

NOMINATIONS

THURSDAY, JUNE 13, 2024

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

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:04 a.m., in room SD-419, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Christopher Murphy presiding.

Present: Senators Cardin, Murphy [presiding], Booker, Ricketts, Young, and Cruz.

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

Senator MURPHY. Good morning. I'm going to call this hearing of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee to order.

I am glad to be here with my ranking member, Senator Young, and the chairman of the committee, Senator Cardin.

Today we are meeting to consider the nominations of United States Ambassadors to Libya, Algeria, Senegal and Guinea-Bissau, the Dominican Republic, and Iraq.

Welcome to our nominees and to your families. Thank you all for being here today. We are going to make brief opening remarks and then we will turn it over to you for short opening comments and then we will engage in a series of questions.

Ms. Gavito, if confirmed you will potentially be presiding over the return of U.S. diplomats to Libya for the first time since 2014. I believe it has been a mistake for the United States to go this long without physical presence inside Libya.

Our friends and adversaries are there. It is a country of deep historic and current importance to the United States. We need to be there. We should have been there yesterday.

I am looking forward to talking with you about the path forward in reestablishing our embassy, our presence, in Tripoli.

Mr. Harris, Algeria matters to the United States for a host of reasons, but when we have a strong, stable Algeria, Europe is healthier. Algeria is vital to Europe, and so we are helping ourselves, but we are also helping our European allies when we are engaging in helping Algeria diversify away from declining oil production as the driver of their economy.

Algeria is also the second biggest military in Africa, a fact that surprises many of our colleagues, and so we need to pay attention to the increasingly close ties between Algeria and Russia and China.

Mr. Lord, it has been a difficult, difficult last few years in the Sahel—armed conflict, poverty, climate change, food insecurity, political instability, malign Russian influence.

But amidst this truly awful set of circumstances, Senegal’s democracy has survived and recently saw a peaceful transition of power to a new president. So too in Guinea-Bissau, which also had recent elections in which losing incumbents peacefully accepted the results and stepped down.

Our task is to work together to keep these and other countries in the region on a path toward development and democracy.

Mr. Iturregui, there has not been a Senate confirmed ambassador in Santo Domingo since 2021, hindering our ability for bilateral relations to reach their full potential.

The cultural and economic links between America and the Dominican Republic are vital, and we need to get you on the ground as a key link between our strong Dominican-American community and their homeland.

And finally, Ambassador Jacobson, good to see you again. I think we last saw each other in your post in Kosovo. Thanks for being willing to take on this really difficult and critical assignment.

The U.S. invasion of Iraq is really the original sin of the last quarter-century of American foreign policy. But there is no going back, and there is certainly a positive story to tell about Iraq where the Iraqi people joined together with the United States and other members of the counter-ISIS coalition to defeat one of the most brutal terrorist organizations the world has ever seen.

President Biden has had a tough job to reestablish U.S. influence in Baghdad after President Trump effectively gutted our presence there. But there is critical work to do.

Iran’s influence and the influence of paramilitary organizations are growing every day in Iraq, and we have some tough decisions to make there.

So we thank you all for being here today. We thank you for the sacrifice that you are all making on behalf of this country. We thank your families for the sacrifices that they have and are continuing to make.

And with that, I will turn it over to our ranking member, Senator Young, for opening comments.

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

Senator YOUNG. Thank you, Chairman.

Today’s hearing provides us the opportunity to both examine the records of the nominees before us and the realities in the countries to which they have been nominated to serve.

The year 2024 has been widely covered as the year of democracy in which more people will head to the polls around the world than in any year in history. The results, both this year and in recent years have been interesting and signal opportunities but also challenges for U.S. foreign policy into the future, including in the countries today’s panel have been nominated to serve in.

I am grateful that we will have the opportunity to hear from all of today’s nominees on the record about some of their past experiences and future goals. I want to congratulate them and their fami-

lies on their nominations and say I look forward to today's exchange.

The geopolitical realities we face are as complicated as they have ever been. Yet, even that is an understatement for the Middle East and North Africa region. Iraq has dominated the foreign policy thinking of an entire generation.

The domestic, political, and economic situations in Algeria and Libya are in some ways a study in contrasts but equally complex, particularly in the face of continuing terrorism and migration challenges. And as these challenges literally migrate westward Senegal will have little time to celebrate its successful democratic transition.

On the other side of the Atlantic the Dominican Republic is a country with long, complex ties with America and whose relative stability on both the land mass it shares with Haiti and in a geopolitically complicated Caribbean cannot be underestimated.

I do fear, however, that for this panel in particular the current Administration risks sending them out to fail. Migration, democratic stability, and lack of commercial and economic opportunities have strained each of these countries in varying ways.

The recent wave of coups in failed states with a Chinese and Russian entourage riding in behind them reminds us that neither hard or soft power alone will suffice, nor is there any corner of the world that we can ignore, but our attention must be carefully planned.

To cite one example, the U.S. has remained engaged after the devastating floods in Libya when the Derna dams failed, delivering more humanitarian aid than anyone. Yet, it has been Chinese construction firms benefiting from a rebuild and Russia's oil laundering war machine, grateful for a purposeful level of political dysfunction.

I am hopeful that we will receive honest assessments from today's nominees about whether they will have the available tools to help bring or maintain a U.S. favorable bilateral relationship to their respective host countries.

Mr. Chairman.

Senator MURPHY. Thank you very much, Senator Young.

I am going to provide some brief introductions, and then I will suggest that you make your opening remarks in the order of the introductions.

Ms. Jennifer Gavito has served as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Iraq and Iran. She has spent the majority of her career working in and around the Middle East including posts in Jerusalem and Beirut and as director for Syria and Lebanon at the National Security Council.

Mr. Josh Harris is the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, and Tunisia. Previously, Mr. Harris worked on Middle East issues at the National Security Council and served in Libya.

Mr. Lord is the Deputy Assistant Secretary for East Africa, Sudan, and South Sudan. Prior to this assignment he served in important posts in Africa, including Namibia, Ethiopia and Malawi as well as tours in Syria, Iraq, and the United Kingdom.

At this point I would like to thank Congressman Espallat, the first Dominican-American to serve in the U.S. Congress, for joining us this morning.

Congressman Espallat has asked for unanimous consent to enter a statement of support for Mr. Iturregui, our nominee for U.S. Ambassador to the Dominican Republic, into the record and without objection we will enter that statement into the record.

[EDITOR'S NOTE.—The information referred to above can be found in the “Additional Material Submitted for the Record” section at the end of this hearing.]

Senator MURPHY. Mr. Juan Carlos Iturregui is a managing partner at Milan Americas, a consulting firm specializing in business, regulatory, and public policy issues. He is also currently a vice chair of the board of the U.S. Inter-American Foundation.

And finally, Ambassador Tracey Ann Jacobson most recently served as Chargé ad interim at the U.S. mission in Ethiopia. She has previously served as an ambassador three times so this will be number four—Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Kosovo.

I would also ask unanimous consent for a letter of support for Ambassador Jacobson from the president of #AfghanEvac, an organization dedicated to the relocation and resettlement of Afghan allies, to be entered into the record, and without objection, so ordered.

[EDITOR'S NOTE.—The information referred to above can be found in the “Additional Material Submitted for the Record” section at the end of this hearing.]

Senator MURPHY. Welcome to all of you. I look forward to your testimony and engaging with you over the course of this hearing.

Ms. Gavito, I will turn it over to you for your opening statement.

STATEMENT OF JENNIFER D. GAVITO, OF COLORADO, A CAREER MEMBER OF THE SENIOR FOREIGN SERVICE, CLASS OF MINISTER-COUNSELOR, TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE STATE OF LIBYA

Ms. GAVITO. Thank you.

Senator Murphy, Senator Young, Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, it is an honor to appear before you as President Biden's nominee to serve as the U.S. Ambassador to the state of Libya.

If confirmed, I look forward to working with you to advance America's critical national security interests there. I have spent the majority of my 26 years in the Foreign Service working in and on the Middle East.

My husband Tony and our sons Dominic and Ali have been an integral part of that journey, weathering this unpredictable and nomadic lifestyle with resiliency and a healthy dose of humor. I am honored to have them with me today.

Libya is interwoven in the history and lore of the United States. As the wife of a former U.S. Marine, the line from the Marine Corps hymn “To the Shores of Tripoli” is part of our own family's vernacular.

Regrettably, Libya, with its legacy of terrorism and instability, has become synonymous with tragedy, and its people have been de-

nied the prosperity the resource abundant country should afford them.

From Qaddafi's terrorism that culminated in the downing of Pan Am Flight 103 to instability in the Sahel that threatens NATO's southern flank, real U.S. interests have been and remain at stake in Libya.

Libya today is fertile ground as PRC and Russia seek to extend their influence and reach. If confirmed, I would prioritize pushing back against these destabilizing influences, advocate for U.S. industry solutions, and seek to preserve hard fought counterterrorism gains.

Libya's selection under the Global Fragility Act is recognition that addressing Libya's instability requires all diplomatic and development tools at our disposal.

If confirmed, I would leverage American innovation to help secure Libya's contributions to a stable energy market and support transparency so revenues are a source of unity rather than division.

If confirmed, I would also work with U.N. and international partners to find a political compromise among Libyan stakeholders that sets Libya on a path to unification and elections.

In closing, for America to effectively lead we must be present. If confirmed, I commit to working closely with Congress to accelerate our resumption of operations in Tripoli in a manner that prioritizes the safety and security of our outstanding team and all Americans.

Senators, thank you again. I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Gavito follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF JENNIFER D. GAVITO

Senator Murphy, Senator Young, distinguished Members of the Committee, it is an honor to appear before you as President Biden's nominee to serve as the U.S. Ambassador to the state of Libya. I'm grateful for the confidence he and Secretary Blinken have placed in me. If confirmed, I look forward to working with Members of this Committee to advance America's critical national security interests in Libya.

I fulfilled my dream of serving the U.S. overseas when I joined the Foreign Service almost 26 years ago. I have spent the majority of my career working in and on the Middle East, including in Beirut, Jerusalem, and Dubai. My husband Tony and our teenage sons, Dominic and Ali, have been an integral part of that journey and I am honored to have them with me today. We are deeply proud of our boys, who have weathered the near-constant uncertainty and upheaval with resiliency and a healthy dose of humor.

Libya is interwoven in the history and lore of the United States itself. As the wife of a former U.S. Marine, the famous line from the Marine Corps hymn "to the shores of Tripoli," is part of the vernacular of our family and others across the country. Regrettably, Libya has become synonymous with tragedy and its people have been denied the prosperity their resource-abundant country should afford them. From Gaddafi's State sponsorship of terrorism that culminated in the downing of Pan Am Flight 103, to the struggle to unseat the Islamic State from its stronghold in the Libyan city of Sirte, to the growing instability in the Sahel that threatens NATO's southern flank, history has time and again proven real U.S. interests are at stake in Libya. If confirmed I would prioritize addressing these critical national security priorities.

First, Libya is fertile ground for global powers seeking to extend their influence and reach. PRC-linked firms have made deep inroads into Libya's information and communications technology sector. If confirmed, I would advocate for U.S. industry solutions and underscore the vulnerabilities Libya faces in relying on untrustworthy vendors for its national security and critical infrastructure.

Russia, meanwhile, has subsumed Kremlin-backed Wagner forces and seeks a more open and formal defense relationship with Libyan actors as a low-cost tool to destabilize NATO's southern flank. If confirmed, I would work with Libyans in the

east and west to promote military integration that safeguards the country's borders and sovereignty. I would also seek, if confirmed, to preserve hard-won counterterrorism gains to deny any opportunity for extremists to threaten U.S. interests. The selection of Libya as a priority country under the Global Fragility Act is recognition that addressing Libya's instability requires a long-term strategic investment using all the diplomatic and development tools at our disposal.

Second, Libya is blessed with Africa's largest and the world's ninth largest proven oil reserves, as well as significant gas reserves. Libya's economic stability and global energy markets are vulnerable to domestic upheaval and external—particularly Russian—manipulation. If confirmed, I would leverage American innovation and influence to help secure Libya's contributions to stable energy markets by supporting transparent, accountable management of the revenues to ensure Libya's resources are a source of unity rather than division.

Finally, the political impasse that has endured since Libya's failure to hold elections in December 2021 has been deeply disappointing, particularly for the Libyan people who embraced elections by registering to vote in massive numbers when last given the chance. Libyans from all parts of the country seek American leadership and support for their aspirations for unified, effective governance that respects the rights of all its people and allows civil society to operate freely and safely. Significant obstacles to that remain, but, if confirmed, I would work with the U.N. and international partners to find a political compromise among Libyan stakeholders that sets Libya on a path to elections that unify the country.

In closing, for America to effectively lead, we must be present. While the Department has increased the pace and frequency of travel into Libya, our lack of a permanent diplomatic presence cedes space to our strategic rivals who are active on the ground. If confirmed, I commit to sustaining our critical travel while working closely with Congress to accelerate our resumption of embassy operations in Tripoli, in a manner that prioritizes the safety and security of our personnel and all Americans. This commitment is deeply personal. Chris Stevens was a friend. I had dinner with him the week before he, Sean Smith, Tyrone Woods, and Glen Doherty were murdered. We shared a love for the Libyan people and for the country's vast potential. It would be an honor, if confirmed, to carry this legacy forward.

Senators Murphy and Young, thank you again for the opportunity to be here today. I look forward to your questions.

Senator MURPHY. Thank you.
Mr. Harris.

STATEMENT OF JOSHUA M. HARRIS, OF MARYLAND, 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 PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF ALGERIA

Mr. HARRIS. Chairman Murphy, Ranking Member Young, Chairman Cardin, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today as the President's nominee to serve as the U.S. Ambassador to the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria.

If confirmed, I will work with Congress to advance U.S. priorities in Algeria reflecting our interests and our values, and to enable the American and local staff at U.S. Embassy Algiers to build the next chapter in this historic and dynamic partnership.

I am incredibly proud to share this day with my family. I above all thank my wife Cheryl, a Foreign Service officer, for her love and partnership. We are joined today by our sons Toby and Gabriel, who with curiosity to engage the world and resilience in navigating the upheavals of Foreign Service life are our loving inspiration.

For 229 years the U.S.-Algeria partnership, anchored in the 1795 Treaty of Peace and Amity, has been continually adapting to shared challenges.

Today, Algeria has a crucial voice in diplomacy following the October 7 attack that aims to secure the release of all hostages, to

surge humanitarian aid and protect civilians, and to promote the conditions for enduring peace and security for Israelis and Palestinians.

Our governments are coordinating intensively during Algeria's tenure on the U.N. Security Council, including to call upon Hamas to accept the proposal detailed by President Biden on May 31 and to urge its full implementation.

If confirmed, I will prioritize further deepening U.S.-Algeria cooperation to advance regional peace, including through our cooperation on the Security Council.

As Algeria contributes to stable energy markets, our economic and commercial ties continue to expand. A trade and investment framework agreement is cultivating constructive dialogue as Algeria undertakes reforms to increase transparency and liberalize the investment climate.

If confirmed, I will advocate for expanding U.S.-Algeria trade and investment to deliver tangible benefits for the American people.

If confirmed, I will also continue the U.S. Government's important dialogue with Algerian counterparts about reforms to foster inclusion, to promote freedom of expression, and to empower civil society.

My highest priority will be the safety of U.S. citizens in Algeria and the colleagues at U.S. Embassy Algiers that I would be honored to lead. I will strive to faithfully represent the United States to the Algerian people.

Thank you for the opportunity to address this committee. I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Harris follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF JOSHUA M. HARRIS

Chairman Murphy, Ranking Member Young, distinguished Committee Members, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you as the President's nominee to serve as the U.S. Ambassador to the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria. If confirmed, I will work with Congress to advance U.S. priorities in Algeria reflecting our interests and values and to enable the American and local staff at U.S. Embassy Algiers to build the next chapter in this historic and dynamic partnership.

I am proud to share this day with my family. I above all thank my wife, Cheryl—a Foreign Service Officer—for her love and partnership. We are joined by our sons, Toby and Gabriel, who, with curiosity to engage the world and resilience in navigating the upheavals of Foreign Service life, are our loving inspiration.

I joined the Foreign Service in the dark shadow of September 11, embarking upon a career of public service amid the horrors of that attack and striving to advance U.S. national security so that such violence must never reoccur.

Over the past two decades, I have sought to empower Libyans to restore their sovereignty, to partner with Iraqis as they build a democratic future free of outside manipulation, to support Tunisians in fostering economic stability and political inclusion, and to leverage our multifaceted relationship with Egypt to help put Israelis and Palestinians alike on the path to more durable peace and security. If confirmed, I will be guided by these experiences to promote U.S. priorities in Algeria.

For 229 years, the U.S.-Algeria partnership—anchored in the 1795 Treaty of Peace and Amity—has been rooted in history and continually adapting to shared challenges.

Today, Algeria has a crucial voice in diplomacy that aims to realize a lasting ceasefire in Gaza and the return of all hostages, to surge humanitarian aid and protect civilians, and to promote the conditions for enduring peace and security for Israelis and Palestinians. Our governments are coordinating intensively during Algeria's tenure on the U.N. Security Council, including to call upon Hamas to accept the ceasefire proposal detailed by President Biden on May 31 and urge its full implementation. The United States and Algeria also have a productive dialogue on ending the fighting in Sudan, preventing Libya's enmeshment in regional conflict,

and improving security and governance across the Sahel as malign actors probe across the region for vulnerabilities.

Algeria's role in fostering regional peace is underpinned by its success in uprooting terrorism and sustaining hard-won gains for internal stability. If confirmed, I will prioritize further deepening U.S.-Algeria cooperation to advance regional peace, including through our cooperation on the U.N. Security Council.

Economic and commercial ties between our countries continue to expand. Our trade has quadrupled in the past 4 years, and the United States is the leading source of foreign direct investment in Algeria—nearly triple the volume of its next largest partner. More than 100 U.S. companies operate in Algeria, the largest country in Africa.

And while contributing to stable energy markets, Algeria is advancing an ambitious agenda for the transition to renewables. A Trade and Investment Framework Agreement is cultivating constructive dialogue as Algeria undertakes reforms to increase transparency, liberalize the investment climate, and enable growth in a commercial partnership already underwriting thousands of U.S. jobs. If confirmed, I will advocate for expanding U.S.-Algeria trade and investment to deliver tangible benefits for the American people.

Algerians are forging their own path, informed by the country's struggle both for independence and against violent extremism. This history continues to guide efforts on the critical issues of promoting the rule of law, building effective institutions, and bolstering respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. If confirmed, I will continue the U.S. government's important dialogue with Algerian counterparts about reforms to foster inclusion, to promote freedom of expression, and to empower the vital contributions of civil society.

My highest priority will be the safety of U.S. citizens in Algeria, and the colleagues at U.S. Embassy Algiers that I will be honored to lead. I will strive to support the professionals of our diplomatic mission and faithfully represent the United States to the Algerian people.

Thank you for the opportunity to address this Committee. I look forward to your questions.

Senator MURPHY. Thank you very much.
Mr. Lord.

STATEMENT OF PETER W. LORD, OF FLORIDA, A CAREER MEMBER OF THE SENIOR FOREIGN SERVICE, CLASS OF COUNSELOR, NOMINATED TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE REPUBLIC OF SENEGAL, AND TO SERVE CONCURRENTLY AND WITHOUT ADDITIONAL COMPENSATION AS AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE REPUBLIC OF GUINEA-BISSAU

Mr. LORD. Chairman Murphy, Ranking Member Young, Chairman Cardin, it is an honor to appear before you as the President's nominee to serve as the next U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Senegal and to the Republic of Guinea-Bissau.

Please allow me to begin by thanking my family, in particular, my wife Leah and our two daughters. I would also like to thank and offer my appreciation to our parents, Richard and Debbie Lord and Ken and Kathy Zimmerman.

Serving our nation overseas is a multi-generational privilege, joy, and sacrifice, and I am truly grateful for their support.

As a career member of the Foreign Service I have sought to serve with integrity, lead with vision and by example, and advance the interests and values of the United States.

If confirmed, I believe my background will be valuable in leading our mission, advancing our bilateral goals with Senegal and Guinea-Bissau, and furthering our objectives in West Africa.

To do this we must first protect the security of the United States and our citizens by cooperating to combat transnational threats and promote regional stability.

Second, we must expand prosperity through economic growth, mutually beneficial trade, and job creation, particularly for Senegal and Guinea-Bissau's young populations.

Third, we must invest in accountable governance and respect for human rights for Senegal and Guinea-Bissau to achieve the full potential of democracy and ensure that all citizens accrue the benefits of development.

If confirmed, I will make protecting the many U.S. citizens in Senegal and Guinea-Bissau my highest priority. Within the mission I will prioritize fostering a workplace with high morale and a team oriented ethos.

I also commit to working closely with you and other Members of Congress, including to fully support congressional travel and engagement.

I look forward to your questions. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Lord follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF PETER W. LORD

Chairman Murphy, Ranking Member Young, 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 Senegal and to the Republic of Guinea-Bissau.

Please allow me to begin by thanking my family, in particular my wife, Leah, and our two daughters. I would also like to offer my appreciation to our parents—Richard & Debbie Lord and Ken & Kathy Zimmerman. Serving our nation overseas is a multi-generational privilege, joy, and sacrifice, and I am truly grateful for their support.

As a career member of the Foreign Service, I have been honored to represent the United States in assignments across Africa, Europe, and the Middle East as well as in Washington and at the United Nations. In each assignment, I have sought to serve with integrity, lead with vision and by example, and advance the interests and values of the United States. If confirmed, I believe this background will be valuable in leading our Mission, advancing bilateral goals with Senegal and Guinea-Bissau, and furthering our objectives in West Africa.

Our long-term partnership with Senegal has advanced important U.S. interests, including in supporting public health, expanding energy solutions, bolstering regional peace and security, investing in economic growth, and deepening democracy. The recent elections in Senegal—particularly the period before the polls—highlighted the importance of our continued partnership and engagement on democracy, human rights, and governance in Senegal. Now is a crucial time to expand our engagement to demonstrate a democratic dividend and our partnership with the new government.

In Guinea-Bissau, our relationship has been deepening in recent years, with a focus on agricultural production, food security, economic growth, and public outreach. Our engagement in Guinea-Bissau comes against a backdrop of our continued work to underscore the importance of democratic principles and collective action against transnational threats.

If confirmed, I will work steadfastly to advance U.S. interests and values—for democracy and good governance as well as for our security and prosperity. This includes countering false narratives and the corrupt and unfair practices of our adversaries. We do this best when we listen, partner, and collaborate on shared interests and challenges—not dictate choices and undermine host country laws and interests, as our adversaries so often do.

To advance our interest and values, we must first protect the security of the United States and our citizens. This includes cooperating to fight transnational threats, promote regional stability, and counter violent extremism. It also encompasses addressing trafficking in persons as well engaging on health threats and food security.

Second, we must expand prosperity through economic growth, mutually beneficial trade, and job creation, particularly for Senegal and Guinea-Bissau's young popu-

lations. U.S. assistance has a catalytic effect, but long-term economic growth will only be sustained by working with these governments to foster a business-friendly environment and through creation of private sector connections that enable trade. If confirmed, I will seek to promote U.S. businesses and create economic opportunities.

Third, accountable governance, rule of law, and respect for human and labor rights are essential for Senegal and Guinea-Bissau to achieve the full potential of democracy as well as attract investment, enable stability, and ensure that all citizens accrue the benefits of development. U.S. engagement has helped to build the capacity of public institutions to deliver these results. If confirmed, supporting effective democratic governance will be a top priority.

If confirmed, I will make protecting the many U.S. citizens living in and traveling to Senegal and Guinea-Bissau my highest priority. I will also dedicate my attention to leading the team at the U.S. mission to foster a workplace with high morale and a team-oriented ethos. I will focus on accountability of resources and effectiveness of interagency collaboration to ensure our partnerships deliver with excellence. I also commit to working closely with you and other Members of Congress, including to fully support congressional travel and engagements.

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

Senator MURPHY. Thank you very much.
Mr. Iturregui.

STATEMENT OF HON. JUAN CARLOS ITURREGUI, OF MARYLAND, NOMINATED TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Mr. ITURREGUI. Good morning.

Chairman Murphy, Ranking Member Young, Chairman Cardin, it is an honor to appear before you today as the President's nominee for U.S. Ambassador to the Dominican Republic.

First, I would like to recognize and thank my wife Maud and our son Tomas and daughter Emma along with my sister Giselle. I am blessed that they can accompany me on this important day for all of us.

I am deeply grateful to President Biden and Secretary Blinken for their confidence in me and allowing me this incredible opportunity to serve our country.

I want to discuss the opportunities for engagement in the Dominican Republic that I would pursue if given the opportunity to serve.

The U.S. and the DR already enjoy a strong, growing, and very close relationship. We share democratic values and the desire for our countries and our region to be prosperous and safe. Our governments are working together on a wide variety of priorities.

I am convinced these shared perspectives and democratic values present the chance to further strengthen our ties. We must continue our efforts to advocate for democracy and human rights in our hemisphere, combat corruption, promote long term economic growth, and enhance citizen security as we tackle the challenges of our times.

Recently reelected president of the Dominican Republic Luis Abinader has made clear that he listens to the Dominican people who are tired of corruption and want their government to do better for them. The U.S. supports his efforts.

If confirmed, I am eager to collaborate with the Dominican government on good governance initiatives, security, investment, human rights, energy transition, and improving the lives of all peoples in Dominican Republic.

I have spent much of my career working in business on regulatory and public policy issues. I know the importance of good governance and to foster and promote resilient development.

In conclusion, honorable committee members, if confirmed I will promote U.S. values and U.S. interests in the Dominican Republic.

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to this committee and its members and staff for your support, for your continued engagement with the Dominican Republic, and for your consideration of my nomination.

I look forward to answering any questions you may have. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Iturregui follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. JUAN CARLOS ITURREGUI

Good morning. Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, distinguished Members of the committee, it is an honor to appear before you today as the President's nominee for U.S. Ambassador to the Dominican Republic.

I would like to recognize my wife Maud and our son Tomas and daughter Emma, along with my sister Giselle, I'm blessed that they can accompany me on this important day for all of us. I am deeply grateful to President Biden and Secretary Blinken for their confidence in me and allowing me this incredible opportunity to serve our country.

I want to discuss the opportunities for engagement in the Dominican Republic that I would pursue, if given the opportunity to serve. The United States and the Dominican Republic already enjoy a strong, growing, and close relationship, with over two million Americans of Dominican heritage residing across the United States, over four million U.S. tourists visiting the Dominican Republic every year, and more than 30 billion dollars in annual trade between our countries. We share democratic values and the desire for our countries and our region to be prosperous and safe. Our governments share and cooperate on a wide variety of priorities.

I am convinced these shared perspectives and democratic values present the chance to further strengthen our ties with the Dominican Republic, which is already a trusted partner and close ally. We must continue our efforts to advocate for democracy and human rights in our hemisphere, combat corruption, promote long-term economic growth, and enhance citizen security as we tackle the challenges of our time.

I am a firm believer in the transformative power of democracy. It enables ordinary citizens to play an active role in their government. It provides a voice and power to the people as well as the opportunity to create change. Recently re-elected President of the Dominican Republic Luis Abinader has made it clear that he listens to the Dominican people, who are tired of corruption and want their government to do better for them. The United States supports President Abinader's efforts to fight corruption and make the government work for the people. If confirmed, I look forward to supporting our joint anti-corruption goals and strengthening the rule of law in the Dominican Republic. I am eager to collaborate with the Dominican government on good governance initiatives, security, investment and near-shoring initiatives, human rights, energy, and improving the lives of all people in the Dominican Republic.

I have spent much of my career working on business, regulatory, and public policy issues while specializing in infrastructure and renewable energy in the Caribbean and Latin America. I know how important good governance is to fostering investment and promoting development that positively impact people's lives. Hence, it is crucial to broaden our economic partnership and solidify our connections with like-minded partners, and I will do this if I am confirmed. Through my last 9 years on the board of the U.S. Inter-American Foundation—a small yet very effective Federal agency that Congress generously funds—I have witnessed first-hand the enduring impacts of investing in grassroots development and empowering local communities to support themselves and obviate the need to migrate.

In conclusion, honorable committee Members, if confirmed, I will promote U.S. values and U.S. interests in the Dominican Republic.

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to this committee and its members for your support for continued U.S. engagement with the Dominican Republic and for your consideration of my nomination. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Mem-

ber, and Members of the Committee for the opportunity to be here with you today. I look forward to answering any questions you may have.

Senator MURPHY. Thank you, Mr. Iturregui.
Ambassador Jacobson.

**STATEMENT OF HON. TRACEY ANN JACOBSON, OF VIRGINIA, A
CAREER MEMBER OF THE SENIOR FOREIGN SERVICE,
CLASS OF CAREER MINISTER, NOMINATED TO BE AMBAS-
SADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE REPUBLIC OF IRAQ**

Ms. JACOBSON. Good morning, Chairman Murphy, Ranking Member Young, Chairman Cardin. It is an honor to appear before you today.

I would like to acknowledge my husband David Baugh, who is celebrating in style his first anniversary as an American citizen.

I would like to thank my friends from the State Department, Diana from the Hill, and especially my A-100 classmates. Today we are celebrating our 36th anniversary of joining the Foreign Service on June 13, 1988.

If confirmed as Ambassador to Iraq, I will safeguard U.S. interests by protecting American citizens and advancing Iraq's stability, security, and sovereignty. Ten years after our troops returned to Iraq at the government's invitation to fight ISIS, it is time for our military to evolve to a new role.

If confirmed, I will ensure any transition from Operation Inherent Resolve to a bilateral security arrangement is geared toward the defeat of ISIS and Iraq's security.

Iran remains a malign actor and a destabilizing influence in the region. The Iran aligned militias in Iraq receive weapons, training, and other support from Iran, and use their arms and cash to ensure Iran's influence.

If confirmed, I will use the full range of U.S. policy tools to stem this influence including by promoting Iraq's energy independence. Fostering Iraq's economic growth is a critical part of our bilateral relationship.

If confirmed, I will support U.S. business, promote investment, and press for improvements in the business climate including reducing corruption and increasing transparency.

Bolstering Iraq's democracy is another priority. If confirmed, I will work to strengthen Iraq's democratic governance, promote human rights, and build durable solutions for Iraq's displaced and minority populations including Christians, Yazidis, and those at Al Hol in Syria.

Our partnership with the Iraq Kurdistan region remains a cornerstone of our broader relationship, and if confirmed, I look forward to strengthening it.

Iraq is one of our largest missions and leadership is important. This includes serving as an effective steward of the taxpayers' trust, creating an atmosphere of open collaboration, including with the Hill, and maintaining a culture of respect for our team members who volunteer for these challenging assignments.

If confirmed, it will be my honor to serve with them.

Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Jacobson follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. TRACEY ANN JACOBSON

Chairman Murphy, Ranking Member Young, Members of the Committee:

I am honored to appear before you today as President Biden's nominee to be the next U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Iraq. I would like to express my gratitude to the President and the Secretary of State for their confidence. If confirmed, I will work closely with the members of this committee to advance U.S. interests in Iraq.

During more than 30 years in the State Department, I have had the privilege of serving as U.S. Ambassador to Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, and Kosovo, as well as Chargé d'Affaires at the U.S. Embassy in Ethiopia, where my teams and I worked successfully to promote U.S. interests and shared goals. If confirmed as Ambassador to Iraq, my highest priorities will be the protection of American citizens and the advancement of our bilateral partnership to support our strategic interests.

If confirmed, I will safeguard U.S. security interests by advancing Iraq's stability, security, and sovereignty, which are critical to the region. ISIS remains a threat in Iraq. Our military provides vital support in an advise, assist, and enable role to the Iraqi security forces and the Peshmerga in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region. Ten years after our troops returned to Iraq at the government's invitation to fight ISIS—and 5 years after ISIS's territorial defeat—it is time for our military to transition to a new role. If confirmed, I will ensure any transition from Operation Inherent Resolve to a bilateral security arrangement will be geared toward the defeat of ISIS and Iraq's security.

It is important for Iraq to strengthen its relations with many of its neighbors and Prime Minister Sudani has taken positive steps in that direction. Iran, however, remains a malign actor and a destabilizing influence in the region that threatens to undo all of Iraq's achievements. We recognize that the primary threat to Iraq's stability and sovereignty are the Iran-aligned militias. These groups receive weapons, training, and other support from Iran, and use their arms and cash to promote Iran's influence over Iraq. If confirmed, I will use the full range of U.S. policy tools to counter these malign groups and stem Iran's influence. I will promote Iraq's energy independence so Iran cannot use energy as a weapon against Iraq. I will support Treasury's important work to modernize Iraq's financial sector and connect it to the international financial system, eroding Iran's ability to take advantage of Iraqi banks.

Fostering Iraq's economic growth is a critical part of the U.S.-Iraq 360-degree bilateral relationship. The Iraqi government aims to provide basic services to its people and expand opportunities for investment. If confirmed, I will promote U.S. investment and work with the Iraqi government to implement reforms to improve the investment climate for the private sector, including by reducing corruption and increasing transparency. I will strengthen the commercial ties that already exist between Iraq and U.S. companies and develop new opportunities.

Bolstering Iraq's democracy and good governance is another U.S. priority. Iraq needs to improve its protection of the rights and freedoms of its citizens, including its ethnic and religious minorities. Since 2018, the United States has provided over \$500 million in assistance to these minorities. If confirmed, I will prioritize U.S. policies and programs that strengthen Iraq's democratic governance and build durable solutions for Iraq's displaced and minority populations, including Christians and Yazidis and those at al-Hol in Syria.

Our partnership with the Iraqi Kurdistan Region remains a cornerstone of our broader relationship with Iraq. Stabilizing the Baghdad-Erbil relationship will bring benefits to all Iraqis. If confirmed, I look forward to strengthening our partnership with the Iraqi Kurdistan Region in the context of our overall relationship with federal Iraq.

Mission Iraq is one of our largest and most complex diplomatic platforms, and leadership is important. For me, this means serving as an effective steward of taxpayer trust. It means creating an atmosphere of open collaboration, including with colleagues on the Hill. And it means building a culture of respect for our team members who volunteer for these challenging assignments. If confirmed, it will be my honor to serve with the women and men of Mission Iraq.

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

Senator MURPHY. Great. Thank you all for your testimony here today.

We have a busy morning in the Senate, and so many of our colleagues may submit questions for the record, may join us, many of them watching from their offices.

Let me start with you, Ambassador Jacobson. Obviously, this is a very difficult assignment. I talked about my distaste for the drawdown of diplomatic presence in Baghdad at the end of the Trump administration.

I think it is important that we have a robust diplomatic and economic engagement with our Iraqi partners, but I do worry about the middling number of American military forces in the region.

We have got about 2,500 troops, about 6,000 contractors. Our presence is really not enough to shift the balance of power, but what it is too often is an easy, sometimes unprotected target for anti-American militias.

There is an argument to be made that our presence on balance is starting to become more of a liability than a net benefit. I am talking about our military presence.

David Schenker, who was the previous Administration's Assistant Secretary of State for the region, who I have a lot of respect for, recently argued that it is time for the United States to start thinking about how to best downsize the U.S. military footprint in Iraq. Outside of the Kurdistan contingent there is less and less utility in the ongoing U.S. military deployment.

I am not going to ask you to take a position on our force numbers, but as you are preparing for this assignment what is your understanding of the comparable efficacy between our diplomatic presence and our military presence, and can you speak at all about how our military contingent—some contingent there—sometimes complicates relations with the Iraqi government, for instance, when we have to take retaliatory strikes against the militias inside Iraq as a means to protect our military contingent inside Iraq?

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

As you know from the time we spent together in Kosovo, I have always approached our engagement as the United States as a three-legged stool. We have to have diplomacy, we have to have development, and we have to have our defense structures together.

As you know, last year the U.S. and Iraq announced a Higher Military Coordinating Commission, which is looking at how our military component of Operation Inherent Resolve eventually evolves into a bilateral security arrangement, and that is informed by a series of important factors, including operational and environmental concerns, the threat that has continued to be posed by ISIS, and the capabilities of the Iraqi Security Forces. So I think this engagement remains very important.

With regards to the diplomatic platform, as you know we have several of our agencies present in Iraq, and if confirmed I would want to play the appropriate role of an ambassador in a whole of government approach, which gets to our national interests in the region, and I would look at security, economic development, democratic development, and the relationship with the Iraq Kurdistan region as all parts of a broad 360 degree relationship, which is not only important for Iraq's investment advancement but also stands as a way to bolster the Iraqi government and the Iraqi people against the Iranian influence.

Senator MURPHY. Yes. I, obviously, do not expect for you to have an opinion today but I look forward to consulting with you once you have boots on the ground to really understand what the com-

parable efficacy is of a relatively small military deployment there which too often ends up being sitting ducks for the folks who are trying to provoke our forces and interests in the region.

Mr. Iturregui, I want to talk to you about gun violence in the Caribbean. It is amongst the highest in the world. Customs data indicates that it is U.S. weapons that are almost always the ones being recovered in crime scenes in the Dominican Republic. Ninety-seven percent of firearms recovered in the DR and submitted to the ATF for tracing were manufactured or imported from the United States.

There is a Caribbean firearms roadmap that has been developed to try to cut down on gun trafficking, largely, coming from the United States into the region. Obviously, this matters a lot because of the instability in Haiti today.

Can you just say a word about what you understand about this roadmap and what kind of contributions our embassy and an ambassador on the ground can make to trying to interrupt the flow of weapons into the region and specifically into the DR, many of which end up getting—moving very quickly into the conflict in Haiti?

Mr. ITURREGUI. Thank you, Senator.

Indeed, it is a very serious problem. From what I read—I have not had the opportunity to be fully briefed—but I know that we have a robust presence in Embassy Santo Domingo of U.S. law enforcement agencies, and they are working very closely with the Dominican government in tackling this challenge.

The Administration, as you know, also has with your support in motion the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative, and I understand that those efforts are being ramped up, and we are not only coordinating with Dominican authorities but with other governments in the Caribbean Basin.

Thank you.

Senator MURPHY. I have got more questions. I will save them for a second round, and I will turn it over now to Senator Young.

Senator YOUNG. Thank you, Chairman.

Mr. Iturregui, what a complex environment. As I prepared for this hearing I am just struck by the enormous challenges there are going to be going forward to restore democratic rule in Haiti, which is relevant in light of its proximity to the Dominican Republic.

Descent into lawlessness in the country has been amplified. There are dire problems with organized crime, the U.S. Embassy in Haiti now evacuated of nonessential personnel. Our embassy in the Dominican Republic will be all the more important.

How do you plan to work with the Dominican government to ensure there is no spillover of conflict from Haiti?

Mr. ITURREGUI. Senator, as you know being a U.S. Naval Academy graduate, we have got to have boots on the ground and the diplomatic front—I am going to borrow from Ambassador Jacobson—we need to approach the three-legged stool in tandem—security, economic development, and diplomacy.

I am comforted that we finally have a U.S. Ambassador on the ground in Port-au-Prince. It is a very complex situation. I have been to Haiti. I can give you my personal observation from 30 years monitoring Caribbean affairs.

What we hopefully should not do is implement the same strategy expecting a different outcome.

Senator YOUNG. Do you feel like there is a coordinated response across country, certainly, across within our Government but working with other governments as well regionally?

I will just throw out a bit of the fact pattern here. So the Dominican Republic has sealed the island's shared border and airspace. The Bahamas has launched a naval blockade to keep Haitians from fleeing the crisis by boat.

The U.K. has sent a warship to ward off anyone seeking refuge in Turks and Caicos. Florida has increased marine and aviation patrols, and then even with all of this drug and gun smuggling continue to be widely reported issues in Haiti.

So seems to me this cannot be dealt with singlehandedly by one Ambassador, so is there a broader effort that you think is coming together?

Mr. ITURREGUI. I believe there is a broader effort, and I am personally hopeful that you all can make the appropriate decisions regarding the potential security—multinational security force on the ground.

I can tell you Port-au-Prince at night goes dark. They do not have any power. This is before the crisis. So, for example, we need to sort of peel the onion little by little and figure out how to bring security.

Because I feel for the Haitian people. They just want to live and breathe, right. So most of the Haitian people are, unfortunately, hostages to transnational crime organizations and gangs, and I believe it is in our national security interest to be there and play a very constructive and proactive role.

Senator YOUNG. Would your counsel be to this committee that we should be focusing more assets in the region to combat illicit drug and arms trafficking?

Mr. ITURREGUI. Short answer yes, but let me go back 25 years ago, because you may have benefited from training or otherwise visiting Roosevelt Roads Naval Station in Puerto Rico.

Ever since we closed that base the Caribbean has open borders. That is the U.S.-Caribbean border, including U.S. Virgin Islands and DR, for that effect. Ever since we closed the base the Caribbean became our very exposed third border.

Senator YOUNG. And that is the naval, not Coast Guard stations?

Mr. ITURREGUI. It used to be the largest Navy base outside the continental U.S. globally.

Senator YOUNG. How do you think the U.S. Coast Guard, just to stick with that smaller but highly relevant and important service—how should the Coast Guard be increasing cooperation with Dominican counterparts to prevent increased drug and arms trafficking?

Mr. ITURREGUI. They are ramping up the efforts, and they have the results to show both on illegal drug interdiction and illegal immigration, but we need to do it also on the other side, which is the Haitian navy has no ships. We recently gave them an old Coast Guard cutter.

In the Dominican navy I understand from what I read—again, I have not been fully briefed, but I understand that we have a very robust and growing cooperation and collaboration dynamic there.

Senator YOUNG. Thank you, sir.
Chairman.

Senator MURPHY. Thank you.
Chairman Cardin.

The CHAIRMAN. First, thank you, Senator Murphy and Senator Young, both of you. I appreciate you taking responsibilities for this hearing.

Senator Murphy mentioned the fact that these are extremely challenging times on our schedule, and I want to thank Senator Risch and the Republican staff for clearing the nominees for hearings today.

We are all doing a lot of different things, and with the cooperation we were able to get this hearing scheduled. We need to find two people to take responsibility for it, and believe me, it is not easy with a markup in the Armed Services on the National Defense Authorization Act, challenges around the world, domestic issues that we are taking up on the floor today.

So, Senator Murphy, thank you for your willingness to chair this hearing, and Senator Young, and Senator Ricketts. They are the two I will call on all the time on the Republican side. They are so committed to this committee and the work of this committee that I thank you so much for your willingness to be here today.

I want to first thank all of you for your willingness to continue in public service. Many of you have devoted your entire careers to Foreign Service and to public service, and we thank you very much for your willingness to continue to do this.

Many members of your family and friends are here with you today, and we thank them, because it really is a family sacrifice, and as Senator Murphy said, we need to have confirmed ambassadors.

When we do not have a confirmed ambassador, there is a void, and that void is going to be filled, and it is filled by countries that do not share our values and in many cases are our adversaries.

So it is critically important we get these nominations moving forward, and we get confirmed ambassadors in these five challenging missions.

Every one of these missions are difficult, and so thank you for willingness to do that.

I have required questions. I am going to ask you all to answer yes or no. I hope you will find these questions easy to answer, and we will just go right on down the line.

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

[All witnesses answer in the affirmative.]

The CHAIRMAN. Do you commit to keep this committee fully and currently informed about the activities under your purview?

[All witnesses answer in the affirmative.]

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

[All witnesses answer in the affirmative.]

The CHAIRMAN. And do you commit to promptly responding to requests for briefings and information requested by the committee and its designated staff?

[All witnesses answer in the affirmative.]

The CHAIRMAN. Well, you are off to a good start with me, so thank you all very much. I appreciate that.

In each of the countries I will be following up and asking you to keep us informed. You just committed to do that.

In Iraq we recognize that Iran has tremendous challenges in our containing Iran's influence. You already mentioned the issues concerning energy. We are going to want to know the strategies for the region.

We have ISIS. We have so many areas in regard to our needs for a strong voice. We have the Middle East process. We have concerns now about what is happening in Lebanon, and Iraq plays a critical role in these decisionmakings.

So we are going to be asking you for your strategies as to how we can leverage our mission to accomplish our objectives.

In Libya we are very concerned about China's influence as well as Russia's influence, and it is a challenging situation, but we need to be actively engaged in order to prevent the influence of two countries that do not share our values.

In the DR I am concerned about not just what is happening with Haiti but their commitment to fight corruption. They have challenges in that country, and it is not just going after the opposition; it is having a strategy in that country to really combat corruption.

So, we will be looking to you as to carrying out a law that was passed in the last National Defense Authorization Act in regards to our missions, having strategies to counter corruption throughout the world.

Algeria—again, this is a country where Russia is trying to fill a much larger role. We have to be aggressive there.

In Senegal I was very concerned about the efforts to postpone the elections. I know the Constitutional Council pulled that back. But we do see trends that might be moving against democratic values that we thought the country was pretty well committed to.

So there is a lot of issues that we are going to be following up with you. I just really wanted to put you on notice about that. Thank you for your willingness. We hope that we will be able to move your nominations promptly and get you to work.

Thank you.

Senator MURPHY. Senator Ricketts.

Senator RICKETTS. Great. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and I want to add my thanks to Senator Cardin as well.

As Governor I had a chance to take a number of trade missions around the world and meet with our embassies, and I just cannot say enough about the Foreign Service people who sacrifice time away from your friends and family here in the United States to represent our country overseas, and I really appreciate the efforts that you all make to do that.

I want to talk a little about Libya. Russia's tentacles continue to expand there in Libya. In September Putin met with Field Marshal Khalifa Haftar to discuss a defense accord that would expand Mos-

cow's military presence there and could eventually even lead to a naval base there.

This year, despite the war in Ukraine raging on, Moscow has sent Russian special forces and thousands of mercenaries from the battlefield to Libya, and additionally, we have seen Russian vessels unloading thousands of tons of military equipment in Tobruk, effectively turning eastern Libya into a Russian way station for places like Niger, Mali, Burkina Faso.

And so far our diplomatic strategy has been to engage Haftar, but he has repeatedly denied our request to cooperate with the U.N. on forming a unified government and holding nationwide elections. And then, of course, he just keeps increasingly moving into the Russian orbit.

So, Ms. Gavito, tell me a little bit—what is your take on Russia's expanding presence in eastern Libya. How concerned are you with that?

What do you think the potential for establishing a naval base for Moscow is? I mean, that, obviously, would give Putin a foothold in the Mediterranean.

Share with me what is your take on this.

Ms. GAVITO. Thank you very much, Senator.

You have touched on what I think is the biggest challenge facing Libya.

Certainly, the lack of a unified government is also a great challenge, but it is exacerbated by Russia's deeply destabilizing impact there.

As you note, in a variety of different ways Russia has made no secret of its intent to deepen its foothold in Libya through its arms trafficking through and to Libya. It is setting itself up to further destabilize the Sahel region as well as NATO's southern flank, and so it is deeply concerning.

With regard to plans to push back on that, a couple of thoughts. First of all, the sanctions both on the Wagner Group as a transnational criminal—excuse me, transnational criminal organization in 2023 and yesterday's sanctions on Goznak for having printed a billion dollars in counterfeit payment, counterfeit bills—Libyan bills—to further destabilize the economy are two examples of ways that we can push back from here.

Ultimately, though, Senator, it is critical that the United States be on the ground, that we have an opportunity to engage Libyans across the political spectrum regardless of where they are on two things: First of all, the dangers of allowing themselves to be further enmeshed in regional conflict, and second, on the opportunities that come from fulfilling their own Libyan based goals of being in a position to reaffirm their sovereignty.

Without taking too much time, Senator, I think that in order for the United States to effectively support and advance the U.N.'s goals of unification of government the reality is that we have to engage all political actors across the political spectrum as they are all going to have to buy into a future unified government that puts itself in position to reassert Libyan sovereignty.

Senator RICKETTS. So I would like you to also just address what do you think the likelihood of a Russian naval base in Libya is?

Ms. GAVITO. Senator, as you are aware, at this stage of the process I am not in a position to see classified information.

That being said, certainly those plans are consistent with what the United States has seen from Russia with regard to deployment of military personnel and their stated desires to deepen the foothold.

You mentioned Haftar's visit to Moscow. Also notable that the deputy defense minister of Russia has visited Libya four times in the last year.

So, certainly, Senator, I would take those reports very seriously.

Senator RICKETTS. Yes. So you mentioned we have to engage with all the political parties. I assume that you mean Haftar as well.

Again, if he is getting additional aid from Russia, Russia is clearly going to be trying to destabilize and foil our attempts to have a unified government. Is that fair?

Ms. GAVITO. I think that is probably fair.

Senator RICKETTS. Yes. So what is it that we can offer Haftar, or what are the things we can do to have leverage to get Haftar to the negotiating table to try and get to a unified government and get to elections?

Ms. GAVITO. Sure. There is no question that this is an extraordinarily difficult undertaking, and recognizing that, I would point back to the 2020 cease-fire agreement in which the Libyans themselves called for the expulsion of all foreign fighters and mercenary forces from Libya.

Libyans themselves have in the past registered in record numbers for elections to be able to vote. Ultimately, Haftar needs to be responsive to his own people.

We need to, as the United States, lay out a framework that demonstrates the benefits that the Libyan people, frankly, have already put forward about the benefits of that reassertion of sovereignty, being able to protect their own borders, and more importantly, the economic benefits to all of them from a stable, secure, more free Libya that is able to respond to the needs of its people.

So, Senator, it is an extraordinarily difficult undertaking, certainly; the status quo has benefited a number of Libyan actors. But I believe that the United States has a different vision that the Libyan people themselves have bought into.

Senator RICKETTS. Ms. Gavito, I am going to take a difference with what you said there, that Haftar has to be responsive to the Libyan people. Dictators do not. They do not think like we do. They do not have to be responsive to their people.

If he can get enough arms from Russia he can just establish himself as a military dictator, and it is not like it is the first time that would happen in Libya, right?

So we are going to have to, obviously, have some of you confirmed. We are going to have to have, I think, a deeper strategy about how we offset that malign Russian influence in Libya.

Ms. GAVITO. I look forward to working with the committee. I could not agree with you more. It is a complicated situation that is going to take all of our efforts.

Senator RICKETTS. Great. Thank you very much.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator MURPHY. Thanks, Senator Ricketts.

Senator Young and I are going to start a second round of questions.

Mr. Harris, Algeria has historically supported the Polisario Front, whose main goal is the independence of Western Sahara from Moroccan control. They regularly deliver arms, training, financial aid.

The Biden administration has sought to revive the U.N. process on the final status of the Western Sahara, but at the same time they have not rescinded the Trump administration's policy of recognizing Morocco's claim of sovereignty over the territory.

Do you perceive these two policies to be at odds, and what kind of progress do you think that we can make on trying to move forward concessions or actions that we would need from Algeria to resolve this longstanding crisis?

Mr. HARRIS. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

I think that we have spoken very clearly to the importance of enabling a U.N. political process on Western Sahara to move forward negotiations leading to a lasting and enduring resolution to this extremely difficult challenge developing over many years without further delay.

I have had the good occasion to work very closely with the personal envoy of the Secretary General, Mr. de Mistura, as he works to intensify these consultations, and also to consult privately with partners, including Algeria, about how all players could lend their influence to the success of that U.N. political process.

I believe there is a recognition about the fundamental challenges at play, and also the importance of ensuring that that political process is successful.

Algeria certainly has a very important role to play in that conversation, and if confirmed a central element of my efforts with the Algerian government will be to further intensify that dialogue so that that U.N. process could finally gain some traction.

Senator MURPHY. Great. Thank you for that.

Mr. Lord, talk to us a little bit about U.S.-Senegal security cooperation. Senegal is really critical to U.S. security efforts in West Africa. It has probably got the most competent security forces in the Sahel.

Given the myriad problems facing Senegal's neighbors what can we do to expand Senegal's positive security influence in the region? What are going to be the first, second, and third steps you are going to take and ask Congress to support on this mission?

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

Indeed, we have a long history of cooperation with Senegal on security arrangements and assistance, which has included professionalization of the forces so that they can engage in global stability operations.

Senegal is on a security and diplomatic level engaged on the difficult problems in the Sahel both through the West Africa sub-regional organization ECOWAS and through the United Nations.

I think one of the key things that we can do is listen to the new government's ideas about how to approach this situation. They have intense interest in seeing a resolution.

Many of our interests overlap with them, and so working together with them on a diplomatic plan as well as providing additional support to their security forces.

If confirmed, this will be a top priority in working with the new government on how to move this forward in West Africa because we have very serious concerns but also shared interests with Senegal.

Senator MURPHY. Well, I also sit on both the Defense Appropriation Subcommittee and the Foreign Relations Subcommittee so I look forward to your recommendations on how we can continue to support that cooperative relationship.

Ms. Gavito, let us talk about the embassy. So we have got a request to establish a diplomatic travel support operation facility, a DT-SOF. Tell me a little bit about how we make sure that that does not become the sort of new permanent normal.

How do we stay on track to get an embassy back up and established? And while we are in this interregnum period where we have got this sort of temporary facility, how do we manage our risk tolerance to make sure that we are actually getting our diplomats who may be temporarily housed there out into the field to talk to people instead of just sitting in this facility and monitoring from inside high walls?

Ms. GAVITO. Thank you very much, Senator.

I think that this is an extraordinarily important step forward, and I was remiss in responding to Senator Ricketts with the same.

So much of what we do requires us to be present on the ground. With so much at stake with Russia, with China, having a persistent presence there, it is absolutely key to having the flexibility, the agility, to engage Libyans on all of these range of issues on a consistent basis.

This decision to move forward with a persistent presence, affectionately called the DT-SOF, came after two, two and a half years of an increased tempo of short visits into Libya.

Throughout that process the Department of State has reviewed at every juncture the security to ensure that everything that is being done is done with an eye toward ensuring that our personnel on the ground are able to stay safe.

Of course, that requires constant evaluation, and I think that that is fundamentally the answer to your question. There is no automaticity to any part of this process.

At every juncture I commit to this committee that we will continue—that I personally will continue to review the security on the ground, which remains complicated despite the fact that the 2020 cease-fire has, largely held, to make sure that everything that we are doing to advance our mission there is, again, done with the prioritization of the security of our personnel.

I would like to, if I may, add that this commitment is extremely personal to me. Chris Stevens was a friend. I had dinner with him the week before he was murdered. It is never far from my mind, and as I said, I can only commit to you that as we move forward with engaging in Libya on a more sustained basis—and you are right, we cannot sit behind walls.

The Russian ambassador in Libya is using as a talking point, we are here, and the United States is not. It is all over the media. So we have to get out. We have to engage.

Senator MURPHY. Listen, his death and that tragedy is never far from our mind as well. But the reality is that tragedy did fundamentally alter our risk tolerance and calculation throughout the Foreign Service in a way that I think has not always accrued to the benefit of the projection of U.S. influence.

And so I say this to all of you. I think Senator Risch and I have had a particular interest in trying to reorder the way in which we do reviews of incidents in the field so as to not be overly punitive of our leadership that often has to make tough decisions to put people in harm's way in order to represent the United States.

I am going to use my prerogative to ask Ambassador Jacobson one last question, which is sort of a step back question.

So, you are a rare breed, having served three times as ambassador. You have served at a very difficult time in the Foreign Service, a moment when American foreign policy changes very quickly from Administration to Administration.

It is just an absolute marvel to me the quality and commitment of the people who work in our embassies despite the fact that they may be running one mission before an election and asked to do something fundamentally different thereafter.

Talk to me about how you try to make sure that we continue to boost and maintain morale amongst the people that work for you. We teach flexibility and agility to our work force even in a moment when from election to election the mission becomes very, very different.

Give us a little advice as to what you have learned during this difficult time as a leader of men and women at three different embassies.

Ms. JACOBSON. Senator, thank you so much for this question. This is really very near and dear to my heart, and when you are someone as long in the tooth as I am, there is no greater privilege or pleasure than supporting the teammates who are rising up through the ranks.

So, the focus on morale and professional development has really been a hallmark of my career including during 3 years in a leadership role at the Foreign Service Institute.

It is true that we often serve in difficult conditions—war, post-war, illnesses, our families may or may not be with us—and you have to think what motivates people to join the Foreign Service in the first place, and that is a sense of service.

I come to this naturally from a military family. Both of my grandparents—my maternal grandparents—served in the British Army during World War II. My sister was married to a Navy pilot. Service is in our blood.

I think all of my classmates, all of my colleagues here, have a similar story. So keeping morale up means keeping focused on why we joined in the first place, the privilege of representing the American people overseas, and also what are the missions that we are striving to achieve.

I think one of the most important things that an ambassador does as a facilitator of the team's work is to keep that vision of the overarching goals first and foremost in everybody's mind.

If we know what we are about, if we know what we are trying to achieve, if we have organized ourselves as an interagency team, including in collaboration with Congress to keep our eye on those overarching goals and bring all the different skills and experiences and authorities and resources to achieve those goals, and we make a little bit of progress, that is what motivates people to keep doing the job even when conditions are tough. I could go on but I will stop there.

Senator MURPHY. Thank you, Ambassador.

Senator Young.

Senator YOUNG. I am almost encouraged. I want to encourage you to go on. I feel like playing some John Philip Sousa music right now.

I am such a big fan of our diplomatic corps and these interagency teams that I encounter when I travel, and I just thank all of you again for your service and your families as well. I know you make some sacrifices, and I appreciate it.

Ambassador Jacobson, our relationship with Iraq has grown stronger in recent years thanks to increased cooperation with the government. However, there is much work that still needs to be done.

Iraq still relies heavily on Iranian energy. Iranian backed militia groups are still given virtually free rein to attack U.S. service members and diplomats, and they continue to have a long way to go in terms of strong governance.

When we met you described that countering Iranian influence will require a whole of government approach within the Iraqi government. If confirmed, how will you lead a similar whole of mission approach to this challenge?

Ms. JACOBSON. Thank you for the question, Senator, and you are correct in that it requires a whole of government approach because it is an extremely complex issue.

With regards to stemming the Iranian pernicious influence in Iraq, we need to bring all of the tools to bear. With regards to the energy—energy independence—critical.

When Prime Minister Sudani was here in April he committed to having achieved energy independence from Iran by 2030, which is an ambitious goal. They do have a plan. I understand our colleague Assistant Secretary Jeff Pyatt was recently in Iraq including both Baghdad and Erbil to work on further developing that plan and there has been progress made on that plan.

I could go into details on some deals, but I will just note that this is also an opportunity for the U.S. private sector particularly to bring their innovation in reducing gas flaring, developing fields. It is really important.

I would also note on the economic front the important work being done by Treasury to modernize the banking sector in Iraq and getting it connected to the international banking system to reduce the influence that Iran can have on Iraq through the banking.

With regards to the security situation—

Senator YOUNG. Could I just interject real quickly?

Ms. JACOBSON. Yes.

Senator YOUNG. With respect to the oil and gas, our private sector partners, are they already quite active in assisting with that flaring mitigation effort that you referenced?

Ms. JACOBSON. They are already doing it, and we also hope—there was this \$27 billion deal with Total, a French firm, last year to develop Iraq's capacity, and we are hoping to see some significant American content in that eventual project as well, which we did support.

Senator YOUNG. Ambassador Jacobson, in light of your extensive experience I am going to ask you sort of a different question here. We were reminded this week that ISIS remains a threat not just in Iraq and Syria, but also here as we saw the arrest of eight ISIS affiliate Tajiks in America.

Given your background in Tajikistan with Afghanistan and across the region, what perspective will you bring to the coalition to defeat ISIS, or perhaps in how you sell this effort to the Iraqis?

Ms. JACOBSON. The defeat of terrorism in general also requires a whole of government multi-prong approach. I did follow the Tajikistan story having served there.

I think when we think about Iraq in particular we have to think about what attracts people to these terrorist organizations in the first place: The need for economic development, the need for a government that has sufficient ability to provide services to its people, so that it reduces the draw of terrorism and also reduces the influence, for example, of the Iran aligned militia groups, which are active in politics and economics as well as taking shots at us.

I should have said—I got distracted on the gas and oil—but absolutely, if confirmed I will continue the policy of using all the tools against those militia groups including the financial ones and the military ones when appropriate.

I think closing—getting to an eventual closure of the Al Hol Camp in Syria is important in this regard. It can be a recruiting ground for terrorism. There are still 19,000 Iraqis at that camp, and we will need—if I am confirmed, I will work on this, as well—both to provide better situation for those in the camp but also to bring them at a more rapid pace into Iraq for rehabilitation and reintegration.

Senator YOUNG. Ms. Gavito, Libya's political instability continues to be an albatross around the necks of European partners but a boon to human smugglers and illicit financiers.

It is a country with an enormous energy potential, as you have indicated, that is being siphoned off by elites that are likely not keen to see an East-West reunification.

You mentioned innovation. It was a point of emphasis in your opening remarks. The energy is supporting wars by our adversaries. How might you apply innovation or other efforts to seek to change that?

Ms. GAVITO. Thank you, Senator.

Libyans have been very open with U.S. interlocutors that they desire greater presence by U.S. companies, so I do think that there is great opportunity, whether it is in the areas of energy or security or infrastructure, for U.S. companies, business, with the strong cor-

porate governance cultures that they bring with them to make a positive impact on the Libyan economy.

We have also seen greater presence by U.S. companies as the security situation in Libya has stabilized—\$291 million in U.S. exports to Libya last year with much more opportunity on the horizon.

And so if confirmed, whether as a counter to the efforts by Russia to enmesh Libya in greater regional conflict or by the PRC, which currently dominates the 4G network with companies like Huawei and ZTE, we do have American businesses that can play a positive role.

Senator YOUNG. Thank you.

Chairman.

Senator MURPHY. Senator Ricketts, a second round?

Senator RICKETTS. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Ambassador Jacobson, obviously, the United States has invested a lot of blood and treasure in Iraq. Thirty-four hundred Americans died during the Iraq war.

Since 2003 we have invested \$2 trillion. We have prevented the collapse of the Iraqi government from ISIS, and obviously, we have got continuing challenges there.

Now we have got Iran backed militias that are continuing to attack U.S. troops and diplomatic facilities close to 200 times across the region since October 7, and obviously, we had the drone strike on Tower 22 in Jordan that killed three Americans there.

It seems like these attacks have subsided since the peak earlier this winter, but of course, that threat could always pick back up again. Obviously, we expect—the American people expect—that Iraq is going to protect our U.S. troops, advisers, convoys, diplomatic facilities.

If confirmed, what specific actions can you take to ensure that the government of Iraq understands its obligation to keep our people safe?

You mentioned, for example, closing the camp in Syria. Can you give me some other specific things that if you are a confirmed ambassador you can do to help keep our folks safe?

Ms. JACOBSON. Thank you for that question.

In my previous assignments as ambassador and in this one as well, if confirmed, there is nothing more important to me than the protection of American lives.

With regards to the Iran aligned militia groups which you correctly note have attacked our U.S. interests more than 170 times between the middle of October and the beginning of February and another sort of short round at the end of April, we need to bring all the tools that we have to bear on that.

I will say that Prime Minister Sudani has repeatedly condemned these attacks and has recognized publicly the commitment of the government of Iraq to protect U.S. interests including the mission, from these attacks.

But the U.S. Government also has to be prepared to respond itself, and I think it is, including by increasing sanctions, by diplomatic efforts to have other partners engage in sanctions, and to take military strikes when necessary including to degrade infra-

structure and on some occasions to actually take out the individuals who have been plotting those attacks against our interests.

If confirmed by the Senate, I would certainly engage in all the tools, the diplomatic with the government of Iraq but also with surrounding countries, allies, and partners, the financial including sanctions, ensuring that those sanctions are actually implemented and effective, and supporting the military options when required.

Senator RICKETTS. And then how can we make sure that Iraq is taking steps against the Iranian backed militia groups that are attacking Israel right now? Because that is a threat as well from Iraq.

Ms. JACOBSON. That is absolutely correct, Senator, and we most recently saw this on April 13. Not only did we see an amazing U.S. military response to those attacks, but we also saw efforts from the State Department, the Administration, and others to engage the international community to also join in additional financial pressure following that attack, and I would continue to do that kind of work if I were confirmed.

Senator RICKETTS. Great. Thanks.

I want to switch gears on you just a little bit and talk more about energy again. How Iraq that is rich in energy resources has to be dependent on Iran is just puzzling, and I know that is one of the key parts of our policy is to get them off of Iranian energy, because that is just giving money to Iran to continue to fuel the attacks on us and Israel and terrorism around the world.

And I note that in March Iraq actually extended its gas import deal with Iran for another 5 years. But in your testimony you mentioned that you will promote Iran's energy independent—Iraq's energy independence so that Iran cannot use this as a thing.

Talk to me a little bit about how this is playing with China, because Chinese firms recently won a lion's share of the licenses for oil and gas exploration in Iran.

Seems like that is kind of a double edged sword there as well. Can you just talk to me about how you think about the specific actions you can take to help get Iraq off of Iran energy, and then touch upon the Chinese firms that are winning these, and what are the pros and cons of that? What kind of threats does that provide?

Ms. JACOBSON. Thank you for that question.

There is a lot to say here so I will try to limit myself. But many of the steps that have been taken by the U.S. Government in the past are helping Iraq to achieve greater energy independence all the time.

In the recent years they have moved from 35 percent to 25 percent of their energy imported from Iran. They have increasing energy needs because their economy and their population is growing, so we all need to get ahead of that curve.

Some of the specific examples are increased connectivity with neighbors other than Iran, including the fact that by the end of the year Iraq will be the first non-GCC country connected to the GCC grid.

Its connection with Jordan went live earlier this year—its connection with Saudi. The U.S. Government is also funding a project on reforms to the electricity grid to make it more efficient, to reduce the losses.

You may know that the electricity grid is pretty much a GE project, and of course, the investment and development that American firms are doing, and we hope they will be able to do even more of.

I have always been a big proponent of promoting American business when I have been posted overseas including in Turkmenistan in the gas and oil sector and U.S. exports, for example; everywhere I have served.

With regards to China, I have also had a chance to see how China works in my previous assignments. In Tajikistan, in Ethiopia, in particular, you can see that Chinese companies come in, and they do a project.

They assign a value to that project that the country then has to pay back over time. It is really not transparent. They use mostly their own labor.

They are not doing technology or knowledge transfer to the local government, and a few years later you can see that this infrastructure is starting to crumble.

And if I were confirmed I would certainly—recognizing the investments that China is making in gas and oil but also telecoms, work with the government to help them understand the value proposition offered by American private sector ingenuity versus the debt trap diplomacy offered by the PRC.

Senator RICKETTS. Yes.

Ambassador, I think, again, you have got great experience there to be able to share with the people of Iraq based upon your previous experience about how the Chinese come in and do business that, hopefully, they will be able to benefit from your wisdom there to the benefit of their country when they are dealing with China.

So, thank you very much, Ambassador.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator MURPHY. Thank you.

Senator CRUZ.

Senator CRUZ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Ambassador Jacobson, you previously served in Tajikistan?

Ms. JACOBSON. Yes, sir.

Senator CRUZ. For what period of time?

Ms. JACOBSON. I was there from 2006 to 2009.

Senator CRUZ. I am sure you have seen the news that broke this week about eight Tajiks who came to this country illegally over the southern border, were apprehended by the Biden administration.

Ms. JACOBSON. Yes, sir.

Senator CRUZ. Were, quote/unquote, “vetted” and then were released, and they have been arrested this week because of their affiliations with ISIS-K and over concerns that they were plotting a major terror attack in the United States. In your experience how dangerous is ISIS-K?

Ms. JACOBSON. ISIS-K remains a threat both in the region to which I have been nominated and to the world and also to our homeland, and I, if confirmed, would sort of welcome the opportunity to further discuss how we can combat this sort of terrorist threat.

I am a little bit out of the loop on Tajikistan in particular, having left there 15 years ago. But of course, I still do follow it.

Senator CRUZ. How concerned should Americans be that this Administration released eight illegal aliens who are Tajiks with connections to ISIS-K?

Ms. JACOBSON. I am not privy to the intelligence or the law enforcement activity or really any of that. I have mostly read about this in the news.

But I, certainly, think it is incumbent on all of us, all the agencies of the U.S. Government, to protect our homeland, and I see—

Senator CRUZ. This is the same terrorist group that murdered 145 people in Moscow at the opera house. Came in with automatic weapons and mowed down civilians. Is that right?

Ms. JACOBSON. It is my understanding that, yes, there were Tajiks involved in that operation in Moscow.

Senator CRUZ. Well, I will say I can tell you Texans are deeply concerned that the Administration keeps releasing illegal immigrants with ties to terrorists, and we are living on borrowed time.

I believe there is a higher likelihood today of a major terrorist attack in the United States than there has been any time since September 11, and this Administration's open border with 11 million illegal immigrants coming across it is an invitation for terrorists—for Hamas, for Hezbollah, for Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and for ISIS-K—to come and murder Americans, and it is utterly indefensible.

And yet, today the Biden administration is releasing yet more illegal immigrants into this country. They do it day after day after day, and we are going to see a lot more dead bodies as a result of it.

All right. Let us shift topics. A few weeks ago Secretary Blinken appeared before this committee, and I questioned him about policy decisions made by the Biden administration which have allowed \$100 billion to flow to Iran including access to a \$10 billion pot of money involving Iraqi electricity in euros and dinars.

This money enabled the Ayatollah to fund Hamas and Hezbollah. This money funded the October 7 terrorist attack, the single worst 1 day massacre of Jews since the Holocaust.

It is right now funding Hezbollah's push to trigger a regional Middle East war all the way through this morning.

Ms. Gavito, you served for 2 years as deputy assistant secretary for Iran, Iraq, and public diplomacy. Then you became the acting principal deputy assistant secretary for Near Eastern affairs. What was your role in issuing the waivers giving Iran access to that pot of money?

Ms. GAVITO. Thank you very much, Senator.

With regard to the \$6 billion in question that—

Senator CRUZ. The \$10 billion, not the \$6 billion.

Ms. GAVITO. I am sorry.

Senator CRUZ. Not the \$6 billion in ransom. That is another problematic decision.

Ms. GAVITO. Apologies. Apologies.

With regard to the electricity waivers, I as deputy assistant secretary did not have a direct role in that particular decision. That being said, certainly was part of those discussions.

As Ambassador Jacobson has noted, the intent behind those waivers was to incentivize the Iraqi government.

Senator CRUZ. I am not asking about the intent. Did you support those waivers?

Ms. GAVITO. I was not in a decisionmaking capacity.

Senator CRUZ. Did you agree with the decision?

Ms. GAVITO. I would have to review, Senator.

Yes, I believe that incentivizing Iraq to divest itself of Iranian oil is positive.

Senator CRUZ. OK.

Ambassador Jacobson, these waivers will have to be renewed this summer, or they expire. If confirmed, would you support reissuing those waivers?

Ms. JACOBSON. So I note that those waivers have spanned at least two Administrations and been renewed 21 times since 2018, if I am not mistaken.

I take heart from the commitment of the government of Iraq to achieve energy independence by 2030.

Senator CRUZ. That is not an answer to the question. Would you support reissuing those waivers?

Ms. JACOBSON. Well, I do not think it would be up to me, and I would be more than interested in serving as part of the conversation.

Senator CRUZ. There is a consistent pattern in this Administration of giving money to theocratic lunatics who want to murder us. A hundred billion dollars to the Ayatollah Khamenei is the single most catastrophic foreign policy decision of this Administration and today this Administration continues to refuse to enforce the oil sanctions enriching the Ayatollah, funding Hamas, funding Hezbollah, funding those who are murdering Israelis and trying to murder Americans.

How does it make sense to give billions and billions of dollars to theocratic lunatics who want to kill us?

Ms. JACOBSON. Thank you for that question, Senator.

I personally am very clear eyed about the Iranian threat. I think I shared with you, and I will share with others, that I have been myself on the receiving end of Iranian death threat information including during my time in Ashgabat when President Niyazov used to remind me that the Iranians had a missile pointed at my bedroom.

With regards to the funds that are kept in restricted accounts that are overseen by the Treasury Department, that are the subject of an extensive system of safeguards, these funds will never reach the government of Iran.

These funds have to stay overseas, and they have to be used for humanitarian purposes. You could ask, "Does that not mean that it frees up money for their massive terrorism campaigns?" which, of course, are heinous, and I would argue that Iran, unfortunately, is always going to focus on destabilizing activity over supporting the humanitarian needs of its own people.

With regards to the sanctions, the Administration has not lifted any sanctions, and as far as I know it has implemented another 700 sanctions—

Senator CRUZ. But it refuses to enforce them.

My time has expired. But the results are indisputable, and Iran has gone from selling 300,000 barrels a day of oil to selling 2 million barrels of oil a day, and that is funding this war of terror against us.

Senator MURPHY. Thank you very much, Senator Cruz.

Thank you all for your testimony today. We really appreciate your—oh, Senator Booker.

Senator BOOKER. It has been a painful rivalry between Connecticut and New Jersey for a very long time.

[Laughter.]

Senator MURPHY. You are not—I swear you are not invisible to me, Senator Booker.

[Laughter.]

Senator BOOKER. We do not abut each other, but we are the tri-State area.

I appreciate the recognition, Mr. Chairman, and I just want to say to everybody assembled here the fact you are even sitting here before us reflects this commitment to country and service that should be applauded.

All of you have careers that evidence, to me, the deepest symbol of patriotism, which is the willingness to make sacrifices for your nation for the greater good.

And I add to that the fact that you are lovers of humanity, and each of you have shown a commitment to wanting to make this world a better place and recognize America's extraordinary role in it.

If I may, I want to really focus in on questions for Peter Lord, and I am fascinated about Senegal right now with the election of a very young leader. It seems to belie what is going on in that region with Burkina Faso and Mali and Niger.

This election, this sort of transfer of power and democracy, is a really hopeful sign, and it was talked about. In fact, when I was in Chad I was talking about it with their autocratic leader as an example of new young leadership coming up, and I am wondering in general how has Senegal sort of avoided this trend in the Sahel region.

What can we learn from their experiences, and how can we reinforce, really, some of the promises of this new leader and promising development elsewhere in the region?

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

Indeed, it is a hopeful sign for the West African region, which, as you noted, has experienced a number of coups.

I would say most of those coups and a lot of the instability is related to weak governance and that has not been the case in Senegal. Since its independence in 1960 its national budget spend has been focused on education and health.

We as the U.S. Government have partnered in that, and so they have had a deep tradition of focusing on citizen responsive governance. And I think what we are seeing today through democratic elections that went well and institutions that reinforced those democratic values of the Senegali people is because of those long term investments over time.

We have been a partner in that, and if confirmed, those are partnerships that I look to continue so that we can work to show that

democracy does deliver a dividend and attract other states in the region to it, as well as work with Senegal on security and diplomacy through the regional organizations to, hopefully, restore democratic governance in those countries.

Senator BOOKER. I love how you put that, right. I mean, I was just talking about this in regards to Kenya with all the democratic backsliding countries that are showing a greater commitment to democratic ideals and principles.

There should be a dividend. We should step up in some way. Senegal has maintained relationships with Israel, even though I know they are straining. It is a Muslim majority country. They are one of our significant partners. We already have the MCC there, investments from, obviously, on health initiatives and more.

I am just wondering what are ways, and I know the President is actually recommending a greater investment in the country, but I am wondering if you could for this committee, which does have some people overlapping with Appropriations as well, what are some things that we should be thinking about in terms of showing in a very strong way investments that can show and reward them for continuing to do what I believe is the right—to have the right trends?

Mr. LORD. Thank you again for your support and for that question.

I think we need to continue to invest in democracy and the country's initiatives in democracy, so increasing our spend there to reinforce the institutions but also to demonstrate that local governance—local governments deliver governments that are the closest to the people and their needs, continuing with our education and health support.

And I understand that the Millennium Challenge Corporation is in development of a regional compact that focuses on blue economy, and so working on blue economy and employment particularly for the extremely large youth population in Senegal will be—those are priorities for the new administration and I think those are investments worth our energy, our time, and our dollars in order to yield the sorts of development—

Senator BOOKER. What is the new concerns? I really want to try to get in a question for Ms. Gavito. Really quickly, just their relationships with Russia, their relationships with China—are these red flags in general? What is your strategy there?

Mr. LORD. They have diplomatic relations with both, with China is engaged very heavily economically. But fundamentally we continue to have the comparative advantage because both the United States and Senegal believe in democratic values, and that will continue to trump all the way in terms of our relationship and our comparative advantage in engaging.

Most of the new administration's policies are very much in line with things that we want to see—transparency, job creation, focusing on people's basic needs. Those are all democratic pieces.

We will, of course, have to continue to be very innovative in using our economic tools to support increased U.S. investment such as through the DFC.

I would also say as a cover—it would cover, if confirmed, Guinea-Bissau as well, that we need a larger presence there. That Russia

and China are engaging more and have presences there, and that it is important for us to increase our engagement and presence there.

Senator BOOKER. I hope to be supportive in that and in future visits.

With the indulgence of the chair, I am going over. Not as much as Ted Cruz but—

[Laughter.]

Senator MURPHY. You have not finished yet.

Senator BOOKER. That is true. This is going to be real quick. I am about to jump into the region. I will be in Greece, but one of the things I am going to be looking at is just the migration crisis in the region.

Could you just give me a really quick perspective, help educate a Senator from New Jersey about the migration issues relating from Libya and what we could be doing to help what is a crisis globally—we are seeing it at our borders—of global migration?

Ms. GAVITO. The weaponization of human migration and suffering is horrific in Libya, which currently houses approximately 700,000 asylum seekers, refugees, and other migrants.

Because of the disunification of the government and the lack of structures in place to protect the human rights of these individuals the situation is exacerbated. State and nonstate actors are responsible for much of what we see.

Additionally, we are working with the international community, the international organizations like IOM, to try to provide the Libyans with the tools that they need to better, A, secure their borders and reassert their sovereignty, but also to be in a better position to hold accountable individuals for protection of the human rights of these people.

The migration flows, as you note, are increasing; 700,000, as I understand it, across the Mediterranean last year. The situation is not getting better.

This speaks, again, across the Sahel to the importance of accountable governance, justice, and providing countries that the United States works with like Libya with the tools that they need to protect their citizens, protect migrants onsite, so that people do not take those horrifically dangerous jobs.

Senator BOOKER. I appreciate it. I am now in Cruz territory.

So I look forward to continuing this conversation. I just want to do a question for the record because there is two staffers behind one of these future ambassadors that look very young.

I just want to say for the record I am against child labor, and when I find out who those two very young looking staffers are working for I will reconsider my affirmative vote.

So thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Senator MURPHY. Thank you very much, Senator Booker.

You have five very impressive performances but the two most impressive performances are the two young men sitting behind you, Mr. Harris.

So, thank you all. A reminder of how this is a family commitment serving the United States of America, and we thank you all for your deep commitment and love for this country. We thank you for what your family and friend networks will do.

Ambassador Jacobson, thanks for inspiring us and reminding us that we owe a deep debt of gratitude to everybody who serves regardless of whether they ever sit in these seats and appear before this committee.

We are going to keep the record open until the close of business tomorrow, so we will ask you to respond to any questions that get submitted by 5 o'clock tomorrow.

And with thanks to the committee, this hearing is now adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 11:29 a.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

Additional Material Submitted for the Record

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO JENNIFER D. GAVITO BY SENATOR ROBERT MENENDEZ

Question. How has your recent role of Deputy Assistant Secretary for Iraq and Iran prepared you for Ambassadorship to the state of Libya?

Answer. The role of Deputy Assistant Secretary for Iraq and Iran uniquely prepared me for the role of Ambassador to Libya. Through it, I have experience promoting United States' national security interests in challenging security environments that can limit the breadth of our diplomatic engagement and which require special and sustained focus on the safety and security of U.S. personnel while undertaking our work. I have worked extensively with governments, like Iraq, that face significant pressure from malign actors. If confirmed, this background will help prepare me to counter Russia's attempts to deepen its foothold in Libya.

Finally, I have spent most of my 26 years in the Foreign Service, working in and on the Middle East (including as the State Department's Deputy Director for North Africa and before that as senior Libya desk officer). From that, I have a deep understanding of the regional and local dynamics that can both complicate our work and also afford us important opportunities to advance core national security interests.

Question. Based on your commitments toward our diplomatic mission to Tripoli, how will you work to strengthen U.S. presence and national security in the region while combatting the influence of U.S. foreign adversaries? I would welcome the opportunity to learn more about your posture of "long-term strategic investment" in Libya.

Answer. Libya's fragility does not impact Libya alone—it has significant consequences across the Sahel and for Europe, given Libya's strategic location on NATO's southern flank. Russia is seeking to exploit the fragmentation of Libya, which also provides opportunities for terrorist and trafficking networks. Addressing these challenges requires long-term investments leveraging the diplomatic, development, and defense tools at our disposal, including those envisioned by the Global Fragility Act (GFA). If confirmed, I would seek to increase our engagement and oversee effective implementation of our GFA strategy.

Question. The obstinance of rival governments and other key players in Libya is exacerbating the country's political impasse and obstructs plans to hold elections this year. How will you work with Libyan stakeholders and U.N. and international partners to set Libya on a path to free and fair elections?

Answer. The political impasse that has endured since Libya's failure to hold elections in December 2021 has been deeply disappointing, particularly for the Libyan people who embraced elections by registering to vote in massive numbers when last given the chance. Libyans from all parts of the country seek American leadership and support for their aspirations for more unified, effective governance. If confirmed, I would firmly support UN-led efforts both to broker a political compromise among key Libyan leaders and engage political parties and civil society throughout the country on a path toward a unified government and national elections.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
 SUBMITTED TO JENNIFER D. GAVITO BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Question. Please outline your policy priorities and objectives as the United States Ambassador to Libya.

Answer. History has proven time and again that there are real U.S. national security interests at stake in Libya. These include countering Russia's use of Libya as a platform to destabilize the Sahel and NATO's southern flank by helping Libyans reassert their sovereignty; promoting global energy security by working to stabilize Libya's economy and pressing for transparent management of oil revenues; advocating for U.S. industry solutions as a secure alternative to untrustworthy, PRC-linked vendors; preserving hard-fought counterterrorism gains to deny any opportunity for extremists to threaten U.S. citizens or interests; and reinforcing UN-led efforts to put Libya on a path to unified governance and national elections.

Question. If confirmed, how would your role as Ambassador to Libya differ from or overlap with that of the Special Envoy?

Answer. I defer to the Department for details on personnel matters or any personnel announcements. However, Ambassador Norland's work as Special Envoy has been critical to advancing our diplomatic engagement with both Libyan interlocutors and key international stakeholders. Ambassador Norland would be glad to brief you directly regarding his plans.

Question. Russia has used private military contractor personnel in Libya to increase its influence in the region. LNA leader Khalifa Haftar has also visited Moscow and met with Vladimir Putin. Media reports have also suggested Haftar is considering granting the Russian military access to bases and ports in eastern Libya. What is your assessment of the impact conflicts in Ukraine and Israel have had on foreign mercenaries' involvement in Libya?

Answer. Russia has made no secret of its ambition to deepen its foothold in Libya and use it as a base from which to further destabilize the Sahel, as well as NATO's southern flank. In doing so it shows a flagrant disregard for Libya's sovereignty and that of its neighbors. Moscow has clear interest in establishing permanent infrastructure in the region. Russia's destabilizing and cynical actions in Libya and the region exacerbate turmoil and sow chaos.

Following Prigozhin's death, the Russian Ministry of Defense has sought to subsume Wagner operations under more direct control and to formalize and expand its presence. The Russian deputy minister of defense has visited Libya five times since August 2023, and we have seen reports of Russian naval vessels delivering artillery and other military equipment to Libya. The Russian ambassador to Libya has publicly acknowledged the presence of Russian forces in Libya. Press reports indicate that there are roughly 1,800 Kremlin-backed forces currently present in Libya.

Question. What impact would a Foreign Terrorist Organization designation on the Wagner Group, or successor organizations such as the Africa Corps, have on Russia's influence in Libya? What impact would it have on stability in Libya?

Answer. The Department of State does not discuss deliberations or potential deliberations regarding designations. However, I understand that the Treasury Department already designated the Wagner Group under Executive Orders 13660 and 14024. If confirmed, I look forward to coordinating closely with Congress to ensure we promote accountability for the malign activities of the Wagner Group and other toxic foreign elements in Libya.

Question. What impact would designating Russia as a state sponsor of terrorism have on Russia's influence in Libya? What impact would it have on stability in Libya?

Answer. I understand President Biden and Secretary Blinken have determined that SST designation is not the most effective nor strongest path forward to hold Russia accountable, as it would undercut the unprecedented multilateral coordination that has made our sanctions so effective; be very challenging to reverse even in the case of peace negotiations or an end to the war; and could interfere with efforts to have Russia pay for the damage it has done, as Russian assets could be tied up in U.S. litigation. If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with Congress to leverage all available tools to hold Russia accountable for its malign activities in Libya.

Question. Given Haftar is a United States citizen, how would you use your role as Ambassador to pressure him to comply with U.S. law, if confirmed?

Answer. I understand the United States—like the U.N. and other international partners—is engaging with all key Libyan actors, including Khalifa Haftar, because of the significant roles they play in the Libyan political process. If confirmed, I would continue this broad engagement, in close coordination with UNSMIL. I would urge Khalifa Haftar, and all key Libyan political actors, to work constructively with UNSMIL to reach a political compromise to enable a peaceful transition to unified governance institutions and a viable path to elections.

If your question is related to specific law enforcement issues, I refer you to the Department of Justice.

Question. Turkish support for the GNU often relies on militias and mercenaries. Would you characterize Turkey’s involvement in Libya as consistent with U.S. policy goals?

Answer. The United States coordinates closely with Türkiye and other key regional and international partners to bolster the UN-led political process. The Turkish military intervened in Libya in support of the then-Government of National Accord in 2020, helping bring to a halt the Libyan National Army’s Wagner-supported offensive on Tripoli. The Turkish parliament has continued to renew mandates for Turkish military deployments, including most recently for a 2-year period starting from January 2. The United States supports Libyan efforts to fully implement the October 2020 cease-fire agreement, which made clear Libyans’ desire for the departure of all foreign forces, foreign fighters, and mercenaries.

Question. Political progress in Libya is stagnant, as the Government of National Unity based in Tripoli and the Libyan National Army in eastern Libya compete for political influence, resulting in a de facto east-west divide. Please outline your priorities for addressing governance and political unification in Libya.

Answer. The political impasse that has endured since Libya’s failure to hold elections in December 2021 has been deeply disappointing, particularly for the Libyan people who embraced elections by registering to vote in massive numbers when last given the chance. Libyans from all parts of the country seek American leadership and support for their aspirations for unified, effective governance. If confirmed, I would firmly support UN-led efforts to broker a political compromise between key Libyan leaders and set the country on a path toward a unified government and national elections.

Question. What levers exist to spur political progress and elections?

Answer. The United States supports the overwhelming demands of the Libyan people to choose their own leaders through free and fair elections. This will not be easy, but it is clear that broad engagement with all major political players is crucial to bring about a unified, legitimate government that can effectively reaffirm the country’s sovereignty.

The respective asset freezes and travel bans on former Qadhafi officials, family members, and Libyan actors who have impeded the political process toward elections, and other designated individuals and entities, demonstrate the international community’s resolve to promote accountability for individuals and entities who threaten Libya’s peace, security, and stability. If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with Congress, the U.S. interagency, and international partners to use all appropriate tools to hold those who subvert democracy accountable.

Question. How will you work to advance U.S. economic interests and lower existing barriers to U.S. investments without a structured government in Libya?

Answer. If confirmed, I would advance U.S. economic interests in Libya by supporting Libya’s contributions to stable global energy markets, urging Libyan decisionmakers to adopt sound macroeconomic policies and increase transparency and accountability, and promoting the interests of U.S. businesses and workers. Libyan businesses and consumers are eager to expand their partnerships with U.S. companies and purchase U.S. goods. Libya’s business climate presents many challenges, including delayed payments for U.S. firms and the difficulty of securing required letters of credit. If confirmed, I would advocate with Libyan authorities to resolve such problems to enable Libyan businesses and consumers to benefit from American innovation and to increase U.S. exports to the Libyan market.

Question. Turkey’s support for the GNU resulted in a Memorandum of Understanding on oil development in the Mediterranean, many of which overlap with other nations’ claims. Do you view this MOU as legitimate? How will you work to bridge the divide between Turkish expectations and the expectations of Greece, the US, and other regional partners?

Answer. The United States continues to urge all States to resolve maritime delimitation issues peacefully through dialogue and in accordance with international law. In general, we remain supportive of energy projects that would physically interconnect vital energy markets such as the Eastern Mediterranean and North Africa to Europe, particularly electricity interconnections that help prepare for the clean energy transition that enhances energy security and sustainability. Our longstanding belief is that resource development in the Eastern Mediterranean should promote cooperation and provide a foundation for durable energy security and economic prosperity throughout the region.

Question. The GFA of 2019 established a long-term commitment to stabilize conflict-affected areas like Libya. However, there have been efforts to restrict GFA funding for Libya, particularly from the Prevention and Stabilization Fund (PSF). What is your assessment on the progress of the administration's 10-year GFA plan for Libya? If confirmed, what next steps would you prioritize as Ambassador?

Answer. If confirmed, I would coordinate closely, and in an ongoing manner, with Congress to ensure effective implementation of the 10-year Strategy to Prevent Conflict and Promote Stability (SPCPS) in Libya. Our interagency Libya policy team has put the principles of the Global Fragility Act (GFA) at the heart of our work: 1) ensuring alignment across "3D" diplomatic, development, and defense lines of effort; 2) prioritizing partnership with Libyan actors and fellow donors; and 3) rigorously aligning all bilateral and Prevention and Stabilization Fund (PSF) budget lines with our SPCPS. Libya's fragility does not impact Libya alone—it has significant consequences across the Sahel and for Europe, given Libya's strategic location on NATO's southern flank. The fragmentation of Libya has also created vulnerabilities that Russia and other malign actors can exploit. Addressing these challenges requires long-term investments and reliable levels of both bilateral and PSF resourcing. The flexibility that the Global Fragility Act (GFA) built into PSF makes it an especially important tool for the Libyan context, particularly when combined with consistent bilateral programming aligned with the Libya SPCPS.

Question. How, if confirmed, will you go about promoting the integration of southern Libya with the northern regions, pursuant to the Biden administration's plan for Libya?

Answer. The Administration's strategy under the Global Fragility Act focuses on Libya's long-marginalized south, where malign actors take advantage of fragile local governance systems to seek safe havens for terrorist and illicit activities. This is especially crucial considering Libya's presence on NATO's southern flank and increasing instability in the Sahel. This strategy to empower civil society, strengthen governance, increase economic opportunity, and support local reconciliation in southern Libya complements U.S. efforts, alongside the U.N. and international partners, to forge a national political compromise that sets Libya on a path to free and fair elections and unified governance.

Question. In the wake of the 2012 Benghazi Attacks and the wave of conflict and violence in 2014, the Obama Administration shuttered the U.S. embassy in Tripoli. Since 2014, the U.S. has not had a full-time diplomatic presence in Libya. What security and stability conditions in Libya do you consider sufficient for U.S. diplomats to return safely on a full-time basis?

Answer. While we continue to see sporadic violence among Tripoli armed groups, the security environment has improved, and the October 2020 cease-fire has largely held. As a result, many foreign missions, including those of our strategic adversaries, have resumed their diplomatic activities in Tripoli. The U.S. decision to return to Tripoli was preceded by more than two and a half years of increasing the frequency and duration of travel into Libya to ensure that diplomatic operations are undertaken prudently and safely. There is no automaticity in this decision; if confirmed, I commit to regularly reevaluate the security situation, and consult closely with Congress at every step, to ensure our resumption of diplomatic operations in Tripoli occurs in a manner that prioritizes the safety and security of our personnel and all Americans.

Question. With a heightened global threat environment, do you have concerns about the resources available for the security needs to re-open the U.S. embassy in Tripoli?

Answer. The President's fiscal year budget request for Libya includes the funding necessary to provide sufficient security for our interim diplomatic facility. While we continue to see sporadic violence among Tripoli armed groups, the security environment has improved, and the October 2020 cease-fire has largely held. As a result, many foreign missions, including those of our strategic adversaries, have resumed

their diplomatic activities in Tripoli. The U.S. decision to return to Tripoli was preceded by more than two and a half years of increasing the frequency and duration of travel into Libya to ensure that diplomatic operations are undertaken prudently and safely. There is no automaticity in this decision; if confirmed, I commit to regularly reevaluate the security situation, and consult closely with Congress at every step, to ensure our resumption of diplomatic operations in Tripoli occurs in a manner that prioritizes the safety and security of our personnel and all Americans.

Question. In the State Department's 2023 Trafficking in Persons Report, Libya was labeled a Special Case for the 8th consecutive year because the government did not effectively govern large swaths of the Libyan territory. If confirmed, what concrete steps could you take to help Libya operationalize the prioritized recommendations contained in the TIP report?

Answer. The weaponization of human suffering that we have seen in Libya is truly horrific. The Department and the international community have routinely expressed outrage at ongoing accounts of sex and labor trafficking as well as the arbitrary detention and abuse of migrants, refugees, and asylum-seekers in Libya.

If confirmed, I would emphasize the need to implement policies and procedures to combat human trafficking, support international efforts to disrupt trafficking and smuggling networks, and improve state enforcement capacity. I would commit to working with foreign partners, international humanitarian organizations, and Libyan authorities and international humanitarian organizations to hold traffickers criminally accountable, to help prevent human rights abuses, to end arbitrary detention, and provide assistance to vulnerable populations.

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

Answer. The United States closely monitors freedom of religion or belief in Libya and around the world through the Office of International Religious Freedom. In response to reports of a restrictive social environment for religious freedom, the State Department has also supported programs in Libya designed to promote inclusivity and tolerance, and to counter hate speech. If confirmed, I would work closely with colleagues throughout the Department—including the Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom—to encourage respect for human rights, including the freedoms of religion or belief, association, and expression.

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

Answer. Yes. A strong and independent civil society is an essential part of a healthy democratic state, and civil society will play a key role in the success of national elections and transitional justice efforts in Libya. If confirmed, I commit to continuing to engage with civil society actors on the full range of human rights issues in Libya, including religious freedom. If confirmed, I would also maintain the current policy of raising human rights issues, including underscoring U.S. support for Libyan civil society actors, in meetings with senior officials.

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

Answer. The United States closely monitors freedom of religion or belief in Libya and around the world, and the State Department has also supported programs in Libya designed to promote inclusivity and tolerance, and to counter hate speech. If confirmed, I would continue the policy of advocating for respect for fair trial guarantees and the rule of law, as the United States does in countries around the world. I would also commit, if confirmed, to raise these issues at the highest levels with Libyan interlocutors.

Question. The State Department's 2023 Human Rights Report notes that U.N. Fact Finding Mission find reasonable grounds to believe state and nonstate actors committed crimes against humanity in Libya. How will you direct your embassy to work with civil society organizations to improve the human rights situation on the ground?

Answer. As the Department has noted before, the U.N. Fact Finding Mission found reasonable grounds to believe state and nonstate actors committed crimes against humanity in Libya. If confirmed, I commit to raise these issues at the highest levels as I engage with Libyan interlocutors. The team at the Libya External Office has intensified their engagement with the civil society organizations that are working to improve the dire human rights situation on the ground. If confirmed, I would continue to support and facilitate this important work, while constantly re-

viewing security conditions to ensure the safety of U.S. personnel traveling into and around Libya.

Question. Management is a key responsibility for chiefs of mission. How do you intend to create a unified mission and vision at post?

Answer. Leading the outstanding interagency team, including American and Locally Employed staff, from the Libya External Office would be the greatest privilege of my career. The unique work conditions, including the presence of some local staff inside Libya, require a unique focus on developing and maintaining a cohesive vision. If confirmed, I would use strategic planning tools such as the Integrated Country Strategy as the basis for ongoing dialogue and review among all staff and agencies to ensure the most effective advancement of U.S. national security priorities.

Question. How would you describe your management style?

Answer. My management style is predicated on the belief that high morale work environments deliver the best results for both individual employees and for the United States' national security interests. To achieve that, I strive to lead in a way that rewards bold thinking and empowers employees to take ownership of their work, that provides regular and constructive feedback so they can continue to expand and improve their skills, and that ensures all of this is done with a clear understanding of the national security imperatives that drive our activities.

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

Answer. If confirmed, my goal as Chief of Mission will be to maintain the high morale that currently exists in the Libya External Office. To do so, I will ensure a cohesive interagency team that operates with a shared understanding of the priorities of our mission. I will work in partnership with the Deputy Chief of Mission to ensure consistent and regular dialogue with all staff members, American and locally employed, about those priorities through regular meetings, town halls, and team building events. I will encourage every staff member to communicate their ideas and concerns, including those which impact their families and other members of the community, in order to improve our team environment.

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

Answer. It is never acceptable to berate subordinates. It is also entirely inconsistent with my own leadership style that focuses on strong morale delivering the best possible outcomes for the individual and for the United States.

Question. How do you envision your relationship with the deputy chief of mission?

Answer. There is no more important relationship in an Embassy than that between the Ambassador and the Deputy Chief of Mission. If confirmed, I would seek to build a seamless partnership and fully empower the DCM to act on my behalf and that of the mission whenever needed. I would rely upon the DCM to provide me with open and honest counsel and commit to doing the same. My vision of the partnership is one in which the DCM and I speak with a single, coordinated voice whether engaging external audiences or in supporting the Libya External Office team.

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

Answer. If confirmed, I envision a unified leadership team in the Libya External Office front office that speaks with one voice in promoting U.S. national security interests in Libya. While the DCM would be empowered to manage most of the internal coordination and operations, s/he also needs to participate in and be fully briefed on external engagement activities to be able to step into the role of Chargé d'affaires in the absence of the Ambassador. If confirmed, I will work with my DCM to maximize their strengths and identify the most effective areas where they can help me to lead the mission team in pursuit of U.S. national security objectives.

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

Answer. Yes, I have throughout my career prioritized providing employees with constructive feedback throughout the annual review cycle and ensured that the feedback is reflected in accurate annual employee evaluation reports. I have also throughout my career held regular meetings with both direct reports and those employees reporting to my direct reports in order to provide feedback and also to solicit

their feedback for me. If confirmed, I will continue to prioritize performance management as a key part of my responsibilities.

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

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, I would make clear to all staff my expectation that supervisors meet regularly with their employees to provide both positive and constructive feedback on performance, as well as to solicit feedback from their employees. I will also encourage all employees to draft meaningful award nominations for deserving colleagues and subordinates.

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 accomplish fully their missions?

Answer. I have spent much of my career working at or on posts with significant security challenges. In each instance, it has been my experience that both American and local staff make every effort, within security allowances, to get out as much as possible. If confirmed, I would work closely and continuously with U.S. and host nation security to ensure our colleagues undertake as much external engagement as possible in line with the oft-changing security environment. To effectively advance U.S. interests, our diplomats throughout the mission need to engage local audiences to execute, for example, commercial advocacy, support of U.S. citizens, assistance oversight, and strategic communications.

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

Answer. The decision to establish an interim facility in Tripoli, notified to Congress on March 12, was preceded by more than two and a half years of increasing the frequency and duration of travel into Libya to ensure diplomatic operations are undertaken safely. The Department has expanded the duration of travel from single-day to multi-day trips, to weeks-long visits on the full range of U.S. diplomatic, consular, and commercial interests. This month, for example, the Department sent consular officers to Benghazi to provide in-person American Citizen Services for the first time in over 50 years. Members of the Libya External Office team have in recent months traveled to Tripoli, Benghazi, and Misrata, and we have conducted necessary preparatory work to enable a future visit to Sabha, the provincial capital of a major province in the long-marginalized south. If confirmed, I would work closely with Congress to sustain and, where possible, increase the breadth and scope of our travel and accelerate our resumption of embassy operations in Tripoli, in a manner that prioritizes the safety and security of our personnel and all Americans.

Question. Congressional travel, including by members (CODELS) or staff (STAFFDELS) serve a critical oversight role. Do you pledge to support fully CODELS and STAFFDELS that seek to travel to post, including on weekends as well as local and Federal holidays?

Answer. Yes. Congressional travel is a critical tool in advancing U.S. interests overseas and I look forward, if confirmed, to supporting it whenever and wherever it can happen.

Question. Do you commit to supporting fully any CODEL or STAFFDEL, with the only exceptions for simultaneous or overlapping visits by the President or First Lady of the United States, the Vice President, or the Secretaries of State or Defense?

Answer. If confirmed, yes, I commit to supporting to the fullest extent possible any CODEL or STAFFDEL. Such visits are a critical tool in advancing U.S. national security priorities.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO JENNIFER D. GAVITO BY SENATOR CHRIS VAN HOLLEN

Question. When the Libyan Government of National Accord (GNA) signed an MOU with Türkiye “on delimitation of their maritime jurisdiction areas in the Mediterranean” in 2019, the State Department called it “provocative and unhelpful.” That MOU and a subsequent 2022 MOU signed with an eye toward joint offshore energy exploration could spark conflict in the region—with Greece in particular.

How will you confront the tensions among countries in the region concerning eastern Mediterranean gas reserves?

Answer. The United States continues to urge all States to resolve maritime delimitation issues peacefully through dialogue and in accordance with international law. In general, and if confirmed, I will remain supportive of energy projects that would physically interconnect vital energy markets such as the Eastern Mediterranean and North Africa to Europe, particularly electricity interconnections that help prepare for the clean energy transition that enhances energy security and sustainability.

Question. Will you press the GNA to abandon cooperating in Türkiye’s provocations concerning these resources?

Answer. If confirmed, I will continue to urge all States to resolve maritime delimitation issues peacefully through dialogue and in accordance with international law. Our longstanding belief is that resource development in the Eastern Mediterranean should promote cooperation and provide a foundation for durable energy security and economic prosperity throughout the region.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO JENNIFER D. GAVITO 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 (PRC) 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 CCP a threat to the United States?

Answer. Yes. In fact, in 2023, 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.” As Secretary Blinken has said, under President Xi, the CCP has become more repressive at home and more aggressive abroad. If confirmed, I will advance U.S. national security interests by countering PRC efforts to expand its problematic influence and use of coercion, through diplomatic engagements, public diplomacy, and commercial advocacy to bolster U.S.-Libya ties.

Question. Does the CCP undertake any activities that are beneficial to U.S. interests? If so, please explain.

Answer. 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 2024 Annual Threat Assessment, the CCP is seeking to “preempt challenges to its reputation and legitimacy, undercutting U.S. influence, driving wedges between Washington and its partners, and fostering global norms that favor its authoritarian system.”

Question. Do you believe that there are any areas within which the CCP that would constructively work with the United States in good faith, knowing that at any moment Chinese interlocutors with U.S. representatives could be disappeared at a moment’s notice? If so, please explain.

Answer. The United States will work with the PRC to address transnational challenges, such as climate change, when it is in the U.S. interest to do so. If confirmed, I will work with my colleagues across the U.S. interagency and Congress 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 PRC in the countries or areas in which you will work?

Answer. If confirmed, my priority will be advancing U.S. national security interests in Libya 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 interagency colleagues and Congress to address the PRC’s efforts to expand its influence in Libya and the region.

Question. As you may be aware, a group of Federal employees penned an open letter to President Biden criticizing U.S. support for Israel in the aftermath of Hamas' brutal terrorist attack on October 7, 2023. In addition, on January 16, 2024, employees from nearly two dozen agencies staged a walkout in protest of the administration's Israel policy. Efforts like these directly undermine the duty of our diplomats to advance the policies of the President of the United States. Yes or no, did you sign the letter to the President expressing opposition to the President's Israel policy?

Answer. No, I did not sign the open letter to the President.

Question. Yes or no, did you participate in the January 16, 2024, walkout?

Answer. No, I did not participate.

Question. If confirmed, would you define one of the employees or contractors operating under your supervision signing an open letter criticizing you, or policies you undertake at the instruction of the President, as insubordination as defined by the Government Accountability Office?

Answer. If confirmed, I would seek to address employee concerns personally by creating an open work environment, free of harassment, discrimination, or reprisal. I will let employees know they can feel comfortable sharing constructive criticism with me directly. I am mindful of whistleblower protections, and I value Department employees' right to free speech under the First Amendment. Moreover, I understand the expression of disagreement does not in and of itself constitute insubordination. If confirmed, I would work with the Department's Office of the Legal Adviser to determine the proper course of action should such a matter arise.

Question. In your view, are the actions these Federal employees took, by anonymously signing a letter to the President of the United States, covered as "whistleblowing"?

Answer. I am not familiar with the letter in question, but I support employees' right to express their views and strive to create a workplace environment in which employees feel comfortable raising any concerns with their supervisors and management. "Whistleblowing" is a term and activity covered by legislation and regulations; I defer to the Department's Office of the Legal Adviser to determine whether the referenced actions are considered protected whistleblowing activity.

Question. If confirmed, how will you address discipline issues, such as insubordination, that do not take established dissent channels?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to ensuring employees are aware of their chain of command and the standards of conduct required of them as Department employees.

According to Department policy, job-related insubordination is a conduct matter and may result in counseling and/or discipline, including a penalty commensurate with the scale of the offense. If confirmed, I would address conduct issues, including insubordination, in consultation with the Department's human resources and legal professionals.

Question. Have you ever expressed support for an Israeli cease-fire in Gaza?

Answer. No, I have never expressed any view on an Israeli cease-fire in Gaza or taken any other policy position on the conflict as it is not within the scope of my current work.

Question. Do you agree that Hamas is an antisemitic entity?

Answer. Yes, Hamas espouses antisemitism and was founded on an antisemitic platform. Hamas, which is designated by the United States as a foreign terrorist organization, seeks to eliminate the state of Israel, and its founding charter calls for the killing of Jews.

Question. Would a cease-fire allow these groups to reconstitute and attack Israel, and Americans, in the future?

Answer. While I do not work on this issue, I understand the United States remains committed to reaching an immediate cease-fire that secures the release of hostages and allows us to surge and sustain humanitarian aid and bolster the protection of civilians. The Administration's hope is that a more enduring peace could be built upon that. Working with partners, the U.S. Government is attempting to secure the release of all hostages held by Hamas. The United States supports Israel's right to protect itself from Hamas' terrorism consistent with international law.

Question. Do you agree that calling for a cease-fire in Gaza means calling for Israel to stop its pursuit of Hamas, a designated foreign terrorist organization, that orchestrated the October 7 attacks and still refuses to release all Israeli and American hostages?

Answer. While I do not work on this issue, I understand the United States remains committed to reaching an immediate cease-fire that secures the release of hostages and allows us to surge and sustain humanitarian aid and bolster the protection of civilians. The Administration's hope is that a more enduring peace could be built upon that. Working with partners, the U.S. Government is attempting to secure the release of all hostages held by Hamas. The U.S. Government supports Israel's right to protect itself from Hamas' terrorism consistent with international law.

Question. Do you believe that Israel, in its operation against Hamas, which is known to use civilians as human shields, is taking all necessary steps to minimize civilian casualties?

Answer. While I do not work on this issue, I understand the Administration has noted it's difficult in the heat of war to make a definitive assessment about any individual incident. However, the National Security Memorandum-20 report States the IDF has undertaken steps to implement IHL obligations for the protection of civilians in the current conflict, including the requirements related to distinction, proportionality, and precautions in attack. Israel's own concern is reflected in the fact it has a number of internal investigations underway.

Question. More than a decade has passed since the Qadhafi regime in Libya was overthrown by popular protests and subsequent NATO intervention. Since that time, Libya has become more fractured, lacks a consensus over its government or constitution, and rival security factions continue to dominate the landscape. On September 11, 2012, militants conducted a coordinated attack against two American facilities in Benghazi, Libya that resulted in the death of the U.S. Ambassador to Libya and another foreign service employee. Against this backdrop, the administration requested funding in fiscal year to support the return of a full-time U.S. diplomatic presence, but has yet to provide any related plans, security needs, costs, or alternatives. Press reporting indicates forces in eastern Libya may have had Russian assistance in shooting down a U.S. UAV and were considering granting Russian military access to air bases and ports in the east in exchange for training and assistance. In your view, what are the core U.S. national security interests in Libya?

Answer. Core U.S. national security interests in Libya include:

- Countering Russia's use of Libya as a platform to destabilize the Sahel and NATO's southern flank by helping Libyans reassert their sovereignty.
- Advocating for U.S. industry solutions and underscoring the vulnerabilities Libya faces in relying on untrustworthy PRC-linked vendors for its national security and critical infrastructure.
- Promoting global energy security (Libya possesses the world's ninth largest oil reserves and significant gas reserves) by working to stabilize Libya's economy.
- Preserving hard-fought counterterrorism gains—which include significantly degrading ISIS and al-Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghreb—to deny any opportunity for extremists to threaten U.S. citizens or interests; and
- Reinforcing UN-led efforts to put Libya on a path to unified governance and national elections.

Question. How much influence could the U.S. leverage over Libyan factions, regardless of the operating platform being in Tunis or in Libya?

Answer. Many Libyans from all parts of the country seek American leadership and support for their aspirations for unified, effective governance that respects the rights of all its people and allows civil society to operate freely and safely. Libyan businesses and consumers are eager to expand their partnerships with U.S. companies and purchase U.S. goods. While significant obstacles remain, U.S. leadership, alongside the U.N. and international partners, is key to finding a political compromise that sets Libya on a path to free and fair elections and unified governance.

Question. To your knowledge, have the Libyan factions supported or agreed that it is in their vital interest for the U.S. to return to Libya?

Answer. As I understand it, many Libyans see the United States as a neutral external actor and seek U.S. leadership and support for their aspirations for unified, effective governance that respects the rights of all its people and allows civil society to operate freely and safely. Many Libyan officials from all parts of the country, as

well as ordinary Libyan citizens, have emphasized their eagerness for the United States to restore a persistent diplomatic presence in Libya.

Question. Have the decision points which led to the departure of diplomats in Libya gone away? If so, what specific analysis or conditions show the security concerns which caused the departure no longer exist?

Answer. U.S. Embassy Tripoli operations were suspended in July 2014 following the outbreak of civil war in Libya. While we have seen sporadic violence among Tripoli armed groups, the security environment has improved, and the October 2020 cease-fire has largely held. As a result, many foreign missions, including those of some of our strategic adversaries, have resumed their diplomatic activities in Tripoli. As I understand it, the U.S. decision to return to Tripoli was preceded by more than two and a half years of increasing the frequency and duration of travel into Libya to ensure that diplomatic operations are undertaken prudently and safely.

Question. If confirmed, would you promote Libya-Israel normalization?

Answer. Normalization of relations with Israel, including through the Abraham Accords, has led to greater peace and security in the region and expanded opportunities for signatories' economic growth. The Department of State has made clear its commitment to the goal of expanding and deepening opportunities for integration represented by the Accords. If confirmed, I would reflect this commitment with Libyan interlocutors and highlight the benefits of improved regional cooperation and integration.

Question. What are Libyan actors providing, in terms of fuel, arms and support, with regard to the conflict in Sudan?

Answer. Russia, the Kremlin-backed Wagner Group, and other emerging paramilitary groups like "Africa Corps" have operated with impunity, seeking to use Libya as a platform to destabilize Sudan and other countries in sub-Saharan Africa. According to press reports, Russian actors used Libyan territory as a platform to provide military equipment, including surface-to-air missiles, to Sudan's Rapid Support Forces, helping drive the civil war. Russia is among the most toxic foreign elements in Libya and has clear interest in establishing permanent infrastructure in the region.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO JENNIFER D. GAVITO BY SENATOR JOHN BARRASSO

Question. After the deadly evacuation of U.S. diplomats in 2012 under the Obama-Biden Administration, the embassy in Libya closed. There are reports that President Biden wants the new Ambassador to Libya to return to a full-time diplomatic presence. What is the status of U.S. efforts to return U.S. diplomatic personnel to Libya on a full-time basis?

Answer. U.S. Embassy Tripoli operations were suspended in July 2014 following the outbreak of civil war, which ended after the October 2020 cease-fire. The United States is one of the only major powers without a persistent diplomatic presence. The decision to establish an interim facility in Tripoli, notified to Congress on March 12, was preceded by more than two and a half years of increasing the frequency and duration of travel into Libya to ensure diplomatic operations are undertaken safely. As I understand it, the facility, when opened, will serve as a temporary base from which to operate for longer and more frequent trips.

Question. What issues must be addressed to restore a full-time U.S. diplomatic presence in Libya?

Answer. As I understand it, the funding requested for Diplomatic Security and the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs in the President's fiscal year budget would be essential for establishing a sustained diplomatic presence in Tripoli. The Department has identified property and set aside money to fund construction of an interim facility. Fully equipping and securing the interim facility, however, will require additional diplomatic security personnel on the ground, which is contingent on fiscal year appropriations.

Question. What impact has the lack of a full-time presence in Libya had on the ability of the United States to meaningfully engage with the Libyans and understand what is happening on the ground?

Answer. Our lack of a persistent diplomatic presence risks ceding space to our strategic rivals who are based full-time in Tripoli. Russia is among the more than

40 countries currently with diplomatic missions in Tripoli, and the Russian ambassador has implemented a robust public diplomacy strategy that frequently references the absence of the United States. While the Department has increased the frequency and duration of travel into Libya, for America to understand events on the ground and advance our national security interests, our diplomats must be present on a persistent basis in order to safely and effectively fulfill our diplomatic mission.

Question. How would you characterize current U.S. relations with Libya?

Answer. The United States supports Libya's stability, independence, territorial integrity and national unity, including in the face of external interference. The United States works with the U.N. and international partners to advance a process for elections and unified governance that will enable Libya to reaffirm its sovereignty and meet the economic and humanitarian needs of the Libyan people. Many Libyans are eager for U.S. leadership, see the United States as a neutral external actor, and want greater connections to U.S. cultural and educational institutions and the private sector.

Question. Reports indicate that Russia has rapidly expanded its military presence in Libya. What is Russia's current policy objectives in Libya?

Answer. Russia has made no secret of its ambition to deepen its foothold in Libya and use it as a base from which to further destabilize the Sahel, as well as NATO's southern flank. In doing so it shows a flagrant disregard for Libya's sovereignty and that of its neighbors. Moscow has clear interest in establishing permanent infrastructure in the region. Russia's destabilizing and cynical actions in Libya and the region exacerbate turmoil and sow chaos.

Question. What is the extent of Russia's security presence in Libya?

Answer. Following Prigozhin's death, the Russian Ministry of Defense has sought to subsume Wagner operations under more direct control and to formalize and expand its presence. The Russian deputy minister of defense has visited Libya five times since August 2023, and we have seen reports of Russian naval vessels delivering artillery and other military equipment to Libya. The Russian ambassador to Libya has publicly acknowledged the presence of Russian forces in Libya. Press reports indicate that there are roughly 1,800 Kremlin-backed forces currently present in Libya.

Question. What specific role does the Wagner Group play in Libya, and what is their level of influence?

Answer. Kremlin-backed paramilitary organizations, from the Wagner Group, a transnational criminal organization, to the newer "Africa Corps," remain among the most toxic foreign elements in Libya. The Russian Ministry of Defense announced its intention to subsume the Wagner Group's operations and seeks to exploit Libya's internal divisions in pursuit of a more formal defense relationship with Libyan actors as a low-cost tool to destabilize the Sahel and NATO's southern flank. Press reports indicate that there are roughly 1,800 Kremlin-backed forces currently present in Libya.

Question. What would be your strategy to counter the growing influence of Russia in Libya?

Answer. If confirmed, I would take every opportunity to hold Russia accountable and underscore to Libyan leaders the profound risks of allowing Russia to undermine Libya's sovereignty and enmesh Libya in regional turmoil. The June 12 sanctions on Russian state-owned Goznak, which has printed more than \$1 billion worth of counterfeit Libyan currency, represent an important step in countering Russia's malign influence. Greater engagement in support of Libyan efforts to unify political, security, and economic institutions is also essential to address the underlying vulnerabilities in Libya that Russia's destabilizing behavior is seeking to exploit.

Question. How do Russian military operations in Libya affect U.S. counterterrorism efforts in the region?

Answer. Russia's destabilizing activities in Libya are perpetuating divisions and thus make it easier for terrorists to operate by undermining efforts to unify the country's counterterrorism capabilities. The United States remains committed to preserving hard-won counterterrorism gains in Libya, which include significantly degrading ISIS and al-Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghreb. Libya does not provide safe haven to terrorist organizations to carry out terrorist activities from Libyan territory; however, it continues to require assistance in ensuring that its territory is not

used for terrorist activities, particularly along Libya's southern border. Libyan security actors are willing U.S. counterterrorism partners, albeit with limited capacity.

Question. Libyan Prime Minister Abdul Hamid Dbeibah said in a China Media Group interview that "China has been objective and impartial in providing support, favoring no particular faction. It is for these positive reasons that we are here, hoping to deepen Libya's relationship with China and that of the Arab states with China." How would you characterize the current economic and political cooperation between China and Libya?

Answer. PRC-linked firms have made deep inroads into Libya's information and communications technology sector. Huawei and ZTE dominate the Libyan 4G space. PRC-linked firms in other sectors in Libya, however, have not returned to their pre-2011 levels. If confirmed, I would advocate for U.S. industry solutions and underscore the vulnerabilities Libya faces in relying on untrustworthy vendors for its national security and critical infrastructure.

Question. How has China's Belt and Road Initiative impacted Libya, and what are the long-term implications for Libyan sovereignty?

Answer. While political turmoil has made it difficult to implement the BRI in Libya, PRC-linked firms dominate Libya's 4G networks, and the PRC government is encouraging its companies to invest more heavily in Libya. The Administration has been clear that the PRC is the most consequential geopolitical challenge facing the United States. 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 Libya and the region.

Question. If confirmed, what would be your strategy to deter Chinese influence in Libya?

Answer. If confirmed, I would seek to stand up against the PRC's unfair economic practices and position U.S. companies to be front and center. I would underscore that relying on untrustworthy vendors risks undermining Libya's national security and critical infrastructure. I would work closely with the interagency and Congress to advance U.S. national security interests and counter PRC efforts to expand its problematic influence and use of coercion, through diplomatic engagements, public diplomacy, and commercial advocacy to bolster U.S.-Libya ties.

Question. How do you assess the effectiveness of current U.S. policies in addressing Chinese influence in Libya?

Answer. If confirmed, my priority will be advancing U.S. national security interests in Libya 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. To effectively do that, however, it is important that the United States is present on the ground.

Question. What impact has Chinese influence had on Libya's government?

Answer. The PRC has made significant inroads in Libya's ICT and infrastructure sectors, and PRC-based Huawei and ZTE dominate the Libyan 4G space. While China has not invested in Libya at the same levels seen before the 2011 conflict, there have recently been indications of its interest in its companies expanding their presence there.

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 2024 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. The United Nations estimates that over 500,000 people in Libya require some form of humanitarian aid. In September 2023, two dams, near the city of Derna, collapsed due to storms causing catastrophic mass flooding and destroyed a majority of the city. What is the status of recovery efforts in areas affected by flooding? What support has been provided by the U.S.?

Answer. With successful interventions, U.N. estimates of those who need assistance in Libya had been decreasing when Storm Daniel struck. The United States was the single largest donor to the U.N. flash appeal for humanitarian assistance to the people of Libya affected by devastating flooding in the northeastern part of the country. The United States, in coordination with international partners, has advocated for a unified, coordinated Libyan national mechanism to deliver humani-

tarian assistance and address reconstruction in Derna and throughout eastern Libya in a transparent and accountable manner.

Question. Given the endemic corruption and militias' influence over the government, what measures are put in place to ensure that U.S. funding is not being misdirected or misused?

Answer. The Department and USAID use a variety of monitoring and evaluation tools, which may include third-party monitoring systems like local monitors on the ground to bolster oversight of programming in Libya and ensure that we receive independent, unbiased information regarding implementation of foreign assistance programs. Over the last few years, we have significantly increased the frequency of travel by U.S. officials to Libya. We have also pressed key Libyan actors to negotiate enhanced transparency and accountability procedures for all government expenditures. Resuming our embassy operations in Tripoli will further enhance our ability to conduct monitoring and evaluation of foreign assistance programs.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO JOSHUA M. HARRIS BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Question. Please outline your policy priorities and objectives if confirmed as the United States Ambassador to Algeria.

Answer. If confirmed, I will prioritize further deepening U.S.-Algeria cooperation to advance regional peace, including through our coordination on the U.N. Security Council; advocate for expanding U.S.-Algeria trade and investment to deliver tangible benefits for the American people, while reinforcing Algeria's contributions to stable energy markets; and continue the U.S. government's dialogue with Algerian counterparts about reforms to foster inclusion, to promote freedom of expression, and to empower the vital contributions of civil society.

Question. Algeria continues a policy of "non-alignment" and maintains diplomatic, military, and economic relationships with Russia, the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the Islamic Republic of Iran. Algeria continues to purchase Russian arms exports. Do you believe Algeria is eligible for sanctions under the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA)? Describe the implications of imposing sanctions for U.S.-Algerian relations.

Answer. The Department of State has consistently engaged the Algerian government, as we do all U.S. partners and allies, on the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA), which is an important tool to address Russia's destabilizing activities globally. While Algeria has historically been a top destination for Russian arms exports, it has pursued a policy of diversification in recent years and increased purchases from non-Russian suppliers. If confirmed, I will continue to urge Algeria to avoid transactions with Russia's defense sector, which risk the imposition of sanctions, and to diversify away from Russian-origin military equipment as rapidly as possible.

Question. Russia's invasion of Ukraine has made Algeria and others reconsider their reliance on Moscow for defense needs. How can the U.S. serve as a competitive alternative to Algeria's current partners, especially given Algerian resistance to oversight of U.S. defense articles?

Answer. Algerian authorities have stated that they are committed to diversification of their defense equipment and have increased their purchases from non-Russian suppliers since CAATSA was enacted. As Deputy Assistant Secretary, I have consistently engaged Algerian officials on this topic. In 2023, the United States and Algeria held a Joint Military Dialogue that explored how the United States might contribute to meeting Algeria's defense needs and included a defense industry roundtable with commercial vendors. As Algeria continues to diversify its defense procurement, I believe the U.S. value proposition is compelling, and if confirmed, I will promote stronger trade and investment ties between the United States and Algeria, deepen diplomatic cooperation to advocate that the United States be Algeria's partner of choice, and explore how the United States can contribute to Algeria's efforts to diversify its military equipment suppliers.

Question. Please provide your assessment of Algeria-China relations and the threat they pose to U.S. economic and political interests in the region.

Answer. The PRC is currently Algeria's largest bilateral source of imports, as is the case with many African countries. PRC companies and workers have a sizable presence in Algeria and have played notable roles in the infrastructure, resource ex-

traction, and telecommunications sectors. While Algeria has economic ties with the PRC, Algeria has nonetheless also prioritized diversification of its relationships. The Administration has been clear that the PRC is the most consequential geopolitical challenge facing the United States. If confirmed, I will push back against PRC efforts to expand its problematic influence, including through robust diplomatic engagement, strong public diplomacy, and persistent commercial advocacy.

Question. To what extent do Algeria's relationships with Tehran, Moscow, and Beijing pose a threat to European security?

Answer. I take the threat Iran, the PRC, and Russia pose to U.S. interests, those of our European Allies and partners, and global security very seriously. While Algeria maintains ties with a broad range of countries, including Iran, the PRC, and Russia, Algeria has also prioritized diversification of its relationships and sought to avoid becoming overly reliant on any one partner. As Algeria makes its sovereign choices in this regard, I believe the U.S. value proposition is compelling, and if confirmed, I will promote stronger trade and investment ties between the United States and Algeria, deepen diplomatic cooperation to advocate that the United States be Algeria's partner of choice, and explore how the United States could contribute to Algeria's efforts to diversify its suppliers of military equipment.

Question. While Algeria remains protective of its economic independence, the United States is a critical economic partner. Additionally, Algeria is an important energy exporter to Europe. How will you engage with the Algerian government to lower existing barriers to U.S. investments and facilitate further trade between Washington and Algiers?

Answer. I agree that Algeria is an important commercial partner for the United States; more than 100 U.S. companies operate in Algeria, supporting U.S. jobs and economic growth across a variety of sectors. Algeria is also critical to Europe's energy security and a significant exporter of oil and gas regionally and globally, contributing to stable energy markets and increasing its oil and gas exports to Europe since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Algeria's energy sector offers significant opportunities for U.S. firms, with Chevron, Exxon, and Occidental Petroleum all signing deals for energy exploration and exportation in the past several years. If confirmed, I will work to further deepen trade and economic ties, consult with Algerian counterparts on reforms to strengthen the investment climate, advocate for U.S. businesses and commercial options, and press for the United States to occupy a leading role among Algeria's economic partners.

Question. Compared to neighboring countries, Algeria has strong border security and counterterrorism programs, which it maintains with one of the largest defense budgets in Africa. In 2023, President Tebboune more than doubled Algeria's defense budget. How can the United States work with Algeria to monitor trans-Saharan routes for drug, weapon, and human trafficking to limit illicit activity?

Answer. The Algerian government has signaled its interest in deepening counterterrorism and law enforcement cooperation with the United States to monitor and combat transnational criminal networks, particularly amid risks emanating from the Sahel. Algeria offers an important perspective and significant capabilities in responding to these trans-national threats. If confirmed, I will consult with Algerian counterparts on efforts to expand law enforcement cooperation and intensify cooperation to improve governance and security in the Sahel.

Question. What opportunities and challenges exist to engage Algeria in trilateral or multilateral constructs to strengthen border security in other countries?

Answer. Algeria has expressed strong concerns about instability and insecurity in the Sahel and interest in consulting with the United States in response to these challenges, including by seeking to improve governance in the Sahel as external actors probe for vulnerabilities. Promoting alignment with Algeria during its tenure as a non-permanent member of the U.N. Security Council through the end of 2025 is an important U.S. objective and basis for further cooperation. If confirmed, I will work closely with colleagues across the U.S. Government to deepen our partnership with Algeria to address crucial border security issues in the region.

Question. Algeria has been a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) since January 2024, a position it is set to retain through 2025. Since then, it has proposed resolutions which the U.S. has vetoed, most notably related to the Israel-Hamas conflict. If confirmed, how will you use your role as Ambassador to engage Algeria on unhelpful activity in the Security Council?

Answer. If confirmed, I will seek to continue the U.S. government's important dialogue with Algerian counterparts on regional security, including by advocating for

U.S. priorities on the U.N. Security Council during Algeria's tenure as a non-permanent member. As Deputy Assistant Secretary, I have personally engaged Algerian officials to seek closer alignment between U.S. and Algerian positions on the Security Council, including with respect to ending the fighting in Sudan and preventing Libya's enmeshment in regional conflict. On June 10, Algeria supported a U.S.-drafted U.N. Security Council resolution calling on Hamas to accept the proposal outlined by the President on May 31 and to urge its full implementation.

Question. How do Algerian and American interests overlap in the Security Council?

Answer. Algeria has an important voice at the U.N. Security Council in promoting regional de-escalation, including by supporting efforts to end fighting in Sudan, to prevent Libya's enmeshment in regional conflict, to improve security and governance in the Sahel, and to create the conditions for greater peace and security for Israelis and Palestinians alike. The United States and Algeria also seek to further expand our counterterrorism partnership as Algeria serves as the 2024–25 chair of the UNSC Counterterrorism Committee. If confirmed, I will prioritize robust diplomatic engagement with Algerian counterparts to seek further alignment on U.S. priorities at the U.N. Security Council.

Question. In the State Department's 2023 Trafficking in Persons Report, Algeria was downgraded to Tier 3 for failing to meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking and is not making a significant effort to do so. If confirmed, what concrete steps could you take to help Algeria operationalize the prioritized recommendations contained in the TIP report?

Answer. I take the challenge of countering trafficking in persons very seriously and, as Deputy Assistant Secretary, have personally engaged Algerian counterparts to urge implementation of the recommendations in the 2023 Trafficking in Persons Report. Algeria passed a new, comprehensive anti-trafficking law in May 2023 and has also increased investigations and prosecutions of alleged traffickers. If confirmed, I will continue to work U.S. interagency partners to urge that the Algerian government further improve its anti-trafficking efforts, including by proactively identifying and assisting trafficking victims.

Question. In particular how would you work with the government to improve processes to deter the trafficking of Cuban medical professionals, Chinese nationals, and North Korean workers?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with the Algerian government and interagency partners, including DHS, CBP, FBI, and the Intelligence Community, to build Algerian capacity to screen for trafficking and forced labor indicators for these populations. I will also, if confirmed, work with U.S. interagency colleagues to urge that such individuals found to be the victim of trafficking are referred by Algerian authorities for appropriate services, including in a manner consistent with obligations under U.N. Security Council resolution 2397 in the case of North Korean workers.

Question. In the State Department's 2022 International Religious Freedom report noted that non-Muslim minority religious groups faced difficulty in registering as associations, importing religious materials and obtaining visas. 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. Restrictions on religious freedom continue to be a significant human rights concern in Algeria, as the Secretary has made clear by designating Algeria since 2021 as a Special Watch List country for engaging in or tolerating severe violations of religious freedom. The Department of State has been clear regarding the inability of religious associations to register with the government, which has resulted in the closure of dozens of churches under the Protestant Church of Algeria (EPA) and the denial of their efforts to register and reopen. As Deputy Assistant Secretary, I have personally engaged the Algerian government to stress the importance of respect and equal treatment for members of all religious groups and the equal and transparent enforcement of laws governing religious organizations. If confirmed, I will continue working closely with the U.S. Ambassador-At-Large and interagency colleagues to urge that the Algerian government address the concerns identified in the annual International Religious Freedom report.

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

Answer. Yes. If confirmed, I will personally engage with Algerian civil society and a diverse array of religious actors on the importance of religious freedom. I will also,

if confirmed, maintain the frank dialogue that U.S. Embassy Algiers has had with Algerian government counterparts about the importance of promoting religious freedom.

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

Answer. The Administration has repeatedly stressed the importance of religious coexistence and the equal and transparent application of laws governing religious organizations. If confirmed, I will build upon existing dialogues between U.S. Embassy Algiers and a diverse group of religious actors and civil society organizations to align our efforts toward promoting religious freedom. If confirmed, I will also maintain frank conversations with the Algerian government on the importance of respect and equal treatment for members of all religious groups.

Question. The State Department's 2023 Human Rights Report notes that the human rights situation in Algeria deteriorated during the year due to an increased repression, notably of the freedoms of expression, press, assembly, and association. How will you direct your embassy to work with civil society organizations to improve the human rights situation on the ground?

Answer. U.S. partnerships around the world are strongest when there is respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, including in Algeria. If confirmed, I will continue the U.S. government's important dialogue with Algerian counterparts about reforms to foster inclusion, to promote freedom of expression, and to empower the vital contributions of civil society. I will also, if confirmed, ensure that employees at U.S. Embassy Algiers continue to meet regularly with civil society representatives and nongovernmental organizations to consult on efforts to promote respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Question. Management is a key responsibility for chiefs of mission. How do you intend to create a unified mission and vision at post?

Answer. I am deeply committed to supporting the American and local professional staff at U.S. Embassy Algiers, if confirmed, in forging a unified and capable mission postured to promote vital U.S. interests in Algeria. If confirmed, I would seek to offer a clear vision for U.S. goals, promote open communication, and advocate persistently in collaboration with U.S. Government partners for our agenda. In my experience, recognizing the impact of colleagues' work and ensuring professional accountability are vital to fostering a unified, high-morale mission, and if confirmed, I would strive to reflect these values in Algiers.

Question. How would you describe your management style?

Answer. As a manager, I have strived to empower subordinates to accomplish their work effectively, including by ensuring the flow of information whenever possible and supporting the professional development of my colleagues. I believe successful managers are able to build cohesive, mission-centric, and motivated inter-agency teams able to harness U.S. power effectively. If confirmed, I would seek to apply these management principles and experiences over the course of my 20-year career to service at U.S. Embassy Algiers.

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

Answer. The dedicated professionals, American and local, at U.S. Embassy Algiers already represent a high-morale and effective team advancing U.S. priorities in Algeria. If confirmed, I would seek to continue this trajectory by showcasing the crucial impact of the team's work, fostering open and collaborative communication within the mission, and advocating within the U.S. Government for the resources necessarily to fulfill our mission.

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

Answer. No. I strongly support a collegial and harassment-free work environment in which employees are able to advance U.S. priorities, develop their skills and tradecraft, and provide different perspectives without fear of reprisal.

Question. How do you envision your relationship with the deputy chief of mission?

Answer. Having previously served as Deputy Chief of Mission at the U.S. Libya External Office Tunis, I consider a collaborative partnership between the Chief of Mission and Deputy Chief of Mission to be fundamental for a successful embassy. This relationship should be characterized by mutual respect, open communication, and seamless collaboration on both internal management and external engagement. If confirmed, I will seek to reinforce the Deputy Chief of Mission's important responsibilities in the success of the U.S. Mission and prioritize that individual's profes-

sional development such that that individual is prepared for future service as a Chief of Mission.

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

Answer. If confirmed, I will seek to empower the Deputy Chief to be a full and collaborative partner in both internal management of the mission and external engagements. I will aim to learn about the Deputy Chief of Mission's experiences and priorities in collaboratively developing that individual's portfolio.

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

Answer. Yes. I strongly believe that employees should be provided timely and constructive feedback in order to further refine their skills and motivate future performance. I also believe employees should be held accountable in accordance with relevant regulations.

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

Answer. Yes. If confirmed, I will strongly support and encourage clear and direct feedback to employees at U.S. Embassy Algiers to support their professional development, improve performance where needed, and recognize their contributions.

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 accomplish fully their missions?

Answer. In my experience, the professionals of the Department of State do remarkable work each day, often in complex security environments, to promote U.S. national security, expand commercial ties, promote the well-being of U.S. citizens abroad, and ensure management excellence for our diplomatic operations. Diplomacy cannot be accomplished solely within the mission walls. If confirmed, I will encourage colleagues at U.S. Embassy Algiers to continue working creatively, collaboratively, and energetically to get outside the embassy walls to fulfill our mission.

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

Answer. During my career, I have consistently seen the skill and creativity with which U.S. diplomats engage local populations, learn about local conditions, and provide thoughtful and well-considered information to policymakers. If confirmed, I will encourage colleagues at U.S. Embassy Algiers to engage a broad range of contacts—in government, the private sector, academia, and the non-governmental community—and avail themselves of language learning opportunities to communicate where practicable with counterparts in Arabic and French.

Question. Congressional travel, including by members (CODELS) or staff (STAFFDELS) serve a critical oversight role. Do you pledge to support fully CODELS and STAFFDELS that seek to travel to post, including on weekends as well as local and Federal holidays?

Answer. Yes. I strongly support the vital contributions of CODELs and STAFFDELS and, if confirmed, will ensure that U.S. Embassy Algiers continues to provide full support for these crucial visits.

Question. Do you commit to supporting fully any CODEL or STAFFDEL, with the only exceptions for simultaneous or overlapping visits by the President or First Lady of the United States, the Vice President, or the Secretaries of State or Defense?

Answer. Yes. If confirmed, I will fully support the crucial contributions of CODELs and STAFFDELS and commit to fully supporting all such travel to Algeria.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO JOSHUA M. HARRIS BY SENATOR MARCO RUBIO

Question. In May 2022, Secretary Blinken said that the People's Republic of China (PRC) is the "only country with both the intent to reshape the international order

and, increasingly, the economic, diplomatic, military, and technological power to do it.” The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) clearly holds the reins of power in the PRC 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 its absolute control of Chinese society and industry, the CCP could stop all of these destructive actions tomorrow if it so chooses. Is the CCP an economic, diplomatic, military, and technological threat to the United States?

Answer. Yes. The Director of National Intelligence has testified that “the CCP represents both the leading and most consequential threat to U.S. national security and leadership globally.” As the CCP becomes both more repressive at home and more aggressive abroad, it is seeking to undercut U.S. influence, alliances, and partnerships. If confirmed, I will prioritize advancing U.S. national security interests and pushing back against these deeply troubling PRC efforts, including by forging closer U.S.-Algeria cooperation to advance regional peace and security, promoting expanded trade and investment between the United States and Algeria, and strengthening public diplomacy.

Question. Does the CCP undertake any activities that are beneficial to U.S. interests? If so, please explain.

Answer. Secretary Blinken has said that the CCP has become more repressive at home and more aggressive abroad, seeking to undercut U.S. influence, alliances, and partnerships. According to the Office of the Director of National Intelligence’s 2024 Annual Threat Assessment, the CCP is seeking to “preempt challenges to its reputation and legitimacy, undercutting U.S. influence, driving wedge between Washington and its partners, and fostering global norms that favor its authoritarian system.”

Question. Do you believe that there are any areas in which the CCP would constructively work with the United States in good faith, knowing that at any moment Chinese interlocutors with U.S. representatives could be disappeared? If so, please explain.

Answer. As the United States competes vigorously with the PRC, the United States may at times need to work with the PRC to address transnational challenges when it is in our interests to do so, as Secretary Blinken has made clear. If confirmed, I will work with the Department of State’s Office of China Coordination to advance U.S. objectives with respect to Algeria and to counter harmful behavior by the PRC.

Question. If confirmed, will you approve any joint activity with organizations or representatives from the PRC in the countries or areas in which you will work?

Answer. If confirmed, my priority will be advancing U.S. interests in Algeria and countering efforts by our competitors that seek to undermine those interests. The Administration has been clear that the PRC is the most consequential geopolitical challenge facing the United States. Guided by this assessment, I will, if confirmed, work closely with Department of State and interagency colleagues and Congress to address the PRC’s efforts to expand its influence in Algeria and regionally.

Question. As you may be aware, a group of Federal employees penned an open letter to President Biden criticizing U.S. support for Israel in the aftermath of Hamas’ brutal terrorist attack on October 7, 2023. In addition, employees from nearly two dozen agencies have staged walkouts in protest of the administration’s Israel policy. Efforts like these directly undermine the duty of our diplomats to advance the policies of the President of the United States. Yes or no, did you sign the letter to the President expressing opposition to the President’s Israel policy?

Answer. No.

Question. Yes or no, did you participate in the January 16, 2024 walkout?

Answer. No.

Question. If confirmed, would you define one of the employees or contractors operating under your supervision signing an open letter criticizing you, or policies you undertake at the instruction of the President, as insubordination as defined by the Government Accountability Office?

Answer. It is Department of State policy that all employees be able to express dissenting or alternative views on substantive issues of policy, in a manner which ensures serious, high-level review and response. While I do not consider signing an open letter criticizing U.S. policies to be a productive method to bring forward alternative views, I recognize the importance of and have sought over my career to promote a collegial and harassment-free work environment in which employees are able

to express disagreement and provide different perspectives without fear of reprisal. I understand the expression of disagreement does not in and of itself constitute insubordination. If confirmed, I will work with the Department's Office of the Legal Adviser to determine the proper course of action should such a matter arise.

Question. In your view, are the actions these Federal employees took, by anonymously signing a letter to the President of the United States, covered as "whistleblowing"?

Answer. While I do not consider anonymously signing a letter criticizing U.S. policies to be a constructive method to express dissent or bring forward alternative views, I strongly support a collegial and harassment-free work environment in which employees are able to express disagreement, provide different perspectives, and raise their concerns with their supervisors and management without fear of reprisal. I understand that "whistleblowing" is a specific activity covered by legislation and regulation, and I would defer to the Department's Office of the Legal Adviser for a determination on whether the referenced actions would be defined as "whistleblowing."

Question. If confirmed, how will you address discipline issues, such as insubordination, that do not take established dissent channels?

Answer. If confirmed, I will ensure employees at U.S. Embassy Algiers are aware of their chain of command and the standards of conduct required of all Department employees. I will also seek to foster a collegial and open environment in which employees are able to express disagreement and provide alternative views to their supervisors and management without fear of reprisal, and ensure relevant employees are aware of the formal dissent mechanism afforded to them. "Insubordination" is specifically defined by Department regulations as a disciplinary offense related to conduct on the job that may result in counseling or discipline, including a penalty commensurate with the scale of the offense. If confirmed, I will address any conduct issues that may arise, including insubordination, in consultation with the Department's human resources and legal professionals.

Question. Have you ever expressed support for an Israeli cease-fire in Gaza?

Answer. As Deputy Assistant Secretary responsible for North Africa, I have followed and supported U.S. policy as set by the President and the Secretary of State on such matters. That has meant that I sought to leverage U.S. partnerships in the region following the horrific Hamas attack on October 7 to secure the release of all hostages, to bring U.S. citizens and their families to safety via Egypt, to surge humanitarian assistance through all available means, to prevent the conflict from spreading, and to promote the conditions for enduring peace and security for Israelis and Palestinians alike. Following the proposal accepted by Israel and detailed by President Biden on May 31 laying out a formula for a cease-fire that would bring hostage home and ensure Israel's security, while permitting a substantial increase in humanitarian aid into Gaza, the Administration has urged regional partners to call upon Hamas to accept the deal and to urge its full implementation.

Question. Do you agree that Hamas is an antisemitic entity?

Answer. Yes. Hamas is designated by the United States as a foreign terrorist organization, seeks to eliminate the state of Israel, and is rooted in a founding charter calling for the killing of Jews.

Question. Would a cease-fire allow these groups to reconstitute and attack Israel, and Americans, in the future?

Answer. The Department of State has made clear that the unconscionable Hamas terrorist attack against Israel on October 7, 2023, cannot be repeated, that Hamas and its affiliates should not be allowed to reconstitute and threaten Israelis, Americans, or anyone else in the future, and that Israel has the right to defend itself consistent with international law. The United States is committed to reaching an immediate cease-fire that secures the release of hostages and allows for a surge in humanitarian aid and the protection of civilians. The Administration's aim is to build a more enduring cease-fire upon that, leading to enduring peace and security for Israelis and Palestinians alike.

Question. Do you agree that calling for a cease-fire in Gaza means calling for Israel to stop its pursuit of Hamas, a designated foreign terrorist organization, that orchestrated the October 7 attacks and still refuses to release all Israeli and American hostages?

Answer. The Administration has made clear that Israel has the right to defend itself consistent with international law. The President on May 31 laid out a pro-

posal, accepted by Israel, for “bring[ing] all the hostages home, ensur[ing] Israel’s security, creat[ing] a better ‘day after’ in Gaza without Hamas in power, and set[ting] the stage for a political settlement that provides a better future for Israelis and Palestinians alike.” Algeria has a crucial voice in diplomacy following the October 7 attack that aims to secure the release of all hostages, to surge humanitarian aid and protect civilians, and to promote the conditions for enduring peace and security for Israelis and Palestinians. If confirmed, I will prioritize further deepening this cooperation, including following the U.N. Security Council’s call for Hamas to accept the proposal detailed by President Biden and urge its full implementation.

Question. Do you believe that Israel, in its operation against Hamas, which is known to use civilians as human shields, is taking all necessary steps to minimize civilian casualties?

Answer. While I do not directly work on these issues and thus do not have access to all information, I understand the Administration has made clear this is a very complex and complicated battlefield, and that Hamas has a clear history of co-locating itself with civilians and civilian infrastructure. The National Security Memorandum–20 report States that the Israeli Defense Forces have undertaken steps to implement international humanitarian law obligations for the protection of civilians in the current conflict, including the requirements related to distinction, proportionality, and precautions in attack. I understand that a number of internal Israeli investigations remain ongoing, reflecting that reported incidents of IHL violations are taken seriously.

Question. Algeria enjoys warm relations with Russia and China, rejects normalization with Israel, has diplomatic ties with Iran and Syria, and petitioned to join the BRICS. Algeria is one of Russia’s top arms export clients and signed a strategic partnership with Putin in June 2023. In 2022, I called on Secretary Blinken to impose sanctions on Algeria for these purchases of Russian weapons. These sanctions have not been imposed. Algeria has also agreed to a strategic partnership with China, which includes cooperation in nuclear energy, aerospace, and petrochemicals. Algeria has agreed to infrastructure projects through China’s Belt and Road Initiative and has hosted a significant number of Chinese workers in the past. What are the main opportunities to strengthen bilateral ties?

Answer. I take the threat the PRC and Russia pose to U.S. interests and global stability very seriously. While Algeria has political, economic, and security ties with a broad range of countries, Algeria has also prioritized diversification of its relationships and sought to avoid becoming overly reliant on any one partner, including the PRC and Russia. As Algeria makes its sovereign choices in this regard, I believe the U.S. value proposition is compelling, and if confirmed, I will promote stronger trade and investment ties between the United States and Algeria, deepen diplomatic cooperation to advocate that the United States be Algeria’s partner of choice, and explore how the United States could contribute to Algeria’s efforts to diversify its suppliers of military equipment.

Question. In your view, what are the main U.S. national security interests in Algeria, besides allowing energy resources to flow to Europe?

Answer. The United States has important national security interests that continue to guide diplomacy toward Algeria. Algeria has an important voice in seeking regional peace and improving security and governance across the Sahel as malign actors probe across the region for vulnerabilities. Encouraging greater Algerian alignment with U.S. priorities in the U.N. Security Council is also a U.S. interest given Algeria’s role as the Arab voice in the council through the end of 2025. Algeria is a capable and important counterterrorism partner and the largest country in Africa with a population of almost 45 million, representing an important market for U.S. trade and investment. And as noted, Algeria continues to contribute to stable energy markets, including through its cooperation with European Allies. If confirmed, I will continue engaging with Algerian counterparts on these national security priorities and strive to further deepen cooperation and alignment between the United States and Algeria to the benefit of the American people.

Question. How would you describe Algeria’s current relationship with China?

Answer. The PRC is currently Algeria’s largest bilateral source of imports, as with many African countries. PRC companies and workers have a sizable presence in Algeria and play notable roles in the infrastructure, resource extraction, and telecommunications sectors. While Algeria has ties with a broad range of countries, including the PRC, Algeria has nonetheless also prioritized diversification of its relationships and sought to avoid becoming overly reliant on any one partner. If confirmed, I will push back against PRC efforts to expand its problematic influence, in-

cluding through robust diplomatic engagement, strong public diplomacy, and persistent commercial advocacy.

Question. How would you describe Algeria's current relationship with Russia?

Answer. Algeria's relationship with Russia dates to the Soviet era, particularly in terms of military cooperation. While Algeria has historically been a top destination for Russian arms exports, Algeria has pursued a policy of diversification in recent years and increased purchases from non-Russian partners; in 2023, the United States and Algeria held a Joint Military Dialogue that explored how the United States might contribute to meeting Algeria's defense needs in this context. Amid Russia's war against Ukraine, Algeria has consistently voiced support for the principles of the U.N. Charter, including respect for national sovereignty and territorial integrity, while contributing to stable energy supplies to Europe. If confirmed, I will work to counter Russia's malign influence by deepening bilateral U.S.-Algeria ties and promoting alignment between the United States and Algeria on regional security priorities.

Question. If confirmed, how will you handle Algeria's continued procurement of Russian arms?

Answer. The Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA) is an important tool to address Russia's destabilizing activities globally. The Department of State has consistently engaged the Algerian government on this legislation, as we do with all U.S. partners and allies as appropriate. If confirmed, I will continue this important dialogue to urge that Algeria avoid transactions with Russia's defense sector, which risk the potential imposition of sanctions, and to support Algerian efforts to diversify defense suppliers, including advocating for U.S. options as appropriate.

Question. If confirmed, would you support sanctions against Algeria under the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act given its continued significant purchases of Russian weapons?

Answer. I am committed to the full implementation of the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA), which is a crucial tool to contest Russia's destabilizing activities globally. The Department of State has consistently engaged the Algerian government on this legislation, as we do with all U.S. partners and allies as appropriate. If confirmed, I will continue to work with Department of State and interagency colleagues to closely monitor Russia's global defense trade, continue to engage Algeria on any potential transactions of concern, and support Algerian efforts to diversify defense supplies, including advocating for U.S. options as appropriate.

Question. If confirmed, how will you seek to promote religious freedom in Algeria?

Answer. As Deputy Assistant Secretary, I have personally engaged the Algerian government to stress the importance of respect and equal treatment for members of all religious groups and the equal and transparent enforcement of laws governing religious organizations. U.S. Embassy Algiers also maintains an active dialogue with the Algerian government on religious freedom and is in regular contact with a diverse group of religious leaders in Algeria. If confirmed, I will continue a frank dialogue with Algerian counterparts about the importance of promoting religious freedom and addressing the concerns identified in the annual International Religious Freedom report.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO PETER W. LORD BY SENATOR BENJAMIN L. CARDIN

Question. Ensuring that we support democracy and governance in Senegal after the tense Presidential election period is critical.

A. Is U.S. support for the International Foundation for Electoral Systems' program in Senegal scheduled to end in November? Will it be renewed? Are we allocating sufficient resources to support democracy, good governance and human rights in Senegal?

B. When are parliamentary elections in Senegal slated to take place? What steps does Senegal need to take to ensure these elections happen on time and in a permissive electoral environment? If confirmed, what role will you play in supporting credible elections?

C. What role will you play if confirmed in advancing democracy and governance within Senegal's institutions and civil society?

Answer A. USAID's election support program, which incorporates IFES, is scheduled to end in November 2024. I understand that there currently are no plans or funding to renew this award, but I will continue to support democracy, good governance, and human rights in Senegal through other programs and across the inter-agency. If confirmed, I will advocate for additional resources invested in these efforts in Senegal to help solidify the democratic transition and support the newly elected government to deliver results that match Senegalese people expectations.

Answer B. Under Senegal's parliamentary system, the Executive can initiate a process for new legislative elections when certain conditions, listed in the Constitution, have been met. I understand that new legislative elections are possible as early as September of this year, but prioritization of the fall budget process may cause a delay until early 2025.

The U.S. government's election support program has sought to build the capacity of Senegal's democratic institutions, support logistical and training requirements, and increase capabilities for domestic observation.

If confirmed, I will advocate publicly and privately for free and fair elections in Senegal and will urge continued U.S. Government support to electoral systems.

Answer C. If confirmed, I will work with the Senegal government, independent government institutions, civil society, political parties, and other key actors on strengthening democracy and governance, including but not limited to issues related to electoral reforms, combatting misinformation, judicial reform, citizen-responsive government spending, and accountability. If confirmed, I will use the United States' voice and relationship, structure U.S.-funded programs and engagement, and arrange technical assistance to achieve these aims.

Question. Guinea-Bissau has had a troubling history with democracy, with what the government described as an attempted coup in December last year—the second attempt in less than a 2-year period.

A. How would you assess stability in Guinea-Bissau?

B. What specific actions will you take if confirmed to build the capacity of civil society operating in the democracy and human rights space in Guinea-Bissau? What will you do if confirmed to press for increased respect for adherence to human rights standards and principles?

Answer A. Guinea-Bissau has suffered from weak government institutions, a poor economy, and corruption related primarily to the illicit narcotics trade all of which undermine Guinea-Bissau's stability. Its constitution can also position the presidency against the governing administration, which led to the President dismissing the legislature in December 2023, only 6 months after elections. Following the events of December 2023 and with the end of the president's term approaching, upcoming elections will be crucial to ensure future stability and development.

If confirmed, I will use all tools at the U.S. government's disposal to support stronger government institutions, counter corruption, and address transnational crime to support stability.

Answer B. If confirmed, I would use my position to advance respect for human rights in Guinea-Bissau. It will be my priority to increase U.S. engagement with Guinea-Bissau through our Liaison Office, managed out of Dakar and staffed by dedicated local employees in Bissau. This office permits the Embassy to maintain real-time awareness of developments and opportunities for engagement. If confirmed, I would travel to Guinea-Bissau frequently to engage with civil society leaders and government officials, promote U.S. values and principles, and oversee key U.S. programs that further respect for human rights and democratic governance.

Question. September will mark 1 year since the adoption of the Declaration on Atlantic Cooperation.

A. What is your understanding of the areas of actions that we have collaborated on with Senegal and Guinea Bissau to date under this partnership?

B. If confirmed, what areas of collaboration will you emphasize in each country through the partnership?

Answer A. The United States is working through the Partnership for Atlantic Cooperation to advance marine spatial planning, scientific capacity building and exchange, and sustainable blue economy, including ocean-based food security with 39 coastal Atlantic States around the Atlantic. Senegal and Guinea-Bissau have been active partners in the Atlantic Partnership since their adoption of the Declaration on Atlantic Cooperation in September 2023, attending nearly all Senior Official-level

meetings and engaging with Ambassador Lapenn at the ministerial level. Senegal and Guinea-Bissau, along with the United States, are members of the Atlantic Partnership's Food Security Steering Committee, collaborating with countries on both sides of the Atlantic to develop the scope and shape of an event in late 2024 to help expand sustainable aquaculture as a key step to elevating foods from the ocean in our shared global commitments to deliver tangible outcomes on food system transformation.

Answer B. If confirmed, I would collaborate with Senegal and Guinea-Bissau on their overlapping areas of shared interests being elevated by the Partnership for Atlantic Cooperation, including developing the blue economy, expanding scientific capacity building and exchange, with a focus on ocean observation, deepening cooperation via the Atlantic Partnership's Marine Spatial Planning Working Group, and the Food Security Steering Committee to host an Atlantic-wide event on expanding sustainable aquaculture as a key step to elevate foods from the ocean in our shared global commitments to deliver tangible outcomes on food system transformation.

Democracy and Human Rights

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 NGO's, and other members of civil society in Senegal and Guinea-Bissau? What steps will you take to pro-actively address any efforts to restrict or penalize NGO's and civil society via legal or regulatory measures should they occur?

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, I will engage with a broad range of civil society, human rights, and other nongovernment organizations and actors in order to advance our work to promote respect for democratic principles, media freedom, freedoms of peaceful assembly and expression, and government transparency and accountability. Such institutions are essential to a well-functioning democratic society. If confirmed, I will advocate in diplomatic channels, use the voice of the U.S. Government, and deploy specialized programs and assistance through the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor and in collaboration with the U.S. Agency for International Development, as appropriate, to proactively address any efforts to restrict or penalize NGO's and civil society via legal or regulatory measures should they occur.

Question. Will you and your embassy team actively engage with Senegal and Guinea-Bissau 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 Senegal & Guinea-Bissau?

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, I will regularly meet and engage with local and independent press. I will encourage my team to do the same. I will also raise with the government any efforts to control or undermine press freedom.

Question. If confirmed, 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 investment and governance, and what will you prioritize in processes to administer such assistance?

Answer. If confirmed, a high priority will be programs and engagement that strengthen democratic institutions so that they are resilient and effective in meeting the needs of Senegal's citizens. A key focus will also be improving the business climate so that U.S. programs and institutions such as Prosper Africa, AGOA, and the Development Finance Corporation have a strong base from which to work and that U.S. businesses are naturally attracted to and confident in Senegal as a destination for investment. When structured and implemented effectively, such investment yields dividends on both inclusive economic growth and good governance.

Question. What are the potential impediments you foresee in advancing democracy in Senegal and Guinea-Bissau and how do you intend to resolve them?

Answer. In Senegal, President Bassirou Diomaye Faye's election in March 2024 marked the first time in the country's history that an opposition figure was elected in the first round of voting. The Faye Administration is outlining an ambitious reform agenda to advance democracy, but a preference for political consensus and entrenched interests may impede implementation of the reform agenda. If confirmed, I will work with the Senegalese government, civil society, and other key actors on strengthening democracy, including but not limited to issues related to electoral reforms, combatting misinformation, judicial reform, citizen-responsive government spending, and accountability.

In Guinea-Bissau, government capacity is the single greatest impediment to advancing democracy. If confirmed, I will seek an increase to U.S. Government engagement, presence, and programming to support democracy as well as to enhance the government's will and capacity to respond effectively to drug trafficking, trafficking in persons, infectious diseases, and violent extremism at its frontiers or internally.

If confirmed, I will use the United States' voice and relationship, structure U.S.-funded programs and engagement, and arrange technical assistance to achieve support democratic advancement in Senegal and Guinea-Bissau.

Management & Accountability

Question. Given the importance of representing the United States' diversity abroad, if confirmed, how will you ensure that our mission's staff and programmatic plans reflect this diversity?

Answer. If confirmed, I am committed to recruiting and supporting a workforce that reflects our nation's diversity and leverages the creativity of diverse, talented groups to advance America's foreign policy priorities in Senegal and Guinea-Bissau. If confirmed, I will do this by recruiting broadly for service at post and mentoring and supporting staff at all levels and from all backgrounds. Regarding programming, if confirmed, I will integrate these practices into Mission programmatic plans to support diversity in the types of programs, the recipients of U.S. Government funds, the beneficiaries of programming, the invitees to events, and the locations of travel.

Question. As a career member of the Foreign Service, please share how your experience in various posts has prepared you to advance the agency's mission of fostering inclusive diplomacy/foreign assistance?

Answer. On the management front, I worked with a group of employees who developed a suite of bureau-wide practices, a vision statement, and new standard operating procedures for recruitment and candidate selection. On the policy front, we created a toolkit that offered posts practical ways to engage on governance, justice, and economic development issues with host governments and in collaboration with like-minded institutions. If confirmed, I will be attentive to this issue in Senegal and Guinea-Bissau pursuant to and in line with Department policies.

Question. Will you commit to using your position, if confirmed, to promote the human rights and dignity of all people in Senegal & Guinea-Bissau, no matter their race or ethnicity, religion, nationality, disability, sexual orientation or gender identity? What specifically will you do to prioritize and to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion in Senegal & Guinea-Bissau if confirmed?

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, I commit to using my position to promote respect for the human rights and dignity of all people in Senegal and Guinea-Bissau, no matter the race or ethnicity, religion, nationality, disability, sexual orientation or gender identity. If confirmed, I will support the work of Post's DEIA Council, initiatives by individual officers, and inclusion of relevant best practices in the Mission's policy, programs, and initiatives pursuant to and in line with Department policies.

Question. What challenges do LGBTQI+ people face in Senegal & Guinea-Bissau? What specifically will you commit to do to help LGBTQI+ people in Senegal & Guinea-Bissau if confirmed?

Answer. The situation for Senegal's LGBTQI+ community is dire, as members of the community are subject to pervasive prejudice; instances of violence, robbery, blackmail, and rape; and laws criminalizing consensual same-sex activity. While the government prohibits LGBTQI+ organizations from legally registering or meeting, if confirmed, I commit to regularly meeting with LGBTQI+ activists and with civil society organizations that support victims of abuse and marginalization to ensure the mission promotes rights and protections to the greatest possible extent while also ensuring we do no harm through our interventions.

The situation in Guinea-Bissau for LGBTQI+ persons is much more tolerant. Some members of the LGBTQI+ community are able to live openly, but challenges remain, such as LGBTQI+ persons confronting discrimination when seeking employment and housing. If confirmed, I will work with our Embassy team, as well as LGBTQI+ community members and organizations, to advocate respect for the human rights of all, including LGBTQI+ persons in Guinea-Bissau, while again ensuring that our actions do no harm.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO PETER W. LORD BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

U.S. Engagement and Strategic Interests

As the U.S. Ambassador to Senegal and Guinea-Bissau, your role, if confirmed, is pivotal in fostering robust bilateral relations that underscore democratic values and strategic partnerships. Understanding your approach to enhancing U.S. engagement and advancing our strategic interests in these countries is vital.

Question. What are the U.S. strategic interests in Senegal?

Answer. It is in the United States' strategic interest that Senegal is a secure, stable democracy in a volatile region and a partner that exports security and our shared values to the region. If confirmed, I will advance our partnership with Senegal to respond to transnational threats and secure its borders. It is in U.S. interests to work with Senegal to improve its democratic institutions and governance and have a business environment that is open to U.S. private sector investment and that can foster inclusive economic growth.

Question. What are the U.S. strategic interests in Guinea-Bissau?

Answer. A more stable, prosperous, and democratic Guinea-Bissau is in the U.S. national interest. If confirmed, I would use the tools at the U.S. government's disposal to support stronger government institutions, expand people-to-people ties, counter corruption, and address transnational crime to support stability. If confirmed, I would use my position and personal engagements to advance the strong partnerships that U.S. law enforcement agencies have developed with local police and judicial officials to disrupt traffickers' abilities to move narcotics through Guinea-Bissau.

Question. How do you plan to enhance our engagement with Senegal and Guinea-Bissau to demonstrate a democratic dividend and partnership with their governments?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work to build on our longstanding cooperation to advance shared security and economic objectives and further strengthen democratic governance so that Senegal is a stable and capable partner in a volatile region. I will do the same in Guinea-Bissau with the understanding that it faces significant challenges. If confirmed, I will endeavor to build on our small but invaluable democracy programming and expand our outreach and advocacy to increase commercial ties. If confirmed, it will be a priority to increase U.S. engagement with and explore increased presence in Guinea-Bissau in order to find opportunity to support stability and further our partnership while deepening the capacity of democratic institutions.

Question. Considering the rising influence of Russia and China in the region, how will you promote U.S. strategic interests while balancing Senegal and Guinea-Bissau's efforts to diversify its international partnerships?

Answer. If confirmed, I will be fully committed to advancing U.S. strategic interests in both countries, including raising instances in which other external partnerships are not in U.S. interests. In Senegal, we have a robust interagency country team, with a full range of programming to advance our shared priorities across a variety of sectors, including development assistance, security cooperation, and economic development. On Guinea-Bissau, in addition to our very capable country team for Senegal, we are fortunate to have excellent local staff in Bissau, as well as a team of three Americans based in Dakar dedicated to covering Guinea-Bissau, which allows embassy leadership to maintain real-time awareness of developments and opportunities in both countries simultaneously. If confirmed, I will travel to Guinea-Bissau frequently to engage with senior leaders, oversee key U.S. programs, lead our public engagement, and use all Embassy resources to counter our competitors' influence and engagement to undermine democracy and U.S. interests.

Question. How do you plan to support and enhance Senegal's contributions to regional stability and peacekeeping efforts, particularly in addressing transnational threats?

Answer. Senegal's long-standing tradition of exporting security through U.N. and multilateral peacekeeping missions underscores the value of continued investment in our security partnership. This includes not only the direct military-to-military cooperation that enhances the Senegalese Armed Forces' capacity and professionalism, but also programming from the INL bureau and others that equips and trains police and gendarmerie units as they prepare for peacekeeping abroad. If confirmed, I will work to ensure these avenues of cooperation are fruitful. As with peacekeeping, Sen-

egal is clear-eyed about its role in addressing the transnational threats that plague the region. We enjoy robust collaboration on issues ranging from countering violent extremism and transnational criminal organizations to breaking up drug and human trafficking networks. If confirmed, I will direct the diverse team of U.S. agencies represented at the embassy to be responsive to Senegal's assistance requests, encourage deeper cooperation on our shared national security concerns, and address any accountability issues related to behavior in multilateral deployments as they arise.

Economic Growth and Business Environment

Economic prosperity and a conducive business environment are critical for sustainable development in Senegal and Guinea-Bissau. Your insights into promoting U.S. businesses and fostering inclusive economic growth in these nations are of paramount interest.

Question. What measures will you take to promote U.S. businesses and create economic opportunities in Senegal and Guinea-Bissau?

Answer. If confirmed, I will focus on improvement of Senegal's investment climate to promote U.S. investment and strengthen bilateral trade ties. Engaging on issues related to cumbersome and unpredictable tax administration, bureaucratic hurdles, opaque public procurement, inadequate access to financing, and a rigid labor market as obstacles will attract greater U.S. investment. If confirmed, I will also prioritize anti-corruption initiatives, a shared interest of Senegal's new administration. If confirmed, I will also animate the work of post's "Deal Team" to identify, track, and conclude trade and investment opportunities for U.S. companies and leverage mission-level and Washington-based support, using tools such as DFC, U.S. EXIM, and U.S. Trade and Development Agency (USTDA) financing. In Guinea-Bissau, if confirmed, I will engage with the government on business environment related issues, such as political instability, corruption, and protection of intellectual capital, to attract U.S. investment.

Question. What initiatives will you support to improve the business climate in Senegal, making it more attractive for U.S. investors and benefiting local entrepreneurs and the broader economy?

Answer. If confirmed, I will focus on improving the business climate so that U.S. programs and institutions such as Prosper Africa and the Development Finance Corporation have a strong base from which to work and that U.S. businesses are naturally attracted to and confident in Senegal as a destination for investment. USAID's portfolio also includes a strong focus on supporting local entrepreneurs, including the agricultural sector, to create jobs and increase agricultural productivity. When structured and implemented effectively, such investment yields dividends on both inclusive economic growth and good governance. If confirmed, I would also support the continued implementation of the Millennium Challenge Corporation power sector compact, which can spur economic growth and reduce poverty, and the development of Senegal's third compact focused on the 'Blue Economy,' which will enable the sustainable development of Senegal's oceans, coasts and freshwater resources to create broad economic growth potential and opportunities for women, young people, and other vulnerable populations in the region.

Question. Considering Senegal's economic challenges and the potential benefits of oil and gas production, what role do you see for U.S. companies in supporting sustainable and inclusive economic growth in Senegal?

Answer. With Senegal's first oil production now on-line, there are increasing opportunities for U.S. firms to engage in this sector. If confirmed, I will encourage U.S. companies to support economic development in ways that support sustainable and inclusive economic growth by supporting their full understanding of the development picture in Senegal and the government's priorities for the economic growth, including noting public-private partnership opportunities as appropriate and allowable. If confirmed, I would also encourage U.S. firms to apply for Department of Commerce's advocacy services to enjoy the full backing of the United States when competing for their bids.

Question. What efforts will you pursue as Ambassador, if confirmed, to help crack down on transnational crime and corruption in Guinea-Bissau, two significant factors impacting the investment climate in the country?

Answer. Large volumes of narcotics are moved through Guinea-Bissau because of the country's limited capacity to combat trafficking. However, we have developed a strong partnership with police and judicial officials, and President Embaló has sought to deepen bilateral cooperation in this area. If confirmed, I would use my

position and personal engagements to advance the strong partnerships that U.S. law enforcement agencies have developed with local police and judicial officials to strengthen law enforcement capacity to disrupt traffickers' abilities to move narcotics through Guinea-Bissau. If confirmed, I would also continue to work with the highest levels of government, who have displayed the willingness to tackle this difficult issue head on.

Political Landscape and Governance

Navigating the political landscapes of Senegal and Guinea-Bissau requires a nuanced understanding of local dynamics and governance structures. It is vital to understand how you plan to support democratic reforms and address political challenges in these countries.

Question. Given the recent election of President Bassirou Diomaye Faye, how do you plan to navigate the new political landscape in Senegal, particularly in light of his populist and anti-establishment rhetoric?

Answer. The United States and Senegal have built a strong relationship over the last 60 years based on shared democratic principles and pragmatic cooperation focused on governance, security, and economic prosperity. While President Faye came to office promising change for the Senegalese people, there remains a strong desire to pursue respectful, responsive, and mutually beneficial international partnerships. These are the same characteristics that have defined our relationship for decades. If confirmed, I will emphasize to President Faye how continued investment in our bilateral relationship aligns with his vision for Senegal as well as that of the people of Senegal. If confirmed, I would also look to explore ways in which our strategic cooperation can evolve to intersect with emergent priorities of the Faye administration, including a welcomed focus on anti-corruption and government accountability, as well as continue to make the case for U.S. priorities should the Faye administration head in a different direction.

Question. USAID is shifting its focus in Senegal from electoral assistance to local governance and post-election initiatives. Do you support this strategy, or do you believe USAID should continue to invest in the electoral aspects of Senegal's democracy, recognizing that elections are part of an ongoing cycle?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to reviewing USAID programming to assess the advisability of any proposed changes.

Question. Given recent political turbulence, how do you plan to support Senegal's efforts to reform State institutions and promote national reconciliation?

Answer. Senegal is a young democracy—President Faye is only Senegal's fifth since independence—and while Senegal's institutions exhibited an impressive degree of resilience and discipline during recent political turbulence, there is room for continued maturation and reform. If confirmed, I will look to leverage our own experiences and expertise through people-to-people, institutional, and technical exchanges to support Senegal's governance reforms.

Question. In light of recent political unrest and security force abuses, how would you evaluate the current State of Senegal's democracy and stability, and what steps will you take to support democratic governance?

Answer. While instances of unrest prior to the election were troubling, Senegal ultimately demonstrated the strength of its democracy when civil society and the Constitutional Council helped prevent a lengthy postponement of the election, voters turned out peacefully and in large numbers, and the country witnessed another peaceful transfer of power. Senegalese citizens' belief in democracy underpins Senegal's stability. If confirmed, I would advocate for continuing or expanding our programming to strengthen democratic institutions and continuing or expanding our programs that strengthen the capacity of police and gendarmes to maintain the peace while respecting human rights.

Question. What are the critical vulnerabilities in Guinea-Bissau's fragile democracy, and how would you address them if confirmed?

Answer. Guinea-Bissau has long suffered from weak government institutions, a poor economy, and corruption related primarily to the illicit narcotics trade all of which undermine Guinea-Bissau's stability. Its constitution can also position the presidency against the governing administration, which led to the President dismissing the legislature in December 2023, only 6 months after free and fair elections. Following the events of December 2023, and with the end of the president's term approaching, upcoming elections will be crucial to ensure future stability and development. If confirmed, I will use all tools at the United States government's dis-

posal to support democratic governance and stronger government institutions and counter corruption and narco-trafficking to reinforce stability for this partner.

Security and Counterterrorism

Ensuring the security and stability of Senegal and Guinea-Bissau, particularly in the face of terrorist threats, is a top priority. It is crucial to understand your plans to bolster security cooperation and address transnational threats in these regions, if confirmed.

Question. How vulnerable do you perceive Senegal to be to terrorist attacks, and what measures will you implement to bolster security cooperation against Islamist insurgent threats from neighboring regions?

Answer. Decades of cooperation with the United States have built Senegal's security forces capable to respond to the threat of terrorism. Social cohesion, including Senegal's tradition of religious pluralism and interfaith cooperation, is an important resilience factor to violent extremism. I understand the potential for violent extremism in Senegal—particularly along the porous eastern border with Mali—remains a concern. If confirmed, I will assess the viability of a twofold approach to counterterrorism. First, continuing to partner with Senegal's security forces in detecting, deterring, and responding to potential terrorist attacks. Second, expanding our partnership with Senegalese authorities, the private sector, and civil society to prevent violent extremist organizations operating in the region from using Senegal as territory for recruitment, financing, and logistical support. If confirmed, respect for human rights will be paramount in any counter-terrorism support.

Question. What is your assessment of the current status of the Casamance conflict, and how do you anticipate President Diomaye Faye will address this issue alongside U.S. security collaboration?

Answer. Following significant breakthroughs coming out of U.S.-facilitated dialogues between the government and rebel groups, the crisis in the Casamance is far less active than it was in the past. Only a few insurgent groups remain, and violence is increasingly rare. The Casamance region is likely to be a focus of the Faye administration, and the prospect of potential new negotiations resulting in a durable peace appears to have risen due in part to Prime Minister Ousmane Sonko's connection to the region. Over the past 2 years, the USG has supported the Government of Senegal to help reintegrate ex-combatants into the surrounding communities, establishing an important model of how peace can be solidified in the Casamance. If confirmed, I will seek to harness civil-military cooperation, reintegration programs, and conflict-sensitive development to support shared U.S.-Senegal objectives for peace, stability, and economic renewal in this region.

Question. How can we further strengthen our counterterrorism cooperation with Senegal?

Answer. As counterterrorism is a threat across the Sahel and West African region, consulting with Senegal on U.S. Government efforts across the region will have a catalytic effect, ideally enlisting of like-minded nations in the region and regional organizations. If confirmed, I will assess the viability of a twofold approach to our bilateral cooperation on counter-terrorism. First, continuing to partner with Senegal's security forces in detecting, deterring, and responding to potential terrorist attacks. Second, expanding our partnership with Senegalese authorities, the private sector, and civil society to prevent violent extremist organizations operating in the region from using Senegal as territory for recruitment, financing, and logistical support. If confirmed, respect for human rights will be paramount in any counter-terrorism support.

U.S. Diplomatic Goals and Challenges

Question. How will you balance the need to protect U.S. citizens in Senegal and Guinea-Bissau while advancing our broader diplomatic goals?

Answer. Protecting U.S. citizens in Senegal and Guinea-Bissau will be my top priority. We have a robust program of American Citizen Services for U.S. citizens in both Senegal and Guinea-Bissau, and I will continue to prioritize regular outreach to American citizens in both countries, if confirmed, through regular town halls and other engagements while also working with the agencies on the country team to achieve our other policy objectives.

Question. How do you plan to enhance interagency collaboration to ensure the effectiveness of our partnerships in these countries?

Answer. The country team for Senegal and Guinea-Bissau represents strong interagency partners all of which have deep engagement with Senegal, and for some

agencies with Guinea-Bissau. If confirmed, I will ensure that the work of our interagency is complementary and aligned with U.S. interests, as necessary seeking engagement from agencies not represented at post, including through thematic working groups to tackle cross-cutting issues. For Guinea-Bissau, if confirmed, I will seek to deepen cooperation with the host government through interagency partners and programs that best meet our shared interests.

Question. What specific risks and opportunities do you see arising from Senegal's Presidential transition for U.S. interests in the region, and how do you plan to address them?

Answer. The Faye Administration's stated priority of enhancing transparency, good governance, and anti-corruption align closely with U.S. interests. Should reform take root, we could expect an improved business climate open to deeper U.S. commercial cooperation and greater efficiency for our development programming. The new administration's desire to promote African integration also presents an opportunity to leverage Senegal's role in the region to revitalize ECOWAS and promote multilateral approaches to regional security challenges. While the implications of the new government's desire for greater sovereignty remains unclear and required a clear-eyed assessment, an approach that results in renegotiating contracts or otherwise undermining the business environment could stymie U.S. business interests in Senegal and impede much-needed economic growth. If confirmed, I would advocate for U.S. interests with the Faye Administration and highlight the opportunity to advance shared objectives through deeper partnership.

Managing Relations with Guinea-Bissau

Given the unique challenges posed by the lack of a permanent U.S. diplomatic presence in Guinea-Bissau, effective engagement with local authorities is critical, particularly strategies for promoting U.S. interests and supporting democratic principles in Guinea-Bissau.

Question. What is your assessment of governance and stability in Guinea-Bissau under President Embaló, and how do you plan to engage with local authorities to support democratic principles?

Answer. President Embaló accepted his political opposition's victory at the polls in June 2023, a major milestone for Guinea-Bissau. However, following the events of December 2023, and with the end of the president's term approaching, upcoming elections will be crucial to ensure future stability and development. If confirmed, supporting free and fair elections and addressing international narcotics trafficking through Guinea-Bissau will be high priorities, as curtailing the illegal drug trade and reducing associated corruption will assist in advancing democratic principles in Guinea-Bissau. President Embaló has sought to further deepen bilateral cooperation to combat trafficking, which would build on the United States' strong partnership with police and judicial officials. If confirmed, I would also engage with sub-national authorities in order to underscore the importance of democratic principles and citizen-responsive governance.

Question. How do you intend to manage your mission in Guinea-Bissau, given the lack of a permanent U.S. diplomatic presence, to effectively promote U.S. interests?

Answer. If confirmed, I will be fully committed to advancing U.S. interests in both Guinea-Bissau and Senegal. In addition to our very capable country team for Senegal, we are fortunate to have excellent local staff in Bissau, as well as a team of three Americans based in Dakar dedicated to covering only Guinea-Bissau, which allows embassy leadership to maintain real-time awareness of developments and opportunities. If confirmed, I will also travel to Guinea-Bissau frequently to engage with senior leaders, oversee key U.S. programs, and lead our public engagement.

As Deputy Assistant Secretary, I formulated and coordinated policies in the Washington interagency, briefed and consulted with Congress on key initiatives, built coalitions among international partners to strengthen our influence, and worked with African governments and institutions to advance U.S. priorities. Specifically relevant to Guinea-Bissau, I led our work to first increase our presence and then open an embassy in Victoria, Seychelles. If confirmed, I will use this experience and background as we might consider increasing our engagement and presence in Guinea-Bissau.

Addressing MDM, Malign Interests, and Strategic Competition

Question. Countering false narratives and strategic competition is crucial for positive U.S. engagement in Senegal and Guinea-Bissau. How will you address misinformation and promote accurate narratives about U.S. involvement if confirmed?

Answer. If confirmed, I would continue to collaborate with local and U.S.-based partners to provide training for journalists and media outlets in Senegal and Guinea-Bissau on topics like journalistic ethics, investigative reporting, the role of media in a democracy, and financial sustainability for media in the 21st century. If confirmed, I would continue the robust public outreach the Embassy manages through traditional and social media channels to inform the Senegalese and Bissau-Guinean public accurately about the impact of U.S. partnership in both Senegal and Guinea-Bissau as well as to find and work with trusted local voices on key messaging priorities.

Question. What strategies will you employ, if confirmed, to counter false narratives and unfair practices by adversaries in both Senegal and Guinea-Bissau?

Answer. In general, the United States is viewed quite positively in Senegal—more so than in many countries in the region, and much more so than in countries where foreign malign influence has tampered more thoroughly with the information environment. Nevertheless, more and more Senegalese are getting their information from online news outlets, which are less likely to be staffed or edited by professionally trained journalists, and ripe for disinformation. One of the largest sources of pressure facing traditional media outlets is financial, at a time when other foreign actors are happy to pay for positive reporting on their programs in the region.

If confirmed, I would promote the work of U.S. agencies working in the information/disinformation space to promote professionalism of journalism, greater sophistication of audiences in discerning the information they learn, and use of trusted local voices as vectors for priority U.S. messages.

Question. What U.S. interests in Senegal and Guinea-Bissau do you view as vulnerable to malign actors such as Russia and China, and how would you work to strengthen our resilience if confirmed?

Answer. As the United States competes vigorously with the PRC and Russia, the United States manages this competition responsibly so that it does not veer into conflict. In Senegal, we maintain a strong, broad and mutually respectful partnership with the government and Senegalese people with whom we share democratic principles that contrast with other external partners. In Guinea-Bissau, Russia and the PRC have a more transactional relationship with the government as the country seeks to meet its acute needs, and both countries exploit our lack of a permanent presence, and possibly counter our messaging with Bissau-Guinean leadership as well as the public. If confirmed, I will work with my colleagues across the U.S. interagency and Congress to advance U.S. objectives and counter harmful behavior by the PRC and Russia, making the United States the partner of choice because of the respect, quality, and responsiveness inherent to the partnership we offer.

Question. Beyond existing U.S. maritime efforts, how should the United States engage with Senegal and Guinea-Bissau on security, illegal fishing, and transnational crime?

Answer. Under the Maritime Security and Fisheries Enforcement (Maritime SAFE) Act, the Interagency Working Group identified the Gulf of Guinea region as a Tier 1 priority for combating illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing. Additionally, Senegal is one of five priority flag states named by the Interagency Working Group. This status makes the region a key area for U.S. interagency coordination and programming, including for further increasing our reporting and understanding of the scope of the problem in the region. If confirmed, I will target new programming and trainings to increase capacity to address IUU fishing.

Trafficking in Persons

In the State Department's 2023 Trafficking in Persons Report, Senegal was upgraded to Tier 2 for increasing its efforts to combat human trafficking.

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

Answer. Senegal's increased efforts to meet the standards for an upgrade to Tier 2 resulted from respectful, pragmatic U.S. engagement on the issue, including through the annual Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report. If confirmed as Ambassador, I would continue in the tenor of that cooperation and stress in all my engagements with officials that combatting human trafficking requires sustained effort. I am aware the Government of Senegal made revisions to its institutional structure to elevate the office overseeing anti-trafficking coordination, and, if confirmed, I would look to support that office with high-level engagement. Where possible, I would look to partner with Senegal on outreach and public media campaigns to in-

crease awareness of trafficking and leverage U.S. justice sector expertise to enhance the capacity of judges, prosecutors, and law enforcement to identify and respond to trafficking crimes.

Question. In the State Department's 2023 Trafficking in Persons Report, Guinea-Bissau remained on to Tier 3 for not fully meeting the minimum requirements and not making significant efforts to do so.

If confirmed, what concrete steps could you take to help Guinea-Bissau operationalize the prioritized recommendations contained in the TIP report?

Answer. If confirmed, I will engage the highest levels of the Bissau-Guinean government to implement the recommendations detailed in the report. If confirmed, I would lead the work of the Embassy's Guinea-Bissau Liaison Office to channel resources and engagement for the benefit of Bissau-Guinean authorities. Additionally, if confirmed, I would work with my staff to increase reporting about trafficking in Guinea-Bissau to deepen the Department's understanding of the situation in the country and encourage additional ideas and resources. If confirmed, I would also warn Bissau-Guinean authorities of the potential consequences, e.g., restriction of certain U.S. assistance, if they fail to make significant efforts to meet the minimum standards.

Religious Freedom

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

Answer. Senegal is a country with a long history of religious tolerance. If confirmed, I would welcome cooperation and counsel from the Ambassador-At-Large for International Religious Freedom to work with Senegalese religious and non-religious leaders, clergy, and civil society to continue to prioritize the importance of promoting and protecting rights to freedom of religion or belief.

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

Answer. Yes.

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

Answer. If confirmed, I would meet regularly with governmental and societal leaders to gain a firsthand understanding of Senegal's strong tradition of religious tolerance. I would look to leverage religious holidays to honor all faiths. In my previous postings abroad, Ambassadors under whom I have served have often held Iftar dinners during Ramadan at which they have invited leaders of other faiths. Although Thanksgiving is a non-denominational holiday, it is a quintessential American holiday that promotes values of friendship, sharing, kindness, and family that are deeply rooted in and upheld by all religious traditions. If confirmed, I would look to occasions such as these to bring together religious actors, civil society, and government leaders at the Chief of Mission Residence to share a meal, in some cases a turkey dinner, to build community and deepen understanding among one another.

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

Answer. Guinea-Bissau has a long history of religious tolerance, and, if confirmed, I would work to strengthen that legacy by meeting with religious leaders while in the country, engaging with civil society, and promoting through public events the values of friendship, sharing, kindness and family that are deeply rooted in and upheld by all religious traditions.

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

Answer. Yes.

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

Answer. If confirmed, I would meet regularly with governmental and societal leaders to gain a firsthand understanding of religious dynamics in Guinea-Bissau. If confirmed, I would look to leverage certain religious holidays to honor all faiths and promote the shared values of mutual respect and respect for rights to freedom of religion or belief. In addition, if confirmed, I would use the convening power of the

USG to advance inter-religious dialogue, which helps to increase social support for religious freedom.

Human Rights

Question. In the State Department's 2023 Human Rights Report, Senegal was noted to continue to have significant human rights abuses.

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

Answer. If confirmed, I would direct the Embassy's Political Section and USAID to continue and increase up engagement with local human rights organizations and increase reporting to shape Department understanding on this priority. Furthermore, if confirmed, I would welcome the opportunity to work with the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, to leverage their expertise and work with my staff to obtain Department funding designed to support human rights organizations in Senegal. If confirmed, I would also require the integration of human rights into all training for security sector professionals and raise accountability issues with the government, including of security forces deployed to multilateral missions.

Question. In the State Department's 2023 Human Rights Report, Guinea-Bissau was noted to continue to have significant human rights abuses and the government did not take credible steps to identify and punish officials who may have committed human rights abuses.

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

Answer. If confirmed, I would direct the Embassy's Guinea-Bissau Liaison Office to ramp up its engagement with local human rights organizations and increase reporting to shape Department understanding on this priority. Furthermore, if confirmed, I would welcome the opportunity to work with the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, to leverage their expertise and work with my staff to obtain Department funding designed to support human rights organizations in Guinea-Bissau. If confirmed, I would also require the integration of human rights into all training for security sector professionals.

UN Peacekeeping

Question. According to the United Nations, Senegal has 40 cases of allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse by their U.N. Peacekeepers dating back to 2015.

If confirmed, how will you engage with the Senegalese government to ensure that these 40 allegations are properly investigated and addressed?

Answer. The allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse are a stain on Senegal's otherwise honorable history of service and sacrifice during peacekeeping missions abroad. If confirmed, I would advocate with senior government officials for a thorough investigation into these allegations and appropriate accountability.

State Management and Oversight

Question. Management is a key responsibility for chiefs of mission. How do you intend to create a unified mission and vision at post?

Answer. If confirmed, I would be leading a U.S. Government team comprised of personnel from multiple agencies. Creating a unified mission and vision will require ensuring all agencies and offices understand the Mission's goals and objectives, which I plan to develop in a collaborative fashion, and discussing together operational plans and tradeoffs as necessary to ensure that work is complimentary and mutually reinforcing. Continual communication across all levels of the Mission is essential, including through weekly Country Team meetings, weekly meetings with agency leaders that include the Deputy Chief of Mission to discuss programs and events, and mission-wide participation in the Integrated Country Strategy and Mission Resource Request planning cycles, and thematic working groups. If confirmed, under my leadership, Mission Dakar would review our goals and achievements as we update our Integrated Country Strategy, which is useful tool to keep all agency activity in-line with our mission goals.

Question. How would you describe your management style?

Answer. As a manager, I want people to love their work and will do everything in my power to support that aim. If confirmed, I would lead and manage Mission Dakar in way that empowers employees at all levels, offers professional development opportunities, supports innovation and engagement generated at all levels, and ensures the efficiency and effectiveness of U.S. Government resources. If confirmed, I would meet regularly with employees of all levels, developing personal relationships to facilitate these aims. If confirmed, I would prioritize an interagency,

team-oriented approach through formal structures, like Country Team, and through ad hoc and informal groupings, such as thematic working groups. If confirmed, the Deputy Chief of Mission and I would be attentive to workplace issues and seek to create an environment free from bullying, harassment, and discrimination.

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

Answer. If confirmed, I plan to focus on morale in the workplace and in the community. In the workplace, I want all staff—Americans and Locally Employed Staff—to have direction and the necessary resources to do their work, to feel empowered and supported, to understand how their work fits into the embassy's mission and achievement of Department goals, and to benefit from professional development. In the community, if confirmed, I will be attentive to the needs of the Eligible Family Members, supporting employment, quality education, and activities that bring the community together as well as addressing concerns about specific issues or situations as they arise.

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

Answer. Never.

Question. How do you envision your relationship with the deputy chief of mission?

Answer. Having twice served as a Deputy Chief of Mission, I think the Ambassador and Deputy Chief of Mission should be a unified leadership and a management team of the Mission. If confirmed, I would prioritize developing a relationship with the DCM that is characterized by two-way open and frank communication, mutual respect, division of labor as appropriate, and empowerment. I want my Deputy Chief of Mission to be effective, happy in this key Mission role, and ready to serve at the next level upon departure.

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 a challenging and rewarding role and arguably one of the most difficult positions at post. If confirmed, as I lead the mission, I plan to fully partner with the DCM on development and execution of strategies, policies, programs, and processes to ensure that the Mission is delivering on objectives, ensuring oversight and accountability of resources, and providing for the development needs of staff and the morale of the community. If confirmed, I will include the DCM in all key meetings and activities with foreign government officials, internal to the Mission, and with Washington. In addition to the internal management oversight and mentoring responsibilities formally designated to the DCM, I would discuss with the DCM policies and programs of personal interest to ensure significant external opportunities for professional development and satisfaction. If confirmed, I would want the DCM to enjoy the role as much as possible and to grow as a professional to succeed at the next level.

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

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

Answer. Yes. I take the responsibility to provide employees with accurate, constructive feedback on their performances very seriously. I want employees to develop professionally and have throughout my career provided feedback on areas of improvement to this end. I want employees to be rewarded for their achievements and have throughout my career nominated those deserving for awards. If confirmed, I will continue these practices and encourage all managers who work for me to do the same.

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

Answer. Yes.

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

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

Answer. I agree that it is imperative that U.S. diplomats get outside of our embassy walls to accomplish fully our mission overseas. If confirmed, I will support and encourage all staff to engage broadly with a broad range of actors in Senegal and Guinea-Bissau.

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 and mentor employees on developing innovative ways to engage frequently and broadly at levels of society in Senegal and Guinea-Bissau. To do so, if confirmed, I will prioritize making the necessary resources available—including for security and representation—to do the best of my ability so that staff are able to cultivate contacts, engage broadly, and promote mission goals.

Question. Congressional travel, including by members (CODELS) or staff (STAFFDELS) serve a critical oversight role.

Do you pledge to support fully CODELS and STAFFDELS that seek to travel to post, including on weekends as well as local and Federal holidays?

Answer. Yes.

Question. Do you commit to supporting fully any CODEL or STAFFDEL, with the only exceptions for simultaneous or overlapping visits by the President or First Lady of the United States, the Vice President, or the Secretaries of State or Defense?

Answer. Yes.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO PETER W. LORD BY SENATOR ROBERT MENENDEZ

Question. How has your recent role of Deputy Assistant Secretary for East Africa, Sudan, and South Sudan prepared you for Ambassadorship to the Republic of Senegal and the Republic of Guinea-Bissau, respectively?

Answer. As Deputy Assistant Secretary, I formulated and coordinated policies in the Washington interagency, briefed and consulted with Congress on key initiatives, built coalitions among international partners to strengthen our influence, and worked with African governments and institutions to advance U.S. priorities and values, all of which will be essential to achieve our goals in Senegal, Guinea-Bissau, and West Africa. Specifically relevant to Guinea-Bissau, I led our work to first increase our presence and then open an embassy in Victoria, Seychelles. If confirmed, I will use this experience and background as we might consider increasing our engagement and presence in Guinea-Bissau. Specifically relevant to Senegal and the Sahel, I was extensively involved in our work with East African governments and institutions, which resulted in an end to the conflict in northern Ethiopia. If confirmed, I will bring important lessons learned to our work in West Africa to use the full range of diplomatic, information, security, and assistance tools to address democratic backsliding, promote stability, and counter terrorism.

Question. Based on your commitment to the realization of good governance and the promotion of human rights and democracy in Senegal, how will you build upon the work of your predecessor to reach such efforts?

Answer. As witnessed in the most recent Presidential elections, the Senegalese people are deeply proud of their strong democratic tradition and generally committed to tolerance; respect for human rights; and an open, inclusive society. Related, U.S. development programs are helping address some of Senegal's greatest socioeconomic challenges by improving social services, stimulating growth, and fostering job creation. Our security cooperation is building police and gendarme capacity and helping Senegal bolster its border security, a critical objective given instability and violent extremism in the Sahel. The new Senegalese administration has indicated a strong commitment to accountability and transparency, values that align with our own and could provide opportunity for deeper partnership. If confirmed, I will seek to leverage Senegal's own democratic values and traditions; use U.S. assistance for good governance, human rights, and democracy; meet regularly with civil society organizations; and lend the support and voice of the United States to further strengthen transparent and accountable governance that respects human rights.

Question. In your testimony, you expressed your commitment to deepening U.S.-Guinea-Bissau collaboration on national security issues. I would welcome the oppor-

tunity to learn more about your view of U.S.-Guinea-Bissau engagement predicated on “the importance of democratic principles and collective action against transnational threats.” What does this phrase mean and look like to you, in more detail?

Answer. The illicit shipment of narcotics passing through Guinea-Bissau is a key transnational threat. Large volumes of narcotics continue to move through Guinea-Bissau because of the country’s limited capacity to combat trafficking. However, we have developed a strong partnership with police and judicial officials, and President Embaló has sought to deepen bilateral cooperation in this area. Narcotics trafficking remains an enormous challenge, but there appears to be political will to address it, giving us an opportunity to make a meaningful impact through increased partnership. Bissau-Guinean leaders have consistently told us that they want greater U.S. partnership, and the country is in the process of opening an embassy in Washington, DC, anticipated in 2024.

If confirmed, I would use my standing as the U.S. Ambassador to Guinea-Bissau to advance and solidify democratic principles, including by encouraging further free and fair elections. I will look to expand on recent positive cooperation we have had with Guinea-Bissau in multilateral institutions. If confirmed, I will prioritize engagement with Guinea-Bissau through our Liaison Office, managed out of Dakar and staffed by dedicated local employees in Bissau, which enables the Embassy to maintain real-time awareness of developments and opportunities for engagement. If confirmed, I would also travel to Guinea-Bissau frequently to engage with senior leaders, oversee key U.S. programs, promote our bilateral cooperation, and lead our public engagement.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO PETER W. LORD BY SENATOR MARCO RUBIO

Question. In May 2022, Secretary Blinken said that the People’s Republic of China (PRC) is the “only country with both the intent to reshape the international order and, increasingly, the economic, diplomatic, military, and technological power to do it.” The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) clearly holds the reins of power in the PRC 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 its absolute control of Chinese society and industry, the CCP could stop all of these destructive actions tomorrow if it so chooses. Is the CCP an economic, diplomatic, military, and technological threat to the United States?

Answer. Last 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.” As Secretary Blinken has said, 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 efforts of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) to expand its problematic influence, through robust and forthright diplomatic engagements, public diplomacy, and commercial advocacy to bolster U.S.-Senegal and U.S.-Guinea-Bissau ties.

Question. Does the CCP undertake any activities that are beneficial to U.S. interests? If so, please explain.

Answer. As Secretary Blinken has said, under President Xi, the CCP has become more repressive at home and more aggressive abroad. According to the Office of the Director of National Intelligence’s 2024 Annual Threat Assessment, the CCP is seeking to “preempt challenges to its reputation and legitimacy, undercutting U.S. influence, driving wedges between Washington and its partners, and fostering global norms that favor its authoritarian system.”

Question. Do you believe that there are any areas in which the CCP would constructively work with the United States in good faith, knowing that at any moment Chinese interlocutors with U.S. representatives could be disappeared? If so, please explain.

Answer. As the United States competes vigorously with the PRC, the United States manages this competition responsibly so that it does not veer into conflict. If confirmed, I will work with my colleagues across the U.S. interagency and Congress 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 PRC in the countries or areas in which you will work?

Answer. If confirmed, my priority will be advancing U.S. national security interests in Senegal and Guinea-Bissau 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 Senegal, Guinea-Bissau, and the region.

Question. As you may be aware, a group of Federal employees penned an open letter to President Biden criticizing U.S. support for Israel in the aftermath of Hamas' brutal terrorist attack on October 7, 2023. In addition, employees from nearly two dozen agencies have staged walkouts in protest of the administration's Israel policy. Efforts like these directly undermine the duty of our diplomats to advance the policies of the President of the United States. Yes or no, did you sign the letter to the President expressing opposition to the President's Israel policy?

Answer. No.

Question. Yes or no, did you participate in the January 16, 2024 walkout?

Answer. No.

Question. If confirmed, would you define one of the employees or contractors operating under your supervision signing an open letter criticizing you, or policies you undertake at the instruction of the President, as insubordination as defined by the Government Accountability Office?

Answer. If confirmed, I plan to create an environment of trust in which personnel are able to express opinions and to use dissent channels and understand the importance of constructive dissent. Should such a matter arise, I would work with the Department's Office of the Legal Adviser and Bureau of Global Talent Management, as appropriate, to determine the proper course of action.

Question. In your view, are the actions these Federal employees took, by anonymously signing a letter to the President of the United States, covered as "whistleblowing"?

Answer. I believe these employees were expressing a dissenting view to their leadership. I support employees' right to express their views and hope that employees feel confident to directly raise their concerns with their supervisors and management without fear of reprisal. "Whistleblowing" is a term and activity covered by Federal legislation and regulations; I defer to the Department's Office of the Legal Adviser to determine whether the referenced actions are considered protected whistleblowing activity.

Question. If confirmed, how will you address discipline issues, such as insubordination, that do not take established dissent channels?

Answer. If confirmed, I would address discipline issues, including insubordination, in accordance with Department procedures and by seeking guidance, including from the Management Support Unit. I would document the conduct and provide counseling to the employee, offering opportunity for improvement. If continued violations occur, disciplinary measures would be taken consistent with personnel policies.

Question. Have you ever expressed support for an Israeli cease-fire in Gaza?

Answer. No, I have not expressed support for an Israeli cease-fire in Gaza. I understand the Administration has expressed support for an immediate cease-fire to secure the release of hostages, surge the delivery of humanitarian aid to those in need, allow for the return of civilians to their homes, and ultimately bring a lasting calm.

Question. Do you agree that Hamas is an antisemitic entity?

Answer. Yes, Hamas espouses antisemitism. Hamas, which is designated by the United States as a foreign terrorist organization, seeks to eliminate the State of Israel, and its founding charter calls for the killing of Jews.

Question. Would a cease-fire allow these groups to reconstitute and attack Israel, and Americans, in the future?

Answer. The United States remains committed to reaching a deal for an immediate cease-fire that secures the release of hostages and allows us to surge and sustain humanitarian aid and bolster the protection of civilians. The Administration's hope is that a more enduring peace could be built upon that. Working with partners,

the U.S. Government is attempting to secure the release of all hostages held by Hamas. The U.S. Government supports Israel's right to protect itself from Hamas' terrorism consistent with international law.

Question. Do you agree that calling for a cease-fire in Gaza means calling for Israel to stop its pursuit of Hamas, a designated foreign terrorist organization, that orchestrated the October 7 attacks and still refuses to release all Israeli and American hostages?

Answer. The United States remains committed to reaching a deal for an immediate cease-fire that secures the release of hostages and allows us to surge and sustain humanitarian aid and bolster the protection of civilians. The Administration's hope is that a more enduring peace could be built upon that. Working with partners, the U.S. Government is attempting to secure the release of all hostages held by Hamas. The U.S. Government supports Israel's right to protect itself from Hamas' terrorism consistent with international law.

Question. Do you believe that Israel, in its operation against Hamas, which is known to use civilians as human shields, is taking all necessary steps to minimize civilian casualties?

Answer. It's very difficult in the heat of war to make a definitive assessment about any individual incident, but what the National Security Memorandum-20 report States is that the IDF has undertaken steps to implement international humanitarian law obligations for the protection of civilians in the current conflict, including the requirements related to distinction, proportionality, and precautions in offensive operations. Israel's own concern about such incidents is reflected in the fact it has a number of internal investigations underway.

Question. The U.S. and Senegal enjoy a close relationship in West Africa against the backdrop of recent regional coups, expulsion of U.S. military assets, French retreat, and the freedom of movement of militants in the Sahel. Senegal, however, faces emergent challenges related to regional security, development cooperation, commercial ties, and strategic competition. Although Senegal has good ties with the U.S. and Israel, how will you expand those ties if confirmed?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work to build on our longstanding cooperation to advance shared security and economic objectives and further strengthen democratic governance so that Senegal will continue to be a stable and capable partner in a volatile region. U.S. development programs are helping address some of Senegal's greatest socioeconomic challenges by improving social services, stimulating growth, and fostering job creation. Our security cooperation is building police and gendarme capacity and helping Senegal bolster its border security, a critical objective given instability and violent extremism in the Sahel. If confirmed, I will endeavor to build on the important progress we have made, sustain, or grow our small but invaluable democracy programming, and expand our outreach and advocacy to increase commercial ties. If confirmed, I will also advocate for ways to expand relations between Senegal and Israel.

Question. How do you assess the current relationship between Senegal and China, given they have agreed to a comprehensive strategic partnership and participate in the CCP's Belt and Road initiative?

Answer. The PRC has deployed its familiar suite of transactional economic, investment, and development tools in Senegal as it has elsewhere on the continent. In 2018, the PRC surpassed France as Senegal's top trading partner, and Senegal was the first West African country to join the PRC's Belt and Road Initiative. The PRC is engaged in various sectors, including infrastructure, ICT, fishing, and trade, and Huawei is the dominant supplier of certain ICT hardware for the government. The People's Liberation Army (PLA) has made efforts to grow its security partnership with Senegal, but much of their engagement is transactional and focused on equipment. As we witnessed in the most recent Presidential elections, the Senegalese people are also deeply proud of their strong democratic tradition and generally committed to tolerance; respect for human rights; and an open, inclusive society, which has the potential to reduce PRC political influence. If confirmed, I will use all tools at the U.S. government's disposal to counter the PRC.

Question. Are you concerned about the possibility of PLA naval basing or access in Senegal?

Answer. While we can never lose sight of the PLA's aspirations for naval basing and access in this region, we do not currently assess that the PLA has viable possibilities for basing and naval access in Senegal. The PLA has increased its security cooperation efforts with Senegal, but much of it is transactional and focused on

equipment. Given Senegal's overall caution and strategic considerations with foreign basing, as well as the new administration's focus on ensuring Senegal's sovereignty, we assess it is unlikely Senegal would welcome PLA naval basing. If confirmed, I will remain attentive to this issue and actively counteract any PLA attempts to secure naval basing or access in Senegal.

Question. The U.S. is one of Senegal's top donors. If confirmed, how will you convey to Senegal that continued or expanded partnerships with China could negatively impact that aid?

Answer. If confirmed, I will engage in forthright dialogue with Senegalese leaders about the risks inherent in many types of cooperation with the PRC and with PRC-affiliated firms and will make clear the potential negative impact of such engagement to U.S. assistance.

Question. If confirmed, are there specific opportunities you would pursue related to the DFC and Senegal?

Answer. I understand that Embassy Dakar has a "Deal Team" approach: inter-agency teams focused on identifying and tracking commercial opportunities for U.S. companies and leveraging mission- and Washington-based support, using tools such as DFC, U.S. EXIM, and U.S. Trade and Development Agency financing. The U.S. Embassy in Dakar also has a DFC representative who is actively seeking opportunities. If confirmed, I would ensure this representative is fully integrated into the Embassy's economic and commercial engagement and would personally seek opportunity for greater U.S. commercial activity in Senegal.

Question. The U.S. Ambassador to Senegal also serves as Ambassador to Guinea-Bissau. Guinea-Bissau continues to experience coups and ramifications of a civil war and independence from Portugal. There are limited ties between the U.S. and Guinea-Bissau, as there is no permanent U.S. diplomatic presence. Poverty is widespread, and according to Congressional Research Services, more than 1/5 of the population lives on less than \$2.15 per day. How do you assess Guinea-Bissau's relations with Russia and China?

Answer. If confirmed, it will be a priority to increase U.S. engagement with and explore increased presence in Guinea-Bissau, including to counter involvement by Russia and the PRC. Guinea-Bissau is currently covered by our Liaison Office, which is based at the U.S. Embassy in Dakar and is supported by dedicated local staff in Bissau. While Bissau-Guinean leaders have consistently told us that they want greater U.S. partnership, including through re-opening an embassy in Washington D.C. anticipated in 2024, the country has ties with Russia and the PRC, which are working to improve their relationship with Guinea-Bissau and are exploiting the void left by the lack of a permanent U.S. diplomatic presence. I assess that Guinea-Bissau is engaging Russia and the PRC in a transactional manner to try to address its many acute needs.

Question. If confirmed, how will you balance your responsibilities between Senegal and Guinea-Bissau?

Answer. If confirmed, I will be fully committed to advancing U.S. interests in both countries. In addition to our very capable country team for Senegal, we are fortunate to have excellent local staff in Bissau, as well as a team of three Americans based in Dakar dedicated to covering Guinea-Bissau, which allows embassy leadership to maintain real-time awareness of developments and opportunities in both countries simultaneously. If confirmed, I will also travel to Guinea-Bissau frequently to engage with senior leaders, oversee key U.S. programs, and lead our public engagement.

Question. In your opinion, how involved is Guinea-Bissau regarding international narcotics trafficking?

Answer. Large volumes of narcotics are moved through Guinea-Bissau because of the country's limited capacity to combat trafficking. However, we have developed a strong partnership with police and judicial officials, and President Embaló has sought to deepen bilateral cooperation in this area. Narcotics trafficking remains an enormous challenge, but there appears to be political will to address it, giving us an opportunity to make a meaningful impact through increased partnership. If confirmed, addressing international narcotics trafficking through Guinea-Bissau will be a high priority.

Question. If confirmed, how would you counter narcotics trafficking with Guinea-Bissau?

Answer. If confirmed, I would use my position and personal engagements to advance the strong partnerships that U.S. law enforcement agencies have developed with local police and judicial officials to disrupt traffickers' abilities to move narcotics through Guinea-Bissau. If confirmed, I would also continue to work with the highest levels of government, who have displayed the willingness to tackle this difficult issue head on.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO JUAN CARLOS ITURREGUI BY SENATOR ROBERT MENENDEZ

Question. How has your recent role of Managing Partner of Milan Americas prepared you for Ambassadorship to the Dominican Republic?

Answer. I have spent much of my career working on business, regulatory, and public policy issues while specializing in infrastructure and renewable energy in the Caribbean and Latin America. I know how important good governance is to foster investment and promoting development that positively impact people's lives. Hence, it is crucial to broaden our economic partnership and solidify our connections with like-minded partners. If confirmed, I will work to advance these priorities.

In addition, through my last 9 years on the board of the U.S. Inter-American Foundation—a small yet very effective Federal agency that Congress generously funds—I have witnessed first-hand the enduring impacts of investing in grassroots development and empowering local communities to support themselves and obviate the need to migrate.

Question. How will you work to support U.S.-Dominican Republic economic relations, the realignment of supply chains, and the ongoing efforts to improve ties between the private sectors of both countries?

Answer. If confirmed, I will focus on expanding the already robust trade and investment relationship with the Dominican Republic. The United States is already the Dominican Republic's largest trading partner, with two-way, bilateral trade in goods and services of over \$30 billion per year. If confirmed, I will prioritize outreach and advocacy to improve the business climate for U.S. firms to ensure they operate on a level playing field with their competitors. This includes expanding our efforts to improve the regulatory environment and ensure fair and transparent procurement protocols.

If confirmed, I will continue to work with the Dominican government and support efforts to improve the investment climate and promote investment opportunities, including the country's integration into secure supply chains for critical and essential goods. In addition, if confirmed, I will continue to support the Dominican Republic's strong interest in expanding trade and seizing nearshoring opportunities through programming such as the Embassy's work with the Ministry of Industry and Commerce to increase participation of small and medium-sized enterprises, especially women-owned businesses, in global value chains.

I understand the U.S. Government also continues to work with the Dominican Republic through multilateral initiatives like the America's Partnership for Economic Prosperity (APEP) and the Alliance for Development in Democracy (ADD) to advance sustainable growth and create more resilient supply chains for our partners and the United States, and I will support these efforts, if confirmed.

Question. In light of increasing investments by the People's Republic of China in telecommunication networks and other critical infrastructure, how do you envision U.S. engagement with the Dominican Republic and other regional partners in addressing serious concerns over the security, human rights, and data privacy risks associated with such investments?

Answer. If confirmed, I will engage closely with Dominican authorities to highlight the importance of international trade and investments that are competitive, transparent, and follow international best practices. If confirmed, I will continue to echo the long-standing calls from Latin American capitals that all trade and investment, including from the People's Republic of China, respect local laws and interests, particularly regarding human rights for workers and protections for the environment.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO JUAN CARLOS ITURREGUI BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Question. If confirmed, how will you communicate with the government of the Dominican Republic, the private sector, and the Dominican people about the risks of the People's Republic of China's (PRC) predatory economic practices and of untrustworthy technologies like Huawei to the Dominican Republic's sovereignty and national security?

Answer. If confirmed, I will engage closely with the Dominican Republic to highlight the importance of international trade and investments that are competitive, transparent, and follow international best practices. Also, I will continue to echo the long-standing calls from Latin American capitals that all trade and investments, including those from the PRC, must respect local laws and interests, transparency, particularly regarding human and civil rights for workers and protections for migrants, and for the environment. I am also committed to working closely with our allies and partners to combat the climate crisis; to face down foreign election interference and corruption; to strengthen our defenses in cybersecurity; and to produce and promote U.S. technologies of the future.

Question. If confirmed, will you prioritize efforts to persuade the Dominican Republic to strengthen its cybersecurity rules by excluding firms based in countries that do not endorse the Budapest Convention on cybercrime from participating in 5G network contracts? If so, how will you work with the Dominican Republic to offer alternatives to untrustworthy technologies?

Answer. If confirmed, I will prioritize efforts to strengthen Dominican cybersecurity and work with the Dominican Republic to prioritize engagement with trustworthy technologies and partners. I will also work with Washington to help find trusted technology solutions for the Dominican Republic. As far as the Budapest Cybercrime Convention, that is a law enforcement treaty that provides valuable tools to combat cybercrime. Budapest presently has 72 States parties, including the Dominican Republic and the United States. While we urge all countries that meet Budapest standards to request accession to this important treaty, we realize that some countries with whom we otherwise have excellent law enforcement cooperation may decide not to do so or may not yet have completed accession. While the United States could certainly consider Budapest membership as a plus factor, requiring that countries be Budapest members to participate in 5G contracts could exclude countries that are otherwise inclined toward U.S. approaches to cyber security.

Question. How will you work with the government of the Dominican Republic to strengthen cooperation on cybersecurity?

Answer. If confirmed, I will strengthen the existing cooperation with the Dominican Republic's National Cybersecurity Center, National 911 Emergency Response System, Government Office of ICT, Vice Ministry for Digital Agenda, law enforcement agencies, and military to implement the country's National Security Strategy. I will also work collaboratively with the interagency in Washington to come up with new ways to strengthen our collaboration with the Dominican Republic on cybersecurity as I understand it seeks to update its National Cybersecurity Strategy to counter new threats and attacks of increasing frequency and complexity. I will also continue to support the United States' longstanding cooperation with the Dominican Republic through the Organization of American States to advance security and stability in cyberspace throughout the Western Hemisphere.

Question. To your knowledge, how many individuals and entities in the Dominican Republic has the United States sanctioned for engaging in corrupt practices with the PRC?

Answer. Since I am not a government employee, I am not privy to this type of information, but, if confirmed, I would work to make sure corrupt individuals and entities are investigated and sanctioned.

International Organizations

Question. If confirmed, will you commit to using all the tools and authorities available to identify and recommend sanctions for individuals engaged in corrupt practices with the PRC or to the benefit of the PRC in the Dominican Republic?

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, I commit to working to identify and recommend sanctions for individuals engaged in corrupt practices.

Question. Is Haiti a failed state?

Answer. Haiti is experiencing a series of complex challenges but is not a failed state. Despite the deliberate attacks in March by criminal gangs seeking to over-

whelm Haiti, the country held together. I understand the Haitian National Police and other security forces held firm. Haiti now has a Transitional Presidential Council, a prime minister, and an inclusive cabinet. The government and Haitian National Police are taking steps toward stabilizing conditions in the country. Security conditions permitting, the transitional government is planning to hold elections in late 2025. If confirmed, I will coordinate with our embassy in Haiti and with the government of the Dominican Republic to support Haiti as it moves toward holding elections.

Question. How will you work with the Dominican Republic to support their efforts to secure their sovereign border with Haiti and to reduce illegal immigration?

Answer. If confirmed, I will encourage the government of the Dominican Republic to constructively engage the transitional government of Haiti to manage cross-border trade and movement and discourage irregular migration, including to the United States. I will advocate for the Dominican Republic to continue enhancing the professionalization of its police, military, and immigration authorities.

Question. How will you work with the Dominican Republic to support international efforts to strengthen the Haitian National Police and to reduce the spillover effects of gang violence in Haiti?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with the Dominican Republic to ensure its police and immigration authorities are prepared to reduce the possibility of spillover of gang violence from Haiti. I would support any international efforts to strengthen the Haitian National Police to help stabilize Haiti and encourage the government of the Dominican Republic to work constructively with Haiti to secure their shared border.

Question. In your testimony, you stated that “hopefully what we should not do is implement the same strategy expecting a different outcome” in Haiti. Are you concerned that the proposed Multinational Security Support mission risks implementing the same strategy and expecting a different outcome as those missions that have come before it in Haiti?

Answer. I believe the MSS mission is a significantly different strategy than has been tried before. The mandate of the MSS mission is to work jointly with the Haitian National Police to stabilize security. I anticipate the outcome of the MSS mission deployment will be improved security in Haiti. A stabilized security environment in Haiti would allow for economic growth, delivery of basic services, and opportunities for development that will lead to better lives for the people of Haiti. A stable Haiti with a durable, functioning government that can make the most of development and investment is good for the Dominican Republic and, if confirmed, I will coordinate with Embassy Port-au-Prince and the Dominican government on anything that affects the Dominican Republic.

Question. What will be your priorities to strengthen the economic partnership between the United States and the Dominican Republic?

Answer. If confirmed, my priorities to strengthen the economic partnership between the United States and the Dominican Republic will be to help the Dominican government combat corruption and strengthen the rule of law, promote long-term, sustainable, and inclusive economic growth, and promote opportunities for nearshoring.

I would also continue to encourage Dominican Republic’s active engagement in the Americas Partnership for Economic Prosperity and appreciate their leadership in the rule of law working group.

Question. How will you work with the Dominican Republic to support investments in strategic sectors in the Dominican Republic?

Answer. If confirmed, I will support investments in strategic sectors by working with the Dominican Republic to improve its business climate through fighting corruption, improving security, and strengthening the rule of law. These three things are critical to fostering investment in strategic sectors, as the private sector needs stability, transparency, and good governance to make those investments.

Question. How will you work to strengthen support to the Dominican Republic within the framework of the Alliance for Development in Democracy?

Answer. The Alliance for Development in Democracy is an important regional initiative in which the Dominican Republic, Panama, Costa Rica, and Ecuador work together on democratic strengthening and economic growth through the tightening of the countries’ commercial, demographic, and cultural ties. I understand the United States actively supports these goals and the strong democracies of the four countries, as well as their work to strengthen democracy in Latin America. If con-

confirmed, I will work to strengthen our cooperation with the Dominican Republic within the framework of the alliance, for example in the context of the 2022 memorandum of understanding to advance the U.S.-Alliance for Development in Democracy (ADD) Consultative Dialogue on Supply Chains and Economic Growth.

Question. What steps will you take to promote anti-money laundering practices in the Dominican Republic and to work with the government of the Dominican Republic to strengthen law enforcement cooperation on money laundering and counter-narcotics?

Answer. Illicit narcotics and money laundering are intrinsically linked in criminal networks. If confirmed, I will work closely with the office of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, the Drug Enforcement Administration, and with all our U.S. law enforcement and military partners to strengthen cooperation with the Dominican Government to address both sides of the equation.

If confirmed, I would build on existing success in narcotics interdiction—through programs such as the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative—by continuing to increase the capacity of our partners to stop drug trafficking through the Dominican Republic and expand our support to Dominican law enforcement to better investigate and bring to justice the criminal networks responsible for illicit drug trafficking and money laundering.

Question. What steps will you take to strengthen military cooperation and military-to-military engagements between the United States and the Dominican Republic?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work closely with the Defense Attaché Office at Embassy Santo Domingo to strengthen military cooperation and military-to-military engagement, including on trainings, disaster preparation and response, donations, sales, and high-level visits. I understand that the working cooperation with SOUTHCOM is robust and proactive.

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

Answer. The government of the Dominican Republic does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking but made significant efforts to do so. These efforts included convicting more traffickers, investigating two police officers for trafficking crimes, and increasing international law enforcement cooperation. The government also identified more victims and implemented new protections for vulnerable domestic workers. However, the government did not demonstrate overall increasing efforts compared with the previous reporting period and was downgraded to Tier 2 Watch List in 2023. If confirmed, I will engage with the government of the Dominican Republic and underscore the importance of ensuring a robust response to human trafficking, including through passing comprehensive legislation to combat trafficking, prosecuting the crime, protecting victims, and working to prevent human trafficking, following the recommendations in the Trafficking in Persons Report.

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

Answer. The government designates Roman Catholicism as the official State religion and extends to the Catholic Church special privileges not granted to other religious groups. I am aware that members of non-Catholic groups do not approve of the government's preference for the Catholic Church, the lack of explicit legal protection for non-Catholic groups beyond what the constitution provides, and the treatment of non-Catholic groups as nongovernmental organizations. If confirmed, I will work with the Ambassador at Large to ensure our engagement with all religious groups reflects our core values, including respect for religious freedom or belief.

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

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, I will engage with civil society on religious freedom in the Dominican Republic.

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

Answer. If confirmed, I will ensure embassy officials meet regularly with religious and civil society representatives to inform the Department's understanding of reli-

religious freedom in the Dominican Republic. I will work with civil society, religious actors, and the government to increase respect for the religious freedom of all people. I will speak out in favor of the fundamental freedom of religion or belief.

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

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with embassy officials and civil society organizations to understand certain challenges related to human rights and improve the human rights situation in the Dominican Republic. Working with the Dominican government is a critical part of this effort as well and, if confirmed, I will engage in regular dialogues with civil society groups and work closely with them and the Dominican government to improve.

Question. Management is a key responsibility for chiefs of mission. How do you intend to create a unified mission and vision at post?

Answer. If confirmed, I intend to continue the regular review of strategic goals and objectives on an ongoing basis to ensure that the team is working on the most important and current priorities to achieve U.S. policy objectives. I will convene the senior leadership team at least twice a year to review and measure our progress through specific indicators and ensure that all agencies and offices channel their efforts toward one shared vision. If confirmed, I will also use town halls, team off sites, and other methods of outlining Embassy objectives in both English and Spanish to ensure that every member of our Mission team understands and is committed to the success of our policy vision. If confirmed, I will work with the team to find the most effective tools to do this in the Dominican Republic, including updating objectives to match the continuously evolving country and regional context and to streamline our strategy.

Question. How would you describe your management style?

Answer. I have an inclusive and empathetic, hands-on management style. I encourage every team member to participate in policy discussions, highlight challenges and successes, and present innovative ideas. Sometimes the best opportunities to move the needle forward on goals come from ideas on the ground, from the people who have the best institutional knowledge and ensure continuity without disruptions. I want to make sure all embassy staff can utilize their best skills to make a positive difference and contribute to achieving our objectives in a professional, friendly, supportive, and inclusive way.

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

Answer. If confirmed, my goal as Chief of Mission will be to promote and maintain high morale and focus on supporting a cohesive, inclusive team environment for all embassy personnel, including our incredibly valuable Locally Employed Staff. If confirmed, I will ensure that my DCM and I are accessible to all employees and, I intend to use a variety of tools to ensure that happens, such as regular meetings with the locally employed staff committee, town halls, and hosting staff at the Chief of Mission Residence for team building events. I will ensure that Management shares and visibly displays in public spaces within the embassy all relevant and most updated information related to equal opportunity employment opportunity rights and protections for all personnel to work in an accessible environment for everyone regardless of disabilities, and free from harassment and/or retaliation.

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

Answer. No. It is never acceptable to berate anyone, and that includes work colleagues at every level, whether in public or in private. Constructive dialogue, starting with acknowledging people's values, skills, and contributions when that is that case, is always the correct and moral path to addressing challenges.

Question. How do you envision your relationship with the deputy chief of mission?

Answer. I know how critical this relationship is for the success of our missions around the globe. In Santo Domingo, if confirmed, I envision a strong, open, and trusting work relationship with the DCM, preparing them to take over charge of the mission during my travels. I very much look forward to working closely with the DCM, if confirmed, to create a unified leadership team for Embassy Santo Domingo.

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

Answer. If confirmed, I envision a unified leadership team in the Embassy Santo Domingo Front Office. I understand that the DCM typically manages most of the internal coordination and operations for the Embassy, and the Chief of Mission is

the face of the United States to both the government and public. The DCM also needs to be included regularly in external activities to be able to step into the role of Chargé d’Affaires in the absence of the Ambassador, as Chargé d’Affaires Aguilera has been doing very adeptly for nearly a year already. If confirmed, I will work with my DCM to maximize their strengths and identify the most effective areas where they can help me to lead the Mission team.

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

Answer. Yes, I believe it is important to provide employees with accurate annual employee evaluation reports. Throughout my career, I have met with each of my direct reports regularly to provide feedback on their ongoing tasks and set aside several times a year to review their overall progress.

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

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, I will encourage each supervisor at Embassy Santo Domingo to meet regularly with their employees to provide both positive and constructive feedback on performance. If confirmed, I will also encourage all employees to draft meaningful award nominations for any deserving colleague or subordinate.

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

Answer. While I have not worked at an embassy before, if confirmed, I will work with COM personnel to ensure that they make every effort, within security, financial, and resource allowances, to get outside the embassy walls and into remote communities as much as possible to ensure we share our vision, values, and goals with the people of the Dominican Republic.

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

Answer. If confirmed, I will ensure that Embassy Santo Domingo takes full advantage of all opportunities to meet with Dominicans across the country. This would include outreach work to many varied locations in the Dominican Republic, as budgets allow, and ensuring more than one office sends representatives to these communities to talk about their work in the country as well as opportunities we promote. As budget allows, I would personally travel to these locations to engage with local populations. We will use modern technology to reach additional people, such as through virtual townhalls; interviews on the news, radio, and internet; and engagement through Instagram, X, Facebook, LinkedIn, and more.

Question. Do you pledge to support fully CODELS and STAFFDELS that seek to travel to post, including on weekends as well as local and Federal holidays?

Answer. If confirmed, yes, I pledge to fully support Congressional Delegations (CODELs) and Staff Delegations (STAFFDELS) that seek to travel to the Dominican Republic, including on weekends as well as local and Federal holidays.

Question. Do you commit to supporting fully any CODEL or STAFFDEL, with the only exceptions for simultaneous or overlapping visits by the President or First Lady of the United States, the Vice President, or the Secretaries of State or Defense?

Answer. If confirmed, yes, I commit to fully supporting any CODEL or STAFFDEL.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO JUAN CARLOS ITURREGUI 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 (PRC) 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 it so chooses.

Is the CCP an economic, diplomatic, military, and technological threat to the United States?

Answer. Last 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.” As Secretary Blinken has said, under President Xi, the CCP has become more repressive at home and more aggressive abroad. If confirmed, I will advance U.S. national security interests and counter PRC efforts to expand its problematic influence and use of coercion, through diplomatic engagements, public diplomacy, and commercial advocacy to bolster U.S.-Dominican Republic ties.

Question. Does the CCP undertake any activities that are beneficial to U.S. interests? If so, please explain.

Answer. 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 2024 Annual Threat Assessment, the CCP “will attempt to preempt challenges to its reputation and legitimacy, undercutting U.S. influence, driving wedges between Washington and its partners, and fostering global norms that favor its authoritarian system.”

Question. Do you believe that there are any areas within which the CCP would constructively work with the United States in good faith, knowing that at any moment Chinese interlocutors with U.S. representatives could be disappeared? If so, please explain.

Answer. The United States will work with the PRC to address transnational challenges, when it is in the U.S. interest to do so. If confirmed, I will work with my colleagues across the U.S. interagency and Congress 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 PRC in the countries or areas in which you will work?

Answer. If confirmed, my priority will be advancing U.S. national security interests in the Dominican Republic and countering efforts by our strategic and regional competitors to undermine those interests. The Administration has been clear 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 the Dominican Republic and the region.

Question. As you may be aware, a group of Federal employees penned an open letter to President Biden criticizing U.S. support for Israel in the aftermath of Hamas’ brutal terrorist attack on October 7, 2023. In addition, employees from nearly two dozen agencies staged walkouts in protest of the administration’s Israel policy. Efforts like these directly undermine the duty of our diplomats to advance the policies of the President of the United States. Yes or no, did you sign the letter to the President expressing opposition to the President’s Israel policy?

Answer. No, I did not sign the open letter to the President.

Question. Yes or no, did you participate in the January 16, 2024 walkout?

Answer. No, I did not participate.

Question. If confirmed, would you define one of the employees or contractors operating under your supervision signing an open letter criticizing you, or policies you undertake at the instruction of the President, as insubordination as defined by the Government Accountability Office?

Answer. If confirmed, I would seek to address employee concerns personally by creating an open, trusting, and harassment-free work environment. I am mindful of and value Department employees’ right to free speech under the First Amendment. Moreover, I understand the expression of disagreement does not in and of itself constitute insubordination. If confirmed, I would work with the Department’s Office of the Legal Adviser to determine the proper course of action should such a matter arise.

Question. In your view, are the actions these Federal employees took, by anonymously signing a letter to the President of the United States, covered as “whistle-blowing”?

Answer. I believe these employees were expressing a dissenting view to their leadership. I would hope that employees would feel confident to directly raise their con-

cerns with their supervisors and management rather than signing an anonymous letter.

Question. If confirmed, how will you address discipline issues, such as insubordination, that do not take established dissent channels?

Answer. If confirmed, I will make sure embassy employees know there are several avenues available to express policy disagreements. I would encourage employees to use established channels to express their views.

Question. Have you ever expressed support for an Israeli cease-fire in Gaza?

Answer. No, I have not expressed support for an Israeli cease-fire in Gaza. I understand the Administration has expressed support for an immediate cease-fire to secure the release of hostages and surge the delivery of humanitarian aid to those in need.

Question. Do you agree that Hamas is an antisemitic entity?

Answer. Yes, Hamas is a terrorist group and antisemitic entity. This foreign terrorist organization seeks to eliminate the state of Israel, and its founding charter calls for the killing of Jewish people.

Question. Would a cease-fire allow these groups to reconstitute and attack Israel, and Americans, in the future?

Answer. It is my understanding the United States remains committed to reaching a deal for an immediate cease-fire that secures the release of hostages and allows us to surge and sustain humanitarian aid and bolster the protection of civilians. I understand the Administration's hope is that a more enduring peace could be built upon that and the U.S. Government, working with partners, is attempting to secure the release of all hostages held by Hamas. I understand the U.S. Government supports Israel's right to protect itself from Hamas' terrorism consistent with international law.

Question. Do you agree that calling for a cease-fire in Gaza means calling for Israel to stop its pursuit of Hamas, a designated foreign terrorist organization, that orchestrated the October 7 attacks and still refuses to release all Israeli and American hostages?

Answer. It is my understanding the United States remains committed to reaching a deal for an immediate cease-fire that secures the release of hostages and allows us to surge and sustain humanitarian aid and bolster the protection of civilians. I understand the Administration's hope is that a more enduring peace could be built upon that, and that the U.S. Government is working with partners to attempt to secure the release of all hostages held by Hamas. The U.S. Government supports Israel's right to protect itself from Hamas' terrorism consistent with international law.

Question. Do you believe that Israel, in its operation against Hamas, which is known to use civilians as human shields, is taking all necessary steps to minimize civilian casualties?

Answer. The U.S. Government supports Israel's right to protect itself, consistent with international law. The Administration has urged Israel to differentiate between civilians and Hamas terrorists and to avoid civilian casualties. Hamas's use of civilians as human shields, a blatant violation of international law, does not lessen Israel's obligations under international humanitarian law.

Question. The Dominican Republic has been a stable and fast-growing economy in the Caribbean. The country held Presidential elections in May 2024 which resulted in President Abinader's re-election. The United States has a strong relation with the Dominican Republic (DR)—they both maintain commercial ties under the CAFTA-DR and cooperate on security issues under the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative. If confirmed, what would your top priorities be as U.S. Ambassador to the Dominican Republic?

Answer. If confirmed, my highest priority would be to ensure the safety and welfare of the approximately 300,000 U.S. citizen residents in the Dominican Republic as well as the millions of U.S. tourists that visit annually.

My additional priorities would be to promote U.S. values and U.S. interests in the Dominican Republic. To do this, if confirmed, I would support our joint goals to fight corruption and strengthen the rule of law in the Dominican Republic, and collaborate with the Dominican government on good governance, security, investment and near-shoring, human rights, energy, and climate issues.

Question. What's your assessment of the U.S.-DR relations under the Biden Administration?

Answer. The Dominican Republic is a critical partner of the United States, and both countries work closely together on anti-corruption, democracy in the region, rule of law, combating transnational crime, and promoting citizen health and security.

If confirmed, I will reaffirm our close partnership with the Dominican Republic and work to see its capacities strengthened—a strong ally with strong institutions will be an even better partner for the United States.

Question. In your view, what should the U.S. do to incentivize U.S. companies and allies to 'nearshore' to the DR?

Answer. The United States maintains a robust trade and investment relationship with the Dominican Republic and remains the Dominican Republic's largest trading partner, with two-way, bilateral trade in goods and services over \$30 billion each year. If confirmed, I would prioritize outreach and advocacy to improve the business climate for U.S. firms to ensure they operate on a level playing field with their competitors.

If confirmed, I would continue to support the Dominican Republic's strong interest in expanding trade and seizing nearshoring opportunities through programming such as the Embassy's work with the Ministry of Industry and Commerce to increase participation of small and medium-sized enterprises, especially women-owned businesses, in global value chains.

I understand the U.S. Government also continues to work with the Dominican Republic through multilateral initiatives like the America's Partnership for Economic Prosperity (APEP) and the Alliance for Development in Democracy (ADD) to advance sustainable growth and create more resilient supply chains for our partners and the United States, and I would strongly support these efforts.

Question. How would you assess the current relations between the DR and Haiti?

Answer. The Dominican Republic and Haiti have a long and complicated history, but I believe their relationship is on a positive trajectory with Haiti's new interim government in place. Hopefully this progress will continue as security conditions in Haiti improve in the future. If confirmed, I would coordinate closely with the U.S. Embassy in Haiti and with Washington to promote a productive relationship among our three countries.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO TRACEY ANN JACOBSON BY SENATOR ROBERT MENENDEZ

Question. How have your recent senior roles, including Ambassadorships, prepared you for Ambassadorship to the Republic of Iraq?

Answer. Four successful tours as Chief of Mission, all in hardship posts, have prepared me for the management and leadership challenges of one of our most complex missions. I am prepared to lead via the establishment and implementation of clear policy goals; open collaboration at post, in Washington, and with Congress; effective stewardship of taxpayer resources; and appropriate attention to security, morale, and professional development. I have been grateful for the opportunity since October 2023 to have served as a Senior Advisor in the Near Eastern Affairs Bureau at State where I have supplemented my regional expertise.

Question. Based on your expressed commitments to the Mission of Iraq, how do you envision U.S.-Iraqi security collaboration to combat ISIS and improve regional security while mitigating the efforts of Iran-aligned militias and U.S. foreign adversaries?

Answer. If confirmed, my top priorities will be to safeguard American citizens and advance Iraq's security, stability, and sovereignty. Our military partnership with Iraq is essential and, in cooperation with Congress, I will strive to ensure that we remain Iraq's security partner of choice including in the fight against ISIS. I will also seek to bring all available policy tools to bear to meet our objectives, to include advancing Iraq's energy independence, strengthening democratic institutions, and promoting respect for human rights, which undergird Iraq's security.

Question. How will you work with Congress and regional stakeholders to improve the Baghdad-Erbil relationship?

Answer. The Kurdistan Regional Government is a key U.S. strategic partner within Federal Iraq. Fundamentally, the Administration believes that stabilizing the Baghdad-Erbil relationship will bring economic benefits to all Iraqis, strengthen Iraqi sovereignty, and promote stability and security for the Region. I understand the KRG and GOI are negotiating to resolve many of the challenges in that relationship. It will be a priority of mine to continue encouraging those discussions, and I will be happy to work with Congress toward that end.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO TRACEY ANN JACOBSON BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Question. What are your priority lines of effort linked to U.S. national security interests?

Answer. If confirmed, my highest priority as Ambassador to Iraq will be the safety and security of all Americans in Iraq, including our military and diplomatic personnel. I will continue to work with our U.S. military, Iraqi, and Coalition partners to advance the enduring defeat of ISIS. I will prioritize pushing back against malign Iranian influence, including the role of Iran-backed militias in Iraqi politics, economics, and society. I will work to promote inclusive economic growth, democracy, and good governance. By advancing U.S. economic interests, supporting U.S. investment in Iraq, and promoting Iraqi energy independence, we can support both U.S. and Iraqi national interests.

Question. How might the United States best advance economic reforms and reduce barriers to entry in Iraq to support economic growth?

Answer. If confirmed, I will continue to work through the Strategic Framework Agreement and the Trade and Investment Framework Agreement to encourage Iraq's economic growth and reform agenda, including energy independence, anticorruption, and banking sector reforms. Comprehensive and structural economic reforms will be necessary to reduce barriers to entry for foreign investors over the long term.

Question. The Iraqi confessional system, or muhasasa, is crippled by corruption, cronyism and nepotism, provides an opening for Iranian influence, and remains a significant barrier to effective governance. What are the outlines of your strategy to address muhasasa and where would you prioritize reforms?

Answer. If confirmed I will promote effective governance, political participation, and civic activism among all of Iraq's diverse religious and ethnic groups. With national elections likely in late 2025, I will look for ways to strengthen the government's respect for human rights and its democratic institutions, while working to minimize malign Iranian influence. I will ensure our policy and programs support the fundamental freedoms of the Iraqi people so that they can elect and hold accountable leaders who are responsive to their needs.

Question. In your opinion, what steps can the United States take to improve our diplomats' ability to get outside the Embassy compound? How do you intend to improve the ability of U.S. diplomats to better access all local populations?

Answer. If confirmed, I will continue Ambassador Romanowski's efforts to travel outside of Baghdad, to include provincial capitals in the southern Shia provinces, in coordination with the Bureau of Diplomatic Security. I will work to continue our keystone security partnership with Iraq's security forces and take advantage of the relatively improved security conditions in the country to expand our face-to-face diplomacy.

Question. From October 2023–February 2024, Iranian aligned militia groups attacked United States forces in Iraq, Syria, and Jordan over 170 times. While Iraqi officials assured the United States they can restrain these militia groups, the attacks only stopped after a significant military operation from the United States following the tragic death of three U.S. service members.

If confirmed, how will you seek to disrupt Iranian support for militias in Iraq?

Answer. Iran is a destabilizing influence in the region and supports multiple terrorist groups that advance its interests. If confirmed, I will support the use of all available tools to counter this malign influence including sanctions, diplomatic engagement with allies and partners, and when necessary, military action. The Department has designated multiple Iran-aligned militia groups and their leaders as Specially Designated Global Terrorists and is continuing to work together with the rest of the U.S. Government as part of a whole-of-government approach to counter

Iran's destabilizing activities and dismantle the logistics and financial networks that support the militias.

Question. Has the Sudani government responded appropriately to Iranian-aligned militia activity? How do you incentivize or empower greater action against militias?

Answer. I understand that PM Sudani publicly condemned Iran-aligned militia group (IAMG) attacks on U.S. and Coalition personnel and made limited arrests of those involved in the attacks. That said, the Administration continues to press the Iraqi government to do more to rein in the militias and reinforce Iraq's sovereignty. A strong, sovereign, and prosperous Iraq that is well-integrated in the region is the best bulwark against Iranian influence. If confirmed, I will work with the Government of Iraq to continue strengthening the U.S. military partnership with Iraq's security forces to ensure they are capable of securing Iraq. If confirmed, I will also seek opportunities to promote Iraq's further economic and political integration with the region and strengthen our bilateral economic relationship, both of which contribute to Iraq's security and stability.

Question. Are there specific steps the U.S. can take to curb militias' influence in the country and limit their ability to act with impunity? If so, what are they?

Answer. If confirmed, I will continue to use all tools available to counter the corrosive influence of Iran-aligned militia groups (IAMGs), including through support for U.S. self-defense operations when necessary and through the imposition of relevant sanctions on individuals and entities. I will also encourage economic and financial sector reforms, support anticorruption initiatives, and promote U.S. investment in Iraq all of which will strengthen Iraq's institutions and contribute to its sovereignty and stability.

Question. How will you approach the militias integrated in Iraq's coordination framework that were involved in attacks on U.S. military and diplomatic facilities?

Answer. Armed actors that attack U.S. personnel must be held accountable, regardless of their affiliation. If confirmed, I will press the Government of Iraq to take the necessary and appropriate steps to detain and prosecute individuals and groups that conduct attacks and remove them from the security establishment, if they hold any official position. I will also seek to counter these groups using all available and appropriate tools, including through sanctions. The Administration has used sanctions designations to disrupt the logistics and constrain the activities of militias, curbing their ability to operate with impunity. This includes the most recent action on June 17, in which the Department designated Harakat Ansar Allah al-Awfiya (HAAA) and its leader as Specially Designated Global Terrorists for their role in the attack on Tower 22 in Jordan and the November 2023 designation of Kata'ib Sayyid al-Shuhada and its leader for their role in attacks on U.S. personnel in Iraq and Syria.

Question. Should the United States consider conditioning assistance to Iraq, including Foreign Military Financing (FMF), based on demonstrated progress disrupting and deterring Iranian militias?

Answer. U.S. security assistance in Iraq is a critical tool for achieving U.S. objectives, including the enduring defeat of ISIS, advancing Iraq's stability and sovereignty, and fostering deeper U.S.-Iraqi security cooperation. Specifically, U.S. security assistance supports the training and equipping of the Iraqi Security Forces to develop their capacity to further shared security goals and ensures that the United States remains Iraq's security partner of choice. Conditioning U.S. assistance, which is tied to U.S. national security interests, would hinder U.S. policy goals in Iraq and the region. If confirmed, I will continue to press the Iraqi government to take action to rein in the militias.

Question. Do proposed FMF budget cuts in the President's 2025 budget request undermine Iraqi security needs?

Answer. The requested reduction in security assistance for Iraq this year reflects the current availability of prior-year funding to meet the operational and capacity building needs of the Iraqi Security Forces. The United States and the Government of Iraq have initiated a series of engagements to review the U.S. and Coalition security presence in Iraq. These engagements will also address future U.S. security assistance requirements. Ultimately, fiscal constraints, competing FMF priorities globally, and Iraq's increasing oil revenues mean that the President's budget request of \$90 million plus prior-year FMF pipeline are sufficient to support ongoing needs.

Question. Since 2003, Iraq policy has been viewed primarily through a military lens. Please provide your thoughts on expanding the Iraq relationship beyond the

military lens and transitioning Iraq away from CTEF to more routine forms of security assistance under the State Department.

Answer. The “360-partnership” between Iraq and the United States includes much more than security: education, health, energy, finance, human rights, climate, and other forms of cooperation define the relationship between the Iraqi and American people. Our assistance reflects this diverse partnership. U.S. security assistance bolsters Iraqi sovereignty and stability, pillars that support our broad relationship. I understand that the Administration has worked to prioritize Iraqi security assistance needs and looked at the range of assistance accounts available to support them. If confirmed, I will closely review U.S. security assistance to ensure alignment with strategic objectives and keep all safeguards in place to ensure the proper stewardship of taxpayer dollars.

Question. Successive administrations have issued Iran sanctions waivers for continued Iraqi purchases of Iranian electricity. Do you see these waivers as potential leverage to encourage the Iraqi government to move faster on energy initiatives or as leverage to reign in militias? Why or why not?

Answer. The Administration is continuing a multi-pronged strategy to help Iraq achieve energy independence by reducing its need for energy imports from Iran, including the building of regional interconnections and gas capture. In the last 2 years, the Government of Iraq has made significant progress toward energy self-sufficiency, but does not currently produce enough electricity to meet domestic needs. Unfortunately, Iraq will not wean itself off of Iranian energy imports overnight. For that reason, this waiver, which was introduced by a prior administration, continues to be necessary to provide the time for the Government of Iraq to develop its domestic energy production. Eliminating Iranian imports prematurely would leave a significant number of Iraqis without power, destabilizing Iraq and undermining U.S. interests in the region. If confirmed, I will continue to urge the Iraqi government to take concrete steps to improve its energy independence.

Question. What are your views on permanently freezing Iranian funds in jurisdictions abroad?

Answer. Iranian funds held in jurisdictions outside Iran remain subject to various restrictions, including rigorous oversight by the Department of the Treasury and trusted partners, and they will continue to be so. The Administration is committed to preventing these funds from being used by the regime to fund its destabilizing activities and will continue to use all the tools at its disposal to deny Iran the ability to use funds held abroad to support their malign activities in and outside Iran.

Question. Operation Inherent Resolve has united 87 countries to eliminate the threat posed by ISIS in Iraq and Syria. The Coalition has also played a major role stabilizing the region and deterring Iranian aggression. Nevertheless, there is still work to be done.

In your opinion, how should the United States engage in the Higher Military Commission (HMC) to review the role of the U.S. military in Iraq? What should we take into consideration for transitioning to a bilateral security relationship?

Answer. The United States and Iraq announced the start of a bilateral Higher Military Commission (HMC) process on January 24. Its purpose is to determine how the Coalition’s military mission, Operation Inherent Resolve (OIR), will evolve on a timeline according to the following factors: 1) the threat from ISIS; 2) operational and environmental requirements; and 3) capability levels of the Iraqi Security Services. The United States and Iraq seek to deliberately and eventually transition to a bilateral security cooperation relationship across a full range of issues. As we undergo this transition, we will continue to work with the Iraqi security forces, including Kurdish Peshmerga forces, to build their capabilities to ensure the enduring defeat of ISIS and advance stability within Iraq and the region.

Question. How would you describe the current capabilities of ISIS in Iraq and Syria? What conditions are necessary to prevent the resurgence of ISIS?

Answer. ISIS remains a serious global threat. In Iraq and Syria, ISIS no longer controls territory, but it continues to conduct terror attacks targeting civilians and security forces. In order to counter this threat, the United States leads an 87-member international Coalition committed to the enduring defeat of ISIS and preventing its resurgence by disrupting the group’s financing and economic infrastructure; preventing the flow of foreign terrorist fighters across borders; supporting stabilization and the restoration of essential public services to liberated areas; and countering the group’s propaganda. The repatriation of displaced persons and detained fighters from northeast Syria remains critical to ensuring the enduring defeat of the terrorist group. If confirmed, I will work to ensure that any transition of the functions

of the Coalition to bilateral arrangements are geared toward the continuing defeat of ISIS as well as Iraq's security more broadly.

Question. If confirmed, what role would you play as Ambassador to continue the repatriation of Iraqis in detention and refugee camps in Syria?

Answer. Addressing the security and humanitarian crises in northeast Syria, including repatriating the Iraqis displaced in al-Hol and Roj, as well as the Iraqi foreign terrorist fighters in detention, must be part of our broader strategy to ensure the lasting defeat of ISIS. I understand Iraq has repatriated over 10,000 of its nationals from Syria, but with nearly 20,000 Iraqi nationals in detention facilities and displaced persons camps in northeast Syria, there's more work to be done. If confirmed, I will continue to press the Iraqi government at the highest levels to both continue repatriations from northeast Syria and to continue to increase the rate of such repatriations. I will also support directing U.S. foreign assistance in Iraq to support such efforts.

Question. If confirmed, how will you address the growing influence of Russia and China in Iraq? What threat do you believe they pose to U.S. national security interests?

Answer. The PRC has a significant presence in Iraq's energy sector and has made inroads in the telecommunications sector as well. I am also concerned by the strong ties between Iraq and Russia in the energy and security sectors. Yet, the Iraqi government has cooperated with U.S. sanctions toward Russia, and the support the United States offers Iraq makes us a partner of choice. If confirmed, I will continue to emphasize the value of our partnership and advocate for U.S. companies approved for commercial advocacy, including in Iraq's energy sector. I will also highlight the pitfalls of dealing with the PRC's debt-trap diplomacy and Russia's harmful role in the region in contrast to the benefits of a strong partnership with the United States.

Question. In the State Department's 2023 Trafficking in Persons Report, Iraq was downgraded to Tier 2 Watch List for failing to meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking but is making significant efforts to do so.

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

Answer. If confirmed, I will engage and encourage the relevant stakeholders in the Iraqi government and the Kurdistan Regional Government in their ongoing efforts to address victim protection concerns—including proactively identifying and screening vulnerable populations for trafficking indicators. Civil society engagement on trafficking is key in Iraq and I commit to coordinating closely with organizations working on the issue in-country to strengthen ongoing initiatives to address these concerns. In addition to protection concerns, I would, along with my embassy staff, urge the government to make tangible progress in line with the other recommendations outlined in the TIP Report.

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

Answer. Protection for ethnic and religious communities is a priority for the Department and has been a priority for me in my previous tours as Chief of Mission. The Administration supports a stable, prosperous, and democratic Iraq that serves all its citizens, including members of these communities. If confirmed, I will prioritize U.S. assistance programs that encourage durable solutions for members of Iraq's most vulnerable populations, and focus on promoting democratic, inclusive, and rights-respecting governance. I look forward to coordinating with Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom Rashad Hussain on this strategy and meeting with these communities and addressing their concerns if confirmed.

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

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, I commit to personally engaging with civil society on this issue. Such engagement has been a hallmark of my previous assignments as Chief of Mission.

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

Answer. If confirmed, I would use meetings with national and regional government officials to urge increased protections and durable solutions for vulnerable ethnic and religious populations in Iraq in addition to promoting freedom of religion

and belief for all Iraqis. I would also prioritize U.S. assistance programs that protect Iraq's most vulnerable ethnic and religious populations, and focus on promoting a democratic, inclusive, and rights-respecting governance system.

Question. The State Department's 2023 Human Rights Report noted that the human rights situation in Iraq had worsened over the past year and the persistence of significant human rights abuses.

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

Answer. Inclusion of civil society voices and perspectives is central to open and accountable governance. If confirmed, I would work closely with civil society to understand their perspectives and inform embassy engagement with the government, as I have done in previous assignments. Furthermore, I would urge the Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government to uphold the commitments made during the Summits for Democracy and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms, including freedom of expression, and promote a strong, independent, inclusive, and diverse civil society.

Question. Management is a key responsibility for chiefs of mission. How do you intend to create a unified mission and vision at post?

Answer. To be effective, a Chief of Mission must establish and implement a shared vision and overarching goals, as well as break down bureaucratic stovepipes and encourage whole-of-government approaches. To accomplish this, if confirmed, I intend to lead the Country Team in regular reviews of the Integrated Country Strategy, updating as necessary in coordination with the Washington interagency. I would expect to participate with key members of my team in NSC-hosted interagency meetings whenever possible.

Question. How would you describe your management style?

Answer. I have an open, collaborative management style that encourages innovation, cross-functional collaboration, and organizational learning. I establish clear expectations and prioritize creating a culture of mutual respect.

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

Answer. If confirmed, I would ensure that everyone at Mission Iraq understands the importance to national security of our Mission goals, and how their individual efforts advance these goals. I would seek to understand the motivations of my team members in volunteering for these challenging assignments and ask open-ended questions about how I can help them achieve their own goals. I would encourage healthy practices, including community building.

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

Answer. Berating a subordinate is never acceptable.

Question. How do you envision your relationship with the deputy chief of mission?

Answer. I have worked with eight Deputy Chiefs of Mission (DCMs) while serving as a Chief of Mission, as well as having served as a DCM myself. I consider the DCM to be a fully empowered policy and management partner. My goal for my DCMs is always to boost their competence and confidence so that they are prepared to move forward in their careers.

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

Answer. I would entrust the DCM with day-to-day operational management of the mission under my supervision. I also think it is important to ensure that DCMs have the opportunity to engage in the full range of diplomatic functions of a Chief of Mission, to include engagement with the host country and the media, to ensure that they cannot only pick up in the absence of the Ambassador but are also fully prepared for advancement.

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

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

Answer. I have always provided accurate, constructive, written feedback for everyone I rate, as well as everyone my immediate subordinates rate, at least three times

a year. I require my managers to do the same. I also ask for feedback on my own performance during these sessions.

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

Answer. Yes.

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

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

Answer. Across four tours as Chief of Mission, I have encouraged my teams not only to get out of the embassy, but also to get out of the capital. This can be challenging when there are security concerns, as there were in Ethiopia and as there are in Iraq. I believe it is critical to work with the embassy's security experts to mitigate risks so that embassy staff can accomplish their missions.

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

Answer. I will work with the Regional Security Office and the Bureau of Diplomatic Security to mitigate risks.

Question. Congressional travel, including by members (CODELS) or staff (STAFFDELS) serve a critical oversight role.

Do you pledge to support fully CODELS and STAFFDELS that seek to travel to post, including on weekends as well as local and Federal holidays?

Answer. With pleasure.

Question. Do you commit to supporting fully any CODEL or STAFFDEL, with the only exceptions for simultaneous or overlapping visits by the President or First Lady of the United States, the Vice President, or the Secretaries of State or Defense?

Answer. I will fully support a CODEL or STAFFDEL whenever it comes.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO TRACEY ANN JACOBSON BY SENATOR MARCO RUBIO

Question. In May 2022, Secretary Blinken said that the People's Republic of China (PRC) is the "only country with both the intent to reshape the international order and, increasingly, the economic, diplomatic, military, and technological power to do it." The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) clearly holds the reins of power in the PRC 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 its absolute control of Chinese society and industry, the CCP could stop all of these destructive actions tomorrow if it so chooses. Is the CCP an economic, diplomatic, military, and technological threat to the United States?

Answer. Last 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." As Secretary Blinken has said, under President Xi, the CCP has become more repressive at home and more aggressive abroad. If confirmed, I will advance U.S. national security interests and counter the People's Republic of China efforts to expand its problematic influence and use of coercion, through diplomatic engagements, public diplomacy, and commercial advocacy to bolster U.S.-Iraqi ties.

Question. Does the CCP undertake any activities that are beneficial to U.S. interests? If so, please explain.

Answer. 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 2024 Annual Threat Assessment, the CCP is seeking to "pre-empt challenges to its reputation and legitimacy, undercutting U.S. influence, driving wedges between Washington and its partners, and fostering global norms that favor its authoritarian system."

Question. Do you believe that there are any areas in which the CCP would constructively work with the United States in good faith, knowing that at any moment

Chinese interlocuters with U.S. representatives could be disappeared? If so, please explain.

Answer. The United States will work with the PRC to address transnational challenges when it is in the U.S. interest to do so. If confirmed, I will work with my colleagues across the U.S. interagency and Congress 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 PRC in the countries or areas in which you will work?

Answer. If confirmed, my priority will be advancing U.S. national security interests in Iraq 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 Iraq and the region.

Question. As you may be aware, a group of Federal employees penned an open letter to President Biden criticizing U.S. support for Israel in the aftermath of Hamas' brutal terrorist attack on October 7, 2023. In addition, employees from nearly two dozen agencies have staged walkouts in protest of the administration's Israel policy. Efforts like these directly undermine the duty of our diplomats to advance the policies of the President of the United States. Yes or no, did you sign the letter to the President expressing opposition to the President's Israel policy?

Answer. No, I did not sign the open letter to the President.

Question. Yes or no, did you participate in the January 16, 2024 walkout?

Answer. No, I did not participate.

Question. If confirmed, would you define one of the employees or contractors operating under your supervision signing an open letter criticizing you, or policies you undertake at the instruction of the President, as insubordination as defined by the Government Accountability Office?

Answer. If confirmed, I would seek to address employee concerns personally by creating an open and trusting work environment, free of harassment, discrimination, or reprisal. I am mindful of whistleblower protections, and I value Department employees' right to free speech under the First Amendment. Moreover, I understand the expression of disagreement does not in and of itself constitute insubordination. If confirmed, I would work with human resources professionals and the Department's Office of the Legal Adviser to determine the proper course of action should such a matter arise.

Question. In your view, are the actions these Federal employees took, by anonymously signing a letter to the President of the United States, covered as "whistleblowing"?

Answer. I believe these employees were expressing a dissenting view to their leadership. I support employees' right to express their views and hope that employees feel confident to directly raise their concerns with their supervisors and management. "Whistleblowing" is a term and activity covered by legislation and regulations; I defer to the Department's Office of the Legal Adviser to determine whether the referenced actions are considered protected whistleblowing activity.

Question. If confirmed, how will you address discipline issues, such as insubordination, that do not take established dissent channels?

Answer. If confirmed, I will make sure employees are aware of their chain of command and the standards of conduct required of them as Department employees.

According to Department policy, job-related insubordination is a conduct matter and may result in counseling and/or discipline, including a penalty commensurate with the scale of the offense. If confirmed, I would address conduct issues, including insubordination, in accordance with the Foreign Affairs Manual and in consultation with the Department's human resources and legal professionals.

Question. Have you ever expressed support for an Israeli cease-fire in Gaza?

Answer. No, I have not expressed support for an Israeli cease-fire in Gaza. I understand the Administration has expressed support for an immediate cease-fire in order to secure the release of hostages and surge the delivery of humanitarian aid to those in need.

Question. Do you agree that Hamas is an antisemitic entity?

Answer. Yes, Hamas espouses antisemitism. Hamas, which is designated by the United States as a foreign terrorist organization, seeks to eliminate the State of Israel, and its founding charter calls for the killing of Jews.

Question. Would a cease-fire allow these groups to reconstitute and attack Israel, and Americans, in the future?

Answer. The United States remains committed to reaching a deal for an immediate cease-fire that secures the release of hostages and allows us to surge and sustain humanitarian aid and bolster the protection of civilians. The Administration's hope is that a more enduring peace could be built upon that. Working with partners, the U.S. Government is attempting to secure the release of all hostages held by Hamas. The U.S. Government supports Israel's right to protect itself from Hamas' terrorism consistent with international law.

Question. Do you agree that calling for a cease-fire in Gaza means calling for Israel to stop its pursuit of Hamas, a designated foreign terrorist organization, that orchestrated the October 7 attacks and still refuses to release all Israeli and American hostages?

Answer. The United States remains committed to reaching a deal for an immediate cease-fire that secures the release of hostages and allows us to surge and sustain humanitarian aid and bolster the protection of civilians. The Administration's hope is that a more enduring peace could be built upon that. Working with partners, the U.S. Government is attempting to secure the release of all hostages held by Hamas. The U.S. Government supports Israel's right to protect itself from Hamas' terrorism consistent with international law.

Question. Do you believe that Israel, in its operation against Hamas, which is known to use civilians as human shields, is taking all necessary steps to minimize civilian casualties?

Answer. It's very difficult in the heat of war to make a definitive assessment about any individual incident but what the National Security Memorandum-20 report States is that the IDF has undertaken steps to implement IHL obligations for the protection of civilians in the current conflict, including the requirements related to distinction, proportionality, and precautions in military operations. Israel's own concern is reflected in the fact it has a number of internal investigations underway.

Question. The State Department Office of Inspector General's (OIG) review of the administration's withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2023 termed it as "disastrous." Specifically, the OIG report highlights significant concerns with the Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) process and Consular Affairs data bases that were not interoperable and hampered vetting the identity of locally employed Afghan staff and contractors since 2016. As the Director of the Afghanistan Task Force, you were ultimately responsible to correct this issue and the overall catastrophic departure of the U.S. from Afghanistan.

It is my understanding that State and DoD utilized a biometric system to vet and verify Afghan employees for operations in country. This system collates information from interagency U.S. partners, and terrorist data bases among others, and is used in other missions, such as Iraq, given security concerns. Did DoD or any other interagency partner approach you or your task force to establish biometrics vetting coordination with Consular Affairs in Washington, DC, for SIV applicants prior to the withdrawal from Afghanistan?

Answer. The task force I led between July 19 and August 15, 2021, was not involved in vetting or biometric coordination. We worked with a population that had been pre-cleared through the interagency.

Question. If so, did you decline this offer?

Answer. The Task Force I led between July 19 and August 15, 2021, was not involved in vetting policy.

Question. Why did you decline biometric vetting for Afghan SIV applicants?

Answer. The task force I led between July 19 and August 15, 2021, was not involved in vetting or biometric coordination. It is my understanding that biometric vetting is required for all SIV applicants to travel to the United States as a matter of law.

Question. To your knowledge, did Consular Affairs utilize the interagency biometric data base for vetting of SIVs or adjudication?

Answer. I understand that all visa applicants' biometrics are screened against both the Department of Homeland Security IDENT data base and the Federal Bureau of Investigation's NGI data base. Between these two data bases, all visa appli-

cants are screened against the most comprehensive biometrics data bases within the Federal Government to help determine their eligibility for a visa. SIV applicants are subject to the same interagency screening, including biometric screening, that all visa applicants worldwide undergo prior to the State Department issuing a visa.

Question. Do they currently utilize the biometric data base?

Answer. I understand that prior to being added to a manifest on a relocation flight with U.S. Government assistance, all Afghans in the U.S. immigration pipeline undergo pretravel vetting, including security checks and medical screening. Every Afghan traveler, regardless of whether they are processed as a refugee, SIV applicant, immigrant visa applicant, or parolee, undergoes rigorous interagency vetting before they are permitted to enter the United States. All Afghan SIV applicants aged 14 and above are subject to fingerprint screening against both the Department of Homeland Security IDENT data base and the Federal Bureau of Investigation's NGI data base.

Question. Did you ever reject or object to efforts by DoD to utilize biometrics on Afghan refugees they were transporting out of Afghanistan to regional allies or ultimately to the U.S.?

Answer. No. I was not involved in vetting or biometric policy and was not in the position to approve or reject any efforts in this regard.

Question. Were you ever informed that State had evacuated Afghan nationals that, once vetted by DoD via biometrics, were on the terror watch list or that their employment was terminated by DoD for malfeasance or criminal activity?

Answer. I am aware that some Afghan national evacuees had vetting issues that precluded their admission into the United States. As I was not involved in vetting, I have no knowledge of those specific issues. To reemphasize, all visa applicants undergo consistent and rigorous vetting, including both biometric and biographic screening against information from across the interagency, prior to being considered for a visa. Every Afghan visa applicant went through this screening. For evacuees who did not receive visas, I refer you to the Department of Homeland Security for their vetting procedures.

Question. Did you ever advocate for any Afghan national's entry into the U.S., or into an allied partner, that had derogatory information in the biometric data bases?

Answer. No.

Question. Why should this committee consider your nomination to Iraq given your past lack of judgment and overall mismanagement during the exit from Afghanistan?

Answer. The Afghanistan Coordination Task Force (ACTF) which I led from July 19 to August 15, 2021, made notable progress in re-energizing the SIV process, which was largely moribund in 2020. In less than a month the ACTF facilitated the arrival of nearly 2,000 Afghans, streamlined medical clearance procedures, and started work on a processing facility in Doha which is still in use today. I was not in charge of the Department's Afghanistan Task Force during the evacuation which began in mid-August 2021 and was not involved in planning or implementing the withdrawal from Afghanistan.

My qualifications for the position of U.S. Ambassador to Iraq include four successful tours as a Chief of Mission and substantial senior leadership experience in Washington.

Question. Since October 2023, Iran-backed proxies have repeatedly attacked U.S. uniformed personnel, including attacks in Iraq, Syria, and Jordan, resulting in the killing of three U.S. servicemembers and a contractor, and injuring dozens more. To date, President Biden has not held Iran accountable for those deaths, their continued destabilization acts in the region, nor has he fully enforced sanctions on Iran which fund their terror machine. As a Senior Advisor to the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, do you agree that Iran is the catalyst for chaos in Iraq and the region?

Answer. Yes, Iran continues to be a destabilizing factor in Iraq and throughout the region. To address Iran's destabilizing actions, the Administration continues to work to contain the threat, deter Iran from conducting destabilizing actions through robust force posture and foreign military arms sales, and defend allies and partners as it did for Israel the night of April 13. The interagency uses a variety of tools, including sanctions, diplomatic engagement with allies and partners, and military action.

Question. What actions is Iran taking or pursuing in Iraq?

Answer. Iran continues to meddle in Iraqi political, economic, and military affairs, providing support for militia groups that advance its interests and undermine Iraq's sovereignty. Iran has repeatedly interfered in Iraq's internal politics at the local and national level, including the repression of free expression. Iran regularly shuts off gas and electricity imports to pressure Iraqi leaders to fulfill its requests. This Administration is continuing a multi-pronged strategy to help Iraq achieve energy independence by reducing its need for energy imports from Iran, including the building of regional interconnections and gas capture.

Question. If confirmed, which specific policies would you undertake to assist Iraq's security regarding Iranian influence?

Answer. If confirmed, I will continue to use all tools available to counter Iran's malign influence, including through support for U.S. self-defense operations when necessary and through the imposition of relevant sanctions on individuals and entities. A strong, sovereign, and prosperous Iraq that is well-integrated in the region is the best bulwark against Iranian influence. If confirmed, I will work with the Government of Iraq to continue strengthening the U.S. military partnership with Iraq's security forces to ensure they are capable of securing Iraq. If confirmed, I will also seek opportunities to promote Iraq's further economic and political reform and integration with the region and strengthen our bilateral economic relationship, both of which contribute to Iraq's security and stability.

Question. In your view, how do Iraqis view engagement with Iran, Russia, and China versus with the West?

Answer. Iraq seeks positive relations with Iran, Russia, the PRC, and the West, but the benefits of a strong partnership with the United States make us the partner of choice. Many Iraqis want to push back on Iran's destabilizing activities, including its support for Iran-aligned militia groups, and meddling in Iraq's internal affairs. The PRC has a significant presence in Iraq's energy sector and has made inroads in the telecommunications sector while Russia has ties with Iraq's energy and security sectors, but they do not bring the same level of quality and expertise that U.S. companies can offer. If confirmed, I will continue to emphasize the value of our partnership and advocate for U.S. companies approved for commercial advocacy. I would also encourage continued cooperation with U.S. sanctions toward Russia and raise our concerns about Russia's harmful role in the region, the pitfalls of the PRC's debt-trap diplomacy, and Iran's destabilizing activity.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO TRACEY ANN JACOBSON BY SENATOR JOHN BARRASSO

Question. How long were you in charge of the Afghanistan Task Force?

Answer. I led the Afghanistan Coordination Task Force (ACTF) from July 19 to August 15, 2021. On August 15, the Department stood up a Crisis Task Force, and the components of the ACTF were repurposed to other functions.

Question. Please describe your role, duties, and involvement in the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan and in dealing with the fall out afterwards.

Answer. Between July 19 and August 15, 2021, I led an interagency team charged with developing and implementing a new process to bring SIV applicants who had completed all security vetting and only required medical clearances to the United States. We then further streamlined the process including by contracting for medical clearances to be completed in Kabul before travel. We also worked to set up a processing facility in Doha, Qatar, which was originally intended only for SIV applicants. During the brief operation of the ACTF we brought nearly 2,000 individuals to the United States. Afterwards, I worked on domestic arrangements for arriving Afghans from August 15–25, 2021, and as the Department's Liaison to the DHS-led Operation Allies Welcome from August 25, 2021, until February 1, 2022.

Question. How many individuals were eligible for SIVs at the time of the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan between February 2020 and August 2021?

Answer. I understand an Afghan's eligibility for an SIV cannot be assessed until the individual has completed all the steps in the process. The process begins with the submission of the required documentation for Chief of Mission (COM) review. Between February 2020 and August 2021, the Department of State's Afghanistan Special Immigrant Visa unit received 10,327 documentarily complete cases for COM review and issued decisions in 8,076 COM cases.

Question. How many individuals applied for SIVs at the time of the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan between February 2020 and August 2021?

Answer. I understand the existing pipeline of SIV applicants in February 2020 totaled approximately 18,000 principal applicants. Between February 2020 and August 2021, the Department created 14,615 new Afghan SIV cases.

Question. How many SIVs were issued between February 2020 and August 2021?

Answer. I understand the Department issued 11,217 SIVs to Afghan principal applicants and their family members between February 2020 and August 2021.

Question. How many SIVs were issued after August 2021?

Answer. I understand the Department issued 50,549 SIVs to Afghan principal applicants and their family members between September 1, 2021, and May 31, 2024.

Question. What measures were taken to evacuate American citizens and Afghan allies, and why were so many left behind?

Answer. As the military evacuation began, American citizens and Afghan allies who had passed through the COM approval process and completed security vetting were invited to come to the Kabul airport to board evacuation flights. The Department also undertook a massive effort involving tens of thousands of calls to U.S. citizens to determine their whereabouts, whether they wanted to leave Afghanistan, and to provide information on how to be evacuated. In collaboration with our military colleagues, the Department of State achieved one of the largest and most successful airlifts in history with nearly 124,000 individuals relocated from Afghanistan since August 2021. The Department is committed to the support of American citizens and to the continuing processing and relocation of SIV applicants. I was not involved in the processes at Kabul Airport and would refer you to the Bureau of Consular Affairs for further information.

Question. Please outline the communication strategy used to inform SIV applicants about their status and the evacuation procedures.

Answer. Our ACTF communications with SIV applicants were limited to logistical information regarding departures during the duration of the ACTF. These communications were by email and started July 21, 2021, with a message to 736 principal applicants outlining the streamlined process and asking about their interest in opting in to the program. Communication with SIV applicants on their application processing and status is managed by the Afghan SIV Unit in the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs and the Bureau of Consular Affairs.

Question. How do you respond to concerns made by U.S. service members and Afghan allies who feel that the SIV process failed to protect those who were most at risk?

Answer. In the fall of 2021 and January 2022, I had many opportunities to engage with U.S. service members and NGO's founded by U.S. veterans working in support of Afghan Allies about the Department's commitment to continuing to relocate SIV applicants—work that continues in the Afghan SIV Unit and the Office of the Coordinator for Afghanistan Relocation Efforts. I am grateful for the letter of support that Shawn VanDiver, President of AfghanEvac, an umbrella organization for many of these veterans' groups, sent to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on my behalf.

Question. What measures are being taken to locate and assist SIV applicants who remain in Afghanistan or third countries?

Answer. The Office of the Coordinator for Afghan Relocation Efforts (CARE) leads the U.S. government's efforts under Operation Enduring Welcome to relocate Afghan allies to whom the United States has enduring commitments. CARE oversees the process of relocating eligible Afghans from Afghanistan to third-country platforms for immigration processing, ultimately resettling them in the United States. This involves coordination with various U.S. agencies, including the Bureau of Consular Affairs, the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, and U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services within the Department of Homeland Security. CARE evolved from the Afghanistan Task Force in the summer of 2021 and is now part of the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs. It collaborates with other Department of State offices, external stakeholders, NGO's, and the White House to facilitate this comprehensive resettlement effort. U.S. embassies manage relationships with host governments, while CARE focuses on relocation and resettlement preparation. In third countries where the Department conducts Immigrant Visa processing, SIV applicants who are COM-approved can have their SIV case processed and interviewed.

Question. Do you believe the withdrawal was successful?

Answer. The Department undertook a massive effort involving tens of thousands of calls to U.S. citizens to determine their whereabouts, whether they wanted to leave Afghanistan, and to provide information on how to be evacuated. Afghans at risk, including many who were eligible for SIVs, were also evacuated. In collaboration with our military colleagues, the Department of State achieved one of the largest and most successful airlifts in history with nearly 124,000 individuals relocated from Afghanistan since August 2021. This work continues.

Question. Who at the Department of State has been held accountable for the strategic failures and disorganized plans?

Answer. Secretary Blinken called for an after-action review to learn important lessons from the war, fortify the Department's processes to respond to unexpected crises around the world, protect U.S. citizens abroad, and offer support to foreign nationals who work within and assist U.S. diplomatic missions.

As I understand, the Department has already taken more than 40 concrete actions and identified additional steps to guide itself in responding to future crises, some of which have been utilized in Sudan, Ukraine, and Ethiopia. The review was developed for the purpose of informing and improving future operations, and the Department has already begun implementing the lessons. I refer you to the Secretary's staff for additional insights.

Question. What interagency coordination efforts were put in place to process and evacuate SIV applicants during the withdrawal?

Answer. As I understand, interagency coordination occurred in the Afghanistan Task Force, and through interagency processes led by the National Security Council. I note that I was not in charge of the Afghanistan Task Force. SIV applicants who had completed the COM approval process were invited by email to come to the airport during the evacuation. Those who were successfully evacuated were processed at interagency platforms overseas and at interagency-staffed military bases in the United States. In collaboration with military colleagues, the Department of State achieved one of the largest and most successful airlifts in history with nearly 124,000 individuals relocated from Afghanistan since August 2021.

Question. What should have been done differently to ensure a smooth and safer withdrawal process?

Answer. I was not involved in the planning and implementation of the military withdrawal from Afghanistan, but I will note that an after-action review commissioned by the Secretary recognized key areas where improved communications, resources, and preparedness could better inform our response in times of crisis. The Department has already taken more than 40 concrete actions and identified additional steps to guide itself in responding to future crises, some of which have been utilized in Sudan, Ukraine, and Ethiopia. In terms of the efforts of my task force, not a day goes by that I don't wish we'd had more time to effect a smooth and safe withdrawal.

Question. Were there any contingency plans in place for the rapid deterioration of the security situation in Afghanistan? If so, why did they fail?

Answer. I was not involved in contingency or security planning for Afghanistan. I understand that the Embassy maintained an active Emergency Action Committee planning process that convened repeatedly in 2021 and coordinated actively with our DoD colleagues to assess the situation on the ground.

I also understand that by the summer of 2021, and within a few months of President Biden's commitment to the previous Administration's timeline outlined in the Doha Agreement, a taskforce was stood up to facilitate coordination of the evacuation.

State coordinated closely with military colleagues, as is standard practice with all non-combatant evacuation operations. Thanks to their courage and dedication, the U.S. achieved one of the largest and most successful airlifts in history. The U.S. Government relocated nearly 124,000 individuals out of Afghanistan following the collapse of the Afghan security forces.

Question. How do you address concerns that the vetting process for SIV applicants was compromised due to the rapid pace of the withdrawal?

Answer. I was not involved in the vetting process. Candidates for processing under the auspices of the task force I led before the withdrawal had already completed security processing. During and after the withdrawal, I understand that Consular officers, intelligence, law enforcement, and counterterrorism professionals con-

ducted screening and security vetting for all SIV applicants and other vulnerable Afghans in third countries before they were allowed to travel to the United States.

Question. What steps were taken to verify identities and eligibility of SIV applicants under the chaotic conditions of the withdrawal?

Answer. Between July 30 and August 14, 2021, Operation Allies Refuge relocated nearly 2,000 individuals who had completed their SIV background checks and received their SIVs or were pending a medical exam. Between August 14 and August 30, 2021, military airlifts relocated many more at-risk Afghans. Consular officers, intelligence, law enforcement, and counterterrorism professionals conducted screening and security vetting for all SIV applicants and other vulnerable Afghans in third countries before they were allowed to travel to the United States.

Question. What is your strategy to address the safety and security of American personnel in Iraq amidst ongoing regional tensions?

Answer. The safety and security of American personnel is my top priority. I will safeguard the welfare of American citizens and the American personnel under my charge. Iran remains a malign actor in the region, supporting multiple Iran-aligned militias in Iraq that receive weapons, training, and other support from Iran and have attacked U.S. personnel. If confirmed, I will use the full range of U.S. policy tools to stem Iran's influence and protect our personnel while advancing Iraq's security, stability, and sovereignty.

Question. What is the most effective deterrent to Iranian terrorism?

Answer. Iran is a malign influence in the region and supports multiple terrorist and militia groups that advance its interests. If confirmed I will advocate for the use all tools at Unites States' disposal to counter this malign influence including sanctions, diplomatic engagement with allies and partners, and when necessary, military action.

Submitted by Senator Christopher Murphy

ADRIANO ESPAILLAT
13th District, New York
RANKING MEMBER OF THE
APPROPRIATIONS LEGISLATIVE
BRANCH SUBCOMMITTEE
BUDGET COMMITTEE MEMBER

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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

June 13, 2024

SENATE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

WRITTEN TESTIMONY REGARDING CONFIRMATION OF JUAN CARLOS
ITURREGUI, OF MARYLAND, TO BE AMBASSADOR TO THE DOMINICAN
REPUBLIC FROM THE HONORABLE ADRIANO ESPAILLAT, MEMBER OF
CONGRESS REPRESENTING NEW YORK'S 13TH CONGRESSIONAL
DISTRICT

The Honorable Ben Cardin
Chairman
423 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC, 20510

The Honorable James E. Risch
Ranking Member
423 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC, 20510

Dear Chairman Cardin and Ranking Member Risch:

I am writing to express my enthusiastic support for Juan Carlos Iturregui's confirmation as the United States Ambassador to the Dominican Republic. Mr. Iturregui's extensive background and unwavering commitment to strengthening the ties between our two nations make him an exemplary candidate for this important role.

Mr. Iturregui's distinguished career and his profound understanding of the region's socio-economic and political landscapes uniquely position him to advance U.S. interests and foster a robust partnership with the Dominican Republic. His biography reflects a deep dedication to international development and cooperation, as seen in his leadership roles at the Inter-American Foundation, where he has successfully spearheaded numerous initiatives aimed at promoting sustainable development across Latin America and the Caribbean.

The strategic partnership between the United States and the Dominican Republic is of paramount importance. The bipartisan House Resolution 98, which I introduced earlier this Congress, highlights the significance of this bilateral relationship, notes that "the United States and the Dominican Republic share a long history of close relations, including economic, cultural, and familial ties." This resolution underscores our shared commitment to democracy, security, and prosperity in the Western Hemisphere.

Furthermore, the joint readout from the White House on June 10, 2022, emphasizes the critical nature of our engagement with the Dominican Republic and the broader Caribbean region. President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris, in a meeting with leaders of the

Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and the Dominican Republic, reaffirmed the administration's commitment to addressing shared challenges such as climate change, energy security, and economic development. The readout states, "The leaders underscored the importance of strong U.S.-Caribbean partnerships to advance a shared vision for a secure, democratic, and prosperous hemisphere."

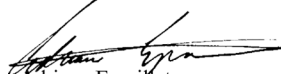
The economic ties between the United States and the Dominican Republic are substantial and growing. In 2022, the two-way trade of goods between our nations was valued at \$22.4 billion, with U.S. exports to the Dominican Republic totaling \$12.9 billion and imports amounting to \$9.5 billion. Additionally, U.S. foreign direct investment (FDI) in the Dominican Republic totaled \$3.4 billion in 2022 and exceeded \$4.0 billion in 2023. These statistics underscore the vital role that economic cooperation plays in the U.S.-Dominican Republic bilateral relationship and the importance of continued engagement between our countries to promote mutual prosperity.

Mr. Iturregui's appointment as Ambassador will further solidify this vision. His expertise in navigating complex international issues, coupled with his dedication to fostering inclusive growth and development, will prove invaluable to our bilateral relations. His leadership will undoubtedly help advance shared goals, including the promotion of democratic values, economic cooperation, and regional security for the future of our Hemisphere.

In conclusion, I strongly urge the Committee to confirm Juan Carlos Iturregui as the United States Ambassador to the Dominican Republic. His exceptional qualifications and proven track record make him the ideal representative to strengthen and expand the enduring relationship between our two nations.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Adriano Espaillat
Member of Congress

Submitted by Senator Christopher Murphy



@AfghanEvac | contact@afghanevac.org | afghanevac.org

EIN:87-3921693 | 501(c)3

6/10/2024

Dear Chairman Cardin and Ranking Member Risch,

I am writing to offer my wholehearted support for the nomination of Ambassador Tracey Jacobson to the position of U.S. Ambassador to Iraq. As President and Chairman of #AfghanEvac, an organization dedicated to the relocation and resettlement of Afghan allies, I have had the privilege of witnessing first hand Ambassador Jacobson's exceptional leadership and unwavering commitment to our mission.

In the critical month preceding the disastrous fall of Kabul, Ambassador Jacobson and her interagency team successfully brought nearly 2,000 Afghan allies and their families to the United States, despite decimated resettlement and refugee support systems. Her leadership was instrumental in beginning the streamlining of the Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) process and establishing a processing center in Doha, Qatar which continues to operate today. These and subsequent efforts have significantly accelerated the pace of SIV arrivals.

During her tenure as the State Department's representative to the DHS-led Operation Allies Welcome from September 2021 to January 2022, Ambassador Jacobson consistently drove innovation and fostered collaboration in an ever-evolving and chaotic situation. Her work with our NGO partners was marked by collegiality, creativity, and transparency, which were essential to our success in increasing the rate of SIV arrivals. It is noteworthy that in the last nine months of 2020, there were almost no SIV arrivals, a stark contrast to the progress achieved under her guidance.

Ambassador Jacobson's contributions to the Afghan relocation efforts have had a lasting and meaningful impact. I have known her to be an energetic, committed, and mission-oriented leader. Her strategic vision and ability to navigate complex interagency dynamics make her an ideal candidate for the role of U.S. Ambassador to Iraq.

I am confident that Ambassador Jacobson will bring the same level of dedication and excellence to her new role, and I fully support her nomination.

Thank you for considering this recommendation. If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Shawn VanDiver
President
#AfghanEvac