

NOMINATIONS

TUESDAY, MAY 16, 2023

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

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 2:06 p.m., in Room SD-419, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Christopher Murphy presiding.

Present: Senators Murphy [presiding], Kaine, Booker, Van Hollen, Ricketts, and Young.

Also Present: Representative Slotkin.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. CHRISTOPHER MURPHY, U.S. SENATOR FROM CONNECTICUT

Senator MURPHY. Good afternoon. It is my pleasure to convene the committee today for an important nominations hearing. You are all before us to represent the United States in key posts overseas in the Middle East and sub-Saharan Africa.

We want to collectively thank you for your willingness to serve the American people and this administration. We are going to make brief opening remarks and then we will turn it over to our nominees for your remarks and then we will engage in a series of dialogues.

Ms. Escrogima, the United States has a distinctive partnership with Oman as a country that plays a really important role in mediating different disputes and conflicts in the Gulf, especially when it comes to Iran and Yemen.

I was there a few years ago pushing the Omanis to take a more active role in midwifing peace negotiations in Yemen and today it is more important than ever before for our Ambassador to Oman to support that back channel role.

Ambassador Johnson, you are headed to Lebanon where the economic and political crises continue to deteriorate. As I told you privately, our Lebanon policy has helped prevent collapse but we have to admit it has not been successful in prompting the political elites to make the compromises necessary to rescue the economy. Your job will be to help us think out of the box as to how we allow Lebanon to make a major leap forward.

Mr. Massinga, the brutal conflict in Ethiopia's northern Tigray region was the world's deadliest conflict in 2022. All sides committed war crimes and crimes against humanity.

While many Ethiopians and the international community welcomed a preliminary peace deal signed by the federal government and the Tigrayan authorities in November, significant challenges

in the peace process lie ahead and other simmering conflicts remain unaddressed.

Mr. Hunt, there were mass protests in Sierra Leone last summer and the skyrocketing costs of living continue to drive unrest there. At least 20 civilians and six police officers died in those clashes with the economic situation still dire and political tensions running high ahead of elections next month. Working with our partners and allies to help prevent more violence there will be critical.

And, finally, Ambassador Popp, you are nominated to lead our post in Uganda. A lot to talk about with respect to Uganda but their parliament just passed one of the most extreme anti-LGBT laws in the world that puts LGBT individuals in Uganda in great danger and may embolden other countries in the region to crack down on those rights as well. The world is watching. We look forward to talking to you about that important topic.

I am looking forward to discussing how all of you are going to represent the administration and advance our U.S. interests and safeguard U.S. personnel abroad.

We thank you all for being here today for the sacrifice you are making on behalf of the country.

And with that I will turn it over to the ranking member, Senator Young.

**STATEMENT OF HON. TODD YOUNG,
U.S. SENATOR FROM INDIANA**

Senator YOUNG. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to thank our five nominees today for their distinguished careers in public service to the United States both at home and abroad.

The positions for which you have been nominated represent the front lines of American diplomacy in increasingly challenging times. I look forward to all our nominees today explaining their vision and plans for advancing American leadership and interest at their respective posts.

In Oman, our engagement with this strategic partner must continue to further U.S. interests and finding a sustainable peace in Yemen, reasserting clear control of vital sea lanes, and not permitting Iran the space to undermine security and stability in the region.

In Beirut our goals are increasingly undermined by prolonged political stasis supercharged by Hezbollah and public corruption and economic collapse. Nor can we forget the massive arsenal of increasingly sophisticated munitions Hezbollah has trained on Israel.

In Ethiopia our Ambassador will immediately be responsible for reasserting American leadership and pursuing accountability in a country recently torn apart by horrific conflict, a conflict fueled in part by regional actors.

Our Ambassador in Kampala will be tasked with moving our bilateral relationship beyond one of humanitarian and security aid and towards a U.S. position that actually pushes back attempts by strategic competitors to swallow that country whole.

And our Ambassador to Sierra Leone will represent the U.S. in a country with immense potential but a need for sustained political and economic growth and stability.

So all of you have your work cut out for you and each of you will have a different perspective on what American leadership and engagement means for each of the posts you have been nominated for.

I look forward to our discussion today and thank you again for your willingness to continue serving the United States.

Senator MURPHY. Let me provide brief introductions and then I will ask you to all make opening statements in the order of introduction. I ask you to keep your opening comments to five minutes or less. Your full statement will be made part of the record.

Ms. Ana Escrogima currently serves as the general counsel at the U.S. Consulate General in Montreal. She has previously served our country in a variety of posts, mostly in the Middle East, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Algeria, Iraq, and Syria.

Ambassador Lisa Johnson is the principal deputy assistant secretary in the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs. She has previously served as an Ambassador to Namibia from 2018 to 2022, coming before the committee for a second time.

Mr. Ervin Massinga is the principal deputy assistant secretary in the State Department's Bureau of African Affairs. He previously served as a United States Trade Representative trade policy officer. His postings overseas have included Sudan, Guinea, Chile, and the Dominican Republic.

Mr. Bryan Hunt serves currently as the senior policy adviser to the United States Transportation Command at the Scott Air Force Base in Illinois. His career in the State Department has a long list of overseas posts including Mozambique, Ghana, Papua New Guinea, Pakistan, Guinea Bissau, and Botswana.

And finally, Ambassador William Popp currently serves as our Ambassador to Guatemala, again a second time before this committee, previously serving in Brazil, Kenya, Colombia, Angola, and Nicaragua.

Welcome to you all. I look forward to your testimony and to engaging with you over the course of this hearing. I will turn it over to you.

STATEMENT OF ANA A. ESCROGIMA, OF NEW YORK, A CAREER MEMBER OF THE SENIOR FOREIGN SERVICE, CLASS OF COUNSELOR, NOMINATED TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE SULTANATE OF OMAN

Ms. ESCROGIMA. Chairman Murphy, Ranking Member Young, and distinguished members of the committee, it is my honor to appear before you as President Biden's nominee to represent the United States as Ambassador to the Sultanate of Oman. I am grateful for the trust that the President and Secretary Blinken have placed in me.

I want to take a moment to acknowledge my father, Pedro Escrogima, and my mother, Ana Fernandez, immigrants from the Dominican Republic and retired career public servants from the great city of New York. My siblings and my brother-in-law, who are here today, and myself, we all admire their example of courage of conviction and dedication to family.

I want to thank my husband Houssam, my partner on this exciting journey, which became more exciting with the arrival of our one-year-old son, Pedro. I understand that our little guy is watching on screen along with Grandma and Grandpa, although he may not exactly realize what is happening.

Senators, I have spent most of my career in the Foreign Service in the Middle East protecting the interests and security of the American people. If confirmed, I will draw on this experience to advance U.S. values and national security interests in Oman. I will work every day to ensure the safety and wellbeing of our Mission Oman team and the American citizens working, traveling, and studying in Oman.

The warm and enduring U.S. relationship with the Sultanate of Oman dates to the earliest days of our republic. We established commercial relations 190 years ago in our first trade agreement with an Arab state.

Today, the U.S.-Oman free trade agreement supports American jobs and drives bilateral trade, which reached a record high of \$4.2 billion in 2022, a 30 percent increase from the prior year.

This February Oman hosted the inaugural U.S.-Oman Strategic Dialogue where we pledged to build our economic relationship for the future.

We have a strategic opportunity to support Oman's economic diversification toward renewable energy, manufacturing, and logistics sectors.

We signed a \$500 million dollar EXIM MOU that will support American companies seeking to be a part of that transition. If confirmed, I will work with our Omani partners to grow trade and commercial ties and build opportunities for our countries to innovate, contribute to global energy security, and create further prosperity.

Now, the bright and prosperous future we seek in the region is only safeguarded if we can address the security challenges that affect Oman and its neighbors.

The Gulf is vital to key U.S. national security priorities and the Sultanate of Oman has consistently been a valued partner in advancing those priorities.

Together, we have worked to disrupt Iranian weapons smuggling and pursue peace in Yemen, which has seen the longest period of calm since the war began. We partner with Oman to address security challenges in the Strait of Hormuz through which 88 percent of the region's oil transits.

Since 1996 Oman has hosted the Middle East Desalination Research Center, the longest functioning regional integration mechanism that includes Israel.

If confirmed, I intend to build on these solid foundations to explore further avenues for deepening regional integration, prosperity, and security.

I will focus on countering Iran's destabilizing actions and on advancing concrete strategic alternatives to the PRC's aggressive practices in the region.

I will encourage Oman to build on its announcement permitting Israeli civilian over flight through its airspace by taking additional steps including consideration of full normalization with Israel.

We are in an exciting moment in the U.S.-Oman people-to-people relationship. We recently announced the resumption of the Fulbright Program for Omanis and a new partnership between Oman and the Arizona National Guard.

If confirmed, I would support exchanges that advance shared priorities and bring together students and experts to take our relationship forward into the future.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Escrogima follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF ANA A. ESCROGIMA

Chairman Murphy, Ranking Member Young, and distinguished Members of the committee: It is my honor to appear before you as President Biden's nominee to represent the United States as Ambassador to the Sultanate of Oman. I am grateful for the trust that the President and Secretary Blinken have placed in me.

I am joined on this special occasion by my father, Pedro Escrogima, and my mother, Ana Fernandez, immigrants from the Dominican Republic and retired career public servants. My siblings and I admire their example of service and dedication to family. I want to thank my husband Houssam Eddine Beggas, my partner on this exciting journey, which became even more exciting with the arrival of our year-old son Pedro. I understand our little guy is watching on screen, although he may not exactly realize what is happening.

Senators, I have spent most of my Foreign Service career protecting the interests and security of the American people in the Middle East. If confirmed, I would draw on this experience to advance U.S. values and national security interests in Oman. I will work every day to ensure the safety and well-being of our Mission Oman team, and the American citizens working and traveling in Oman.

The warm and enduring U.S. relationship with the Sultanate of Oman dates to the earliest days of our republic. We established commercial relations 190 years ago, in our first trade agreement with an Arab state. Today, the U.S.-Oman Free Trade Agreement supports American jobs and drives bilateral trade, which reached a record high of \$4.2 billion in 2022, a 30 percent increase from the prior year. This February, Oman hosted the inaugural U.S.-Oman Strategic Dialogue, where we pledged to build our economic relationship for the future. We have a strategic opportunity to support Oman's economic diversification toward the renewable energy, manufacturing, and logistics sectors. We signed a \$500 million EXIM MOU that will support American companies seeking to be a part of that transition. If confirmed, I will work with our Omani partners to grow trade and commercial ties, and build opportunities for our countries to innovate, contribute to global energy security, and create further prosperity.

The bright and prosperous future we seek in the region is only safeguarded if we can address the security challenges that affect Oman and its neighbors. The safety and wellbeing of Americans in Oman will be my top priority. The Gulf is vital to key U.S. national security priorities in the region, and the Sultanate of Oman has consistently been a valued partner in advancing those priorities. Together, we have worked to prevent smuggling across Oman's borders and to pursue a resolution to the conflict in Yemen and move the peace process forward. We partner with Oman to address security challenges in the Strait of Hormuz, through which 88 percent of the region's oil transits. Oman has since 1996 hosted the Middle East Desalinization Research Center, the longest functioning regional integration mechanism that includes Israel.

If confirmed, I intend to build on these solid foundations to explore further avenues for deepening regional integration, prosperity, and security. I will focus on countering Iran's destabilizing actions, and on advancing concrete, strategic alternatives to the People's Republic of China's aggressive practices in the region. I will encourage Oman to build on its announcement permitting Israeli civilian overflights through its airspace by taking additional steps, including consideration of full normalization with Israel.

We are also in an exciting moment in the U.S.-Oman people-to-people relationship. We recently announced the resumption of the Fulbright program for Omanis and a new partnership between Oman and the Arizona National Guard. If confirmed, I would support exchanges that advance shared priorities and bring together students and experts to take our relationship forward into the future.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I look forward to your questions.

Senator MURPHY. Thank you very much.

STATEMENT OF LISA A. JOHNSON, OF VIRGINIA, A CAREER MEMBER OF THE SENIOR FOREIGN SERVICE, CLASS OF MINISTER-COUNSELOR, NOMINATED TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE LEBANESE REPUBLIC

Ms. JOHNSON. Chairman Murphy, Ranking Member Young, distinguished members of the committee, it is an honor to appear before you today as President Biden's nominee to serve as U.S. Ambassador to the Lebanese Republic.

I would like to express my gratitude to the President and Secretary of State for the confidence they have shown me. If confirmed, I look forward to working very closely with this committee and with Congress more broadly to advance our nation's interests in Lebanon.

Please permit me to acknowledge my parents and my brother without whose steadfast support I would not be here today. I am deeply grateful for their encouragement as well as that of mentors, colleagues, and dear friends during my more than 32 years serving the American people at home and abroad.

If confirmed, I would be honored to return to Lebanon where I had the privilege of serving from 2002 to 2004. During that time, I gained a deep admiration for the vibrancy of the Lebanese people and a sobering appreciation for the challenges they face, including endemic corruption, poor governance, and Hezbollah's continued threat to their country's sovereignty and security.

Unfortunately, Lebanon today stands on the brink of collapse, battling what the World Bank has described as one of the world's three worst economic crises of the past 150 years.

In this the Lebanese people bear the costs of their leaders' inaction. Lebanon's leaders have failed to implement critical economic reforms required for an IMF program, the country's only realistic path to recovery.

They also have yet to elect a president and form a government, depriving the Lebanese people of leadership when they need it most. The way forward is clear. Lebanon must elect a president, form an empowered government, and implement long overdue reforms.

If confirmed, I look forward to continuing U.S. efforts to support the Lebanese Government and Lebanese people every step of the way.

I am grateful for the strong bipartisan congressional support for the Lebanese Armed Forces and Internal Security Forces as trusted partners in maintaining Lebanon's stability and security.

Since 2006 we have provided more than \$3 billion in security assistance, enabling these forces to strengthen Lebanon's sovereignty, mitigate instability, disrupt terrorists, and counter Hezbollah's false narrative that its illicit weapons are necessary to defend Lebanon.

We also remain committed to UNIFIL's mission and to the safety of U.N. peacekeepers who continue to play a critical role in defusing tensions in Lebanon. I am heartened, too, by the substan-

tial U.S. development assistance we provide to the Lebanese people. For example, last year we provided over \$100 million U.S. to support the Lebanese private sector, enhance service delivery, and improve access to education.

Importantly, we also provided over \$400 million to critical humanitarian assistance for the most vulnerable, including both Syrian refugees and vulnerable Lebanese.

The way ahead for Lebanon will not be easy. I am all too aware there are entities that stand in the way of progress in pursuit of self-interest. As demonstrated by our recent sanctions designations, the United States remains committed to fighting corruption in Lebanon, which I will continue to prioritize, if confirmed.

I also am clear eyed about the threat Hezbollah poses to Lebanon's sovereignty and stability as well as to the United States, to Israel, and to the wider region.

Recent U.S. sanctions against financiers, drug traffickers, and the sanctions evasion network all demonstrate the United States is committed to targeting those with Hezbollah ties. If confirmed, I will continue to pursue all tools to advance U.S. counterterrorism objectives.

There is, however, cause for optimism. Lebanon's recent conclusion of a historic maritime boundary agreement with Israel brokered by the United States demonstrates what the country's leaders can achieve if they set aside partisan and personal interests and put those of the country and Lebanese people first.

If confirmed, I look forward to invoking that same sense of unity and purpose to press Lebanon's leaders along the path to both political and economic recovery.

Finally, as a former Ambassador, I know well that advancing U.S. interests is a team effort. If confirmed, I would be honored to lead Embassy Beirut's talented, dedicated, diverse team of American and Lebanese staff whose safety and security along with that of the more than 40,000 U.S. citizens residing in Lebanon will always be my top priority.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Johnson follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF LISA A. JOHNSON

Mr. Chairman, ranking member, distinguished Members of the committee, it is an honor to appear before you today as President Biden's nominee to serve as U.S. Ambassador to the Lebanese Republic. I would like to express my gratitude to the President and Secretary of State for the confidence they have shown in me. If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with this committee, and Congress more broadly to advance our nation's interests in Lebanon.

Please permit me to acknowledge my parents and brother, without whose steadfast support I would not be here today. I am deeply grateful for their encouragement, as well as that of mentors, colleagues, and dear friends during my more than 32 years serving the American people at home and abroad.

If confirmed, I would be honored to return to Lebanon, where I had the privilege of serving from 2002 to 2004. During that time, I gained a deep admiration for the vibrancy of the Lebanese people and a sobering appreciation of the challenges they face, including endemic corruption, poor governance, and Hezbollah's threat to their country's sovereignty and security.

Unfortunately, Lebanon today stands on the brink of collapse, battling what the World Bank has described as one of the world's three worst economic crises in the past 150 years. In this, the Lebanese people bear the costs of their leaders' inaction.

Lebanon's leaders have failed to implement critical economic reforms required for an IMF program, the country's only realistic path to recovery. They also have yet to elect a president and form a government, depriving the Lebanese people of leadership when they need it most.

The way forward is clear: Lebanon must elect a president, form an empowered government, and implement long overdue reforms. If confirmed, I look forward to continuing U.S. efforts to support the Lebanese Government and people every step of the way.

I am deeply grateful for bipartisan congressional support for the Lebanese Armed Forces and Internal Security Forces as trusted partners in maintaining Lebanon's stability and security. Since 2006, we have provided more than \$3 billion in assistance, enabling these forces to strengthen Lebanon's sovereignty, mitigate instability, disrupt terrorists, and counter Hezbollah's false narrative that its illicit weapons and fighters are necessary to defend Lebanon. At the same time, we remain committed to UNIFIL's mission and the safety of U.N. peacekeepers, who play a critical role in diffusing tensions in southern Lebanon.

I am heartened, too, by the substantial development assistance the United States provides to the Lebanese people. Last year, we provided over \$100 million to support the private sector, enhance service delivery, and improve access to education. We also provided over \$400 million in humanitarian assistance for the most vulnerable, including Syrian refugees and vulnerable Lebanese.

The way ahead for Lebanon will not be easy. I am all too aware there are entities that stand in the way of progress in pursuit of self-interest. As demonstrated by our recent sanctions designations, the United States remains committed to fighting corruption in Lebanon, which I will continue to prioritize, if confirmed. I also am clear-eyed about the threat Hezbollah poses to Lebanon's sovereignty and stability, as well as to the United States, Israel, and the region. Recent U.S. sanctions against financiers, drug traffickers, and a sanctions evasion network demonstrate the United States is committed to targeting those with Hezbollah ties. If confirmed, I will continue to pursue all tools to advance U.S. counterterrorism objectives.

There is reason for optimism. Lebanon's conclusion of a historic maritime boundary agreement with Israel—brokered by the United States—demonstrates what the country's leaders can achieve if they set aside partisan and personal interests and put those of the country and people first. If confirmed, I look forward to invoking that same sense of unity and purpose to press Lebanon's leaders along the path to political and economic recovery.

As a former Ambassador, I know well that advancing U.S. interests is a team effort. If confirmed, I would be honored to lead Embassy Beirut's dedicated, talented, diverse team of American and Lebanese staff, whose safety and security—along with that of the more than 40,000 U.S. citizens residing in Lebanon—will always be my top priority.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today, and I look forward to your questions.

Senator MURPHY. Thank you very much. Just before you begin, let me welcome Representative Slotkin to the committee today, I believe here in support of her friend, Ms. Escrogima. Thank you very much for being here.

STATEMENT OF ERVIN JOSE MASSINGA, OF WASHINGTON, A CAREER MEMBER OF THE SENIOR FOREIGN SERVICE, CLASS OF MINISTER-COUNSELOR, NOMINATED TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE FEDERAL DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF ETHIOPIA

Mr. MASSINGA. Senator Murphy, Senator Young, and distinguished members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak with you and to answer your questions on my nomination to be the United States Ambassador to the Federal Republic of Ethiopia.

I thank President Biden and Secretary Blinken for this tremendous opportunity to serve my country, and my wife, Laurayne, for helping to make all of this possible in countless ways.

My story is like all Americans with my family having many different origins, from my mother's roots in Louisiana where her parents and grandparents worked tirelessly to establish an educational foundation for later generations despite the enormous challenges of that era, to my father's parents and grandparents who struggled with the Portuguese colonial regime in what is now Mozambique.

I am deeply humbled today to appear before the United States Senate as an Ambassadorial nominee. My parents themselves provided clear guidance and instilled bedrock values that I have aspired to emulate from discipline, integrity, and treating with people with kindness and respect.

Public service has always been a hallmark of my family, from my mother's national level leadership in the social services arena to her father's service in World War II in a refinery and her mother's service as a school principal.

If confirmed by this body I pledge I will do my utmost to live up to those values and models in leading this important diplomatic mission.

My career includes challenging tours in China, Latin America, and leadership roles in Guinea, Sudan, and Washington, all of which have reinforced my core belief that there is no higher calling than to serve my fellow Americans and to also mentor the next generation of Foreign Service professionals.

Mr. Chair, the United States seeks a trusted partner in Ethiopia, a country significant not only for its strategic location and growing population but for its economic potential as well as its prominent role in history and the global community.

The last two years have tested our bilateral relationship. The conflict that began in late 2020 wrought horrific violations and abuses upon the citizens of Ethiopia.

In response, as required by U.S. law, the United States placed restrictions on our foreign assistance and suspended Ethiopia's trade benefits under the AGOA—Africa Growth and Opportunities Act.

But our diplomatic engagement never faltered, and to the credit of Ethiopian federal government and the Tigrayan regional authorities they left the door open to our efforts to seek a peace agreement in concert with our partners, notably the African Union, Kenya, and South Africa.

The November 2022 cessation of hostilities agreement silenced the guns and I am deeply proud of the role the Department of State played in facilitating that outcome.

We continue to focus on supporting the implementation of that agreement, be it through human rights monitors, humanitarian assistance, or transitional justice.

But more must be done to ensure peace in Ethiopia is durable. I believe we must be ready to support Ethiopia in all ways that further our own policy objectives.

Chief among those objectives is security and stability in the Horn of Africa. Historically, Ethiopia has been an exporter of stability, for example, being one of the largest global contributors to U.N. peacekeeping operations.

But instability within Ethiopia, notably Oromia, threatens to destabilize the region. We welcome the recent announcement of government talks with the OLA and we stand ready to facilitate those discussions if asked.

Ethnic tensions persist and youth unemployment is high, now exacerbated by the need to demobilize thousands of soldiers following the cessation of hostilities in the north.

Investment in the country's democratic and economic reforms will address the root causes of conflict, including economic and social fragility. At the same time we need to ensure there is accountability for the atrocities committed during the conflict. That is key to ensuring true reconciliation and durable peace.

To that end, we should support Ethiopia's nascent transitional justice efforts. Transitional justice is a key part of any country's path from war to peace and Ethiopia will be in urgent need of international support and technical expertise as it seeks to heal, pursuing the key transition justice elements of truth telling, accountability, reparations, and guarantees of nonrecurrence.

We should support these efforts not just out of a commitment to peace and human rights but also because a durable peace in Ethiopia will promote security throughout the Horn of Africa, making Americans at home and abroad safer.

Finally, we should be clear eyed about our primary mission in any overseas Embassy, to protect and serve U.S. citizens. In that context, I echo the thanks extended to the Government of Ethiopia for enabling the evacuations out of Sudan.

I am proud to make it my mission to ensure U.S. citizens in Ethiopia can expect the highest level of attention and service that they deserve.

Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Massinga follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF ERVIN J. MASSINGA

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Young, and Distinguished Members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak with you and to answer your questions on my nomination to be the U.S. Ambassador to the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.

I thank President Biden and Secretary of State Blinken for this tremendous opportunity to serve my country, and my wife Lauryne for helping to make all of this possible in countless ways.

My story is like all Americans, with my family having many different origins. From my mother's roots in Louisiana, where her parents and grandparents worked tirelessly to establish an educational foundation for later generations despite the enormous challenges of the era, to my father's parents and grandparents, who struggled with the Portuguese colonial regime in what is now Mozambique, I am deeply humbled today to appear before the United States Senate as an Ambassadorial nominee. My parents themselves provided clear guidance and instilled bedrock values that I have aspired to emulate, from discipline, integrity, treating people with kindness and respect. Public service has always been a hallmark in my family, from my mother's national level leadership in the social services arena, to her father's service in a World War 2 refinery and her mother's service as a school principal. If confirmed by this body, I pledge I will do my utmost to live up to these values and models in leading this important diplomatic mission.

My career includes challenging tours in China, Latin America, and leadership roles in Guinea, Sudan and Washington, all of which have reinforced my core belief that there is no higher calling than to serve my fellow Americans and mentor the next generation of foreign policy practitioners.

Mr. Chair, the United States seeks a trusted partner in Ethiopia—a country significant not only for its strategic location and growing population, but for its eco-

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The November 2022 cessation of hostilities agreement silenced the guns, and I am deeply proud of the role the State Department played in facilitating that outcome. We continue to focus on supporting the implementation of the agreement—be it through human rights monitors, humanitarian assistance, or transitional justice. But more must be done to ensure peace in Ethiopia is durable. I believe we must be ready to support Ethiopia in all ways that further our own policy objectives.

Chief among these objectives is security and stability in the Horn of Africa. Historically, Ethiopia has been an exporter of stability, for example by being one of the largest global contributors to UN peacekeeping operations. But instability within Ethiopia, notably in Oromia, threatens to destabilize the region; we welcome the recent announcement of government talks with the OLA and we stand ready to facilitate these discussions if asked. Ethnic tensions persist and youth unemployment is high—now exacerbated by the need to demobilize thousands of soldiers following the cessation of hostilities in the north. Investment in the country's democratic and economic reforms will address the root causes of conflict, including economic and social fragility.

At the same time, we need to ensure there is accountability for the atrocities committed during the conflict. That's key to ensuring true reconciliation and durable peace. To that end, we should support Ethiopia's nascent transitional justice efforts. Transitional justice is a key part of any country's path from war to peace, and Ethiopia will be in urgent need of international support and technical expertise as it seeks to heal, pursuing the key transitional justice elements of truth-telling, accountability, reparations, and guarantees of non-recurrence. We should support these efforts not just out of a commitment to peace and human rights, but also because a durable peace in Ethiopia will promote security throughout the Horn of Africa, making Americans at home and abroad safer.

Finally, we should be clear-eyed about our primary mission in any overseas Embassy—to protect and serve U.S. citizens. In that context, I echo the thanks extended to the Government of Ethiopia for enabling the evacuations out of Sudan. I am proud to make it my mission to ensure U.S. citizens in Ethiopia can expect the high level of attention and service that they deserve.

STATEMENT OF BRYAN DAVID HUNT, OF VIRGINIA, A CAREER MEMBER OF THE SENIOR FOREIGN SERVICE, CLASS OF MINISTER-COUNSELOR, NOMINATED TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE

Mr. HUNT. Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Young, and Members of the committee, thank you for this opportunity to appear before you as President Biden's nominee to be the next U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Sierra Leone.

I would like to thank the President and Secretary Blinken for the trust they have placed in me with this nomination. If confirmed, I will work closely with this committee to advance our nation's partnership with Sierra Leone.

For more than two decades it has been my honor to serve as a member of the United States Foreign Service, oftentimes in dangerous and austere locations. I could not have done so without the love and support of my family and friends, many of whom are here today.

If confirmed, I look forward with their help to once again strive to advance U.S. interests in Africa, a region of the world on which

I have focused much of my career and one which I believe has the potential in the coming decade to play an even greater role on the world stage provided the democratic aspirations of its young and vibrant population are met.

The Republic of Sierra Leone has demonstrated that democratic progress is possible. Since the end of the country's devastating decade-long civil war in 2002 and with sustained support from international friends, including the United States, the people of Sierra Leone have rebuilt, maintained peace, and most importantly, hewed to a democratic path through four rounds of national elections that were broadly judged to be free and fair.

Next month Sierra Leoneans will once again head to the polls and much more important than the political outcome will be the manner and environment in which this latest electoral contest is conducted.

A free and fair election that is competitive, inclusive, and held peacefully is essential both for the prosperous future that the people of Sierra Leone desire and for an expanded U.S.-Sierra Leonean partnership.

If confirmed I will ensure that support for democracy and good governance remains at the forefront of the Embassy's work with the goal of helping Sierra Leoneans institutionalize their democracy and ensure it delivers.

Despite progress, Sierra Leone ranks 181st out of 189 countries on the U.N.'s Human Development Index. The 2014 to 2016 Ebola epidemic and the COVID-19 pandemic have stressed a health system already struggling with high rates of maternal mortality, child malnutrition, neglected tropical diseases, and malaria.

Sierra Leone made effective use of U.S. health security investments to fully vaccinate 70 percent of its eligible target population against COVID-19.

Its government should, however, continue to allocate resources to the health sector not only to protect its own citizens but also to sustainably safeguard the region and the broader international community from future disease outbreaks.

If confirmed, I will work with Sierra Leonean leaders to ensure that public health remains a top national priority and that U.S. funding is used effectively to complement Sierra Leone's own efforts.

Sierra Leone has made progress in establishing a market-based economy and has taken steps to protect workers' rights. U.S. investment in and trade with Sierra Leone has the potential to advance prosperity both for Americans and Sierra Leoneans.

If confirmed I will work closely with the U.S. business community to advocate for reforms that enhance Sierra Leone's ability to attract high-quality foreign investment, including through regional market integration, while simultaneously using trade development tools to help ensure U.S. businesses remain competitive in the Sierra Leonean marketplace.

I hold paramount the safety and security of the hundreds of U.S. citizens resident in Sierra Leone and the entire U.S. Embassy team, including U.S. citizen employees, their families, and our Sierra Leonean colleagues. If confirmed, I would do everything within my power to ensure their security and wellbeing.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, members of the committee, I am committed to working with you all to advance American interests overseas. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you and I welcome your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Hunt follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF BRYAN DAVID HUNT

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Young, and members of the Committee, thank you for this opportunity to appear before you as President Biden's nominee to be the next U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Sierra Leone. I would like to thank the President and Secretary Blinken for the trust they have placed in me. If confirmed, I will work closely with you to advance our nation's partnership with Sierra Leone.

For more than two decades, it has been my honor to serve as a member of the U.S. Foreign Service—oftentimes in dangerous and austere locations. I could not have done so without the love and support of my family and friends, many of whom are here today. If confirmed, I look forward, with their help, to once again strive to advance U.S. interests in Africa—a region of the world on which I have focused much of my career and one which I believe has the potential in the coming decade to play an even greater role on the world stage—provided the democratic aspirations of its young and vibrant population are met.

The Republic of Sierra Leone has demonstrated that democratic progress is possible. Since the end of the country's devastating decade long civil war in 2002 and with sustained support from international friends, including the United States, the people of Sierra Leone have rebuilt, maintained peace, and most importantly hewed to a democratic path through four rounds of national elections that were broadly judged to be free and fair. Next month, Sierra Leoneans will once again head to the polls and much more important than the political outcome will be the manner and environment in which this latest electoral contest is conducted. A free and fair election that is competitive, inclusive, and held peacefully is essential both for the prosperous future that the people of Sierra Leone desire and for an expanded U.S.-Sierra Leonean partnership. If confirmed, I will ensure that support for democracy and good governance remains at the forefront of the Embassy's work with the goal of helping Sierra Leoneans institutionalize their democracy and ensure it delivers.

Despite progress, Sierra Leone ranks 181st out of 189 countries on the U.N.'s Human Development Index. The 2014-2016 Ebola epidemic and the COVID-19 pandemic have stressed a health system already struggling with high rates of maternal mortality, child malnutrition, neglected tropical diseases, and malaria. Sierra Leone made effective use of U.S. health security investments to fully vaccinate 70 percent of its eligible target population against COVID-19. Its government should, however, continue to allocate resources to the health sector not only to protect its own citizens but also to sustainably safeguard the region and the broader international community from future disease outbreaks. If confirmed, I will work with Sierra Leonean leaders to ensure that public health remains a top national priority and that U.S. funding is used effectively to complement Sierra Leone's own efforts.

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Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, members of the Committee, I am committed to working with you all to advance American interests overseas. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you. I welcome your questions.

STATEMENT OF WILLIAM W. POPP, OF MISSOURI, A CAREER MEMBER OF THE SENIOR FOREIGN SERVICE, CLASS OF MINISTER-COUNSELOR, NOMINATED TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA

Mr. POPP. Mr. Chairman, Mr. Ranking Member, members of the committee, it is an honor to appear before you as the President's nominee to serve as the next United States Ambassador to the Republic of Uganda.

I would like to begin by thanking my family, particularly my wife of 24 years, Milena, and my daughter, Alicia Pilar. I am grateful to them for joining me in the privilege, joys, and sacrifices of serving our nation overseas.

As a career member of the Foreign Service for more than 23 years I have been honored to represent the United States in seven overseas assignments across Africa and the Western Hemisphere, including as our current U.S. Ambassador to Guatemala as well as serving in Washington.

In each of these duties I have advanced U.S. interests, promoted our democratic values, and worked with host nations to achieve shared goals. If confirmed, I believe this experience will be valuable in leading our mission, advancing bilateral goals with Uganda, and furthering our regional objectives.

Our relationship with Uganda has advanced important U.S. interests over the years, including working together through PEPFAR and other U.S. health programs to save millions of lives from HIV/AIDS, Ebola, and other health threats.

We have likewise strengthened regional security and counterterrorism including in Somalia. Uganda, with U.S. assistance, currently provides protection to more than 1.5 million refugees and asylum seekers who have been forced to flee their home countries in east and central Africa.

We have also faced challenges, including human rights violations and limited democratic space. These challenges impact not only Uganda but also the United States' interests in a freer, more prosperous, and secure region.

If confirmed, I will work steadfastly to advance U.S. interests and values and to pursue security, prosperity, good governance, and democracy with Ugandans.

First, we must protect our citizens' security. This includes cooperating to fight transnational criminal organizations, countering violent extremism, and strengthening border security. It also includes effectively preventing, detecting, and responding to health threats, addressing food insecurity, and supporting climate resilience.

Second, we must broaden prosperity for both countries through sustainable economic growth, mutually beneficial trade, and formal job creation. With one of the youngest populations in the world generating opportunities for Ugandan youth and women is particularly vital.

U.S. assistance is an important part of the solution but so is working with the public and private sectors to create an enabling environment for businesses to thrive and support entrepreneurship.

If confirmed, I will seek to create more opportunities that generate jobs, support U.S. businesses, and assist entrepreneurs.

Third, rule of law, transparency, good governance and respect for human and labor rights for all are essential for Ugandans to achieve the full potential of their democracy. U.S. engagement can help build the capacity of public institutions to deliver services to the Ugandan people. In working with civil society, the private sector, youth leaders and innovators, we can foster prosperity, opportunity, and integrity.

A more just and equitable Uganda will spur investment, stability, and development for all Ugandans. We also will continue to support the equal protection and nondiscrimination of members of all minority groups.

In addition to pursuing these objectives, if confirmed, I will make protecting the thousands of U.S. citizens living and traveling in Uganda my highest priority.

I will also lead the more than 600 U.S. and Ugandan professionals in the U.S. mission to advance our bilateral and regional agenda by creating a safe, equitable, and respectful workplace and I will vigilantly safeguard resources and maximize the effectiveness across U.S. agencies to build a brighter future with Uganda.

I also commit to working closely with you and the other members of the Senate, members of the House of Representatives, and your staffs. Thank you for the honor to appear before you today. I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Popp follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF WILLIAM W. POPP

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Ranking Member, Members of the Committee, it is an honor to appear before you as the President's nominee to serve as the next United States Ambassador to the Republic of Uganda.

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Thank you for the honor to appear before you today. I look forward to your questions.

Senator MURPHY. Thank you all very much for your testimony. We will start a round of five-minute questions. I will start with you, Ambassador Johnson.

I enjoyed our conversation together. I wanted to give you just an opportunity to expand upon your comments regarding the status of the Lebanese Armed Forces.

Every time I go I am more and more impressed at the capability of the Armed Forces and their willingness, often at great risk to themselves, to put themselves in between the factions inside that country that often are very close to coming to significant long-term conflict.

They have stood up for protesters, protected the right of people to provide their views, and they also were really one of the few things that stands in between Hezbollah having even more control of the insecurity environment than they do today.

Maybe I am making the case for you. But tell me if you agree with my assessment of the Lebanese Armed Forces and the reasons why we have had good bipartisan support for continued funding to keep them operational.

Ms. JOHNSON. Thank you very much, Senator, and I greatly appreciate your deep interest in Lebanon and support for the Lebanese Armed Forces and Internal Security Forces, as well as the bipartisan supportive of Congress for that purpose.

I share your view. We have spent a lot of funding on security assistance for the Armed Forces, developing them into a professional and capable force capable of meeting any threat in Lebanon.

Specifically, we bolstered the capabilities to defend Lebanon's territorial integrity, to mitigate instability, to combat terrorism, to dismantle drug trafficking and smuggling networks, to preserve—maintain law and order.

They have carried out these missions very well, as you have noted. They are a quite trusted partner for the United States with actually an absolutely exemplary end use monitoring record in terms of the way they keep track of the assistance that we provided to them.

I am very proud to continue partnering with them, and one of the most important things in supporting the Lebanese Armed Forces in particular is that it really undermines Hezbollah's narrative, their false claim that their weapons are necessary to defend Lebanon.

As we continue to see the Lebanese Armed Forces deploy effectively to meet, really, any threat it debunks that claim and lays it bare.

So, if confirmed, I would continue to advocate for very strong, robust security assistance to Lebanese Armed Forces and Internal Security Forces. They are doing a great job of bolstering stability and security in this part of the world at a very difficult time for Lebanon.

Senator MURPHY. Thank you very much.

Ambassador Popp, the attacks on homosexuals and LGBTQ individuals in Uganda are, frankly, extraordinary. The parliament passed legislation in March that goes further than making same-sex relations punishable by life in prison, which is an effect of the 2014 law.

It now creates a new offense of aggravated homosexuality that is punishable by death and by making the promotion of homosexuality punishable by up to 20 years in prison. It would criminalize failing to report knowledge of individuals engaged in homosexual conduct.

I guess I am interested that you did not mention this in your prepared testimony and I am worried that this sort of avoidance in your testimony of this extraordinary piece of legislation that is sitting in front of the president's desk for signature as we speak is a signal of an intent to deprioritize this issue because it might upset the Ugandan Government.

Can you clarify your opening remarks and can you tell us what the U.S. response will be if the president signs this law?

Mr. POPP. Yes, Senator. Thank you for the question. And by no means my not mentioning it in the testimony am I deprioritizing it.

I would say that I share your concern. It is a very troubling piece of legislation. It is not yet signed, as you noted, but it is something that is very threatening not only to members of the LGBTQI community in Uganda but, frankly, to all Ugandans.

The implications and potential impact of this legislation if signed and enacted could have major negative repercussions for all Ugandans that are interested and need access to medical care, health care, particularly individuals who may be HIV or AIDS positive but also the impact that it could have, frankly, on Uganda's international reputation, its ability to attract investment, tourism, and, frankly, the opportunity to advance as a democratic society that includes all Ugandans.

So when I mentioned in my testimony, obviously, that we must continue to support all Ugandans and prevent discrimination that is, certainly, included in the element of LGBTQI and the anti-homosexual act.

Senator MURPHY. I appreciate that. I do not think it is enough to raise the general concern about fair treatment of individuals regardless of sexual orientation, race, ethnicity inside Uganda.

I think you have got pay special attention to this just abnormally vitriolic and dangerous attack on LGBTQ individuals and I appreciate your clarifying statement.

Senator Young?

Senator YOUNG. Mr. Massinga, the Ethiopian economy has shown significant growth and potential but it has also faced certain structural challenges and socio economic disparities.

How would you support Ethiopia in advancing sustainable economic development, attracting investments, and fostering job creation and how can these efforts be used to leverage accountability measures for the role of members of the Government in Tigray conflict?

Mr. MASSINGA. Senator Young, thank you for the question.

If confirmed, helping Ethiopia and the Ethiopian people and economy get back on track, back on the track that we saw prior to the most recent conflict, would be uppermost in our—amongst our objectives.

The Government prior to the conflict had engaged in a thorough set of reforms designed to enable the country to continue moving ahead forcefully on the economic side in telecommunications, banking, logistics, et cetera.

That was derailed by—to a great extent by the current conflict and in the current context the macro economy is struggling with the immense costs imposed by the conflict.

We look forward to working with the Government, the people, the business community, to reinvigorate those reforms and those processes, and as the American Ambassador I would be honored, if confirmed, to ensure that our model—our growth model, the Western growth model, the American growth model—would be one that the people of Ethiopia would recognize would be useful, if not essential, for growth forward.

It is no secret that there are others around the world, other major economic economies, that are interested in Ethiopia, that are interested in investing in Ethiopia. Our growth model is the strongest one for long-term growth and I will be steadfast, if confirmed, in ensuring that the people of Ethiopia recognize that.

Senator YOUNG. Thank you. And among the countries that is no doubt interested in supplanting the United States, certainly, competing against the influence of the United States in Ethiopia is China. In fact, Ethiopia is a central hub for China's Belt and Road Initiative to the tune of some \$4 billion.

What potential risks and challenges do you perceive in Ethiopia's increasing economic reliance on China and how would you work to mitigate any negative consequences for Ethiopia's long-term development and sovereignty?

Mr. MASSINGA. Senator, thank you for that follow-on question.

Again, China is deeply invested in Ethiopia and is looking to continue that investment. As we have seen in many countries around the world, that investment is not cost free nor is that model the most appropriate model for long-term growth.

And, Senator, if confirmed, I look forward to working with the Ethiopian business community and government to ensure that they understand the costs associated with that.

Senator YOUNG. Are there—are there government agencies—U.S. Government agencies, regional partners, international organizations that you would regard as best placed to help address and, perhaps, counterbalance some of the malign influence of China and other adversaries in the country of Ethiopia?

Mr. MASSINGA. Of course. Within the United States Government—Department of Commerce, USTR, other specialized agencies and telecommunications—certainly would be part of all that and, of course, the international community would also be essential to help demonstrate to the Ethiopian people and the Government that that model really is the best way to go forward.

Senator YOUNG. Of course, some of those agencies hopefully have a presence in the Embassy, right, which is a good thing.

Ambassador Johnson, China has been expanding its Belt and Road Initiative, of course, globally, as we just mentioned in Ethiopia. But Lebanon signed on to that initiative in 2017.

Are there any ongoing or proposed BRI projects that you are aware of in Lebanon that you believe could have negative long-term implications for the United States, our partners, or our interests?

Ms. JOHNSON. Yes, Senator. Thank you very much for the question.

Yes, Lebanon did sign on to the Belt and Road Initiative. However, my understanding is that there are no significant Chinese investments in Lebanon. We continually reiterate with our partners' concerns risks of deeper engagement with China, of problematic nontransparent financial and infrastructure investments.

That was very much a focus for me in my previous role as Ambassador to Namibia and I can assure you it would be priority for me if confirmed as Ambassador to Lebanon.

Senator YOUNG [presiding]. Thank you so much.

Senator KAINE? Yes, sir.

Senator KAINE. Thank you, Senator Young, and congratulations to all of you nominees. It is a really well-qualified panel.

Ambassador Johnson, I want to drill down on the aspect of your testimony where you talked about the severity of the economic—really economic, political challenges facing Lebanon right now.

Sometimes in this committee and on the Hill there is a debate about, okay, how does it affect us—how does it affect the world, the internal challenges in Lebanon.

Should Lebanon continue on the path that it is on, a downward spiral characterized by a challenged economy, a lot of refugees, the inability to organize the Government—should it continue on that path, what are the consequences for the region that the United States needs to be very worried about?

Ms. JOHNSON. Yes, Senator, it is a very important question. Thank you. Thank you for that.

The reason Lebanon remains a real priority for the United States is it is just at the intersection of U.S. national security interests in the Middle East. I mean, you have got Israel on the southern border, which has to defend itself from Hezbollah.

You have got Syria and instability and war the brutal dictator Assad has fomented. You have got Iran supporting through its

proxy Hezbollah destabilizing activity in both Lebanon and the region. We cannot ignore any of this.

And then there is, of course, the historic ties we have with the Lebanese people. Lebanese are—form a really important part of our diaspora here in the United States and the rich cultural fabric that they contribute to.

So I do not think we can allow Lebanon to reach the worst case scenario, which is why we are doing a number of things. I mean, I mentioned several in my opening statement—the humanitarian assistance for the most vulnerable and supporting the Lebanese Forces to provide stability while we push Lebanon's leaders to do the necessary things, the hard things they will need to do.

I mean, first, elect a president. They have got to form a government. That government has got to be capable of bringing in the different parties that are necessary to take the really hard decisions, to do the reforms they need to get done for that IMF package. It is the only way out.

Senator KAINE. The presence of Hezbollah poses a huge risk to Israel but there are at least some potential positives that the Lebanese Government in the past has explored together with Israel, whether they might do energy projects in tandem in the Mediterranean.

So there is not only a need to protect against the influence of Hezbollah but there is the opportunity for some cooperation should the situation in Lebanon stabilize.

I want to associate myself with the comments you made earlier about the Lebanese Armed Forces, having visited Lebanon, spent time with them, spent time with the U.S. troops that are there training them.

They are not perfect. Nobody is perfect. But in terms of a stabilizing force in a nation that desperately needs one you do not really have many better options if there are any better options than the Lebanese Armed Forces. I agree with you on that.

Ambassador Popp, it is good to see you again. My colleagues and I really enjoyed being with you in Guatemala in the summer of 2021 and I will ask—I will just make one point about Uganda but then I am going to ask you some Guatemala questions since I have you.

I just want to associate myself with what Senator Murphy said about the need to be really active in trying to provide safe haven for LGBTQ Ugandans. We cannot dictate the internal politics of a country. That is not what diplomacy is about.

But as I have traveled around the world as a member of this committee often I have heard from LGBTQ activists in countries that were it not for the United States, were it not for the Embassy, were it not for a consulate being a place of safe haven where they could come and dialogue about their hopes and aspirations and what they hope to contribute to their own countries, if it were not for the U.S. there would not be a safe space for them.

And so while we might not be able to have a huge impact on domestic politics in Uganda, the role of the Ambassador is really important in creating a place where people can be treated with equality, the North Star virtue of this country. So I would just encourage you in that way.

When we talk about immigration issues at the border we often talk about the U.S.-Mexico border. But there are two other really important borders in terms of immigration flows to the United States in the Americas.

One is the border between Colombia and Panama, and the other is the border between Guatemala and Mexico. From your experience as the Ambassador in Guatemala, how cooperative has Guatemala been in trying to help us deal with immigration issues in the south to north flow at their border with Mexico?

Mr. POPP. Thank you, Senator, for the questions.

First, I just want to make sure I am very clear. I fully agree with your point on the U.S. Embassy and the U.S. Ambassador's role in supporting all communities including the LGBTQI community, and if confirmed as Ambassador to Uganda I would be Chief of Mission that would be engaged with that community and continuing to have an active regular dialogue with them as I have done so in Guatemala.

In regards to your question about the border of Guatemala and their border security measures, they have been partners effectively not only with their border with Mexico, which is, as you note, a very important transit point for migrants headed north to our Southwest border, as well as their border with Honduras.

They have been effective on different occasions of stopping mass movements of individuals including caravans but also in working with us and U.S. law enforcement in particular to counter the alien smugglers and the human traffickers and the individuals who have been—are criminally taking advantage of migrants and, unfortunately, putting people in positions of great risk and danger.

Senator KAINE. Thank you. I am going to need to—I am a minute over so I want to cede time to my colleagues. But I appreciate that answer. Thank you.

Senator YOUNG. Thank you.

Senator RICKETTS?

Senator RICKETTS. Thank you very much.

I would like to start by echoing what Chairman Murphy and Ranking Member Young said to say thank you for your service to our country and the sacrifices that you and your families make to be able to serve our great nation. It is appreciated and you all should be congratulated on being nominated for these posts.

Ambassador Johnson, I am going to start with you as this is the 70th anniversary of Israel, one of our closest friends in the world and, certainly, in the region, and Israel since its inception has endured attacks from state actors and nonstate actors, most recently Hamas.

We talked about Hezbollah, Palestinian Islamic jihad, the—Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, just to name a few, and I had the opportunity to see this personally when I was in Israel earlier this year.

You can see how small a country is when you fly in a helicopter you can see the ocean on one side and the Syrian border on the other side, and we were at the Lebanese border where Hezbollah had been digging tunnels through solid limestone for 10 years to be able to get inside Israel and attack them and that—and then, of course, during the Passover in early April Israel endured the

largest rocket attack coming from Lebanon since the Lebanese war in 2006 and, obviously, this is all being encouraged by—it is even being done by Hamas or Islamic jihad and certainly encouraged by the IRGC.

So what can we do to prevent southern Lebanon from becoming a staging area for these types of rocket attacks on Israel?

Ms. JOHNSON. Thank you, Senator, for your question.

I share your deep concern with the attacks that have been emanating on Israel both from Lebanon and more recently from Gaza.

The United States' commitment to Israel's security is absolutely ironclad and Israel will continue to exercise its inherent right to self-defense. But we have to do more. The Lebanese have to do more.

Hezbollah—there are a number of ways that we have been targeting Hezbollah, since 2005 over 200 sanctions on individuals and entities going after their finances, and that is important in terms of their ability to access weapons.

I understand that they are—that Hezbollah is under financial stress—economic stress—due to some of these sanctions. We have been able to enlist some of our partners in the Gulf—Saudi Arabia, UAE, Qatar—to join us in these sanctions.

Just last week the FBI seized 13 internet domains of Hezbollah, which is another way to try to cut off their support. We do continue very much to support UNIFIL's mission in southern Lebanon.

UNIFIL has played an effective role in monitoring the cessation of hostilities since the 2006 war between Israel and Lebanon and also plays a stabilizing role along—on the Blue Line with their reporting activities and especially the ability of the peacekeepers to get in there and defuse tense situations.

Now, I am not going to say that they have been able to fully implement their mandate. They have not. They have been prevented from accessing key areas of concerns like the tunnels that you mentioned.

If confirmed, I would call on the Lebanese authorities to uphold their responsibility to allow UNIFIL to operate in all the areas necessary to fulfill their mandate and we also need to continue to work with Lebanese Armed Forces to do more joint patrols and have a stronger presence in southern Lebanon. I do think those things will help.

Senator RICKETTS. Absolutely. I mean, again, 10 years to dig the tunnels through solid limestone was a very loud, noisy process, and as we observed from the Israeli side of the border Hamas is still there. I mean, they are still there watching us.

And, obviously, Lebanon has got—75 percent of its population is in poverty. They have not had a president in six months or whatever it is. Very complicated. The economy is in meltdown.

My understanding is the Iran foreign minister was there recently to talk—really, start trying to get their candidate, Suleiman Franjeh, to be the new president.

What would that mean if Suleiman Franjeh was actually the new president of Lebanon? How would that impact our relations with Lebanon and relations with how Lebanon was going to interact with Israel?

Ms. JOHNSON. Senator, thank you for the question. I share your concern about Iran's malign influence in Lebanon, including through Hezbollah.

What we have been continuing to advocate is that the Lebanese parliament is going to have to choose the next president. It is not for the international community to decide.

But we have really expressed the qualities that we believe are important—someone that is free from corruption, someone that can unite the country, that puts the interests of the people first, that can build a coalition to implement the reforms.

Some candidates will not meet that—will not meet that bar. We have been very clear with all across Lebanese political spectrum that that is what needs to happen. We have been delivering a united message with our partners, with France, with Saudi Arabia, with Qatar. We share the same goal and it is the one that I have stated.

Senator RICKETTS. All right. So real briefly because I have already run out of time, too, what is your analysis of the political stalemate? Where does it go?

Ms. JOHNSON. I am an optimist, Senator.

[Laughter.]

Ms. JOHNSON. Everything I read leads me to believe they are getting closer. They are getting closer. I just—they need to assume the urgency that the situation demands. This is—it is really time for the Lebanese leaders and political leadership to step up.

Electing the president is just the first step. It gets us to some of those next stages where we need to form a government that is capable of providing services to the people, that can operate transparently, that puts corruption in the rearview mirror.

The reforms are not going to be easy, I will not lie. But they really have to do it to secure that World Bank loan and get some necessary liquidity into the economy. So electing the president is the first step but it is a path and they are going to need our support.

Senator RICKETTS. Great. Thank you, Ambassador.

Senator MURPHY. [Presiding.] We do not generally make pessimists Ambassadors but we do not—we definitely do not send pessimists to Lebanon.

[Laughter.]

Senator MURPHY. Senator Booker?

Senator BOOKER. I am deferring to Senator Van Hollen.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Thank you. Thank you, Senator Booker, and thank you, Mr. Chairman. Congratulations to all of you on your nominations and thank you for your service as part of the Foreign Service.

And let me start with you, Ambassador Johnson, and on Lebanon, right, you have to be an optimist and I think you were there 20 years ago.

Senator Murphy and I were there in 2021 on a trip, and as I look at the situation today not that much has changed since our trip in 2021 and maybe it has not changed that much in 20 years. But let me—let me look to the future a little bit.

When Senator Murphy and I were last there it was just as they were coming out of the last political crisis and forming a new government for a little while. Now they are back in a political crisis.

But Salameh—as you know, Mr. Salameh, I think, has been the head of the central bank for a very long time. He has been indicted in many European countries, I believe. I also understand that his tenure will come to an end on June 30th.

Is that correct? And what would his departure mean for the opportunity to try to deal with some of the reform and corruption issues?

Ms. JOHNSON. Senator, thank you very much for the question.

Yes, his term is coming to an end. I think it is in July but I would stand to be corrected. I believe it is also up to the president of Lebanon to appoint the next central bank governor. So all the more reason that we need to have the Lebanese parliament get a president in place.

But we are very much looking forward to working with whoever the Lebanese decide who the next central bank governor will be. That person will be critical in undertaking the reforms necessary to get to that IMF package. Probably chief among them is the restructuring of the banking sector.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Got it.

On the electricity situation—I apologize if you already covered this territory before I arrived—but that, of course, has been a chronic problem, these—the limits on electricity each day in Lebanon.

Our current Ambassador, Ambassador Shea, came up with an innovative idea some time ago to help Egypt produce some electricity that would be transported through Jordan, Syria, and on to Lebanon.

There were a number of issues that, obviously, had to be resolved to make sure it was compliant with the Caesar Act. But my question now is I understand that the main hang up now is the fact that Lebanon has not conformed to the World Bank proposals. Am I—is that correct?

Ms. JOHNSON. Largely correct, Senator. Where we are at—I mean, two hours of electricity a day you cannot run a business on that much less an economy or a country. So it has been very important to the U.S. Government to push for long-term sustainable energy solutions for Lebanon.

Chief among those has been discussion of a natural gas deal from Egypt and an electricity deal with Jordan that would be financed by the World Bank. So where Lebanon is at right now, as you noted, is there are a number of kind of reforms that need to be done of the sector to get them to that World Bank loan and they are close.

I would actually like to commend some of the progress they have made. One is they raised electricity tariffs for the first time in over 30 years. That is an important part of the cost recovery plan requirement.

They have also advertised in *The Economist* magazine for a regulating—regulator authority. So they have taken a number of the steps that would be necessary for that World Bank loan and they are getting close. But they need to complete those reforms so the World Bank can vote on that loan.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. No, I thank you. I appreciate that, and everything we can do, of course, to push them in the right direction would be helpful to the people of Lebanon.

I should say while we are on Lebanon I do believe we have two treasurers there, both in the American University of Beirut and the Lebanon University. I just met with the precedent of the latter and they are sort of islands of hope in the middle of a pretty desperate situation.

Very quickly, if I could turn to you, Mr. Massinga, and it is good to see you in person having talked to you, I think, via Zoom and, obviously, a very delicate situation in Ethiopia.

A number of the surrounding countries, the African Union, and the United States have worked hard to get the very fragile peace agreement.

What is your current assessment of that situation and, if confirmed, one of your really most important jobs will be to try to make sure we nurture that agreement and make sure that it is sustainable, going forward.

So what do you see as the biggest challenge at this time?

Mr. MASSINGA. Thank you, Senator, for the question.

To be succinct, I think the biggest challenge, going forward, is the economic situation. We have seen tremendous progress in cementing the cessation of hostilities and some progress in establishing a reconciliation effort as well as transitional justice.

If confirmed it would be among my highest objectives to continue nurturing those two processes to move forward. But at the same time we have to be clear eyed and recognize that the people of Ethiopia are facing a very difficult economic situation which has been worsened enormously by the drought that is impacting the entirety of the Horn and, of course, the conflict itself.

But make no mistake, moving ahead in continuing to cement the peace, which has been hard won through efforts by the international community, the regional community, and the United States would be top on my list.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Thank you. I look forward to supporting all your nominations. Congratulations.

Thank you.

Senator MURPHY. Senator Booker?

Senator BOOKER. Mr. Massinga, you and I have a commonality besides being bald Black men. We both have deep roots in Louisiana and there is no reason for me saying that besides the fact that I want to recognize.

I really want to go to another place, interestingly enough, I found out I have roots to from having my DNA tested, which is Sierra Leone.

There was this interesting 2020 study that showed that views of China are going down significantly in their political economic partnership while views of the United States are actually going up, and I am wondering is there something we can learn there as we have a bit of a rivalry on the African continent for influence in the continent as a whole. What can we learn from Sierra Leone in that sense?

Mr. MASSINGA. Well, I would say a couple of things, Senator.

First and foremost, China has not helped itself. It has done immense damage to its reputation in Sierra Leone through its own actions. Its continued engagement in illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing off the Sierra Leonean coast, its continued illegal logging in Sierra Leone's forests, its continued pursuit of mineral agreements that violate both international best practice and Sierra Leone's own environmental and labor standards have, frankly, left a bad taste in a lot of Sierra Leoneans' mouths towards what China brings to the table.

But I think complementary to that what my colleagues at the Embassy have done is really to carry forward America's story and to try to offer real alternatives to what the People's Republic of China is putting on the table, I think, to the work that the Development Finance Corporation has done there and looking at projects that they can support American investment in.

I think of the work of the Millennium Challenge Corporation has done, very importantly, in trying to deliver first the initial threshold projects and now, hopefully, a full compact for the people of Sierra Leone, which will be transformational in terms of its infrastructure.

So I think it is a combination of the people of Sierra Leone learning the realities of dealing with the People's Republic of China but also our own ability to offer alternatives for the country's development.

Senator BOOKER. I appreciate that and, if confirmed, how do you think we can further double down on those development of economic interests between Sierra Leone

—setting a standard, in a sense?

Mr. MASSINGA. Yeah. If confirmed, Senator, one of my top priorities will be to work with the American business community to try to make sure that they are actively engaged in helping Sierra Leone shape its future.

I believe there are immense opportunities for investment across the board in Sierra Leone and, certainly, with the investments that we have made through the Development Finance Corporation and the Millennium Challenge Corporation there are going to be opportunities for U.S. business that, frankly, can benefit not just Sierra Leone but also benefit us back home in the United States.

So, if confirmed, I would work very closely with those private sector elements—private sector elements of the U.S. that is present in Sierra Leone and also try to bring to the table an even more active Development Finance Corporation, an even more active MCC, an even more active trade development authority to make sure that we are actively offering those alternatives to what China is trying to still sell to the Sierra Leonean Government.

Senator BOOKER. I am really grateful.

Ms. Escrogima, how are you?

Ms. ESCROGIMA.

Senator BOOKER. I feel like you have been left out as well in this conversation and I am not sure if you were happy about that or were you——

[Laughter.]

Senator BOOKER. I am one of the Senate founding members of the Abraham Accords Caucus here and I am very concerned

about—very hopeful about the possibility of normalizing relations going on in Oman.

And so I am wondering how does Oman view, in your opinion, the potential benefits of building relations with Israel, potential risks, and what kind of role can you play?

Ms. ESCROGIMA. Thank you, Senator.

As someone who has lived and worked in the region for the better part of 20 years let me say I think the Abraham Accords is one of the most positive developments we have seen in a generation and, if confirmed, I would, certainly, work to make the case to our Omani partners to consider normalization with Israel and participation in regional fora like the Negev Forum.

Oman is no stranger to this type of diplomacy, hosting since 1996 the longest lasting regional mechanism that has included Israel, the Regional Desalination Center.

Oman has hosted three visits from Israeli prime ministers, most recently in 2018, and, of course, in February Oman agreed to Israeli over flight, which has opened up new trade routes from Israel to Asia.

So, if confirmed, I would look forward to hitting the ground and working with my team to see how we can make the case with our Omani partners for pursuing normalization.

Senator BOOKER. Well, I look forward to trying to help from the Senate side and, perhaps, work with you to continue to expand that.

Mr. Popp, a lot has been discussed already. Uganda is frustrating to me because there are just a lot of human rights issues that are really pressing.

The State Department's latest human rights report documented serious restrictions of political rights and civil society—unlawful killings, forced disappearances, and even torture by state agencies, parts of Ugandans'—Uganda's Government.

Add to that Senator Murphy already pointedly expressed concerns about a stunning—a law that is going to undermine our efforts and the successes we have through PEPFAR in the region.

They have an important role for this—our bilateral relationship is really important when it comes to United States interests, its regional interests in that area promoting democracy, human rights, but also just general security issues and it is just a very difficult balance.

Could you maybe address the concerns I have for a government that started out so hopeful years ago and now seems to be slipping towards a behavior that is demonstrably violent, unjust, and undemocratic?

Mr. POPP. Thank you, Senator.

Yes, you sum it up very clearly and accurately. I think the concern is that Uganda is headed in a direction that is not good for Ugandans in all of these areas, and as friends of Uganda and the region and of the people of Uganda we should be clear about where those challenges are, be clear eyed in how we assess ways to work forward with civil society, with other stakeholders in the country.

Obviously, issues of torture, violence, those types of abuses have to be rejected completely and clearly in our diplomacy, in our conversations and discussions with the host government, and also find

ways to support increases in democratic space instead of restrictions.

That is everything from building space for NGOs and for organizations that are advocating for all the communities that are facing challenges.

It includes making sure that we are talking with all stakeholders in the country, including the political opposition, so that we are hearing very clearly about ways to find solutions, going forward, to change, hopefully, in a constructive way the trajectory that Uganda is on.

At the same time, as you note, there is a number of areas where Uganda has previously been an important partner on security and regional stability and, of course, we want to try to continue to find ways to work in those areas because it is an area that faces a lot of challenges, as we have seen even recently.

Senator BOOKER. And with the chair's indulgence a comment—a quick question and then a final comment. The quick question, yes or no, do you plan on meeting with LGBTQ leaders in Uganda, civil society groups that are advocating for the protection and the safety and security of the LGBTQ community there?

Mr. POPP. Yes, absolutely.

Senator BOOKER. Thank you.

And then the comment is just to the five of you. These are committee hearings we have often when it comes to confirming Ambassadors. I just want to say thank you. My intention is to support each of you on the floor. It is a tremendous sacrifice and many of you have had a career doing this remarkable work.

When I travel around from Lebanon to the subcontinent of Africa I am just in awe of the commitment not just of our Ambassadors there but also their staffs as well and the families of folks.

So to the families behind everyone, thank you, and to the five extraordinary servants of this country I just give you my gratitude.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator MURPHY. Thank you, Senator Booker.

The ranking member and I are going to hold you here for a short second round of questions and I will turn it over to Senator Young.

Senator YOUNG. Thank you, Chairman.

Ms. ESCROGIMA, Oman is essential in efforts to constructively engage with Iran while also providing a check on its malign influences in the region. I am thinking here about Iranian harassment of commercial shipping vessels but there are, of course, other areas in which Oman has been and can be helpful, moving forward.

How will you work with the Omani Government and private sector to encourage stronger compliance within Oman with U.S. sanctions on Iran?

Ms. ESCROGIMA. Thank you for the question, Senator.

As you noted, our security relationship with Oman is strong. It dates back four decades and includes military access, joint exercises.

We have stepped up maritime interdictions in the Gulf that has denied the flow of lethal aid to the Houthis and, certainly, this is an ongoing conversation and, if confirmed, I would look forward to arriving and checking with my team and seeing what more we can

do and you have my pledge that I will ensure that Oman is compliant with all relevant sanctions.

Senator YOUNG. It is a good idea consulting with your team. I do it a lot. So I understand and I will look forward to following that important work.

I would like to get your views on Oman's efforts to promote regional peace in—regional peace and the Abraham Accords. It is clear that Oman favors engagement over confrontation even with countries whose interests do not completely align.

I was encouraged to learn of Oman permitting over flights of Israeli carriers earlier this year and in your testimony you're referred to the Mideast Desalinization Research Center.

However, Oman has yet to pursue normalization with Israel. In your view, what are the primary reasons for Sultan Haitham's hesitation in having Oman join the Abraham Accords and, if confirmed, how would you advocate for Oman to finally take this step?

Ms. ESCROGIMA. Thank you for raising this, Senator.

It is true Oman's commitment to mediation and de-escalation in the region makes it a vital partner in many of our efforts to engage in diplomacy to depressurize and deescalate tensions in the region, and the Omanis have told us that they would like to see more progress on the Israeli-Palestinian track of peace negotiations before looking at pursuing normalization with Israel and we, of course, keep our Omani partners briefed up on our efforts in that regard.

And at the same time I think it is important to continue making the case for the regional integration and economic benefits of pursuing normalization with Israel as we begin to see the impact of the Abraham Accords in the Negev Forum and the benefits that are accruing to states who are participating.

Senator YOUNG. Thank you.

Ambassador Johnson, you may recall that last year Senator Van Hollen and I urged Secretary Blinken and the administration to engage with Lebanon to ensure fairness and transparency in its parliamentary election.

Lebanon, nonetheless, appears no closer to having a complete government due to its inability to elect a president and it is a very thorny issue. But, if confirmed, what U.S. and multilateral policies would you support to help build consensus and finally break this political impasse?

Ms. JOHNSON. Well, Senator, yes, I very much share your concern about the stalled presidential election. As I have mentioned, Lebanon needs to elect a president so they can move forward on the reforms toward the IMF package.

So we have to leverage—if confirmed, I would leverage all diplomatic tools to continue to push all sectors within Lebanon, all political leaders, to step up and do what they need to do for the Lebanese people and for parliament to elect a president, and the way we are going about this Ambassador Shea discusses all the time with all the leaders on the ground.

Our assistant secretary for Near Eastern affairs, Barbara Leaf, was just in Beirut in March. We have been meeting with our international partners. You mentioned the multilateral effort, and we thank very much the efforts of France, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Qatar,

who partnered with us in the meeting in Paris in February to deliver a united message to the Lebanese political leadership.

So, if confirmed, I would continue to use those tools pressing across all spectrums of Lebanese society but also ensuring we deliver that unified message with our international partners.

Senator YOUNG. Thank you for your response. I have one more line of questioning for you and it pertains to Hezbollah. If confirmed, would you meet with leaders of Hezbollah?

Ms. JOHNSON. No, Senator, I would not. They—Hezbollah is a U.S.-designated terrorist organization.

Senator YOUNG. Will you work with ministries run by Hezbollah or its allies?

Ms. JOHNSON. Senator, I think we have been very careful. I would like to point to we have sanctioned members of parliament and allies in parliament for their ties to Hezbollah.

I think we are raising the costs for anyone of doing business with Hezbollah or seeking closer ties and I think it has sent a strong warning to others. It, certainly, complicates our diplomacy if key ministries are held by ministers who are aligned to Hezbollah.

Senator YOUNG. How should the U.S. deal with Lebanese parties or politicians that align themselves with Hezbollah?

Ms. JOHNSON. Senator, we do have tools that we can leverage to deal with that and I would be committed to using those tools when there is evidence that the interagency and the United States could pursue.

Senator YOUNG. Can you elaborate on the tools?

Ms. JOHNSON. I think—I mean, as I mentioned earlier, our sanctions tools have been very, very effective in going after and designating over 200 individuals and entities.

Some of these are on the financial side. Some of these are facilitators. Some of these are weapons smugglers. Some of these are drug traffickers.

So there have been many ways we have been able to get at the things that enable Hezbollah to continue its illicit and terrorist activities.

Senator YOUNG. Thank you.

Mr. Hunt, I will sort of end my questions with you, sir. The mining sector is a crucial part of Sierra Leone's economy. But local Sierra Leoneans do not seem to be reaping the benefits of many of the large-scale projects.

China has sponsored gold mining operations and those have had a particularly brutal impact on Sierra Leone's land, their water. How would you promote responsible and sustainable mining practices that benefit both Sierra Leone and international investors?

Mr. HUNT. Senator, it is—there is no question that the PRC has blatantly ignored Sierra Leone's own environmental and labor standards while it has carried out its mining projects in Sierra Leone.

The Sierra Leonean people, from what we can tell based upon polling that your colleague referenced, have very clearly taken—are very clearly of the opinion that the PRC is not a trusted partner in this sector.

So, from my perspective, if confirmed, what I would attempt to do is to try to help identify trusted partners, primarily from the

United States or other Western allies, who are prepared to follow the various international regimes that are in place to ensure best practices in the mining sector.

Senator YOUNG. And who would you work with as you look to identify trusted private sector partners?

Yes, sir?

Mr. HUNT. Certainly. Ideally, I would hope to work with the U.S. Foreign Commercial Service, first and foremost, to see if we have private sector American businesses that can provide the technology and the investment that Sierra Leone needs.

In the absence of that I would turn to our closest friends and allies—the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia—who have well established—well established mining sectors in their economy.

Senator YOUNG. Sierra Leone has made efforts to attract foreign investment, improve its business environment. What measures would you support to encourage U.S. companies to invest in Sierra Leone beyond what you have indicated you would do as it pertains to trusted mining partners and how would you address any concerns related to bureaucracy, corruption, or legal protections for investors?

Mr. HUNT. Certainly, Senator.

I think it is a very important question. When I think about how best to attract investment to Sierra Leone, if confirmed, first and foremost, I would look to the Sierra Leone diaspora in the United States.

There are many of our own citizens who have deep ties to the country, deep interest in its future, and have expressed an interest already in coming and investing there.

Secondly, I would want to talk to those who are looking to invest as well as those who already have businesses in Sierra Leone to understand the obstacles that they are facing in engaging in trade and investment in the Sierra Leonean economy.

In the past in various posts where I have served in leadership roles I have been an active advocate for the reduction of bureaucracy, the reduction of obstacles, the implementation of international best practices, and if confirmed I would hope to do that as Ambassador to Sierra Leone in close concert with the rest of our country team and the various agencies that have been set up in the U.S. Government to support U.S. businesses working overseas.

Senator YOUNG. Thank you, sir. Thank you all.

Mr. Chairman?

Senator MURPHY. Thank you, Senator Young.

I am just—this panel reminds me of how well served we are at the State Department. We are all asking you questions as if you were already at posts, as if you are intimately familiar with these countries, and you are answering the questions as if you are already there, which just tells us how well suited you are for these roles, how well trained you are, how lucky we are to have you.

Just I have two final wrap-up questions. In the vein of maybe asking an unfair question to a nominee who is not on the ground yet I wanted to ask you, Mr. Massinga, about how the U.S. has viewed Abiy.

I mean, this is remarkable. We go from Nobel Prize to civil war within 12 to 18 months. We are celebrating him as a statesman

who is willing to set aside grievance to make peace with his neighbors, and some critics of our policy will say that we kind of misread the core political dynamics in the country and that our support for Abiy ended up underwriting his confrontational approach with his rivals, including the TPLF.

And so I just wonder what you think—in hindsight, was our assessment of Abiy off? Did we make a mistake to make this bet? Did we end up providing him with cover to allow him to engage in the kind of tactics that have gotten us to this sort of moment of crisis?

Mr. MASSINGA. Senator Murphy, in response to that question let me start with where we are now and then maybe loop back towards the historical part you are talking about.

The U.S. understands and regards all actors, all leaders in Ethiopia, through a clear-eyed lens. Ethiopia did not arrive at the position where it is now and the horrendous conflict that we have seen in recent years accidentally.

There were many factors that led and contributed to this conflict and the conflict was pitiless, and the leaders that were associated with that conflict we all understand and see them clearly and see all the dynamics very clearly for what they are.

Having said that, they are the leaders of the country and so we will work with them intensively to rebuild the country. We are seeing enormous energy and optimism amongst many of the former combatants to stitch that country together and, Senator, I look forward to working with them and all of you in that endeavor, if confirmed.

Going back to your somewhat difficult question, probably there was some level of excessive optimism. However, our engagement with Ethiopia over many years has been deep and intense due to the size of our diaspora—a very important diaspora in our country—and the love that many Americans have for Ethiopia, the size of their country, and the importance of that country in Africa and the region.

Going forward, again, I, as Ambassador, if confirmed, will look forward to working with all of you and all stakeholders to recognize through a clear-eyed, again, manner the stakes involved and to help that country move forward.

Senator MURPHY. Optimists sometimes have a hard time learning lessons because we believe that if there are obstacles in the past they do not need to be obstacles in the future.

We can just do a better and more innovative and more thorough job of surmounting them the next time we need them. The U.S. is particularly bad at learning lessons, in part because we do not believe that there is any barrier that we cannot surmount.

And so I just ask that question to make sure that as we try to push forward with our friends and our partners in Ethiopia that we are also looking backwards as well.

Final question, Ambassador. I want to talk to you just a bit more about Lebanon. I just want to talk to you a little bit about what you know regarding Hezbollah's propaganda and information ability.

It was pretty stunning to me when I was there with Senator Van Hollen. As was mentioned, we put on the table this very innovative

program to try to get gas delivered to Lebanon from Egypt and this was an initiative that the United States was leading on.

And, yet, it was a liability for us when we were there because Hezbollah had let people know that in fact it was the United States that was stopping this initiative, that the Caesar sanctions were the only thing standing in the way of Egyptian gas getting to Lebanon and that was the narrative that was the dominant narrative, not that the United States is trying to find innovative creative means to get gas to Lebanon but that the United States is standing in the way of gas getting to Lebanon.

It just feels to me that we are completely outgunned and outmanned when it comes to Hezbollah's effort to spin a narrative compared to our Embassy and our State Department's ability to tell the real story of what is going on.

I am not necessarily looking for a full diagnosis of what is wrong with U.S. information operations but this is a capability that Hezbollah has that is serious and has to be confronted, correct?

Ms. JOHNSON. Absolutely, Senator. I agree with you. The disinformation is dangerous and seeks to undermine our objectives and the good work we are doing together with our Lebanese partners.

It is just—it shows, I mean, two things. The most important is the need for very active proactive public diplomacy on the part of the U.S. Government. If confirmed I would very much look forward to a very active forward-leaning public diplomacy program in Lebanon.

One thing Lebanon does have is a very vibrant press corps. So I think there are many opportunities to get our story out. At the same time we have to counter the disinformation that is out there.

Not the only way to do it but I was—I was heartened by the creative seizure by the FBI of the 13 internet domains last week and I would look forward to using all the tools at our disposal to counter Hezbollah disinformation, if confirmed. It is a very important point.

Senator MURPHY. Great. Well said.

Thank you all for your testimony. We really do appreciate you sticking with us and answering all these tough questions. We are going to allow members to submit questions for the record until the close of business tomorrow.

And with thanks to the committee, to our nominees, and to the staff, this hearing is now adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 3:29 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

Additional Material Submitted for the Record

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO ANA A. ESCROGIMA BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Question. If confirmed, what concrete steps could you take to help Oman operationalize the prioritized recommendations contained in the TIP report?

Answer. As President Biden has said, the promotion of universal values, including human rights, is one of five pillars of our Middle East strategy, as laid out in the National Security Strategy. Human trafficking is a top priority. If confirmed, I will engage with the Omanis at the highest levels, including the Human Rights Commission, the Ministries of Labor and Foreign Affairs, the judiciary, law enforcement and

others working on this topic, to increase their efforts to investigate, prosecute, and convict traffickers for forced labor crimes, specifically of migrant workers and domestic servants.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to reporting the reality of the trafficking situation as accurately as possible?

Answer. Yes.

Question. In the State Department's 2022 International Religious Freedom Report, Oman was noted for having a lack of governmental and societal respect. What is your assessment of this particular issue and if confirmed, how will you work with the Ambassador At Large for International Religious Freedom to bolster religious freedom in-country?

Answer. Oman is an important partner to the United States; but I understand that limitations on civil society, freedom of expression, and freedom of association exist. If confirmed, I will work with Omani Government officials to reinforce U.S. support for freedom of religion and belief, including non-belief, and the needs of faith communities as well as agnostics and atheists. If confirmed, I will meet regularly all religious communities in Oman to discuss their needs and ability to practice their faith, in collaboration with our Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom .

Question. In the State Department's 2022 International Religious Freedom Report, Oman was noted for having a lack of governmental and societal respect. If confirmed, do you commit to personally engaging with civil society on this issue?

Answer. Yes. If confirmed, I will make it a priority to engage with Omanis and international civil society and, when appropriate, to elevate their concerns to the appropriate Omani officials. I also commit to engaging with the Government of Oman to honor and uphold fundamental freedoms.

Question. In the State Department's 2022 International Religious Freedom report, Oman was noted for having a lack of governmental and societal respect. If confirmed, what concrete steps can you take to help Oman increase their societal and governmental respect for religious freedom?

Answer. The Administration has been clear that human rights, including freedom of religion, are central to our foreign policy and that these concerns will continue to be raised with partners as well as adversaries. Oman has historically had a high degree of religious tolerance. Oman's Basic Law protects the right of individuals to practice other religions; however, recent blasphemy prosecutions were concerning. If confirmed, I will also meet regularly with leaders and representative of all religious communities in Oman to discuss their needs and ability to practice their faith.

Question. In the State Department's 2022 Human Rights Report, Oman was noted as having several significant human rights abuses, including arbitrary detention and arrest, restrictions on freedom of expression, and more. How will you direct your Embassy to work with civil society organizations to improve the human rights situation on the ground?

Answer. The Administration has made clear that human rights are a key pillar of our foreign policy. I understand that Embassy Muscat and our leadership here engage regularly on human rights concerns. Department leadership just raised human rights with a delegation of senior Omani officials earlier this month. If confirmed, I will press the Government of Oman to uphold and protect human rights, including loosening restrictions on fundamental freedoms and elevating TIP concerns. I also will engage with civil society and elevate their concerns, as appropriate, with relevant Omani officials.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO ANA A. ESCROGIMA BY SENATOR MARCO RUBIO

U.S.-Oman Relationship

In May 2022, Secretary Blinken said that the People's Republic of China is the "only country with both the intent to reshape the international order and, increasingly, the economic, diplomatic, military, and technological power to do it." The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) clearly holds the reins of power in the People's Republic of China and has used this power to commit genocide in Xinjiang, flood our communities with fentanyl, and emit, by far the largest quantity of greenhouse gases in the world today. With their

absolute control of Chinese society and industry, the CCP could stop all of these destructive actions tomorrow if they so choose.

Question. Is the Chinese Communist Party a threat to the United States?

Answer. Earlier this year, the Director of National Intelligence testified that “the CCP represents both the leading and most consequential threat to U.S. national security and leadership globally.” Under President Xi, the CCP has become more repressive at home and more aggressive abroad, seeking to undercut U.S. influence and alliances. If confirmed, I will advance U.S. national security interests and push back against PRC efforts to expand its problematic influence, through robust and forthright diplomatic engagements, public diplomacy, and commercial advocacy to bolster U.S.-Oman ties.

Question. Does the Chinese Communist Party undertake any activities that are beneficial to U.S. interests?

Answer. The Administration assesses the Chinese Communist Party’s (CCP) activities in the context of the fact that, as Secretary Blinken has said, the CCP has become more repressive at home and more aggressive abroad. According to the Office of the Director of National Intelligence’s 2023 Annual Threat Assessment, the CCP is seeking to “undercut U.S. influence, drive wedges between Washington and its partners, and foster some norms that favor its authoritarian system.”

Question. Do you believe that there are any areas within which the Chinese Communist Party would constructively work with the United States in good faith?

Answer. As the United States competes vigorously with the PRC, the United States manages this competition responsibly so that competition does not veer into conflict. The United States will work with the PRC to address transnational challenges, such as climate change, when it is in our interest to do so—as Secretary Blinken has said, not as a favor to us or anyone else, and never in exchange for walking away from our principles, but because it is what the world expects. If confirmed, I will work with the Department of State’s new Office of China Coordination to advance U.S. objectives and counter harmful behavior by the PRC and other actors in the Middle East.

Question. If confirmed, will you approve any joint activity with organizations or representatives from the People’s Republic of China in the country in which you will work?

Answer. If confirmed, my priority will be advancing U.S. national security interests in Oman and countering efforts by our strategic and regional competitors to undermine those interests. The Administration has been clear that the PRC is the most consequential geopolitical challenge facing the United States, and that the United States is committed to working to strengthen our partners in the region. If confirmed, I will work closely with Department of State and interagency colleagues and Congress to address China’s efforts to expand its influence in Oman and the region.

Question. The State Department describes the U.S.-Oman relationship as a long-standing one based upon economic, defense, and trade partnerships. Oman was the first Persian Gulf state to sign a long-standing strategic partnership in the 1980s and has received over \$853 million in aid since 1946. In addition to the aid, Oman permits the U.S. military to use its facilities and Oman has had over 70 Foreign Military Sales cases valued at over \$2.7 billion. The U.S. and Oman additionally enjoy a Free Trade Agreement that was ratified in 2006, with the U.S. being Oman’s largest trading partners. What is your assessment of the current state of U.S.-Omani relations?

Answer. Oman is a strategic partner in a critically important region, located at a key naval chokepoint through which 30 percent of the world’s maritime oil shipments pass. Our longstanding partnership with Oman helps to advance a wide range of shared goals, including regional stability and security, counterterrorism, and economic diversification. The 2023 U.S.-Oman Strategic Dialogue deepened our cooperation in trade, investment, clean energy, education, and people-to-people ties.

Question. How is U.S. security enhanced by taxpayer investment in Oman?

Answer. Oman promotes stability and peace in the Middle East. The United States and Oman work closely to promote freedom of navigation in the key naval chokepoint of the Strait of Hormuz to counter piracy and to combat weapons and narcotics trafficking. Oman permits the U.S. military to use its facilities. Oman has also been a valuable diplomatic partner, facilitating important regional mediation efforts that advance our goal to end the war in Yemen, secure the release of wrong-

fully detained American citizens, and deescalate other regional conflicts and tensions.

Arms Transfers to Oman

Question. In your view, what would happen if the U.S. did not provide a high level of foreign military sales to Oman?

Answer. Oman's purchase of U.S. military equipment reinforces our strategic and security cooperation; strengthens interoperability with U.S. forces; and contributes to the U.S. economy. Its decision to use its own funds to purchase U.S. equipment is a testament to the technical quality of our defense articles, as well as the strength of the bilateral relationship. Enhancing Oman's security promotes stability and prosperity in the region.

Question. If confirmed, which aid programs will you focus on to promote continued and improved economic growth with U.S. business partners in Oman?

Answer. If confirmed, I will focus on improving the climate for U.S. businesses in Oman, promoting economic bilateral ties, and advocating for U.S. companies. Tools like the Commercial Law and Development Program and the U.S. Advocacy Center at the Department of Commerce create a level playing field for U.S. companies and encourage inclusive economic growth. Our Free Trade Agreement with Oman is a tremendous resource to promote mutually beneficial trade and economic growth. EXIM's February 2023 MOU with Oman will also help catalyze U.S. exports and Oman's economic diversification and growth in strategic sectors.

China

Question. Oman and China have been cultivating ties regarding oil trade. Oman exports 85 percent of its oil to China and the CCP has lent more than \$3.6 billion in financing for an industrial park in the port of Duqm. Additionally, China is the 5th largest foreign investor in Oman, with one Chinese company taking a 49 percent stake in one of Oman's electricity transmission companies. What is your characterization of the existing relationship between Oman and China?

Answer. Oman rightfully considers the United States its strategic partner. The PRC enjoys no such special relationship in Oman. PRC investment in Duqm largely did not materialize, giving the Omani Government a clear understanding of the risks of problematic PRC investment.

Sultan Haitham is actively diversifying Oman's economy away from hydrocarbons, shifting away from the PRC and other oil net importers. Many tools, including the Free Trade Agreement and EXIM financing, ensure the United States benefits from Oman's economic transformation.

Question. Are you concerned with their existing relationship? Please explain.

Answer. I am confident in the enduring strength of the U.S.-Oman partnership, which Oman prioritizes. The PRC is the only competitor with both the intent to reshape the international order and, increasingly, the economic, diplomatic, military, and technological power to do it. If confirmed, I will remain vigilant to promote trusted vendors and encourage Oman to be cautious of investments and projects that could infringe on its sovereignty—while ensuring that the United States remains present as a trusted strategic partner.

Question. Late last year, Arab leaders met CCP General Secretary Xi Jinping in Riyadh. It was then determined that China would hold a summit for Gulf Cooperation Council member states, including Oman, and Iran in 2023. This is in addition to the agreement that Beijing brokered between Riyadh and Tehran which was announced in April. What do you believe accounts for this recent win by China to supplant U.S. leadership in the Middle East?

Answer. The United States has a long and constructive track record promoting de-escalation and a reduction in Middle East regional tensions, and we welcome efforts that advance this goal. We will encourage our partners to press the PRC to hold Iran accountable for its commitments. Our engagement with the GCC remains regular and robust and, if confirmed, I will continue our engagement with GCC partners to increase cooperation on regional security and press for an end to destabilizing Iranian behavior.

Question. How would you, as Ambassador, seek to restore the United States' role as the region's main power broker?

Answer. Our commitment to the region is unshakeable. The United States will proactively deter threats, defend our people and interests, and support the defense of our partners in the region. In recent days, our military increased its defensive

posture in the Gulf to respond to Iranian attacks. The United States is uniquely positioned to serve as a strategic and security partner to the countries of the region, while also working to resolve conflicts such as the war in Yemen and to pursue new possibilities for regional integration and de-escalation.

Israel/Abraham Accords

Question. Oman has opened their airspace to Israeli commercial flights to Asia. This is a significant step towards normalization of relations between the two countries. If confirmed, how will you approach the Omani's regarding their possible adoption and entry into the Abraham Accords?

Answer. I strongly support the Abraham Accords. If confirmed, I will highlight the economic and diplomatic benefits of increased regional integration. Oman was the first Gulf state to host an Israeli prime minister. It subsequently hosted two more, including PM Netanyahu in 2018. Since 1997, Oman has hosted the Middle East Desalination Research Center (MEDRC), which brings together scientists from Israel and Arab states to water cooperation in the region. If confirmed, I will make it a priority to find opportunities to advance relations between Oman and Israel.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO LISA A. JOHNSON BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

In the State Department's 2022 Trafficking in Persons Report, Lebanon was ranked as Tier 2 but has significant work to do to better meet the minimum standards to combat trafficking.

Question. If confirmed, what concrete steps could you take to help Lebanon operationalize the prioritized recommendations contained in the TIP report?

Answer. If confirmed, I will engage with the Government of Lebanon to press for progress on the 2022 TIP Report recommendations, as well as the 2023 TIP Report recommendations, once released; those steps include establishing and implementing victim identification procedures, ensuring trafficking victims are not inappropriately penalized for crimes committed as a direct result of being trafficked, and enacting labor reforms to prevent exploitation of migrant workers, including workers under the visa sponsorship system and artiste visa program.

I will also work with U.S. Government stakeholders, including the Department of State's Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons (J/TIP), to encourage programming on these issues. For example, J/TIP is currently funding a project with the International Organization on Migration (IOM) to strengthen protection assistance for victims of trafficking, prevent trafficking by building resilience of those at risk through awareness and empowerment initiatives, and strengthen the evidence base on trafficking to support reform advocacy efforts.

Question. If confirmed, how can you encourage the Lebanese caretaker government to better incorporate government procedures to identify victims of trafficking?

Answer. If confirmed, I will, in coordination with J/TIP and other stakeholders, engage with the Government to finalize and implement standardized victim identification procedures. I will work to ensure these procedures are incorporated into frontline responders' daily work, including law enforcement and immigration officials. In addition, I will work with J/TIP to ensure stakeholders receive capacity-building training to better identify trafficking victims, including through the ongoing J/TIP-IOM project.

In the State Department's 2022 International Religious Freedom report Lebanon was noted as lack for religious freedom, but noted significant efforts by the U.S. Embassy to encourage interfaith dialogue.

Question. What is your assessment of this particular issue and if confirmed, how will you work with the Ambassador At Large for International Religious Freedom to bolster religious freedom in-country?

Answer. Religious freedom is a central American value and supporting international religious freedom is a key tenet of the Administration's foreign policy. I share your concerns about certain limitations on religious freedom, and freedom of conscience, in Lebanon. Civil marriage does not exist in Lebanon because many Christian and Muslim leaders continue to fear that permitting civil marriage would threaten their ability to administer their own religious affairs. Couples who want a non-religious ceremony typically travel to countries where civil marriages are allowed, such as Cyprus. If confirmed, I will work with the Ambassador At Large for

International Religious Freedom and our partners in Lebanon's vibrant civil society to promote and protect religious freedom in Lebanon.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to personally engaging with civil society on this issue?

Answer. Yes. If confirmed, I commit to engaging civil society organizations both in the United States and in Lebanon to promote religious freedom and the welfare of religious minority groups for the benefit of all Lebanese.

Question. If confirmed, what concrete steps can you take to help Lebanon increase their societal and governmental respect for religious freedom?

Answer. If confirmed, I will continue the Administration's existing efforts to promote interfaith dialogue and urge the country's religious leaders to take steps to counter violent extremism related to religious belief, including by continuing to engage Lebanese Government officials on the need to encourage tolerance, dialogue, and mutual respect among religious groups, meeting with the leaders of all recognized sects on a regular basis to encourage interfaith dialogue, and exploring options to promote religious freedom through our existing bilateral assistance programs. I will also use outreach activities to the public, especially the younger generations, to foster a greater sense of the value of tolerance among faiths and interfaith dialogue.

In the State Department's 2022 Human Rights Report, Lebanon was noted for having a litany of significant human rights abuses, including serious restrictions on freedom of assembly, press, expression, and more.

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

Answer. I share your concerns about the range of reported significant human rights issues detailed in the 2022 Human Rights Report, including serious restrictions on freedom of expression, refoulement of Syrian refugees, widespread and endemic corruption, and violence against members of the LGBTQI+ community in Lebanon. If confirmed, my Embassy team and I will work with the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, as well as directly with civil society organizations and human rights defenders in Lebanon to promote respect for human rights and help ensure that Lebanon stands as a vibrant and multicultural beacon for the rest of the region.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO LISA A. JOHNSON BY SENATOR MARCO RUBIO

In May 2022, Secretary Blinken said that the People's Republic of China is the "only country with both the intent to reshape the international order and, increasingly, the economic, diplomatic, military, and technological power to do it." The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) clearly holds the reins of power in the People's Republic of China and has used this power to commit genocide in Xinjiang, flood our communities with fentanyl, and emit, by far the largest quantity of greenhouse gases in the world today. With their absolute control of Chinese society and industry, the CCP could stop all of these destructive actions tomorrow if they so choose.

Question. Is the Chinese Communist Party a threat to the United States?

Answer. Earlier this year, the Director of National Intelligence testified that "the CCP represents both the leading and most consequential threat to U.S. national security and leadership globally." Under President Xi, the CCP has become more repressive at home and more aggressive abroad, seeking to undercut U.S. influence and alliances. If confirmed, I will work to advance U.S. national security interests and push back against the PRC's efforts to expand its problematic influence, through robust and forthright diplomatic engagements, public diplomacy programming, and commercial advocacy to bolster the strong pillars of U.S.-Lebanese ties.

Question. Does the Chinese Communist Party undertake any activities that are beneficial to U.S. interests?

Answer. The Administration assesses the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) activities in the context of the fact that, as Secretary Blinken has said, the CCP has become more repressive at home and more aggressive abroad. According to the Office of the Director of National Intelligence's 2023 Annual Threat Assessment, the

CCP is seeking to “undercut U.S. influence, drive wedges between Washington and its partners, and foster some norms that favor its authoritarian system.”

Question. Do you believe that there are any areas within which the Chinese Communist Party would constructively work with the United States in good faith?

Answer. As the United States competes vigorously with the PRC, the United States manages this competition responsibly so that competition does not veer into conflict. The United States will work with the PRC to address transnational challenges, such as climate change, when it is in our interest to do so—as Secretary Blinken has said, not as a favor to us or anyone else, and never in exchange for walking away from our principles, but because it is what the world expects. If confirmed, I will work with the Department of State’s new Office of China Coordination to advance U.S. objectives and counter harmful behavior by the PRC and other actors in the Middle East.

Question. If confirmed, will you approve any joint activity with organizations or representatives from the People’s Republic of China in the country in which you will work?

Answer. If confirmed, my priority will be advancing U.S. national security interests in Lebanon and countering efforts by our strategic and regional competitors to undermine those interests. The Administration has been clear that the PRC is the most consequential geopolitical challenge facing the United States, and that the United States is committed to working to strengthen our partners in the region. If confirmed, I will work closely with Department of State and interagency colleagues and Congress to address China’s efforts to expand its influence in Lebanon and the region.

Question. Iranian backed Hezbollah, which the State Department has designated as a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO), operates freely in Lebanon as a militia force, a political party, and provides social services. Iran uses Hezbollah in Lebanon as a proxy force to threaten Israel’s existence. What is your assessment of the current state of U.S.-Lebanon relations?

Answer. The Administration remains clear-eyed about the threat Hezbollah poses to Lebanon’s sovereignty and stability, as well as to the United States, Israel, and the region. Iran’s malign influence in Lebanon, exercised through its proxy, Hezbollah, harms the Lebanese people, who also continue to grapple with one of the world’s worst economic crises. To combat Iran and Hezbollah’s destabilizing influence, the United States continues to support the Lebanese people and legitimate Lebanese security forces, and is pressing the political class to elect a president, form an empowered government, and implement critical reforms needed to secure an International Monetary Fund program.

If confirmed, I will continue to use all available tools—including diplomatic engagement and sanctions recommendations—to push back against Hezbollah and Iran’s influence and bolster Lebanon’s sovereignty, security, and stability.

Question. If confirmed, how would you work with the Government of Lebanon, which has members of an FTO actively participating in the Government?

Answer. I share your concerns about Hezbollah’s participation in Lebanon’s current caretaker government, which includes two cabinet ministers appointed by Hezbollah. The Administration does not engage with Hezbollah-appointed ministers; nor will I, if confirmed. We also do not provide assistance that has a high risk of benefitting ministries headed by Hezbollah-appointed ministers. If confirmed, I commit to continuing to ensure rigorous safeguards remain in place to mitigate the risk that any designated terrorist group benefit from U.S. Government activities in Lebanon.

Question. How will you incentivize a government infiltrated by Hezbollah to support U.S. goals in the region regarding security?

Answer. I understand that despite the presence of two Hezbollah ministers in the current Lebanese caretaker government, the Department does not assess that the Government is controlled by Hezbollah. If confirmed, I will use all available tools—including recommendations to the Department for imposition of sanctions alongside diplomatic engagement—to erode Hezbollah’s influence and counter its destabilizing activities. I also look forward to continuing robust U.S. assistance to Lebanon’s legitimate security forces, which helps build their capabilities and professionalism, as well as counter Hezbollah’s false narrative that it needs weapons to protect Lebanon.

Question. Since 2018, the U.S. has provided more than \$1 billion dollars for development, humanitarian, and security assistance to Lebanon, making the U.S. the

largest donor. USAID provides significant aid and according to USAID's Scaling Up Renewable Energy (SURE) website, the program aims to meet international climate commitments, strengthen energy security via private investment and procurement of clean electricity. However, many of the clean energy aid programs, such as solar-powered aid projects and wind turbines projects, source these products or components that are made in China, which is often linked to slave labor. Besides USAID subsidizing China's industry by using solar panels and wind turbines parts for aid projects, the production of these items in China is anything but "clean" and simply provides the veneer that these USAID projects somehow reduce CO₂ emission. Further, there is ample concern that components used in these projects are likely connected to forced labor in China. How will you ensure that USAID solar panels, wind turbines, or other "clean" energy products/components are not made in China by slave labor for use in Lebanon?

Answer. I understand that USAID/Lebanon has implemented safeguards to ensure that its partners are in compliance with U.S. laws and regulations regarding the prohibited use of forced labor, particularly in light of PRC human rights abuses in Xinjiang, China. USAID implementing partners are required to conduct due diligence of any proposed vendors of solar panels. The implementing partner also validates upon equipment delivery through an inspection report that equipment is not from any entities excluded from receiving federal assistance. As an extra safeguard, USAID requires implementing partners to notify their respective Contracting Officer's Representative (COR) prior to solar panel purchases to ensure adequate checks have been made. CORs are also required to conduct site visits to check that the equipment installed matches the list of approved equipment, including verifying the equipment matches the approved manufacturer.

If confirmed, I will work with my USAID colleagues to maintain strict adherence to these safeguards.

Question. If confirmed, how will you ensure implementing or third-party partners for these "clean" energy aid projects by USAID in Lebanon are required to source from non-China suppliers?

Answer. USAID requires implementing partners to include standard language in their subcontracts with local companies that prohibit the subcontractors from purchasing materials from prohibited PRC suppliers (following the H.R. 6256 the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act). If confirmed, I will work with my USAID colleagues to maintain strict adherence to this requirement.

Question. Are you aware that a current USAID project in Lebanon uses Chinese sourced solar-panels?

Answer. I understand that USAID's solar interventions are being implemented through mechanisms that allow the purchase of goods and services from the United States, Lebanon as the recipient country, and developing countries other than advanced developing countries. However, the allowable origin of goods is broad as long as it does not include any countries that are prohibited due to Office of Foreign Assets Control sanctions or country-specific legislation. China is not a prohibited source country, though certain manufacturers (as listed in Section 889 of the John S. McCain National Defense Authorization Act and H.R. 6256 Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act) are prohibited.

If confirmed, I will work with my USAID colleagues to ensure U.S.-funded programs support U.S. and Lebanese businesses to the maximum extent possible.

Question. If confirmed, will future "clean" energy aid products, funded by USAID in Lebanon, contain Chinese produced solar panels or wind turbines?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with my USAID colleagues to maintain strict adherence to all applicable restrictions related to purchasing goods and services from prohibited PRC suppliers. I understand that USAID's implementing partners must conduct due diligence to ensure compliance with all award terms and federal regulations, including provisions prohibiting implementing partners from using forced labor. USAID takes specific measures to encourage implementing partners engaged in projects related to solar energy to exercise thorough due diligence and engage appropriate legal advice, due to persistent concerns with the prevalent use of forced labor in solar panel supply chains. In addition, USAID requires implementing partners to prohibit subcontractors from purchasing materials from prohibited PRC suppliers.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
 SUBMITTED TO LISA A. JOHNSON BY SENATOR TED CRUZ

America's strategy in Lebanon has for decades been aimed at bolstering state institutions against Hezbollah, including prominently the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) and the Internal Security Forces (ISF). Despite these efforts, Hezbollah continues to exert significant influence over Lebanese state institutions, which in turn are unwilling or unable to take action against the Iran-backed terror group. Additionally, in summer 2017 Hezbollah launched an offensive in the Arsal Mountains alongside a campaign by the LAF, US-supplied weapons were used by the LAF in that operation, and Lebanese media outlets reported that the LAF was providing de facto fire cover for Hezbollah operations. These challenges—the fragility of state institutions, the influence of Iran-backed terrorist groups, the inefficiency of American security assistance, etc.—have persisted over several years when you have been a high-ranking official at the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL), which administers many of these policies.

More recently, the State Department has begun to provide livelihood support to LAF and ISF members, i.e. salaries for Lebanese troops and police officers. INL specifically oversees the livelihood support for the ISF. If confirmed, you would have significant responsibilities overseeing livelihood support to both the LAF and ISF. Hezbollah exercises significant control over sectors of the Lebanese economy, and operates businesses—supermarkets, gas stations, wholesale operations, and so on—which they use to finance terrorism against the United States and our allies, including Israel. It is not clear what if any steps the State Dept. has taken to ensure the salaries being provided to LAF and ISF members are not spent in those sectors or businesses, i.e. providing material support for terrorism.

Alongside these policies, the Biden administration has also sought to implement a proposal in which gas from Egypt would be delivered to Lebanon through a route that includes Syria, in what experts have described as a straightforward violation of American sanctions, including the Caesar Act.

Question. What percent of U.S. assistance to Lebanon was used for activities or operations aimed at disarming Hezbollah during your tenure at INL? A rough estimate or a range will be sufficient.

Answer. All U.S. Government assistance to Lebanon is ultimately aimed at fostering a stable, sovereign Lebanese state free of Hezbollah's malign influence. U.S. security assistance is aimed at increasing the professional capacity of both the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) and the Internal Security Forces (ISF) as strong state institutions, which remains the best way to erode Hezbollah's influence. The LAF and ISF have proven themselves capable of applying our assistance to face a broad range of evolving threats, including counterterrorism operations against ISIS and Al-Qaeda affiliates, and operations against captagon traffickers and arms smuggling networks on the Syrian border, some of whom are alleged to be affiliated with Hezbollah.

Question. What percent of U.S. assistance to Lebanon was used for activities or operations aimed at disrupting Hezbollah military activities other than through disarming them during your tenure at INL, e.g. through roadblocks? A rough estimate or a range will be sufficient.

Answer. All U.S. Government assistance to Lebanon is ultimately aimed at fostering a stable, sovereign Lebanese state free of Hezbollah's malign influence. U.S. security assistance strengthens the professional capacity of the Lebanese security services, enabling them to defend Lebanon from terrorist organizations and other militant groups, thereby undercutting Hezbollah's claim that the Lebanese need Hezbollah and its weapons to protect Lebanon from external threats. U.S. security assistance includes training and equipment that has also improved the frequency and sophistication of Lebanese anti-crime operations, including against captagon traffickers and smuggling networks on the Syrian border, which works against Hezbollah's interests.

Question. Please describe the degree to which, in your assessment, Hezbollah continues to influence or exert control over the Beirut—Rafic Hariri International Airport or facilities located within the airport.

Answer. I share your concerns about Hezbollah's influence at Beirut-Rafic Hariri International Airport; moreover, I understand that widespread corruption in Lebanon also undermines the integrity and effectiveness of counterterrorism efforts at

the airport. The Department of State would welcome the opportunity to offer a closed briefing on our assessment of the degree to which Hezbollah continues to influence or exert control at the Beirut-Rafic Hariri International Airport. The Administration continues to engage senior Lebanese officials on the need to strengthen counterterrorism measures at the airport and other ports of entry and has seen a commitment on behalf of the Government of Lebanon to interdict high-risk individuals and cargo. U.S. foreign assistance to the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) and the Internal Security Forces (ISF) enables them to maintain a robust security presence in the airport, including with elements that regularly benefit from U.S. training.

Question. In your assessment, does Hezbollah use the Beirut-Rafic Hariri International Airport for illicit activities related to the trafficking of narcotics internationally?

Answer. I assess that captagon, cocaine, and other narcotics trafficking, including but not limited to Beirut-Rafic Hariri International Airport, directly benefits malign actors including Hezbollah-affiliated groups and individuals. I share your concerns about use of the Beirut-Rafic Hariri International Airport to traffic illicit drugs, and I was heartened to see reports that Lebanese authorities have stepped up enforcement efforts, including, for example, through a reported seizure of more than half a million captagon pills at the airport in May 2022. Ending the scourge of drug trafficking the world over—including the captagon trade in the Middle East—is an Administration priority. If confirmed, I will bring to bear my INL experience to bolster the capacity of the Government of Lebanon to counter the rising drug trade in the region.

Question. In your assessment, does the Beirut—Rafic Hariri International Airport maintain effective antiterrorism efforts?

Answer. We assess that Lebanese security services, working with the U.S. Government and international partners, are working to improve counterterrorism controls at Beirut-Rafic Hariri International Airport, but that widespread corruption in Lebanon continues to undermine the integrity and effectiveness of counterterrorism efforts at the airport. The Department of State would be pleased to offer a closed briefing on antiterrorism efforts at Beirut-Rafic Hariri International Airport. U.S. foreign assistance to the Lebanese Armed Forces and Internal Security Forces enables them to maintain a robust security presence in the airport, including elements which regularly benefit from U.S. training. That said, further improvement is required. As such, the Department and the Embassy continue to engage senior Lebanese officials on the need to further strengthen counterterrorism measures at the airport and other ports of entry.

Question. Please describe the degree to which, in your assessment, Hezbollah continues to influence or exert control over the Port of Beirut or facilities located within the port?

Answer. I share your concerns about Hezbollah's influence at the Port of Beirut; moreover, widespread corruption in Lebanon also undermines the integrity and effectiveness of counterterrorism efforts of partners like the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF), which maintains perimeter security at the port and plays an important role in deterring terrorist activity in and around the facility. The Department of State would welcome the opportunity to offer a briefing on our assessment of the degree to which Hezbollah continues to influence or exert control at the Port of Beirut.

Question. In your assessment, does Hezbollah use the Port of Beirut for illicit activities related to the trafficking of narcotics internationally?

Answer. I am concerned by reports that Hezbollah continues to exert influence over ports of entry, which both supports the terrorist group's illicit activities, including related to narcotics trafficking, and deprives the Lebanese people and government of much needed customs revenue. The best way to address malign influence at ports of entry is through strengthening the legitimate security agencies present at those same locations, a strategy we have already employed through, for example, providing training and equipment for the LAF and ISF.

Question. In your assessment, does the Port of Beirut maintains effective antiterrorism measures?

Answer. We assess that Lebanon has taken steps to better secure the Port of Beirut, including improving counterterrorism measures, but that widespread corruption in Lebanon continues to undermine the integrity and effectiveness of counterterrorism efforts at the Port of Beirut. The Department of State would be pleased to offer a closed briefing on antiterrorism efforts at the port of Beirut. The Lebanese Navy, with assistance from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and international

partners, is in the first phase of completely rebuilding the Beirut Naval Base at the port, which will increase surveillance and interdiction capabilities in the port area. The Lebanese Armed Forces benefits from coordinated U.S. training and support, including maintaining perimeter security at the port, which plays an important role in deterring terrorist activity in and around the port. That said, further improvement is required, including further strengthening counterterrorism controls. Moreover, the Port of Beirut still has not recovered full operability following the August 2020 explosion. Some security infrastructure at the container terminal remains dysfunctional and diminished port capacity persists. As such, the Department and the Embassy continue to engage senior Lebanese officials on the need to ensure security measures, including counterterrorism measures at the port, are in line with international best practices.

Question. Did you clear policies providing livelihood support for ISF members? If not, do you support providing livelihood support for ISF members?

Answer. Since serving as INL Deputy Assistant Secretary (DAS) from October 2021, Acting Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary (A/PDAS) since October 2022, and PDAS since February 2023, I have not cleared on any policies or programs related to Lebanon. When the program concept was approved in December 2021, I was serving as the INL DAS responsible for Europe and Asia, and therefore my duties did not include clearing policies related to INL's efforts in the Middle East. I do, however, support this program, as I understand that the Internal Security Forces (ISF) (as well as the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF)) plays a key role in bolstering the Lebanese state to avoid outright collapse, which could precipitate the return of sectarian militias, prompt civil war, strengthen Hezbollah, and threaten Israel's security.

Question. Do you support providing livelihood support to LAF members?

Answer. Yes. I understand that this temporary and extraordinary program was approved to offset the unprecedented financial and other strains on the LAF due to Lebanon's ongoing economic crisis. The LAF is a key state institution holding the country together in this time of crisis. Buttressing the LAF figures as part of a larger Administration effort to bolster the Lebanese state and avoid outright collapse, which could precipitate the return of sectarian militias, prompt civil war, strengthen Hezbollah, and threaten Israel's security. The LAF is one of the only remaining state institutions with cross-confessional support capable of guaranteeing the country's stability. The LAF has taken on new challenges, especially in maintaining domestic social order even as the collapse of Lebanon's currency has hollowed out personnel salaries. This temporary program supplements our larger efforts to press Lebanon's political leadership to move on critical reforms and government formation.

Question. What steps has the State Department taken to ensure that livelihood support provided to LAF and ISF members are not spent in businesses owned by Hezbollah or individuals linked to Hezbollah?

Answer. I understand that the Department of State has put in place robust and thorough risk mitigation measures to minimize the risk that U.S. assistance might benefit terrorist entities, including Hezbollah. These measures include counterterrorism namecheck vetting, financial oversight, in-person monitoring, and extensive reporting requirements. While I was not involved in the program's development when serving in INL, I understand that the program is utilizing a third-party monitor, which will conduct visits to LAF and ISF units throughout the country to document how livelihood recipients are spending their funds. This third-party monitoring is in addition to U.S. Government monitoring and extensive reporting from the implementing partner. If confirmed, I will do everything in my power to ensure that not a single dollar of U.S. assistance benefits Hezbollah.

Question. Please describe what you understand to be the statutory basis for providing livelihood support for LAF members.

Answer. The LAF livelihood support program was funded from Peacekeeping Operations (PKO) funds, which I understand are available for peacekeeping operations and other programs carried out in furtherance of the national security interests of the United States consistent with the authority in the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961.

Question. Please describe what you understand to be the statutory basis for providing livelihood support for ISF members.

Answer. The Internal Security Forces (ISF) livelihood support program was funded from the International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement (INCLE) account,

which I understand is appropriated to carry out foreign assistance programming for counternarcotics and other anti-crime purposes consistent with the authority in the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961.

Question. Please describe what you understand to be any precedents for providing livelihood support for LAF members.

Answer. The United States has provided livelihood support to foreign security partners in extraordinary circumstances, as has been the case in Somalia using Peacekeeping Operations (PKO) funds. The Department works closely with all relevant interagency stakeholders to ensure such programs include robust risk mitigation protocols and clear exit plans.

Question. Please describe what you understand to be any precedents for providing livelihood support for ISF members.

Answer. International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement (INCLE) funds have been used to provide limited stipends for targeted, vetted groups. The Department works closely with all relevant stakeholders to ensure such programs include robust risk mitigation protocols and clear exit plans.

Question. In January and March 2022, the ISF announced that it had dismantled 17 different Israeli espionage networks that were operating against Hezbollah. Do you believe that these actions enhanced American national security?

Answer. No. The Department of State does not assess that any reported effort by the Internal Security Forces (ISF) to dismantle such networks is in the U.S. national security interest. This is why the Department continues to urge the ISF to focus on its core mission—bolstering stability and meeting the internal security needs of the Lebanese people. Our support to the ISF continues to build the institution's professionalism and capacity to counter internal threats that have the potential to destabilize the country and the region.

Question. In April and May 2023, the LAF and ISF participated in the deportation of Syrian refugees back into territory controlled by the Assad regime. Do you believe that these actions enhance American national security?

Answer. No. I share your concerns about the Lebanese Armed Forces' (LAF) involvement in recent deportations of Syrians residing in Lebanon back to regime-controlled territory without ensuring access to all applicable legal protections. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), among those deported were individuals registered with or known to UNHCR. However, the LAF has denied deporting anyone with UNHCR documentation, and the LAF has since confirmed it has ceased any involvement in deportations. Further, I understand that according to the information available at this time, including from the U.N. and Lebanese Government and security services, the Internal Security Forces (ISF) may have been involved in the arrests of some Syrians but did not play a role in these recent deportations. If confirmed, I will continue to reiterate that all persons in Lebanon, including refugees, should be treated in accordance with international human rights law, that anyone detained should be afforded all applicable legal protections, and that the principle of non-refoulement should be respected.

Question. Do you support the Biden administration's proposal to bring gas to Lebanon via routes in Syria? If so, is it your assessment that the proposal would violate American sanctions against the Syrian regime, including the Caesar Act? If you do not believe the proposal violates sanctions, please explain why not.

Answer. Yes, I do support this proposal to help address Lebanon's acute energy crisis, which is having a devastating impact on critical life-saving infrastructure such as hospitals and the water supply. However, I understand that no final determination has been made about the U.S. sanctions implications of that proposal. The Administration received provisional contracts for both the electricity and gas deals last year. The final financing terms and contracts are still being discussed by the parties and the World Bank. The Departments of Treasury and State still need to review details of the final financing terms and contracts to assess any relevant sanctions concerns. Only at that time will we have the information needed to make any final determinations. The Administration looks forward to continuing to consult with Congress on this important issue.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
 SUBMITTED TO ERVIN JOSE MASSINGA BY SENATOR ROBERT MENENDEZ

In recent hearings on Sudan, the Sahel, and Russia I have expressed concern that the State Department's Africa Bureau appears to be allergic to sanctioning African Government officials. On May 23, 2021, Secretary Blinken announced a visa restriction policy under Section 212(a)(3)(C) of the Immigration and Nationality Act on the issuance of visas for any current or former Ethiopian or Eritrean Government officials, or others responsible for, or complicit in, undermining resolution of the crisis in northern Ethiopia.

Question. Has the State Department designated anyone using this authority?

Answer. The Department of State has taken steps to impose restrictions on multiple individuals under the 3C visa restriction policy for current or former Ethiopian or Eritrean Government officials, members of the security forces, or other individuals as announced by the Secretary of State on May 23, 2021. This includes those who have engaged in wrongful violence, or other abuses, against people in northern Ethiopia, as well as those who have hindered access of humanitarian access to those in the region.

Question. Do you believe imposition of sanctions can be a useful policy tool?

Answer. Yes, foreign policy-related sanctions can be effective in helping to counter and deter threats to national security posed by particular activities of individuals, private enterprises and/or countries. The Department seeks to maximize their economic impact on targets and to minimize the damage to U.S. economic interests. Beyond the imposition of sanctions, the THREAT of sanctions is also a useful tool to use in complex negotiations. We also work to remove economic sanctions when appropriate to reward and incentivize improved behavior or demonstrate U.S. support for foreign government actions.

Question. Can the threat of sanctions be effective if sanctions are never actually imposed?

Answer. Yes, the announcement of a visa restriction or sanction regime as a first step, before any designations, has in some instances been helpful in deterring behavior contrary to U.S. foreign policy goals.

For example, since the outbreak of armed conflict in northern Ethiopia in November 2020, the United States has engaged in intense diplomacy and pressed the Government of Ethiopia and the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) to cease hostilities without preconditions, ensure access to lifesaving humanitarian assistance, and end human rights abuses and violations. These efforts, implicitly back by the threat of possible sanctions in the event of continued fighting, helped incentivize the Government of Ethiopia and the TPLF signing a cessation of hostilities agreement on November 2, 2022. All options including sanctions remained on the table during this period, as they still do.

There are many such examples. Sometimes, the use of SOME sanctions against SOME actors serves as a warning to others that additional action by the United States may be forthcoming should our policy goals not be met.

On November 1, 2021, the Department of State amended the International Traffic in Arms Regulations to add and update the entry for Ethiopia to deny licenses and other approvals for exports of defense articles and defense services to certain end-users.

Question. Has the Administration revised the amendment since it took effect?

Answer. No, the Department of State has not made further revisions to the entry for Ethiopia, since amending the International Traffic in Arms Regulations (ITAR) on November 1, 2021. The 2021 amendment codified that it is the policy of the United States to deny licenses and other approvals for exports of defense articles and defense services to certain end-users in Ethiopia.

Question. If confirmed, what criteria will you recommend the Administration use to determine whether the U.S. should once again allow licenses and other approval for export of defense articles for Ethiopia?

Answer. The Department of State updated ITAR § 126.1 on November 1, 2021, consistent with the Secretary of State's May 21, 2021 announcement of human rights related restrictions with respect to Ethiopia and Eritrea. Since the signing of the cessation of hostilities agreement on November 2, 2022, the human rights situation in northern Ethiopia has improved dramatically and parties have acknowledged the need for transitional justice. That said, I would recommend that any pro-

posal for exporting defense articles to Ethiopia continue to be subject to a rigorous review process, including as necessary Leahy vetting, to ensure that those articles would be used as intended by cleared personnel to advance U.S. policy interests.

Question. In your view, should assistance to Ethiopia from the International Financial Institutions including the World Bank and International Monetary Fund be resumed? What safeguards, if any, should be put in place to assure that projects are carried out?

Answer. The State Department acts consistently with the IFI Act provision to not channel assistance to the government of any country which engages in a pattern of gross violations of internationally recognized human rights (GVHR)—unless such assistance is directed specifically to programs which serve the basic human needs of the citizens of such country. Since the November 2, 2022 cessation of hostilities agreement, there has been a marked improvement in the human rights situation in northern Ethiopia. As the human rights situation evolves in Ethiopia, the Secretary will continue to review the applicability of relevant restrictions.

Audits and other engagements of programs and operations across agencies can help ensure that foreign assistance programs are conducted effectively and efficiently, in accordance with statutory standards and authorities.

President Biden terminated Ethiopia from the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) effective January 1, 2022. Ethiopia did not meet the criteria due to gross violations of internationally recognized human rights being perpetrated by the Government of Ethiopia and other parties to the conflict in northern Ethiopia.

Question. Do you believe the Government of Ethiopia meets the criteria set in law?

Answer. The annual AGOA review process, in which State and the interagency review each country's eligibility, has just begun. AGOA eligibility determinations are made in September by the interagency Trade Policy Staff Committee. Although there has been significant progress towards meeting specific benchmarks related to the conflict in northern Ethiopia, Ethiopia must also satisfy the statutory requirements. Because the review has only just started, we are unable to pre-determine the State Department's position on Ethiopia's AGOA eligibility.

Question. What specific actions must the Government of Ethiopia take to meet the criteria?

Answer. AGOA criteria in U.S. law stipulates that, among other criteria, a country must not engage in gross violations of internationally recognized human rights. Offensive military operations in northern Ethiopia have ceased following the signing of the cessation of hostilities agreement on November 2, 2022. Ethiopia has clear benchmarks for a pathway toward reinstatement, and the United States will continue to work with the Government of Ethiopia to achieve that objective. Ethiopia's progress toward meeting its benchmarks and statutory requirements will be assessed by the interagency Trade Policy Staff Committee in September.

Question. What steps will you take, if confirmed, to ensure that individuals implicated in the diversion of U.S. donated food aid to Ethiopia are held accountable?

Answer. The U.S. Agency for International Development's Office of the Inspector General is investigating the diversion of food aid in Ethiopia, and we are engaging with partners (including WFP) at both the headquarters and field levels to ensure appropriate risk mitigation systems to strengthen program monitoring and oversight are in place. If confirmed, I would work closely with USAID's Bureau of Humanitarian Assistance to ensure that USAID-supported food assistance resumes only when strong oversight measures are in place and we are confident that assistance will reach the intended vulnerable populations based on the humanitarian principles of humanity, independence, impartiality, and neutrality.

The war in northern Ethiopia was characterized by egregious abuses by all parties to the conflict. On March 20, Secretary Blinken announced the determination that members of the Ethiopian National Defense Forces (ENDF), EDF, TPLF forces, and Amhara forces committed war crimes during the conflict in northern Ethiopia, and that members of the ENDF, the EDF, and Amhara forces also committed crimes against humanity, including murder, rape and other forms of sexual violence, and persecution.

Question. If confirmed, what steps will you take to support accountability for these crimes?

Answer. If confirmed, I would continue to support ongoing transitional justice and accountability efforts in Ethiopia, which are key to securing a sustainable peace. Meaningful accountability can only take place through active participation by all parts of Ethiopian society in a credible transitional justice process, consultations for which are currently underway in Ethiopia. If confirmed, I will seek to strengthen the efforts of NGOs, civil society, and the international community to support fact-finding, documentation, and justice. We will also use the tools at our disposal to encourage accountability.

Question. Do you believe the Ethiopian judicial system can credibly prosecute perpetrators?

Answer. The Ethiopian judicial system will need the technical and political support of international partners. On the technical side, there are ongoing efforts to build capacity through small grants and trainings. On the political side, the international community must continue to push the Government toward sincere and robust justice and accountability in order to break the cycle of violence in Ethiopia. If confirmed, I would press the Government to approach the need for justice after the recent conflict seriously, honestly and transparently, and use the tools at our disposal to advance that goal.

Question. Does the State Department have a position on whether Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed bears any level of responsibility for the crimes committed in Ethiopia by Eritreans forces?

Answer. One of the goals of a robust transitional justice process would be to identify responsible parties and bring them to justice. This is why it is essential that we support nascent transitional justice efforts both technically and politically, as well as international fact-finding and documentation.

Related to the specific question concerning PM Abiy, this is a decision of the Ethiopian people to make through their judicial institutions.

In December of 2021, the United Nations Human Rights Council established the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia (ICHREE). ICHREE's mandate includes investigating allegations of violations and abuses of international human rights law international humanitarian law and international refugee law in Ethiopia committed since 3 November 2020 by parties to the conflict. Its mandate ends in September of this year.

Question. I understand ICHREE's mandate will not be renewed. Considering the scale of the abuses in northern Ethiopia, why won't the mandate be renewed?

Answer. ICHREE, of which the mandate began in 2021, will provide a comprehensive report in September 2023. The European Union proposed creation of ICHREE and the United States Government supported the mandate. More recently, the European Union has made it clear it is not planning to seek renewal of its current mandate, which expires in September. It is our unambiguous understanding that there is very little international support, particularly among African states, for extending the mandate.

The U.S. Government will continue to support independent human rights organizations, including the United Nations, to paint a complete picture of the abuses that took place during the conflict.

Question. Did the State Department agree to allow ICHREE's mandate to expire in exchange for the Ethiopian Government dropping its efforts to disband ICHREE's mandate early?

Answer. As stated above, the European Union is not planning to pursue ICHREE's renewal. This decision takes into account the continued adherence to the cessation of hostilities agreement and the dramatic reduction in reports of human rights violations and abuses in northern Ethiopia. Our long-term goal is to support domestic capacity for human rights accountability and transitional justice, and ICHREE's comprehensive report in September 2023 will be a valuable contribution to this goal.

Question. If confirmed, how will you ensure the Ethiopian people, the Human Rights Council and U.N. headquarters receive regular, public reporting from an independent, credible entity about abuses and violations that occurred in the course of the conflict?

Answer. If confirmed, I will support independent and credible human rights organizations working in Ethiopia to document and investigate human rights violations and abuses. I will also coordinate with likeminded nations to ensure the inter-

national community speaks with one voice on the importance of credible and transparent reckoning with violations committed by all sides of the conflict. We believe credible efforts are being made on this front, but more must be done to ensure they have the technical and political backing they need to succeed.

Question. I understand the ICHREE investigators do not have unfettered access to Ethiopia. What will you do if confirmed to ensure they have full access to carry forward with their work until the end of its mandate?

Answer. ICHREE negotiates access issues directly with the Government of Ethiopia. We have pressed the Government of Ethiopia to support the ICHREE mission and allow the team access and have repeatedly noted that the cycle of violence in Ethiopia cannot be broken without meaningful steps towards accountability and justice. The U.S. Government will continue to support independent human rights organizations, including the U.N. Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, to document and investigate human rights abuses that took place during the conflict. Our assessment of the situation on the ground will always be a composite of information we receive from many institutions and voices.

Question. What are the most important actions you have taken in your career to date to support democracy and human rights? What has been the impact of your actions?

Answer. I am proud of many actions undertaken to promote human rights, but sometimes the most important impact is that on just one family. While in China, I, along with colleagues, helped a Uigher family escape the PRC and come to the United States for resettlement. Beyond that, in Guinea as DCM, I worked intensively with the Ambassador to demand credible elections on the National and sub-national level, and personally worked with the electoral commission to ensure its work was honest. Again, in Guinea, I worked with USAID to ensure funding of a parallel vote tabulation system that proved effective in demonstrating to the public the elections reflected the will of the people.

In Sudan while in CDA status, I publicly demanded that the Government respect the rights of Christian worshippers who were being bullied by a powerful official over a land dispute—the Government convoked me to complain, but quietly backed down on the matter. More recently, during the Kenyan elections of 2022, as Acting Assistant Secretary I worked closely with Ambassador Whitman, State/DRL, and much of the policy making interagency to steer a course that was seen as balanced and effective in promoting our values while bolstering the stability of a key partner.

Question. What issues are the most pressing challenges to democracy or democratic development in Ethiopia? These challenges might include obstacles to participatory and accountable governance and institutions, rule of law, authentic political competition, civil society, human rights and press freedom. Please be as specific as possible.

Answer. There are many challenges to democratic development in Ethiopia, which stalled during the conflict in northern Ethiopia and remains threatened by violence in Oromia and Amhara regions. The absence of transitional justice throughout Ethiopia's history has entrenched impunity and degraded rule of law and public trust in the justice system. Further, as the most recent Human Rights Report highlighted, Ethiopia ranks poorly in press freedom, with journalists being arrested or intimidated. Civil society organizations that don't agree with the Government are also under threat. This has an overall chilling effect on freedom of speech. If confirmed, I will champion international support for Ethiopia's institutions that underpin participatory and accountable governance, rule of law, authentic political competition, civil society, human rights, and press freedom.

Question. What steps will you take—if confirmed—to support democracy in Ethiopia? What do you hope to accomplish through these actions? What are the potential impediments to addressing the specific obstacles you have identified?

Answer. The U.S. Government directly supports several democracy programs in Ethiopia in the form of small grants from USAID, State/DRL, and USIP. However, the current assistance pause prevents some programming that could advance key U.S. objectives in the country. More broadly, our policy towards Ethiopia is designed to be a combination of incentives (potential future reinstatement of AGOA and international funding support) and disincentives (Executive Order 14046 sanctions) to encourage the Government of Ethiopia to build on the progress in national dialogue and transitional justice it has made since November 2022.

Question. How will you utilize U.S. Government assistance resources at your disposal, including the Democracy Commission Small Grants program and other

sources of State Department and USAID funding, to support democracy and governance, and what will you prioritize in processes to administer such assistance?

Answer. With the resources at our disposal, we will focus on developing robust institutions, strengthening democratic systems, and supporting civil society organizations. It is my belief that long-term peace in Ethiopia depends not just on a willingness by leaders to lay down arms, but on developing a capacity to deal with future problems (and take account of those in the past) at a local level. We will therefore prioritize issues like transitional justice, press freedom, human rights, conflict prevention and mitigation, civic engagement, and accountability as we work with non-governmental actors to build capacity.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to meet with civil society members, human rights and other non-governmental organizations in the U.S. and with local human rights NGOs, and other members of civil society in Ethiopia? What steps will you take to pro-actively address efforts to restrict or penalize NGOs and civil society via legal or regulatory measures?

Answer. Yes, if confirmed I plan to meet regularly with civil society and NGOs. I will continue to use the policy and legal tools at our disposal to empower these organizations and encourage a greater role for NGOs and civil society in Ethiopia.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to meet with democratically oriented political opposition figures and parties? What steps will you take to encourage genuine political competition? Will you advocate for access and inclusivity for women, minorities, and youth within political parties?

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, I will meet with democratically-oriented political opposition figures and parties. One of our primary goals in Ethiopia is to promote democracy, an inclusive political system, and good governance, and I will continue our policy of meeting with both government and opposition leaders. Certainly women, minorities, and youth within democratically-oriented opposition groups will be key interlocutors with me and the Embassy staff if confirmed.

Question. Will you and your Embassy team actively engage with Ethiopia on freedom of the press and address any government efforts designed to control or undermine press freedom through legal, regulatory or other measures? Will you commit to meeting regularly with independent, local press in Ethiopia?

Answer. Yes, if confirmed I will meet and engage with members of the press, including local and independent press. The lack of press freedom was noted in the most recent Human Rights Report, and promoting press freedom is a key goal for this administration.

Question. Will you and your Embassy team actively engage with civil society and government counterparts on countering disinformation and propaganda disseminated by foreign state or non-state actors in the country?

Answer. Yes, I plan to build upon the collaboration I currently have with the State Department's Global Engagement Center and related USG institutions and will, if confirmed and through leading the whole country team, actively engage with civil society and government counterparts on countering disinformation and propaganda. This is not only a priority for the United States, it is a priority for the Government of Ethiopia. If confirmed, I will look for ways to work with external actors, the Global Engagement Center, and the GOE to counter disinformation and propaganda disseminated in Ethiopia.

Question. Will you and your Embassy teams actively engage with Ethiopia on the right of labor groups to organize, including for independent trade unions?

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, my team and I will actively engage with Ethiopia on the right to unionize and organize. Our Embassy colleagues currently liaise regularly with labor groups, including the Confederation of Ethiopian Trade Unions, and I would intend for our engagement on labor issues to remain robust.

Question. Will you commit to using your position, if confirmed, to defend the human rights and dignity of all people in Ethiopia, no matter their sexual orientation or gender identity?

Answer. Yes, I will commit to use my position as Ambassador to defend the human rights and dignity of all people in Ethiopia, no matter their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Question. What challenges do the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) people face in Ethiopia?

Answer. As noted in State's most recent Human Rights Report, consensual same-sex sexual conduct is illegal in Ethiopia and punishable by three to fifteen years' imprisonment. While we are not aware of any recent prosecutions or incarcerations under this law, reports of violence against LGBTQI+ people occur, and discrimination against the LGBTQI+ community is permitted in Ethiopia. If confirmed, I will use my position to defend the human rights and dignity of all people in Ethiopia, no matter their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Question. What specifically will you commit to do to help LGBTQ people in Ethiopia?

Answer. If confirmed, I will ensure first and foremost that all employees within my purview receive the respect and dignity they deserve. I will protect staff from discrimination and create a safe working environment. Outside the Embassy, I will support civil society leaders and NGOs working to defend the rights of all people in Ethiopia, regardless of their sexual orientation, and lend my political and diplomatic support to their message as they carry out their important work.

Question. Will you commit, if confirmed, to ensuring that you fully brief Members of Congress and/or their staff each time you are in Washington for visits or consultations during your tenure as Ambassador to Ethiopia?

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, I will work with the Bureau of Legislative Affairs to offer briefings for Members of Congress and their staffs when I am back in Washington for visits or consultations. The Ethiopia team has actively and frequently engaged with the Hill; from my current role as PDAS in the Africa Bureau, I have noted and appreciated the mutual understanding this has fostered.

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility.

Question. How do you anticipate fostering diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility at the U.S. Embassy in Ethiopia?

Answer. If confirmed as Chief of Mission, I will lead the American and Ethiopian professionals in Mission Ethiopia to advance our national security agenda in a safe, inclusive, and respectful workplace. I will communicate my commitment to a workplace in which diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility are core tenants of our mission culture. I will also make clear that discrimination, harassment, and bullying are unacceptable and take swift action to address any such issues that may arise. I will demonstrate my commitment to equal employment opportunity (EEO) principals and the work of Mission EEO counselors and locally engaged staff advisors.

Question. What specifically will you do to prioritize and promote diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility, while also combating racism, discrimination, and inequality among locally employed staff in Ethiopia?

Answer. If confirmed as Chief of Mission, I will demonstrate through actions and words that diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) is a priority, and reinforce with my staff it should also be a priority for them. I will also make clear my strong opposition to harassment, discrimination, and bullying and ensure a prevention plan is in place. I will hold supervisors accountable and expect them to hold their team members accountable for acts of harassment, discrimination, or bullying. I will ensure mission personnel have access to all the resources they need to combat racism, discrimination, and inequality. If confirmed, I will meet regularly with post's DEIA council at Mission Ethiopia, participate in community activities to increase dialogue and inclusion, and promote a positive work environment among the Embassy team.

Question. In addition to focusing on diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility in our workforce, will you commit to engaging more equitably in operations and programming, particularly with potential partners and communities that traditionally have been marginalized, excluded, or underrepresented in ours and others' donor and partnership efforts? How do you anticipate utilizing local expertise, knowledge, and capacity to meet our foreign policy goals?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to engaging more equitably in our operations and programs and will lead Mission Ethiopia to build relationships with all communities in Ethiopian society through active outreach. I will carefully monitor, evaluate, and coordinate the design and implementation of programming and assistance and extend their reach as far as possible. I will ensure that our representational events and public diplomacy programs include marginalized and underrepresented groups and that our human resources team uses diverse panels in hiring processes to ensure applicants are not being disadvantaged. I will work with our locally employed

staff to expand our outreach efforts and leverage the various languages spoken within our mission to assist our U.S. officers in making connections beyond the capital.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO ERVIN JOSE MASSINGA BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Question. What is your understanding of the division of labor between yourself as U.S. Ambassador to Ethiopia, if confirmed, and Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa Hammer?

Answer. SEHOA plays an instrumental role in supporting the department's diplomatic goals in the region. My understanding is that if confirmed, I would lead the bilateral relationship within Ethiopia while SEHOA would focus on complementary efforts, such as ensuring implementation of the cessation of hostilities agreement, coordinating with regional actors, and participating in engagements outside of Ethiopia. I have worked with Ambassador Hammer effectively during his tenure as SEHOA, and fully anticipate that collaborative, productive working relationship will continue if confirmed.

Question. If confirmed, will you commit as U.S. Ambassador to placing a strong emphasis on thoughtful and balanced public diplomacy, including on social media, traditional press, and Embassy-produced content?

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, I will emphasize public diplomacy, including on social media, traditional press, and Embassy-produced content. Given recent ethnic tensions, Ethiopia is particularly susceptible to propaganda and hate speech. Countering false narratives and promoting and highlighting U.S. values-oriented policy messages will be a key pillar of my strategy.

On March 20, 2023, Secretary Blinken made an atrocities determination for Ethiopia, finding that actors committed war crimes, crimes against humanity, and ethnic cleansing throughout the conflict in northern Ethiopia. I publicly called for accountability for atrocities committed in Ethiopia in April 2021, May 2021, June 2021, August 2021, September 2021, November 2021, December 2021, March 2022, June 2022, July 2022, August 2022, and November 2022, and introduced S.Res.97 (117th Congress) and was the lead-cosponsor on S.3199 (117th Congress) with Senator Menendez to call for and require accountability measures. Additionally, Senate Foreign Relations Committee and House Foreign Affairs Committee staff repeatedly raised the question of an atrocities determination for the conflict in Northern Ethiopia in regular calls with the State Department for over two years.

Question. Given your role as Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs as deliberations about the atrocities determination were ongoing, what is your perspective on why the Department made the atrocities determination for the conflict in northern Ethiopia in March 2023 after two years of conflict and an agreement on the cessation of hostilities, and not used as an accountability tool when the atrocities were occurring?

Answer. We focused the core of our diplomatic efforts on bringing the parties together and facilitating a cessation of hostilities, given that most gross violations of human rights were occurring in the context of the fighting. While our assessment was that an atrocity determination during that sensitive period of diplomacy would not have contributed to ending the conflict or the human rights abuses, the parties to the conflict were aware that a determination was forthcoming, and that the United States had other tools at its disposal (such as sanctions authorities) to press for an end to the fighting and to promote negotiation. It is our view that the existence of sanctions authorities (as well as their use during various points during the conflict) as well as the knowledge an atrocities determination would eventually come contributed to the eventual decision of the parties to seek a negotiated solution.

After achievement of the cessation of hostilities agreement, the Secretary decided, based on a careful review of the law and facts, that an atrocity determination was necessary to document the serious human rights abuses during war and to highlight the need for justice and accountability. Justice and accountability will be of vital importance if peace is to hold in Ethiopia, and we are supporting (both financially and diplomatically) ongoing efforts to those ends.

Question. The State Department's 2022 Human Rights Report on Ethiopia notes the September 2022 finding by the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia (ICHREE) that the Ethiopian federal government and allied re-

gional state governments implemented a “wide range of measures designed to systematically deprive the population of Tigray of material and services indispensable for its survival,” and ICHREE assessed that the federal government had committed the war crime of using “starvation as a method of warfare.” The State Department’s statement on its atrocities determination does not mention this—does the State Department concur with ICHREE’s finding that the federal government systematically deprived Tigray’s population of food and other indispensable materials?

Answer. The determination was not intended to be an exhaustive accounting of all acts that constituted atrocities over the course of the conflict.

Given that there have been allegations of many different specific war crimes in this armed conflict, we decided to address the category of war crimes collectively and not attempt to make public determinations as to each specific war crime. Our focus was on the final determination, which was that all parties to the conflict committed war crimes.

Question. How will the atrocities determination impact your approach to engaging with the Government of Ethiopia, the Tigray People’s Liberation Front, and the Ethiopian people in your role as U.S. Ambassador to Ethiopia, if confirmed?

Answer. The determination does not speak to individual criminal responsibility, which will need to be determined through credible justice processes. The atrocities determination acknowledged the severity of crimes committed by all sides of the conflict, and we will continue to recognize these abuses and push for credible justice. This requires working with all sides to ensure that the transitional justice process continues to move forward, and continuing to emphasize that there must be accountability for those responsible for human rights violations and abuses, including those in positions of command.

Question. In your view, what implications does the atrocities determination have for the U.S./Ethiopia relationship?

Answer. The atrocities determination is a public declaration based on careful review of the law and the facts. The Ethiopian Government does not agree with the atrocity determination, which it has made clear in public statements. However, the determination underscores the extent of human rights abuses committed during the conflict and helps focus our policy on key priorities to ensure accountability and a durable peace, such as transitional justice, democracy, and human rights. It establishes new areas for bilateral cooperation.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to submitting any new information that may contribute to updating the Department’s atrocities determination?

Answer. The Secretary’s atrocities determination was not meant to be an exhaustive list of crimes. If confirmed, I would continue the Embassy’s ongoing efforts to gather information on atrocities and human rights violations, which will inform our general bilateral relationship and policy. We also continue to support comprehensive transitional justice, which must include truth telling and criminal accountability; credible transitional justice processes will also shed light on the abuses committed during the conflict. Whether or not a new or updated atrocity determination is appropriate will depend on the circumstances on the ground and the information that emerges.

On April 6, 2023, USAID notified my staff of the discovery of widespread diversion of U.S.-branded food aid in Tigray. Administrator Power announced the suspension of food aid to Tigray on May 4. Last week, USAID notified my staff of the discovery of widespread diversion of food aid—in the same manner as discovered in Tigray—in Gambella. USAID suspects that diversion occurred in other regions of Ethiopia, where a large segment of the population suffers from acute food insecurity. USAID, the World Food Programme (WFP), and other food aid implementers are conducting investigations across Ethiopia.

Question. As U.S. Ambassador to Ethiopia, if confirmed, how will you engage with the Government of Ethiopia on the issue of the diversion of U.S.-sponsored food aid?

Answer. I have zero tolerance for any fraud, waste, or abuse of U.S. taxpayer-funded resources. I expect the ongoing USAID Office of the Inspector General investigation into food diversion in Ethiopia to lead to concrete recommendations for improving oversight over U.S.-funded assistance. In advance of these OIG determinations though, I will, if confirmed, insist on sustained access to ensure robust monitoring and oversight while also pressing for major reform of the existing food assistance system to ensure greater accountability among implementing partners and authorities at the federal, regional, and local levels. I will also press Ethiopian authori-

ties at all levels to hold accountable those found to be responsible for the diversion of U.S. assistance away from its intended beneficiaries. The Government of Ethiopia has formed a committee to coordinate with regional authorities on food diversion investigations.

Question. As U.S. Ambassador to Ethiopia, if confirmed, will you commit to laying out specific actions the Ethiopian Government needs to measure their demonstrated cooperation on an investigation into the diverted food aid?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with my USAID colleagues on identifying and communicating to the Government of Ethiopia the specific steps the Government must take to demonstrate their cooperation on the investigation into food diversion.

Question. If investigations find that there was collusion to divert U.S. food aid by Ethiopian officials at the national level, how should this impact the U.S./Ethiopia relationship?

Answer. I will press the Ethiopian leadership to hold everyone found to be responsible for the diversion of U.S. assistance to account—including Ethiopian Government authorities at all levels.

We cannot assess the potential impact on the U.S./Ethiopia relationship until the investigation is complete.

Question. What accountability tools should the U.S. pursue against those responsible for the widespread diversion of U.S. food aid to Ethiopia?

Answer. Ethiopian authorities are responsible for any criminal prosecution of those found to have been involved in the diversion of U.S. assistance away from its intended beneficiaries. If confirmed, I would insist that the Government and all implementing partners institute the appropriate oversight measures within their respective organizations.

Question. As Chief of Mission in Ethiopia, if confirmed, how will you work with the USAID Mission Director and other USAID colleagues to ensure that USAID is doing all it can to monitor the distribution of U.S. food aid to Ethiopia and to ensure against widespread diversion?

Answer. As previously stated, I have zero tolerance for any fraud, waste, or abuse of U.S. taxpayer-funded resources. If confirmed, I will work closely with the USAID team in Addis Ababa to ensure the full implementation of all recommendations put forward by USAID's Office of the Inspector General following its investigation into food diversion in Ethiopia.

Question. As U.S. Ambassador to Ethiopia, if confirmed, how will you work with WFP colleagues to ensure that U.S.-sponsored food aid reaches its intended beneficiaries?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work closely with WFP and USAID to ensure American generosity is not misused. Our implementing partners must share the burden of accountability as we assist beneficiaries across Ethiopia. As WFP's largest donor in Ethiopia and globally, the United States should insist on WFP's full compliance with any recommendations put forward by USAID's Office of the Inspector General following its investigation into food diversion.

Question. Significant lobbying has been conducted in Washington to restore Ethiopia's eligibility under the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA). Should Ethiopia be eligible for trade preferences under the African Growth and Opportunity Act for 2024?

Answer. In November 2021, the United States Trade Representative (USTR) articulated specific human rights-related benchmarks to the Government of Ethiopia as a pathway toward reinstatement of AGOA eligibility. Although there has been significant progress towards meeting specific benchmarks related to the conflict in the north, Ethiopia must also satisfy the statutory requirements. The annual AGOA review process, in which State and the interagency review each country's eligibility, has just begun and so we are unable to pre-determine the State Department's position on Ethiopia's AGOA eligibility for 2024.

Question. As U.S. Ambassador to Ethiopia, how will you engage with Ethiopian stakeholders on the AGOA issue if confirmed?

Answer. Ethiopia's ineligibility for AGOA privileges was triggered by the gross violations of internationally recognized human rights perpetrated by its government. If confirmed, I will work with international and domestic human rights monitors and organizations to press the Ethiopian Government to refrain from engaging in gross violations of human rights, and to encourage its active cooperation with relevant actors to investigate and hold to account perpetrators of such abuses.

Question. Given the State Department's determination that ethnic cleansing, among other crimes, has occurred in western Tigray, how is the Department determining whether Ethiopia has made progress in meeting the AGOA requirements in that area, given the continued lack of access by human rights monitors? Does the State Department consider Ethiopia's lack of cooperation with the ICHREE to constitute a lack of cooperation in international efforts to eliminate human rights violations (an AGOA eligibility requirement)?

Answer. To be eligible for AGOA benefits a country must "not engage in gross violations of internationally recognized human rights (GVHRs)." At this time, we have heard from credible human rights organizations with an on-the-ground presence in the north that they have not received new reports of ongoing GVHR by the Government of Ethiopia, including in western Tigray. We are also not aware of the Ethiopian Government preventing international human rights monitors from accessing western Tigray; rather, we understand current lack of travel to the region is based on security concerns. Our Embassy has pressed the Government to grant travel access to western Tigray, and to date has been largely unsuccessful.

On March 8, 2023, Secretary Blinken and First Lady Jill Biden honored Meaza Mohammed at the 2023 International Women of Courage Awards at the White House. Ms. Mohammed has a long history of supporting anti-Semitic and pro-genocide Ethiopian activists, including Tadio Tantu. In particular, after she attended the White House ceremony, Mohammed tweeted a picture with Secretary Blinken and First Lady Biden. The accompanying text advocated for the release of Tantu. Ms. Mohammed's support for Tantu is concerning because he has advocated for treating Tigrayans as the Germans treated the Jews. A 2004 article entitled Get Lost Judae has a particularly disturbing excerpt:

"This is an achievement of the German's struggle. The bees are stirred. The tigers are on the move. The bee knows what to do when its hive is messed with. The German lion is angered. It is on fire. It has no patience to tolerate the Jewish anymore. What about us, Ethiopians? How long are we to tolerate the Judaes? When will we stop petitioning to serve as underlings of our Judae rulers? How long will we be ruled by the enemy of the country and the people? How long will we buy goods from their businesses? How long shall Ethiopia continue pouring honey and milk for our ruler and their people? Why is our slavery limitless? Why don't we understand that we are waiting our death, though already as good as dead? Get closer and listen to them. You will listen our rulers' peoples discussing which model of heavy-truck to buy, while you and your friends talk about a warning letter from the servants of our rulers for failing to pay utility fee on time"

Question. Due to this alarming association with Tantu and the promotion of his racist cause, do you feel that the White House should revoke Ms. Mohammed's award?

Answer. Ms. Meaza is a journalist who has been outspoken in her advocacy for the women who have been victims of sexually-based violence in the northern conflict—whether from Amhara, Tigray, or Afar. She is also active in her advocacy for the release of individuals, especially journalists, who have been imprisoned by the Government of Ethiopia. Ms. Meaza's post celebrating the award read: "On #InternationalWomensDay we must all come together to be a voice for the voiceless. That is why I continue to call for justice for young women (students) kidnapped from Dembi Dolo University and to #FreeTadiosTantu, the elderly journalist." I am not familiar with the quotation attributed to Mr. Tantu, an outspoken columnist who has been arrested and imprisoned multiple times over the twenty years since the cited article was published.

Question. What role did the Bureau of African Affairs play in identifying Ms. Mohammed as a potential International Women of Courage awardee?

Answer. Ms. Meaza was nominated for consideration for this award by the Embassy in Addis Ababa, for her courage in continuing to report on and advocate for the victims of sexually-based violence in the northern conflict—whether from Amhara, Tigray, or Afar—despite multiple arrests and detentions in retaliation for her reporting.

Question. What vetting took place before awarding Ms. Mohammed with the International Women of Courage award? What was the Bureau of African Affairs' role?

Answer. Nominations for the International Women of Courage Award are submitted by embassies and consulates overseas, in response to an annual call for nominations by the Office of Global Women's Issues. In addition to interviewing the potential nominees, posts conduct research on their prospective nominees' associations and affiliations, current and past social media postings, public speaking engagements, and other publications, as well as media by or about the nominee. Ms. Meaza is an activist whose personal views do not reflect the policies of the USG. If confirmed, I will ensure a continued rigorous vetting process for nominees of all USG-funded programs.

Question. In light of the recent determination that atrocities, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and ethnic cleansing occurred in Ethiopia, do you condemn the narrative that Ms. Mohammed supported toward Tigrayans?

Answer. Ms. Meaza's nomination was in recognition of her advocacy for media freedom. I am not familiar with the quotation attributed to Mr. Tantu. Any rhetoric that encourages hate and division is deplorable, and I condemn it in the strongest terms.

Your testimony stated, "I believe we must be ready to support Ethiopia in all ways that further our own policy objectives."

Question. Beyond offering to facilitate talks between the Government of Ethiopia and the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA), what specific support do you envision?

Answer. Thus far the United States has not been involved in the ongoing talks between the Ethiopian Government and the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA). We have made clear to the Government as well as Oromo interlocutors with access to the OLA that we stand ready to support as long as U.S. involvement is agreeable to both sides. While it is too early to tell what support might be requested with regard to Oromia, in the case of the cessation of hostilities agreement between the Government and the TPLF, we provided transportation to the negotiations for the latter as well as technical advice on running productive negotiations. We could also consider supporting confidence-building measures to reduce mistrust between the parties, in coordination with international partners, to facilitate the negotiation, implementation and sustainability of any agreement reached in the talks.

Question. How should the U.S. support Ethiopia to "address the root causes of conflict, including economic and social fragility?" Please be specific.

Answer. Beyond historical grievances, we know that much of Ethiopia's recent instability has been exacerbated by youth unemployment, a lack of economic growth, entrenched impunity, and elite-level competition for political power and resources. Ethiopia's ethno-federalist structure may also contribute to ethnic tensions. The Ethiopian Government is endeavoring to address these challenges through its nascent transitional justice and accountability process, National Dialogue Commission, and economic reforms. The United States will support Ethiopia in making these initiatives credible, genuine, inclusive, and able to address the country's current instability and fragility.

I agree with your testimony that "we need to ensure there is accountability for the atrocities committed during the conflict [in northern Ethiopia]. That's key to ensuring true reconciliation and durable peace." President Biden issued an executive order "imposing sanctions on certain persons with respect to the humanitarian and human rights crisis in Ethiopia" on September 17, 2021; however to date, only Eritrean individuals and entities have been designated.

Question. What role did you play as Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs in deciding not to impose sanctions on any Ethiopian individuals or entities for atrocities committed during the war in northern Ethiopia?

Answer. Since the outbreak of conflict in northern Ethiopia in November 2020, the United States has engaged in intense diplomacy and pressed the Government of Ethiopia and the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) to cease hostilities without preconditions, ensure access to lifesaving humanitarian assistance, and end human rights abuses and violations. These efforts, implicitly backed by the threat of sanctions in the event of continued fighting, helped incentivize the Government of Ethiopia and the TPLF signing a cessation of hostilities agreement on November 2, 2022. The Administration's decision to impose sanctions on individuals and entities is weighed alongside other policy tools to help us meet U.S. objectives—in this case, to end the conflict.

As the African Affairs PDAS, I was integrally involved in the policy-making discussions and processes in this decision, as I am in nearly all key policy matters.

Question. Under President Biden's executive order, do you feel that "ensuring accountability for the atrocities committed during the conflict" includes designating Ethiopian individuals and entities for sanctions? If not, why not.

Answer. If an Ethiopian individual or entity has been identified as committing an atrocity, supported with evidence defined under strict legal requirements and statutory information, and sanctioning furthers our prioritized foreign policy goals, then I support sanctioning. If confirmed, I will continue to do so within the interagency process.

Question. What other accountability measures should the United States employ?

Answer. In addition to the possibility of sanctioning individuals and entities for atrocities, we have suspended most bilateral foreign assistance as well as support for international financial institutions' programs that go beyond addressing basic human needs. We have also suspended Ethiopia's eligibility for the African Growth and Opportunity Act. Moreover, we are supporting the transitional justice and accountability process, which should be the centerpieces of truth, reconciliation and transparency that the victims of the atrocities committed during the conflict deserve. We will consider additional measures if appropriate.

During your confirmation hearing, you responded to a question from Sen. Young that "you would be steadfast in ensuring that the people of Ethiopia understand" that the American growth model is the strongest for long-term growth.

Question. How will you carry this out in practice if confirmed?

Answer. Ethiopians and the Ethiopian Government already understand that the American free-market growth model is the strongest one for long-term development and prosperity. Once assistance restrictions are lifted when warranted under law and consistent with our policy and values, the United States should re-engage Ethiopia in the broad range of economic growth programs offered by U.S. Government agencies and international organizations, including USAID, USTDA, USTR, the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, Power Africa, DFC, MCC, etc. The United States should also be ready to provide technical assistance to the Government of Ethiopia as it redoubles efforts to implement its free-market economic reform plan. When appropriate, I plan to serve as a strong champion of U.S. and likeminded countries' corporate investment and engagement with Ethiopia.

Question. As U.S. Ambassador, if confirmed, will you communicate publicly about the costs associated with Chinese predatory lending, Belt and Road Initiative, and other malign projects and investments?

Answer. If confirmed, I will be forthright in my public statements and diplomatic engagement about the differences between Chinese bilateral lending and multilateral or private lending, as well as the associated consequences for Ethiopia. Whenever possible, I will present alternatives with likeminded partners, multilateral organizations, and the private sector as a counter Chinese bilateral lending, projects, and investments.

In response to Senator Murphy, who discussed the "remarkable" shift with Prime Minister Abiy from "Nobel Prize to civil war within 12-18 months" and how critics would say that the U.S. "misread the core political dynamics in the country and that our support for Abiy ended up underwriting his confrontational approach with his rivals, including the TPLF," you said, "probably there was some level of excessive optimism."

Question. How will you, as U.S. Ambassador to Ethiopia, if confirmed, approach all actors in Ethiopia, including Prime Minister Abiy, "for what they are?"

Answer. If confirmed, I will continue to engage key actors in Ethiopia but remain clear-eyed about our expectations and U.S. policy goals. Diplomacy has a key role to play in creating and sustaining a bilateral relationship that both supports the people of Ethiopia and helps us achieve our policy goals. The leadership of Ethiopia, at the federal and regional level, are the primary actors responsible for ending the savage conflict of recent years and establishing a durable governance foundation upon which the country can move forward on a solid, sustainable basis. In that context, we must focus on what is possible and attainable while holding to our core values.

Question. What other situations have the Bureau of African Affairs approached with “excessive optimism?”

Answer. While it would be imprudent to directly compare Ethiopia to other countries in the region, it is the case that diplomacy exists in a space of incomplete and sometimes inaccurate information. We do our best to make informed decisions, but none of our policies is perfect or beyond fault. The most important thing, for me, is that we continue to try to make the best, most informed decisions based on our core values and policy goals, engage in course correction when needed, and ensure our policymaking processes fully incorporate diverse voices, opinions and approaches.

Sudan

While those directing Sudan policy within the Administration were preparing for an imminent declaration of a civilian government, they seem to have missed obvious signs of the impending collapse of the negotiation process and ensuing civil war that forced American diplomats to dodge roving gun battles and airstrikes.

Question. How did the State Department fail to respond to the apparent signs of an impending crisis in Sudan? Why was the Biden Administration caught flat-footed in its crisis response, which needlessly endangered U.S. Embassy personnel and did not sufficiently forewarn American citizens?

Answer. We share the Sudanese people’s deep disappointment in the conflict started by Sudan’s military leaders. Our engagement since the October 2021 military takeover focused on restoring the promise of the revolution and fostering the resumption of the civilian-led transition. We supported Sudanese-led efforts and process. In supporting a Sudanese-led process, our approach emphasized the need for the military to finally move from political control to an appropriate role—protecting the people of Sudan and the country’s borders—under civilian-led rule. Neither the Department nor our diplomats were blind to the risks. We understood the pathway to restoring a civilian-led government was always going to be difficult, as was establishing a unified military.

The U.S. Department of State and our embassies and consulates abroad have no higher priority than the safety and security of U.S. citizens abroad. Our Travel Advisory for Sudan has been Level 4: Do not Travel since August 2021. Once the crisis began, Secretary Blinken’s around-the-clock diplomatic efforts enabled the security conditions to allow the United States and our allies and partners to undertake departure operations by air, land, and sea.

Question. What, if anything, did the State Department do to address concerns reportedly raised by international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) with the Embassy and USAID in the aftermath of the 2021 coup (and previously) that the international community would not be able or willing to support the evacuation or extraction of international staff of NGOs?

Answer. We remained in close communication with our NGO partners throughout our work to support Sudanese-led efforts to transfer power to a civilian government; that regularly communication included discussions related to security. After April 15 once fighting between the SAF and RSF broke out. In a multinational effort, the USG, in concert with allies and partners, supported the departure from Sudan of more than 2000 private U.S citizens, lawful permanent residents, locally employed staff, their immediate family members, NGO staff, and nationals from allied and partner countries.

Question. What direct role did you have, if any, in the evacuation planning and staffing decisions of the Embassy in the weeks leading up to the evacuation?

Answer. Assistant Secretary Phee and I remained in close communication with Ambassador Godfrey in the weeks leading up to the crisis that started on April 15. I was in official training from April 17 for three weeks.

Question. What problems did Embassy Khartoum encountered in trying to implement its evacuation plan, and what lessons were learned?

Answer. Regardless as to how much time is spent developing an evacuation plan, no amount of planning can foresee every possibility. As the Department does for every evacuation, Embassy Khartoum will document lessons learned in order to improve future evacuation efforts. Learning from what happened with the Khartoum evacuation, AF is already asking posts to maintain communication groups through popular mobile chat applications to facilitate alternate means of quick communication with locally employed staff.

Question. Did Embassy Khartoum have contingency plans in place in case post could not execute the emergency evacuation plan? Were these contingency plans implemented? Why or why not?

Answer. Embassy Khartoum maintained an Emergency Action Plan that included multiple evacuation plans for getting staff out and plans for if staff were cut off from the Embassy. These plans were implemented and helped successfully consolidate staff to the Alternate Command Center, before moving all American staff and their family members to the Embassy prior to evacuation.

Question. With evidence of a deteriorating security situation in Sudan, did the Department consider moving to authorized or ordered departure before fighting broke out? Please describe the Department's deliberations on this matter, including your input.

Answer. No, the post Emergency Action Committee did not consider moving to authorized or ordered departure prior to the initial request due to the presence of armed fighters in the streets of Khartoum. As soon as it was safe to move staff and families, the Embassy suspended operations and evacuated all staff members and families.

As stated earlier, I was in official training from April 17 for three weeks.

Question. Do all posts in sub-Saharan Africa maintain emergency evacuation plans? If so, what direct role have you played, if any, in their development?

Answer. Each diplomatic post around the world maintains an emergency action plan, which includes an evacuation plan. These plans are largely developed by posts overseas, as on-the-ground experts. The plans must be reviewed and revalidated annually. As the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for the Bureau of African Affairs, I do not have a direct role in their development.

Question. How often are emergency evacuation plans updated for posts in sub-Saharan Africa?

Answer. Emergency Action Plans, which include sections on evacuation planning, are reviewed and revalidated annually.

Question. Do emergency evacuation plans for posts in Sub-Saharan Africa include contingencies in case the primary plan is not executable?

Answer. Yes, Embassies in Sub-Saharan Africa all have Emergency Action Plans, that include sections on evacuation planning. These plans include contingency plans if primary routes are unavailable.

Question. In your role as Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for the Africa Bureau, did you ever raise concerns within the Department regarding contingency planning for any evacuation plans at an Embassy in Africa? If so, where and when?

Answer. The Department periodically reviews the viability of maintaining diplomatic missions at our higher risk posts abroad. As the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for the Africa Bureau, I present to Department leadership the political justifications and risks associated with maintaining our diplomatic presence at many of our posts in Africa, to include our posts in Nigeria (April 2023), Somalia, Sudan and South Sudan (February 2023), Mali and Burkina Faso (October 2022), and Ethiopia (June 2022). These reviews consider contingency plans and risks prior to needing to evacuate.

Question. How will you draw upon the lessons of the crisis in Sudan to adapt to your role as Chief of Mission at the U.S. Embassy in Addis Ababa, a post with a high risk for conflict but with significantly more personnel, if confirmed?

Answer. More posts evacuate or draw down in AF than all the other geographic regions combined. I plan to incorporate lessons learned from these evacuations into Embassy Addis Ababa's crisis planning. This includes, inter alia, developing an approachable leadership structure to ensure I remain informed of fluid situational developments and that the Embassy has mechanisms in place to communicate with staff at all times.

The size of Embassy Addis Ababa requires focused attention in the context of emergency planning, a lesson learned from the 2021 period of Ordered Departure.

Question. What is the current posture of the Department in Sudan?

Answer. The Department temporarily suspended operations at U.S. Embassy Khartoum and evacuated all official Americans from Sudan.

Question. Under what conditions would the Department decide to move Embassy personnel back to Khartoum?

Answer. As conditions in Sudan improve, Embassy Sudan's Emergency Action Committee will meet to discuss changes to the security environment. The committee will then make a recommendation to the Ambassador, who may then request the Department reopen the Embassy. Any decision to restart operations will be based on verified changes to the security environment in Sudan.

Question. What is the timeline for returning to Embassy Khartoum once the Department decides to do so?

Answer. Prior to temporarily suspending operations, the Embassy disabled and destroyed sensitive computer networks and communications equipment and sealed the building. Before returning to full operations, the Bureau of Diplomatic Security, in conjunction with the Bureau of Information Resource Management and the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations would need to determine the timeline for resuming operations based on any damages sustained to the physical plant, security systems, and in controlled access areas and availability of locally employed staff to assist.

Question. Did Embassy personnel have to abandon their personal belongings to be evacuated? If yes, is the Department compensating them for their losses?

Answer. Yes. Given the short timeline to departure and the non-permissive environment at the time of evacuation, unfortunately personnel had to abandon personal belongings. Employees will be able to file claims through private insurance, once it is officially determined that there has been a loss. Claims denied by private insurance may then be resubmitted to the Department for adjudication of a loss claim.

Question. Has there been any damage to Embassy Khartoum or personnel housing, including the Chief of Mission residence?

Answer. The Embassy compound and some personnel housing units have sustained damage.

Question. Is it the Department's policy to allow Mission Chiefs to take annual leave regardless of conditions in the host country? If not, under what conditions would a Chief of Mission have annual leave denied or canceled if previously approved?

Answer. Like all employees, Chiefs of Mission are entitled to annual leave, which is vital to an employee's wellbeing and resiliency. An Assistant Secretary, as the supervisor for a Chief of Mission, may cancel previously approved annual leave or deny annual leave at his/her discretion.

Question. As Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for the Africa Bureau, what role did you play in deciding to not recall Ambassador Godfrey from his leave back to Khartoum earlier?

Answer. Ambassador Godfrey was given permission to be away from post before the fighting escalated. He unilaterally returned to post earlier than originally planned. I was not involved in this decision.

The two warring generals, Burhan and Hemetti, have direct links to the genocide in Darfur, oversaw the death of many Sudanese civilians and the abuse of countless more during their reign, and continue to steal Sudan's resources. They also removed a sitting civilian-led transitional government in October 2021. The United States has not held these generals accountable but instead fed their lust for legitimacy by repeatedly making them central to the Administration's policy for a "democratic transition" in Sudan. As a result, the U.S. has less leverage today in Sudan since the removal of Omar al-Bashir in 2019. It seems to me we helped elevate these two monsters.

Question. Do you assess the United States should have taken action against the warring generals, Burhan and Hemetti, their vast financial interests, and/or their foreign backers to contain and weaken their stranglehold on the Sudanese people earlier?

Answer. We put pressure on the military government and led, with our partners, international efforts to support a Sudanese-led process to form a civilian-led government. This pressure included a sanctions designation on the Central Reserve Police, the suspension of all assistance to the Government, including from the \$700 million appropriated by Congress in FY 2021, and coordinating multilateral action to pause HIPC Debt Relief and any support from international financial institutions.

On May 4, President Biden issued an executive order (EO) imposing sanctions on certain persons destabilizing Sudan and undermining the goal of a democratic transition. However, as we have seen in Ethiopia, the Adminis-

tration has not designated any individuals or entities for sanctions since the announcement of the EO.

Question. What is the Department of State’s perspective on designating Sudanese individuals and entities under the executive order issued by President Biden on May 4 related to Sudan?

Answer. The Executive Order underscores our policy aims to end the conflict, support Sudan’s transition to democracy, and to promote accountability for those who undermine it or commit serious human rights abuses. As the Secretary said on May 22, if the ceasefire is violated, we will know, and we will hold violators accountable through our sanctions and other tools at our disposal. We continue to intensively monitor and evaluate ceasefire conditions up to the time of submission of these questions for the record.

Question. In your role as Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for the Africa Bureau, did you advocate against sanctioning Generals Burhan or Hemetti at any time during your tenure? If so when?

Answer. Between October 25, 2021, and April 15, 2023, I and other State Department officials frequently reassessed our approach to Sudan, explored alternatives, and prepared for contingencies including the use of sanctions. Throughout this period, the Bureau has explored the use of other pressures, including the suspension of direct assistance and preventing HIPC Debt Relief or support from international financial institutions, and use of sanctions and visa restrictions on those responsible for human rights abuses.

As PDAS, I coordinate and orchestrate policy review processes. It is not appropriate to characterize one official’s position, including my own, in the policy development process.

Question. What accountability measures do you think the United States should use in the case of Sudan?

Answer. We have consistently supported the Sudanese people’s demands for freedom, peace and, critically, justice. We will continue to support Sudanese-led efforts to advance justice and accountability, including ongoing efforts, such as documentation of human rights abuses and violations, to lay the groundwork for justice accountability in the future.

On May 11, 2023, the parties to the conflict—the SAF and RSF—signed the Jeddah Declaration of Commitment to Protect the Civilians of Sudan with the facilitation of Saudi Arabia and the United States. While the Jeddah Declaration does secure commitments from the parties to protect civilians and the movement of humanitarian aid, it only achieved a commitment “to prioritizing discussions to achieve a short-term ceasefire,” and to “scheduling subsequent expanded discussions to achieve a permanent cessation of hostilities.”

Question. What, if any, practical impact has the outcome from the Jeddah talks had on the situation on the ground in Sudan?

Answer. Given the brutality of the conflict, our immediate focus has been on stopping the fighting to relieve the suffering of the Sudanese people. The Jeddah talks have focused on a short-term ceasefire to facilitate humanitarian assistance and restoration of essential services. This is in line with the step-by-step approach agreed by the parties. The Sudanese people have not given up hope and neither should we.

Question. Instead of subsiding, fighting in Khartoum and West Darfur has intensified since the Jeddah talks. Reports of rape by RSF combatants have increased significantly, and reports from humanitarian organizations suggest that SAF-affiliated authorities have increased bureaucratic impediments to aid operations. How have humanitarian and human rights pledges agreed to at the Jeddah talks impacted the bureaucratic barriers to aid operations and cases of sexual violence since given that they both seemingly have worsened?

Answer. We have received deeply disturbing reports about an increasing number of attacks, gender-based violence, including sexual violence, and looting against Sudanese civilians and foreign civilians, to include humanitarian workers, and humanitarian facilities and assets. As Ambassador Godfrey tweeted on May 16, we are deeply alarmed by reports of sexual violence at the hands of armed actors across Sudan. All parties to the conflict must fulfill their obligations under international humanitarian law and undertake efforts to prevent such violence, enable medical care and other services for survivors, and to seek accountability for perpetrators.

We continue to monitor these reports and commend local and international organizations who are providing services to survivors and taking steps to help break the

cycle of impunity. We continue to document these abuses and violations. It's imperative for perpetrators to be held accountable.

Question. To what extent are U.S. diplomats in Jeddah focused on seeking a ceasefire versus pressing the parties to allow unhindered humanitarian access while negotiations continue?

Answer. They are deeply focused on humanitarian access, both in terms of pressing for removal of obstacles and achieving a ceasefire to facilitate humanitarian assistance and restoration of essential services. The parties agreed to a seven-day, short-term ceasefire starting May 22 to facilitate the delivery and distribution of humanitarian assistance, restore essential services, and withdraw forces from hospitals and essential public facilities. The parties also agreed to facilitate the safe passage of humanitarian actors and commodities, allowing goods to flow unhindered from ports of entry to populations in need.

Question. How is Ambassador Godfrey coordinating his outreach to Sudanese civilians with other regional and international actors undertaking similar efforts, including UNITAMS, the African Union, and East African governments?

Answer. Ambassador Godfrey and other senior officials are frequently engaging Sudanese civilian leaders, Resistance Committees, and civil society to work toward the shared goal of establishing civilian democratic governance in Sudan as soon as possible, and to harmonize civilian and international assistance efforts. We are coordinating this outreach with the African Union, IGAD, East African governments, and UNITAMS and other partners.

In the Foreign Policy article "How the U.S. Fumbled Sudan's Hopes for Democracy," a spokesperson for the State Department stated "U.S. engagement after the October 2021 military takeover was centered on supporting Sudanese civilian actors in a Sudanese-led process to re-establish a civilian-led transitional government."

Question. Do you agree with that characterization of the U.S. policy after the October 2021 coup?

Answer. I would agree that U.S. engagement after the October 2021 military takeover was centered on supporting Sudanese civilian actors in a Sudanese-led process to re-establish a civilian-led transitional government in line with the democratic aspirations of the Sudanese people.

The same Foreign Policy article references an early 2022 "memo [that] was written and circulated within the State Department's Bureau of African Affairs warning of the risks of current U.S. policy on Sudan and listing potential scenarios that could emerge from the rivalry between Burhan and Hemetti, including those tensions erupting into a full-scale conflict [the memo] was meant to go to U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken's desk, but the draft was heavily edited, watered down, and never passed out of the bureau."

Question. Are you aware of the existence of this memo? If yes, did you ever see it? Did you contribute to the memo?

Answer. In the normal course of the work in this area there have routinely been products prepared by staff working on Sudan that discussed a variety of risks, including that of conflict between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces and how best to mitigate against those risks. Since 2021, senior State officials have been well aware of ongoing tensions between SAF and RSF leadership, and have engaged in frequent diplomacy, often working closely with civilians, to defuse tensions between the SAF and RSF, including in the days before April 15, 2023. As an institutional matter, as PDAS I would have reviewed products that included those circulated to the A/S and to the 7th floor.

Question. Were you part of conversations where the memo was discussed internally? If yes, what decisions were made as to how to handle it?

Answer. There have been a number of memos and internal deliberations on this subject. We carefully considered policy proposals and different opinions on our policy on Sudan and did not dismiss dissenting views. AF's recommendations on this subject over this period were used to structure frequent, intensive diplomacy over many months designed to defuse and end tensions between the SAF and RSF.

Question. Did you edit or change the contents of the memo? If so, what were your changes?

Answer. As PDAS I focused on ensuring that all memos had concise and cogent analysis and clear policy recommendations, including on memos related to supporting a democratic transition in Sudan.

I do not feel it is appropriate to characterize one official's position, including my own, in the policy development process.

South Africa

Question. Last week, a delegation of senior South African officials travelled to the United States to meet with State Department officials, ostensibly about the U.S.-South Africa relationship. On May 11, U.S. Ambassador to South Africa Brigety, in a press conference in Johannesburg, "bet [his] life" on the claim that South African weapons and ammunition were loaded onto Russian vessel the "Lady R" from December 6–8, 2022. South Africa's foreign ministry has denied the claim. Then, on May 12, Amb. Brigety apologized for his remarks to Foreign Minister Pandor after being summoned to a meeting with her. Secretary Blinken did the same in a call with Minister Pandor. Was Ambassador Brigety authorized to accuse the South African Government of supplying arms to Russia publicly? If no, why not?

Answer. Ambassador Brigety was authorized to speak with local South African press about the visit in early May of a delegation of South African officials to Washington, D.C. Those meetings in early May included discussion of the Lady R and South Africa's assurance that an investigation was underway, as President Ramaphosa subsequently confirmed in a statement. As Ambassador Brigety subsequently clarified, as did the State Department spokesperson, we intend to keep conversations with the South Africans regarding our serious concerns in diplomatic channels moving forward.

Question. Did the Department raise the issue of potential transfer of arms to the Russian Government or Russia-affiliated entities or on a Russian-sanctioned vessel with the South African Government? If so, when, and were you personally involved or present for any of those conversations?

Answer. Since the docking of the Lady R in a South African naval port in early December 2022, U.S. officials—including Secretary Blinken, APNSA Sullivan, Assistant Secretary Phee, and others—have raised the matter on multiple occasions with South African counterparts. I was not personally present at those conversations.

Question. Do you agree with the State Department's decision to not publicly pushback against the South African Government and ANC party members when they personally attacked and portray Ambassador Brigety negatively and make anti-American statements?

Answer. In my capacity as Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary, and in Acting Assistant Secretary status of the time the interview with Ambassador Brigety was made public, I was integrally part of discussions about how to manage our diplomatic relations with South Africa before and after Ambassador Brigety's interview. Our goal was to ensure that South African officials understood the depth of our concern about the Lady R and our desire to continue conversations about it in diplomatic channels without letting those conversations disrupt work on common priorities. I stand by our decision to keep those priorities in balance.

Question. How do you think the apologies and walking back of the accusations will impact the U.S. relationship with South Africa?

Answer. I believe our relationship with South Africa is both complex and resilient. We will continue to have frank and sometimes difficult conversations with South African officials when we disagree—as is the case when South Africa takes actions that appear to contradict its stated position of "non-alignment"—but we will at the same time pursue a robust and affirmative agenda on long-standing priorities like health and trade.

Question. What signals do you think the apologies and walking back of the accusations send to other governments who are considering acting against the national security interests of the United States?

Answer. I do not think there is any government in the world that does not understand how seriously the United States takes our national security interests and the interests of our allies and partners, nor do I think any country doubts our resolve and our willingness to take action. South Africa is undertaking an investigation of the Lady R matter, and our bilateral relationship continues to address a wide range of complex matters. We are moving past this.

Question. Did Secretary Blinken raise with Foreign Minister Pandor the photos and other accounting of her meeting with Ambassador Brigety released publicly that were seemingly intended to portray him as being scolded and spoken down to by the South African Government?

Answer. Secretary Blinken spoke with Minister Pandor immediately after her meeting with Ambassador Brigety, and therefore the photos and descriptions in question were not yet public when they spoke.

Question. How is the State Department engaged with the United States Trade Representative on South Africa's eligibility under the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA)?

Answer. The State Department and USTR are in regular contact regarding AGOA matters. AGOA eligibility is determined by the Trade Policy Staff Committee, which consists of multiple agencies across the U.S. Government.

Question. If there is evidence that elements within South Africa's Government or ruling ANC party took part in facilitating a reported arms transfer to the Russian Government or Russia-affiliated entities or on a Russian-sanctioned vessel, do you think the Administration should use its existing authorities to hold those individuals and entities accountable?

Answer. We do not publicly preview sanctions decisions. The Biden-Harris Administration has shown that it does not hesitate to use existing authorities as appropriate to curtail Putin's ability to fund and supply his war machine. As you know, I have been deeply involved in policymaking efforts to attack and degrade Russian PMC's Wagner's African reach and fundraising capabilities—I am a serious, committed officer on the Russia security portfolio.

The Department of State is, as always, open to classified discussions with you and your colleagues to discuss in further detail.

Question. As of May 17, 2023, which senior members of Africa Bureau leadership had direct conversations with Ambassador Brigety about the South Africa press conference and reaction?

Answer. I and other Africa Bureau leadership speak regularly with Ambassador Brigety, as we do with all our Chiefs of Mission in the field, on a range of topics. I spoke with Ambassador Brigety immediately following the press conference. Deputy Assistant Secretary Robert Scott spoke to him on multiple issues pertaining to the bilateral relationship, both before the Ambassador's comments in question and the week subsequent to them (Scott was on official travel the week of the actual press conference).

Elections

Elections are expected to be called for late July in Zimbabwe. In addition to the persistent restrictions on political and civic space in Zimbabwe and the regular use of the institutions and resources of the state to the benefit of the ruling ZANU-PF party, the pre-election period in Zimbabwe has been marred by: the jailing (without bail) and convictions of opposition leaders and critical voices on politically-motivated charges; the threat of draconian legislation regulating NGOs; and significant flaws in the voter registration process.

Question. What is your view on the prospects for democratic elections in Zimbabwe later this year?

Answer. The Government of Zimbabwe has tilted the playing field in the ruling ZANU-PF's favor using intimidation, coercion, patronage, lawfare tactics, and at times, violence. Absent significant change in the immediate term, it is difficult to see how this can lead to free and fair elections in 2023.

Question. How have you prepared your colleagues at Embassy Harare for the inevitable increased strain on the bilateral relationship and pressure placed on the staff in country from a deteriorating political environment in Zimbabwe leading up to the 2023 polls?

Answer. In my capacity as Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of African Affairs, I directed the Bureau of African Affairs to connect with Washington-based counterparts in the Department of State and USAID to identify support mechanisms for Embassy Harare's election preparations. The AF Bureau has worked closely with Embassy Harare to develop and deliver messages to the Government of Zimbabwe on our expectations regarding this year's elections. Further, the Embassy team conducted scenario planning and crisis management exercises to prepare for a range of election-related outcomes.

Question. At what point do the pre-election conditions make it impossible for Zimbabwe to hold legitimate democratic elections?

Answer. The United States will use all tools at its disposal to determine whether the 2023 harmonized elections in Zimbabwe are free and fair. I remain concerned about the worrying trends in the lead-up to the elections, including the Government of Zimbabwe's use of intimidation, coercion, patronage, lawfare tactics, and at times, violence.

Elections in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) are expected for December of this year. In addition to the logistical challenges posed by holding nation-wide elections in DRC, the ongoing State of Siege and conflict in Eastern Congo, exacerbated by the presence of Rwanda-backed M23 rebels and the delays in conducting a legitimate voter registration exercise (among other issues) make it near certain that elections will be delayed and/or impossible to hold across the country.

Question. What lessons have you learned from the State Department's handling of the 2019 electoral process in DRC, including the controversial "victory" of President Tshisekedi?

Answer. Successful elections in 2023 should be free and fair, with inclusive, transparent and impartial electoral processes, and held in accordance with constitutional deadlines. President Tshisekedi has firmly expressed his commitment to free and fair elections, held on time, but we must remain engaged at the highest levels throughout the elections planning process to ensure the DRC Government takes the necessary legal, financial, and technical actions to ensure a better election in 2023.

Question. Have you been satisfied with the Presidency of Felix Tshisekedi, whom the State Department was quick to support as the "winner" of the 2019 elections despite serious questions about the legitimacy of the outcome?

Answer. Since he assumed power in 2019, President Tshisekedi and his administration have shown a commitment to working closely with the United States on areas of bilateral interest, including peace in eastern DRC, preservation of the environment, public health, and strategic minerals. Our bilateral relationship has also allowed us to engage critically with the DRC Government on areas of concern, such as combatting trafficking-in-persons, anti-corruption efforts, and professionalization of the Congolese security sector.

No leader is perfect, and the Democratic Republic of Congo remains a country suffering weak institutions. The United States continues to work with the Government and President Tshisekedi on these and other matters of concern to us and the people of that country and region.

Question. How is the State Department engaging with Congolese officials, including President Tshisekedi, on the challenges to the current electoral process?

Answer. The Department continues to call on the DRC Government to ensure that political and civic space remains open in the lead up to the elections so that the Congolese people can express their views peacefully. The United States is the largest donor of funding for activities in support of free and fair 2023 elections, providing \$24.75 million that: strengthens transparency of electoral processes and electoral administration, improves civic education, and empowers communities to participate in elections.

Question. What accountability measures are being discussed for spoilers to elections in DRC?

Answer. The U.S. Government is willing to consider the full range of diplomatic and legal tools, including sanctions, in order to promote accountability and help ensure the DRC can hold free and fair elections in accordance with constitutional deadlines.

Nigeria

Question. I have been engaged in discussions with the Department over security assistance to Nigeria, considering both the acute security challenges Nigeria faces and the concerning human rights record of the Nigerian military. In your opinion, how should the Department balance these considerations as it engages with the Nigerian Government on security assistance and in combatting the insurgent threat posed by Boko Haram and other groups in the North East, and other security challenges across Nigeria?

Answer. The Department shares your commitment in ensuring that our security cooperation takes human rights concerns into account and is consistent with our objective of strengthening respect for human rights in Nigeria. Our security coopera-

tion seeks to strengthen the capacity of Nigeria's Armed Forces to more effectively address security threats, protect civilians, and institutionalize respect for human rights and the laws of armed conflict. Pursuant to the Leahy laws, the Department does not provide security assistance to any security force unit if there is credible information that the unit has committed a gross violation of human rights. We will continue to vet all Nigerian security force units nominated for assistance. Human rights considerations play a critical role in the evaluation of any arms sales.

A focus on human rights and civilian protection is fundamental to, and built into, every major U.S. security cooperation engagement with Nigeria. The Department is committed to ensuring that this remains the case as we prepare to work with a new Nigerian Administration.

Nigeria held national-level elections on February 25, 2023 and state-level elections on March 11 [sic], 2023. On March 1, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) announced Bola Tinubu of the All Progressives Congress won the presidential election with 36.61 percent of the vote. That same day (March 1), State Department spokesman Ned Price stated from the podium that the "United States congratulates the people of Nigeria, President-elect Tinubu, and all political leaders on the results of the February 25th presidential election. This competitive election represents a new period for Nigerian politics and democracy." The February 25 elections were marred by technical challenges and low voter turnout, and reports of vote buying, voter intimidation, attacks on polling stations, and accusations of fraud. Presidential candidates Peter Obi and Atiku Abubakar challenged the results in Nigerian courts. The Nigerian Court of Appeal began proceedings on the election challenges on May 8. The inauguration of President-elect Tinubu is scheduled for May 29, 2023.

Question. What is your assessment of Nigeria's 2023 electoral process?

Answer. Domestic and international observers noted significant logistical and technical shortcomings on February 25 for the national elections, as well as concerns about incidents of violence and intimidation, especially surrounding the March 18 state-level elections. For many Nigerians, the electoral process did not meet their expectations. The United States echoed many of these concerns in its public statements following the elections.

Despite these shortcomings, many neutral observers believed the official outcome reflected the will of those who voted. A comprehensive, USAID-supported Parallel Vote Tabulation process of the February 25 presidential race, run by a highly respected implementing partner that has carried out such tabulations in multiple previous Nigerian presidential elections, produced data that was consistent with the official results in 35 out of 37 states; the discrepancies in the two other states were not close to changing the overall outcome.

Nigeria's February and March 2023 elections were also highly competitive. In the presidential election, each of the top three candidates was the leading vote-getter in twelve states, a remarkable first in Nigeria's modern political era, reflecting the diversity of views that characterized the campaign and the wishes of voters. In more than half of Nigeria's states—twenty—the winning presidential candidate represented a different party than that of the incumbent governor. Many of Nigeria's state-level elections were also highly competitive, with the control of six governorships changing party hands. Although voter turnout proved to be disappointingly low, engagement by civil society and the media before, during, and following the elections was robust and energized, and advanced the cause of informed, issue-based politics.

In response to incidents of violence and voter intimidation during the election cycle, the U.S. Government-imposed visa restrictions on specific individuals for undermining the democratic process.

Question. Do you think it was premature for the State Department to congratulate president-elect Bola Tinubu and the Nigerian people on the conduct and outcome of the February 25 election on March 1?

Answer. I understand your concerns, and we carefully considered what would be an appropriate response. We believed it was important immediately after the election to recognize the determination and commitment to democracy of the Nigerian people, especially amidst the challenges that they confronted during the voting process.

In addition to our understanding through the Parallel Vote Tabulation that the announced results accurately reflected the national vote, the State Department offered congratulations to President-elect Tinubu based on the official declaration of the outcome by the sole body empowered by the Nigerian constitution to do so—the

Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). Presidential candidates Peter Obi and Atiku Abubakar were fully within their rights to file legal challenges using the well-established mechanisms for doing so; indeed, legal challenges have been filed by losing candidates in almost every presidential election since democracy returned to Nigeria in 1999. The Court of Appeals' Electoral Tribunal is currently holding hearings regarding these challenges, and per the Nigerian constitution has 180 days to issue a ruling; if an appeal of that ruling is filed by the losing party, the Supreme Court will have 60 days to make a final, binding ruling. The legal process will thus extend well past the May 29 inauguration date, as it has in previous presidential election cycles.

Given these factors, the Department made the decision to recognize the announced victory of Mr. Tinubu.

However, the State Department's March 1 statement did not diminish U.S. concerns about the technical shortcomings of an electoral process that clearly failed to meet Nigerians' expectations. That same statement also called on Nigeria's Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to address such issues ahead of Nigeria's then-upcoming state-level elections.

In December 2022, Reuters published a deeply troubling investigative piece on forced abortions and child killings by Nigeria's military. On April 19, 2023, Reuters published a follow up piece "More women describe enduring forced abortions in Nigerian Army programme."

Question. What is your assessment of the Nigerian National Human Rights Commission's investigation into these allegations?

Answer. Nigeria's National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) is conducting a serious and thorough investigation into the deeply troubling allegations reported by Reuters. On February 7, the NHRC inaugurated the Special Independent Investigative Panel on Human Rights Violations in Counter-Insurgency Operations in North-East Nigeria. Since opening its investigation, the Panel—which is headed by Abdu Aboki, a well-respected former Supreme Court justice, along with six legal, medical, and civil society experts, plus a military liaison—has made multiple visits to Nigeria's North East and interviewed dozens of witnesses, including health care workers, NGO workers, military personnel, and government and U.N. officials. The NHRC recently told our Embassy staff that it was planning additional trips to Borno State in order to reach more rural areas as they seek to the fullest possible picture of what may have transpired. The NHRC has reported that the military is cooperating with the investigation and is offering the NHRC full access to military personnel and installations.

We continue to monitor the work of the NHRC investigative panel, which is expected to last several more months, and press Nigeria's Government to ensure accountability for wrongdoing based on its findings and recommendations. I do not wish to pre-judge the results of any investigation currently underway.

Question. What is your assessment of how the U.S. Embassy in Abuja responded to the Reuters report?

Answer. I was satisfied with the work our Embassy in responding immediately to these reports, which involved immediate outreach to dozens of contacts across the full spectrum of our relationship, in order to gather initial perspectives. The Department was shocked and remains deeply concerned by the allegations in Reuters' reports. After the reports were published, U.S. officials in Abuja and Washington pressed the Nigerian Government to conduct a thorough and transparent independent investigation and ensure accountability for any wrongdoing. From this, we have seen results—on February 7, Nigeria's National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) inaugurated its investigative panel with a mandate to investigate Reuters' allegations, and determine culpability, compel appropriate damages or compensation, and recommend appropriate legal action by civil or military justice systems if warranted. Senior Nigerian officials—including President Buhari and Chief of Defense Staff Irabor (in a change from his initial comments)—pledged to support the investigation and assured that the Government would help facilitate its work. Everything we have seen since suggests that has been the case, and we recently learned that President Buhari has agreed to provide supplemental funding to the NHRC to support the Special Panel.

In the State Department's 2022 Trafficking in Persons Report, Ethiopia was listed as Tier 2 Watch List for the second year in a row for its lack of sustained efforts to meet the minimum standards to combat trafficking.

Question. If confirmed, what concrete steps could you take to help Ethiopia operationalize the prioritized recommendations contained in the TIP report?

Answer. The most recent TIP report outlined several steps Ethiopia could take to improve its anti-TIP efforts, including expanding training to regional officials outside of Addis, screening for trafficking indicators among vulnerable populations, developing a national action plan, and collaborating with international NGOs to increase the Government's capacity to combat trafficking. My understanding is the Ethiopia in making good progress in implementing these recommendations and, if confirmed, I will support these efforts within legal and policy guidelines.

In the State Department's 2022 International Religious Freedom report Ethiopia had significant religious freedom issues in country.

Question. What is your assessment of this particular issue and if confirmed, how will you work with the Ambassador At Large for International Religious Freedom to bolster religious freedom in-country?

Answer. Many of the religious tensions in Ethiopia are rooted in political and ethnic conflicts. Therefore, the key to ending religious persecution in Ethiopia is achieving lasting political peace. If confirmed, I will work to facilitate peace in Ethiopia and make the free expression of religion one of my core priorities.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to personally engaging with civil society on this issue?

Answer. Yes. If confirmed, I commit to engaging with civil society on the importance of religious freedom. This is something the Embassy team does already, and I look forward to continuing the great work it does in this area.

Question. If confirmed, what concrete steps can you take to help Ethiopia increase their societal and governmental respect for religious freedom?

Answer. The most important step that can be taken to help Ethiopia increase its societal and governmental respect for religious freedom is the achievement of a durable peace in the country. Religious conflicts in Ethiopia are often rooted in political and ethnic conflicts. If confirmed, I would stress with all interlocutors that the United States considers the respect for religious freedom a fundamental human rights issue—and one with far-reaching effects on the overall health of the bilateral relationship.

In the State Department's 2022 Human Rights Report there were a litany of significant human rights abuses attributed to the Government in Ethiopia.

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

Answer. Civil society organizations have a vital role to play in ensuring the respect for human rights in Ethiopia. If confirmed, I would continue ongoing efforts to support—both financially and diplomatically—human rights-based organizations working in the country. Outside perspective and technical knowledge will be a key component in ensuring a durable and lasting peace in Ethiopia.

State Management and Oversight

Please answer the following questions based on your experience as Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs from 2021-present.

Question. What is the process within the Bureau of African Affairs for decision making, particularly related to difficult or controversial issues?

Answer. Prior to deciding on a difficult or controversial issue, I endeavor to ensure that the Bureau gathers all available facts and surfaces perspectives from as many viewpoints as possible, including dissenting views relative to existing policy. I invite stakeholders in to discuss viewpoints and rigorously test hypotheses and policy concepts before the Bureau makes a final decision.

No process is perfect—we will never have all the facts, and ensuring all viewpoints are heard and engaged is our aspiration, but not possible to achieve without fault. What is important in my estimation of leadership is the ability of an institution to be able to make course corrections with new information, new insights and when we see current approaches falling short.

Question. What role do you play, as a member of Bureau leadership, in decision making processes?

Answer. I am the decision maker when the Assistant Secretary is out of the office or unavailable. When the Assistant Secretary is in the office, I coordinate the policy review processes of the Bureau, provide my own recommendation if appropriate, and ensure that she has the information and strongest analysis we can muster to make a well-informed decision. I try to maintain a constant policymaking assessment apparatus, to ensure the decisions made remain fit for purpose and consistent with evolving circumstances.

Question. Is there space for communicating dissent within the Bureau for African Affairs?

Answer. I aspire to achieve an unequivocal “yes” to the question, and constantly strive to live up to that aspiration.

Valuing opinions, trust, and fostering a harassment-free workplace are all key to ensuring dissenting views are expressed and heard. In the Bureau of African Affairs, we actively promote sharing of various opinions and do not tolerate employee harassment. Employees may express dissent through the formal Department-wide dissent process, but are also welcome to use less formal mechanisms, such as offering multiple perspectives in decision memos or through face-to-face interactions.

The Assistant Secretary and I purposely solicit wide ranging views on difficult topic to test current policy thinking and inform new or review policy processes. Our aim cannot be to incorporate every view into every policy, but to ensure we understand the range of options, tools, tradeoffs, and cost/benefit assessments.

Question. How do you manage dissent within the Bureau of African Affairs?

Answer. As stated above, by valuing opinions, trust, and fostering a harassment-free workplace are all key to encouraging and managing dissent. In the Bureau of African Affairs, we actively promote sharing of various opinions and do not tolerate employee harassment. When personnel communicate policy disagreement, I will organize appropriate discussions with key stakeholders to test the proposition.

Many U.S. Missions have been under enormous stress over the last several years, in large part due to COVID.

Question. What is your understanding of morale throughout Mission Addis Ababa?

Answer. The aftermath of a three-month ordered departure from November 2021 to February 2022, combined with continuing in-country travel restrictions related to the conflict in northern Ethiopia, have impacted morale at Embassy Addis Ababa. It is now more challenging to recruit diplomatic staff and many of our positions remain vacant without qualified bidders. Our Locally Employed Staff are still impacted by conflict-related issues that continue to arise. The Mission strives to support all employees through these challenges while meeting Mission objectives.

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

Answer. If confirmed, I will demonstrate my commitment to respect for all, customer service, professional development, safety and security, and quality of life issues. I will ensure the mission has access to resources to support a positive, respectful, and inclusive workplace. I will hold supervisors accountable and expect them to hold their teams accountable for conduct and performance. Incidents will be addressed immediately.

I will recognize and reward high performers and promote work-life balance and safe social activities to build community resilience.

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

Answer. If confirmed as Chief of Mission, I will lead the American and Ethiopian professionals in Mission Ethiopia to advance our national security agenda in a safe, inclusive, and respectful workplace. I will continue to ensure our Embassy in Ethiopia is working together as a team, including through an active diversity council, Federal Women’s Program, and professional development program that promote respect for each other and a shared commitment to advancing U.S. national interest through diplomacy, public outreach, and programs.

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I will recognize and reward high performers and promote work-life balance and safe social activities to build community resilience.

Management is a key responsibility for Chiefs of Mission.

Question. How would you describe your management style?

Answer. I would ideally compare myself to a musical conductor or band leader—setting the tone, pace and overall direction, but inviting creativity, individual and group excellence to shine, and innovation. I would also describe my management style as respectful, collaborative, dedicated, and committed to integrity.

Ultimately, I strive to serve the mission team and community. I lead with a consistent goal for excellence in our internal management and operational platforms in the mission, high customer service, and high morale in the community as essential ingredients to achieving success in our external diplomatic, public outreach, and programmatic goals. I also firmly believe in the principle that the “buck stops with me.” Meaning, I try to take full responsibility for actions taken by those who I supervise and institutions I direct.

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

Answer. As I mentioned in my statement before the committee on May 16, my parents provided clear guidance and instilled bedrock values that I aspire to emulate, including discipline, integrity, and treating people with kindness and respect. It is never acceptable or constructive to berate subordinates or other individuals, either in public or in private.

Question. How do you envision your relationship with the deputy Chief of Mission?

Answer. As a previous two-time deputy Chief of Mission and a current Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary, I have over a decade of experience serving successfully in a deputy role or supervising. I believe that the deputy and Chief of Mission must communicate well with one another and with the mission team, have a shared commitment to integrity, and both be focused on serving the community and their mission team. I believe in working as a partner with my deputy, complementing and reinforcing each other wherever possible. I know my deputy will be called upon to have important conversations with me from time to time to express a viewpoint that is not appropriate for a wider audience within the Mission, even with the senior personnel.

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

Answer. I believe in developing the skills of my deputy Chief of Mission to be ready to lead at any moment. This means including the deputy Chief of Mission in operations and external engagements, while also identifying specific leadership responsibilities. If confirmed, I would delegate to my deputy responsibilities such as the leading professional staff development programs, chairing key coordination working groups, and supervising emergency and crisis response exercises. I would support and reinforce those duties wherever helpful.

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

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

Answer. Yes, I believe it is essential to provide all employees with accurate, constructive feedback on their performance, as well as reward employees who successfully fulfill their roles. Throughout my Foreign Service career have actively provided such feedback and recognition, including for Locally Employed Staff, and by implementing additional recognition mechanisms such as Local Staff Member of the Month and Local Staff Member of the Year awards in my last two postings.

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

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, I would support and encourage clear, accurate, and direct feedback to all employees to improve performance and reward high achievers, as I have done throughout my Foreign Service career.

It is imperative that U.S. diplomats get outside of posts abroad to meet with local actors, including host government officials, non-government organizations, and local citizens.

Question. In your experience, do U.S. diplomats get outside of our Embassy walls enough to fully accomplish their missions?

Answer. In my experience U.S. diplomats generally strive to get outside our Embassy walls to advance mission goals. I believe that with clear and coordinated planning, consistent security and emergency accountability training, and prioritization on public outreach, it is possible, and essential, for U.S. diplomats to get outside of embassies and the capital cities of their host countries as much as possible. If confirmed, I would lead Mission Addis Ababa to actively and safely engaging in robust public outreach and travel outside of the Embassy and Addis Ababa.

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

Answer. If confirmed, I would work closely with the Embassy's Regional Security Office and Public Affairs Office to ensure that all U.S. diplomats and local staff have the necessary training, communications platforms for emergency accountability tools to safely travel and access local populations. I would also work with the Public Affairs Office to ensure that all staff have training in public messaging to engage Ethiopians in all parts of the country. Finally, I would work with the Management team and Washington to budget sufficient travel resources to support appropriate outreach to advance our U.S. national interests in Ethiopia.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO ERVIN JOSE MASSINGA BY SENATOR MARCO RUBIO

Question. In May 2022, Secretary Blinken said that the People's Republic of China is the "only country with both the intent to reshape the international order and, increasingly, the economic, diplomatic, military, and technological power to do it." The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) clearly holds the reins of power in the People's Republic of China and has used this power to commit genocide in Xinjiang, flood our communities with fentanyl, and emit, by far the largest quantity of greenhouse gases in the world today. With their absolute control of Chinese society and industry, the CCP could stop all of these destructive actions tomorrow if they so choose. Is the Chinese Communist Party a threat to the United States?

Answer. Earlier this year, the Director of National Intelligence testified that "the CCP represents both the leading and most consequential threat to U.S. national security and leadership globally." Under President Xi, the CCP has become more repressive at home and more aggressive abroad, seeking to undercut U.S. influence and alliances. If confirmed, I will advance U.S. national security interests and push back against the People's Republic of China (PRC) efforts to expand its problematic influence, through robust and forthright diplomatic engagements, public diplomacy, and commercial advocacy to bolster U.S.-Ethiopia ties. As an officer with substantial experience working in China and interfacing directly with PRC officials, I understand the stakes, the PRC's tools and approaches, and its weaknesses.

Question. Does the Chinese Communist Party undertake any activities that are beneficial to U.S. interests?

Answer. The Administration assesses the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) activities in the context of the fact that, as Secretary Blinken has said, the CCP has become more repressive at home and more aggressive abroad. According to the Office of the Director of National Intelligence's 2023 Annual Threat Assessment, the CCP is seeking to "undercut U.S. influence, drive wedges between Washington and its partners, and foster some norms that favor its authoritarian system."

Question. Do you believe that there are any areas within which the Chinese Communist Party would constructively work with the United States in good faith?

Answer. As the United States competes vigorously with the PRC, the United States manages this competition responsibly so that competition does not veer into conflict. The United States will work with the PRC to address transnational challenges, such as climate change, when it is in our interest to do so—as Secretary Blinken has said, not as a favor to us or anyone else, and never in exchange for walking away from our principles, but because it is what the world expects. If confirmed, I will energetically advance U.S. objectives and counter harmful behavior by the PRC.

Question. If confirmed, will you approve any joint activity with organizations or representatives from the People's Republic of China in the country in which you will work?

Answer. If confirmed, my priority will be advancing U.S. national security interests in Ethiopia and countering efforts by our strategic and regional competitors to undermine those interests. The Administration has been clear that the PRC is the most consequential geopolitical challenge facing the United States, and that the United States is committed to working to strengthen our partners in the region. If confirmed, I will work closely with Department of State and interagency colleagues and Congress to address the PRC's efforts to expand its influence in Ethiopia and the region.

Question. Despite the March 2022 African Union-brokered truce between the Ethiopian Government and Tigray forces in the north, ethnic tensions remain. All sides engaged in the conflict, including neighboring Eritrean forces who invaded and occupied the north of the country, are accused of forced recruitment, committing crimes against humanity, and carrying out war crimes. Some estimates state that more than 500,000 have died during the war from killings, starvation, and lack of health care. What is your assessment of the current state of U.S.-Ethiopian relations?

Answer. A stable, prosperous, and democratic Ethiopia is in the U.S. national interest. Two years of conflict strained the bilateral relationship but also weakened Ethiopia economically and exacerbated interethnic tensions within its borders. The United States seeks to restore this relationship and help Ethiopia rebuild, but our ability to provide financial assistance will be limited until we assess there is no longer a pattern of gross violations of human rights committed by the Government of Ethiopia. We are pleased to observe significant progress in this area. To ensure durable peace, we are urging Ethiopia to address recent atrocities through an independent, inclusive, and comprehensive transitional justice process. If confirmed, I will encourage further progress in this regard.

Question. Who or what is the greatest threat to the peace process currently in place?

Answer. We are confident the signatories to the cessation of hostilities agreement—the Government of Ethiopia and the Tigray People's Liberation Front—are committed to its successful implementation and note significant progress. Remaining challenges include the continued presence of Eritrean Defense Forces in border areas as well as Amhara irregular forces in contested parts of Tigray regional state. There is also a need for Ethiopia to source financial support for its nationwide disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) initiative. If confirmed, I will help mobilize international partners to share the financial responsibility for DDR in Ethiopia.

Question. Civil conflict in Tigray is not the only internal conflict. How would you describe the violence in other parts of the country and ethnic groups?

Answer. Poverty, unemployment, ethnic tensions, and a lack of trust in regional and federal authorities continue to be drivers of violence, well after silencing the guns in Tigray. This is especially the case in Amhara and Oromia regions. Developing dispute resolution mechanisms at the community level and among civil society groups are a core focus of U.S. development funding in Ethiopia. If confirmed, I will encourage Ethiopia's national dialogue process to address long-standing grievances that have been historical drivers of conflict.

Question. The U.S. is Ethiopia's largest donor, providing approximately \$2.5 billion in aid over the past two years. USAID recently suspended aid to the northern region of Ethiopia due to theft and diversion of humanitarian supplies. If confirmed, how will you ensure U.S. taxpayer assistance is used for what it is intended?

Answer. I have zero tolerance for any fraud, waste, or abuse of U.S. taxpayer-funded resources. I expect the ongoing USAID Office of the Inspector General investigation into food diversion in Ethiopia to lead to concrete recommendations for improving oversight over U.S. assistance. These will likely include additional use of third-party monitoring as well as greater accountability among implementing partners and authorities at the federal, regional, and local levels. If confirmed, I will press Ethiopian authorities at all levels to hold accountable those found to be responsible for the diversion of U.S. assistance away from its intended beneficiaries.

Question. Will you commit to this Committee and American citizens that USAID employees under your authority will provide appropriate oversight and not solely utilize implementing partners to verify aid is not stolen or diverted?

Answer. Yes, I commit to this.

Question. In your opinion, what assurances must be in place before assistance is resumed for these challenging areas?

Answer. Assurances for better oversight and accountability with regard to aid diversion must come from Ethiopian authorities at the federal, regional, and local levels. I also believe our implementing partners responsible for the actual distribution of assistance—be they U.N. organizations or non-governmental organizations—should provide assurances that they have increased their capacity to oversee operations across the entire country. If confirmed, I would hold all parties involved to the highest standards.

Question. Ethiopia maintains strong ties with China, as their largest trading partner and foreign investor. It is estimated that Ethiopia has more than \$13 billion in loans for significant infrastructure projects. What is your characterization of the existing relationship between Ethiopia and China?

Answer. The PRC is Ethiopia's largest bilateral lender and investor. The Government of Ethiopia views the PRC as an important partner that has helped the country accomplish key infrastructure development objectives, but the relationship is transactional, and the PRC's non-concessional approach to lending, in addition to often poor quality of infrastructure built and weak skills transfer mechanisms, increasingly shows itself as a poor model for development. There are not deep person-to-person or cultural ties like those that exist between the United States and Ethiopia. If confirmed, I will engage Ethiopia on its own terms, continue to deepen our person-to-person diplomacy, and advance our affirmative agenda.

Question. The Development Finance Corporation (DFC) was considering a multi-billion-dollar investment in Ethiopia, to include multinational bids for a telecom license in Ethiopia, however these plans were frozen in 2021. If confirmed, will you press DFC to resume looking for investment projects in Ethiopia?

Answer. Despite current economic headwinds, Ethiopia has promising, long-term growth prospects and represents a potentially attractive market for U.S. business. Prior to the northern conflict, its economy was among the fastest growing in the world. If confirmed, I will press the DFC to resume looking for investment opportunities in Ethiopia that meet the organization's legally mandated due diligence criteria.

Question. Which other programs will you support which will deepen U.S. investment in and with Ethiopia to counter Chinese initiatives?

Answer. If confirmed, I will focus on ensuring a level playing field for American businesses and calling out coercive and questionable business practices by unscrupulous actors like the PRC when necessary. Ethiopians and the Ethiopian Government already understand that the American free-market growth model is the strongest one for long-term development and prosperity. Once assistance restrictions are lifted when warranted under law and consistent with our policy and values, the United States should re-engage Ethiopia in the broad range of economic growth programs offered by U.S. Government agencies and international organizations, including USAID, USTDA, USTR, the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, Power Africa, DFC, MCC, etc. The United States should also be ready to provide technical assistance to the Government of Ethiopia as it redoubles efforts to implement its free-market economic reform plan. When appropriate, I plan to serve as a strong champion of U.S. and likeminded countries' corporate investment and engagement with Ethiopia.

I will also draw attention to the Partnership for Global Infrastructure Investment (PGII) as a viable alternative to PRC infrastructure investment. PGII was launched at the November 2022 G20 meeting and will introduce collaboration mechanisms among G7 countries and across all U.S. Government agencies to direct investment to projects in developing countries focused on climate and energy security, digital connectivity and health and health security—including related transportation infrastructure like ports, railroads, and other connective infrastructure.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO BRYAN DAVID HUNT BY SENATOR ROBERT MENENDEZ

Question. What are the most important actions you have taken in your career to date to support democracy and human rights? What has been the impact of your actions?

Answer. I have focused much of my State Department career on the promotion of democracy and respect for human rights. As Chargé in Georgetown, Guyana, I led our team in collaborative efforts with like-minded international partners to advance free and fair local and national elections. Our combined efforts resulted in the first peaceful transition of power in the country in more than two decades following national elections that were judged by international and domestic observers to be free and fair and to reflect the will of the people and the organization of long-delayed local government elections judged to be free and fair and reflect the will of the people. During my time as Principal Officer in Lahore, Pakistan, I helped lead U.S. Mission efforts to push-back against efforts by the then-military regime to declare martial law, jail politicians and civil society activists, and permanently disrupt the planned transition back to civilian rule. U.S. Mission efforts pressured the military to abandon its attempt and ensured a transition back to civilian rule, including national elections that were judged to be broadly free and fair.

Question. What issues are the most pressing challenges to democracy or democratic development in Sierra Leone? These challenges might include obstacles to participatory and accountable governance and institutions, rule of law, authentic political competition, civil society, human rights and press freedom. Please be as specific as possible.

Answer. The lack of independence of key election-related institutions, insufficient judicial independence, insufficient legislative oversight, and endemic corruption stand out as some of the most significant challenges to democracy and democratic development in Sierra Leone. I understand that as the country moves toward elections in June 2023, our Embassy has already raised concerns about the need to ensure a level playing field for all political parties, the importance of sustained media freedom, and the imperative of ensuring freedoms of association and peaceful assembly.

Question. What steps will you take—if confirmed—to support democracy in Sierra Leone? What do you hope to accomplish through these actions? What are the potential impediments to addressing the specific obstacles you have identified?

Answer. If confirmed, I would hope to use Sierra Leone's 2023 national elections as a catalyst to encourage the Government, political opposition, civil society, and other stakeholders to embark on a national reflection on the state of Sierra Leone's democratic institutions. I would work closely with like-minded partners to ensure that recommendations from the 2023 international and domestic election observation reports—particularly those related to the politicization of key electoral institutions—formed a key part of that reflection and resulting reforms. I would seek to use available U.S. democracy and governance funding to support the long-term strengthening of institutions identified for genuine reform and to support an independent judiciary, democratic political parties, and effective and independent civil society and media institutions. My hope would be to advance more independent, non-partisan institutions able to ensure the long-term viability of Sierra Leone's democracy and deliver for all Sierra Leonean people. Potential impediments include the highly partisan nature of Sierra Leone's politics, the intersection of partisan politics and ethnic identity, ingrained corruption, and the lack of human capacity. It is my hope that addressing these challenges will help Sierra Leone build on the gains it has made since the end of its civil war in 2002.

Question. How will you utilize U.S. Government assistance resources at your disposal, including the Democracy Commission Small Grants program and other sources of State Department and USAID funding, to support democracy and governance, and what will you prioritize in processes to administer such assistance?

Answer. I understand that the U.S. Government assistance resources for promotion of democracy and governance in Sierra Leone are limited. If confirmed, I would, therefore, seek to focus those limited resources on capacity-building programming that is central to reforming and strengthening Sierra Leone's democratic institutions and holding those institutions, including political parties, accountable to the country's citizens, particularly those historically underrepresented in national politics. I would also support efforts to strengthen accountable governance both at the national and local council level and will promote initiatives that prevent violence and foster peace and national cohesion. This would include continuing our work to strengthen civil society, build independent media, and advance the independence of key electoral and judicial institutions. In the processes used to administer such assistance, I would prioritize capacity building of Sierra Leonean institutions, ensuring funding awards are made in a transparent fashion, and overseeing our implementing partners to facilitate delivery of results.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to meet with civil society members, human rights and other non-governmental organizations in the U.S. and with local human rights NGOs, and other members of civil society in Sierra Leone? What steps will you take to pro-actively address efforts to restrict or penalize NGOs and civil society via legal or regulatory measures?

Answer. Yes. Human rights, civil society, and other non-governmental organizations all play an essential role in advancing democratic governance, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and assisting Sierra Leone to develop into a more stable, secure, and prosperous partner for the United States. If confirmed, I commit to meet with civil society members, human rights and other non-governmental organizations in the United State, local human rights non-governmental organizations, and other members of civil society in Sierra Leone. It is essential that non-governmental organizations and civil society are afforded freedom to express their opinions and conduct their activities. If confirmed, I would advocate this position to government, non-governmental, and civil society leaders. I would continue and expand upon the Embassy's efforts to facilitate connections between government and civil society organizations to build trust and mitigate unhelpful restrictions on civil society or non-governmental organizations.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to meet with democratically oriented political opposition figures and parties? What steps will you take to encourage genuine political competition? Will you advocate for access and inclusivity for women, minorities and youth within political parties?

Answer. Yes. If confirmed, I would engage with representatives from across the democratically oriented political spectrum, including the ruling party and opposition parties, and would ensure that Embassy colleagues did the same. I would also advocate for political parties to adopt credible, internal democratic mechanisms. I understand that the Embassy has joined international partners in calling for an increased commitment to issues-based politics and dialogue and cooperation among political parties on issues of national interest. If confirmed, I would continue this practice, as well as the Embassy's advocacy for access and inclusivity for women, minorities, and youth within political parties.

Question. Will you and your Embassy team actively engage with Sierra Leone on freedom of the press and address any government efforts designed to control or undermine press freedom through legal, regulatory or other measures? Will you commit to meeting regularly with independent, local press in Sierra Leone?

Answer. Yes. I am committed to supporting media freedom and strengthening journalistic professionalism and to meeting regularly with independent, local press in Sierra Leone. If confirmed, I would continue the Embassy's practice of engaging with the media, like-minded partners, civil society, and non-governmental organizations to underscore the importance of an independent, professional, and open media to a free and democratic society. I would work to address any government efforts designed to control or undermine press freedom through legal, regulatory, or other measures. If confirmed, I would also support expanded educational and exchange opportunities for local media to help strengthen journalistic professionalism and build capacity. I understand that in the past, the Embassy has hosted these exchanges to raise awareness on issues such as public health, mis/disinformation, democracy, and elections. If confirmed, I would seek to continue those efforts.

Question. Will you and your Embassy team actively engage with civil society and government counterparts on countering disinformation and propaganda disseminated by foreign state or non-state actors in the country?

Answer. Yes. If confirmed, I would engage with like-minded international partners, civil society, the media, and government counterparts to counter disinformation and propaganda disseminated by foreign state and non-state actors in Sierra Leone and would ensure that the Embassy team did likewise.

Question. Will you and your Embassy teams actively engage with Sierra Leone on the right of labor groups to organize, including for independent trade unions?

Answer. If confirmed, I would continue our Embassy's efforts to promote internationally recognized labor rights, including for independent trade unions. I understand that the government of Sierra Leone generally protects the right to bargain collectively. If confirmed, I would advocate for continued improvements in this area as well as fair and consistent enforcement of labor laws.

Question. Will you commit to using your position, if confirmed, to defend the human rights and dignity of all people in Sierra Leone, no matter their sexual orientation or gender identity?

Answer. I understand that the U.S. Embassy in Sierra Leone is already working to defend the human rights and the dignity of all people in Sierra Leone, no matter their sexual orientation or gender identity. If confirmed, I am committed to continuing and building upon this work.

Question. What challenges do the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) people face in Sierra Leone?

Answer. According to the 2022 Human Rights Report, “LGBTQI+ advocates reported the community faced challenges ranging from stigma and discrimination to denial of public services such as health care and justice.” Human rights defenders in Sierra Leone report that societal prejudice against LGBTQI+ persons is strong and dissuades many LGBTQI+ persons from publicly identifying as such. This prejudice has significant impacts on the ability of LGBTQI+ persons to access employment, health care, and housing. Sierra Leone maintains a colonial-era law that criminalizes same-sex activity among men, but not among women.

Question. What specifically will you commit to do to help LGBTQ people in Sierra Leone?

Answer. If confirmed, I would support LGBTQI+ persons in Sierra Leone through outreach and inclusion in mission activities, and by speaking out on the importance of protecting the human rights of members of the LGBTQI+ community. I would meet periodically, and ensure that staff met regularly, with members of the LGBTQI+ community, to ensure the Mission’s work continues to “do no harm” and was always cognizant of the priorities of LGBTQI+ persons in Sierra Leone. I would facilitate linkages between LGBTQI+ groups and other human rights-oriented civil society groups to ensure that the human rights of LGBTQI+ individuals are included as part of broader human rights advocacy efforts with the Sierra Leonean Government. I would seek to advocate with the Sierra Leonean Government for the protection of human rights of all in Sierra Leone, including members of the LGBTQI+ community, and would prioritize advocacy for the issues of greatest importance to the LGBTQI+ community. I would also seek opportunities, where appropriate, to demonstrate U.S. support for the protection of the human rights of LGBTQI+ individuals publicly.

Question. Will you commit, if confirmed, to ensuring that you fully brief Members of Congress and/or their staff each time you are in Washington for visits or consultations during your tenure as Ambassador to Sierra Leone?

Answer. I have great respect for and place high value on the importance of the relationship between the executive and legislative branches of government. If confirmed, I commit to, working through the Department, to make myself available to fully brief Members of Congress and/or their staff each time I am in Washington for visits and consultations during my tenure as Ambassador to Sierra Leone.

Question. How do you anticipate fostering diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility at the U.S. Embassy in Sierra Leone?

Answer. If confirmed as chief of mission, I will lead the American and Sierra Leonean professionals in Mission Sierra Leone to advance our national security agenda in a safe, inclusive, and respectful workplace. I will communicate my commitment to a workplace in which diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility are core tenets of our mission culture. I will also make clear that discrimination, harassment, and bullying are absolutely not acceptable and take swift action to address any such issues that may arise. I will demonstrate my commitment to equal employment opportunity (EEO) principals and the work of Mission EEO counselors and locally engaged staff advisors. I will support and participate in programs that promote respect and diversity.

Question. What specifically will you do to prioritize and promote diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility, while also combating racism, discrimination, and inequality among locally employed staff in Sierra Leone?

Answer. If confirmed as chief of mission, first, I will demonstrate that diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) is a priority, through actions and words, and reinforce with my staff it should also be a priority for them. I will also make clear my strong opposition to harassment, discrimination, and bullying and ensure a prevention plan is in place. I will hold supervisors accountable and expect them to hold their team members accountable for acts of harassment, discrimination, or bullying. I will ensure mission personnel have access to all the resources they need to combat racism, discrimination, and inequality. If confirmed, I will meet regularly with post’s DEIA council at Mission Sierra Leone, participate in community activi-

ties to increase dialogue and inclusion, and promote a positive work environment among the Embassy team.

Question. In addition to focusing on diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility in our workforce, will you commit to engaging more equitably in operations and programming, particularly with potential partners and communities that traditionally have been marginalized, excluded, or underrepresented in ours and others' donor and partnership efforts? How do you anticipate utilizing local expertise, knowledge, and capacity to meet our foreign policy goals?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to engaging more equitably in our operations and programs and will lead Mission Sierra Leone to build relationships with all communities in Sierra Leonean society through active outreach. I will carefully monitor, evaluate, and coordinate the design and implementation of programming and assistance and extend their reach as far as possible. I will ensure that our representational events and public diplomacy programs include marginalized and underrepresented groups and that our human resources team uses diverse panels in hiring processes to ensure applicants are not being disadvantaged. I will work with our locally employed staff to expand our outreach efforts and leverage the various languages spoken within our mission to assist our U.S. officers in making connections beyond the capital.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO BRYAN DAVID HUNT BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Democracy and Elections

Sierra Leone will hold elections on June 24. While elections will likely occur before you arrive at post, if confirmed, you will serve as U.S. Ambassador to Sierra Leone in the post-election period and in the initial months of the term of the president, parliament and local authorities.

Question. What is your view of the role of a U.S. Ambassador in supporting democratic institutions and democratic governance?

Answer. I view the role of a U.S. Ambassador in supporting democratic institutions and democratic governance as four-fold. First, the U.S. Ambassador should work in tandem with like-minded partners to advocate with political actors—both inside and outside of government—to strengthen democratic institutions and democratic governance practices in line with international best practices. In doing so, the U.S. Ambassador should advocate for transparency and accountability in government decision making and space in which political parties, civil society, and independent media can operate freely. Second, the U.S. Ambassador should work closely with independent, host country pro-democracy voices to help amplify their calls for review/reform of democratic institutions and democratic governance practices and to press for debate, consideration, and, as appropriate, enactment of reforms. Third, the U.S. Ambassador in a post-electoral environment should be pressing government institutions, opposition parties, and civil society to review and act upon the recommended reforms contained in national and international observation reports on the electoral contest to ensure that future contests are conducted in-line with international best practices. Finally, the U.S. Ambassador should be working with the Country Team and Washington to assess the democracy and governance programs in which the U.S. Government is involved and to ensure that such programs are adequately working to provide technical support for strengthening of key democratic institutions—both governmental and non-governmental.

Question. Do you commit to using your platform as U.S. Ambassador to Sierra Leone, if confirmed, to publicly amplify and support the democratic aspirations of the people of Sierra Leone?

Answer. Yes. If confirmed, I commit to using my platform as U.S. Ambassador to Sierra Leone to publicly amplify and support the democratic aspirations of the people of Sierra Leone.

Question. In your view, how can the United States better support the democratic aspirations of the people of Sierra Leone?

Answer. The lack of independence of key election-related institutions, insufficient judicial independence, insufficient legislative oversight, and endemic corruption stand out as some of the most significant challenges to the democratic aspirations of the people of Sierra Leone. To better support these aspirations, if confirmed, I would work with Sierra Leonean pro-democracy stakeholders and like-minded inter-

national partners to use Sierra Leone's 2023 national elections as a catalyst to encourage the Government, political opposition, civil society, and other stakeholders to embark on a national reflection on the state of Sierra Leone's democratic institutions. The United States should advocate that the recommendations from the 2023 international and domestic election observation reports—particularly those related to the politicization of key electoral institutions—form a key part of that reflection and resulting reforms. Available U.S. democracy and governance funding should be used to support the long-term strengthening of institutions identified for genuine reform and to further develop an independent judiciary, democratic political parties, and effective and independent civil society and media institutions.

Relationship with USAID

Question. As U.S. Ambassador to Sierra Leone, you will be Chief of Mission in a country with significant development challenges. While the U.S. has a significant foreign assistance portfolio in Sierra Leone, the USAID/Guinea Mission covers Sierra Leone from Conakry. How will you approach partnership with the USAID Mission Director and other USAID colleagues covering Sierra Leone remotely?

Answer. I recognize that, if confirmed, I would be leading a U.S. Government team comprised of personnel from multiple agencies, some based outside of Freetown. If confirmed, I would work closely with my USAID colleagues covering Sierra Leone remotely by holding regular coordination meetings involving USAID senior staff in Freetown, the USAID Mission Director in Conakry, and, as needed, key USAID personnel in Washington. Open and robust communication between the USAID Mission in Conakry and the Embassy in Sierra Leone is a must whether it is about planning for USAID activities in Sierra Leone, including the development of strategic priorities; implementation and evaluation of USAID programming in Sierra Leone; or international donor coordination. I would seek to ensure that a common approach that meets the needs of all stakeholders is adopted on key issues and already have assurances from USAID that they welcome increased collaboration. If confirmed, I would plan to make regularly scheduled visits to the USAID Mission in Conakry and, again, have received assurances from USAID that they will also schedule routine visits, including the USAID Mission Director, to Freetown.

Trade and Investment

Marampa Mines is the largest U.S. investment in Sierra Leone. Owned by the Gerald Group, in partnership with the Government of Sierra Leone, this major investment to increase iron ore production has led to the direct employment of some two thousand Sierra Leoneans, with a positive ripple effect in the local economy. In our competition with China, we should be supporting U.S. mining operations throughout Africa. Over the last several years, the U.S. Embassy in Freetown has been supportive of this project, advocating on its behalf with the Government and publicly visiting its site on at least two occasions.

Question. Are you aware of Marampa Mines?

Answer. Yes. I am aware of Marampa Mines and if confirmed, would seek to engage regularly with its leadership, and to provide Embassy support and advocacy where appropriate.

In your testimony, you stated that a priority of yours will be to “work closely with the U.S. business community to advocate for reforms that enhance Sierra Leone’s ability to attract high-quality foreign investment, including through regional market integration, while simultaneously using trade development tools to help ensure U.S. businesses remain competitive in the Sierra Leonean marketplace.”

Question. How would you practice commercial diplomacy on behalf of U.S. investments in Sierra Leone?

Answer. I understand that Sierra Leone's economy has significant potential for private sector investment, with abundant mineral resources, large areas of fertile land, well-stocked fisheries, and tourist development potential. If confirmed, I would work with Embassy Freetown's Deal Team to enhance our efforts to link U.S. firms with opportunities in Sierra Leone, whether through the International Trade Administration's (ITA) Express Leads system, reverse trade missions, or other commercial diplomacy tools at our disposal. I would ensure that our economic officers leverage our substantial economic toolkit, which includes Prosper Africa, Power Africa, USTDA, the Export Import Bank, and the DFC to help support U.S. businesses seeking to invest in or trade with Sierra Leone. If confirmed, I would utilize DFC and other trade development tools such as the Trade Development Agency and the

Export-Import Bank to offer viable alternatives to PRC-proposed debt-financed infrastructure projects. If confirmed, I would meet regularly with U.S. companies doing business in Sierra Leone and those interested in expanding their presence in Africa to understand investment and trade impediments in Sierra Leone and would advocate for their removal, using USAID trade and investment policy development tools as appropriate to support the Government of Sierra Leone in such reform efforts. Given the comparatively small size of the Sierra Leonean market, I would advocate for Sierra Leone's further economic integration into the wider West African marketplace and for continued reduction in tariff and non-tariff barriers to trade with its neighbors.

Question. What is your assessment of Sierra Leone's greatest barriers to increased two-way trade and investment with the United States?

Answer. Although the Government of Sierra Leone has a generally favorable attitude toward two-way trade and investment with the United States, and generally treats U.S. companies in a non-discriminatory fashion, U.S. businesses face obstacles, including corruption, low human capital development, poor infrastructure, and intermittent rule of law concerns. In addition, the small size of the Sierra Leonean domestic economy deters some U.S. businesses from the cost of entry into this new market. If confirmed, I would continue to urge the Government of Sierra Leone to improve on these investment and trade climate issues to strengthen their economy and make it a more attractive location for American businesses including through continued pursuit of full economic integration with other West African states.

Question. What is your understanding of the tools at your disposal—including through Prosper Africa—as U.S. Ambassador to Sierra Leone, if confirmed, to support addressing barriers to trade and investment in the enabling environment, including the need for economic and political reforms?

Answer. If confirmed, I understand that I would be able to access expertise within the State Department, USAID, and the Department of Commerce, including through Prosper Africa, to support addressing barriers to trade and investment in the enabling environment, including the need for economic and political reforms. Each of these agencies have programs that could potentially be utilized to assist the Government of Sierra Leone in analyzing barriers to trade and investment and in developing reform strategies to address such barriers. In addition, it is my understanding that, if confirmed, I would be able to use the full-range of U.S. Government trade and investment development agencies—including USTDA, the Export Import Bank, and DFC—to provide direct USG assistance to U.S. companies looking to expand trade and investment in Sierra Leone. Such assistance could help overcome barriers to trade and investment such as project financing and political risk. My understanding is that Prosper Africa serves as a one-stop shop through which U.S. and African companies can access USG assistance for expanded two-way trade and investment.

Question. How will you work with Prosper Africa leadership to ensure that Sierra Leone can benefit from Prosper Africa resources, tools and expertise?

Answer. If confirmed, I would seek to identify through consultation with the U.S. business community active in Sierra Leone those areas in which USG expertise could be most beneficial to removing barriers to trade and investment in Sierra Leone. I would work with Prosper Africa leadership and the Sierra Leonean Government to identify ways in which Prosper Africa could engage on such issues and provide technical assistance to advance necessary reforms. I would also anticipate a regular dialogue with Prosper Africa leadership, both in Washington D.C. and on the continent, to identify resources, tools and expertise that are best fitted to Sierra Leone.

Moreover, I would look to expand contact between the Embassy Deal Team and Prosper Africa to ensure that Prosper Africa was fully aware of emerging opportunities in the Sierra Leonean marketplace with an eye to bringing its tools, resources, and expertise to bear in identifying and assisting U.S. companies to take advantage of such opportunities—particularly in cases where an alternative to PRC investment is required.

Sudan

From 2019–2022, you worked in the Office of South Sudan and Sudan within the Bureau of African Affairs, including as the office director. You also served as the Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary for East Africa and the Sudans within the Bureau of African Affairs in 2021. Understanding that you have not been involved with Sudan policy since 2022, the following

questions are about your work on Sudan from the ouster of President Omar al-Bashir in 2019.

Question. In your experience, what is the process within the Bureau of African Affairs for decision making, particularly related to difficult or controversial issues? Was bureau leadership welcoming of opinions and/or dissent? How was dissent, in your experience, handled?

Answer. During my time as Office Director for South Sudan and Sudan, I worked for three different Africa Bureau Front Offices. While each had its own processes for decision making, in general terms, I found that each consulted closely with the Sudan Office, Embassy Khartoum, the Sudan Special Envoy (when filled), and other State Department and interagency stakeholders to assess all of the courses of action available to us—consistent with State Department senior leadership guidance—in order to advance the democratic transition in Sudan and to understand fully the risks and benefits of each potential course of action prior to making final decisions. In my experience, discussion on policy options was robust, and the Africa Bureau Front Offices welcomed feedback on whether or not courses of action being pursued were achieving desired results. In my experience, the Africa Bureau Front Offices were willing to adjust policy approaches based on feedback and the evolution of events on-the-ground. I also found them open to innovative thinking on alternative courses of action.

In the Foreign Policy article “How the U.S. Fumbled Sudan’s Hopes for Democracy,” a spokesperson for the State Department stated “U.S. engagement after the October 2021 military takeover was centered on supporting Sudanese civilian actors in a Sudanese-led process to re-establish a civilian-led transitional government.”

Question. Do you agree with that characterization of the U.S. policy after the October 2021 coup?

Answer. I would agree that U.S. engagement after the October 2021 military takeover was centered on supporting Sudanese civilian actors in a Sudanese-led process to re-establish a civilian-led transitional government in line with the democratic aspirations of the Sudanese people.

The same Foreign Policy article references an early 2022 “memo [that] was written and circulated within the State Department’s Bureau of African Affairs warning of the risks of current U.S. policy on Sudan and listing potential scenarios that could emerge from the rivalry between Burhan and Hemeti, including those tensions erupting into a full-scale conflict [the memo] was meant to go to U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken’s desk, but the draft was heavily edited, watered down, and never passed out of the bureau.”

Question. Are you aware of the existence of this memo? If yes, did you ever see it? Did you contribute to the memo?

Answer. I am not in a position to comment upon the accuracy or characterizations of media reports not based upon official Department communications. There were, of course, a large number of memos and policy papers that were drafted during my time in the Office of South Sudan and Sudan, including papers that discussed generally the risks of conflict between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces, and, of course, included discussions of how to avoid and mitigate against those risks. Given my institutional position in the office, I would likely have reviewed and contributed to all such papers.

Question. Were you part of conversations where the memo was discussed internally? If yes, what decisions were made as to how to handle it?

Answer. Again, I am not in a position to comment upon press reporting that is not based upon official Department communications. In my institutional position, I would receive feedback from the Africa Bureau Front Office on various and numerous internal written products. Aside from the timeframe when I served as Acting DAS, I was not generally involved in discussions related to when, whether, or in what final form to move written products forward to senior State Department principals.

Question. Did you edit or change the contents of the memo? If so, what were your changes?

Answer. Again, I am not in a position to comment on any matters in press reporting where such reporting is not based upon official Department communications. Consistent with my institutional role as an Office Director, I provided input to nu-

merous products designed to ensure that the challenges and recommended courses of action to senior policymakers were clearly articulated and that they reflected Africa Bureau Front Office policy guidance. My edits on products related, in general terms, to the prospect for conflict between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces would have focused on ensuring that the risk of conflict was clearly articulated and that policy recommendations reflected effective approaches to diminish further the political and economic influence of military actors.

On May 4, 2023, President Biden issued an executive order on imposing sanctions on certain persons destabilizing Sudan and undermining the goal of a democratic transition. To date, no individuals or entities have been designated for sanctions under the executive order. We understand that there were robust debates within the State Department as to whether or not to pursue sanctions for certain individuals and entities, dating back to at least the October 2021 coup.

Question. During your time in the Bureau for African Affairs covering Sudan after the October 2021 coup, what was your stance on whether or not to pursue sanctions against the leadership of Sudan's military junta?

Answer. Between October 25, 2021, and July 2022, I and other State Department officials frequently reassessed our approach to Sudan, explored alternatives, and prepared for contingencies including the use of sanctions. I, and others, have preferred the use of other pressures that were more likely to have a meaningful impact on military regime leaders' finances, given the lack of their financial assets subject to U.S. jurisdiction. These included the suspension of direct assistance and preventing HIPC Debt Relief or support from international financial institutions, advising international businesses against investing in Sudanese military/government-controlled companies, restricting USG and international contracting with Sudanese military-owned security and logistics companies, establishing international mechanisms to restrict the export of Sudanese gold by military and military-linked companies, and use of sanctions and visa restrictions on those responsible for human rights abuses. I also favored working with Congress to craft legislation that would have allowed for sanctions against third country entities handling financial assets belonging to leaders of the military regime, their family members, and businesses.

Trafficking in Persons

In the State Department's 2022 Trafficking in Persons Report Sierra Leone remained on Tier 2 for its efforts to meet the minimum standards to combat trafficking.

Question. If confirmed, what concrete steps could you take to help Sierra Leone operationalize the prioritized recommendations contained in the TIP report?

Answer. I understand that the State Department's Office to Combat Trafficking-in-Persons has provided a grant to the University of Georgia to work with the Government of Sierra Leone and non-governmental organizations to strengthen efforts to prevent trafficking-in-persons, specifically the sex and labor trafficking of children. This program would carry out similar, integrated work in other regional countries and would, if successfully implemented, help address many of the recommendations contained in the Sierra Leone Trafficking in Persons report. If confirmed, I would press the Government of Sierra Leone to take full advantage of this assistance, to adopt the legal and procedural reforms recommended as part of it, and to cooperate fully with regional partners in combating trafficking. I would also meet regularly with implementors of this grant on-the-ground to ensure effective implementation.

Religious Freedom

In the State Department's 2022 International Religious Freedom report, Sierra Leone was noted as generally having governmental and societal respect for religious freedom.

Question. What is your assessment of this particular issue and if confirmed, how will you work with the Ambassador At Large for International Religious Freedom to bolster religious freedom in-country?

Answer. The Sierra Leonean constitution provides for the protection of fundamental human rights and freedoms of the individual, including freedom of thought and of religion. The law prohibits religious discrimination and allows all persons to observe their own religious practices and to change religions without interference from the Government or members of other religious groups. If confirmed, I would continue the Embassy's long-standing advocacy for religious tolerance and freedom,

and engagement with members of all faiths in Sierra Leone. I would work closely with the Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom and Office for International Religious Freedom, so our approach in Sierra Leone to promoting religious freedom is informed by the most recent guidance and best practices.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to personally engaging with civil society on this issue?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to personally engage with civil society on promoting religious freedom.

Question. If confirmed, what concrete steps can you take to help Sierra Leone increase their societal and governmental respect for religious freedom?

Answer. If confirmed, I would use my position to host religious leaders for roundtable discussions, and I would meet with religious leaders during in-country trips to emphasize the important role they can play to prevent and mitigate conflict. I would leverage our Public Diplomacy programming and exchanges to find opportunities to expose young leaders to religious freedom issues. I would also seek opportunities for U.S.-based experts on religious freedom to visit Sierra Leone and interact with various audiences in and out of the capital.

Human Rights

In the State Department's 2022 Human Rights Report, Sierra Leone was noted for having significant human rights abuses which included corruption, a lack of freedom of expression and assembly, and more.

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

Answer. Working with civil society organizations is critical to our understanding of the human rights situation in Sierra Leone as they are on the frontline of addressing challenges facing their communities. If confirmed, I would encourage my team to continue to work closely with civil society so that the United States has an accurate picture of human rights concerns so that we can address them with the Government and design programming to improve the human rights situation in Sierra Leone. I understand the Embassy discusses human rights issues with the Government at the highest level and I would continue to do this, if confirmed. In such interactions, I would seek to be forthright with the Government about our concerns and would press for transparent, independent legal processes through which accountability could be addressed.

State Management and Oversight

Many U.S. missions have been under enormous stress over the last several years, in large part due to COVID.

Question. What is your understanding of morale throughout Mission Freetown?

Answer. My understanding is that morale is good at Mission Freetown despite the challenging environment and the lingering impact of stress from COVID-19. Personnel in Freetown have a strong sense of purpose and mission. They see the results of their work and see the rewards, including through promotions.

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

Answer. My tours overseas have taught me the importance of being attentive to each employee's professional development and ensuring that they know how their work fits into the Embassy's mission and achievement of Department goals. It also is important to take care of the needs of eligible family members through employment, quality education, and activities that bring the community together. Creating and maintaining an environment free of harassment and bullying is a hallmark of my leadership style and essential for employees to flourish. If confirmed, I would model the importance of work-life balance and ensure our managers know how to set priorities and negotiate deadlines to avoid employee burn out and promote resilience. I would advocate with Washington to ensure that assigned workload and deadlines are appropriate for a post of Sierra Leone's limited size and would seek to ensure that assigned workload dovetails with our agreed-upon policy objectives in Sierra Leone.

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

Answer. If confirmed, I would be leading a U.S. Government team comprised of personnel from multiple agencies. This means ensuring all agencies understand the mission and activities of others and discussing the tradeoffs that often need to be made on foreign policy goals or Embassy operations together. I have found that a

structured approach should include weekly Country Team meetings, weekly meetings with agency leaders that include the DCM to discuss programs and events, and mission-wide participation in the Integrated Country Strategy and Mission Resource Request planning cycles. Mission-wide off-sites and professional development days would be used to review our progress and develop our workforce skillsets and build a sense of community and mission. Finally, if confirmed, under my leadership, Mission Freetown would review our goals and achievements as we update our Integrated Country Strategy. This is an effective tool to keep all agency activity in-line with our mission goals.

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

Answer. I strive to maintain a workplace atmosphere where mistakes are turned into learning opportunities. I would coach our employees through decision-making processes to develop their leadership skills and provide regular mentoring and support. I am decisive, but inclusive of a wide range of views and will communicate the “why” of a decision to make sure those who were involved and those not involved understand what the Executive Office will be doing and the rationale for it. If confirmed, the Deputy Chief of Mission and I would be attentive to workplace issues and create an environment free from bullying, harassment, and discrimination.

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

Answer. It is never acceptable or constructive to berate subordinates. Performance and conduct management needs to be a regular and ongoing process. Mistakes are learning opportunities and correcting them should be an inclusive, constructive process that is done in private.

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

Answer. As a former DCM and long-term Charge d’Affaires myself, I understand what it takes to establish and nurture a strong, collaborative relationship between the Ambassador and DCM. If confirmed, I would listen and learn from the experience of the current DCM and respect the relationships she has established with Sierra Leonean officials and within the mission. I view the DCM role as a force multiplier and as someone who must be ready to step in during my absence, so she will be involved in key internal and external meetings. I would expect her to deliver her honest, frank opinion so that together we can make the best decisions possible. I would create an environment in which she can feel free to disagree with me when we consider options or suggest course corrections but would ensure that we present a united front to the mission once a decision is made. Leadership at the top must be proactive, consistent, and fair. If confirmed, I am confident the DCM and I would be able to create a positive work experience for our team in Freetown.

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

Answer. The Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM) is arguably the most difficult position at post. If confirmed, I would leverage my experience as a DCM to establish a strong and symbiotic relationship to oversee mission operations and conduct our foreign policy. If confirmed, as I lead the mission, I would need to be able to work through the DCM to ensure that we are protecting U.S. Government resources across agencies, running an efficient Interagency Cooperative Services platform, and supporting our personnel needs. The DCM would play the role of chief operating officer of the mission but also be involved in our foreign policy agenda. I would include her in meetings with government officials and in communications with Washington. She would ensure that performance management, budget oversight, and human resources platforms are performing effectively, and our operations soundly steward U.S. Government resources. I would expect her to develop her managerial skills across all aspects of mission life and would coach her as needed. I also would ensure that the DCM and our other employees share in our representational activities to expand our outreach activities. I would expect the DCM to oversee our leadership, mentoring, Family Advocacy, and Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility programs.

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

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

Answer. Yes. I believe that establishing open communications between employees and their supervisors is at the core of effective performance management. Throughout my career, I have mentored supervisors on how to provide effective feedback and write employees' performance reviews and counseling documents. If confirmed, I would continue to pay close attention to developing the performance management skills of our supervisors and the employee's understanding of how the system benefits their professional development. I would seek to ensure that top performers are rewarded and that those with performance challenges receive the appropriate, constructive feedback and support required to address them.

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

Answer. Yes. I believe that establishing open communications between employees and their supervisors is at the core of effective performance management. Throughout my career, I have mentored supervisors on how to provide clear, accurate, and direct feedback and write employees' performance reviews and counseling documents that include such feedback. If confirmed, I would continue to pay close attention to developing the performance management skills of our supervisors and the employee's understanding of how the system benefits their professional development. I would seek to ensure that top performers are rewarded and that those with performance challenges receive the clear, accurate, and direct feedback and professional development support required to address them.

It is imperative that U.S. diplomats get outside of posts abroad to meet with local actors, including host government officials, non-government organizations, and local citizens.

Question. In your experience, do U.S. diplomats get outside of our Embassy walls enough to fully accomplish their missions?

Answer. I believe that Mission leadership largely sets the tone and the expectations that determine whether U.S. diplomats sufficiently get outside of our Embassy walls. Throughout my career, I have consistently modeled going outside of the mission walls to meet and cultivate a wide range of contacts in and outside the capital and major cities. I do not believe that it is possible to be effective as a diplomat without such significant outreach. If confirmed, I would continue to reach beyond the Embassy walls and to encourage all Embassy staff to do likewise. To enable these efforts, I would work closely with my DCM and the Regional Security Office to ensure that we are managing any associated risks smartly and proactively and that we identify and receive the resources necessary to support robust Mission in-country travel.

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

Answer. If confirmed, I would encourage and support in-country travel with adequate security resources and mentor employees on thinking-outside-the-box on how to reach local populations. On a regular basis, I would ensure that our employees are maintaining contacts with regional leaders at all levels and meeting with them in their areas and when they come to the capital. This also means ensuring that employees are using representational events and funds to cultivate contacts and promote mission goals. I would support cross-cultural learning from our locally employed staff and U.S. employees as well as learning of local languages.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO BRYAN DAVID HUNT BY SENATOR MARCO RUBIO

Question. In May 2022, Secretary Blinken said that the People's Republic of China is the "only country with both the intent to reshape the international order and, increasingly, the economic, diplomatic, military, and technological power to do it." The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) clearly holds the reins of power in the People's Republic of China and has used this power to commit genocide in Xinjiang, flood our communities with fentanyl, and emit, by far the largest quantity of greenhouse gases in the world today. With their absolute control of Chinese society and indus-

try, the CCP could stop all of these destructive actions tomorrow if they so choose. Is the Chinese Communist Party a threat to the United States?

Answer. Earlier this year, the Director of National Intelligence testified that “the CCP represents both the leading and most consequential threat to U.S. national security and leadership globally.” Under President Xi, the CCP has become more repressive at home and more aggressive abroad, seeking to undercut U.S. influence and alliances. If confirmed, I would advance U.S. national security interests and push back against People’s Republic of China (PRC) efforts to expand its problematic influence, through robust and forthright diplomatic engagements, public diplomacy, and commercial advocacy to bolster U.S.- Sierra Leone ties.

Question. Does the Chinese Communist Party undertake any activities that are beneficial to U.S. interests?

Answer. The Administration assesses the Chinese Communist Party’s (CCP) activities in the context of the fact that, as Secretary Blinken has said, the CCP has become more repressive at home and more aggressive abroad. According to the Office of the Director of National Intelligence’s 2023 Annual Threat Assessment, the CCP is seeking to “undercut U.S. influence, drive wedges between Washington and its partners, and foster some norms that favor its authoritarian system.”

Question. Do you believe that there are any areas within which the Chinese Communist Party would constructively work with the United States in good faith?

Answer. As the United States competes vigorously with the PRC, the United States manages this competition responsibly so that competition does not veer into conflict. The United States will work with the PRC to address transnational challenges, such as climate change, when it is in our interest to do so—as Secretary Blinken has said, not as a favor to us or anyone else, and never in exchange for walking away from our principles, but because it is what the world expects. If confirmed, I would work with the Department of State’s new Office of China Coordination to advance U.S. objectives and counter harmful behavior by the PRC.

Question. If confirmed, will you approve any joint activity with organizations or representatives from the People’s Republic of China in the country in which you will work?

Answer. If confirmed, my priority will be advancing U.S. national security interests in Sierra Leone and countering efforts by our strategic and regional competitors to undermine those interests. The Administration has been clear that the PRC is the most consequential geopolitical challenge facing the United States, and that the United States is committed to working to strengthen our partners in the region. If confirmed, I would work closely with Department of State and interagency colleagues and Congress to address the PRC’s efforts to expand its influence in Sierra Leone and the region.

Question. U.S. and Sierra Leone relations have been described as warm and cordial, and in early 2021, the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) concluded a four-year, \$44.4 million project to deliver water and electrical services in and around Freetown. What are the outcomes of the MCC program?

Answer. MCC and the Government of Sierra Leone completed the \$44 million threshold program in March 2021. The program supported reforms and improved governance in the water and electricity sectors. By supporting independent regulation, strengthening public utilities, and increasing transparency and accountability, the program helped to deliver water and electricity services more effectively to the people of Sierra Leone. The tariff reforms adopted by the national electricity utility as part of the threshold program increased revenues by \$1 million USD per month. The threshold program improved clean water access through the construction of 10 new water kiosks operating under a public, private partnership model. The newly constructed water kiosks are providing safe, accessible, and sustainable water to 15,000 residents, while also significantly reducing the time spent by community members on water collection. A new digital map of Freetown’s water distribution system allows the Guma Valley Water Company to better assess the water system’s performance and more efficiently address service delivery problems. The threshold program also “set the stage” for expanding critical access to electricity for Sierra Leoneans and supported the U.S. Government’s Power Africa initiative.

Question. What are the other major opportunities of the U.S.-Sierra Leone partnership?

Answer. U.S. partnership with Sierra Leone has the ability to solidify Sierra Leone’s rejection of the PRC’s authoritarian, state-centric model of development. Through continuing to offer viable private sector infrastructure development alter-

natives and investing in democratic institutions that deliver effective services to the Sierra Leonean people, the United States can advance the democratic, free-market development model desired by most Sierra Leoneans, undercut PRC inroads in West Africa, advance global health security, and advance prosperity for both Americans and Sierra Leoneans. If confirmed, I would focus on the strengthening of democratic institutions, development of Sierra Leone's public health sector, and advancing U.S. investment in and trade with Sierra Leone in order to further the U.S.-Sierra Leone partnership.

Question. If confirmed, how would you further utilize U.S. Development Finance Corporation projects, like the one regarding debt finance for a new power plan in Freetown?

Answer. I understand the Embassy has robust engagement with Sierra Leone on project identification and financing and that DFC representatives visit Sierra Leone often to determine how to support possible U.S. investment in local projects. For example, DFC CEO Scott Nathan visited in July 2022. If confirmed, I would direct our Deal Team to enhance our efforts to link U.S. firms with opportunities in Sierra Leone appropriate for DFC financing, whether through the International Trade Administration's (ITA) Express Leads system, reverse trade missions, or other commercial diplomacy tools at our disposal. I would pay particular attention to utilizing DFC to offer viable alternatives to PRC-proposed debt-financed infrastructure projects. If confirmed, I would meet regularly with U.S. companies interested in expanding their presence in Africa to discuss opportunities in Sierra Leone and to underscore DFC as a potential tool to support their businesses.

Question. China is Sierra Leone's top trade partner in the mining industry and the CCP has financed a number of the country's infrastructure projects, including port, rail, and ore mining projects. While President Bio canceled some CCP projects upon assuming office, Bio has since continued to express support and signed new contracts with CCP firms and projects. Do Sierra Leonean ties to China threaten U.S. interests?

Answer. I understand that Beijing's engagements in Africa are expanding, including in Sierra Leone. I also understand that the PRC continues to exploit—both legally and illegally—Sierra Leonean resources, particularly in the fisheries, forestry, and minerals sectors. I am gravely concerned that such PRC activities and its proposed infrastructure investments in Sierra Leone are not being carried out in line with internationally accepted standards, such as those spelled out in the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, and the Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights. If confirmed, I would seek to identify and promote socially responsible foreign investment alternatives to those being pushed by the PRC—particularly U.S. investment—that promote sustainable development and respect for human rights of all individuals.

Question. According to reports, positive perceptions of China in Sierra Leone dropped between 2015 and 2020. What do you believe accounts for this drop?

Answer. Despite billions in PRC investment and over 50 years of relations with Sierra Leone, the United States remains the partner of choice for most Sierra Leoneans. A recent Afrobarometer survey found that Sierra Leoneans view the economic and political influence of the United States on their country more favorably than that of the PRC. The U.S. Embassy promotes sustainable development and respect for human rights of all individuals. U.S. Embassy engagement on important issues such as public health, democracy and governance, and trafficking in persons are often featured on the front page of newspapers, discussed on the radio and television, and posted on social media. I believe that U.S. Embassy engagement on these topics throughout the country has provided an opportunity for Sierra Leoneans to see and hear from the United States to better understand our core values and partnership with Sierra Leone. If confirmed, I will continue these engagements and meet with Sierra Leoneans all over the country to demonstrate U.S. commitment to deepening our partnership.

There is also a substantial Sierra Leonean diaspora population residing in the United States with close connections to the country. If confirmed, I will engage with the Sierra Leone diaspora in the United States.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
 SUBMITTED TO WILLIAM W. POPP BY SENATOR ROBERT MENEDEZ

Question. The Department of State's 2022 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for Uganda documents arbitrary killings, forced disappearance, restriction to freedom of expression, and torture by government agencies. On March 28, 2022, I asked the Administration to provide (1) "a list of detention facilities known to be used by Ugandan security forces for illegal detention and torture, as well as the units that operate these facilities and the senior officers responsible for their operation;" and (2) "a list of units and security force members in Uganda barred from receiving training and assistance under the Leahy Laws." With regard to Ugandan units and security force members barred under Leahy, the Africa Bureau stated that "we have not worked with the Special Forces Command since early 2016; we also do not work with elements of the Chieftancy of Military Intelligence, which have been credibly implicated in gross violations of human rights."

Please clarify the following: Have the Chieftancy of Military Intelligence (CMI) and the Special Forces Command been denied training under the Leahy Laws?

Answer. Following interagency reviews of the human rights practices of the Special Forces Command (SFC) and elements within the Chieftancy of Military Intelligence (CMI), these groups were determined to be ineligible for U.S. training and assistance. All support to the SFC ceased in 2016. The SFC and CMI have not been proposed for further training or assistance since that time, so application of the Leahy law has not arisen.

Question. The U.S. imposed visa restrictions on the former head of CMI under a previous administration. Has the U.S. also imposed visa restrictions on the current or former leadership of the Ugandan Special Forces Command? If not, why not?

Answer. Designations under some legal authorities may or must be privately held. On April 16, 2021, Secretary Blinken announced visa restrictions under Section 212(a)(3)(C) of the Immigration and Nationality Act, but under U.S. law, individual visa records are confidential. We cannot provide details about who is affected, but Secretary Blinken did announce that they would be applied against Ugandan security forces who were "responsible for the deaths and injuries of dozens of innocent bystanders and opposition supporters, as well as violence against journalists that occurred before, during, and after the elections." I understand additional visa restrictions will be considered as new evidence and information become available.

Question. Are there other "elements" of CMI that continue to receive U.S. assistance? If yes, please specify what "elements" of CMI continue to receive U.S. assistance, what type assistance they receive, and why these "elements" of CMI have not also been banned under Leahy for human rights abuses.

Answer. Some units and individuals of CMI that are not accused of human rights abuses remain eligible for technical assistance. These units and individuals primarily have investigatory responsibilities under policing functions and have received limited U.S. technical assistance to counter illicit trade in goods. As the Ugandan military has expanded its role into a variety of non-military functions, including law enforcement, U.S. Government agencies believe that continuing to retain very limited and focused contact with law enforcement investigatory offices that fall under the CMI umbrella, but which have no human rights concerns, furthers U.S. security and law enforcement interests. For example, recently, the U.S. Government provided assistance to a unit of CMI that is active in combatting illegal trafficking of conflict minerals to help reduce the trafficking of illegally obtained minerals from eastern DRC through Uganda.

Question. Please provide, as requested more than a year ago, a full list of the names of Ugandan security force members and units denied training under Leahy.

Answer. As the nominee to serve as Ambassador to Uganda, I have not been involved any decisions or vetting of Ugandan security force members or units. However, I understand that no list of names or units denied training exists because so few have been candidates for training in recent years and of the few individuals trained, all have passed Leahy vetting. In that time, U.S. Government agencies have only provided very limited technical assistance to a small component of CMI, where there was no evidence that any training recipient has engaged in human rights violations or abuses. The training assistance was non-military in nature and all of the participants nominated to participate in this training passed Leahy vetting. Additionally, for the very limited assistance available to Ugandan military forces primarily for peacekeeping operations, I understand that the U.S. Embassy in Kampala has fully Leahy vetted all participants and restricted the training to that which incorporates human rights components.

In recent hearings on the Sudan, the Sahel, and Russia I have expressed concern that the State Department's Africa Bureau appears to be allergic to sanctioning African Government officials. In Uganda, where the Government relies on torture, forced disappearances, and extra judicial killings to silence critics, sanctions could be an important tool for pressuring Ugandan officials to respect rule of law and basic democratic and human rights norms. But sanctions cannot work if we do not use them. Under Section 7031(c) visa restrictions are mandatory if the Secretary of State has "credible information" implicating—either directly or indirectly—a current or former government official in corruption or human rights abuses. During your tenure as Ambassador to Guatemala, the United States sanctioned dozens of individuals in Guatemala. In Uganda, on the other hand, this Administration has announced only one sanction under 7031(c) for human rights abuses and that designation—while revealed publicly in December 2021—was actually made several years before. This Administration has not imposed any new 7031(c) restrictions on any Ugandan officials for human rights abuses or corruption, despite widespread human rights violations and corruption within the Museveni regime.

Question. How many individuals were subjected to sanctions in Guatemala during your tenure as Ambassador? How many of these individuals were Guatemalan Government officials?

Answer. Since 2020, 65 individuals have been designated in Guatemala under either Global Magnitsky, Section 7031(c), or the Section 353 Corrupt and Undemocratic Actors Report. Of that total, 38 have been government officials (including the judiciary, legislative, and executive branches) or former government officials designated for their activities during their public tenure. The other designees have been from the private sector or members of family of primary designees. Additional individuals have been privately designated under Section 212(a)(3)(c) authorities.

Question. Based on your experience, are sanctions effective? Please provide some examples of how sanctions had an impact during your tenure as U.S. Ambassador to Guatemala.

Answer. I believe we should use the tools Congress has given the Executive Branch to fight corruption and prevent human rights violations and abuses. The use of sanctions and visa restrictions can be effective when based on clear facts and applied as part of an overall strategy to support respect for human rights, counter corruption, and encourage democratic governance.

While I served as U.S. Ambassador in Guatemala, the United States designated more than 60 individuals and their family members in accordance with authorities provided by the U.S. Congress. We have used all available tools, including Global Magnitsky for the first time and, where possible, have done coordinated joint designations with likeminded international partner governments. Many of the designations have received prominent public attention, helping dissuade corrupt officials, impeded malign actors, increased transparency in economic sectors threatened by corruption, and increased accountability for violators of human rights.

If confirmed, I will work diligently with willing Ugandan authorities, national and international non-government organizations, and U.S. Government agencies to support the rule of law. Such efforts, combined with targeted use of sanctions and visa restrictions in accordance with U.S. law, can help demonstrate that the United States is a tireless and sure partner on human rights issues in keeping with our nation's values.

Question. If confirmed, will you commit to considering using sanctions as a tool to increase pressure on governments and individual government officials to respect basic democratic and human rights norms?

Answer. Yes, if confirmed I commit to doing so in accordance with the statutory requirements of the sanctions, designations, and visa revocations authorities provided by the U.S. Congress to the U.S. Executive Branch.

Question. Does the Department currently have a sanctions strategy for Uganda? If not, will you commit to drafting one if confirmed?

Answer. The Department of State remains committed to continually evaluating the potential for new sanctions and visa restrictions targets for Uganda, particularly in acute cases such as recent legislation which would violate the human rights of the LGBTQI+ community. In general, the Department continually gathers evidence of allegations of human rights abuses and violations and corruption for consideration of new sanctions proposals. If confirmed, I commit to developing a working group within the Embassy comprised of all stakeholder offices and agencies at post

to ensure coordination in the gathering of evidence, sharing information on alleged perpetrators of human rights abuses and violations and corruption, and development of nominations for designations review in Washington. I initiated this approach at U.S. Embassy Guatemala, which was productive in enhancing coordination and use of the tools that the Congress has given the Executive Branch to fight corruption and prevent human rights abuses.

Earlier this year, the Ugandan parliament passed “anti-homosexuality” legislation that will violate the human rights of all Ugandans, increase violence toward LGBTQI+ individuals, and greatly undermine efforts to combat the spread of HIV/AIDS. When Uganda adopted similar legislation in December 2013, the United State redirected funding away from the Ugandan Government, cut some security assistance, and imposed travel bans on senior Ugandan officials implicated in human rights abuses or corruption.

Question. How do you intend to engage with the Ugandan Government on this issue? Please outline specific strategies that you plan to use to advocate for the protection of the rights of LGBTQI+ individuals in Uganda.

Answer. If confirmed, and after consultation with the local LGBTQI+ community to ensure our actions “do no harm,” I would engage the Ugandan Government and Ugandan stakeholders directly about how the anti-homosexuality bill has increased the threat of violence against the LGBTQI+ community and undermined respect for human rights. If President Museveni signs the bill into law and it is implemented, the law could impact U.S. foreign assistance and deter trade, investment, and tourism to Uganda. It could also have serious consequences for the viability of the U.S. PEPFAR program, the fight against HIV/AIDS, and the health of all Ugandans.

I would engage the Ugandan Government on the importance of protecting the fundamental human rights and safety of LGBTQI+ people as well as upholding Uganda’s international legal commitments to protect and defend the human rights of all people. I would point out that individuals responsible for violence or human rights abuses against LGBTQI+ persons could be subject to sanctions, public designations, and/or visa restrictions under U.S. law. I would work with the Embassy team to publicly and privately engage civil society organizations, including those that represent the LGBTQI+ community or are working in public health areas including HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment. I would coordinate with international and local implementing partners to publicly underscore how the fear and discrimination stoked by the AHA is deterring people from receiving health treatment, thereby risking the lives of Ugandans from all backgrounds. I would also consult with civil society on their priorities to protect LGBTQI+ persons from violence and work to identify areas in which U.S. assistance programs could be directed or increased to help prevent violence and discrimination. Finally, I would ensure that our programming and resources for advancing human rights and governance goals for all Ugandans, regardless of their identity or background, are implemented efficiently and effectively.

Question. What steps will the Department take now to ensure that our response to the new iteration of Uganda’s “anti-homosexuality” bill includes and expands upon the actions the U.S. took nearly ten years ago in 2014?

Answer. The Ugandan president has not yet signed and implemented the Anti-Homosexuality Bill of 2023. The U.S. Government interagency is reviewing all appropriate measures should the president choose to sign the bill into law and implement it, including expanding on USG responses from 2014. While no final decision has yet been made, U.S. Government agencies are examining using existing authorities to impose visa restrictions and sanctions on those who may violate the human rights of Ugandans, including LGBTQI+ individuals, undermine democracy or engage in corruption under the law. They are also investigating the possibility of new visa restrictions, continued eligibility for trade preferences like AGOA, the impact the AHA may have on our assistance programs, updating our travel warning to Uganda, and additional measures.

Question. Will you commit to regularly meet, in person and on a bilateral basis, with Ugandan LGBTQI+ activists and organizations?

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, I commit to regularly meet with Ugandan LGBTQI+ persons and organizations, as well as other human rights defenders and organizations.

Question. Will you commit to regularly meet with and brief U.S.-based human rights groups on actions the U.S. Embassy in Kampala is taking to defend the rights of LGBTQI+ individuals in Uganda?

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, I commit to regularly meet and brief U.S.-based human rights groups on the actions the U.S. Embassy in Kampala and U.S. Government are taking to defend the rights of LGBTQI+ persons in Uganda.

Question. My understanding is that the Center for Disease Control continues to provide significant direct support to the Ugandan Ministry of Health to include business class travel for the Ugandan Health Minister—who was filmed praying for the passage of the “anti-homosexuality” law in the office of the Ugandan Speaker of Parliament the day the bill was adopted. Do you think it is appropriate, in light of Uganda’s passage of new “anti-homosexuality” legislation, for the United States to continue to provide funding directly to Ministry of Health and fund the Health Minister’s business class travel? Will this support for the Ugandan Health Ministry and Health Minister continue on your watch as U.S. Ambassador to Uganda if confirmed?

Answer. The Ministry of Health (MOH) is the official Ugandan public institution responsible for ensuring health service delivery for Ugandans and has been a long-standing institutional partner in efforts to control HIV, tuberculosis (TB), malaria and to promote global health security in Uganda and globally for over two decades. The MOH has stated its support to non-discriminatory health services in the past. If confirmed, I would continue to actively engage the MOH to not discriminate against any person. I would also clearly convey the potential impacts, including potential funding cuts, that the AHA could make necessary if the legislation is enacted. At the same time, I would lead U.S. health agencies at post to thoroughly review and explore all feasible options for increasing work with any non-governmental organizations or alternative institutions that could provide access to health care services to LGBTQI+ community members in the event of decreased cooperation with the MOH, understanding that NGOs could face significant limitations to providing equivalent capabilities as the MOH.

Question. In light of Uganda’s passage of “anti-homosexuality” legislation, how will you work to ensure that all U.S. agencies and implementing partners, as well as International Financial Institutions to include the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, are complying with nondiscrimination agreements and in full compliance with nondiscrimination policies?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with Embassy and U.S. agencies in Washington to require inclusive programming and closely monitor partner compliance with their agreements. Further, I would continue efforts that I understand are underway to engage the World Bank, the IMF and other like-minded development partner groups, to which the United States is a significant donor, to enforce existing contractual agreements and to identify additional measures that could be considered and included in new financing with the Government of Uganda. I will likewise advocate that the U.S. Government engage its full set of diplomatic, economic and contractual rights and responsibilities to further U.S. foreign policy objectives.

The Ugandan military has been engaged in Somalia for nearly two decades and received significant U.S. support. Inside Uganda, however, the same military is responsible for widespread gross violations of human rights going back decades.

Question. What is the total value of U.S. security assistance and security cooperation for the Ugandan military?

Answer. In Fiscal Year (FY) 2023, State Department-funded security assistance for Uganda’s military is approximately \$18 million, with \$760,000 in bilateral funds (International Military Education and Training, IMET), about \$8 million in peacekeeping operations (PKO) funding to support Uganda’s participation in the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) and \$9 million from Global Peace Operations Initiative (GPOI) for continued programming to build Uganda’s peacekeeping capacity. The Department of Defense-implemented PEPFAR programming is worth about \$16 million, but it is not considered security assistance or security cooperation. About \$12 million is channeled through the public health sector aiding civilians through HIV/AIDS programming, infectious diseases surveillance, and medical research and an additional \$4 million supports HIV/AIDS programs which primarily benefit Uganda People’s Defense Forces soldiers but aids the overall goal of ending HIV/AIDS as a public health threat by 2030.

Question. Please list the full range of U.S. sponsored engagements, trainings, or other planned support for the Uganda military in 2023.

Answer. I understand that engagement with the Ugandan military can shift depending on funding and scheduling. Nevertheless, it is always consistent with U.S.

policy regarding Leahy vetting and human rights concerns. Engagement currently focuses on support for Uganda's peacekeeping operations in other countries, as well as professionalization training which includes human rights elements and enables the United States to offset engagement by strategic competitors. For 2023, U.S. engagement includes: advisors for Uganda's Peace Support Operations Training Center which supports pre-deployment training for ATMIS in Somalia; health assistance to provide HIV/AIDS support which furthers our goal of ending the epidemic as a public health threat by 2030; Defense Institute of International Legal Studies programs on human rights training; an ATMIS Lessons Learned Workshop; an ATMIS Legal Advisors Roundtable; International Military Education Training (IMET) exchanges; pilot training for personnel operating ATMIS aircraft in Somalia; and training on anti-wildlife trafficking practices.

Question. What specific steps has the United States taken to hold individual senior Ugandan military officials responsible for gross violations of human rights perpetrated against Ugandan citizens in Uganda?

Answer. Two military officials, Gen. Kale Kayihura (2019) and Maj. Gen. Abel Kandiho (2021), were designated for financial sanctions by the U.S. Department of the Treasury under Global Magnitsky for serious human rights abuse. Designations under other legal authorities may or must be privately held. On April 16, 2021, Secretary Blinken announced visa restrictions under Section 212(a)(3)(C) of the Immigration and Nationality Act, but names of individuals were not publicly announced, as visa confidentiality laws prohibit public disclosure of any individual visa restrictions under Section 212(a)(3)(C). Secretary Blinken stated "Ugandan security forces were responsible for the deaths and injuries of dozens of innocent bystanders and opposition supporters, as well as violence against journalists that occurred before, during, and after the elections." I understand that consideration of additional visa restrictions against officials in the security services continues as information and evidence comes to light. If confirmed, I would support the use of Global Magnitsky sanctions and public visa restrictions, in accordance with the evidentiary requirements under U.S. law, against any individuals in the Ugandan military and security services responsible for gross violations of human rights or serious human rights abuses.

President Museveni has been in power since January 1986. He has twice changed the Ugandan constitution to extend his time in office by lifting first term limits, then age limits. He has consistently used Ugandan Government security forces to intimidate, threaten, and hobble his political opponents while turning a blind eye to the corruption and abuses perpetuated by his own military and police force, members of the first family, and senior members of the National Resistance Movement (NRM) party. Uganda's last elections were marred by violence, corruption, and human rights abuses. Scores of pro-democracy protesters were killed. President Museveni's main political opponent was severely beaten.

Question. If confirmed, what steps will you take between now and Uganda's next presidential election in 2026 to level the political playing field and increase the likelihood of credible and peaceful elections?

Answer. If confirmed I would lead the U.S. Embassy in Kampala to support the Ugandan people's right to choose leaders in free and fair elections that are credible and peaceful. I would start by regularly messaging publicly and privately in support of democratic processes, norms, and institutions. I would support dialogue between Ugandan stakeholders, integrate U.S. assistance to build capacity of electoral institutions, civil society organizations, and electoral observation organizations. I would also support voter education and conflict mitigation mechanisms through our assistance and public diplomacy platforms.

Question. What are the most important actions you have taken in your career to date to support democracy and human rights? What has been the impact of your actions?

Answer. I have supported human rights and democracy across my nearly 24-year diplomatic career, helping to facilitate free and fair elections, increase space for civil society, establish police oversight mechanisms, and protect labor activists and independent media. In Kenya, I worked closely with U.S. Government agencies, international partners, civil society, and Kenya's electoral commission to prepare for and conduct free, fair, credible, and peaceful elections in 2017.

In Guatemala, as Ambassador, I worked to support protection for multiple justice and human rights defenders from persecution as well as supported the continued operation of the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

office. I likewise worked to ensure robust local civil society and international observation of the 2023 elections. I also engaged authorities to provide transparency around the NGO registration law and fair treatment for all civil society organizations.

If confirmed, I would implement similar successful whole-of-mission strategies with host government, civil society and international partners in support of democracy and human rights.

Question. What issues are the most pressing challenges to democracy or democratic development in Uganda? These challenges might include obstacles to participatory and accountable governance and institutions, rule of law, authentic political competition, civil society, human rights and press freedom. Please be as specific as possible.

Answer. Uganda faces several pressing human rights challenges, including the need to protect human rights activists, gender-based violence, abuses by security forces, threats to freedom of expression, and violence or threats of violence targeting LGBTQI+ persons with the criminalization of consensual same-sex sexual conduct. Human rights concerns have become an increasing focus of our bilateral relationship over the last decade. Political tensions have increased, election violence has persisted, and democratic space, especially for civil society, is shrinking. Ugandan security forces continue to harass and intimidate members of the opposition, including through forced disappearances, kidnappings, and torture. The NGO Bureau has made it difficult to near impossible for NGOs to register and operate in the country.

If confirmed, I will work diligently with the Government, national and international non-government organizations, and the many U.S. Government agencies that work to address these concerns. I would, among other actions, engage with and message continuously to the Ugandan Government on the importance of promoting and protecting the human rights of all people; help and consult with civil society organizations on their priorities so that they can safely operate; ensure that our programming and resources are efficient and effective; and work to address the consequences of the dangerous anti-homosexuality bill, which has exacerbated homophobia, undermined respect for human rights, would put American citizens in Uganda at risk, and could also have serious consequences for the fight against HIV/AIDS and the health of all Ugandans. I believe through such efforts, we can demonstrate to the Ugandan Government and its people that the United States is a tireless and sure partner on human rights issues in keeping with our nation's values.

Question. What steps will you take—if confirmed—to support democracy in Uganda? What do you hope to accomplish through these actions? What are the potential impediments to addressing the specific obstacles you have identified?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work to eliminate corrupt influences in Uganda through our diplomatic engagements, public messaging, and U.S. assistance programs supporting anticorruption efforts and the rule of law. I will also actively engage human rights defenders, civil society organizations, and those experiencing human rights violations and abuses to address and improve respect for human rights. If confirmed, I will work to ensure U.S. assistance aligns with our important policy goals of supporting democracy and good governance. I will also closely examine our existing support to key NGOs operating in this sector, advocate for new resources if needed, and promote transparency during my engagements with government officials.

Through such efforts I would hope to advance our longstanding values of freedom, democracy, individual liberty, and human dignity. Increasing adherence to rule of law, reducing corruption, and ending impunity would increase security, stability, and prosperity, not only in Uganda, but throughout the region and the world.

Entrenched corruption, abuses of human rights, and limited democratic space are key impediments to advancing democratic development, but if confirmed, I will also be prepared to use the tools Congress has made available including the Global Magnitsky Act and Section 7031(c) of the Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Act, to hold corrupt actors and human rights violators accountable and prevent them from utilizing resources in the United States.

Question. How will you utilize U.S. Government assistance resources at your disposal, including the Democracy Commission Small Grants program and other sources of State Department and USAID funding, to support democracy and governance, and what will you prioritize in processes to administer such assistance?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work closely with all U.S. assistance agencies and programs to ensure the maximum integration and coordination possible, including in support of democracy and governance. I would prioritize civil society capacity building, including helping local organizations become administratively capable, in-

cluding necessary financial oversight, of receiving direct assistance from USAID, Department of State, the Small Grants program, or other sources. I would also prioritize civic and voter education activities, including for youth, women, and minority communities, to prepare for the 2026 elections. I would also prioritize activities to support independent media, counter disinformation, and protect press freedom. Finally, I would seek out opportunities to assist in political party capacity building in order to support full and transparent participation in the 2026 elections.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to meet with civil society members, human rights and other non-governmental organizations in the U.S. and with local human rights NGOs, and other members of civil society in Uganda? What steps will you take to pro-actively address efforts to restrict or penalize NGOs and civil society via legal or regulatory measures?

Answer. Yes. If confirmed, I will absolutely be committed to meeting and engaging with those organizations. They have their ear to the ground and a deep understanding of the issues. I will listen to their concerns and recommendations, but also leverage their expertise and resources to further democratic governance. If confirmed, one of my top priorities will be to ensure NGOs can operate safely in Uganda. I would work to communicate to the Ugandan Government the benefits NGOs have for millions of Ugandans. If confirmed, I will continue demonstrating to the Ugandan Government and key stakeholders that NGOs are not a threat and are of critical importance. From Uganda's Ebola response, to improving food security, to protecting vulnerable communities, Uganda needs these NGOs. These NGOs make Uganda healthier and safer, which leads to economic growth and stability.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to meet with democratically oriented political opposition figures and parties? What steps will you take to encourage genuine political competition? Will you advocate for access and inclusivity for women, minorities and youth within political parties?

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, I will meet with people from across the democratically oriented political spectrum, and from all walks of Ugandan life. As Ambassador, I would interact with as diverse a range of Ugandan citizens as possible, across political, economic, geographic, social, and ethnic groups. If confirmed, I would engage not only with government and opposition figures and political parties, but also with civil society, independent media, community, labor and human rights organizations and activists, including from the LGBTQI+ community. I would also reach out to youth, minority, and women's groups on areas of entrepreneurship, rights promotion, education, and other key issues.

Question. Will you and your Embassy team actively engage with Uganda on freedom of the press and address any government efforts designed to control or undermine press freedom through legal, regulatory or other measures? Will you commit to meeting regularly with independent, local press in Uganda?

Answer. Yes. Supporting an active and free press is a fundamental part of U.S. Government diplomacy and programming overseas. If confirmed, I would work diligently with the Embassy team to promote the importance of a free press with Ugandan officials, while using programming such as our International Visitor Leadership Program to support efforts to share with local journalists best practices in investigative journalism. I commit, if confirmed, to meeting regularly with independent, local press in Uganda. I fully believe that a free and fair press is critical to a healthy democracy and will continue to support efforts to promote press freedom in Uganda.

Question. Will you and your Embassy team actively engage with civil society and government counterparts on countering disinformation and propaganda disseminated by foreign state or non-state actors in the country?

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, I will work with our team at the U.S. Embassy in Uganda to engage with civil society and government counterparts on countering disinformation and propaganda disseminated by foreign state or non-state actors in Uganda. There is increased interest in the region by the People's Republic of China (PRC) and Russia and the entities they control. If confirmed, I will work diligently to deter and counter malign influence by foreign state and non-state actors in country, and help Ugandan understand how to protect themselves from disinformation.

Question. Will you and your Embassy teams actively engage with Uganda on the right of labor groups to organize, including for independent trade unions?

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, I will lead my Embassy team to actively engage with Ugandan labor organizations, including independent trade unions, to support rights under Ugandan law and Uganda's international commitments to organize and to protect fair treatment.

Question. Will you commit to using your position, if confirmed, to defend the human rights and dignity of all people in Uganda, no matter their sexual orientation or gender identity?

Answer. Yes. If confirmed, I will support the efforts of the United States Government to defend the human rights and dignity of all people, no matter their sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or sex characteristics.

Question. What challenges do the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) people face in Uganda?

Answer. Uganda's LGBTQI+ community has been consistently marginalized, discriminated against, and targeted by the Ugandan Government, homophobic organizations, and vigilantes. Parliament's recent passage of the repressive Anti-Homosexuality Act further undermines respect for human rights. If the legislation is enacted, it could have serious and negative consequences for LGBTQI+ persons in Uganda as well as the viability of the U.S. PEPFAR program, the fight against HIV/AIDS, and the health of all Ugandans.

Question. What specifically will you commit to do to help LGBTQ people in Uganda?

Answer. If confirmed, I will support U.S. assistance programs that seek to protect the human rights of, and respect for all Ugandans, including LGBTQI+ people. I would also maintain consistent dialogue with LGBTQI+ activists and NGOs, ensuring our actions "do no harm," as well as support accurate and timely reporting on abuses against the LGBTQI+ community. Where U.S. sanctions law and authorities are applicable against perpetrators of gross violations of human rights, I would support the lawful application of such authorities.

Question. Will you commit, if confirmed, to ensuring that you fully brief Members of Congress and/or their staff each time you are in Washington for visits or consultations during your tenure as Ambassador to Uganda?

Answer. Yes, organized through the Department of State's Bureau of Legislative Affairs and conducted in accordance with long-standing Department and Executive Branch practice.

Question. How do you anticipate fostering diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility at the U.S. Embassy in Uganda?

Answer. If confirmed as Chief of Mission, I will lead the American and Ugandan professionals in Mission Uganda to advance our national security agenda in a safe, inclusive, and respectful workplace. I will communicate my commitment to a workplace in which diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility are core tenants of our mission culture. I will also make clear that discrimination, harassment, and bullying are unacceptable and take swift action to address any such issues that may arise. I will demonstrate my commitment to equal employment opportunity (EEO) principals and the work of Mission EEO counselors and locally engaged staff advisors. I will support and participate in programs that promote respect and diversity.

Question. What specifically will you do to prioritize and promote diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility, while also combating racism, discrimination, and inequality among locally employed staff in Uganda?

Answer. If confirmed as Chief of Mission, I will first demonstrate that diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) is a priority, through actions and words, and reinforce with my staff it should also be a priority for them. I will also make clear my strong opposition to harassment, discrimination, and bullying and ensure a prevention plan is in place. I will hold supervisors accountable and expect them to hold their team members accountable for acts of harassment, discrimination, or bullying. I will ensure mission personnel have access to all the resources they need to combat racism, discrimination, and inequality. If confirmed, I will meet regularly with post's DEIA council at Mission Uganda, participate in community activities to increase dialogue and inclusion, and promote a positive work environment among the Embassy team.

Question. In addition to focusing on diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility in our workforce, will you commit to engaging more equitably in operations and programming, particularly with potential partners and communities that traditionally have been marginalized, excluded, or underrepresented in ours and others' donor and partnership efforts? How do you anticipate utilizing local expertise, knowledge, and capacity to meet our foreign policy goals?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to engaging more equitably in our operations and programs and will lead Mission Uganda to build relationships with all communities

in Ugandan society through active outreach. I will carefully monitor, evaluate, and coordinate the design and implementation of programming and assistance and extend their reach as far as possible. I will ensure that our representational events and public diplomacy programs include marginalized and underrepresented groups and that our human resources team uses diverse panels in hiring processes to ensure applicants are not being disadvantaged. I will work with our locally employed staff to expand our outreach efforts and leverage the various languages spoken within our mission to assist our U.S. officers in making connections beyond the capital.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO WILLIAM W. POPP BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Question. As U.S. Ambassador to Uganda, if confirmed, do you commit to speaking publicly about the current state of Uganda's political and electoral system, and to amplify and support the democratic aspirations of the Ugandan people?

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, I would speak publicly and clearly about the current state of Uganda's political and electoral system in support of democracy in Uganda.

Question. In your view, how can the United States better support the democratic aspirations of the Ugandan people?

Answer. If confirmed, I would work with all U.S. Government agencies at post and in Washington to support increased investment in civil society capacity building, protection of independent media and human rights defenders, and countering corruption. I would work to maximize integration of our democracy and governance assistance with our diplomatic engagement for a freer, more transparent, and democratic Uganda. I would also support the early design and implementation of assistance in support of free and fair elections that are credible and peaceful in 2026.

Question. How will you, as U.S. Ambassador to Uganda, engage Ugandan officials on issues related to democracy and elections?

Answer. If confirmed, I would engage directly and clearly with Ugandan officials to convey U.S. commitment to supporting good governance, strengthening democratic institutions, and free and fair elections in 2026 that are credible and peaceful. I would speak through media and public outreach about U.S. interests and values in support of democracy and seek to publicly engage with Ugandan civil society and citizens dedicated to fostering democratic governance in Uganda. I would support bolstering our democracy, human rights, and governance assistance to support civil society, freedom of expression, voter and civic education, and electoral institution and political party capacity building wherever possible. I would speak publicly to the right of all Ugandans to choose the leaders who will lead the country to a more prosperous and democratic future. I would also support use of tools such as sanctions, designations, and visa restrictions, in accordance with the evidentiary requirements under U.S. law, against individuals responsible for human rights violations and abuses, electoral violence, or corruption. In all these efforts, I would effectively coordinate our engagement across agencies at post.

Question. How will you, as U.S. Ambassador to Uganda, engage Ugandan political parties on issues related to democracy and elections?

Answer. If confirmed, I would actively engage with Ugandan political parties in support of democracy and free and fair elections that are credible and peaceful. I would meet with all political parties committed to democratic and peaceful principles. I would also use public messaging to underscore that suppression of and violence against opposition political parties is unacceptable. Wherever appropriate, I would seek to connect political parties committed to democratic governance to U.S. programs to strengthen their institutional capability.

Question. How will you, as U.S. Ambassador to Uganda, engage with Ugandan civil society on issues related to democracy and elections?

Answer. If confirmed, I would actively engage with Ugandan civil society in support of democracy and free and fair elections that are credible and peaceful. I would seek to meet with a broad range of voices committed to free and fair elections and democratic governance, including through travel outside of Kampala to all regions of the country. I would seek to connect civil society organizations to U.S. assistance programs where practical and work to partner with like-minded international donors to build networks in support of democratic governance. I would also aim, wherever possible, to build capacity of local civil society organizations to receive direct assistance and strengthen their institutional capability.

Question. In your view, how can the United States better support the democratic aspirations of the Ugandan people?

Answer. We should continue to meet with leaders of all political groups, in addition to civil society, youth, and women leaders, in support of strengthening democratic norms. We should arrange for more senior opposition leaders to meet with U.S. Government officials in the United States, and connect visiting U.S. officials with local civil society, community organizations and political parties in Uganda. In addition, we should seek to design and implement additional democracy and governance programs that promote a level playing field for the 2026 elections, including robust electoral observation, voter education, citizen participation, and counter-disinformation activities.

Question. Do you commit to working with the USAID Uganda Mission Director to support a robust portfolio of democracy and governance programs for Uganda ahead of the 2026 elections?

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, I would work closely with the USAID Uganda Mission Director and the entire USAID team, as well as other elements of the Embassy, to support a robust portfolio of democracy and governance programs in Uganda ahead of the 2026 elections. If confirmed, I would treat this as an immediate priority in order to prepare for the elections in less than three years.

Question. What is your view of the conditions for legitimate democratic elections in Uganda in 2026?

Answer. Conditions are challenging for legitimate democratic elections in Uganda in 2026. Since the flawed 2021 elections, democratic space has continued to shrink. Corruption is persistent and independent media are under pressure. Human rights abuses are pervasive and marginalized populations, such as the LGBTQI+ community, are at an increased risk of violence and persecution. Political opposition parties and independent NGOs are threatened. At the same time, Ugandan youth continue to aspire to a freer, more transparent, and peaceful Uganda. Engaging Ugandans, particularly youth and women, in civic participation and voter education activities to maximize democratic inclusion and election participation could help increase the chances of legitimate democratic elections. Likewise, beginning as soon as possible, support for transparent electoral administration and observation in 2026 will be vital. Finally, holding accountable corrupt and undemocratic actors, as well as violators of human rights and perpetrators of political violence wherever possible is important to uphold justice and protect remaining democratic space.

Question. How will you, as U.S. Ambassador to Uganda, engage with Ugandan officials at the highest levels on abuses of internationally-recognized human rights?

Answer. If confirmed, I would convey to them clearly that abuses of internationally recognized human rights and violence of any kind are unacceptable. I would emphasize that all potential recipients of any U.S. security cooperation must be Leahy vetted and that any individuals or units identified as responsible for human rights violations are automatically ineligible. I would also convey that United States is prepared to use sanctions, designations, and visa restrictions, in accordance with evidentiary requirements under U.S. law, against individuals responsible for human rights violations and abuses.

Question. How will you, as U.S. Ambassador to Uganda, engage with Ugandan officials on the issue of abductions and forced disappearances?

Answer. If confirmed, I would convey to Ugandan officials clearly that abductions and forced disappearance are unacceptable. I would emphasize that the U.S. Government will publicly report on any substantiated incidents through the Congressionally-mandated annual Human Rights Report and that I and other U.S. Government officials will publicly call for thorough investigations of all cases and justice for all victims. I would convey that United States is prepared to use sanctions, designations, and visa restrictions, in accordance with evidentiary requirements under U.S. law, against individuals responsible for abductions and forced disappearances.

Question. In your view, how should the United States pursue and support accountability for violations of internationally-recognized human rights in Uganda, including abductions and forced disappearances by state security forces?

Answer. I believe the United States should support, where possible, any Ugandan public and non-government organizations sincerely committed to investigating, arresting, prosecuting, and convicting individuals responsible for human rights violations, including abductions and forced disappearances. I believe we should use our assistance programs to build institutional capacity and train individuals to protect human rights in compliance with Ugandan law and international commitments. I

would ensure that Leahy vetting is done to ensure any training for security forces is only offered to individuals and units with no involvement in violations and abuses and that all training has clear components of respect for human rights. Finally, if evidence can be obtained that meets U.S. legal requirements, we should utilize the public sanctions, designations, and visa restrictions authorities such as Global Magnitsky and 70311 against perpetrators of human rights violations and abuses.

On May 2, Uganda's parliament passed an updated version of draconian anti-LGBT legislation, to include the death penalty. While President Museveni has not yet signed the legislation into law, the effects of the legislation's passage in parliament is already being felt in Uganda and the broader region.

Question. You did not directly mention the anti-LGBT legislation in your testimony. Were you advised by leadership of the Bureau of African Affairs or other State Department leadership to do this? If yes, was the guidance given so as to avoid confronting and displeasing the Government of Uganda?

Answer. As cited in my written statement submitted to the committee, I strongly believe that the United States must support equal protection and non-discrimination for all persons. As emphasized in my responses in the confirmation hearing discussion, this absolutely includes the LGBTQI+ community and underscoring the risks, including of imprisonment and capital punishment, posed by the deeply troubling and dangerous Anti-Homosexuality Bill. If confirmed, I would speak clearly to the Government of Uganda about the United States Government's deep concern about the legislation's threat to lives, about Ugandan officials' hateful rhetoric, and the very negative impact that the legislation has for respect of human rights, the potential to undermine progress on preventing and treating HIV/AIDS, and in deterring trade, investment, and tourism that would only deepen poverty for all Ugandans. My views on these issues, which are fully consistent with the policy views of the Administration and the Department, are my strongly held personal views as well.

Question. The passage of the repressive anti-LGBT legislation has implications for U.S. foreign assistance to Uganda, including in the global health and democracy and human rights space. As U.S. Ambassador to Uganda, if confirmed, how will you work with your USAID and State Department colleagues to adjust the US assistance portfolio as appropriate?

Answer. If confirmed, I would lead USAID and State Department colleagues at post to carefully identify and propose adjustments necessary to the U.S. assistance portfolio if the repressive Anti-Homosexuality Act (AHA) is signed and enacted into law. In the interest of our priority to "do no harm," I would also consult with local civil society, including the LGBTQI+ community, and health care implementing partners and experts to identify areas for adjustment. I would also have health and assistance experts examine the continued viability of partnerships with the Ministry of Health. As the dangerous AHA is representative of a larger trend in the closing of democratic space and reduction in respect for human rights of all Ugandans, I believe it would be necessary to carefully consider the need to increase democracy and governance programming, as well as partnerships with international and local civil society organizations. I would also look closely for opportunities to increase coordination with other international donors to leverage joint diplomatic and assistance efforts. Finally, I would use public outreach to underscore the value of U.S. assistance and the jeopardy in which the dangerous AHA and other steps against human rights and democratic governance are putting all Ugandans. I would of course consult with the Bureau of African Affairs, USAID and other relevant agencies, as well as Congress, prior to moving forward with any adjustments.

Question. As U.S. Ambassador to Uganda, if confirmed, how will you engage with the Government of Uganda on impacts of the anti-LGBT legislation, including any restrictions or reductions on U.S. global health programming to combat HIV/AIDS?

Answer. If confirmed, and after consulting the local LGBTQI+ community to ensure our actions would "do no harm," I would engage the Ugandan Government directly about the consequences of the anti-homosexuality bill that has increased homophobia, the risk of violence against the LGBTQI+ community, and undermined respect for human rights generally. If President Museveni signs the bill into law and it is implemented, the law could impact U.S. programming as well as deter trade, investment, and tourism to Uganda and thereby increase poverty. It could also have serious consequences for the viability of ongoing PEPFAR programming, the fight against HIV/AIDS, and the health of all Ugandans. I would communicate the potential for negative impacts on U.S. assistance, particularly on health and HIV/AIDS programs, and the potential to severely restrict our ability to help protect

lives in Uganda and enable Ugandans from all backgrounds to access quality health care. I would also engage the Ugandan Government on the importance of protecting fundamental human rights and safety as well as upholding Uganda's international commitments to protect and defend the human rights of all people, including LGBTQI+ persons.

Question. As U.S. Ambassador to Uganda, if confirmed, how will you lead Mission Uganda to plan for and respond to attacks on U.S. implementing partners, Ugandan health facilities, Ugandan health workers, and/or Ugandan organizations receiving U.S. assistance who provide services to marginalized communities?

Answer. If confirmed, and after consulting the local LGBTQI+ community to ensure actions "do no harm," I would work with the Embassy team to publicly and privately support civil society organizations, including those that represent the LGBTQI+ community and those working in public health areas including HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment. I would communicate to the Ugandan Government the benefits that such NGOs provide millions of Ugandans. If confirmed, I would work to convince the Ugandan Government that implementing partners are of critical importance for the health care system and the health for all Ugandans. I would emphasize attacks on partners, as well as Ugandan health facilities and workers or organizations receiving U.S. assistance, would be completely unacceptable. I would remind the Ugandan security and justice authorities of their responsibilities to prevent any such attacks and the potential impacts of impunity for perpetrators and I would convey that the United States will use Congressionally provided tools and other existing authorities to sanction, designate, and restrict visas to individuals perpetrating human rights violations and abuses. Finally, I would ensure our programs, planning, and messaging are coordinated as much as possible with like-minded international partners to maximize prevention of any attacks and support accountability in the event of any incidents.

Question. Do you view the roles and responsibilities of the U.S. Ambassador to Uganda to include supporting U.S. companies currently investing and interested in investing in Uganda?

Answer. If confirmed I would work to support U.S. companies invested in or interested in investing in Uganda, in accordance with United States national interests. I would ensure that the companies had a full picture of the challenges and opportunities for doing business in Uganda. I would also ensure that U.S. companies understand threats posed by corruption and closing civic space in Uganda. I would work with the Embassy team and the Prosper Africa Executive Secretariat to help U.S. companies present in Uganda and potential U.S. investors access the full slate of commercial and investment tools available through the Development Finance Corporation (DFC), the U.S. Trade and Development Agency (USTDA), and the Export-Import Bank, among other U.S. Government agencies.

Question. As U.S. Ambassador to Uganda, if confirmed, how will you approach supporting U.S. companies currently investing and interested in investing in Uganda?

Answer. If confirmed I would work to support U.S. companies invested in or interested in investing in Uganda, in accordance with United States national interests. I would ensure that the companies had a full picture of the challenges and opportunities for doing business in Uganda. I would also ensure that U.S. companies understood threats posed by corruption and closing civic space in Uganda. Finally, I would work with the Embassy team and the Prosper Africa Executive Secretariat to help U.S. companies present in Uganda and potential U.S. investors access to the full slate of commercial and investment tools available through the Development Finance Corporation (DFC), the U.S. Trade and Development Agency (USTDA), and the Export-Import Bank, among other U.S. Government agencies.

Question. What is your understanding of the tools Prosper Africa provides to U.S. Missions in Africa to support two-way trade and investment?

Answer. I understand that the Prosper Africa initiative through the 17 participating agencies provides a number of tools to advance two-way trade and investment. This includes helping companies access U.S. Government services, as well as for embassies that need to refer potential deals to the relevant agency for further examination and potential support. For example, USTDA can provide feasibility studies and reverse trade missions to facilitate project preparedness to increase potential exports; the Department of Commerce can provide advocacy and facilitate market entry; the DFC can provide debt, equity and political risk insurance; and U.S. African Development Foundation provides grant capital capacity building assistance to grow African enterprises. USAID can also direct its programs to provide

U.S. companies and investors with market information; facilitate buyer-supplier linkages; advise companies on accessing finance; and build the capacity of local businesses, among other things. Prosper Africa assists U.S. missions to advance trade and investment by tapping into all of these resources. If confirmed, I will work with the U.S. Embassy team in Uganda and Prosper Africa participating agencies in Washington to support mutually beneficial and job-creating bilateral trade and investment wherever possible.

Question. In your view, does Uganda meet the statutory requirements for eligibility for preferential trade benefits under the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA)?

Answer. Given the deep concern about the Anti-Homosexuality Act (AHA) legislation along with the broader erosion of respect for human rights and democratic space for all Ugandan citizens, I understand that U.S. Government agencies are continuing to evaluate Uganda's eligibility for African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) preferential trade benefits. The AGOA legislation requires the Administration to review annually whether beneficiary countries such as Uganda are meeting the statute's eligibility criteria, including with respect to gross violations of internationally recognized human rights by the Government. During the AGOA eligibility review process conducted for calendar year 2023, I understand that the U.S. Government warned the Government of Uganda that continuing human rights violations or abuses, including those targeting LGBTQI+ persons, could jeopardize its AGOA eligibility. If confirmed, I would support a careful review of Uganda's continued eligibility for AGOA for 2024.

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

Answer. Many posts around the world have suffered through heavy workloads, limited staffing, barriers to health care access, and many other challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic. Mission Kampala has had to face many of those challenges as well as a recent outbreak in late 2022 and early 2023 of Ebola. As a high hardship differential post and with persistent staffing gaps that affect most of the U.S. embassies in Africa, the Embassy community works under challenging circumstances. Nevertheless, I understand the Embassy has remained resilient, is emerging from the COVID-19 and Ebola health restrictions and has attained very important achievements under difficult circumstances.

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

Answer. If confirmed, I will demonstrate through actions and words my commitment to respect for all, customer service, professional development, safety and security, and quality of life issues. I will ensure the mission has access to all the resources available to support a positive, respectful, and inclusive workplace. I will hold supervisors accountable and expect them to hold their team members accountable for conduct and performance. Any incidents that arise will be addressed immediately. I will participate fully in community activities and encourage participation from all parts of the Embassy community. I will actively support performance and service recognition, through awards and other forms of recognition. Finally, I will support work-life balance, community wellbeing, and promoting a positive work environment among the Embassy team.

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

Answer. If confirmed as Chief of Mission, I will lead the American and Ugandan professionals in Mission Uganda to advance our national security agenda in a safe, inclusive, and respectful workplace. I will continue to pursue the active approach that I did as Ambassador at the U.S. mission to Guatemala and as Deputy Chief of Mission at the U.S. mission to Brazil by ensuring our Embassy in Uganda is working together as a team, including through an active diversity council, Federal Women's Program, and professional development program that promote respect for each other and a shared commitment to advancing U.S. national interest through our Embassy's diplomacy, public outreach, and programs. I will also ensure that our Integrated Country Strategy objectives and goals are clearly communicated and understood by all mission personnel to forge a shared vision. Finally, I will work with the Management team and all other service providers to achieve the highest level of efficiency and customer service for mission operations to Embassy personnel.

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

Answer. If confirmed, I will demonstrate through actions and words my commitment to respect for all, customer service, professional development, safety and security, and quality of life issues. I will ensure the mission has access to all the resources available to support a positive, respectful, and inclusive workplace. I will hold supervisors accountable and expect them to hold their team members accountable for conduct and performance. Any incidents that arise will be addressed immediately. I will participate fully in community activities and encourage participation from all parts of the Embassy community. I will actively support performance and service recognition, through awards and other forms of recognition. Finally, I will support work-life balance, community wellbeing, and promoting a positive work environment among the Embassy team.

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

Answer. I would describe my management style as respectful, collaborative, dedicated, and committed to integrity. Ultimately, I strive to serve the mission team and community. I lead with a consistent goal for excellence in our internal management and operational platforms in the mission, high customer service, and high morale in the community as essential ingredients to achieving success in our external diplomatic, public outreach, and programmatic goals.

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

Answer. No. It is never acceptable or constructive to berate subordinates or other individuals, either in public or in private. Such behavior has never been a part of my leadership or management style in my nearly 24 years of Foreign Service experience supervising local or U.S. direct hire personnel.

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

Answer. As a previous Deputy Chief of Mission and deputy principal officer as well as a long-term Charge d'Affaires and a current Chief of Mission, I have over a decade of experience serving successfully in a deputy role or supervising a deputy. I believe that the deputy and Chief of Mission must communicate well between each and with the mission team, have a shared commitment to integrity, and both be focused on serving the community and mission team they lead. I believe in working as a partner with my deputy, complementing and reinforcing each other wherever possible.

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

Answer. I believe in helping develop the overall skills of my Deputy Chief of Mission to be able to successfully lead the mission in any moment. This means including the Deputy Chief of Mission in all aspects of mission operations and engagement. At the same time, identifying specific leadership responsibilities for the deputy is vital to the Deputy Chief of Mission's professional development as well as the efficient and effective workload management for the Embassy front office. If confirmed, responsibilities such as the leading professional development programs for U.S. direct hire and locally employed personnel, chairing key coordination mechanisms such as the law enforcement working group, and supervising emergency and crisis response trainings and preparations are examples of some of the key areas I would entrust my deputy to lead while I would support and reinforce those duties wherever helpful.

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

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

Answer. Yes, I believe it is essential to provide all employees with accurate and constructive feedback on their performance, as well as reward employees who successfully perform their duties. Throughout my Foreign Service career I have actively provided such feedback and recognition, including for Locally Employed Staff and by implementing additional recognition mechanisms such as Local Staff Member of the Month and Local Staff Member of the Year awards in my last two postings.

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

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, I would support and encourage clear, accurate, and direct feedback to all employees to improve performance and reward high achievers, as I have done throughout my Foreign Service career.

Question. It is imperative that U.S. diplomats get outside of posts abroad to meet with local actors, including host government officials, non-government organizations, and local citizens. In your experience, do U.S. diplomats get outside of our Embassy walls enough to fully accomplish their missions?

Answer. While a challenge in some high-threat security environments and over the last three years due to the COVID-19 pandemic, in my experience generally U.S. diplomats strive to get outside our Embassy walls to advance their mission goals. I believe that with clear and coordinated planning, consistent security and emergency accountability training and procedures, and prioritization on public outreach, it is possible and essential for U.S. diplomats to get outside of their Embassy and the capital of their host country as much as possible. If confirmed, I would lead the Embassy in Uganda actively and safely engaging in robust public outreach and travel outside of the Embassy and Kampala.

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

Answer. If confirmed, I would work closely with the Embassy's Regional Security Office and Public Affairs Office to ensure that all U.S. diplomats and local staff have the necessary training, communications platforms for emergency accountability tools to safely travel and access local populations. I would also work with the Public Affairs Office to ensure that all staff have training in public messaging to engage with Ugandans in all parts of the country. Finally, I would work with the Management team and Washington to budget sufficient travel resources to support appropriate outreach to advance our U.S. national interests in Uganda.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO WILLIAM W. POPP BY SENATOR MARCO RUBIO

Question. In May 2022, Secretary Blinken said that the People's Republic of China is the "only country with both the intent to reshape the international order and, increasingly, the economic, diplomatic, military, and technological power to do it." The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) clearly holds the reins of power in the People's Republic of China and has used this power to commit genocide in Xinjiang, flood our communities with fentanyl, and emit, by far the largest quantity of greenhouse gases in the world today. With their absolute control of Chinese society and industry, the CCP could stop all of these destructive actions tomorrow if they so choose. Is the Chinese Communist Party a threat to the United States?

Answer. Earlier this year, the Director of National Intelligence testified that "the CCP represents both the leading and most consequential threat to U.S. national security and leadership globally." Under President Xi, the CCP has become more repressive at home and more aggressive abroad, seeking to undercut U.S. influence and alliances. If confirmed, I will advance U.S. national security interests and push back against the People's Republic of China (PRC) efforts to expand its problematic influence, through robust and forthright diplomatic engagements, public diplomacy, and commercial advocacy to bolster U.S.-Uganda ties.

Question. Does the Chinese Communist Party undertake any activities that are beneficial to U.S. interests?

Answer. The Administration assesses that the CCP has become more repressive at home and more aggressive abroad. According to the Office of the Director of National Intelligence's 2023 Annual Threat Assessment, the CCP is seeking to "undercut U.S. influence, drive wedges between Washington and its partners, and foster some norms that favor its authoritarian system."

Question. Do you believe that there are any areas within which the Chinese Communist Party would constructively work with the United States in good faith?

Answer. As the United States competes vigorously with the PRC, the United States manages this competition responsibly so that competition does not veer into conflict. The United States will work with the PRC to address transnational challenges, such as climate change, when it is in our interest to do so—as Secretary Blinken has said, not as a favor to us or anyone else, and never in exchange for walking away from our principles, but because it is what the world expects. If confirmed, I will work with the Department of State’s new Office of China Coordination to advance U.S. objectives and counter harmful behavior by the PRC.

Question. If confirmed, will you approve any joint activity with organizations or representatives from the People’s Republic of China in the country in which you will work?

Answer. If confirmed, I would prioritize advancing U.S. national security interests in Uganda and countering efforts by our strategic and regional competitors to undermine those interests. The PRC is the most consequential geopolitical challenge facing the United States and the United States is committed to working to strengthen our partners in the region. If confirmed, I will work closely with Department of State and interagency colleagues and Congress to address PRC’s efforts to expand its influence in Uganda and the region and disinclined to undertake joint activities.

Question. Uganda receives almost \$1 billion annually in aid from the U.S., with Uganda making overtures to China and Russia on increased relations. The Ugandan parliament passed a highly restrictive bill on LGBTQ rights in March 2023, which received critiques from U.S. and European officials. Uganda in turn accused Western countries of trying to “impose” homosexuality on Uganda. How does lecturing the Ugandan Government on a divisive social issue help us counter CCP and Russia influence in Uganda?

Answer. We engage the Ugandan Government on actions, policies, and decisions that could threaten the human rights of Ugandan citizens, negatively impact the delivery of our health and humanitarian assistance, impact foreign investment, and deter tourism. The Anti-Homosexuality Bill, if signed into law, may jeopardize aspects of American public health assistance that are required to end HIV/AIDS as a public health threat by 2030 in Uganda. Imposing the death penalty for persons exercising their basic human rights is counter to American values. We also engage the Government of Uganda regularly to counter PRC and Russian influence and false narratives and to encourage support for U.S. foreign policy goals.

Question. What is the U.S. doing to counter Russian activities and propaganda in Uganda?

Answer. The USG works to counter Russian disinformation primarily by disseminating clear, timely, and fact-based information on U.S. foreign policy decisions and actions in local print, social, and broadcast media. We also directly respond to disinformation when deemed necessary. We amplify credible non-USG voices by providing platforms for diverse perspectives. The Dignity Dialogues program, for example, identified Ugandan experts to discuss food and energy insecurity due to Russia’s war against Ukraine, thereby countering Russian narratives that demonized the United States support for Ukraine.

Question. China has reportedly provided more than \$3.5 billion to Uganda, prompting U.S. concerns. Huawei has provided surveillance equipment, including facial-recognition technology, and President Museveni has praised China’s non-interference foreign policy approach, while criticizing Western donor conditionality. How would you characterize Uganda’s relationship with China?

Answer. The PRC has an extensive commercial relationship with Uganda and seeks to influence Uganda in other areas as well. We offer Uganda alternatives to the PRC model and as a partner on economic issues, we advocate for U.S. businesses who seek to do business in Uganda. If confirmed, I will work with the Embassy team as well as with all agencies and branches of the U.S. Government to emphasize to Ugandans the advantages and opportunities of working with trustworthy partners like the United States.

Question. What are the main barriers to U.S. direct investment in Uganda?

Answer. While some U.S. companies are present and thriving in Uganda with U.S. Government support, problems with corruption, the rule of law, respect for human rights, and basic infrastructure are impediments to deeper economic ties.

Question. Is there an expanded role for the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation in facilitating U.S. investment in Uganda?

Answer. The U.S. International Development Finance Corporation (DFC) supports investments that address critical development challenges throughout sub-Saharan Africa. The agency has invested more than \$10 billion across sub-Saharan Africa and continues to seek opportunities to invest in bankable projects, including in Uganda, that comply with DFC standards.
