these missions. We share reporting and readouts from these visits with the interagency and use that information to shape bilateral and regional peace and security program planning efforts.

Question. In 2016, the African Union (AU) backed a proposal under which AU member states would commit to covering an increased share of the cost of African-led stabilization operations, in exchange for a commitment, on a case-by-case basis, that the remainder of such costs could be covered by assessed contributions for UN peacekeeping. In 2018, the three African members of the Security Council introduced a draft resolution that could have paved the way for financing future AU-led operations through UN assessed contributions under specific conditions. The draft resolution did not advance to a vote. What is the Biden administration's position on using UN assessed contributions to fund AU-led stabilization operations?

Answer. The Biden administration is committed to working with the AU and its member states to explore options for predictable and sustainable financing for AU-led peace support operations. This includes the potential use of UN assessed contributions, in line with the conditions outlined in UN Security Council Resolutions 2320 and 2378.

Question. What conditions would African countries and the AU need to meet for the United States to support such an initiative at the Security Council?

Answer. In order for the United States to consider supporting the use of UN assessed contributions to support AU-led peace support operations, the African Union would need to meet a number of conditions. Key conditions include the African Union (1) recognizing UNSC oversight over any mission partially financed through assessed contributions; (2) adopting and implementing performance, human rights, and conduct and discipline frameworks; and (3) paying at least 25 percent of the cost of any mission partially financed through assessed contributions.

Question. Would the Biden administration support using UN assessed contributions to fund AU-led stabilization operations without a UN Security Council vote on each mandate?

Answer. The Biden administration would not support the use of UN-assessed contributions to fund an AU-led peace support operation without a UN Security Council (UNSC) mandate. UN Security Council (UNSC) oversight is one of the key preconditions of any agreement on the use of UN assessed-funds for AU-led peace support operations. Appropriate UN oversight bodies, including the UNSC through resolutions authorizing mission mandates, must oversee UN funds.

Question. How would the Biden administration ensure transparency and accountability in AU-led, UN-financed stabilization operations, including in cases of sexual exploitation and abuse?

Answer. I will ensure the Department continues to communicate our expectations regarding transparency and accountability in all engagements with the African Union and its member states on the subject of UN financing for AU-led peace support operations. We will continue to use our seat on the Security Council to ensure future resolutions maintain the conditions set forth under UN Security Council Resolutions 2320 and 2378, while also identifying opportunities to strengthen the capabilities of the AU and its member states to implement frameworks related to performance, accountability, and transparency.

Question. In updated, written responses to Questions for the Record that you submitted to the Committee on February 1, 2021, you committed to working "with the White House and relevant State Department bureaus and offices to ensure that all posts in Sub-Saharan Africa are sufficiently and consistently staffed with the appropriate personnel." While the process for nominating and confirming U.S. ambassadors is not entirely within the Department's control, recruitment and placement of junior and senior positions within the Africa Bureau and at U.S. Missions in Afri-

ca is. Under your leadership, how has the Department budgeted for and taken steps to ensure that Department “sufficiently and consistently” staffs “all posts” in the region?

Answer. Recruiting and assignments of Foreign Service (FS) officers are controlled by the Bureau of Global Talent Management (GTM). We expect to increase our FS hiring by at least 30 percent this fiscal year from the previous year, which will be the highest FS hiring in a decade. The Entry Level Division of GTM’s Career Development and Assignments Office works closely with the AF Bureau staff to ensure entry-level positions in AF are filled in a timely manner. Similarly, we strive to fill every available mid-level job in AF. However, the pool of potential candidates for AF service is diminished due to medical care and schooling concerns, particularly for parents of high schoolers or children with special needs. The Department continues to explore ways to remove such barriers to service. The majority of the vacancies in AF are at the FS-02 and FS-03 level, which reflects both the global shortage of FSOs due to reduced hiring and a Department-wide shortage of specialists in IT, facilities management, security, and office support.

Question. Several recent career State Department nominees put forward to serve overseas in Africa, as well as here in Washington, DC, have demonstrated little-to-no experience working on the African continent. What steps is the Department taking to develop talent with more significant experience in Africa?

Answer. We are always striving to send the best and the brightest to serve as ambassadors worldwide. We take every opportunity to lobby senior officers to seek ambassadorial assignments, using the HR system, Department notices, and reaching out to affinity groups. AF is no exception. Of 24 confirmed or nominated ambassadors, only three lack prior service in Africa. Of those three, one has served as a principal officer and has extensive management experience, one has served as a DCM and as the NSC Office Director for Afghanistan, and the third is a political appointee with a distinguished private sector career.

Question. What incentives has the Department employed or contemplated for attracting more senior personnel, including ambassadors, with extensive Africa experience, particularly for hard-to-fill posts on the continent?

Answer. We regularly have ample interest in leadership positions among senior career officers, as service in the African Affairs Bureau is perceived to provide more opportunities for advancement. There are no additional incentives specific to senior personnel. Due to security concerns, several posts in Africa limit or prohibit accompanying family members, which is a limiting factor for some senior foreign service officers.

Question. Economic, Trade and Investment Policy in updated written responses to Questions for the Record that you submitted to the Committee on February 1, 2021, you stated that increased U.S. trade and investment are “critical to building stronger ties” with Africa. How has the United States increased its ties with African countries through trade and investment under the Biden administration?

Answer. Under the Biden administration, the United States has engaged Africa through a number of programs to increase trade and investment. Prosper Africa has increased diaspora outreach and financing opportunities, such as the San Francisco Employees’ Retirement System investing \$100 million in clean energy solutions. The Africa Women’s Entrepreneurship Program is an incubator and networking platform for African women entrepreneurs. Direct Line for American Business provides information on opportunities and market conditions abroad. The Women Entrepreneurs Finance Initiative (We-Fi) increases women entrepreneurs’ access to financing, markets, technology, and networks.

Question. What more does the United States need to do to accelerate these efforts?

Answer. The United States, while not a party to the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), supports its goals of enhancing regional value chains and increasing African integration. We will continue to support the AfCFTA to achieve sustainable economic development, build regional value chains, and increase both competitiveness and investment opportunities for mutual benefit. We continue to engage the private sector to increase trade and investment with Africa in pursuit of inclusive economic development, including by supporting increased African utilization of the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA).

Question. You stated in the same written responses, “In Africa, we compete with China by ensuring that American companies can compete on an even playing field, providing a meaningful alternative to China’s economic approach, promoting entrepreneurship and fair practices.” Can you provide specific examples where the United

States has affected how “we compete with China” in Africa through the Prosper Africa initiative?

Answer. Prosper Africa coordinates the tools and resources of the U.S. Government to facilitate two-way trade and investment with Africa and provide alternatives to PRC involvement. Embassy Deal Teams are an integral part of this effort, assisting U.S. companies to identify and close deals. The Djibouti Deal Team helped CR Energy Concepts close a deal with the Government of Djibouti to construct a \$190 million renewable energy park—the first infrastructure project in Djibouti to be built by a U.S. company. Another example involved Prosper Africa advisors working with an Africa diaspora-owned company to secure financing that enabled them to prevail over a Chinese competitor on a cybersecurity contract.

Question. Do you have the resources and staffing—overseas and domestically—to successfully manage the full range of public affairs, public diplomacy, and strategic communications across sub-Saharan Africa?

Answer. Our public diplomacy work across sub-Saharan Africa needs additional resources and support. Overseas, the Bureau of African Affairs has the second-largest number of Public Diplomacy Sections (50), but ranks last in both the number of U.S. Direct Hire positions and overall public diplomacy budget. Of those public diplomacy sections, more than 40 percent are staffed by a single American officer. AF is slated to receive six PD positions through the FY 2022 budgetary process, and the FY 2023 request includes 6 PD positions for AF both in the field and in Washington. With your support, this will be an important step to matching resources to priorities across sub-Saharan Africa.

Question. What tools or authorities can Congress provide to help support these important efforts?

Answer. Approving the President’s FY 2023 budget request will help ensure critical positions are open for recruitment as soon as possible. After many years of being chronically understaffed, we view this request as especially important in meeting needs across our missions and within the Bureau of African Affairs in Washington. Global power competitors have dedicated human and financial resources in Africa on a scale that puts us at a distinct disadvantage in efforts to challenge their influence and counter propaganda, disinformation, and malign activities. As you and your colleagues consider a State Department Authorization Bill this year, I encourage you to meet with our public diplomacy leadership to best understand the constraints and challenges we face.

Question. Is the Department considering appointing a U.S. Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region of Africa? If not, what are the Department’s plans for managing the ever-complex crises and challenges facing the Great Lakes and wider Central African region?

Answer. At this time, I do not plan to appoint a Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region of Africa. The Bureau of African Affairs and our U.S. Ambassadors to the Great Lakes countries ensure our policy objectives are aligned and our teams are coordinated to address the complex crises and challenges in this region. This is a priority and senior State Department officials are in close contact with Great Lakes country leaders, the United Nations, and multilateral partners to encourage progress on security, governance, economic development, climate adaptation, and health infrastructure.

Question. Burundi: In March, the Burundi Human Rights Initiative noted, “2021 was not a good year for human rights in Burundi. The national intelligence service tortured dozens of detainees, some of whom died as a result. Others were forcibly disappeared or held incommunicado. Many of the victims were opposition party members.” The Department’s most recent annual country reports on human rights practices noted for Burundi “significant human rights abuses” and cited many cases of abuse committed by or on behalf of the Burundian Government. The Biden administration terminated the Burundi Sanctions Program in 2021, and opened up several aspects of the bilateral relationship as part of an aggressive engagement policy with Evariste Ndayishimiye’s government. The comparative lack of vigor by the United States in publicly addressing gross human rights abuses committed by Burundi’s Government under Ndayishimiye’s leadership is notable. In updated written responses to Questions for the Record that you submitted to the Committee on February 1, 2021, you stated, “Our Administration will restore democracy and human rights to the center of U.S. foreign policy, including in Africa.” Can you explain how the Administration’s current U.S. foreign policy approach to Burundi is centered on democracy and human rights?

Answer. Prior to and since the termination of the Burundi Sanctions Program in November 2021, the Department has consistently raised our concerns in both Bujumbura and Washington about ongoing allegations of human rights violations and abuses, the space for civil society, media freedom, and cooperation with international human rights mechanisms. In addition to continuing Embassy work on this issue, Acting Assistant Secretary for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor Lisa Peterson visited Burundi in March 2022 where she pressed these issues directly with government interlocutors and held numerous meetings with civil society organizations and individuals working on good governance and human rights.

Question. How has the Biden administration addressed, publicly, openly, and with the same level of vigor as its diplomatic and bilateral re-engagement with the Ndayishimiye's government, the glaring record of human rights abuses committed against the Burundian people?

Answer. The Department regularly raises our concerns about allegations of human rights violations and abuses in Burundi, both in public and private. Our messaging and engagements by senior U.S. officials in Bujumbura and Washington, interventions and support for resolutions at the UN Human Rights Council, and most recently, the publication of the 2021 Burundi Country Report on Human Rights Practices in April 2022, all demonstrate publicly the full range of concerns we have about reported human rights violations and abuses in the country. We will continue to publicly press the Government of Burundi to improve the human rights situation in the country and use all other appropriate tools to do so.

Question. How does the Ndayishimiye government's performance on human rights abuses rate against other African governments in the East Africa/Great Lakes region?

Answer. The Great Lakes Region of Africa continues to experience widespread reports of human rights violations and abuses as covered in the Department's 2021 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices. Although the reports do not rank countries or draw comparisons across them, Burundi's human rights record is concerning. The 2021 Burundi Country Report on Human Rights Practices contains credible reports of significant human rights issues including extrajudicial killings, forced disappearances, torture, and restrictions on fundamental freedoms. The Department continues to actively engage the Government of Burundi and other regional governments on the importance of advancing the protection of human rights.

Question. Which is more important to the Biden administration: the reform-minded focus projected by the Ndayishimiye's government or its well-documented human rights abuses?

Answer. I welcome the reforms undertaken by President Ndayishimiye since June 2020. We are encouraging the Government of Burundi to continue progress and deepen reforms, especially in the area of human rights. Our messaging and engagements by senior U.S. officials in Bujumbura and Washington, interventions and support for resolutions at the UN Human Rights Council, and most recently, the publication of the 2021 Burundi Country Report on Human Rights Practices demonstrate our concerns about reported human rights violations and abuses. We will continue to press the Government of Burundi to ensure accountability and respect for human rights, even as we engage in other areas to advance the Government of Burundi's reforms.

Question. Does the Administration plan to re-designate, under other U.S. sanctions or related accountability mechanisms, those individuals previously designated under the Burundi Sanctions program terminated in November 2021?

Answer. In line with our global commitment to promote respect for human rights and accountability, the Department continues to consider the use of all available tools to respond to any new or continuing human rights violations and abuses in Burundi. These include assessing the applicability of visa restrictions and economic sanctions, including Section 7031(c) and the Global Magnitsky sanctions program, in connection with allegations of serious human rights abuses. While we do not preview potential visa restriction or sanctions actions, we regularly assess individuals and entities reportedly involved in serious human rights abuses for designation under appropriate authorities.

Question. Cameroon: In updated written responses to Questions for the Record related to Cameroon that you submitted to the Committee on February 1, 2021, you stated, "An end to violence, and accountability for its perpetrators, is needed. It is important that children attend school and that aid can be delivered. More broadly, political dialogue is needed to resolve this ongoing conflict and to improve respect

for human rights. If confirmed, I will review the different tools we have to press for a resolution of this conflict and to hold human rights violators accountable, including sanctions.” What specific actions has the Department taken under your leadership to “press for the resolution of” the Anglophone conflict and to “hold human rights violators accountable, including sanctions”?

Answer. I have directed our efforts to work with likeminded nations to condemn violence against civilians in Cameroon by government and nonstate actors and to urge an inclusive dialogue with a broad range of stakeholders. We have imposed visa restrictions on those undermining the peaceful resolution of the crisis and we have maintained suspensions on U.S. security assistance and AGOA eligibility to Cameroon. We continue to work within the interagency to hold accountable individuals living in the United States for any illegal actions that perpetuate violence. Ambassador Lamora in Yaoundé has underscored these principles and expectations in his full range of engagements since arriving in country earlier this year.

Question. Does the Department continue to believe that the ‘Swiss process’ remains the most viable path to getting all parties to the conflict to the table to agree to cease hostilities and find a sustainable approach to peace?

Answer. We and likeminded partners, including the Swiss, continue to encourage constructive actions by all parties to bring a peaceful resolution to the crisis in the Northwest and Southwest regions. While that process must be Cameroonian-owned to be successful, the international community can play a positive role in facilitating a resolution through continued engagement with key government officials and a range of stakeholders, particularly those both in Cameroon and in the diaspora who are actively seeking peaceful solutions for their communities.

Question. What other avenues exist to end hostilities in the Anglophone conflict and to begin working toward peace?

Answer. There are positively inclined actors in government, as well as civil society members and others, who are pursuing pathways to peace. The government should accelerate decentralization and special status to the Northwest/Southwest regions, as agreed during the 2019 Grand National Dialogue. Armed groups must allow children to go to all schools and end kidnappings, lockdown days, and forced contributions. Diaspora leaders should demonstrate a willingness to engage peacefully with a range of stakeholders in Cameroon, including the government, and cease activities and statements that fuel violence. We encourage exploring Cameroonian stakeholders’ receptivity to facilitation from senior, well-respected African leaders.

Question. What specific steps can the United States take—on its own or in coordination with international and regional partners—to help improve the conditions affecting the education of more than 700,000 children because of conflict in Cameroon?

Answer. We and likeminded partners have engaged Cameroon on the need to ensure access to education throughout the country as a critical step towards peace. Nonstate armed groups must cease the violence that has prevented children from attending school. The government must engage in an inclusive national dialogue to address the root causes of the conflict, to include calls for access to bilingual education. We support civil society working in education and humanitarian assistance, and the World Bank’s Prevention and Resilience Allocation, which seeks to improve education access, among other fragility indicators. We also work with UN and NGO partners to facilitate school enrollment of displaced children in host communities.

Question. Central African Republic: In updated written responses to Questions for the Record that you submitted to the Committee on February 1, 2021, you committed to assessing “what more can be done to counter malign Russian influence in the CAR mining and security sectors.” After more than a year, what have you assessed regarding “what more can be done to counter malign Russian influence the CAR mining and security sectors”?

Answer. We have consistently raised concerns with President Touadera related to CAR’s partnership with the Kremlin-backed Wagner Group, including human rights abuses by Wagner and national security forces, which limits traditional partners’ ability to work with the CAR government. To address CAR’s security needs, we support the UN mission in CAR, which helps build the capacity of Central African security forces and supports security sector reform. The Department engages with the Kimberley Process, UN, and CAR authorities to prioritize transparency in the mining sector. We are also exploring actions with countries that import illicit minerals to limit Wagner and other Yevgeny Prigozhin-linked entities’ profitability.

Question. What specific actions has the Department taken under your leadership to respond to these challenges in CAR?

Answer. To counteract the Kremlin-backed Wagner Group and Yevgeny Prigozhin-linked entities' destabilizing activities in CAR and Africa, the bureaus of African and European affairs—along with our embassies abroad, other Department offices, and interagency partners—have coordinated closely to: (1) hinder Wagner's ability to operate with impunity; (2) in meetings with African leaders and civil society, spotlight Wagner's destabilizing activities; (3) engage with UN members and offices to highlight Wagner's human rights abuses and obstruction of the UN mission in CAR (MINUSCA); and (4) counter pro-Russian and anti-UN disinformation in collaboration with partners.

Question. Chad: What is the United States doing to help restore civilian rule in Chad, and does the Biden administration believe that the military-led junta supports democratic rule?

Answer. Since April 2021, the United States has called for a peaceful, timely transition of power to a democratically elected, civilian-led government in Chad. I continue to support efforts, diplomatic and through programming of modest appropriated resources, that will lead to an inclusive national dialogue, constitutional referendum, and free and fair elections, which includes reaching a peace agreement between the Chadian transitional government and rebel groups at the negotiations underway in Doha. Transitional Military Council President Mahamat Deby has publicly stated his intentions not to stand for election and that the Transitional Military Council will cede power following elections—we must hold him to his pledge.

Question. Democratic Republic of the Congo: Do you believe the funds committed to support the DRC's 2023 elections are sufficient, given the importance the United States has placed on democratic and economic reforms in post-Kabila policy toward the country?

Answer. The Administration is prioritizing support for free and fair DRC 2023 elections, held within the prescribed constitutional timelines and using inclusive electoral processes, as part of its efforts to ensure that the U.S.-DRC Privileged Partnership for Peace, Prosperity, and Preservation of the Environment (PP4PPP) delivers for the Congolese and American people. USAID is supporting the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), which provides direct technical assistance to the DRC's electoral commission (CENI). USAID and the Department of State are reviewing allocated resources to determine if additional support is needed, including from other international partners, ahead of the 2023 elections.

Question. Equatorial Guinea: Senior officials from the Biden administration reportedly made several trips to Equatorial Guinea to meet with the country's leaders about vital bilateral issues, but chiefly to discuss reported plans by the People's Republic of China (PRC) to increase military cooperation with and presence in this coastal Central African state, located along the Atlantic Ocean. Does the United States regard Equatorial Guinea as an ally? If so, why? If not, why not?

Answer. Equatorial Guinea is a potential partner of the United States in maritime security and other areas. The United States has not worked closely with the Equatoguinean Government for many years. We are still evaluating what new bilateral initiatives will achieve our aims. What we do know is that our nonengagement has not affected the desired change. As we have stepped up our level of cooperation with Equatorial Guinea over the past year, we are affording them an opportunity to change their mindsets and behaviors by word and deed and become a more responsible partner.

Question. The Government of Equatorial Guinea is authoritarian, notoriously corrupt, and has one of the worst human rights records in the world. Does the Biden administration regard the government as a reasonable actor with whom the United States can engage in normal diplomatic relations to address our reported national security concerns regarding the PRC?

Answer. Promotion of respect for human rights and good governance remain central to our efforts and is a cornerstone of U.S. policy towards Equatorial Guinea. We prioritize the fight against corruption globally and seek real commitment from the Government of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea to counter the corruption that threatens security, economic equity, and development. We welcome greater partnership across the full spectrum of Equatoguinean society to advocate for responsive governance that will increase transparency and promote respect for human rights.

Question. At what point in the reported developing military and security relationship between Equatorial Guinea and the PRC would the United States publicly regard the Central African country as a threat to the United States and change its policy approach to treat the government as such?

Answer. The United States does not expect the Government of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea to end partnerships with other countries, but we have made clear that certain potential steps involving PRC-basing activity would raise U.S. national-security concerns both for the United States and Equatorial Guinea's neighbors.

Question. What current or planned regional initiatives are the United States using or developing to counter the reported threats posed by an increased PRC military presence in Equatorial Guinea and, potentially, the wider littoral region along Africa's Atlantic Coast?

Answer. We share the concern of our African and European partners over potential militarization of the Gulf of Guinea. This includes the possible construction of a PRC military installation. We engage frequently with countries facing security challenges in the maritime domain. Our long-term and emerging partnerships with African states are vital for addressing immediate threats such as trafficking and piracy and building capacity in the region to ensure long-term security and economic growth. We would like to support Equatorial Guinea and other African states to collaborate on shared concerns, including maritime security, support for blue economies, and environmental preservation.

Question. Rwanda: In updated written responses to Questions for the Record that you submitted to the Committee on February 1, 2021, you committed through your team to follow closely Paul Rusesabagina's case in Rwanda. In your comment regarding the issue, you also noted, "I will make clear that the human rights of all prisoners, including Paul Rusesabagina, should be respected." Understanding that Deputy Secretary Wendy Sherman and other Department officials recently made direct reference to Rusesabagina's trial and treatment to Rwanda's Foreign Minister, have you ever personally made clear to any Rwandan officials that "the human rights of all prisoners, including Paul Rusesabagina, should be respected"?

Answer. The Department presses the Government of Rwanda (GOR) to respect the human rights of all prisoners. Mr. Rusesabagina's case highlights the critical importance of fair trial guarantees and all applicable legal protections that Rwanda owes to all persons. We remind the GOR that these guarantees and protections are recognized in applicable domestic laws of Rwanda, as well as in Rwanda's international obligations as a party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. In addition, the publication of the 2021 Rwanda Country Report on Human Rights Practices communicates the full range of concerns we have about reported human rights violations and abuses, including those related to prisoner conditions and treatment.

Question. Do you plan to raise this matter of Paul Rusesabagina personally to Rwandan officials at your next opportunity?

Answer. The Department regularly engages the Government of Rwanda on this case at high levels in both Kigali and Washington, and we evaluate all diplomatic engagements with Rwanda with this case in mind. In recent months, we escalated our engagement to senior level U.S. Government officials, including the Deputy Secretary and the USAID Administrator. We will continue to evaluate all appropriate opportunities for engagement in the future that could lead to the release of Mr. Rusesabagina.

Question. The Horn of Africa in the updated written responses to the Questions for the Record you submitted to the Committee on February 1, 2021, you agreed when asked if the United States would better serve its national security interests in the region if we had a more comprehensive and coordinated interagency approach toward the Greater Horn of Africa. Throughout your tenure as Secretary, the complexities and acute need for such an approach have only grown. Under your leadership as Secretary, what specific actions have the Department, and the broader Biden administration, taken to ensure a more comprehensive and coordinated interagency approach regarding the Greater Horn of Africa?

Answer. I appointed a U.S. Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa in April 2021 to boost our international diplomatic effort in addressing the broader political, security, and humanitarian crises in the Horn of Africa. Since then, we have seen some positive steps in de-escalating the conflict and improving humanitarian access in Ethiopia, as well as in coordinating a humanitarian response to the drought in the region. We will continue this work, while also focusing on supporting a democratic transition in Sudan, mitigating the negative impact of Eritrea's activities in the region, and addressing other regional and transnational issues.

Question. Do you believe the Administration used the U.S. Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa adequately to address the myriad of challenges in the region beyond just those in Ethiopia and Sudan?

Answer. The Special Envoy and his team have been critical in addressing several transnational and transregional challenges that are beyond the scope of any single U.S. embassy in the region. In addition to his work on internal crises in Ethiopia and Sudan, the Special Envoy has been a key interlocutor with Egypt, Sudan, and Ethiopia on the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) and maintained close contacts with Gulf states who play a key role in various issues in the region.

Question. Would the United States having a more dedicated Special Envoy or another senior advisor better serve our response to crises in Ethiopia and Sudan, particularly given crises elsewhere in the Horn of Africa region?

Answer. The Special Envoy to the Horn of Africa (SEHOA) and his team have done well in advancing U.S. interests and assisting in the de-escalation and resolution of various crises in the region. The current SEHOA office remains well-suited for the challenges we face, and we remain open to adjusting as needed.

Question. Eritrea: What is the U.S. policy toward containing the malign and increasingly destabilizing role of Eritrean President Isaias Afwerki in the Horn of Africa region, including Eritrea's growing cooperation with China and other malign regional actors?

Answer. Eritrea's continued intervention in the conflict in northern Ethiopia and the horrendous human rights abuses Eritrean forces have committed there threaten regional stability. The United States has consistently and publicly called for Eritrean forces to withdraw from Ethiopia. We have imposed financial and other sanctions on Eritrea for obstructing efforts to resolve the conflict and for committing human rights violations. We are closely monitoring Eritrea's growing diplomatic relationship with strategic competitors, including the PRC and Russia.

Question. Ethiopia: How is the United States holding those countries or foreign contractors accountable that have and continue to sell lethal drone and other weapons systems to the parties to the conflict in northern Ethiopia?

Answer. The Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) has announced sanctions on Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and its expeditionary unit, the IRGC Qods Force, for, among other things, proliferating lethal UAVs to Ethiopia.

The United States encourages other countries to impose restrictions on defense trade with Ethiopia and Eritrea. On November 1, 2021, the Department of State amended the International Traffic in Arms Regulations (ITAR) to codify that it is the policy of the United States to deny licenses and other approvals for exports of defense articles and defense services to or for the armed forces, police, intelligence, or other internal security forces of Ethiopia and Eritrea.

Question. What metrics is the United States using to gauge the progress and intention of the major parties to the conflict in northern Ethiopia regarding existing efforts towards, provision of humanitarian access, and accountability for atrocities committed in the course of the conflict?

Answer. The United States uses a combination of metrics and benchmarks to help gauge the intention of the parties to the conflict. Examples of metrics are the number of trucks entering Tigray or the amount of cash approved for humanitarian NGOs. Benchmarks, which we associate with the steps required for the Ethiopian Government to restore African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) benefits, include engaging in ceasefire talks, allowing unhindered humanitarian assistance, and granting access to human rights monitors. The United States uses these to complement statements and concrete actions by the parties, such as ceasing airstrikes on the part of the Ethiopian Government or withdrawing forces into Tigray on the part of the TPLF.

Question. Do you agree or disagree that there is important value in the United States providing a clear determination regarding the atrocities committed during the conflict in northern Ethiopia? Please explain.

Answer. Making a determination that atrocity crimes have occurred is an important tool available to the Secretary of State. In the case of the conflict in northern Ethiopia, we believe a diplomatic resolution is the most effective means to halt and prevent atrocities in the immediate term. This is our urgent priority, and we are actively working to that end. Throughout the conflict, we have repeatedly called out alleged human rights abuses as credible evidence has been reported or shared. This

is why we support the independent UN commission of experts and encourage the government to allow them access to the country.

Question. Kenya plans to hold general elections in August 2022, which we expected to be contentious, have a strong ethnic dimension, and risk likely violence. How is the U.S. engaging with Kenya's leaders in the lead up to these elections, and what specific efforts is the Administration making to help ensure the country holds free, fair, credible, transparent and peaceful elections?

Answer. The United States continues to promote free, fair, and peaceful elections in Kenya through our diplomatic engagement, programs, and public messages. Our Charge d'Affaires, a.i. in Nairobi and the Assistant Secretary for African Affairs have engaged directly with the two leading presidential candidates to underscore our expectations that they will support a free, fair, and peaceful election in word and deed. President Biden and Secretary Blinken met directly with President Uhuru Kenyatta to encourage a peaceful transition of power. Together with the UK and other likeminded partners, we are working with the government and civil society to strengthen civic education, improve electoral processes and oversight, increase human rights protections, and mitigate violence.

Question. Somalia: Does the Department view Somaliland as a viable candidate for a closer defense and security partnership in the Horn of Africa region?

Answer. There are prospects for closer security and defense cooperation with Somaliland nested within the framework of our single Somalia policy given our recognition of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Federal Republic of Somalia. The Department is implementing border security and financial intelligence capacity building and collaborated with Somaliland on man-portable air defense system collection and destruction. We have offered to discuss additional security assistance with Somaliland within the framework of our single Somalia policy and strategy.

Question. What specific steps has the Department taken, or plan to take, to build a stronger defense and security relationship with Somaliland?

Answer. In 2021, the Bureau of Counterterrorism offered targeted border security and watch listing assistance to Somaliland and began a program to strengthen the Bank of Somaliland Financial Intelligence Unit's capacity to combat terrorist financing and money laundering. The Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs provided technical assistance on vessel boarding, search, and seizure operations and maintenance to the Somaliland Coast Guard to increase Somaliland's capacity to patrol coastal waters, interdict illicit goods, and cooperate with land-based police investigators, as well as provided limited communications and maritime patrol equipment.

Question. In a recent Congressional Notification from USAID, there was a distinct change of focus in programming from Somalia's federal government in Mogadishu toward Federal Member States and structures. Does this reflect a broader U.S. policy change regarding Somalia?

Answer. The United States supports the development of effective democratic institutions at all levels of the Somali Government. USAID's FY 2021 Congressional Notification is consistent with last year's requests for two priorities: (1) addressing the structural conditions that allow violent extremist organizations such as al-Shabaab to maintain a foothold in Somali society; and (2) reducing chronic humanitarian need that compromises the wellbeing and stability of the Somali people. The Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration via partners engages with all regional administrations in the parameters of the U.S. Government's single Somalia policy.

Question. Tanzania: Has the Department assessed Tanzanian President Samia Suluhu Hassan's role in eroding the country's democratic institutions and suppressing opposition voices and democratic actors while she served as Vice President of Tanzania under the administration of President John Pombe Magufuli? Please explain.

Answer. As former President Magufuli's vice president, President Hassan publicly supported many of his policies that undermined democratic institution, although while serving in this role, President Hassan was not involved in many major policy decisions of the Magufuli administration. Since assuming the presidency, President Hassan has changed the government's tone and rhetoric, re-engaged with the international community, loosened media restrictions, and engaged with opposition leaders. The Department remains cautiously optimistic about President Hassan's willingness to engage on more substantive democratic reforms.

Question. Has the Department determined if President Hassan bears any responsibility for the anti-democratic actions and rights abuses that occurred under the previous president?

Answer. As former President Magufuli's vice president, President Hassan publicly supported policies that resulted in the shrinking of democratic and civil society space, limits on media freedom, and the rise in politically motivated violence that occurred during the Magufuli presidency. Given that President Hassan has changed the government's tone and rhetoric, re-engaged with the international community, loosened media restrictions, and engaged with opposition leaders, we are focused on working constructively with President Hassan's government to support a political environment that protects democratic institutions, civil and political rights, and human rights, including as related to accountability.

Question. What benchmarks is the Biden administration using to gauge the level and pace of U.S. re-engagement with Tanzania under President Hassan's government?

Answer. We are assessing the direction of President Hassan's administration using a variety of factors, including the following: (1) substantive improvements to democracy, human rights, and governance, including changes to legislation; (2) Tanzania's level of re-engagement with the international community; (3) progress on anti-trafficking-in-persons efforts; (4) improving responsible security cooperation; (5) improving the investment climate; (6) continued efforts to mitigate the spread of COVID-19; (7) improving the environment for refugees; and (8) Zanzibar addressing 2020 election violence, electoral reform, and political reconciliation.

Question. Uganda: The Department's most recent annual country reports on human rights practices noted for Uganda, "human rights organizations, opposition politicians, and local media reported that security agencies tortured suspects as well as dissidents to extract self-incriminating confessions and as punishment for their opposition to the government, leading to several deaths." Why has this Administration been slow to act with available tools beyond Global Magnitsky sanctions on one individual to hold those in Uganda's security agencies and government accountable for the long-running and ongoing trend of torture to suppress democratic actors in Uganda?

Answer. The Department remains gravely concerned about credible allegations of the use of torture by Ugandan security forces. In March, Acting Assistant Secretary for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor Lisa Peterson conveyed these concerns during her trip to Uganda and urged government officials to seek accountability for alleged abuses. In April 2021, the Department announced an INA Section 212(a)(3)(C) visa restriction policy for persons whose actions undermine Ugandan democracy, "including through use of violence and excessive force against opposition candidates and supporters." Since then, we have designated numerous individuals and continue to assess others under this authority and other authorities at our disposal.

Question. Angola: Angola's ruling People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) and the government's security and intelligence services have a long record of manipulating and interfering in electoral processes in their country for their political benefit. During the current electoral cycle, in the lead-up to the polls in August, worrying signs of history repeating have emerged. How is the United States engaging with the Angolan Government to encourage the country to hold free, fair, credible, and transparent democratic elections in August, free from interference from the Angolan security forces and intelligence services?

Answer. We have consistently communicated to high-level Angolan officials, including to President Lourenco, the desire to see free, fair and transparent elections, including the timely provision to accommodate international observers. Deputy Secretary of State Sherman emphasized these same points during her recent travel to Angola and meeting with President Lourenco. In response, President Lourenco has said Angola will allow international observers and facilitate their applications for the credentials they need before election day. U.S. assistance programs have also supported civil society groups and all political parties working with the public to increase civic engagement.

Question. What specific steps is the Department contemplating to hold election spoilers accountable, and how is the United States communicating this to Angolan officials?

Answer. In the months leading up to the elections, U.S. officials have repeatedly raised and will continue to emphasize with Angolan officials that electoral transparency and integrity are fundamental priorities and hallmarks of a democratic na-

tion. The Department will continue to use engagement around its annual Country Reports on Human Rights Practices and periodic Bilateral Dialogues on Human Rights to hold Angola accountable on issues including anti-corruption, access to justice and accountability for past abuses, expansion of democratic governance, and protection of fundamental freedoms.

Question. Hakainde Hichilema's presidential victory in 2021 served as a critical moment in both Zambia and the region's democratic development. The success or failure of President Hichilema's presidency will hinge on his reforms, approach to governance, and an essential factor not entirely within his control—restructuring Zambia's approximately \$17.3 billion in external debt, of which Chinese state and commercial creditors account for about one-third. How is the United States supporting the government of Hakainde Hichilema to deleverage their country from the stranglehold of Chinese debt?

Answer. The United States uses its position on Zambia's creditor committee to call for an immediate end to Beijing's intransigence on multilateral debt restructuring negotiations. Deputy Secretary Wendy Sherman met the Zambian Foreign Minister and Treasury Secretary on May 19 to discuss a coordinated response to Beijing's continued obstructionism. Our public and private diplomacy has highlighted the centrality of private sector-led growth to sustainable development in Zambia. Under Secretary Jose Fernandez conveyed this message to President Hichilema and U.S. business leaders during his May 12–13 visit to Lusaka. We are also pursuing programs that help Zambia scrutinize PRC contracts and expose problematic debt.

Question. What steps can the United States take alongside its like-minded allies to support Zambia's democratic consolidation under President Hichilema while also minimizing the country's exposure to China's (often-malign) influence?

Answer. Public, private, and financial support for accountability institutions, civil society, and independent media will bolster Zambia's democratic resilience. The United States can work with likeminded partners to develop and deploy targeted programs in support of Zambia's Summit for Democracy Year of Action commitments to enshrine media freedoms, protect civil liberties, and strengthen the independence and transparency of the Elections Commission of Zambia. Supporting the government's planned fiscal reforms with an emphasis on transparency and reducing opportunities for corruption will help re-establish fiscal stability and deliver a "democratic dividend" to the Zambian people.

Question. How is the United States supporting the continuation of multi-party democracy in Zambia to continue the consolidation of democracy in Zambia and ensure checks and balances on the Hichilema administration?

Answer. U.S.-funded programming advances the decentralization of power in Zambia, moving decision-making and critical services from the capital city to local governments. Embassy officials work closely with civil society and media, government, and political parties to improve the legal and regulatory framework for elections, political reforms, and greater transparency in public resource allocation. U.S. technical assistance and financial support also build the viability and quality of independent media and the capacity of civil society organizations to monitor government actions and ensure citizen perspectives are considered. Our support for Zambia's participation in the Summit for Democracy will also spur democratic reforms.

Question. In the updated written responses to the Questions for the Record you submitted to the Committee on February 1, 2021, you committed to assessing "the current U.S. approach to Zimbabwe, including opportunities for greater regional engagement" and to "review the sanctions program as well as our democracy assistance (political party support, anti-corruption work, and support to the media)."

After more than a year as Secretary and with potentially violent undemocratic general elections held in Zimbabwe in 2023, what has been your assessment of the current U.S. approach to Zimbabwe, particularly opportunities for African regional engagement?

Answer. I share the Committee's concern around ongoing democratic backsliding and potential for escalating violence in advance of the 2023 general elections. The current U.S. approach to Zimbabwe supports democratic governance programs that improve electoral processes, refine citizen advocacy strategies, and enhance public accountability measures. We will continue these programs while leveraging our targeted sanctions to promote accountability for corrupt actors and those who abuse human rights and undermine democratic processes. We will continue to work with regional governments, civil society organizations, and likeminded partners to increase the pressure on the Government of Zimbabwe to respect democratic principles and human rights.

Question. What conclusions have you drawn regarding the U.S. approach to sanctions on Zimbabwean officials and entities and our democracy assistance, notably supporting strengthening political parties?

Answer. The U.S. approach to sanctions promotes accountability of corrupt actors and those who abuse human rights and undermine democratic processes. Our democracy assistance improves electoral processes, refines citizen advocacy strategies, and enhances public accountability. We do not currently support strengthening political parties in Zimbabwe due to the assessment that it would not be effective so close to 2023 elections, and that it could bolster a perception that we are intent on regime change vice free and fair elections. We will continue democratic governance programs, working with civil society, regional governments, and likeminded partners to increase the pressure on the Government of Zimbabwe to respect democratic principles and human rights.

Question. What changes to U.S. policy toward Zimbabwe occurred under the Biden administration?

Answer. U.S. policy toward Zimbabwe has been clear and consistent during the Biden-Harris administration and several prior administrations. We call on the Government of Zimbabwe to respect the fundamental freedoms enshrined in Zimbabwe's 2013 constitution and required through its international commitments. We publicly voice support for those who speak out against government corruption and abuses. We leverage our targeted sanctions program to deter bad acts and promote accountability for bad actors. We support many democracy-assistance programs and work with civil society, regional governments, and likeminded partners to increase pressure on the Government of Zimbabwe to respect democratic principles and human rights.

Question. The Sudans: Are there plans to appoint a Special Envoy to Sudan and South Sudan following the departure of Ambassador Booth from the role in late 2021?

Answer. Both Sudan and South Sudan remain a policy focus for the Biden-Harris administration. Assistant Secretary Phee is actively engaged on developing and implementing administration policy on both countries and, in the case of Sudan, coordinates closely with the Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa. The Administration continues to monitor the situation in both countries closely and engage at senior levels to achieve policy objectives.

Question. Are there plans to reorganize the Bureau of African Affairs to eliminate the Office of South Sudan and Sudan?

Answer. Both Sudan and South Sudan remain a policy focus for the Biden-Harris administration. Assistant Secretary Phee is actively engaged on developing and implementing Administration policy on both countries. There are no plans to eliminate the Office of South Sudan and Sudan.

Question. Sudan: Why is the United States not leading the charge in restoring Sudan's civilian-led transition to democracy, but instead supporting a diplomatic and political path that continues to entrench military-led rule and the restoration of officials from the autocratic regime of Omar al-Bashir?

Answer. The United States continues to lead in pressing for the establishment of a civilian-led transition to democracy in Sudan. We have been clear that the military needs to cede authority to civilian leadership and exit politics in line with the views of the Sudanese people. We are supporting an inclusive political process facilitated by UNITAMS, the AU, and IGAD as the best vehicle to establish a framework for civilian leadership of the transition. In coordination with the Friends of Sudan, we are increasing financial pressure on the military leadership by maintaining a pause on certain international assistance and debt relief and will continue to use, as appropriate, available domestic authorities to apply sanctions on persons responsible for, inter alia, serious human rights abuse such as the Central Reserve Police.

Question. What steps is the Administration taking to hold accountable those military and security officials responsible for the October 2021 coup in Sudan that resulted in the ousting of the civilian-led transitional government?

Answer. Immediately following the military takeover, the United States paused new obligations from the \$700 million in Title IX ESF while evaluating next steps. We subsequently redirected certain foreign assistance to avoid benefitting the Government of Sudan. We also worked with international partners to encourage them to do the same, including pausing debt relief, and have engaged with the international financial institutions in this regard. The United States sanctioned the Sudanese Central Reserve Police (CRP) to impose costs on those perpetrating serious

human rights abuse, including the use of lethal force against protesters. We remain poised to use all tools at our disposal to support the Sudanese people in their pursuit of a democratic and prosperous Sudan that respects human rights.

Question. At the end of 2020, Congress appropriated \$700 million in Economic Support Funds (ESF) in the FY21 budget to support Sudan's democratic transition. Due to delays in programming the \$700 million, and the October 25, 2021 coup that removed Sudan's civilian leadership from power, the majority of the \$700 million remains unobligated and is set to expire on September 30, 2022. What are the Department's priorities for the balance of the \$700 million in ESF for Sudan?

Answer. The Administration is planning for the FY 2021 \$700 million in Title IX Economic Support Funds that Congress appropriated. Our plans focus on areas that we assess are most likely to establish and further a civilian-led transition to democracy in Sudan. Priorities include support to the tripartite facilitated and/or related negotiation processes; democracy, human rights, and governance; accountability and transparency; peacebuilding in the peripheries; and food security and resilience. We have initiated consultations with Congressional committee staff and look forward to working closely with Congress to shape priorities and programs.

Question. Is the Administration considering options for using the balance of the \$700 million that do not directly involve Sudan, the broader Horn of Africa, or the African continent? If so, please explain.

Answer. The Administration's priority is to work with Congress to use these funds in a responsible way to establish and further a civilian-led transition to democracy in Sudan and are continuing our planning in that regard. All of the funds in the draft spend plan are for Sudan at this time.

Question. South Sudan: Does the Administration regard President Salva Kiir as the legitimate democratic leader of the Republic of South Sudan? Please explain your answer.

Answer. While not democratically elected, Salva Kiir is the President of the Republic of South Sudan during the transitional period as agreed by the signatories of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan signed on September 12, 2018. The transitional period originally planned for 36 months has been extended to February 2023.

Question. As discussed in my S. Res. 380, which passed the Senate by unanimous consent on December 9, 2021, the United States spends more than \$1 billion per year on the fallout of the conflict in South Sudan, mostly for humanitarian assistance and through contributions to the UN peacekeeping mission UNMISS. In 2018, President Trump called for a review of U.S. assistance to South Sudan, to ensure that U.S. funds are not contributing to the war economy or inadvertently perpetuating conflict.

What is the status of the assistance review begun under the Trump administration with the State Department as the lead agency underway?

Answer. The Administration is concluding our assessment of the assistance review of South Sudan proposed by the prior administration and will be sharing data from that review with Congress in due course. The Administration is committed to ensuring that foreign assistance programs in South Sudan are consistent with our objectives to promote political, economic, and security sector reform. The Department will continue to work with the NSC, USAID, and others to ensure that programs are strategic, effective, and have adequate oversight to mitigate risks of diversion or obstruction of aid or perpetuation of kleptocratic governance.

Question. What policies is the Department pursuing to reduce the need for U.S. humanitarian assistance to South Sudan due to persistent conflict?

Answer. Pursuing the sustainment of the permanent ceasefire and advancing political, economic, and security sector reforms are our key policy objectives and are necessary to reduce South Sudan's dependence on international humanitarian assistance. To further these policy objectives, the Department regularly presses South Sudan's leaders to expand political space, to advance legal and policy reforms necessary to establish functioning government institutions, and to end ongoing human rights violations and abuses. The United States—in rotation with Norway and the United Kingdom—co-chairs South Sudan's Public Financial Management Oversight Committee and uses this forum to press the South Sudanese Government to use its resources transparently for the benefits of its citizens. We continue to support financially the regional mechanisms responsible for monitoring and verifying South Sudan's peace agreement and its associated ceasefire, and as a vocal participant in those mechanisms we continue to press all sides to live up to their obligations under

the peace agreement, including through the advancement of promised security sector reforms.

Question. Is the United States discussing any novel policy approaches to South Sudan related to the country's leaders, the peace agreement (R-ARCSS), and pervasive corruption?

Answer. The United States, in close consultation with our international partners, is actively working on a range of policy initiatives to support the South Sudanese people's demands for meaningful political and economic transformation in their country. This includes helping the people in South Sudan establish the necessary conditions to allow them to choose their leaders freely and to hold leaders accountable for their actions.

Question. The Sahel: Which Sabelean country is the most stable and reliable U.S. security and diplomatic partner? Please explain why.

Answer. The United States engages with the countries of the Sahel to advance our security, diplomatic, and economic interests. Niger and Mauritania stand out as key partners that are stable democracies focused not only on security, but on improving citizen-responsive governance to ensure longer-term stability and prosperity. Niger is a reliable and willing partner with a firm commitment to democratic processes. It is a member of the Multinational Joint Task Force, the G-5 Sahel Joint Force, and the D-ISIS Coalition, where it co-chairs the Africa Focus Group. Our engagement with Mauritania focuses on shoring up a key U.S. ally and reformist government in the Sahel, one that can serve as a model of good governance and countering violent extremism in the region.

Question. In the updated written responses to the Questions for the Record you submitted to the Committee on February 1, 2021, you stated that you were "concerned about rising violent extremism, growing humanitarian concerns, and increasing governance challenges in the Sahel." After more than a year as Secretary, what has the Department done to address your concerns in the Sahel?

Answer. The Department participated extensively in a National Security Council process to finalize a 5-year Sahel Strategy. The strategy is based on the assessment that instability in the Sahel is a political problem with security implications, thereby necessitating a greater governance-focused solution. Given the persistent, negative trend lines for stability in the region, we see this as a moment to address the root causes and core grievances in the region to support stability. Senior leaders from Washington have joined our embassies in pressing for political and development reforms, urging accountability in security efforts, and identifying openings for greater security and development support. We joined the Sahel Alliance in order to better coordinate with partners on non-security projects for long-term stability. Without more resources, however, our impact will be limited.

Question. Should the Biden administration appoint a U.S. Special Envoy for the Sahel to better address and coordinate the United States' response to this myriad of challenges?

Answer. At this time, the Deputy Assistant Secretary (DAS) for West Africa is undertaking the activities of the Special Envoy role. The remit for the Sahel as part of the broader West Africa allows better integration of efforts across the Sahel and Coastal West Africa, which I view as an asset as threats from the Sahel spread. The DAS is in constant engagement with the Sahel Special Envoys of our closest partners and travels regularly to the region. The Department hosts monthly interagency meetings with our embassies across the Sahel to ensure policy synergy. Central to our approach, as codified in the Sahel Strategy, is working closely with international partners to address drivers of conflict, with an emphasis on support for African institutions and mechanisms.

Question. Given the equally daunting and complex challenges in West Africa and the Sahel, should the Department have two deputy assistant secretary positions—one for the Sahel and one West Africa?

Answer. We are increasingly concerned by the spread of insecurity emanating from the Sahel into Coastal West Africa. A deputy assistant secretary responsible for the Sahel as part of the broader West Africa region allows us to look at this problem-set as a whole. It provides for a more holistic analysis of the drivers of conflict and the means to address those drivers while keeping our embassies in the field apprised of critical developments in their region. A single deputy assistant secretary helps us to maintain policy consistency on cross-cutting issues and streamlines officers and offices with Sahel and West Africa equities. It also allows us to engage,

leverage, and support West Africa's primary regional bloc, the Economic Community of West African States, from a shared perspective.

Question. If having a separate Deputy Assistant Secretary is not possible, should the Department consider a more dedicated Sahel coordinator to divide the large workload of the Sahel and wider West Africa region?

Answer. Given the dynamic interplay between the Sahel and the broader West Africa region, as well as the Economic Community of West African States' (ECOWAS) active engagement on the Sahel, the Department assesses that retaining a Deputy Assistant Secretary to cover the Sahel and the wider West Africa region remains preferable. The Deputy Assistant Secretary for West Africa currently advances efforts in the Sahel, as guided by the Sahel Strategy as well as collaborates with the interagency, which include our Sahelian Embassies, via daily policy coordination in Washington. With appropriate staffing, this arrangement optimally advances U.S. interests.

Question. Nigeria: Should the United States support strengthening the institutions of political parties in Nigeria's democratic system? If so, how? If not, why not?

Answer. The United States believes political parties constitute an important component of Nigeria's democratic evolution. Ahead of Nigeria's 2023 general elections, we are focusing our election support on providing technical assistance to Nigeria's independent electoral commission and bolstering civil society capacity. One objective of our support to civil society is to promote public discourse and encourage a greater focus on issue-based politics. We engage on a regular basis with Nigeria's leaders, including during my November trip to Abuja, to urge continued steps towards a more responsive and transparent political system.

Question. Why is it in the national interests of the United States to sell AH-1Z Cobra attack helicopters to Nigeria?

Answer. The primary goal of U.S.-Nigerian security cooperation is to build a more professional and accountable Nigerian Armed Forces (NAF) that respects human rights and protects civilians. Military assistance is only one aspect—albeit a critical one—of addressing Nigeria's security crises. This potential sale of a more modern platform fulfills the NAF's requirement for a close air support capability to advance Nigerian and U.S. shared interests of defeating terrorist forces, protecting humanitarian convoys, defending vulnerable communities, and reducing the risk of civilian casualties. Furthermore, this sale builds on the successful A-29 Super Tucano sale and the subsequent training and engagement between DoD and the NAF.

Question. How will the Administration monitor Nigeria's adherence to human rights-related commitments to the United States and specifically related to equipment provided through U.S. foreign military sales and security assistance?

Answer. The Administration consistently raises the importance of respect for human rights and accountability for human rights violations and abuses at all levels of the Nigerian Government. We also consult an array of Nigerian and international civil society organizations to understand their perspectives on Nigeria's adherence to its human rights-related commitments. Regarding U.S. foreign military sales and security assistance, the Administration provides human rights-focused training and technical assistance to the Armed Forces of Nigeria, including training on international human rights law, international humanitarian law, and mitigation of civilian casualties. We will not provide assistance to units implicated in human rights violations.

Question. Iran and JCPOA: The Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act (INARA) requires the President to submit to Congress any agreement related to Iran's nuclear program. Will you commit to submitting any deal with Iran for review and a vote by Congress, as required by the Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act (INARA)?

Answer. We are committed to ensuring the requirements of INARA are satisfied.

Question. Do you plan to comply with the law and submit any Iran nuclear agreement to Congress for a vote?

Answer. We are committed to ensuring the requirements of INARA are satisfied.

Question. We previously discussed that the decision to delist the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) as a foreign terrorist organization was with the President for final decision. As we're all aware, the IRGC arms Iranian proxies across the Middle East, is actively trying to assassinate former U.S. officials, and was responsible for the deaths of over 600 Americans in Iraq. Are you prepared to remove the IRGC designation as a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO)?

Answer. The IRGC's FTO designation will only be revoked if Iran takes necessary actions to merit a revocation.

Question. Has the IRGC stopped behaving as a terrorist organization in a way that would support removing the listing?

Answer. The IRGC's FTO designation will only be revoked if Iran takes necessary actions to merit a revocation. Beyond its FTO designation, the IRGC and several of its components are also designated a Specially Designated Global Terrorist (SDGT) and Iran is designated as a State Sponsor of Terrorism.

Question. You and the National Security Advisor, Jake Sullivan, have indicated that Russia will be allowed to continue nuclear work under a new nuclear deal with Iran. In fact, the Russian state-owned company RosAtom, currently on the ground in Ukraine, will likely reap up to \$10 billion for continued nuclear work under the JCPOA. How are you ensuring that Russia does not use a financial windfall from a new nuclear deal with Iran to continue Putin's assault on Ukraine?

Answer. The JCPOA, UNSCR 2231, and previous UN Security Council Resolutions related to Iran all acknowledge Russia's engagement with Iran regarding the Bushehr nuclear power plant. Such cooperation was never sanctioned under any of these tools. It remains in our interest, and the interest of our partners in the region, that Russia continues to provide the support necessary for the safe operation of this nuclear facility. Separately, we are working with our allies and partners to reduce our reliance on the Russian energy sector, including in the nuclear energy area.

Question. What specific mechanisms are in place to ensure this money is not used to commit war crimes in Ukraine or Syria?

Answer. The Administration has a robust, interagency effort dedicated to monitoring and implementing our sanctions regimes with respect to Russia, Iran, and Syria. We will watch developments closely and are committed to working with our allies and partners to counter any attempts to evade these sanctions.

Question. *American Disengagement from the Middle East:* This Administration's relationships with our Middle East partners are at an all-time low. Our partners bemoan the Administration's Iran policy, view the Afghanistan withdrawal as a measure of American commitment, and saw an initially weak embrace of the Abraham Accords and greater restrictions placed on security assistance. Many of our traditional partners are moving closer to Russia and China. Would you characterize your Middle East policies as effective?

Answer. Our efforts in Yemen have led to a truce that continues to hold, allowing a vital respite for a weary population. Working groups established at the Negev Summit, which brought together ministers from the United States, Bahrain, Jordan, Morocco, and the UAE in Israel, will advance cooperation on security, food and water security, education, energy, health, and tourism. Our diplomatic and economic engagements with regional security partners show our commitment to long-term relationships with broad benefits. Elevation of the Administration's priorities of human rights and democratic values support fundamental freedoms and civil society. The PRC and Russia have not shown the will nor capacity to resolve regional conflicts. Their indifference to human rights and human dignity limits their ability to strengthen relations in the region.

Question. What are you doing to rebuild relationships in an important region?

Answer. We are deepening our relationships in the Middle East in order to deescalate conflicts, better integrate the region, and improve the lives of the millions of people. I fully support the Abraham Accords and normalization agreements with Israel, which are yielding greater stability and security. Beyond security, we are committed to multilateral diplomacy, engaging the Arab League, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) on innovation, climate change, and food insecurity. In recent meetings with leaders across the region, I have reaffirmed our commitment to close cooperation and to our enduring presence. The Administration's elevated attention to human rights will create space for people in the region to realize their aspirations and strengthen bilateral relationships. The U.S.-brokered Project Prosperity creates tangible energy and water cooperation between Israel, Jordan, and the UAE.

Question. What role should high-level visits play in the effort to rebuild relationships in an important region?

Answer. In March, I met with foreign ministers from Israel, the UAE, Bahrain, Morocco, and Egypt at the Negev Ministerial to build on the Abraham Accords and normalization agreements in the region, and I traveled to Morocco and Algeria to

promote greater regional stability. Most recently, I joined the Vice President, Secretary of Defense, and CIA Director in a delegation to the UAE. These visits and others from senior leaders across the U.S. Government signal our commitment to long-term partnerships in the region and are important for addressing global challenges together with our Middle East partners. Engaging directly with civil society leaders and other individuals also deepens our relationships within these societies.

Question. Syria Policy and Caesar Act Enforcement: The *Caesar Act* is intended to prevent rehabilitation of the Assad regime, seek accountability for the regime's atrocities, and advance a political solution to the conflict. Unlike the previous administration, we have seen very few Caesar sanctions under the Biden administration. Why have you issued so few sanctions?

Answer. Our sanctions, including under the *Caesar Act*, are an important tool as we seek accountability from the Assad regime, notably with respect to its human rights abuses. This Administration remains committed to pressing for accountability and justice for the Syrian people, including through the use of targeted sanctions. On July 28, 2021, the United States imposed sanctions on eight Syrian prisons and five Syrian regime officials who were implicated in human rights abuses and the ongoing suffering of the Syrian people. On December 7, 2021, the United States designated two senior Syrian Air Force officers responsible for killing civilians in chemical weapons attacks and three senior officers in Syria's repressive security and intelligence apparatus. We will continue to use all available tools, including Caesar Act sanctions, to further press for accountability for the ongoing atrocities of the Assad regime.

Question. While you may not be encouraging normalization with Assad, you are certainly not discouraging it. What are you doing to prevent our Arab partners from normalizing with Assad?

Answer. We continue to make clear to partners in the Middle East and beyond that we do not support efforts to normalize with Damascus. We also do not support Syria's return to the Arab League and continue to oppose the reconstruction of Syria until there is irreversible progress towards a political solution. We clearly and publicly conveyed our profound disappointment with Bashar al-Assad's recent visit to the United Arab Emirates. In discussions with partners, we continue to underline the Assad regime's ongoing horrific atrocities against Syrians, including over the last decade, as well as its continuing efforts to deny much of the country access to humanitarian aid and security. Targeted sanctions and multilateral resolutions we lead at the UN deter investment and underscore the reputational risk of normalizing with Assad. We have made this position clear to governments across the region and beyond at the highest level.

Question. The *Caesar Act* mandates that you provide technical assistance to document war crimes. What assistance have you issued to date?

Answer. U.S. stabilization assistance supports the work of grantees, including Syrian civil society organizations, to collect evidence of atrocities in Syria, some of which the United States has determined rise to the level of war crimes and crimes against humanity. This work has focused on gathering and analyzing evidence of atrocities, which may be used to build case files to prosecute perpetrators of these crimes. These efforts help provide critical evidence to both informal and formal transitional justice mechanisms, such as the Commission of Inquiry, the International, Impartial, and Independent Mechanism (IIIM), and national criminal proceedings, to promote accountability. U.S. assistance also supports survivors of atrocities and their families with critical resiliency, mental health, and psychosocial support.

Question. Syria: The upcoming UN Security Council (UNSC) Syria Cross Border mandate renewal is of grave concern to me and my colleagues in Congress. Not only should this Administration work to renew the one remaining crossing, Bab Al-Hawa, but it should actively work to build consensus in the Security Council to reopen previously closed crossings. How would you or our Ambassador to the UN engage with partners in the UNSC to ensure this mandate renewal passes?

Answer. We are working actively with our allies and partners, as well as the United Nations and fellow members of the Security Council, in support of the renewal and expansion of the cross-border mechanism. As part of this effort, Ambassador Thomas-Greenfield attended the Brussels VI Conference on Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region on May 10, during the United States' presidency of the UNSC, to emphasize that continuing and expanding UN-facilitated cross-border aid is a top U.S. priority. She also conveyed this message at a separate, Syria-focused ministerial meeting convened by the United States, which was attended by several UNSC members. Ambassador Thomas-Greenfield plans to travel to Bab al-

Hawa, the last remaining UN border crossing, in the next few weeks to highlight the importance of renewing the mandate. We will continue to coordinate with like-minded states on the Security Council and to urge all members to support the renewal, including by explaining the humanitarian consequences of a non-renewal.

Question. Would you recommend that President Biden engage at the highest possible levels on this important issue?

Answer. This Administration engaged with UN Security Council members at the highest levels of government to secure passage of Security Council Resolution 2585 last year. We will do whatever is necessary and appropriate, to secure the renewal of the mandate for cross-border aid this July.

Question. How will you work to ensure that U.S. taxpayer dollars that fund UN humanitarian assistance are not being used to effectively subsidize the Assad regime, which blockades assistance to Syrians through seizure of cross-line assistance delivery attempts?

Answer. We take all possible steps to ensure that humanitarian assistance funded by American taxpayers reaches those for whom it is intended. We carefully monitor the risks associated with providing aid in all parts of Syria and work closely with our partners, other donors, and the United Nations on this issue. We also support the UN's efforts to negotiate a new preferential exchange rate for aid provided in regime-held areas.

Question. Do you believe that cross-line assistance is an acceptable modality of delivery of humanitarian assistance or as an alternative to cross-border?

Answer. We support using all modalities to deliver humanitarian assistance to Syrians in need, including both crossline and cross-border mechanisms. However, we have been clear and consistent with Security Council members, allies, partners, and the United Nations that given the numerous challenges of delivering crossline aid, it cannot match the scale and scope of cross-border aid into northwest Syria. Since the passage of UNSC Resolution 2585, there have been four UN crossline missions to northwest Syria. However, the latest crossline mission delivered food aid for 43,500 people. By contrast, in a typical month, UN cross-border aid through Bab al-Hawa delivers enough food for 1.4 million people. Frankly, there is no comparing the two.

Question. In the event of non-renewal of the Syria cross border mandate, what preparations have been made to continue to support Syrians with life-saving aid?

Answer. We will use all means available to advocate for continued humanitarian access and to deliver U.S. humanitarian assistance to the Syrian people, in coordination with the UN, NGOs, other donors, and partner countries. Preparations to date have confirmed that any contingency operations in the event of a non-renewal will only cover a fraction of the UN's current caseload of assisting 2.4 million people per month through cross-border aid, which includes food, health, shelter, and water. In any emergency response, we expect humanitarian agencies to prepare for all reasonable scenarios, so life-saving aid reaches those who need it. The Department is available to provide further details in response to this question in an appropriate setting.

Question. Has the U.S. Government consulted with partners and allies on alternatives and contingency plans for continuing to support Syrians with life-saving aid? If so, what are those plans?

Answer. Since the start of this Administration, we have had regular consultations with partners and allies on the best ways to maintain humanitarian access and deliver U.S. humanitarian assistance to the Syrian people, including in the northwest. Those channels will remain open up to and beyond the vote to reauthorize UN cross-border aid to Syria this July. The Department is available to provide further details in response to this question in an appropriate setting.

Question. What steps are the United Nations and UN agencies taking to appropriately plan for the event of non-renewal?

Answer. We are in constant discussion with the UN about humanitarian needs in northwest Syria and the importance of meeting them through all means available. In any emergency response, including in Syria, we expect humanitarian agencies to prepare for all reasonable scenarios, so life-saving aid keeps flowing to those who need it. The Department is available to provide further details in an appropriate setting.

Question. Have all UN agencies operating in NW Syria adequately planned for this event?

Answer. We are in regular contact with all UN agencies about humanitarian needs in northwest Syria and the unique mandates and capabilities that each agency brings to this humanitarian response. We constantly stress to UN agencies the importance of meeting needs in northwest Syria through all means available. The Department is available to provide further details in an appropriate setting.

Question. Have all UN agencies operating in NW Syria created plans for eventual hand-off to local partners if non-renewal happens?

Answer. We are in constant discussion with all UN agencies and our NGO partners about the need to support local humanitarian partners in northwest Syria and across the whole of Syria. NGOs play an indispensable role in this response, and we support efforts to enhance their capacities, up to and beyond the July vote to re-authorize UN cross-border aid. The Department is available to provide further details in an appropriate setting.

Question. Global Health Security: We have spoken repeatedly—publicly and privately—about the need for the Department of State to take a stronger leadership role in global health security. This committee has approved bipartisan legislation—the International Pandemic Preparedness and COVID-19 Response Act—that would help achieve that goal by establishing a structure for effective leadership and coordination, built upon PEPFAR’s proven model. The Department was repeatedly consulted on the bill, and relevant technical assistance has been incorporated. What is the status of efforts to establish an organizational structure within the Office of the Secretary that elevates global health diplomacy and ensures effective coordination of USAID and CDC global health security activities without diminishing PEPFAR?

Answer. The Department is conducting a review of our organizational structure related to global health security and diplomacy. The review has involved consultations with stakeholders across the Department, U.S. Government interagency, non-governmental sector, and Congress. We seek to strengthen the Department’s organizational structure to best advance U.S. interests in building global health and global health security capacity and ensures that we have enhanced policy and programmatic leadership as well as better integration of global health within the Department. We will continue to consult with Congress as this process moves to conclusion.

Question. The bill also provides a roadmap for establishing an accountable international financing mechanism for pandemic preparedness. Here again, I understand planning is advancing quickly, yet there has been little conversation with Congress. The President’s budget request includes \$6.5 billion in mandatory spending, reportedly so you can make a multi-year commitment to this yet-to-be-consulted-or-established financing mechanism. This is a major departure from past practice, and it certainly wasn’t envisioned in the bill approved by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. What is the status of efforts to establish an international financing mechanism for international pandemic preparedness?

Answer. The United States is closely collaborating with international partners to establish a pandemic preparedness and global health security financial intermediary fund (FIF). On April 20, most G20 members agreed on the need for a new financing mechanism, and the Indonesian G20 Presidency called for the World Bank (WB) to launch the process to establish the FIF. This success carried into the Second Global COVID-19 Summit on May 12, where World Bank President Malpass reiterated the Bank’s commitment to establish the FIF by end of June. An additional U.S. pledge of \$200 million unlocked new donor commitments (EU \$450 million; Germany 50 million euros), and we look forward to additional announcements in the coming months.

Question. Why would the President request \$6.5 billion in mandatory spending, reportedly to support the establishment of an international financing mechanism for pandemic preparedness, before knowing how it will be governed, how and where resources will be targeted, how progress will be measured, and how implementers will be held accountable for results?

Answer. The Administration believes strongly that the United States can lead an effort to develop a pandemic preparedness and global health security financial intermediary fund (FIF) that would fill well mapped investment gaps. Resources from the FIF would be channeled to programs/projects at the global, regional, and country level through a set of accredited implementing partners. These entities would be required to meet agreed standards as well as following their own established operating policies and procedures for implementation. The World Bank would apply its fiduciary standards as trustee and the governing body will draw on best practices to ensure transparency, accountability, clear results indicators.

Question. The budget request also includes \$2 billion (+\$440 million) to support the first year of an anticipated \$6 billion commitment to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria (the Global Fund) while reducing funds available for bilateral tuberculosis programs (−\$21.5 million) and the bipartisan, Congressionally-authorized President’s Emergency Program for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) program (−\$20 million). Is it your view that the Global Fund is more efficient and effective than PEPFAR, thereby justifying a major shift in funding, or is it the intent of the Administration that the Global Fund would take on greater responsibility for procuring antiretrovirals, thereby enabling PEPFAR to focus its shrinking resources on service delivery?

Answer. The Administration did not cut the PEPFAR program in the FY 2023 budget request. In FY 2022, Congress provided \$20 million more to PEPFAR than the Administration had requested. However, after the appropriation was finalized, we were unable to incorporate the \$20 million increase for PEPFAR in the Congressional Budget Justification given time constraints resulting from delays in the appropriation. The Administration’s FY 2023 budget request, therefore, reflects a flatline for PEPFAR rather than a decrease. The Global Fund and PEPFAR have worked effectively to leverage the strengths the Global Fund brings, for example, in procurement, with PEPFAR’s on-the-ground service delivery strengths at the country level.

Question. The Putin regime’s unprovoked, brutal war against Ukraine has exacerbated the conditions driving food insecurity globally and has had a particularly damaging impact on fragile states in East Africa, North Africa, and the Middle East. Given how the 2007–2008 global food price crisis provoked riots and economic and political instability in countries from Africa to South America, it is clearly in the national security interests of the American people to respond. Remarkably, and despite claims that the Administration is seeking to “reinvigorate U.S. humanitarian leadership”, the FY 2023 budget request proposes to cut humanitarian assistance by nearly 18 percent, relative to FY 2022 enacted levels. While in full agreement that other donors need to step up and do more, how can you justify an 18 percent decrease in humanitarian assistance accounts at a time when displacement and food insecurity levels are at all-time highs?

Answer. The Department is concerned with the unprecedented and growing global humanitarian needs, which have been exacerbated by Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. The FY 2023 request includes \$10.45 billion for humanitarian assistance worldwide in base IDA, FFP-Title II, MRA, and ERMA, which will maintain U.S. leadership in the global humanitarian response and continue to grow the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program. The FY 2023 request level is \$1.8 billion—or 21 percent—more than the FY 2022 base enacted level of \$8.65 billion. We are grateful for the nearly \$5 billion in supplemental resources Congress provided in FY 2022 to address unanticipated circumstances in Afghanistan and Ukraine, as well as the global food crisis. We will continue to assess evolving humanitarian needs, and consultation with Congress is an important part of our effort to ensure we have sufficient resources to respond.

Question. The proposal to reduce international food assistance accounts was accompanied by a vague reference to an interest in reforming the Food for Peace program. While Food for Peace has served as America’s flagship food aid program since 1964, its success is hampered by arcane U.S. purchase and shipping requirements that unnecessarily drive up costs. These inefficiencies led Congress to authorize an alternative, the International Disaster Assistance—Emergency Food Security Program (IDA–EFSP), which enables the United States utilize the right tool in the right place at the right time. Specifically, what reforms are do you intend to propose to make the Food for Peace program more efficient and effective?

Answer. It is my understanding that USAID seeks to streamline the provisions in the Food for Peace Act to make implementation of the Food for Peace program simpler and more efficient for USAID and the providing USAID reduce eliminate implementing partners, including local organizations. I am committed to working with Congress to make programming to combat rising food insecurity and build the resilience of vulnerable communities as effective and efficient as possible.

Question. Will those reforms include a change to U.S. cargo preference requirements, which have outlived their usefulness purpose? If not, why not?

Answer. At this time of unprecedented global humanitarian need, I agree that the U.S. Government’s ability to reach additional hungry people and improve the efficiency of U.S. programs is of utmost importance. I look forward to working with

Congress with respect to reforms to U.S. cargo preference requirements, given the important and diverse humanitarian and maritime interests at stake.

Question. The U.S. and the United Nations: The recent establishment of the office of “Multilateral Personnel and Strategy” within the bureau of International Organizations structure presents new avenues to address the growing malign influence across the UN system. How have you empowered this office to address the systematic Chinese and/or Russia malign influence within the UN?

Answer. Established in July 2021, the Bureau of International Organization Affairs’ Office of Multilateral Strategy and Personnel (IO/MSP) has grown to 13 staff and coordinates efforts to counter PRC and others’ initiatives that reshape or undermine the principles and values enshrined in the UN Charter; supports U.S. and likeminded candidates for priority UN elections and appointments; and facilitates strategic engagements with emerging partners. These efforts have helped build coalitions to counter the PRC’s promotion of its ideology and foreign policy platforms throughout the UN and multilateral system. The office is also developing and implementing strategies to strengthen the United States’ relationships with emerging partners and ensure we advance our affirmative view of a strong, effective, and resilient UN capable of delivering for all member states.

Question. What is your strategy for increasing American representation in the UN system including through the Junior Professional Officer Program, appointments, and elections?

Answer. Increasing U.S. citizen representation in the UN system requires a multifaceted approach to support and advocate for qualified candidates at all levels. Thanks to Congress’s support, the Department has increased financial resources and staffing to promote U.S. citizens for senior leadership and mid-level appointments, as well as entry-level talent through the Junior Professional Officer (JPO) program, across the UN system. We are also executing strategies to support U.S. candidates in high-priority elections for leadership and independent expert positions in the UN and international organizations. These initiatives are increasing U.S. citizen representation in the UN and advancing U.S. values such as innovation, ethical conduct, transparency, and accountability.

Question. UNRWA: U.S. Taxpayers have sent billions to UN Relief and Works Agency since the 1950s when it was originally established. Will the United States continue to fund UNRWA? If so, please explain what reforms you have secured from UNRWA and the Palestinian Authority.

Answer. The best way for the United States to influence UNRWA’s operations and ensure its provision of quality services consistent with UN principles is to provide assistance to UNRWA. The United States will continue to pursue the reforms outlined in the U.S.-UNRWA Framework for Cooperation. The United States has secured reforms to uphold humanitarian principles, including neutrality, by increasing inspections of facilities to four times per year; institute digital beneficiary identity verification to reduce the risk of fraud; improve financial and procurement regulations; and increase accountability for staff misconduct. The State Department will continue to monitor UNRWA’s reform efforts closely.

Question. Do you believe that UNRWA is currently operating beyond its mandate?

Answer. UNRWA’s mandate, set by the UN General Assembly, is to provide essential services directly to Palestinian refugees in the five regions it covers. UNRWA does not have a mandate to engage in political negotiations or to seek durable solutions (such as resettlement, repatriation, and local integration) for Palestinian refugees as these matters are final status issues to be negotiated directly between Israel and the Palestinians. UNRWA’s activities include providing emergency services, education, health, protection, and livelihoods programming for vulnerable Palestinian refugees, all of which are within its mandate.

Question. Do you believe that UNRWA has serious budget issues and should solicit enduring funds from regional partners outside of the United States?

Answer. UNRWA faces recurring financial challenges and must diversify its donor base. This is an issue on which we routinely engage with UNRWA’s leadership. We directly advocate with ongoing and potential donors to support UNRWA financially, including regional partners. We also support UNRWA’s efforts to broaden its donor base by, for example, increasing fundraising with private donors and Islamic charitable organizations. I believe it is in the United States’ interest to contribute robustly to UNRWA to demonstrate our commitment to humanitarian assistance and regional stability.

Question. In your recent visit to Israel, you met with the Palestinian Authority. Did you discuss neutrality issues and if so, what were the major takeaways from this discussion?

Answer. Yes. During my visit, I met with President Mahmoud Abbas and with representatives of Palestinian civil society. In these meetings, I underscored the Administration's commitment to re-building our relationship with the Palestinian Authority and the Palestinians on a basis of trust, cooperation, and shared values, that advance respect for Palestinians' civil and human rights. We are working to prevent actions on both sides that raise tensions and make achievement of our goal of a negotiated two state solution more difficult, including settlement expansion, settler violence, incitement to violence, demolitions, payments to individuals convicted of terrorism, and evictions of families from homes they have lived in for decades.

Question. U.S. and the UN: What is your view of the relationship between the United States and the United Nations (UN) after the first year of the Biden administration?

Answer. President Biden has prioritized U.S. engagement with the UN, not only as a means to advance U.S. national interests and counter our international competitors, but also to strengthen the international system to face today's global challenges and deliver benefits to the American people. Early actions to implement the President's vision include re-engaging with the World Health Organization (WHO), the Paris Climate Accords, and the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC). The early returns of the President's direction are promising, with new momentum on reform at the WHO, strong unity in the UN General Assembly and the UNHRC related to Russia's unprovoked invasion of Ukraine and growing international solidarity behind U.S. initiatives to address global food insecurity. While multilateral diplomacy can be frustrating, the Biden administration's positive U.S. multilateral leadership has allowed us to make progress on important objectives that would otherwise be unattainable without our participation and influence.

Question. UN Budget Issues: U.S.-assessed and voluntary contributions to the UN, as appropriated under the Contributions to International Organizations (CIO), Contributions for International Peacekeeping Operations (CIPA), and International Organizations and Program (IO&P) accounts, represent only a small fraction of total U.S. contributions to the UN system. Will you assist in compiling and sharing with Congress a comprehensive report on total U.S. contributions, from all sources, to the UN and its specialized agencies and programs?

Answer. Yes. The State Department reports to Congress annually on U.S. Government contributions to international organizations. The report tracks all U.S. contributions by agency, funding account, and recipient organization. These reports are publicly available and can be found on the State Department website: <https://www.state.gov/u-s-contributions-to-international-organizations/>.

Question. Will you ensure that other donors remain apprised of the full depth and breadth of U.S. contributions from all sources?

Answer. Yes. We frequently point to the fact that the United States is the single largest financial contributor to the U.N. system. We note the breadth and depth of U.S. contributions across all facets of the multilateral system as an important indication of our commitment to multilateral leadership. However, we often hear from other Member States that our failure to pay our assessed contributions in full and on time jeopardizes U.S. credibility and therefore diminishes our ability to advance our positive agenda, counter our strategic competitors, and advance reform efforts at the UN.

Question. Whereas assessed contributions are determined on a scale and provide no discretion to nations, voluntary contributions are provided to advance specific U.S. goals and objectives. Moreover, voluntarily funded agencies, including the World Food Programme (WFP) and the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), must compete for resources and are subject to rigorous transparency and accountability measures. Will you seek to ensure that the Secretary General adopts a rigorous performance matrix, transparency requirements, and accountability measures that apply across the UN system, including to agencies and programs funded through assessed contributions?

Answer. I share your strong commitment to ensuring transparency and accountability across the UN system. The United States will continue to work closely with the Secretary General to ensure rigorous performance and accountability measures are in place for all UN organizations.

Question. Last Congress, I introduced the Multilateral Aid Review Act to assess the value of U.S. taxpayer investments in multilateral entities, including the UN and its affiliated agencies. Would you support a comprehensive review of U.S. investments in multilateral organizations?

Answer. I support rigorous performance and evaluation measures for multilateral entities to ensure U.S. taxpayer dollars are aligned to achieve U.S. foreign policy objectives. The United States is committed to ensuring efficiency and effectiveness in international organizations to maximize their ability to deliver on their important mandates.

Question. UN Reform: What are your views on the need for management reform at the UN?

Answer. An efficient, effective UN is essential to achieving America's strategic objectives. We consistently work to ensure organizations in the UN system adhere to best management and oversight practices in the areas of protecting whistleblowers, addressing sexual exploitation and abuse, promoting zero tolerance for corruption, and ensuring financial and managerial transparency. The United States also continues to support strong U.S. and likeminded candidates for UN technical, budget, and oversight bodies. Our membership and leadership on these bodies enable us to promote fiscal discipline and accountability.

Question. How will you work to address barriers to advancing UN management reforms, especially those created by the different priorities among member states?

Answer. We are working with allies and likeminded member states who strongly support UN management reform to overcome any barriers that stand in the way of advancing reforms. And we will continue this work, emphasizing the need for strong oversight and implementation of necessary reforms to ensure the United Nations is the effective, efficient, and responsive organization it needs to be to address the global challenges of the 21st century.

Question. How will you measure success in implementing management reforms at the UN?

[No response received.]

Question. What policies does the UN need to implement to maintain fiscal responsibility and accountability within the UN system?

Answer. The Department is working to ensure international organizations in the UN system adhere to best fiscal management and oversight practices in the areas of protecting whistleblowers, promoting zero tolerance for corruption, and ensuring financial and managerial transparency in order to promote a more effective UN. The U.S. Missions to international organizations are working to support strong U.S. candidates for UN technical, budget, and oversight bodies. Our membership and leadership on these bodies enable us to promote fiscal discipline, greater transparency, and accountability.

Question. Do you support reform in the United Nations Security Council? Please explain your answer.

Answer. I remain open to a modest expansion of both permanent and non-permanent Security Council members in a way that does not diminish the Security Council's effectiveness or efficiency, nor alter or expand the veto. A well-executed expansion of the Security Council could help modernize the body to better reflect 21st century global realities and increase its effectiveness.

Question. While the UN has taken steps to improve its efficiency, operational effectiveness, and accountability, the continuing need for reform is obvious to most observers, including strong supporters of the institution. The UN Secretary-General has committed to an agenda of reform. The push for reform by the United States is one of the main drivers behind the reform movement's progress to date. In your opinion, what are the top three reforms that the UN could undertake over the next 2 years that will have the greatest impact?

Answer. The UN should continue to ensure organizations in the UN system are adhering to best management and oversight practices that advance accountability and transparency. These practices include increasing financial transparency and promoting budget discipline; promoting a culture of accountability, including in the areas of protecting whistleblowers and ensuring that the United Nations is taking steps to address sexual harassment, exploitation, and abuse; and strengthening rigorous evaluation of its program activities. The United States will continue to press for these reforms.

Question. The United States is the largest donor to the World Food Programme, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, and other UN agencies. Will you continue this pattern of voluntary donations to address some of the world's most pressing issues?

Answer. The United States will continue to support the vital work of international organizations, including UNHCR, WFP, IOM, the ICRC, the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), and the UN Population Fund (UNFPA), as well as more than 80 non-governmental partners. The United States is the single largest donor of humanitarian assistance worldwide for people in need, including refugees, conflict victims, internally displaced persons, stateless persons, and other vulnerable populations. We fund life-saving humanitarian assistance, including food, water, shelter, emergency healthcare, sanitation and hygiene, and critical nutrition services. We also fund resilience-building activities, including access to education, school meals, employment for forcibly displaced persons, and other services which contribute to local, regional, and international stability. The United States acknowledges we cannot address these issues alone. We continue to engage with other donors to encourage increased funding contributions to humanitarian responses around the world.

Question. UN Human Rights Council: The United States recently rejoined the UN Human Rights Council and in the first few months were successful in removing Russia from the Council to hold the regime accountable for its provocation in Ukraine. What is the position of the Biden administration regarding additional reforms in the UN Human Rights Council?

Answer. We advance America's interests best when we have a seat at the table, including in the UN Human Rights Council (HRC), where the United States is once again a member. In addition to suspending Russia from its Council seat, the United States led the campaign to create an HRC Commission of Inquiry on Russia's actions in Ukraine. Furthermore, I consistently articulate our top reform objectives including defending Israel from unfair bias and improving the Council's membership. Russia's former seat is now occupied by a U.S. ally, the Czech Republic, and we will pursue further improvements in HRC membership. And in partnership with Israel, the United States continues to lead efforts to reduce the number of actions against Israel.

Question. Did the Administration clearly articulate its desired reforms before rejoining the Council? If so, please describe the reforms.

Answer. We advance America's national interests best when we have a seat at the table, including in the UN Human Rights Council (HRC), where we are once again members. I consistently articulate our top HRC reform objectives including defending Israel from unfair bias and improving the Council's membership. The Administration made these reform objectives clear during our campaign for HRC election and we have made concrete progress on them since that time.

Question. Does the Biden administration believe the Council spends a disproportionate amount of attention on criticizing Israel?

Answer. Yes, the Human Rights Council spends a disproportionate amount of attention on criticizing Israel. I will continue to uphold President Biden's strong commitment to defend Israel. This includes opposing efforts to unfairly single out or delegitimize Israel through actions across the United Nations, including in the Human Rights Council.

Question. Understanding that the Human Rights Council is "broken" because it allows human rights abusers to obtain seats on the council, do you believe that the current composition on the Council is a productive one that allows for beneficial discussions of the promotion and protection of human rights?

Answer. I believe the current composition of the Human Rights Council is problematic. I also believe the Council allows for beneficial discussions on the promotion and protection of human rights. Since our return to the body, and with our backing, the Council has condemned Russia's unprovoked war in Ukraine; shined a powerful light on Beijing's human rights atrocities; pressured problematic regimes around the world, such as Belarus, Burma, Eritrea, Syria, and Russia, by sharpening investigative mechanisms into their human rights violations and abuses; and worked to advance equality for all, including for women, LGBTQI+ individuals, and members of racial and ethnic minority groups. We will continue to seek reforms of the Council, particularly with respect to its problematic membership.

Question. There have been credible allegations that the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights shared the names of Chinese dissidents who were

attending UN Human Rights Council sessions with the Chinese Government. How have you investigated these allegations?

Answer. I remain committed to defending the right of activists, human rights defenders, members of ethnic and religious minorities, and journalists around the world to speak their minds freely without fear of persecution and violence. Department officials continue to raise these allegations with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, and we will continue to monitor the issue closely.

Question. What actions have you taken to ensure that this practice is never again used?

Answer. Department officials continue to raise these allegations with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, and we will continue to monitor the issue closely.

Question. UN Peacekeeping: The United States is the single largest financial contributor to UN peacekeeping activities. Congress authorizes and appropriates U.S. contributions, and it has an ongoing interest in ensuring such funding is used as efficiently and effectively as possible. Do you believe that any nation, including the United States, should pay more than 25 percent of the UN peacekeeping budget?

Answer. I believe that the United States' influence in the UN, our ability to strengthen the integrity of the rules-based international system, and our ability to lead reform efforts is greatest when we pay our bills in full and on time. We continue to work to ensure that all countries pay their fair share and successfully negotiated a 1 percent reduction to our peacekeeping rate of assessment to 26.94 percent for calendar year 2022–2024, down from 27.89 percent for calendar years 2019–2021. I welcome the opportunity to work with Congress to take the steps necessary to allow the United States to meet our financial obligations.

Question. What is your position on U.S. repayment of UN peacekeeping arrears?

Answer. Our failure to live up to our financial obligations—both on the UN regular budget and the peacekeeping budget—undermines U.S. credibility and leadership at the United Nations. I welcome the opportunity to work with Congress to take the steps necessary to allow the United States to meet our financial obligations, including addressing the substantial level of arrears that have accumulated. The United States' influence in the UN, our ability to strengthen the integrity of the rules-based international system, and our ability to lead reform efforts is greatest when we pay our bills in full and on time.

Question. As memorialized in the 1999 Helms-Biden agreement, the Late Ambassador Holbrooke, then-President Clinton, then-Secretary General Kofi Anan, and then-Senator Biden all believed that the United States has no obligation to pay, and thus should not pay, the roughly \$500 million in “contested arrears” that were explicitly excluded from the \$1.6 billion Helms-Biden agreement. However, since then, the UN has insisted upon keeping on its books, and the Obama administration sought to pay over Congressional objections. Do you commit not to pay these “contested arrears” per Congressional intent as outlined in the Helms-Biden agreement?

Answer. I continue to welcome the opportunity to work with Congress to allow the United States to meet our financial obligations to the United Nations, including addressing the arrears that have accumulated over the past 5 years due to the 25-percent cap on peacekeeping funding. Our ability to pay our dues on time and in full strengthens our credibility and influence to advance our priorities and counter our adversaries at the UN.

Question. Are there any specific steps you believe the UN should take to reduce the overall size of the UN peacekeeping budget? If so, what are they?

Answer. UN peacekeeping operations are among the most effective mechanisms of burden-sharing to address the global challenges to international peace and security. The United States continues to evaluate peacekeeping missions with a view to making them as efficient and effective as possible, while also providing missions with the necessary resources to fully implement their mandates. The Administration is committed to prioritizing reforms in annual budget negotiations, increasing the efficiency of missions, and minimizing the cost to U.S. taxpayers, including reducing or closing missions where appropriate and when conditions allow.

Question. Are there any specific UN peacekeeping missions you would support reducing or terminating in order to reduce UN peacekeeping costs? If so, what active and ongoing missions do you believe should be reduced or terminated?

Answer. The Administration continually reviews and assesses all existing peacekeeping missions to ensure they are making a meaningful and substantive contribu-

tion to international peace and security. For missions where that work remains imperative, the United States is focused on making them as effective and efficient as possible and providing them with the necessary resources to fully implement their mandates, including well-trained and well-equipped troops and police. For missions in countries where conditions allow, the United States works with the UN Secretariat and UN Security Council to press for early strategic planning and sustainable transitions that preserve the advances in host nation peace and security.

Question. The UN and the Palestinians: The United Nations maintains several particular bodies and departments that focus on the Palestinians. These include the Division on Palestinian Rights (DPR), the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (CEIRPP), and the United Nations Information System on the Question of Palestine (UNISPAL). Will you work to challenge the existence and funding of these departments?

Answer. The United States will continue to oppose efforts to unfairly single out or delegitimize Israel through one-sided resolutions, reports, and other actions across the United Nations. We will continue to publicly and privately call on Member States to join us in opposing the perpetuation of the DPR, CEIRPP, and UNISPAL.

Question. The United States lacks a veto over membership decisions in UN-specialized agencies that the Palestinians could target for membership. When the Palestinians obtain membership, the United States must cut funding to that organization as required under two laws enacted by a Democratic-led Congress in the early 1990s. What steps have you taken as Secretary of State to disincentivize the PA from attempting to join International Organizations or other UN bodies?

Answer. I believe that efforts by the Palestinians to join international entities as a state are premature and counterproductive. There are no shortcuts to Palestinian statehood outside direct negotiations between the parties and this includes counterproductive steps to gain membership in UN entities.

The United States continues to make clear, both with the parties and with international partners, that the only realistic path forward to end this conflict is through direct negotiations aimed at achieving a comprehensive and lasting peace.

Question. Israel at the United Nations: The United States has long maintained a policy of opposing many one-sided Security Council resolutions that, more often than not, criticize Israel, but fail to address other issues such as Palestinian terrorism. Do you support the use of an American veto to block one-sided anti-Israel resolutions in the Security Council?

Answer. The United States takes seriously its privilege of veto power over the adoption of UN Security Council resolutions. We work closely with the other members of the Security Council to ensure that resolutions advance international peace and security, engaging in good faith to reach agreed texts. However, we will not hesitate to veto a resolution if its adoption does not meaningfully advance international peace and security. In this vein, we will oppose biased resolutions that delegitimize Israel, subject it to unfair standards, or undermine the prospects for a negotiated two-state solution in which Israel lives in peace and security alongside a viable Palestinian state.

Question. What do you believe should be the standard employed in deciding whether to veto or not?

Answer. The use of a veto to prevent the adoption of a UN Security Council resolution is a responsibility that must be respected. The United States will veto a resolution if we conclude its adoption will not advance international peace and security. The UN General Assembly adopted, on April 26, 2022, a resolution supported by the United States that automatically convenes the General Assembly after a veto in the Security Council. Such a meeting allows the state that cast the veto to explain why the resolution would not have advanced international peace and security. U.S. vetoes of Security Council resolutions on Israel have often led to General Assembly meetings. Formalizing this standard will force other permanent members including Russia to explain their use of veto power.

Question. Do you believe that there is a disproportionate focus on Israel at the UN? How would you counter this at the UN?

Answer. Yes. I believe the United Nations spends a disproportionate amount of attention on criticizing Israel. I will continue to uphold President Biden's ironclad commitment to defend Israel. This includes opposing efforts to unfairly single out or delegitimize Israel through actions across the United Nations, including the Security Council, the General Assembly, the Human Rights Council, and other bodies.

The United States will also continue working with our Israeli diplomatic colleagues to promote Israel's inclusion in UN working groups, as well as support qualified Israeli candidates for UN positions.

Question. As of April 2022, there are over 40 public cases of Americans who are classified as hostages or those who are unlawfully detained abroad, some having been in detention for several years. To date, the Biden administration has only brought a few Americans home while others like Paul Whelan, Austin Tice, Paul Rusesabagina, and others languish away. I previously asked about these cases in March, but I have not received answers to them. There are currently nine Americans who are unlawfully detained in Venezuela. I know that Special Presidential Envoy for Hostage Affairs Carstens recently traveled to Caracas to visit with them and engage in diplomatic talks on their potential release. What was the outcome of this trip?

Answer. SPEHA Carstens traveled to Venezuela in early March and returned to the United States on March 9 with two U.S. citizens who were wrongfully detained in Venezuela, Gustavo Cardenas, and Jorge Fernandez. Upon return, he went to Texas to engage with families of the remaining wrongful detainees in Venezuela. There are still six U.S. nationals who are wrongfully detained in Venezuela. Five of them are remaining former CITGO executives. The sixth is former U.S. Marine Matthew Heath.

While in Caracas, SPEHA Carstens was able to conduct welfare visits with U.S. national detainees. One of our main priorities is to ensure their health and wellbeing while we continue to advocate for their release.

Question. What do you believe to be the biggest obstacle to securing the release of the CITGO6, Matthew Heath, Adrian Berry, and Luke Denman?

Answer. The biggest challenge to securing their release is that the Maduro regime wants to engage in hostage diplomacy and make transactional exchanges for their release that we cannot or will not give them. We struggle to find options that are amenable to all sides.

Question. The Government of Rwanda's Paul Kagame lured Paul Rusesabagina, hero in the 1994 Rwandan Genocide and noted Kagame critic, from his home in the U.S., stood trial on terrorism charges in Rwanda, and denied due process. My staff visited Mr. Rusesabagina in prison in Kigali and verified many of the issues raised by his family. What is your assessment of Mr. Rusesabagina's case and what are potential next steps?

Answer. The Department has been engaged on Paul Rusesabagina's case since his August 2020 detention and remains committed to assuring his welfare and securing his release. Pursuant to the Robert Levinson Hostage Recovery and Hostage-taking Accountability Act, the Department determined the Government of Rwanda wrongfully detained Paul Rusesabagina. To date, the Department has pursued a quiet diplomacy strategy to seek Rusesabagina's release. Unfortunately, this approach has not yielded much fruit, and the Department is currently exploring other options to use moving forward.

Question. How can the United States better leverage its relationship with the Rwandan Government to force discussions about Mr. Rusesabagina's release?

Answer. The Department regularly discusses the Rusesabagina case with the Government of Rwanda at high levels in both Kigali and Washington. We are currently reevaluating our strategy to identify the best options moving forward.

Question. Do you believe that you have all the tools necessary to bring Americans home? Why or why not?

Answer. We are committed to doing everything we possibly can to bring home U.S. nationals who are wrongfully detained or held hostage, wherever they are around the world. Until every single U.S. national that is wrongfully detained or held hostage is brought home, we will continue to seek new opportunities to help us in our shared goal to see them reunited with their loved ones. As we continue to implement the Levinson Act, engage with families, and analyze areas for improvement, we will be sure to continue our engagement with you and your Congressional colleagues, whom we view as valuable partners in our efforts.

Question. Atrocity Prevention: The Administration's FY23 budget request decreased the amount of funding for the Atrocities Prevention Fund from \$5 million as enacted in FY22 to \$2.5 million. Could you please explain the rationale for the reduction?

Answer. The President's Budget ensures that Atrocities Prevention will remain a top priority for the Department. Since FY 2020, we have programmed \$15 million in ESF and INCLE funds to support atrocities prevention work in Iraq and Syria, as well as other regions. This work is critical in our efforts to promote justice and accountability by aiding in the collection, preservation, and maintenance of chains of custody of evidence, including for use in prosecutions. These funds are also used in the establishment of transitional justice mechanisms.

Question. Do you feel this reduction accurately represents the USG's whole-of-government approach to atrocity prevention?

Answer. The U.S. Government coordinates routinely on atrocity prevention through the interagency Atrocity Prevention Task Force, enabling unity of focus and effort across departments and agencies, and allowing each to fund relevant programming from funds outside the framework of the Atrocity Prevention Fund. In a whole-of-government approach to preventing and mitigating atrocity risk around the globe, the U.S. Government uses all of the tools at its disposal—including diplomacy, foreign assistance, investigations and fact-finding missions, financial tools and engagements, training, and reports—to raise awareness and generate coordinated international pressure in response.

Question. How do you plan to synthesize atrocity prevention within the State Department's existing programs and initiatives and improve and expedite the implementation of the *Elie Wiesel Act*?

Answer. We continue to provide training to our teams in Washington and around the world on how to spot warning signs or indicators of potential atrocities and how to take early steps to disrupt possible atrocity crime continuums. Thus far we have trained almost 2,000 people. We also work with embassy country teams to incorporate atrocity risk mitigation into country planning and strategy efforts. In addition, we are currently working on a government-wide strategy to anticipate, prevent, and respond to atrocities, as called for in the Elie Wiesel Genocide and Atrocities Prevention Act of 2018. The strategy and its corresponding workplan will help improve the implementation of the Act.

Question. How does the State Department plan to work with other U.S. agencies and multilateral and international partners and institutions to synchronize atrocity prevention strategies and coordinate prevention and mitigation efforts?

Answer. Working closely with the interagency Atrocity Prevention Task Force, the State Department coordinates regularly with other U.S. agencies and departments to forge a whole-of-government unity of focus and effort to synchronize atrocity prevention strategies and coordinate prevention and mitigation efforts. The State Department also leads efforts to develop a U.S. whole-of-government strategy to anticipate, prevent, and respond to atrocities, as called for in the Elie Wiesel Genocide and Atrocities Prevention Act of 2018, that lays out roles and responsibilities across the interagency, sets goals, and orients the interagency Atrocity Prevention Task Force's priority actions towards achieving these goals. The State Department coordinates regularly with international partners and shares best practices. The State Department also leads efforts with multilateral and international partners on joint actions on atrocity prevention, including coordination of diplomatic, programmatic, and accountability efforts. The State Department has also planned joint engagements, statements, training, and assistance efforts through UN mechanisms.

Question. Special Issuance Visas (SIVs): After the fall of Kabul and the subsequent takeover of Afghanistan by the Taliban, the backlog of SIV applicants (including those post-chief-of-mission approval and others) totals more than 50,000. What steps are you taking to alleviate this backlog?

Answer. Relocating Afghan qualified SIV applicants is a priority for me and the Department. Despite having no consular presence in Afghanistan since the suspension of the U.S. Embassy operations on August 31, 2021, we continue to process SIV applications at every stage of the SIV process, including by transferring cases to other U.S. embassies and consulates around the world where applicants are able to appear. We are committed to identifying where additional investments can be most effective in expediting SIV processing as well as the expected costs, and find ways to get SIV applicants out of Afghanistan in light of significant challenges with outbound travel. The Coordinator for Afghanistan Relocation Efforts is dedicated to assisting SIV applicants through the logistical process.

Question. Provide those with credible and legitimate pathways to the U.S. through the SIV program with the resources they need?

Answer. We have increased the resources dedicated to SIV processing and have undertaken steps to streamline the process at every stage of the application under State Department control. In FY 2021, the Department was able to increase resources dedicated to COM approval processing and take steps to prioritize applications from interpreters and translators. While we are currently unable to provide consular services in Afghanistan, we continue to process applications at every stage, including by transferring interview-ready cases to U.S. embassies and consulates where applicants are able to travel.

Question. Provide resources to personnel at intake facilities abroad and at home for expeditious screening and vetting?

Answer. The Department of State has the highest respect for the men and women who have taken enormous risks to support our military and civilian personnel in Afghanistan and Iraq. We take these threats very seriously, and we are committed to providing efficient and secure SIV processing while maintaining national security as our highest priority. The Department of State supports the interagency community's efforts to complete screening and vetting of SIV applicants in the most efficient manner possible, both abroad and domestically. Overseas, SIV cases are interviewed and screened through interagency vetting partners.

Question. Human Rights: Do you believe that the FY23 budget accurately and completely represents the Administration's efforts to put human rights at the center of its foreign policy?

Answer. Yes. The FY 2023 budget fully supports the democracy and human rights core objectives of the Administration's 2022–2026 Joint Strategic Plan and U.S. foreign policy priorities in line with Interim National Security Guidance goals. U.S. foreign assistance plays a key role in supporting the Administration's efforts to put human rights at the center of foreign policy, including by strengthening democratic institutions, upholding universal values, and promoting human dignity.

Question. How much U.S. foreign assistance and State Department resources have been dedicated to the Summit to Democracy?

Answer. The Department's dedicated funding is coming from appropriated funding for programs with the same intent as those associated with the Summit. As part of the Presidential Initiative for Democratic Renewal, DRL supports eight foreign assistance lines of effort. For FY 2021, DRL has \$18 million from regularly allocated funding and a similar amount of FY 2022, pending availability, dedicated to Summit initiatives. INL has attributed \$5.6 million in FY 2021 INCLE funding to Summit initiatives, a level anticipated to increase in FY 2022, pending availability of funds. S/GWI has \$2 million in FY 2021 ESF for Summit-related programs. We will conduct activities that do not require dedicated funding including advancing U.S. policy commitments.

Question. Migration: The FY 2023 budget request states the Administration's intention to "support a renewed focus on migration management" including "climate migration programming." What are the details of this plan and how, if at all, does it complement other humanitarian priorities?

Answer. The Administration issued a Report on the Impact of Climate Change on Migration in October 2021 that recognizes the relationship between climate change, migration, and displacement. Using a whole-of-government approach to address this urgent problem, a working group led by State and the NSC is now taking stock of all bilateral and multilateral assistance to countries impacted by climate change and migration. The working group is studying, for example, expanding climate resilience and preparedness activities in U.S. foreign assistance programs to prevent or mitigate displacement as an adaptation to climate change, and how to address critical gaps in development, humanitarian, and climate finance. The work is ongoing.

Question. UNFPA: The FY23 Budget Request includes \$56 million for the UN Population Fund. How will you ensure that none of these funds are used in the support or participates in the management of a program of coercive abortion or involuntary sterilization in violation of Kemp-Kasten amendment?

Answer. UNFPA opposes any form of coercive sexual and reproductive health policies or programs, including but not limited to forced abortion and forced sterilization. I will continue our government's oversight of UNFPA activities as a member of its executive board, including through the board's country program review mechanism.

Question. Gender Equity & Equality Action Fund: The FY23 Budget request includes \$200 million for the Gender Equity & Equality Action Fund. How will this

money be spent compared to the previous fund which was named Women's Global Development and Prosperity Fund?

Answer. The Gender Equity and Equality Action (GEEA) Fund advances the economic security of women and girls globally, including from marginalized and underserved populations, and addresses the disproportionate impacts of the COVID-19, climate change, conflict, and crisis on women and girls. The GEEA Fund builds upon the successes and lessons learned from the Women's Global Development and Prosperity (W-GDP) Fund including upon the three W-GDP pillars with a comprehensive set of priorities and principles. The priority areas incorporate addressing gender-based violence as it impacts economic development, focus on green jobs and building resilience to climate change, and address issues such as unpaid care responsibilities.

Question. Consular Affairs: Last year, President Biden issued an Executive Order on Transforming Federal Customer Experience and Service Delivery to Rebuild Trust in Government. One aspect of this executive order was a commitment to "design and deliver a new online passport renewal experience that does not require any physical documents to be mailed." Please provide to the Committee update on the progress of online passport renewal, including an estimated date of when this service will be made available to the entire American public.

Answer. I remain committed to ensuring the Department launches Online Passport Renewal (OPR) to the American public this year. The Bureau of Consular Affairs initiated a controlled pilot of the OPR system in February to validate it will meet usability and performance expectations. The pilot will conclude this summer. The Department will determine the official public launch date soon thereafter. OPR will enable certain applicants to submit their renewal application and pay their fees online. This will eliminate the need to print and mail the application and payment. OPR will eventually enable employees to adjudicate renewal applications remotely and the Department to balance workload across sites, promoting increased efficiency.

Question. What additional technological resources and investments does the Department of State, specifically Consular Affairs need to deliver this service to the American public?

Answer. I remain committed to ensuring the Department launches Online Passport Renewal (OPR) to the American public this year. The Bureau of Consular Affairs initiated a controlled pilot of the OPR system in February to validate it will meet usability and performance expectations. The pilot will conclude this summer. The Department will determine the official public launch date soon thereafter. The Department does not anticipate needing additional resources to complete the delivery of OPR. OPR will enable certain applicants to submit their renewal application and pay their fees online. This will eliminate the need to print and mail the application and payment. OPR will eventually enable employees to adjudicate renewal applications remotely and the Department to balance workload across sites, promoting increased efficiency.

Question. An OIG Report released at the end of the 2021 reviewed Consular Affairs' ConsularOne modernization program. OIG's best estimate was that the total cost of the ConsularOne program ranged between \$200-600 million since 2009. The report further concludes that Consular Affairs has failed to meet performance goals and has delayed delivery of modernization services to the public.

In light of the finding of the OIG report and the Biden administration's commitment to providing online passport renewal to the American public, please outline for the Committee how the Department of State's Bureau of Consular Affairs plans to employ technological solutions to ensure that this service is provided to the taxpayer in a timely manner without continued wasteful spending?

Answer. I remain committed to ensuring the Department launches Online Passport Renewal (OPR) to the American public this year. The Bureau of Consular Affairs initiated a controlled pilot of the OPR system in February to validate it will meet usability and performance expectations. The pilot will conclude this summer. The Department will determine the official public launch date soon thereafter. OPR will allow certain applicants to submit their renewal application and pay their fees online. This will eliminate a need to print and mail the application and payment. Further, OPR will enable employees to adjudicate applications remotely and the Department to balance workload across sites, promoting efficient service.

Question. Last year, President Biden issued an Executive Order on Transforming Federal Customer Experience and Service Delivery to Rebuild Trust in Government. One aspect of this executive order was a commitment to "design and deliver a new

online passport renewal experience that does not require any physical documents to be mailed.” Yet, an initial rollout of online passport renewal revealed significant security issues with taxpayers most private information. What specific steps is the Department of State’s Bureau of Consular Affairs taking to deploy technological solutions to provide online passport renewal service without compromised privacy and security issues?

Answer. Security and protection of Personally Identifiable Information (PII) has always been a priority of the Department. The vulnerabilities found were related to the widely publicized Log4j vulnerability affecting most private and public sector websites. We remediated the vulnerabilities and implemented additional security-strengthening measures. Department security teams from Consular Systems and Technology, Information Resource Management, and Diplomatic Security conducted evaluations of OPR, including the internal Web platform, our Travel Document Issuance System, and the public facing MyTravelGov account portal over a period of 7 weeks and deemed it secure.

Question. Diplomatic Security: It is vitally important that our diplomats are empowered to get outside of embassy walls to meet with local leaders and populations. Unfortunately, far too often at high-threat posts, security concerns take precedence over diplomatic necessity, and our FSOs are trapped in their embassies. Effective diplomacy cannot be conducted from behind the walls of a compound, and our adversaries do not face similar restrictions on their diplomatic activity. The department needs to take a more forward leaning approach towards risk management, as opposed to risk avoidance. Do you believe that the Department’s current risk tolerance in high-threat posts is appropriately tailored? Do you believe that it should be improved, and if so, how? What will you do to bring about that improvement?

Answer. Our Chiefs of Mission and security professionals make hard decisions every day to balance security while pursuing engagements and furthering critical national security priorities. While we have no higher priority than the safety and security of our people, I have said before that we have to accept risk, and manage it smartly, and I am proud to report that our High Threat/High Risk posts maintained a 95 percent approval rate for engagement requests for the second consecutive year. Additionally, we are updating and revising our risk management policies and exploring both procedural and legislative changes to better enable us to quickly establish new facilities and continue to expand our diplomatic outreach.

Question. I was glad to see you voice support for reform of the Accountability Review Board (ARB) process in your testimony. Are you familiar with S. 816, the *Diplomatic Support and Security Act of 2021*?

Answer. I am aware of the Act and want to assure you that the Department of State has shared its sentiments and concerns that aim at reforming the ARB process. While we are in sync on the broader goals, we would urge that if legislation were to proceed, it should preserve maximum flexibilities to ensure diplomacy operates effectively. We look forward to an opportunity to engage with the Committee as the Act proceeds.

Question. Do you support this bill?

Answer. I appreciate that SFRC included in the Act certain flexibilities recommended by the Department of State. While we are very much in sync on the broader goal of reforming the ARB process, it should preserve greater flexibility in convening an incident review, to ensure the Department of State will operate with agility. Flexible authorities could advance important U.S. national security priorities and U.S. foreign policy, while considering the Department’s physical security priorities. We look forward to working with Committee staff on this critical issue.

Question. The *Secure Construction and Counterterrorism Act (SECCA)* is now more than 20 years old. Are there updates that you would like to see to SECCA? If yes, what?

Answer. SECCA has been in place, unchanged, since 1999. It mandates setback and collocation requirements for diplomatic facilities at all U.S. posts unless a waiver is exercised by the Secretary of State. SECCA was part of the U.S. response to the 1998 East Africa bombings and reflected the tactics deployed at the time against our facilities. In the intervening period, threats have evolved and our understanding of effective countermeasures and the technology we use to defend ourselves has changed. As we seek to reshape our diplomatic footing and acceptance of risk in the pursuit of the nation’s foreign policy mission, the Department will propose amendments to reflect the new realities facing our diplomatic platforms.

Question. Do SECCA restrictions lead to much higher costs of building embassies and consulates, even though the Department is building farther and farther from city centers?

Answer. Yes, SECCA constraints directly increase both land purchase and construction cost. SECCA's one-size-fits-all standard impedes a nuanced approach to construction. Construction logistics costs, such as restrictions on noise, truck access, and laydown areas, combined with the cost of a full setback site in a dense urban center, especially in the highly developed world, increases the overall cost of delivery. Increased flexibility to determine embassy locations based on operational needs would decrease costs.

Question. Do you believe that reforms are necessary to give the Department the needed flexibility to build in convenient locations?

Answer. Yes, I believe reform is needed to locate our missions in the most operationally advantageous locations. Existing legislation imposes a single standard regarding the setback of facilities irrespective of the threat level, footprint size, or the nature of the facility. This impairs the Department's ability to rapidly shift staff, create or expand our presence, and adds time, complexity, and cost. A reformed SECCA would allow the Department to pursue diplomacy from a mindset of managed risk.

Question. Would SECCA reforms also empower the Department to build embassies that address the threats of today, not just those of 20 years ago?

Answer. The Department designs and constructs facilities to address both current and future threats. Over time, security threats have evolved, and we cannot leverage distance alone as a defensive measure. 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. While the Department enhanced its construction methodologies and provides greater performance against extended threats, SECCA reforms would allow more flexibility to adjust our defensive standards and implement mitigation or construction strategies that replicate the stand-off defense equivalent to a 100-foot setback without a waiver process, i.e., build to an engineering standard where feasible.

Question. Anomalous Health Incidents (AHIs): After years of being the interagency laggard in providing care for victims of AHIs, I am glad to see the State Department catch up to the other departments and agencies whose employees have also been affected by AHIs. These brave people were harmed while doing their duty, and it is the department's responsibility to care for them. What is the department currently doing to provide care for AHI victims? What more could you do?

Answer. There is nothing more important to me than protecting the health, safety, and security of our people. I believe our current efforts reflect the personal priority I place on this issue. I can assure you that we are continually improving the care and support we provide, including access to the best, state-of-the-art care available at facilities such as Johns Hopkins and Walter Reed and other facilities that are part of the military health system. We are active in the interagency investigation into the cause of AHI, discussions on preventative measures, and how we can best protect our people.

I am grateful for the bipartisan support of Congress, including the specific support provided through the FY 2022 NDAA and HAVANA Act and the FY 2022 *Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Act*.

Question. Unfortunately, USAID personnel have also suffered from AHIs, yet they do not have the access to care that their State Department colleagues have. Do you commit to assisting your colleagues at USAID to get the access to care that they deserve?

Answer. Yes. The Department works closely with USAID on AHI, including on the provision of care to USAID colleagues who have been affected by AHI. USAID personnel working overseas are eligible to access care and support at post, as are all U.S. Government employees and their families under Chief of Mission authority. I commit to ensuring that USAID personnel, like all mission personnel, have the information they need to access and utilize the resources available to them at post.

Question. Since incidents of AHIs first became public, the executive branch, especially the State Department, has been very close-lipped about the problem. Do you commit to promptly providing Congress with full, accurate, regular, and up-to-date information and intelligence regarding AHIs when requested?

Answer. There is nothing more important to me than protecting the health, safety, and security of our people. I believe that the flow of information has improved

since I arrived at the Department. My team, coordinated by the Department's Health Incidents Response Task Force, has been providing briefings on anomalous health incidents (AHI) on a regular basis and is available to members and staff. Further, in response to the FY 2022 NDAA, the Department will join the interagency briefings that will be conducted regularly. I understand the first of those interagency briefings is tentatively scheduled for June.

I am grateful for your continuing support for the Department's efforts to address AHI.

Question. Public Diplomacy: The Global Engagement Center (GEC) has a vital role to play in our great power competition with China and Russia. How is the Department leveraging the GEC's capabilities to address Russian disinformation and propaganda regarding its invasion of Ukraine?

Answer. The GEC works closely with other parts of the Department, other U.S. Government agencies, and like-minded foreign partners to coordinate support efforts, exchange expertise, and provide analysis on ongoing Russian disinformation campaigns. The GEC creates content for State's Dismantling Disinformation website and distributes analytical "Russian Disinformation Snapshots on Ukraine" to more than 1,500 U.S. Government and like-minded government contacts twice a week. We also share selected unclassified reporting with the Ukrainian Government's Center for Strategic Communication (CSC) and are working with them to strengthen their relationships with social media platforms to protect the information environment from malign Russian influence.

Question. What is the GEC doing to address disinformation from the Chinese Communist Party regarding the origins of the COVID-19 virus?

Answer. The GEC has proactively monitored PRC disinformation and propaganda about COVID-19, including its origins, since the beginning of the pandemic. The GEC shares analyses with Department regional bureaus, the interagency, and foreign partners to inform messaging that punctures or debunks Beijing's false narratives. The GEC also exchanges insights on PRC tactics with social media companies to help them identify examples of information manipulation. In addition, GEC programs bolster the awareness of foreign civil society and media to encourage the amplification of accurate information about the pandemic and to counter COVID-19-related disinformation.

Question. Cybersecurity: The State Department's cybersecurity is seriously lacking, evidenced by major, damaging cybersecurity attacks conducted against the department over the last several years. What are you doing to shore up the Department's cyber defenses?

Answer. The Department takes our cybersecurity responsibilities seriously. We are establishing new policies and programs to provide more proactive cybersecurity practices. The Department's top cybersecurity initiative is the implementation of Executive Order 14028. This will ensure that we deliver a Zero Trust architecture and emphasize preventive cyber hygiene measures to maintain system health across the enterprise. Our efforts include improving identity, credential, and access management; requiring multifactor authentication for users; and instituting multiple layers of data encryption across a multi-cloud ecosystem. We are also working with CISA, NSA and other federal partners to implement cybersecurity best practices.

Question. What are you doing to increase the number of IT workers within the Department while also providing greater incentives for professional growth throughout the IT workforce?

Answer. The Department initiated an IT skills incentive program (IT SIP) as part of a long-term strategy to attract, train, and retain IT professionals in both the Foreign Service (FS) and Civil Service (CS) within the State Department. FS and CS IT employees can apply to the IT SIP and receive a base salary increase by earning industry-recognized certifications or acquiring a certain bachelor's or master's degree in an IT field. Additionally, the Department is implementing cybersecurity skills incentives. Occupational series or skill codes with approved cybersecurity certifications can be eligible for a retention incentive payment based on duties that contribute to cybersecurity and protection of Departmental assets. We are also developing a recruitment incentive package for newly hired CS and FS IT employees that we hope will go into effect as early as this year.

Question. Mission China: Last week, I sent you a letter regarding the deplorable treatment of our diplomats in China at the hands of the CCP. Do you agree that the CCP's treatment of our diplomatic personnel is unacceptable?

Answer. The United States has no higher priority than the safety, health, and well-being of U.S. citizens overseas, including Mission China's personnel and their families. The United States expects all governments, including the People's Republic of China, to adhere to their commitments under the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations. Senior Department officials have raised our concerns in Washington and Beijing regarding the challenging circumstances as the PRC responds to the COVID-19 pandemic and will continue to defend our interests. A response to your letter is forthcoming.

Question. Do you believe that such treatment violates the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations?

Answer. While the Department strives to comply with reasonable COVID-19 containment measures for its diplomatic personnel and their families, many of the People's Republic of China's (PRC) measures are inconsistent with the privileges and immunities such personnel enjoy under the Vienna Conventions. We have pushed back on numerous occasions both in the PRC and in the United States on measures we believe are inconsistent with the privileges and immunities of our personnel.

Question. Have you or any senior State Department officials raised this issue with your Chinese counterparts? If not, why not?

Answer. We have raised on numerous occasions with People's Republic of China (PRC) interlocutors both in Beijing and in Washington measures we believe are inconsistent with the privileges and immunities of our personnel. Ambassador Nicholas Burns, Deputy Secretary Sherman, and I have conveyed to senior PRC officials our deep concerns with how the challenging pandemic environment impacts the operations of the U.S. embassy and consulates in China. The Department strives to comply with reasonable COVID-19 containment measures for its diplomatic personnel and their families.

Question. What must be done now to bolster Taiwan's defense and deter Chinese aggression?

Answer. Our commitment to Taiwan is rock-solid and contributes to the maintenance of peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait and within the region. In that vein, the United States will continue to make available to Taiwan the defense articles and services necessary to enable Taiwan to maintain a sufficient self-defense capability, consistent with our one China policy. We are also working with allies and partners to highlight the positive role that Taiwan plays in addressing global challenges and encourage them to stand with Taiwan in defending against threats to its democratic values.

Question. Is the Department considering security assistance programs for Taiwan? In particular, is the Department considering initiatives or funding focused not just for arms, but also more training for Taiwan?

Answer. The Department welcomes the opportunity to further discuss tools such as security assistance with Congress. The U.S. Government continues to support Taiwan through the acquisition of asymmetric capabilities, and the Departments of State and Defense are also coordinating closely with Taiwan to support non-materiel and indigenously produced solutions to improve Taiwan's defenses. Our expanding security cooperation seeks to encourage Taiwan to prioritize reserve force reform.

Question. Do you commit to working with Congress on advancing proposals that bolster Taiwan's defenses?

Answer. Yes, the Department is committed to working with Congress on bolstering Taiwan's defenses, and we are already engaged in discussions with Congressional committees on possible security assistance programs. The Department has notified Congress of more than \$32 billion worth of arms to Taiwan since 2009, and we also are encouraging Taiwan to implement necessary reforms that will strengthen Taiwan's ability to deter PRC aggression and coercion.

Question. Sanctions: What are the Department's specific budgeting and personnel plans for ensuring the Office of Sanctions Coordination has the necessary tools for success?

Answer. While Congress created the Office of Sanctions Coordination (S/SC) in statute, a former sanctions coordination office remained within the structure of the Department. This office—assumed by S/SC—has not had an adjustment of funding or personnel resources since 2014. The sanctions landscape, however, has changed dramatically over this period of time—with sanctions becoming a primary foreign policy tool of the both the executive and legislative branches. To date, the Department has relied on the legacy funding and staffing pattern, used its regular authori-

ties to hire a deputy coordinator from the Senior Foreign Service, and used the authorizing statute's special hiring authorities to extend offers to three sanctions experts. However, we need additional resources to enable S/SC to succeed in its mandate. S/SC is working to identify its needs and on a request for additional funding to support the office's robust travel needs and hiring of additional personnel to engage and coordinate with allies, new sanctions partners, and other stakeholders.

Question. What specific role has the State Department played in coordinating with foreign partners on the roll out of sanctions against the Russian Federation after the invasion of Ukraine? Please provide specific examples. In your view, what has been working well and where is there room for improvement?

Answer. Since Putin began his war of choice, the Department of State has worked directly with nearly 40 allies and partners across the world to levy coordinated, wide-ranging sanctions and export controls against Russia in response to its unprovoked war against Ukraine. Countries such as New Zealand, Switzerland, and San Marino, among others, have enacted new or expanded existing unilateral sanctions authorities to join global efforts to support Ukraine and isolate Russia. We continue to coordinate with our allies and partners to ensure unity on sanctions actions, including to target and capture the ill-gotten gains of Russia's oligarchs.

Question. What specific role has the State Department played in coordinating with foreign partners on the roll out of sanctions implementation and enforcement guidance associated with sanctions against the Russian Federation after the invasion of Ukraine? Please provide specific examples. In your view, what has been working well and where is there room for improvement?

Answer. Since Putin began his war of choice, the State Department has coordinated with nearly 40 allies and partners to impose unprecedented sanctions in response to Russia's war against Ukraine. We are now focused on closing any potential gaps in sanctions and export controls measures between the United States and our allies and partners as well as targeting sanctions evasion networks, broadening our multilateral coalition, and launching the REPO and KleptoCapture interagency taskforces to enhance enforcement. Our outreach to foreign partners and industry to expand and sustain these efforts are ongoing.

Question. In March, the United States and other international partners announced the creation of the Russian Elites, Proxies, and Oligarchs (REPO) multilateral task force. Please describe in detail the role the State Department has played in engaging and coordinating with allies and partners on issues before the REPO task force. In your view, should seized assets be confiscated and then used to support Ukraine?

Answer. The Department has coordinated between U.S. agencies and our posts abroad to communicate relevant information on the REPO and KleptoCapture task forces, including related to engaging with host governments. Together we have focused on identifying and seizing assets, including boats, planes, helicopters, and real estate. We have also focused on freezing financial accounts in the United States and foreign jurisdictions with a view towards possible forfeiture/confiscation and/or criminal prosecution where the facts and law would support such a result. We will continue to work with interagency and multilateral partners to hunt down the assets of those individuals and entities that have been sanctioned in connection with Russia's premeditated, unjust, and unprovoked invasion of Ukraine and the continuing aggression of the Russian regime.

Question. In a recent vote on Russia's removal from the Human Rights Council, over 50 nations abstained from the vote. With regards to sanctions policy and enforcement, how does the Department plan to engage with nations that could provide alternative markets or avenues to evade sanctions imposed against the Russian Federation?

Answer. We understand that many nations have a policy of not supporting unilateral sanctions, only joining in UN sanctions. The Department is conducting outreach to many nations which abstained to stress to them the importance of taking actions against the Kremlin, including sanctions cooperation and enforcement, while also explaining our authority under E.O. 14024 to impose sanctions on persons who provide material support to sanctioned persons.

Question. What specific benchmarks is the Department utilizing to measure the impact of sanctions imposed against the Russian Federation?

Answer. The Department of State is closely monitoring a range of economic indicators from private sector analysts, the Kremlin, and national statistics agencies around the world, as well as reporting from our embassies and information shared

by partners and allies, to assess the economic impact of our sanctions. Extraordinary policy actions taken by the Kremlin and the Central Bank of Russia to limit capital flows, stabilize stock markets, and prop up the value of the Russian Ruble are additional evidence of the effectiveness of our measures.

Question. Guantanamo Bay: When considering whether to transfer a detainee from U.S. Naval Station, Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, to another country, what requirements must be met before you would authorize or consent to such a transfer?

Answer. The State Department leads the U.S. Government's efforts to identify suitable transfer destinations for individuals in U.S. custody at the Guantanamo Bay detention facility who have been approved for transfer. The Department leads efforts to negotiate non-legally binding transfer frameworks, including mutually acceptable humane-treatment and security assurances to mitigate the threat posed by former Guantanamo detainees to the United States or U.S. persons or interests. In most cases, the Secretary of Defense must certify to Congress, 30-days in advance of a repatriation or resettlement, *inter alia* that the receiving government "has taken or agreed to take appropriate steps to substantially mitigate any risk the individual may pose."

Question. What safeguards would you demand to ensure that any detainee subject to transfer does not support or engage in future acts of terrorism or violence against the United States, U.S. personnel, citizens, or property, or U.S. allies or partners?

Answer. The Department of State vigorously pursues efforts to identify suitable repatriation or resettlement locations that will substantially mitigate the threat that may be posed by any former Guantanamo Bay detention facility detainee post-transfer. State does so by developing mutually acceptable security and humane-treatment assurances with receiving countries that are designed to appropriately mitigate post-transfer risk. Recognizing some risk will still attend any detainee transfer, the Department of State and other U.S. Government agencies and departments regularly communicate with receiving countries to share information and to resolve challenges as they arise.

Question. Please describe the status of any and all negotiations that the State Department is currently engaged in with any foreign country with respect to the possible transfer of any detainee currently detained at U.S. Naval Station, Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

Answer. It has been our longstanding practice to not share the specifics of any negotiations the State Department undertakes concerning Guantanamo Bay detention facility detainees due to the sensitive diplomatic nature of these ongoing discussions. In general, the process involves identifying and engaging suitable countries to which detainees may be repatriated to countries of origin or resettled to third countries. Whenever possible, we pursue repatriation before resettlement. After we identify a suitable transfer location, we approach the host government to begin negotiations to accept the detainee. After the receiving government agrees to accept the detainee, we then negotiate mutually acceptable security and humane treatment measures.

Question. Special Presidential Envoy for Climate: On November 23, 2020, then-President-elect Joe Biden announced his intent to appoint former Secretary of State John Kerry to be a "Special Presidential Envoy for Climate." In response to committee questions regarding whether Special Envoy John Kerry is legally required to be submitted to the Senate for Advice and Consent, the State Department has informed the committee an administration legal view that: "Envoys who have only a discrete and temporary mission and do not fill a "continuing position established by law," see *Lucia v. SEC*, 138 S. Ct. 2044, 2051 (2018), historically have not been considered "public ministers" or "Officers of the United States" to whom the Appointments Clause applies. See *Officers of the United States Within the Meaning of the Appointments Clause*, 31 Op. O.L.C. 73, 102-05 (2007). Special Envoy Kerry remains in his position. Is this position still "discrete and temporary"? Why?

Answer. The work of the Special Envoy remains fixed and finite, "to elevate the issue of climate change and underscore the commitment my Administration will make toward addressing it" as outlined in section 102(c) of E.O. 14008 of January 27, 2021, issued by President Biden. The nature of this position is consistent with special envoy positions appointed by administrations on a bipartisan basis to respond to focused and urgent foreign policy priorities.

Question. At what point is this position no longer considered discrete and temporary? Why?

Answer. This inquiry involves a fact-specific assessment depending on the relevant circumstances at that time. For example, the position would no longer be considered discrete and temporary if a federal statute were to confer permanent status on the position.

Question. Yes or no. Is it possible for the Special Envoy Kerry’s position to be considered “discrete or temporary” if the position is retained for a complete 4-year Presidential term? Why?

Answer. This inquiry involves a fact-specific assessment depending on the relevant circumstances at that time, and there is no specific, fixed time-period beyond which a position may not be considered discrete and temporary. The existence of the same position for a period of 4 years would not, by itself, prevent it from being considered discrete and temporary.

RESPONSES OF SECRETARY OF STATE ANTONY J. BLINKEN TO QUESTIONS
SUBMITTED BY SENATOR BENJAMIN L. CARDIN

Question. Afghanistan: The Foreign Assistance budget proposed for Afghanistan in FY23 is \$268.0 million and reflects a decrease of \$95.8 million, 26 percent below the FY 2022 Request. How do you justify this 26 percent decrease, given the many needs still in Afghanistan for U.S. assistance?

Answer. Support for Afghanistan remains a key Administration priority. This means prioritizing critical sectors: humanitarian assistance first then meeting the needs that underpin a functioning society—food security, livelihoods, health, and education—as well as civil society, with a focus on the protection of women and girls and human rights. Given the new realities on the ground, the Administration’s Afghanistan assistance request reflects reduced funding requirements for the following security sector assistance accounts: International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement; International Military Education and Training; and Nonproliferation, Antiterrorism, Demining, and Related Programs.

Question. The FY23 budget for the State Department’s Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs includes \$10.9 million to sustain the Coordinator for Afghanistan Relocation Efforts (CARE) and a \$7.0 million increase for Afghan Affairs Unit Operations in Doha. How do you justify these amounts, especially with the lack of progress in getting many individuals out of Afghanistan who are in danger—such as USAGM journalists, American Spaces staff, and SIV applicants?

Answer. Since August 2021, the United States has directly supported the relocation of over 70,000 Afghans, including at least 672 U.S. citizens and 555 Lawful Permanent Residents (LPRs). The Department of State, under the leadership of the Coordinator for Afghan Relocation Efforts, continues to support travel out of Afghanistan for eligible travelers, including U.S. citizens, LPRs, our Afghan allies and their eligible family members—including USAGM journalists and staff, American Spaces staff, Afghanistan Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) holders, and SIV applicants who have received Chief of Mission approval. Since the non-combatant evacuation operation ended, CARE has evacuated thousands of SIV holders and eligible applicants.

Question. Burma: The FY23 Burma request is 109.1 million which is 20 percent below the FY 2021 actual and consistent with the FY22 request. With the human rights situation worsening in Burma due to the military coup, why did the Department decrease the budget from FY21 actual by 20 percent?

Answer. The FY 2023 President’s Budget request for Burma reflects the Administration’s commitment to advance democratic governance and the rule of law, bolster civil society groups, promote basic and higher education, promote access to justice, support humanitarian needs, address human rights violations and abuses, support independent media, and strengthen processes and mechanisms for an eventual return to the path to democracy. The request adjusts some accounts, including eliminating law enforcement and other criminal justice assistance, as the coup restricted our ability to work with the military-led government. The request also shifts bilateral HIV/AIDS funding to a regional EAP fund to allow greater flexibility and responsiveness to health needs.

Question. This funding is meant to support a large pool of items including supporting civil society, grassroots organizations, food security, healthcare programs, etc. Is this enough funding to support these broader issues?

Answer. Yes. No cuts were made to our support for civil society, grassroots organizations, food security, healthcare programs, or other critical programs promoting the restoration of Burma’s path to democracy, as well as human rights and support for

the people of Burma. Note: While not shown in the bilateral line, the request shifts bilateral HIV/AIDS funding to a regional fund consistent with our request for the broader the EAP region to allow great flexibility and responsiveness to health needs.

Question. Ethiopia: The FY23 budget for Ethiopia, which totals \$267 million, is 17 percent below the actual amount expended for FY 2021, and 12 percent below the FY 2022 request. Given the protracted humanitarian crisis in Ethiopia, how can the State Department justify a decrease in funding for FY23?

Answer. The request reflects programming shifts given required assistance restrictions to Ethiopia under U.S. law, as well as the protracted humanitarian crisis in Ethiopia. We continue to actively engage on the humanitarian response and its drivers in Ethiopia. Our funding levels for the humanitarian response are robust. The U.S. Government has funded almost \$1 billion in humanitarian assistance for northern Ethiopia between FY 2020 and FY 2022. The State Department will continue to monitor the situation on the ground to inform future funding levels.

Question. Combatting Global Corruption Act, S.14: This bill requires the Department of State to develop a series of reports on how well the countries of the world are living up to the commitments they have made to combat corruption. The President has said time and again that combatting corruption is a vital national security interest of the United States. Secretary Blinken, are you aware of this bill and do you support it? Why or why not?

Answer. The Department is deeply committed to the goals of this bill. The Department has concerns with some elements of the legislation, which may present unintentional challenges for our multilateral engagement and undermine our support for the strong international anti-corruption architecture. Many multilateral bodies already assess countries' implementation of anti-corruption obligations through peer-review processes. We believe reinforcing and complementing these existing multilateral reviews by focusing our engagement and analysis on the substance of each country's achievements or shortcomings—instead of new ranked reports—would better advance the Act's goals.

Question. Funding for State Department Personnel and "Training Float": The Biden administration is requesting funding for 570 additional Foreign Service and Civil Service positions. I understand that this request includes 250 positions to expand the State Department's "Training Float." During the hearing, you stated that these additional 250 positions "will get us where we need to be" in terms of a training float." However, given that the State Department will have added only 450 positions to achieve the training float for FY 2022 and FY 2023 combined, for a workforce of approximately 24,500 Foreign Service Officers and Civil Service Staff (not including Locally Employed Staff overseas)—that figure seems low. Please clarify the current size of the State Department's training float, and when the Department of State is projected to arrive at the 15 percent training float as required in the FY22 State Authorization Act.

Answer. The current training and professional development float is composed of 1,112 positions (approximately 4 percent of our combined Civil Service and Foreign Service workforce). The Department is expanding by adding 80 additional opportunities in FY 2022 and has requested another 250 opportunities in FY 2023. Implementing a 15 percent training and professional development float to accommodate the number of career employees would require a total of 4,143 positions or assignments (1,848 Civil Service and 2,295 Foreign Service), a goal that is fiscally unachievable in the short-term without leaving significant gaps in operational staffing. Therefore, the Department will gradually implement increased training and professional development opportunities, as expanding too fast will lead to overseas and domestic vacancies.

Question. Paid Internships: I am happy to see that \$10 million is included in the FY23 budget request for paid internships at State. Can you speak to the progress paid internships are expected to make on DEIA (diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility) at the Department?

Answer. Existing paid internship and fellowship opportunities have had a significant impact on DEIA. The Pickering and Rangel fellowships have been responsible for increasing the overall Foreign Service generalist minority rate by 33 percent. The additional \$10 million requested in FY 2023 will allow the Department to transition all student internships to paid, as part of the Department of State's continued efforts to diversify the ranks of its employees by encouraging applications from populations traditionally underrepresented in the Department and that reflect the diversity of the United States. This paid internship program will help remove barriers for students who may not have the financial means to accept an unpaid internship.

RESPONSES OF SECRETARY OF STATE ANTONY J. BLINKEN TO QUESTIONS
SUBMITTED BY SENATOR JEANNE SHAHEEN

Question. We have seen time and again in the last year the critical importance of having sufficient diplomatic staff to support our national security, from having ambassadors in place to having diplomats on the ground to report on and respond to crises as they happen. Your budget request seeks funding to add 570 new positions in the State Department, 288 in the Foreign Service, and 282 in the Civil Service. In your testimony, you stated that additional positions funded by the FY23 request would allow a float of 250 people. In your request, you note that would fund a ceiling of 16,091 positions. A training float of 250 people would be a float of less than 2 percent, leaving a long way to go from Congressional requests to have a float of 15 percent. How would a training float of 2 percent meet the goals of allowing more employees to take time for training?

Answer. The current training and professional development float is composed of 1,112 positions. This is approximately 4 percent of our combined Civil Service and Foreign Service workforce. The Department is expanding by adding 80 additional positions in FY 2022 and has requested another 250 positions in FY 2023. We are committed to expanding training and professional development opportunities, including interagency details, to ensure employees have the right skills throughout their career to support and defend United States' interests.

Question. What number is your target number for a training float, and how do you plan to get there?

Answer. The Department's current training and professional development float is 1,112 positions—approximately 4 percent of our combined Civil Service and Foreign Service workforce. Implementing a 15 percent float to accommodate the number of career employees would require a total of 4,143 positions or assignments, a goal that is fiscally unachievable in the short term without leaving significant gaps in operational staffing. Therefore, we will gradually implement increased opportunities, as expanding too fast will lead to overseas and domestic vacancies. We plan to gradually expand the training float by adding 80 additional opportunities in FY 2022 and another 250 opportunities in FY 2023.

Question. You stated early in your tenure that our diplomatic corps should reflect the diversity of America, and you have taken steps by hiring the first-ever Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer at State. How does this budget request help you achieve State's goal of improving diversity in recruitment, retention, and promotion to leadership positions?

Answer. The Department's FY 2023 DEIA budget request is \$78.6 million and includes projected expenditures across several offices and bureaus. Together, these elements will build an infrastructure for new and enhanced programs, accelerate hiring and recruitment modernization to support diversity outreach, increase the collection and analysis of DEIA-oriented data so that potential barriers to equal employment opportunities can be identified and eliminated, reduce backlog of discipline case reviews, and improve work-life programs. This is a significant increase from the Department's DEIA budget for FY 2021, which totaled \$21.4 million, and the FY 2022 budget request of \$43.8 million.

Question. Can you share statistics that disaggregate State's workforce data by region and diversity?

Answer. When I became Secretary, I stated that our diversity is one of our great national strengths, and I was committed to ensuring a State Department workforce that reflects the full diversity of our country. Our Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer has been leading an effort to develop the first-ever demographic baseline report for the State Department. This report, which is accessible to the entire workforce, provides a comprehensive snapshot of our workforce demographics and is one of several tools the Department will use to assess DEIA progress. It is disaggregated by sex, race, ethnicity, disability status, bureau, employment category, and grade or rank. In the coming weeks, we look forward to sharing our demographic baseline information with the respective Congressional oversight committees.

Question. Our world-class U.S. diplomats should receive the support they need in all circumstances, including for those afflicted by directed energy attacks. These diplomats rightly deserve an institution that has their full support, especially when attacked in the line of service. I appreciate your leadership in ensuring that after years of doubt, they have access to the services that they need. Has the Department established the procedures necessary to refer patients with brain injuries to Walter Reed's medical facilities?

Answer. Our diplomats deserve the world's finest care and support. Recognizing that and building on the FY 2022 National Defense Authorization Act, the Department has established the necessary procedures to get patients into the military health system, including at Walter Reed. We also have procedures in place to get patients access to other centers of excellence quickly, including Johns Hopkins, among other places. No two patients are alike; we want to ensure that they receive the best and most appropriate care.

Question. What obstacles, if any, hinder the State Department from making use of these facilities for affected employees?

Answer. I am pleased to report potential obstacles associated with getting treatment and care for those patients affected since January 1, 2016, have been resolved, and we are able to quickly get those affected by a potential AHI to a medical facility. For those affected by a possible AHI prior to January 1, 2016, or who may no longer be affiliated with the Department, treatment and care are available via Johns Hopkins Hospital and other centers of excellence.

Question. And what can Congress do to support this effort?

Answer. Congressional engagement has helped us ensure we are doing everything we can to get this right. I look forward to continued engagement with Congress related to these efforts and am grateful for Congressional support for our diplomats around the world.

Question. Has the Department established procedures for handling reports of "Havana Syndrome," either at our diplomatic posts abroad or here in the United States?

Answer. Yes, the Department of State has established procedures for reporting and responding to reports of AHI, and regularly provides updates to our workforce.

Question. Do your employees know what to do if they experience symptoms?

Answer. The Department works to ensure all employees under Chief of Mission authority abroad and all State Department employees domestically know what to do if they experience a suspected AHI. Upon arrival at post, employees are briefed on AHI and reporting protocols, so they know what sensations or symptoms to look for and where to go for help. We regularly provide information and updates to the entire workforce through cables, security briefings, Department notices, and training opportunities.

Question. What instructions have your Chiefs of Mission received about how to handle these types of reports?

Answer. Chiefs of Mission are briefed on AHI during their initial training in Washington, including an intelligence briefing, and upon arrival at post. The briefings include information on how to identify the sensations and symptoms associated with potential AHI and the process for reporting potential incidents to the health and security offices at post. In addition, Chiefs of Mission are briefed on the protocols for reporting incidents to Washington and when to convene an emergency action committee. We also provide guidance for Chiefs of Mission on communicating with employees and family members at post, host governments, and the press.

Question. Late last year the State Department proposed increasing many non-immigrant visa fees—including business, tourist, and student visas. These fee increases are very untimely, considering the travel industry is still reeling from the pandemic. International inbound travel was still down 78 percent in 2021, compared to 2019 levels, according to the U.S. Travel Association. Meanwhile business travel continues to struggle to recover, last year generating just 44 percent of 2019 travel spending levels. Domestic leisure travel is really the only thing keeping the industry afloat in many communities, but it's not enough. With that in mind, would you support delaying the fee increases or exploring other ways to cover added funding needs that wouldn't needlessly harm the travel community at a time when they're most vulnerable?

Answer. The Department appreciates the concerns regarding the Nonimmigrant Visa (NIV) fee recommendations. We are closely examining all options. The Bureau of Consular Affairs relies on revenue from NIV fees to fund visa operations and does not receive appropriated funds to cover these operations. Based on fee statutes, the bureau calculates the fee for full cost recovery using historical and projected demand and costs. The Department has concluded the 60-day public comment period for the fee change, and we are now reviewing comments. We continue to monitor demand and costs for these visa services and the impact these may have on the fee recommendations.

Question. Lebanon: In spite of the Russia-Ukraine war's impact on Lebanon's wheat imports, fuel, and inflation, the struggling country took the courageous step to condemn Russian atrocities and voted with the U.S. at the UN. Given competing pressures (i.e., the war and humanitarian emergency in Ukraine), the U.S. must continue to engage with Lebanon. Is the Administration prepared to ensure that supporting humanitarian and security assistance to Lebanon is a priority?

Answer. U.S. humanitarian and security assistance to Lebanon are priorities for the Administration and are some of the tools used to demonstrate our commitment to the Lebanese people, civil society, and institutions critical to building a sovereign state responsive to its people's legitimate needs. The FY 2023 President's budget request seeks robust assistance levels for Lebanon, including nearly \$170 million in overall security assistance, bolstering our support to Lebanese security services. The request includes \$10.45 billion in State and USAID humanitarian assistance, which aims to reduce the pain and suffering resulting from conflict and disaster globally, including in Lebanon where the United States provided more than \$400 million in FY 2021.

Question. Lebanon is voting in important elections in May. I'm concerned that there are efforts to suppress vote and that anything less than a fully free and fair election will further undermine any remaining stability in Lebanon. Please detail your department's engagements with the Government of Lebanon ahead of their elections. Will the State Department publicly call for free and fair elections in May? While I understand concern about not appearing to weigh in on either side of an election, but calling for free and fair elections should not be considered an endorsement of any party or politician.

Answer. The Administration publicly and privately called for free, fair, and on-time elections in Lebanon. The International Support Group for Lebanon, of which the United States is a member, issued a statement on February 11 urging the Lebanese authorities to hold free, fair, and inclusive elections. On February 7, Ambassador Shea told media that "elections must be held on time in a fair and transparent manner. There is no wiggle room." The U.S. Government also worked to include language in a February 4 UN Security Council statement on the importance of election integrity. Moreover, senior U.S. officials frequently emphasized in their conversations with Lebanese leaders and with key partners responsible for election security that Lebanon's elections should be in line with international standards.

Question. The expansion of the global gag rule under the previous administration has resulted in the disruption of U.S. global health programs. According to the State Department's own report, the global gag rule negatively affected a wide range of people and programs, including family planning access for women in rural areas in West Africa, HIV testing and treatment for key populations, and TB programming in India. The Biden-Harris administration rescinded the global gag rule as an early executive action, yet the toll of the policy continues to be felt by organizations who are trying to rebuild lost partnerships, networks and programs while navigating the threat of it coming back under the next administration. This is why I lead the Global Health, Empowerment and Rights Act to permanently end it. Can you describe for us why repealing the Global Gag Rule is good policy and how permanently repealing the Global Gag Rule would support the strengthening of health systems in fragile communities?

Answer. The permanent repeal of the Global Gag Rule goes beyond good policy, especially for health systems in fragile communities. The slightest disruption to fragile health systems can have a negative ripple effect on multiple aspects of a community, including peace and security. Policies like the Global Gag Rule heighten the risk of destabilization, placing women and girls at disproportionate risk for negative health and socioeconomic outcomes. I support the permanent repeal of the Global Gag Rule and strengthening of health systems, because the United States is the preeminent leader in providing life-saving foreign assistance that safeguards the human rights and dignity of women and girls through essential gender-equitable healthcare.

Question. National Strategy on Gender Equity and Equality: The Administration rightly prioritized protecting, improving, and expanding access to sexual and reproductive health care as one of 10 key priorities in their National Strategy on Gender Equity and Equality. The State Department is due to release their implementation plan for the strategy this summer. Can you preview how you will contribute to this critical piece of the strategy and what additional funding and policy change you need to expand access to sexual and reproductive health care around the world to advance gender equity and equality?

Answer. As the State Department develops its implementation plan for the National Strategy on Gender Equity and Equality, I will continue to support strengthened efforts to expand access to sexual and reproductive health (SRH) care around the world to advance the goals of the strategy. We are currently doing this through supporting key multilateral partners like the UN Population Fund. Furthermore, our continued support for PEPFAR's DREAMS program remains a critical pillar of our SRH efforts to reach adolescent girls and young women.

Question. Egypt Assistance. The regime of President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi systematically brutalizes its citizens, cracks down on independent civil society, shows flagrant disregard for human rights in the country, and represses dissidents and their families across national borders. Given these enduring and serious rights violations, does the Administration support conditions on foreign military financing to Egypt?

Answer. The Administration has elevated human rights in our engagement with the Egyptian Government to press for political prisoner releases and to support implementation of systemic human rights reforms, including to protect freedom of expression and association. We continue to make clear that our bilateral relationship with Egypt will be strengthened by tangible progress on human rights issues. The Department reprogrammed some of the Foreign Military Financing (FMF) this past year after Egypt did not meet specific human rights requests within a specified timeframe. Retaining maximum flexibility on FMF allows us to seek concrete improvements in human rights while also advancing our regional security interests.

Question. In comparison, the Administration requested that some assistance to Jordan be conditioned on "negotiated benchmarks towards reforms." Can you explain this discrepancy?

Answer. The President's FY 2023 budget request includes \$1.45 billion for Jordan to support the first year of an anticipated fourth U.S.-Jordan MOU, expected to take effect in FY 2023 and for which negotiations are ongoing. We anticipate the MOU will include consistent annual request levels for Foreign Military Financing and Economic Support Funds (ESF), including critical assistance programs and budget support to adequately address Jordan's needs. Additional ESF would be provided if Jordan implements meaningful and achievable reforms negotiated through the MOU. This additional ESF is part of our political commitment to support economic reforms and Jordan's long-term fiscal health in the interest of strengthening this key strategic partnership. We will work closely with Jordan to pursue and support these reforms.

RESPONSES OF SECRETARY OF STATE ANTONY J. BLINKEN TO QUESTIONS
SUBMITTED BY SENATOR MARCO RUBIO

Question. Putin's war against Ukraine has destabilized the oil and gas market. We're now looking at gas prices reaching four dollars, even five dollars a gallon in the United States—these are prices that will destroy America's economic recovery from the COVID-19 caused downturn and financially hurt millions of Americans. The Biden Administration should look at all options to decrease the price of oil, most of all by unleashing investment in America's unrivaled energy resources, but also by looking to expand oil and gas production by our allies and partners. Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana and Brazil are ready and eager to step in to the breach and export to the United States. This should be common sense; it would help lower prices here, while also driving up the economies of other countries that stand with us. Instead of working with these countries, the Administration instead sent officials to Caracas to explore the idea of receiving oil from the Maduro regime. I should not have to say that Nicolas Maduro has actively worked to undermine the United States at every opportunity—from sponsoring terrorism in Colombia, cooperating with Iran and Russia, to holding American citizens hostage. How would financing the Maduro regime advance any American interest, knowing that both the creaky oil infrastructure in Venezuela makes its oil more carbon intensive than other countries, and that its regime is a source of transnational crime and terrorism in the region?

Answer. The U.S. officials' visit to Venezuela focused on securing the release of U.S. wrongful detainees and urging the Maduro regime to return to the negotiating table in Mexico with the democratic opposition's Unitary Platform to restore democracy in Venezuela. The visit reinforced U.S. support for the Verdad Act and for Interim President Juan Guaidó's call for a negotiated solution through the Mexico process. We remain steadfast in our commitment to the Venezuelan people, which includes supporting their democratic aspirations and providing assistance to address

Venezuela’s humanitarian crisis. We will continue to implement and enforce our Venezuela sanctions, and ensure they help contribute to a peaceful democratic transition. The Administration has ongoing discussions with other energy-producing countries in the Americas, such as Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, and Brazil, and remains committed to preventing benefits accruing to malicious actors.

Question. Can you confirm that the meeting between U.S. and Maduro-affiliated officials in Caracas occurred only after the Administration exhausted efforts to secure oil from allies and partners? Like Colombia, Brazil, Ecuador, and Guyana?

Answer. U.S. officials’ visit to Venezuela focused on securing the release of U.S. wrongful detainees and urging the Maduro regime to return to the negotiating table in Mexico with the democratic opposition’s Unitary Platform to restore democracy in Venezuela. The visit reinforced U.S. support for the Verdad Act and for Interim President Juan Guaidó’s call for a negotiated solution through the Mexico process. We welcomed the return of two wrongfully detained U.S. citizens from Venezuela.

Question. Should the U.S. receive oil imports from the Maduro Regime, how would it remain true to its policy of supporting the democratically-elected interim government of Juan Guaido?

Answer. Consistent with the sense of Congress reflected in the VERDAD Act of 2019, we support the Venezuelan-led negotiations between the Unitary Platform and the regime as the best path to restore democracy and human rights in Venezuela. While the Administration does not preview sanctions actions, it has made clear that the United States would review some sanctions policies if the Venezuelan parties make meaningful progress toward a democratic solution.

Question. Of the appropriated funds to Venezuela to support political competition and consensus building, it is my understanding that the Administration will support democratic electoral events, according to a recent congressional notification.

Answer. Free and fair local, regional, National Assembly, and presidential elections remain at the forefront of our objectives in Venezuela.

Question. Does the Biden administration recognize Interim President Juan Guaido?

Answer. The United States recognizes the Interim Presidency of Juan Guaidó and the 2015 democratically elected National Assembly as the legitimately elected representatives of the Venezuelan people.

Question. Does the Biden administration support efforts to hold free and fair presidential elections?

Answer. The need for a peaceful restoration of democracy, free and fair elections, and respect for the rights and freedoms of Venezuelans continues to drive our policy toward Venezuela. The United States considers free and fair local, regional, National Assembly, and presidential elections essential for Venezuelans to reach a peaceful and democratic solution to the crises their country faces.

Question. On March 18, President Biden had a video call with Chinese Communist Party General Secretary Xi Jinping. The White House said the call focused on Ukraine. Beijing said it focused on U.S.-China relations. Beijing blamed the Trump administration for disrupting the “stable relationship” we had since Carter—the one that terribly disadvantaged America and sold out our most basic principles for corporate interests—and suggested that the Biden administration needed to do more to redeem itself. The official Chinese state news agency quoted President Biden as having stated the following: “I am willing to reaffirm that America does not seek to fight a ‘new Cold War’ with China, does not seek to change China’s system, does not seek to use the strengthening of alliances to counter China, does not support ‘Taiwan independence,’ and has no intention of entering into a conflict with China.” Biden further pledged to “effectively control and manage the competition and disagreements.” This sounds like a return to the policy of acquiescence that left us economically weaker, sold out American workers, and made us dangerously dependent on Beijing. Does this Chinese readout depict an accurate representation of what the President said?

Answer. We do not want a return to a world divided into rigid blocs. The United States remains focused on the longer-term challenge to the international system posed by the PRC, which is the only country with the desire to reshape key elements of the international system if left unchallenged. As I made clear in my speech, over the last year, the Biden administration has implemented a comprehensive, whole-of-government strategy to compete responsibly with the PRC while advancing our shared affirmative vision with allies and partners.

Question. The claim that the United States “does not seek to change China’s system” is especially wrongheaded, and far from a slip up, it echoes a line in the Biden administration’s Indo-Pacific strategy released in February: “Our objective is not to change the PRC, but to shape the strategic environment in which it operates.” This sounds exactly like the defeatism that I feared when I warned in November 2020 that Biden would bring back the “caretakers of American decline.” What exactly does winning look like in a “strategic competition” if China’s political system—a system that conducts genocide, that covers up the spread of a pathogen of pandemic potential, that systematically steals our intellectual property and technology—does not change?

Answer. As I have said, we cannot rely on Beijing to change its trajectory, so we will shape the strategic environment around Beijing to advance our vision for an open, inclusive international system. U.S. global leadership is defined by what we are for, not by what we are against. It’s about supporting and improving the international order that has brought about security and prosperity for over 70 years. It’s about revitalizing relationships with key allies and partners to effectively counter Beijing’s coercive practices as needed and to set the rules of the road that will shape the coming decade. We will be forthright in opposing PRC actions that challenge or bend the rules which we have all, including the PRC, accepted.

Question. How can U.S. leadership be maintained unless our worldview continues to shape the global order, and Beijing’s worldview—what they call “socialism with Chinese characteristics”—is tossed onto the ash heap of history where it belongs?

Answer. Our vision is about what we are for, not what we are against. We are for a world where technology is used to lift people up, not suppress them; where trade and commerce protect and lift up our workers and grow the middle class; where universal rights are respected; and where nations can write their own futures and work together in common cause. We are defending and revitalizing the system of norms and institutions which has created the conditions for development and prosperity around the world, including, it is worth mentioning, for the PRC.

Question. How can we ignore General Secretary Xi’s statements that he wants the Chinese Communist Party to “liberate all of humanity” and serve as the “grave-diggers of capitalism?”

Answer. We are confident in the strength of our values, and the resilience of the rules-based international order that has enabled so much of the world to prosper over the past seven decades. We are also committed to vigorously defending that system against those that would seek to undermine or replace it. The United States consistently engages with Beijing at the highest levels to responsibly manage the competition. We are committed to maintaining open lines of communication at all levels, including the President with Xi Jinping and the Secretary, the National Security Advisor, and the Secretary of Defense with their PRC interlocutors.

Question. Why does the President of the United States, with all of the power at his disposal, display a weaker commitment to the cause of democracy and freedom than unarmed Hong Kong protesters did?

Answer. As the President has told President Xi, standing up for human rights is in our DNA as Americans. We have a fundamental commitment to defending human rights and dignity. And we will continue to take actions to advance respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in China and beyond. The Administration has called out human rights abuses against all who suffer them in the PRC, including Tibetans, Hong Kongers, and others. We have also worked to protect the rights and freedoms of Hong Kongers in the face of the PRC’s draconian policies. We will continue to promote accountability for the PRC’s atrocities and other human rights abuses and violations against all of its citizens and repressive acts beyond its borders.

Question. Why is this Administration so prone to timidity when confronted by what is nothing less than an existential threat?

Answer. Over the 16 months, the Biden administration has implemented a comprehensive, whole-of-government strategy to compete responsibly with the PRC while advancing our shared affirmative vision with allies and partners. We are investing in the foundations of our strength at home; aligning with partners and allies on our approach abroad; and harnessing those two key assets to compete with the PRC to defend our interests and build our vision for the future. It is an approach that will enable us to carry forward this long-term competition effectively and responsibly, in a way that leverages our extraordinary strengths, in common cause with our unmatched network of allies and partners.

Question. Last week, Cuba's Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs met with Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Emily Mendrala to discuss implementation of the U.S.-Cuba Migration Accords. This week, the Cuban Deputy Minister is making the rounds to spread the lies of the Communist Regime he represents—that the policies of the United States are to blame for the suffering experienced by the people of Cuba. The people of Cuba suffer only because of the radical, Marxist-Leninist policies implemented by Fidel Castro and carried out by his successors. It is not hard to understand why people seek to flee a regime that detains children, executes its own citizens without trial, and prevents them from profiting from the natural abundance of their country. So long as the regime continues to exploit its own citizens, I am worried that platforms like these talks will only serve the purposes of the regime. What issues did DAS Mendrala raise with the Cuban Deputy Minister?

Answer. Talks held April 21 to discuss implementation of the U.S.-Cuba Migration Accords represent a continuation of our nearly 30-year engagement with Cuba on migration matters to promote safe, orderly, and legal migration. Discussions under the meeting's limited agenda covered migration trends, irregular migration, returns and repatriations of citizens, Embassy functions, and other related issues. Enabling safe, legal, and orderly migration between Cuba and the United States is consistent with U.S. interests in fostering family reunification and promoting greater respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in Cuba.

Question. Did DAS Mendrala convey the primacy of human rights and democracy in U.S. policy towards Cuba?

Answer. Our policy toward Cuba focuses on support for the Cuban people, including their political and economic well-being, and human rights. We consistently raise our serious concerns directly with the Cuban Government through multiple diplomatic channels, including our view that poor human rights conditions represent a major reason Cubans choose to leave their homeland. The Migration Talks focused on mutual obligations under the Migration Accords.

Question. Did DAS Mendrala urge her counterparts that the United States seeks the immediate release of dissidents and democracy activists, like Jose Daniel Ferrer, artists Luis Manuel Otero Alcántara and El Osorbo, the Damas de Blanco Aymara Nieto Muñoz, Sayli Navarro and many more who peacefully demonstrated against the regime?

Answer. The Biden-Harris administration, including DAS Mendrala, consistently and regularly urges the Cuban Government in private diplomatic conversations to release all political prisoners. Additionally, we continue to call on the Cuban Government publicly and in multilateral fora to respect the human rights and fundamental freedoms of Cubans and to release Jose Daniel Ferrer, Luis Manuel Otero Alcántara, Maykel Osorbo, Aymara Nieto Muñoz, Sayli Navarro and the hundreds of detained protestors from last year's historic July 11 demonstrations.

Question. Last year, when President Biden took office, I was extremely concerned that the President would return to the failed policy of engagement with the Castro-Diaz-Canel regime that President Obama pursued. I was pleasantly surprised when the Biden administration announced it would put its Cuba policy review on hold. Of course, this only came after the Cuban people rose up in unprecedented protests across the island against the now 63-year old communist regime. After the events of July 11, the Biden administration promised that the Cuba Policy Review would reflect the new environment in Cuba created by these historic, organic protests. Now, 10 months later, our policy towards Cuba appears to be in a holding pattern. Does the United States still “stand with the Cuban people and their clarion call for freedom,” as President Biden said in July?

Answer. Our policy toward Cuba continues to focus first and foremost on support for the Cuban people, their human rights, and their political and economic well-being. We stand with the Cuban people in their fight for freedom by holding Cuban Government officials accountable for oppressive actions, condemning restrictions on freedom of expression, calling for the unconditional release of political prisoners, urging our allies to do the same, and finding meaningful ways to support the Cuban people. We are committed to increasing our capacity to reunite family members, support independent entrepreneurs, and ensure remittances flow more freely to the Cuban people while not enriching those who perpetuate human rights abuses.

Question. When can Congress expect to receive the Cuba Policy Review?

Answer. Our policy toward Cuba focuses first and foremost on support for the Cuban people, including their political and economic well-being, and human rights. Per the Biden administration's announcement on May 16, 2022, the Administration plans to implement a series of measures in the coming weeks and months to in-

crease support for the Cuban people and safeguard our national security interests. As we implement these measures, we will continue to call on the Cuban Government to respect freedom and human rights for all Cubans as they work to determine their own futures, and we will continue to hold Cuban Government officials accountable for human rights abuses through the imposition of appropriate sanctions and visa restrictions.

Question. What can you tell us about that review and its proposed policies to support protesters, activists, and journalists in Cuba?

Answer. We continue to have serious concerns about human rights abuses in Cuba, including harsh sentencing for protestors, extensive restrictions on fundamental freedoms, and the passage of a restrictive Penal Code. We remain committed to promoting respect for Cubans' human rights and accountability for Cuban Government officials involved in human rights abuses. We consistently condemn human rights abuses in our diplomatic conversations with the Cuban Government and in our public statements, and we urge the Cuban regime to release political prisoners unconditionally and to protect and respect the human rights and fundamental freedoms of individuals in Cuba.

Question. What has the State Department done to ensure unfettered access to the internet in Cuba, beyond providing VPNs to protesters?

Answer. The Administration supports efforts globally to counter Internet censorship, restrictions on content access, and shutdowns, including in Cuba. We have bolstered that support since nationwide protests on July 11 and will continue to do so. We continue to study options and solicit opinions from stakeholders to advance the Administration's policy goals.

We remain dedicated to expanding information flow for the Cuban people, recognizing that no easy fixes exist to address the limitations we see in Cuba.

Question. China's aggression against Taiwan has increased steadily in recent years, particularly incursions into its airspace and territorial waters. It seems the goal is to exhaust and intimidate Taiwan's forces without engaging in open combat. As Beijing's tactics change, so too should our response. What do you make of these gray zone warfare tactics?

Answer. We agree that PRC gray zone tactics are destabilizing, risk miscalculation, and undermine peace and stability in the region. We have engaged extensively with both Taipei and our allies and partners to calibrate our response. In terms of specifics, I would recommend a classified briefing to you or your staff.

Question. Is the Administration taking concrete steps to counter them, and if so, what are they?

Answer. In response, we are pursuing multiple lines of effort. Consistent with our one China policy, we will continue deepening our security relationship with Taiwan to ensure it has sufficient capabilities to defend itself.

We will continue to urge Beijing to cease its military, diplomatic, and economic pressure, and instead engage in meaningful dialogue with Taiwan.

We will also continue to work with allies and partners to highlight the positive role that Taiwan plays in addressing global challenges and encourage them to stand with Taiwan in defending against threats to its democratic values.

Question. Have you gamed out a series of proportional responses if Beijing continues to escalate the scale of these provocations against Taiwan?

Answer. We remain resolutely committed to make available to Taiwan the defense articles and services necessary to enable it to maintain a sufficient self-defense capability, consistent with the Taiwan Relations Act.

We also seek to minimize miscalculations on both sides of the Taiwan Strait and ensure the future of Taiwan is determined peacefully and free of PRC coercion.

We are pursuing deterrence on a number of fronts to complicate the PRC's calculus and to force Beijing to think very carefully about precipitating a crisis that would have terrible consequences for the region and the world and not be in the PRC's own best interest.

Question. Have you warned your PRC counterparts that there would be serious consequences if they took any coercive action against Taiwan?

Answer. I would be happy to answer this in a closed session.

Question. As you know, our friends in Taiwan need to acquire military capabilities to deter aggression by the PRC as quickly as possible. Business-as-usual in our foreign military sales process simply will not cut it. Arming Taiwan must be among our top security assistance priorities. What is the State Department doing to re-

vamp the Foreign Military Sales process to prioritize and expedite transfers to Taiwan?

Answer. The Administration processes each sale as soon as it is received. However, the speed of arms sales also depends on Taiwan moving as quickly as possible to confirm transfers and U.S. industry delivering these capabilities as soon as possible.

We are looking at the entire defense trade enterprise to find efficiencies and also working with industry to find ways to ensure Taiwan has the capabilities it needs in a timely manner. We are exploring every possible avenue to expedite cases.

Question. Putin's war against Ukraine has demonstrated the viability of new and old technology in countering the equipment deployed by our authoritarian adversaries in Beijing and Moscow. One of the most successful tools in the war has been FIM-92 Stingers and FGM-148 Javelins. While the United States itself has not really needed these tools in recent conflicts, because we have almost always enjoyed air and armor superiority, they are critical assets for our partners going up against Russian jets and tanks or maybe soon Chinese jets and tanks. I am concerned that the need for these weapons has already outstripped our defense industry's ability to produce more. What is the State Department doing to assure our allies that their needs and requests for additional Stingers and Javelins will continue to be met, despite reduced production of both of these weapons in the United States?

Answer. Long production timelines are one of the top concerns we consistently hear from our partners, especially considering recent increased demand. We are working very closely with our Allies and the Department of Defense—which has the lead on this issue—to ensure the defense readiness of our partners and prevent any potential capability gaps. This includes making sure DoD has an accurate picture of and accounts for the foreign demand for these systems as it works with primes and sub-tier suppliers to increase production. We are also engaging industry on multiple fronts to support and encourage increased production of high-demand weapon systems.

Question. Is the State Department working with the Defense Department on the production of these weapons in order to support Ukraine and even Taiwan's defense needs, even as the DoD looks to invest in next generation technology?

Answer. Absolutely. The U.S. Government is looking closely at what we and industry can do to improve production timelines to get needed defense capabilities to our Allies. The Deputy Secretary of Defense is leading an effort to examine production processes for several items, including Javelins and Stingers. And the National Security Council has convened interagency discussions to examine this broader issue.

RESPONSES OF SECRETARY OF STATE ANTONY J. BLINKEN TO QUESTIONS
SUBMITTED BY SENATOR ROB PORTMAN

Question. Energy revenues continue to be the main source of income fueling Russia's war machine. Energy is Russia's top export and accounts for roughly half of its entire federal budget, and we must continue to work to cut off this funding. I was pleased the Administration—at the urging of myself and other members of Congress—banned the import of Russian oil, natural gas, and coal into the U.S. in early February. However, the U.S. imported only a small amount of energy from Russia. In 2021, the U.S. imported approximately 670,000 barrels of oil and petroleum products per day, which was about 8 percent of all U.S. petroleum imports. The larger issue at hand is the E.U.'s reliance on Russian energy: approximately 40 percent of E.U. gas comes from Russia, as well as more than a quarter of its oil. This means, Europe is continuing to send Russia nearly \$1 billion per day in energy revenues (approximately \$870 million/day from the EU27 to Russia), compared with the approximately \$50 million the U.S. was purchasing on a daily basis. Specifically, estimates show that Europe is purchasing each day: roughly \$22 million of coal, \$415 million of oil, and \$433 million in natural gas, for a total of \$870 million. I recognize shutting off Russian energy flows into Europe is complicated, and is a large undertaking that would have an impact on consumers and prices. However, is a matter of saving lives, and immediate action must be taken. Last month, I was pleased with the announcement of the joint Task Force on Energy Security, which is aimed at strengthening the coordination between the U.S. and the E.U. to reduce Europe's reliance on Russian energy. It has been almost exactly a month since this task force was established. Can you please provide us with an update on its efforts and progress as it relates to reducing European reliance on Russian energy?

Answer. The European Commission and the United States understand and are working to address the imperative of reducing energy imports from Russia through the Joint Task Force. We have held meetings with EU member states and industry representatives to support diversifying Europe's supply of natural gas and accelerating deployment of energy efficiency and smart grid technologies in European homes and businesses, electrify heating, and increase clean energy output to reduce demand for fossil fuels. Separate from the Task Force, the EU has announced a phased ban on imports of Russian coal and a ban on seaborne oil imports that immediately affects around 75 percent of imports of Russian oil.

Question. Can we expect a plan or report to be released detailing the objectives the task force and a strategy to achieve them?

Answer. The March 25 public announcement of the Joint Task Force by the White House and the European Union provides details on the Task Force's objectives to strengthen European energy security, including its overarching aims to diversify liquefied natural (LNG) supplies and reduce demand for natural gas in alignment with climate objectives. Since then, the Commission and the White House released two joint statements on April 29 here (<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/04/29/joint-statement-between-the-united-states-and-the-european-commission-on-european-energy-security-2/>) and May 24 here (<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/05/24/joint-statement-between-the-united-states-and-the-european-commission-on-european-energy-security-3/>) that provided additional details on our strategic priorities and efforts towards achieving them. As the Joint Task Force makes further progress towards its goals, the Administration is committed to providing further updates.

Question. Increasing LNG shipments to the E.U. is a central component of this joint initiative. Specifically, under this agreement, the U.S. will ensure an additional 15 bcm of LNG to Europe this year, with an additional 50 bcm of U.S. LNG annually over the next decade. How has the Task Force engaged with energy producers in the U.S. to help follow through on these commitments?

Answer. The United States committed to working with international partners and striving to identify additional LNG volumes for the EU market of at least 15 bcm in 2022. The EU has committed to working with Member States toward the goal of ensuring, until at least 2030, demand for approximately 50 bcm/year of additional U.S. LNG consistent with our shared net-zero goals. Since that announcement, the Task Force has met with key energy industry representatives and EU Member States. We have seen tangible progress, such as Finland's contract to lease a floating LNG import terminal from a U.S. provider that will be operational by the end of 2022.

Question. In addition to increasing shipments of U.S. LNG to the EU, what other options is the Task Force exploring to help shift Europe's energy reliance away from Russia?

Answer. In addition to facilitating increased LNG supplies to Europe, the U.S.-European Commission Joint Task Force is focused on reducing overall demand for natural gas by accelerating deployment of clean energy technologies and energy efficiency solutions. The United States and European Commission have also convened representatives of EU Member States, industry participants, and other stakeholders to solicit views and promote government-private sector cooperation on steps and actions the United States, the EU, and its Member States can take to accelerate the deployment of heat pumps, energy efficiency technologies, and renewable energy.

Question. Which will have the most immediate impacts?

Answer. As part of the task force, the Administration and the European Commission committed to reduce overall gas demand by accelerating market deployment of clean energy technologies. These include energy efficiency solutions such as increasing demand response devices, including smart thermostats, and deployment of heat pumps to reduce gas demand through electrification. The REPowerEU plan estimates that reductions through energy savings in homes and electrified heating can replace up to 15.5 bcm of Russian natural gas in 2022.

Question. What ways can Congress help support these efforts?

Answer. The Administration appreciates Congress's continued support for our efforts to reduce Europe's dependence on Russian fossil fuels and diversify its energy sources and suppliers, and welcomes constructive engagement with Congress in furtherance of these efforts.

Question. Ukraine Security Assistance Coordinator: Now that LTG (Ret) Terry Wolff has been appointed to the National Security Council as the Ukraine Security

Assistance Coordinator, there are two issue areas that I believe we need to continue to make progress in: The initial strategy of providing Warsaw Block equipment to the Ukrainians was the right one—they know how to use them and our Eastern European allies had stocks they were willing to provide. As the war continues we are now providing them with more NATO standard equipment—to include our own 155mm howitzer artillery and NATO standard tanks and personnel carriers. What discussions are you having with Secretary Austin about developing a strategic plan to train Ukraine’s forces on NATO standard equipment?

Answer. The Department of State is working closely with the interagency to determine how best to get Ukraine the security assistance it needs to defend itself as quickly as possible. Throughout the course of the war Ukraine’s defensive requirements have changed, and we have worked closely with the Department of Defense to adapt the assistance provided. The Department has engaged extensively with our NATO Allies and other partners to provide both Warsaw Pact and NATO standard equipment. The United States and key Allies have also provided training to our Ukrainian partners to ensure that they can operate this equipment effectively and safely. We do anticipate that Ukraine will increasingly require NATO standard and similar equipment from other countries as the war continues. We seek to transition all of our Allies and partners away from Russian equipment, but that process will take time and resources, such as the significant assistance Congress recently appropriated to help countries that have been impacted by the war in Ukraine.

Question. How is the State Department going to coordinate with Lieutenant General Wolff in improving the arms transfer process? Does he report to you or the President?

Answer. The State Department coordinates closely with Lieutenant General Wolff (Ret) to improve the provision of security assistance to Ukraine, working with the National Security Council, Department of Defense, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and others. Our collaboration ensures coordinated policy and timely, effective provision of arms transfers and security assistance to Ukraine and coordinated diplomatic outreach to secure security assistance from our Allies and partners. Lieutenant General Wolff reports to the President, as he is a Senior Director at the NSC.

Question. After their initial hesitancy, Germany has stepped up their support of Ukraine, but are still unwilling to provide them with the heavy weapons they need. Germany’s ruling coalition appears to be fractured on the issue of sending additional heavy weaponry to Ukraine, and Austria has spoken out against Ukraine’s bid to join the EU. What discussions have you had with our allies to reverse these trends?

Answer. We coordinate closely with Germany through diplomatic and defense channels both bilaterally and multilaterally (i.e., through NATO, the EU, and G7) to support Ukraine. Germany is a key ally in maintaining unity in the face of Russia’s invasion. Germany has sent lethal weapons to Ukraine, increased troop deployments to the Eastern flank, suspended the Nord Stream 2 pipeline, committed to spending 2 percent of GDP on defense, established a new 100-billion-euro defense fund, and announced it would end Russian coal and oil imports by August 1 and December 31, 2022, respectively. We were pleased that the European Council unanimously approved Ukraine’s EU candidate status on June 23 and continue to engage Austria and other partners on the integration of Ukraine and the Western Balkans into the EU.

Question. Global Engagement Center: In last year’s testimony for the FY22 budget request, you gave me your commitment that you would follow through on President Zelenskyy’s request to set up a Center for Combatting Disinformation in Ukraine in partnership with the Global Engagement Center. You also stated that appointment of a special coordinator to lead the Center was being reviewed. Can you provide an update as to the efforts of the GEC in Ukraine today, as well as why a special coordinator of the GEC has not been appointed for over 2 years into this Administration to lead the GEC?

Answer. I respectfully defer any questions regarding the appointment of a special coordinator to the White House.

GEC regularly communicates with the Ukrainian Government’s Center for Strategic Communication and shares selected unclassified reporting to help inform their counter-disinformation efforts within Ukraine and assist with programming and content creation. The GEC’s collaborative approach to countering Russian propaganda and disinformation in Ukraine is conducted in close coordination with others in the Department and the interagency, with our international partners and directly with the Government of Ukraine.

Question. The FY23 Budget Request only asks for \$5 million increase toward the Global Engagement Center—is this an adequate increase to tackle the disinformation environment we face today?

Answer. The FY 2023 Request includes a \$5 million increase for the Global Engagement Center’s programmatic activities, as well as a \$2.7 million increase to support 15 new positions requested for GEC. When including current services adjustments, the overall increase for GEC is approximately \$8.07 million, or 15 percent above FY 2022. In the near term, the Department anticipates providing GEC with additional resources from the recently enacted Ukraine supplementals. The current information environment includes principal actors such as Russia and the PRC surging resources toward disinformation and propaganda, making GEC’s coordination of broader State and interagency resources all the more vital.

Question. The White House has been hesitant at times to impose stricter sanctions. Russian officials admitted last week that sanctions had harmed their economy, we remain concerned that the Administration is not being aggressive enough in impacting the Russian economy. However, sanctions against VTB Bank do not go into effect until nearly 2 months from today. Placing full blocking sanctions on all Russian banks and adding secondary sanctions would make it really difficult for the world to pay for Russian energy exports. Secretary Blinken, can you provide an update on sanctions on Russia?

Answer. We continue to impose sanctions on Russia for its unjustified war against Ukraine. Together with more than thirty partners, we have designated over 2,400 individuals and entities. These include sanctions on oligarchs, their networks, and assets, along with hundreds of political, financial, and corporate leaders. Our sanctions have imposed severe costs on Russia’s financial sector and key sources of revenue and economic sectors. We have also degraded Russia’s defense and other critical sectors feeding Putin’s war machine. Our most recent actions targeted major Russian defense companies like Rostec and United Aircraft. We have coupled sanctions with extensive export controls that cut Russia off from critical goods.

Question. Why are we not implementing full blocking sanctions on all banks and why have you not instituted secondary sanctions?

Answer. All options remain on the table when it comes to promoting accountability for Russia’s atrocities and its continued war against Ukraine. As President Biden said, our goal is to “maximize the impact on Putin and Russia and minimize the harm on us and our allies and friends around the world.” We routinely assess and analyze targets to ensure our sanctions have the intended impact and help achieve our foreign policy goals. Before we move forward with any designations, we want to make sure they will not have undesirable consequences.

Question. Denial of Tax Benefits: Since Russia’s invasion began, we have seen hundreds of companies around the world pull their businesses out of Russia or modify them to reduce their presence. Given the atrocities we are witnessing in Ukraine, it is clear why many companies would not want to be paying taxes to a foreign government who is using that revenue to finance its war machine. However, right now, many companies who continue to operate in Russia still benefit from U.S. foreign tax credits, which are generally provided to offset the double taxation that results from operating in multiple countries. Senator Wyden and I now have a bipartisan agreement to change this and ensure American taxpayers are not subsidizing the Russian war machine. If companies choose to keep doing business in Russia and paying taxes to Putin’s government in the face of these atrocities, they should forfeit their foreign tax credits and deductions for taxes paid to Russia in the United States. This effort follows my work with Senator Cardin to end the exchange of tax information with Russia and to suspend our tax treaty. I was glad to see the Administration suspend the exchange of tax information. In your view, how has the exodus of companies from Russia impacted its war-making capacity, and would you agree that Russia and Belarus have earned their place amongst the list of nations, currently including North Korea, Iran, Syria, and Sudan, in which we deny tax benefits for multinational companies who continue to operate there?

Answer. The exodus of foreign companies has negatively impacted Russia’s economy by reducing imports and domestic production, contributing to job losses, cutting access to technologies, and lowering Russia’s tax revenues. We continue to use sanctions and export controls to squeeze the Russian Government’s revenues, and they have slowed the economy. The economic steps we took with respect to Russia with our allies and partners have been in effect for almost 6 months. We expect to see the impacts on Russia’s ability to wage war grow in the coming months. Thank you

for raising the potential role of an updated tax policy, including the possibility of legislation to deny credits and deductions for taxes paid to Russia or Belarus.

Question. Last week, the Administration announced a new program to accept refugees called Uniting for Ukraine. My understanding is that this will be a new streamlined process for Ukrainian citizens who have been displaced to apply for humanitarian parole in the United States. I have heard personally from many generous Ohioans who want to open their homes to these refugees, more than 500 people have called or emailed my office and a number of businesses have expressed interest in offering jobs. Is there a website where people can go to today to apply for this program?

Answer. Uniting for Ukraine is a program administered by the Department of Homeland Security. More information on the program can be found on their website, www.dhs.gov/Ukraine. I respectfully refer you to the Department of Homeland Security for more information on Uniting for Ukraine and its application process.

Question. When will Uniting for Ukraine be operational so that people here and abroad can apply and begin the process?

Answer. Uniting for Ukraine is a program administered by the Department of Homeland Security. More information on the program can be found on their website, www.dhs.gov/Ukraine. It is currently operational, and I respectfully refer you to the Department of Homeland Security for more information on the program and its application process.

Question. How long do you envision the application process taking? Weeks or months?

Answer. The Department of State does not have a role in the application or approval process for Uniting for Ukraine. I respectfully refer you to the Department of Homeland Security for more information on that program and its application process.

Question. I fully support bringing in Ukrainian refugees so long as they are vetted, can you speak to how State will be administering biometric and biographic screening and vetting security checks for those who apply for this program?

Answer. Uniting for Ukraine is a program administered by the Department of Homeland Security. More information on the program can be found on their website, www.dhs.gov/Ukraine. I respectfully refer you to the Department of Homeland Security for more information, including the screening and vetting process for applicants and sponsors.

Question. There are approximately 300 children who are caught with no options to complete an adoption with a U.S. family. My office has been in touch with at least 7 families in Ohio who are directly impacted. A portion of these children have severe medical problems and lack access to quality health care. Other children have participated in host programs where they have come to the United States multiple times to visit with their adoptive families. It seems, from communications with agencies and families that Department of State, thus far, has not engaged with the Ukrainian Ministry about a path to preserve these children's connections to these families. What has Department of State done to advocate for these children and families?

Answer. I have tremendous empathy for families who have hosted Ukrainian children in the past and for families at the earliest stages of the intercountry adoption process. Many families develop an emotional attachment to the children well before a legal parent-child relationship is established. Until a final adoption order is issued, Ukrainian authorities have sole jurisdiction over decisions about the best interests of these children. The Bureau of Consular Affairs is in regular communication with the Government of Ukraine's Ministry of Social Policy and National Social Service, as well as with U.S. families and adoption service providers. We have shared U.S. families' concerns. Ukraine has repeatedly indicated that they prefer the children to remain in Europe or nearby countries, in closer proximity to Ukraine.

Question. Who has been the Ukraine point of contact?

Answer. The Department's primary points of contact for intercountry adoption in Ukraine are the National Social Service of Ukraine (NSS) and the Ministry of Social Policy (MSP). We are also in close communication with the Ukrainian Embassy in Washington, DC.

Question. Some of these children were previously eligible for B1/B2 visas. Do you plan to make these children eligible for the Uniting in Ukraine program?

Answer. The Department of Homeland Security has sole authority to grant parole, including under the Uniting for Ukraine parole program. We respectfully refer you to the Department of Homeland Security for any questions regarding parole eligibility for children under Uniting for Ukraine. Additionally, a B1/B2 nonimmigrant visa is not a suitable alternative to a permanent resettlement or immigration process.

RESPONSES OF SECRETARY OF STATE ANTONY J. BLINKEN TO QUESTIONS
SUBMITTED BY SENATOR EDWARD J. MARKEY

Question. As the Administration's Indo-Pacific Strategy stated, the Indo-Pacific is "the epicenter of the climate crisis." My provision calling on the United States Government to facilitate a robust interagency Indo-Pacific climate resiliency and adaptation strategy was included in the Senate-passed U.S. Innovation and Competition Act. How will the Fiscal Year 2023 budget request for the Department of State support U.S. efforts to mitigate the impacts of climate change in the Indo-Pacific?

Answer. The FY 2023 budget request to Congress supports U.S. coordination bilaterally and regionally with institutions and groupings including the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), Australia-India-Japan-U.S. "Quad," Pacific Islands Forum (PIF), and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum to build capacity and address the key regional challenge of climate change. These investments are essential for the global effort to limit temperature rise to no more than 1.5°C and will reduce the need for costly humanitarian aid following extreme-weather events and safeguard decades of U.S. investment in global development.

Question. What additional resources does the Department of State need to adopt and execute this strategy?

Answer. The FY 2023 budget request to Congress includes more than \$11 billion in international climate assistance and finance across the U.S. Government, of which \$2.28 billion is for Department of State and USAID climate programs. If enacted, this funding will meet the President's historic pledge to quadruple international climate finance while strengthening global stability, increasing energy security, enhancing U.S. competitiveness, and strengthening climate resilience in key geographies around the world.

Question. The 2018 Asia Reassurance Initiative Act (ARIA), which I championed with former Senator Cory Gardner, invests more than \$1.7 billion per year for 5 years to support democracy, human rights, the rule of law, and security in the Indo-Pacific. What will the Fiscal Year 2023 State Department budget request do to push back against the authoritarian playbook of repression in the Indo-Pacific and make investments in people-to-people exchanges, democracy promotion, rule of law, and the protection of human rights?

Answer. In order to achieve the goal of a free and open Indo-Pacific, U.S. assistance will build collective capacity of partners and allies to update and adapt the rules-based order to new challenges. U.S. foreign assistance will support efforts to modernize the architecture of international cooperation for the challenges of this century. Pooling shared resources and ambitions with like-minded partners amplifies the reach and effect of U.S. foreign assistance programs. Investments in multilateral fora, including ASEAN and the Mekong-U.S. Partnership (MUSP), highlight the United States' commitment to these institutions and their ability to forge solutions to shared challenges and reflect shared values. Foreign assistance will elevate U.S. coordination with Quad partners to meet current and emerging challenges. The United States will continue to increase its engagement with Pacific Island nations, bilaterally and multilaterally, through programs that seek to build their resilience to current and future health shocks, respond to the climate crisis, and advance their long-term prosperity and security.

Question. China has been aggressively moving to secure its access to critical minerals and block other countries, including the United States, from the supply chain. China has acquired over 50 percent of the world's lithium supply through investments in Australia and the Lithium Triangle. Furthermore, Argentina, one of the key producers in the Lithium Triangle, has signed a Memorandum of Understanding to join the Belt and Road Initiative, positioning China for further investment in the region. While China has a plan for lithium, the United States does not. An issue of this magnitude spans multiple agencies, but what is the State Department doing in order to protect the United States' stake in the international market for critical minerals?

Answer. The State Department is leading diplomatic efforts to strengthen resiliency, ensure mining and processing adhere to the highest environmental, social, and governance standards, and create a level-playing field for U.S. producers. The State Department achieves this through its Energy Resource Governance Initiative (ERGI), which promotes sound mining-sector governance practices in more than 15 mining and processing countries globally. We are also expanding our coordination with likeminded countries that are significant off takers of critical minerals to share information and identify investment opportunities in minerals exploration, mining, processing, and recycling.

RESPONSES OF SECRETARY OF STATE ANTONY J. BLINKEN TO QUESTIONS
SUBMITTED BY SENATOR JEFF MERKLEY

Question. Transnational Repression: In yesterday's briefing, Secretary Blinken responded to my question on transnational repression that he shared my concerns about authoritarian governments increasingly reaching across their own borders, including into democracies like the United States and Europe, to silence dissent among diasporas and exiles. How does the President's budget reflect that transnational repression is a priority for the Administration?

Answer. The President's budget request includes funding for the Department of State to support a variety of programs addressing and countering transnational repression. Some programs aim to enable civil society protection providers to identify, investigate, and take action to protect targets of transnational repression; others make emergency holistic security and legal assistance available to support civil society actors worldwide who have come under threat or attack for their work or aim to ensure global civil society can preemptively engage in advocacy efforts to reduce instances of transnational repression and raise the cost of using those tactics.

Question. In addition, Blinken noted that the Administration has a number of initiatives in development with like-minded allies to pushback against transnational repression. Could you expand on what these initiatives are?

Answer. The Department is working together with our like-minded partners to shine a spotlight on transnational repression, strengthen resiliency against the practice, and take steps in international organizations, including the United Nations, to stigmatize transnational repression and hold its perpetrators accountable. We have implemented financial sanctions and visa restrictions on individuals for their transnational repression activity, including under the global visa restriction policy known as the "Khashoggi Ban," and we encourage our partners to take similar measures. Furthermore, we work with likeminded countries to prevent INTERPOL being abused to facilitate acts of transnational repression.

Question. Burma: The President's budget requests \$48.2 million in economic support funds (ESF) for Burma. How will that money be used and how will the U.S. Government ensure that it does not go to the military junta?

Answer. The requested \$48.2 million in ESF funds for Burma will build upon State and USAID efforts to provide necessary services to the people of Burma. With these resources, USAID and State will work with communities and civil society organizations across the country to address the impacts of violent conflict, address human rights violations, and strengthen processes and mechanisms for an eventual return to democratic governance. We convened an interagency working group after the military coup through which we continue to review planned USG engagements with and assistance to Burma, ensuring that all assistance is consistent with applicable restrictions and does not benefit the regime.

Question. Can you break down the difference between how ESF will be used versus the \$31.8 billion in development assistance that was also requested for Burma in the President's budget?

Answer. The \$48.2 million in ESF requested for Burma will directly support pro-democracy and civil society organizations, think tanks, and private businesses that support the restoration of Burma's path to democracy. The \$31.8 million in DA requested for Burma will strengthen civil society, as well as advance food security, basic education, private sector growth, and sustainable land use practices.

Question. How has the United States adapted its support to Burmese civil society in the aftermath of the coup?

Answer. Since the February 2021 military coup d'état, the United States has increased support for Burma's civil society, pro-democracy, and human rights actors. We continue to engage at all levels, including at senior levels, with representatives

of Burma's pro-democracy movement as well as ethnic and religious leaders. We have directed significant attention and resources to support civil society activists working to build an inclusive, representative democracy, to enable them to exercise their human rights, and to support those most at risk, including journalists and human rights defenders. We have also provided life-saving humanitarian assistance to meet the needs of vulnerable populations, including strengthening the capacities of civil society organizations to deliver essential health services.

Question. How is the Department able to get humanitarian assistance to the over 14 million in Burma in need without working through the military junta?

Answer. The Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) works through partners, including the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Committee of the Red Cross, to provide life-saving humanitarian assistance to the people of Burma. These partners provide protection services, shelter materials, non-food items, mental health support, and other life-saving assistance. This assistance is carefully monitored to ensure it is not diverted by the military regime nor can they claim credit for its implementation. PRM has also provided funding to partners who provide assistance on both sides of the Thailand-Burma border to refugees and internally displaced persons.

Question. Where do conversations with the Government of Thailand stand on delivering cross-border humanitarian assistance to Burma from Thailand?

Answer. The Department strongly supports cross-border humanitarian assistance from Thailand to Burma and continually advocates with the Royal Thai Government (RTG) on the importance of lifesaving, cross-border assistance. Building off our long history of working together to advance humanitarian assistance, we are engaging the RTG and other stakeholders in identifying solutions for the people of Burma to receive the help they need. Currently, PRM funds partners on the Thailand-Burma border who provide assistance to refugees and internally displaced persons on both sides of the border.

Question. Bangladesh has relocated a total of 30,000 Rohingya to Bhasan Char and recent trips by senior U.S. officials have offered the opportunity to put pressure on the Government of Bangladesh to improve conditions. Bangladesh is invested in having the Bhasan Char relocation considered a success, but I remain troubled by forced relocations and/or limited mobility once refugees arrive at the island. What is the U.S. position on providing assistance for Rohingya that may have been forcibly relocated to Bhasan Char especially as other donors like Japan and Canada provide funding?

Answer. We are currently assessing humanitarian needs on Bhasan Char. We welcome the improvement in the conditions and availability of services on Bhasan Char since the Government of Bangladesh and UN signed the memorandum of understanding in October 2021. However, any U.S. Government funding will depend on the Government of Bangladesh's respect for freedom of movement. Bhasan Char's long-term viability requires Bangladesh's continued commitment to fully informed and voluntary relocations, improved health services, expanded livelihood opportunities, and frequent opportunities to move to and from the mainland.

Question. Irrespective of U.S. funding for activities on Bhasan Char, how can the U.S.—as by far the largest donor to the response and to UNHCR—leverage its position to ensure the rights of Rohingya such as freedom of movement, are protected, including by holding UNHCR accountable to its protection mandate?

Answer. After nearly 5 years since the 2017 outbreak of violence in Burma forced nearly 740,000 Rohingya into Bangladesh and with no prospects for voluntary repatriation to Burma in the near term, we continue to work with UN partners, including UNHCR, and Bangladesh on this protracted displacement crisis. This includes urging Bangladesh to allow Rohingya refugees to exercise greater self-reliance through expanded access to education, work opportunities, and greater freedom of movement. We emphasize that self-reliance is key to decreasing tensions with host communities and mitigating growing hopelessness among Rohingya refugees.

Question. Honduras: In fiscal year 2022, Congress zeroed out Foreign Military Financing to the three Northern Triangle countries, and conditioned 60 percent of the remainder of U.S. assistance to the central governments of Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala on the successful completion of anti-corruption and rule of law metrics. For Fiscal Year 2023, however, the President's Budget Request provides \$10.5 million in Foreign Military Financing throughout the Central America region, though it does not specify a country-by-country breakdown. What is the Administration's current approach to U.S. security assistance in each Northern Triangle coun-

try, and how does the State Department plan to program Foreign Military Financing in Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala, respectively?

Answer. The approach for FMF in northern Central America will be complex, but there are areas for cooperation. The key factors will be countries making verifiable progress on anti-corruption efforts and developing clear plans and actions for removing the military from policing roles. The Department would like to ensure FMF is available to support humanitarian assistance and disaster response capabilities with those militaries, but would need Congressional support.

Question. To what extent does the FY23 Budget Request factor in recent developments—both positive and negative—on democracy and the rule of law throughout the region, including President Xiomara Castro’s promising anti-corruption agenda in Honduras, on the one hand, and crackdowns on judicial independence in El Salvador and Guatemala, on the other?

Answer. The FY 2023 Request includes \$986.8 million in support of the Administration’s Root Causes Strategy and Collaborative Migration Management Strategy, and to help meet the President’s 4-year commitment for Central America. The request includes \$97.6 million in funding for El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras, and \$219.8 million in regional funding for democracy, human rights, and governance programs. We have already pivoted our assistance to support the new Castro administration and will consider reprogramming funding away from government institutions undermined by the Bukele and Giammattei administrations if needed.

Question. Can you provide more details on the programming of U.S. security assistance to enhance Honduras’ border security as part of the U.S.-Honduras Strategic Dialogue?

Answer. Our assistance to Honduras includes an interagency agreement with U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) which provides mentoring, equipment, and technical assistance to Honduran Frontier Police’s special operations unit. CBP advisors teach Honduran officers how to improve their intelligence gathering techniques and use scanners to search for drugs, contraband, and smuggled human cargo. We also fund programs with the Department of Homeland Security’s investigations arm, which works in conjunction with Honduran units to combat cross-border criminal activity in Honduras such as human smuggling and drug trafficking.

Question. What does our border security cooperation with the Government of Honduras involve, and what are the Administration’s policy objectives there?

Answer. Our border security cooperation involves training, mentoring, and equipping our Honduran counterparts to target smugglers, deter irregular migration, and develop strategic plans to better monitor and control borders. We fund the deployment of U.S. Custom and Border Protection advisors to Honduras, who assess the state of border security, monitor trends in migration and narcotics smuggling, and develop training for their Honduran counterparts to address the issues. Our objective is to help Honduras increase its capacity to better secure its borders, stem irregular migration, and stop the flow of narcotics into the United States.

Question. Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act: Now that Senator Rubio and my Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act is law, the interagency is working diligently to implement it. We secured over \$27 million to bolster enforcement in Fiscal Year 2022, and the Administration has asked for a sizable increase for FY23. But as the United States ramps up its efforts we need to make sure that companies benefiting from Uyghur slave labor don’t just ship their products to other markets. What is the Administration doing to push other countries to enact their own prohibitions on these imports?

Answer. The Biden-Harris administration has been utilizing a whole-of-government approach to increase awareness of the PRC’s use of forced labor in Xinjiang. The United States continues to coordinate with partners and allies, NGOs, and the private sector to prevent the importation of goods produced with forced labor. The Department submitted a report to Congress outlining the U.S. diplomatic strategy to address forced labor in Xinjiang and underscoring our continued efforts to coordinate with like-minded countries to end forced labor in Xinjiang. We will continue to encourage foreign governments to use the Act as a model for their own national efforts to prevent the introduction into their own markets of goods produced by forced labor.

Question. Can the Administration use the Summit for Democracy process to push for other countries to take concrete action like we have?

Answer. We are leveraging the Summit for Democracy to maintain momentum by partners and allies for democratic renewal and seizing the Summit’s Year of Action

as an opportunity for countries to translate words into action. Under our own commitments in the Presidential Initiative for Democratic Renewal, the United States has launched the Multilateral Partnership for Organizing, Worker Empowerment, and Rights (M-POWER), a global initiative to unite governments, unions, labor academics and CSOs committed to promoting worker empowerment and rights. We are using “democracy cohorts” to bring governments, civil society, private sector, and philanthropies together to support the fulfillment of countries’ Summit commitments.

Question. Ethiopia: The United Nations and international NGOs have all found that atrocities and crimes against humanity have happened in Ethiopia during the current conflict. What is the status of consideration of these atrocities?

Answer. The United States closely examines the assessments of UN bodies and credible NGOs, such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, and incorporates them into the development of U.S. policy. In the case of Ethiopia, such assessments have contributed to our decisions to impose sanctions, restrict some forms of foreign assistance, and terminate AGOA privileges. The United States also co-sponsored the UN Human Rights Council resolution creating a Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia, an independent, international investigative mechanism.

Question. Is the Department pursuing a genocide determination? If not, why not?

Answer. Making a determination that atrocity crimes have occurred is an important tool available to the Secretary of State. In the case of the conflict in northern Ethiopia, we believe that a diplomatic resolution is the most effective means to halt and prevent atrocities in the immediate term. This is our urgent priority, and we are actively working to that end. Throughout the conflict, we have repeatedly called out alleged human rights abuses as credible evidence has been reported or shared. This is why we support the independent UN commission of experts and encourage the government to allow them access to the country.

Question. I have been pleased to see that truckloads of humanitarian assistance have been arriving in Tigray in recent weeks after months and months of a blockade that has resulted in widespread famine conditions and unnecessary deaths. This is no doubt in part because of the advocacy of the State Department. However, the United Nations estimates that at least 500 truckloads of aid, medicine, and fuel are needed on a weekly basis. What is the Department doing to ensure that the Government of Ethiopia will facilitate meaningful levels of assistance to arrive in Tigray?

Answer. The continuous, uninterrupted flow of overland assistance must become regularized in order to meet the immense needs of the millions of people in northern Ethiopia. We are pressing the Ethiopian Government, regional authorities, and all other actors to accelerate, uphold, and expand these efforts to ensure immediate, sustained, and unimpeded humanitarian access to all Ethiopians affected by this conflict, in coordination with humanitarian organizations. We will not hesitate to consider all options should parties block or divert humanitarian assistance. E.O. 14046 authorizes sanctions against those who obstruct such assistance.

Question. Critics assess that Prime Minister Abiy is allowing in just enough aid to prevent sanctions. Has the Department considered putting sanctions on those actors that have taken steps that have worsened the humanitarian crisis in Ethiopia?

Answer. We are encouraged that the Government of Ethiopia and regional authorities in Tigray and Afar have taken steps in recent weeks to enable the delivery of desperately needed food aid to war-affected communities. However, the continuous, uninterrupted flow of overland assistance must become regularized to meet the immense needs of the millions of people in northern Ethiopia. We are pressing the Ethiopian Government, regional authorities, and all other actors to accelerate, uphold, and expand these efforts to ensure sustained and unimpeded humanitarian access to all Ethiopians. We will consider all options, including sanctions, if actors take steps to worsen the humanitarian crisis.

Question. Philippines: Following the May 9 Presidential election in the Philippines, the United States will have an opportunity to revisit its relationship with that country with a strong focus on promoting human rights and democracy. How does the Department’s proposed budget center protections for human rights and democracy in our assistance to the Philippines, especially that that goes to the Philippines National Police and the Armed Forces of the Philippines?

Answer. We look forward to working with the next president of the Philippines to strengthen the alliance between our countries. That includes focusing on the importance of promoting respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in our

bilateral engagements, including with respect to the armed forces and police. Sustained constructive engagement with all levels of the Philippine military is essential for promoting both respect for human rights and U.S. security interests, and our proposed budget reflects this. Human rights and ethics are integral parts of training for law enforcement units, and, in compliance with the Leahy Law, no assistance is provided to Philippine security units credibly implicated in gross violations of human rights.

Question. Can you breakdown what types of programming and arms sales comprise the \$40 million for foreign military financing as well as the \$14.025 million for international narcotics and law enforcement (INCLE), nonproliferation, anti-Terrorism, Demining and related programs (NADR), and International Military Education and Training (IMET)?

Answer. The FY 2023 \$40 million FFM request will improve maritime security, humanitarian assistance and disaster response, and counterterrorism capacity in support of multi-year efforts to enhance upgraded Armed Forces of the Philippines and Philippine Coast Guard maritime, air, and land assets. The \$2.1 million IMET request is commensurate with prior years and will support professional military education. The \$5.5 million NADR request is consistent with prior year funding, which will support counterterrorism training. The \$6.4 million INCLE request will support programs to combat transnational crime, improve the capacity of Philippine maritime security institutions, and strengthen the justice sector and rule of law.

Question. What foreign assistance programs benefit the Philippines National Police?

Answer. The Department provides limited assistance to the Philippines National Police (PNP) and focuses on programs that provide training on human rights, ethics, and professional skills. The United States also works with Leahy-eligible specialized units of the PNP, such as maritime units engaged in countering transnational crime; the Transnational Criminal Investigative Unit of the PNP, which fights child exploitation and trafficking in persons; as well as specialized cybercrime units. Focused law enforcement assistance also includes units charged with investigating ISIS-affiliated and other transnational terrorist groups, such as the Special Action Force. No U.S. assistance to the PNP benefits units involved with the country's drug war.

Question. How does the Department ensure that these funds do not go to human rights violators?

Answer. All security force units in the Philippines, including the Philippines National Police nominated for applicable assistance, are vetted consistent with the Leahy law, and are denied assistance if credible information is found that the unit committed a gross violation of human rights. Leahy vetting occurs at both the unit and individual levels consistent with Department guidance.

Question. What is the Department's long-term view on how to reform the Philippines National Police?

Answer. Ongoing engagement with the Philippines National Police (PNP) focuses heavily on human rights, ethics, and professional skills. The Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, in partnership with the Department of Justice's International Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Program, trains police cadets and officers on human rights, ethics, leadership, instructor development, and professionalization. Enduring institutional change takes time, and the Department's goal is to institutionalize respect for human rights within core PNP training curricula to give early and mid-career officers a foundational understanding of these concepts as they rise through the ranks.

Question. Ukraine Food Security: For Fiscal Year 2023, the President's Budget Request provides approximately \$1 billion in bilateral agriculture and food security programming. This is the same amount as Fiscal Year 2022 enacted levels, despite the tremendous shock to global agriculture and food prices, including for wheat and fertilizer, prompted by Putin's war in Ukraine. How does the Administration plan to mitigate the war's impact on the global food supply and the risk of elevated food insecurity in humanitarian settings and conflict zones, from Yemen to Syria, Afghanistan, and Ethiopia, if not in the Budget Request?

Answer. In addition to the approximately \$1 billion for agriculture and food security programming, the President's FY 2023 budget requests provides \$10.45 billion in humanitarian assistance, part of which will help address the risk of elevated food insecurity in humanitarian settings. The FY 2023 Request will be complemented by the Ukraine Supplemental Appropriations Act, which included \$4.15 billion in hu-

manitarian assistance. On April 26, 2022, the President also submitted an additional supplemental appropriations request to Congress that contained \$1.6 billion in additional humanitarian and food security assistance, along with additional funds for the Departments of Agriculture and Treasury, to people around the world facing food insecurity due to Putin's war in Ukraine and other drivers of global food insecurity. If passed by Congress, these resources would significantly increase our ability to respond.

Question. How will this request complement the \$670 million in food aid that the Biden administration announced on April 27?

Answer. The funding for humanitarian assistance and agriculture and food security programming in the FY 2023 President's Budget Request, the Ukraine Supplemental Appropriations Act, and the President's April 2022 supplemental funding request will complement and support ongoing efforts by the U.S. Government to respond to global food insecurity exacerbated by Putin's war in Ukraine. The \$670 million in food assistance, which includes \$282 million from the Bill Emerson Humanitarian Trust, is a part of these efforts and will provide much-needed assistance to countries and people facing food insecurity around the world.

RESPONSES OF SECRETARY OF STATE ANTONY J. BLINKEN TO QUESTIONS
SUBMITTED BY SENATOR JOHN BARRASSO

Question. In January 2021, you acknowledged that China was committing genocide and crimes against humanity towards the Uyghurs. On March 21, 2022, you once again called on China to "end its ongoing genocide and crimes against humanity." Is China continuing to commit genocide and crimes against humanity?

Answer. Yes. Despite increased global attention and actions to promote accountability, we have seen no indications that PRC authorities have ceased committing genocide or crimes against humanity in Xinjiang, which include imprisonment, enforced sterilization, torture, persecution through the use of forced labor, and imposition of draconian restrictions on freedom of religion or belief, freedom of expression, and freedom of movement. We reiterate our call upon the PRC to immediately cease committing atrocities against predominantly Muslim Uyghurs, and members of other ethnic and religious minority groups in Xinjiang, immediately release those unjustly detained, and allow independent investigators unhindered access to the region.

Question. How effective have U.S. efforts been in ending the genocide and human rights abuses committed by the Chinese Communist Party?

Answer. The United States has implemented visa restrictions, financial sanctions, export controls, and import restrictions to promote accountability for PRC officials and entities connected to human rights abuses and violations in Xinjiang. Through sustained diplomatic engagement, we have convinced like-minded partners and allies to impose similar actions. These measures have, as applicable, effectively imposed costs on PRC officials connected to human rights abuses and violations by prohibiting them from traveling to the United States and using the U.S. financial system. Import measures are helping to ensure the PRC cannot derive financial benefits from U.S. markets for perpetrating human rights abuses, including forced labor.

Question. What is your strategy to hold China accountable for its serious human rights abuses?

Answer. The United States will continue to work with our allies and partners to promote accountability for those responsible for human rights abuses and violations. Working bilaterally and through multilateral fora, we will continue to seek to support victims and jointly impose costs on PRC officials and entities responsible for perpetrating these abuses and violations. We will also continue to call upon the PRC to respect human rights and fundamental freedoms. We remain steadfastly committed to promoting accountability for PRC officials responsible for genocide and crimes against humanity and will continue to consider the use of all appropriate tools to promote accountability for those responsible and deter future abuses.

Question. China is developing capabilities with the potential to threaten global security and stability. At the end of last year, China reportedly tested a hypersonic missile. What threats does the Chinese Communist Party pose to the United States?

Answer. The People's Republic of China's (PRC) hypersonic missile test is concerning to us as it should be to all who seek peace and stability in the region and beyond. The PRC's nuclear build-up and development of delivery systems raises

questions about Beijing's intent and reinforces the importance of pursuing practical measures to reduce nuclear risks. Despite PRC obfuscation, this rapid build-up has become more difficult to hide and highlights how the PRC is deviating from decades of nuclear strategy based on minimum deterrence. We will continue to advance our capabilities to defend and deter against a range of threats from the PRC to ourselves, our allies, and partners.

Question. What is your assessment of the risk associated with China's military modernization?

Answer. The People's Republic of China's (PRC) military-civil fusion doctrine and military modernization efforts are components of how the PRC seeks to prepare internally to combat the U.S. and our allies and partners, and hence are contrary to U.S. interests. We will continue to shine a light on PRC influence efforts and on PRC-based companies that support military modernization or commit human rights abuses and impose appropriate restrictions on those firms. President Biden is firmly committed to ensuring PRC-based companies cannot misappropriate and misuse U.S. technology and that U.S. technology does not support the PRC's military modernization and is not acquired for use by the People's Liberation Army.

Question. Is the United States keeping pace with China's rapid military expansion and modernization?

Answer. We are committed to protecting U.S. national security and technological edge, including through domestic investments in research and development, and manufacturing. President Biden is firmly committed to making sure that PRC-based companies cannot misappropriate and misuse U.S. technology and that U.S. technology does not support the PRC's military modernization and is not acquired for use by the People's Liberation Army, including through the PRC's military civil fusion doctrine.

Question. Last year, the Biden administration rejoined the World Health Organization (WHO) claiming the best way to reform the WHO is from within. It provided \$200 million in taxpayer dollars without requiring a single reform. Despite the inability to make progress on good governance, transparency, or better warning and response times, the State Department is asking Congress to provide \$200 million more for the WHO in Fiscal Year 2023. Please outline the meaningful reforms achieved at the World Health Organization since the United States rejoined the organization.

Answer. The United States has been a leading voice in calling for reforms to improve the WHO's efficiency, accountability, transparency, and effectiveness. The forthcoming report to Congress on WHO reform outlines significant progress. Of note, the WHO Working Group for Sustainable Financing recently adopted a U.S.-led proposal that calls for WHO's budget proposal for the 2024–2025 biennium to be accompanied by an implementation plan for governance, budget, financial, and other reforms. We also continue to work to improve pandemic prevention, preparedness, and response, including through negotiations on amendments to the International Health Regulations and a new pandemic instrument. These amendments are designed to clarify early-warning triggers for international pandemic response, promote rapid information sharing, and improve WHO decision-making regarding public health emergencies. These capabilities, in turn, will allow the United States and other countries to exercise their ability to make more informed public health decisions.

Question. What specific reforms has the Administration requested be adopted and implemented at the WHO?

Answer. We have advocated that the WHO undertake concrete reforms to strengthen WHO governance; budget and financial transparency and oversight; prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment; accountability; compliance, risk management, and ethics; and human resources management. We proposed to increase transparency and Member State engagement through a new Standing Committee on Health Emergencies, which will be launched at the 151st Executive Board. We also continue to work with WHO and our multilateral partners to improve pandemic prevention, preparedness, and response, including through ongoing negotiations on targeted amendments to the International Health Regulations (2005) and a new pandemic instrument. These amendments are designed to clarify early-warning triggers for international pandemic response, promote rapid information sharing, and improve WHO decision-making regarding public health emergencies. These capabilities, in turn, will allow the United States and other countries to exercise their ability to make more informed public health decisions.

Question. What is the United States' agenda for the World Health Assembly meeting in May 2022?

Answer. The Biden-Harris administration is committed to advancing U.S. public health interests and leading the global community toward a safer, more equitable future. The U.S. delegation to the World Health Assembly will advance multilateral efforts to combat COVID-19, as well as to detect, prevent, prepare for, and respond to future pandemic threats. The United States will also work within the World Health Assembly to address a broad range of global health topics, including polio, HIV/AIDS, nutrition, and non-communicable diseases. In addition, the U.S. delegation will advocate for WHO governance and administrative reforms; prevention of sexual abuse and exploitation and sexual harassment; multilateral cooperation to address the global health impact of the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine; and inclusive engagement of non-state actors and other partners, including Taiwan's meaningful participation in the World Health Organization's activities.

Question. Does the Biden administration support the WHO's proposal to increase assessed contributions?

Answer. The WHO Working Group on Sustainable Financing recently reached consensus on a U.S.-led proposal that links any increase in assessed contributions to progress on reform. The proposal calls on WHO to provide a budget proposal for the first proposed increase of 20 percent at the World Health Assembly in May 2023 alongside an implementation plan on reforms. Additional increases, up to a level of 50 percent of the base budget, will be considered in line with standard WHO budgetary processes and progress on reform through 2031.

Question. Last year, China succeeded in blocking Taiwan's participation at the World Health Assembly. What efforts have been taken to push the World Health Organization to allow the participation of Taiwan?

Answer. We have strongly advocated with likeminded partners for Taiwan's participation as an observer at the WHA through bilateral and multilateral engagements with WHO Director-General Tedros and senior WHO leaders. We have also sought to grow broad international support for Taiwan's participation through diplomatic engagement in member state capitals, public statements, and public affairs campaigns that highlight Taiwan's valuable expertise and the need for inclusive processes to address today's global health challenges.

Question. Our nation should be a strategic energy supplier to Europe. American natural gas is reliable, affordable, and abundant. The United States has the energy resources needed to help our allies reduce their dependence on Russian energy. Do you support increasing exports of American liquefied natural gas to help our allies and partners escape their dependence on Russia?

Answer. We are in constant conversation with Allies and partners about the most effective ways to decrease their dependence on Russian energy. For example, we established the U.S.-EU Task Force on Energy Security to diversify LNG supplies to Europe and to reduce demand for natural gas. We have nearly doubled our LNG exports to Europe over the past 4-5 months and are working to secure an additional 15 billion cubic meters of LNG this year compared to 2021 from global sources.

Question. How is Russia using its energy resources to coerce, intimidate and manipulate other countries?

Answer. Russia exploits its energy supplies and export pipelines to create national and regional dependencies on Russian energy, which it leverages to expand its political, economic, and military influence; weaken European security; and undermine transatlantic security and foreign policy interests. Gazprom's unilateral breach of natural gas contracts with NATO Allies Bulgaria and Poland over Russia's demand for payments in rubles exemplifies how Russia uses energy as an instrument of economic coercion and demonstrates its unreliability as an energy supplier. Our focus is on helping our Allies and partners, who have been an integral part of our unprecedented sanctions, reduce dependencies on Russian fossil fuels as quickly as possible.

Question. The security and stability of the Black Sea is critically important to U.S. national security. When Defense Secretary Austin was in the Black Sea region last year, he stated, "Russia's destabilizing activities in and around the Black Sea reflect its ambitions to regain a dominant position in the region and to prevent the realization of a Europe that is whole, free and at peace." What is the Administration's strategy for increasing security in the Black Sea?

Answer. Our strategy focuses on building the capacity of our partners in the region. The Biden administration has provided more than \$6.3 billion in security as-

sistance to Ukraine and approximately \$70 million to Georgia, Bulgaria, and Romania. The Administration also allocated \$650 million in foreign military financing (FMF) funds provided in the Ukraine Supplemental Appropriations Act of 2022 (USAA) to help Allies and partners defend against Russian aggression in the Black Sea region and elsewhere. With additional Congressional notifications forthcoming, we have notified an additional \$317.6 million for Ukraine, \$34.5 million for Bulgaria, and \$35 million for Georgia in foreign military financing under the USAA.

Question. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) created a very successful Baltic Air Policing Mission to safeguard the integrity of the NATO alliance members' airspace. This mission could serve as a model for efforts to maintain a robust NATO presence in the Black Sea. What are your views on NATO establishing a Black Sea Maritime Patrol mission?

Answer. Along with our NATO Allies, we already conduct air policing operations for Romania and Bulgaria and are constantly exploring ways to bolster the integrity of NATO member airspace, including over the Black Sea. We regularly analyze the security environment and make decisions in consensus with our NATO Allies and other littoral states in the region, in line with existing international obligations and commitments. We also conduct regular NATO exercises in the region and have deployed NATO battlegroups to Romania and Bulgaria.

Question. What are some of the challenges and opportunities of a regular and rotational maritime presence in the Black Sea?

Answer. The Montreux Convention Regarding the Regime of the Straits of 1936 regulates maritime traffic through the Black Sea and requires NATO Ally Turkey to implement restrictions and limitations on the passage of military vessels. The convention places limits on the ability of states, especially non-Black Sea states, to maintain a regular maritime presence in the Black Sea. Turkey continues to enforce the Montreux Convention, which has denied Russia a critical military supply route. We are constantly exploring ways to bolster the security of NATO littoral states in the region under existing bilateral defense cooperation agreements and through NATO.

Question. Do NATO members have the capacity, capabilities, commitment to create this type of mission?

Answer. The NATO Alliance is the most successful and enduring military alliance in history. With our NATO Allies, we conduct regular exercises in the Black Sea region and constantly explores ways to bolster the security of NATO Allies in the region, in line with existing international agreements and law. We have established bilateral and NATO military presence in Allied countries that border the Black Sea, and our commitment to them under Article 5 on mutual defense is ironclad. Any change in mission would require consensus agreement among all Allies before implementation.