

NOMINATIONS

THURSDAY, JUNE 16, 2022

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

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:19 a.m., in Room SD-419, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Benjamin L. Cardin presiding.

Present: Senators Cardin [presiding], Shaheen, Schatz, Van Hollen, Rubio, Romney, Portman, Young, Cruz, and Hagerty.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. BENJAMIN L. CARDIN, U.S. SENATOR FROM MARYLAND

Senator CARDIN. The Senate Foreign Relations Committee will come to order.

We are here today to consider several important nominations: Dr. Tamara Cofman Wittes to be an Assistant Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development in the Middle East; Mr. Michael Alan Ratney to be Ambassador to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia; Mr. Timothy T. Davis to be Ambassador to the State of Qatar; and Dr. Geeta Rao Gupta to be Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues.

Congratulations to all of you and we thank you very much for your public service and your willingness, in many cases, to continue in public service.

You are all eminently qualified for the positions that you have been nominated for, and we thank you for being willing to serve at this challenging time in public service and we also thank your families.

We would ask when you have an opportunity to address the committee, if you have family members that are present we would welcome your introduction of your family members.

Dr. Tamara Cofman Wittes currently is working at the State Department as a senior advisor in the Office of the Ambassador-at-Large for Sanctions Policy. She was for more than a decade a senior fellow in the Center for Middle East Policy at the Brookings Institution where she directed research and publications on U.S. policies in the Middle East.

Dr. Wittes previously served as Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs from November of 2009 to January 2012 and was one of the first recipients of the Rabin/Peres Peace Award established by President Bill Clinton in 1997.

Dr. Wittes is well known as one of our country's leading experts on the politics and development challenges in the Middle East region.

The Middle East is, obviously, a critically important area for U.S. national security, as the President just recently announced he will be visiting that region next month.

Michael Alan Ratney is a career member of the Senior Foreign Service with the rank of Minister-Counselor and is currently the acting Deputy Director of the Department of State's Foreign Service Institute.

Mr. Ratney recently served as charge at the U.S. Embassy in Jerusalem where I had a chance to visit him and see firsthand his incredible talent as a diplomat and the respect that he earned not just with the Israelis but with the Palestinians and with the major players in the region.

If confirmed, Mr. Ratney would serve at a critical time in U.S.-Saudi affairs as relations have been strained, given the kingdom's human rights abuses, particularly its involvement in the brutal murder of U.S. resident and Washington Post columnist Jamal Khashoggi and its controversial military campaign in Yemen.

President Biden is scheduled to visit Saudi Arabia in July. The administration has looked to Saudi Arabia and others to step up oil supply amid rising gas prices after the U.S. banned Russian oil imports over Russia's invasion of Ukraine. This will be a critically important assignment and we look forward to hearing from Mr. Ratney how he will deal with those challenges.

Timothy T. Davis is a career member of the Senior Foreign Service with the rank of counselor who most recently served as the executive assistant to the Secretary of State.

Prior to that, Mr. Davis served as the U.S. counsel general for Basra and southern Iraq. He served in the United States Marine Corps for nearly a decade, I understand, following in your father's footsteps, who is here, who is a master sergeant.

It is an honor to have both of the Davises here today, and you served including in operations in the Horn of Africa and Iraq before joining the Foreign Service.

The Government of Qatar played a leading role in addressing the crisis in Afghanistan, assisting with the evacuation last August, providing diplomatic support and housing more than 58,000 Afghans during the noncombatant evacuation operations from Kabul.

On the other hand, I am deeply concerned about the exploitation and abuse of migrant workers in Qatar, with workers exposed to forced labor, unpaid wages, and excessive working hours as the country prepares for the World Cup in November.

Dr. Geeta Rao Gupta is currently a senior fellow at the United Nations Foundation and senior advisor to Co-Impact. While at the United Nations Foundation, Dr. Gupta founded and served as the executive director of the 3D Program for Girls and Women.

She currently serves as co-chair of the WHO Independent Oversight and Advisory Committee for Health Emergencies and chairs the Global Advisory Board of WomenLift Health, a new initiative to promote women's leadership in global health. Dr. Gupta is well qualified for this key position for U.S. foreign policy advancement of equality for women.

The position for which you have been nominated are all highly important, each requiring specific skills and experience.

Once again, I thank you very much for your willingness to serve, and I will now yield to my colleague and friend, Senator Young.

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

Senator YOUNG. Thank you, Chairman.

I, too, want to thank our four nominees today for their willingness and, in some cases, their continued willingness to serve the United States of America in these important positions.

As the ranking member of this committee's Near East panel, I am hopeful to hear from all of our nominees today on how they will advance American leadership and interests in this pivotal region of the world.

While we cannot predict how the face of U.S. relations with the Middle East will change over the coming years, now is a crucial moment for the United States to embrace the collective capabilities of our allies and partners in the region as we turn our attention to strategic great power competition.

While many are justifiably focused on the war in Ukraine, the looming crisis in Taiwan, and the South China Sea, this competition is also taking place in the Middle East.

If we want to succeed in this competition, we must find the best way forward to balance our interests while remaining the partner of choice for those in the Middle East.

Unlike in years past, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and others in the region have options for security partnerships.

Our task must be to enforce and uphold our standards while recognizing the fact that if we move goalposts or set unattainable goals we will risk pushing them closer to China and Russia instead of keeping them in our corner.

As the regime in Tehran marches towards a nuclear weapon and fomenting terror in Yemen, Syria, Lebanon, and throughout the Gulf, we must employ some empathy in understanding the threat that our partners in the region are facing, and the urgent task of hardening their countries to defend their people.

At the same time, we must not ignore the need to advance real development, diplomatic, and humanitarian priorities.

But, again, if our policy actions drive them into the arms of Russia and China we will be undercutting these very priorities.

Our witnesses will be approaching all of these challenges from different perspectives and I look forward to hearing their views on this conversation.

Thank you again to our nominees for their willingness to serve the United States in their respective roles. I look forward to our discussion today.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator CARDIN. Thank you, Senator Young.

I am going to ask consent, without objection, to put into the record the introductory comments of Senator Shaheen for Dr. Gupta.

Senator Shaheen is in the markup of the Senate Armed Services Committee on their National Defense Authorization Act. So that is the reason why she could not be here.

I read her introductory comments and it is a glowing introduction on Dr. Gupta. She says, "I cannot think of a more qualified candidate and I look forward to working with you once you have been confirmed."

So without objection, that will be made part of the record, and without objection, I am going to enter into the record the letter from the American Jewish Committee in support of Dr. Wittes.

[The information referred to above follows:]

STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD REGARDING DR. GEETA RAO GUPTA
SUBMITTED BY SENATOR JEANNE SHAHEEN

I am pleased to finally get to introduce to this committee Dr. Geeta Rao Gupta, President Biden's nominee to be Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues.

Having spent her career in service to gender equality and women's empowerment, Dr. Gupta is eminently qualified for the role to which she has been nominated. For more than 20 years, she has worked to advance women's and girls' rights at every stage of life.

She has researched and implemented strategies to promote gender equality and development issues, including poverty reduction and economic empowerment.

As Deputy Executive Director for Programs at UNICEF, Dr. Gupta oversaw programs that provide fundamental services to the world's most underserved communities and address the factors that contribute to gender inequality from birth.

While with the International Center for Research on Women, she studied the intersection of health outcomes and gender equality, particularly where women and girls are impacted by HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases. Her devotion to the subject resulted in a landmark 10-year program to understand women's vulnerability to HIV/AIDS in order to tailor international interventions to help women.

She knows better than most the impact that gender norms and inequalities have on economic opportunities and health outcomes for women. This is why I am thrilled to finally have her nomination considered by this committee.

The Office of Global Women's Issues is an integral part of the Department of State's implementation of a whole-of-government devotion to women's equality and empowerment. And we know that women must be involved in the process of policy and decision making. With the Women, Peace and Security Act, it's a requirement that the U.S. Government promote women's involvement abroad but also within our own Government. The Office of Global Women's Issues is important to achieving both of these aims.

I also want to take a moment to recognize the devoted staff at the Office of Global Women's Issues. For three years under the previous administration, the office went without an Ambassador. Now, because of delays by this committee, it has sat without a head for over a year. Despite this, the staff of the GWI continue to work hard to promote women's rights around the world.

We must now support them by confirming Dr. Geeta Rao Gupta to be Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues. I cannot think of a more qualified candidate, and I look forward to working with you once you've been confirmed, Geeta.

Thank you.

Senator CARDIN. With that, Dr. Wittes, glad to hear from you.

STATEMENT OF DR. TAMARA COFMAN WITTES OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, NOMINATED TO BE AN ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR OF THE UNITED STATES AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Ms. WITTES. Thank you, Chairman Cardin, Ranking Member Young, distinguished members of the committee. I am so grateful for your consideration today.

I am deeply honored by the trust placed in me by the President and the Vice President, and by the support of USAID Adminis-

trator Samantha Power, and I can never sufficiently express my thanks to my husband, Ben, who is here today, and my sons, Gabe and EJ.

I was born at a U.S. Army hospital in Ankara, Turkey, where my father was serving at our Embassy on behalf of the U.S. Information Agency. As a young adult, I lived in Israel on kibbutz and then again while studying at Tel Aviv University.

I have spent over 20 years working on Middle East policy and traveled through nearly every country of the region, and I was also privileged to serve the American people in the Near East Affairs Bureau at the State Department, where I worked with our embassies across the region to support civil society and democratic reforms, and I organized the first wave of U.S. assistance to Tunisia after the uprising in 2011.

Engagement with the governments and peoples of the Middle East has been part of my entire personal and professional life and that is why I am so excited at the prospect of leading USAID's Middle East Bureau and so grateful for your consideration.

The region today presents tremendous challenges and human suffering, as well as opportunities to build greater human security, stability, and prosperity. Stabilizing the Middle East and strengthening our partnerships there will advance American interests and values while enhancing U.S. national security.

The people of this region are overwhelmingly young and seek a better future. So lasting stability demands human security and governments that are transparent, responsive, and accountable to their people.

It is essential that America's civilian engagement in this region, our diplomatic and economic engagement, and especially our development assistance be robust and persistent.

All of Administrator Power's priorities for USAID globally, including COVID response, fighting corruption, advancing democracy and diversity frame the work ahead in the Middle East.

Many states in the region, including key American partners, have been hit hard by COVID-19, a health crisis and an economic contraction layered on top of existing crises in governance and security.

Social and political and economic progress will be absolutely key to regional stability, and USAID's development work is a central tool in that effort.

Administrator Power is also focused on pushing back on the People's Republic of China's predatory model of development, combating corruption and supporting democratic progress, and if I am confirmed that will be a focus of my work as well.

Iran's destabilizing influence around the region, bitter conflicts in Syria and Yemen, and a tough political environment in Libya all present obstacles to promoting stability and prosperity in the region.

USAID provides life-saving support now and can play a key role down the road in securing the peace.

Despite all these challenges, I also see opportunities for the United States. I am grateful for this committee's bipartisan support for the Abraham Accords.

As I said when they were first announced, they relieve Israelis' sense of isolation and they reflect shared interests between Israel and her neighbors. The Accords offer a foundation for more cooperation between Arab states and Israel on shared interests, including on development.

And so if I am confirmed, I look forward to engaging with you on how we can build on the Abraham Accords to bolster positive engagement across the region on issues like energy, environment, water, and health.

Another opportunity is MEPPA, the Nita Lowey Middle East Partnership for Peace Act. I believe strongly in the power of people-to-people engagement. It can encourage leaders to take difficult steps and it can rebuild Israelis' and Palestinians' hope in the possibility of coexistence.

If I am confirmed, I look forward to working with you on this exciting new initiative. I understand that advancing stability in the Middle East in the face of crisis, conflict, and challenge is no simple task. I want to emphasize to you that I see no monopoly on wisdom on these issues.

My commitment to you is to open and honest engagement, transparency, dialogue with Congress with the shared goal of advancing American interests.

I am so grateful for your consideration and look forward to your questions. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Wittes follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF DR. TAMARA COFMAN WITTES

Chairman Cardin, Ranking Member Young, and distinguished members of the committee: I am deeply honored to appear before you today as the President's nominee to serve as Assistant Administrator for the Middle East at the U.S. Agency for International Development. I also want to thank Administrator Power for her support, and I can never sufficiently express my gratitude to my husband Ben, and my sons, EJ and Gabe.

I was born at a U.S. Army hospital in Ankara, Turkey, where my father was serving at our Embassy with the U.S. Information Agency. I spent my childhood summers in and around the Middle East as he served in Riyadh, Tel Aviv, and several other posts. As a professional, I have spent over twenty years working on Middle East policy and traveled through nearly every country in the region. I was also privileged to serve the American people in the State Department's Near Eastern Affairs Bureau. In that position, I worked with our embassies across the region to support civil society and democratic reforms, and I organized the first wave of U.S. assistance to Tunisia after the 2011 Uprising.

Engagement with the governments and peoples of the Middle East has been part of my entire personal and professional life, which is why I'm so honored to be considered to lead USAID's Middle East Bureau and so grateful for your consideration.

The Middle East today presents tremendous challenges and human suffering, as well as opportunities to build greater human security, stability, and prosperity. Stabilizing the Middle East and strengthening our partnerships there will advance American interests and values while enhancing U.S. national security.

The peoples of the region are overwhelmingly young and seek a better future. Lasting stability demands human security and governments that are transparent, responsive, and accountable to their people. It is essential that America's civilian engagement in this region—our diplomatic and economic engagement, and especially our development assistance—be robust and persistent.

Administrator Power's priorities for the Agency for International Development globally—COVID-19, People's Republic of China (PRC), corruption, democracy, and diversity—frame the work ahead in the Middle East.

Many states in the Middle East, including key American partners, have been hit hard by COVID-19—a health crisis and economic contraction layered atop existing crises in governance and security. Social, political, and economic progress will be ab-

olutely key to regional stability. USAID's development assistance is a central tool in that work.

Administrator Power is also focused on pushing back on the PRC's predatory model of development, combating corruption, and supporting democratic progress—and if I am confirmed, these will be a focus of my work as well.

In addition, Iran's destabilizing influence around the region, bitter conflicts in Syria and Yemen, and a challenging political environment in Libya present major challenges to promoting stability and prosperity in the region. The U.S. Government is working with regional and international partners to resolve these conflicts. USAID provides life-saving humanitarian support now and can also play a key role in securing peace for the future.

While the region presents many challenges, the Middle East also presents opportunities for the United States. One that most drives me is the Nita M. Lowey Middle East Partnership for Peace Act. I believe in the power of people-to-people engagement. It can grow the constituency for peace, encourage leaders to take difficult steps towards peace, and rebuild Israelis' and Palestinians' hope in the possibility of coexistence. If I am confirmed, I look forward to working with Congress on this exciting initiative.

There are also opportunities for regional cooperation on shared issues like energy, water security, and health. In marking the anniversary of the Abraham Accords, Secretary Blinken said that "We want to widen the circle of peaceful diplomacy." I am grateful for this committee's strong bipartisan support for the Abraham Accords and look forward to engaging with each of you on how we can bolster positive engagement across the region.

In closing, I want to emphasize that advancing stability in the Middle East in the face of crisis, conflict, and challenges from malign actors is no simple task. There is no monopoly on wisdom about these issues. My commitment to you is to maintain open and honest engagement, transparency, and dialogue with Congress, with the shared goal of advancing American interests.

I am grateful for your consideration of my nomination and look forward to your questions. Thank you.

Senator CARDIN. Thank you very much for your testimony.
Mr. Ratney?

**STATEMENT OF MICHAEL ALAN RATNEY OF MASSACHUSETTS,
A CAREER MEMBER OF THE SENIOR FOREIGN SERVICE,
CLASS OF MINSTER-COUNSELOR, NOMINATED TO BE AM-
BASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF
THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE KINGDOM OF
SAUDI ARABIA**

Mr. RATNEY. Chairman Cardin, Ranking Member Young, distinguished members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today as President Biden's nominee to be the United States Ambassador to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

I would like to thank the President and Secretary Blinken for the confidence they have shown in me with this nomination. If confirmed, I commit to working closely with this committee and with the U.S. Congress, more broadly, on our country's critical national security interests in Saudi Arabia.

I have spent more than 30 years in the Foreign Service, much of that in the Middle East, and I found that Saudi Arabia represents so much of what is compelling and at the same time challenging about working in the region and advancing U.S. interests there.

The prospect of being confirmed as U.S. Ambassador to Saudi Arabia is very exciting and I would like to take a moment to thank my wife, Karen Sasahara, who is also a Foreign Service Officer and is with us today, as well as my father and my family, for all their support.

If confirmed, I am committed to a strong and sustainable U.S.-Saudi partnership that advances U.S. interests and reflects U.S. values.

We have so much at stake in this relationship: encouraging the modernization project underway, including on interfaith tolerance, building on our vital counterterrorism cooperation, working to help Saudi Arabia defend its territory and deter Iran's aggressive behavior, helping to end the horrific war in Yemen, stabilizing global energy markets, deepening our engagement on human rights, and solidifying links with the many thousands of young Saudis, men and women, building their country's future.

My top priority will be the protection of U.S. citizens. The Iran-backed Houthis in Yemen launched more than 400 cross-border attacks last year alone on infrastructure, schools, mosques, and workplaces, endangering the 70,000 U.S. citizens there, along with the Saudi population.

If confirmed, I will work to strengthen Saudi defenses through security cooperation and training, demonstrating the durable American commitment to our partners and allies and to our values.

The U.S. has a powerful interest in ending the war in Yemen, a tragic conflict that has left many lives and families destroyed and the Yemeni population impoverished.

To that end, the President ended U.S. support for offensive operations in Yemen, even as we remain committed to helping Saudi Arabia defend its people and territory.

Fortunately, over the last two months, the warring parties have accepted and recently extended a truce, bringing a measure of relief to millions of Yemenis. This truce would not have been possible without Saudi Arabia's support.

I look forward to working closely with our U.S. Special Envoy for Yemen to support U.N.-led efforts to transform that truce into a durable and inclusive resolution to the conflict.

Iran poses a significant threat to U.S. and Saudi interests, as well as to those of our other regional allies and partners. We must work with our Saudi partners to counter Iranian threats to global energy flows, regional stability, and the lives of our fellow U.S. citizens in the region.

If confirmed, I will prioritize working with Saudi leaders on mitigating and containing Iranian threats to these interests.

The President and the Secretary have rightly made human rights a key pillar of our foreign policy. This was a key aspect of the administration's reorientation of the U.S.-Saudi bilateral relationship and we consistently have made clear to Saudi officials that progress on human rights will help strengthen the bilateral relationship and make it more sustainable over the long term.

The Saudis have made important reforms already, including concrete steps to integrate women into the workplace and economy. But these reforms are incomplete.

If confirmed, I will continue to make that a priority.

The United States and Saudi Arabia have extensive economic ties and, if confirmed, my team and I will work hard to support American businesses in the Saudi market, especially as Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 economic program presents new opportunities for Americans to compete.

Saudi Arabia is, of course, a major player in global energy. Recently, the OPEC+ ministers endorsed a recommendation to increase production quotas in July and August.

This will, hopefully, contribute to providing relief to Americans struggling with high gas prices, though it does not necessarily address the broader factors now destabilizing global energy markets, particularly Russia's unprovoked and unjustified war against Ukraine.

Energy supplies and encouraging a Saudi energy policy that aligns with U.S. priorities will be a major focus of my discussions with the Saudi Government.

The United States and Saudi Arabia established diplomatic relations back in 1931. Over the years, as our relationship has become more complex and multifaceted, it has remained key to U.S. national security.

If confirmed, I will work hard to ensure that the U.S.-Saudi partnership serves U.S. interests and reflects U.S. values.

I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Ratney follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF MICHAEL ALAN RATNEY

Chairman Cardin, Ranking Member Young, distinguished members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today as President Biden's nominee to be the United States Ambassador to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. I would like to thank the President and Secretary Blinken for the confidence they have shown in me with this nomination. If confirmed, I commit to working closely with this committee, and the U.S. Congress more broadly, on our country's critical national security interests in Saudi Arabia.

I have spent more than 30 years in the Foreign Service, much of that in the Middle East. I have found that Saudi Arabia represents so much of what is compelling, and at the same time challenging, about working in that region and advancing U.S. interests there. The prospect of being confirmed as U.S. Ambassador to Saudi Arabia is very exciting, and I would like to take a moment to thank my wife, Karen Sasahara, who is also a Foreign Service Officer, as well as my father and family for all their support.

If confirmed, I am committed to a strong and sustainable U.S.-Saudi partnership that advances U.S. interests and reflects U.S. values. We have so much at stake in this relationship—encouraging the modernization project underway, including on interfaith tolerance; building on our vital counterterrorism cooperation; working to help Saudi Arabia defend its territory and deter Iran's aggressive behavior; helping to end the horrific war in Yemen; stabilizing global energy markets; deepening our engagement on human rights; and solidifying links with the many thousands of young Saudis, men and women, building their country's future.

My top priority will be the protection of U.S. citizens. The Iran-backed Houthis in Yemen launched more than 400 cross-border attacks last year on infrastructure, schools, mosques, and workplaces, endangering 70,000 resident U.S. citizens, along with the Saudi population. If confirmed, I will work to strengthen Saudi defenses through security cooperation and training, demonstrating the durable American commitment to our partners and allies and to our values.

The U.S. has a powerful interest in ending the war in Yemen, a tragic conflict that has left many lives and families destroyed, and the Yemeni population impoverished. To that end, the President ended U.S. support for offensive operations in Yemen, even as we remain committed to helping Saudi Arabia defend its people and territory.

Fortunately, over the last two months the warring parties have accepted, and recently extended, a truce, bringing a measure of relief to millions of Yemenis. This truce would not have been possible without Saudi Arabia's support. I look forward to working closely with our U.S. Special Envoy for Yemen to support U.N.-led efforts to transform that truce into a durable and inclusive resolution to the conflict.

Iran poses a significant threat to U.S. and Saudi interests, as well as those of our other regional allies and partners. We must work with our Saudi partners to counter Iranian threats to global energy flows, regional stability, and the lives of

our fellow U.S. citizens in the region. If confirmed, I will prioritize working with Saudi leaders on mitigating and containing Iranian threats to these interests.

The President and the Secretary have rightly made human rights a key pillar of our foreign policy; this was a key aspect of the administration's reorientation of the U.S.-Saudi bilateral relationship, and we consistently have made clear to Saudi officials that progress on human rights will help strengthen the bilateral relationship and make it more sustainable over the long term. The Saudis have made important reforms already, including concrete steps to integrate women into the workplace and economy. But these reforms are incomplete. If confirmed, I will continue to make this a priority.

The United States and Saudi Arabia have extensive economic ties, and if confirmed, my team and I will work hard to support American businesses in the Saudi market, especially as Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 economic program presents new opportunities for Americans to compete. Saudi Arabia is of course a major player in global energy. Recently, the OPEC+ Ministers endorsed a recommendation to increase production quotas in July and August. This will hopefully contribute to providing relief to Americans struggling with high gas prices, though it does not necessarily address the broader factors now destabilizing global energy markets, particularly Russia's unprovoked and unjustified war against Ukraine. Energy supplies and encouraging a Saudi energy policy that aligns with U.S. priorities, will be a major focus of my discussions with the Saudi Government.

The United States and Saudi Arabia established diplomatic relations back in 1931. Over the years, as our relationship has become more complex and multifaceted, it has remained key to U.S. national security. If confirmed, I will work hard to ensure that the U.S.-Saudi partnership serves U.S. interests and reflects U.S. values. I welcome your questions.

Senator CARDIN. Thank you very much for your comments.
We will now go to Mr. Davis.

STATEMENT OF TIMMY T. DAVIS OF VIRGINIA, 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 STATE OF QATAR

Mr. DAVIS. Chairman Cardin, Ranking Member Young, distinguished members of this committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today as President Biden's nominee to be United States Ambassador to the State of Qatar.

I am honored by this nomination and grateful to the President and Secretary Blinken for the confidence they have shown in me. If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with this committee and Congress to advance U.S. foreign policy and national security interest in Qatar.

I want to thank my family, Patti and Parker, who are here today. I am so grateful for their support and sacrifice.

Patti, in particular, has carried the burden of being both parents with grace and has helped create a smart, thoughtful young man in Parks. They exemplify the dedication and service of all of our Foreign Service families.

I want to also recognize family members lost, Robbie and Jim. My father, Carlie, served as a U.S. Marine for over 30 years with service from Vietnam to Lebanon, and my mom, Eddie, has been the foundation of a family of Marines. They are both with us today.

The family of Marines include my sister, Yolanda, her husband, Marc, and two of my uncles, Isaac and Woody. My sister, Tammy, is a university research nurse.

My grandparents, Clotee and Jack Davis, Edna and Reverend Arthur Johnson, built a foundation in Mississippi out of hard work and faith.

That I sit before you today is a testament to their belief in an America of great possibility. If confirmed, I would be only the eighth African-American Ambassador to be posted to the Middle East.

My son, Parker, asked last week if my nomination was a big deal for the Davis family. I told him his great grandparents would not believe it but they had worked hard every day of their lives to make it possible.

As a New Orleanian, I know firsthand the benefits of a strong bilateral relationship with Qatar. When Katrina destroyed communities and killed thousands in 2005, Qatar donated \$100 million in humanitarian aid for medical care, reconstruction of homes and places of worship, and educational scholarships.

I have stood in the Boys and Girls Club in Pass Christian, Mississippi, that was rebuilt with Qatari funds. Their generosity, quite simply, helped rebuild lives.

Our partnership with Qatar again yielded dividends when the United States withdrew from Afghanistan and Qatar opened its doors as a critical transit site for over 75,000 U.S. citizens, lawful permanent residents, and Afghans.

Qatar is still helping with our efforts to resettle Afghans and, if confirmed, I would work to deliver on President Biden's commitment to take on Afghans who worked side by side with U.S. forces by continuing that cooperation.

Mr. Chairman, I know from my decade of service as a Marine, including overseas deployments in Iraq and the Horn of Africa, that we cannot defend our country without support from our allies and partners.

Security and defense cooperation is vital to our strong relationship with Qatar. Since 1996, Qatar has hosted Al Udeid airbase, our largest base in the region, and home of U.S. CENTCOM's forward operating headquarters.

Qatar is a safe, secure, and welcoming home to 8,000 U.S. military personnel. President Biden designated Qatar as a major non-NATO ally earlier this year as a testament to our longstanding strategic partnership.

The President and the Secretary have been clear that human rights are a pillar of our foreign policy. If confirmed, a primary focus for our bilateral engagement will be to advance human rights and encourage full implementation of labor reforms Qatar has made in previous years. I believe honest conversations about human rights will make our relationship stronger and more resilient.

Qatar plays an important role in bolstering global energy security and as our European partners look to reduce their dependence on Russian oil and gas in the wake of Russia's brutal and unprovoked war in Ukraine.

If confirmed, I would encourage Qatar's positive contributions. I also would make it a priority to continue working to address—together to address the climate crisis, including by working with Qatar to continue its progress on reducing domestic methane emissions.

Qatar's economic assistance to and diplomatic engagement with the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza helps reduce tensions

in the region. If confirmed, I would work to further develop the pragmatic relationship between Qatar and Israel and further regional stability and security underpinned by the Abraham Accords.

Our commercial relationship with Qatar directly benefits the American people and, if confirmed, I would seek to deepen commercial ties.

Qatar has already invested tens of billions of dollars in the U.S. economy and wants to increase that, including through engagement with state governments.

Finally, as Qatar hosts the FIFA Men's World Cup tournament this year, my highest priority will be ensuring the safety, security, and dignity of visiting U.S. fans.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to testify today and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Davis follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF TIMMY T. DAVIS

Chairman Cardin, Ranking Member Young, distinguished members of this committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today as President Biden's nominee to be the United States Ambassador to the State of Qatar.

I am honored by this nomination and grateful to the President and Secretary Blinken for the confidence they have shown in me. If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with this committee and Congress to advance U.S. foreign policy and national security interests in Qatar.

I want to thank my family, Patti and Parker; I am so grateful for their support and sacrifice. It exemplifies the dedication and service of all our Foreign Service families. My father, Carlie, served as a Marine for over 30 years, with service from Vietnam to Lebanon, and my mom, Eddie, has been the foundation of a family of Marines, including my sister, Yolanda, her husband, Marc, and two of my uncles. My sister, Tammy, is a university research nurse. My grandparents, Clotee and Jack Davis; Edna and Reverend Arthur Johnson built a foundation in Mississippi out of hard work and faith. That I sit before you today is a testament to their belief in an America of great possibility. If confirmed, I would be only the 8th African American Ambassador posted to the Middle East. My son, Parker, asked last week if my nomination was a big deal for the Davis family. I told him his great grandparents would not believe it, but they worked hard every day to make it possible.

As a New Orleanian, I know firsthand the benefits of a strong bilateral relationship with Qatar. When Katrina destroyed communities and killed thousands in 2005, Qatar donated \$100 million in humanitarian aid for medical care, reconstruction of homes and places of worship, and educational scholarships. I have stood in the Boys and Girls Club in Pass Christian, MS that was rebuilt with Qatari funds. Their generosity helped rebuild lives.

Our partnership with Qatar again yielded dividends when the United States withdrew from Afghanistan and Qatar opened its doors as a critical transit site for over 75,000 U.S. citizens, Lawful Permanent Residents, and Afghans. Qatar is still helping with our efforts to resettle Afghans, and if confirmed, I would work to deliver on President Biden's commitment to take on Afghans who worked side-by-side with U.S. forces by continuing our cooperation.

Mr. Chairman, I know from my decade of service as a Marine, including overseas deployments, that we cannot defend our country without support from our allies and partners. Security and defense cooperation is vital to our strong relationship with Qatar. Since 1996, Qatar has hosted Al Udeid Air Base, our largest base in the region and the home of USCENTCOM's forward operating headquarters. Qatar is a safe, secure, and welcoming home to 8,000 U.S. military personnel. President Biden designated Qatar as a Major Non-NATO Ally earlier this year as a testament to our long-standing strategic partnership.

The President and the Secretary have been clear that human rights are a pillar of our foreign policy. If confirmed, a primary focus of our bilateral engagement will be to advance human rights and encourage full implementation of labor reforms Qatar has made in previous years. I believe honest conversations about human rights will make our relationship stronger and more resilient.

Qatar plays an important role in bolstering global energy security as our European partners look to reduce their dependence on Russian oil and gas in the wake

of Russia's brutal and unprovoked war in Ukraine. If confirmed, I would encourage Qatar's positive contributions. I also would make it a priority to continue working together to address the climate crisis, including by working with Qatar to continue its progress on reducing domestic methane emissions.

Qatar's economic assistance to and diplomatic engagement with the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza helps reduce tensions in the region. If confirmed, I would work to further develop the pragmatic relationship between Qatar and Israel, and further regional stability and security underpinned by the Abraham Accords.

Our commercial relationship with Qatar directly benefits the American people, and if confirmed, I would seek to deepen commercial ties. Qatar has already invested tens of billions of dollars in the U.S. economy and wants to increase, including through engagement with state governments. Recent deals between Qatari and American companies like Boeing's sale of cargo planes to Qatar Airways have created tens of thousands of American jobs. I would also advocate on behalf of American companies pursuing opportunities in Qatar.

Finally, as Qatar hosts the FIFA Men's World Cup tournament this year, my highest priority would be ensuring the safety, security, and dignity of visiting U.S. fans.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to testify today and I look forward to your questions.

Senator CARDIN. Mr. Davis, thank you for your testimony.

We do note that there are three generations of your family here with your parents and your son.

And, Parker, we want you to know your father's appointment is a very big deal and that he has made an incredible contribution to the progress in peace globally.

So it is wonderful to have your family present with us.

Mr. DAVIS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator CARDIN. With that, Dr. Gupta?

STATEMENT OF DR. GEETA RAO GUPTA OF VIRGINIA, NOMINATED TO BE AMBASSADOR-AT-LARGE FOR GLOBAL WOMEN'S ISSUES

Ms. GUPTA. Chairman Cardin, Ranking Member Young, and members of the committee, it is an honor to be before you as President Biden's nominee to be the next U.S. Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues at the Department of State.

Here with me today are my husband, Arvind, and our daughter, Nayna, whose commitment to justice inspires me every day. I want to underscore how much their love and support mean to me as well as that of all my friends and family who are probably watching online, particularly my late parents, Sarah and Srini Rao, who modeled for me the value of public service.

I am grateful for the trust placed in me by the President and Secretary Blinken to serve the American people and advance the economic rights, leadership, and safety of women and girls around the world.

If confirmed, I pledge to work closely with the administration and Congress in a bipartisan way to lead the Secretary's Office of Global Women's Issues and the integration of gender equality across the work of the department.

Research suggests countries are more prosperous and peaceful when women have economic security and are fully able to participate in their societies. Investing in women and advancing their human rights, as the Office of Global Women's Issues is mandated to do, is one of the most powerful ways to advance U.S. foreign policy interests and national security priorities.

Mr. Chairman, I am proud to be a U.S. citizen and a first-generation immigrant. I belong to a family of professional women, each of whom dedicated their lives to serving their communities, and from a family of men who supported them fully.

I was aware that the opportunities available to me and the roles exemplified by the women in my family were not the same as those available to the majority of women globally.

This led me to focus my doctoral research on understanding the barriers that women face in pursuing a career and, ultimately, propelled me toward a career focused on rectifying the inequities experienced by women, and that became both my passion and my profession.

Over the past three decades as the leader of a gender and development research institution, a senior executive of a multilateral organization, and as an adviser to philanthropies, I have learned that economic security and the guarantee of health and personal safety are critical ingredients for women to thrive and prosper, and when they do so do their families, communities, and nations.

It is for this reason that I have dedicated myself to advocating for evidence-based policies and programs to allow women and girls to fulfill their economic and leadership potential and conduct their lives with dignity, without fear of violence or discrimination.

Through that work, I witnessed the courage, resourcefulness, and resilience of women in the face of seemingly insurmountable challenges, such as in the Zaatari camp for Syrian refugees in Jordan or in the Rohingya camps in Bangladesh.

From the women entrepreneurs in Kenya and India who sustain small businesses despite limited access to financial services, to the brave women in Liberia, who mobilized against great odds to demand peace for their families and communities, I have seen women use the limited resources they have to provide for their families and protect others.

Mr. Chairman, the status of women and girls has improved since I began my career. However, the pace of change has been slow and the gains are vulnerable to backsliding. COVID-19 has forced many women to leave their jobs and countries across the globe report sharp increases in violence against women and girls.

The pandemic, however, is not the only threat facing women globally today. They are uniquely affected by the climate crisis, the weakening of democratic institutions, and the conflict, political instability, and fragility that characterize more countries today than ever before.

Today, in real time, we are all witnessing the courage and resilience of Ukrainian women as they fight alongside men and seek safety for their children and families.

Simultaneously, we watch in awe and determination the Afghan women who, despite the threat of imprisonment and torture, are protesting increasingly stringent limits that have been placed on their rights by the Taliban. Those brave women need their voices amplified and championed.

Women's equality is a moral and economic imperative of U.S. foreign policy. It has transcended both Democratic and Republican administrations. Ever since the position of Ambassador-at-Large for

Global Women's Issues was established in 2009 with bipartisan congressional support, the issue has been a foreign policy priority.

If confirmed, I will continue this bipartisan tradition and work closely with interagencies, civil society, government, and private sector partners, and especially with Congress to advance the mandate of the office to integrate gender equality throughout foreign policy.

I confess that I can almost hear my parents say now enough with the talk; go get the job done. So should I be confirmed, I reaffirm to you I am ready to get the job done.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Gupta follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF DR. GEETA RAO GUPTA

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and members of the committee: It is an honor to be before you as President Biden's nominee to be the U.S. Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues at the Department of State.

My husband, Arvind and our daughter, Nayna are here with me today. I want to underscore how much their love and support mean to me, as well as that of all my family members, particularly my late parents, Sarah and Srini Rao.

I am grateful for the trust placed in me by the President and Secretary Blinken to serve the American people and advance the economic rights, leadership and safety of women and girls around the world. If confirmed, I pledge to work closely with the Administration and Congress, in a bipartisan way, to lead the Secretary's Office of Global Women's Issues and the integration of gender equality across the work of the Department.

Research suggests countries are more prosperous, peaceful, and stable when women have economic security and are fully able to participate in their societies. Investing in women and advancing their human rights, as the Office of Global Women's Issues is mandated to do, is one of the most powerful ways to advance U.S. foreign policy interests and national security priorities.

I am proud to be a U.S. citizen and a first-generation immigrant. I belong to a family of professional women, each of whom dedicated their lives to serving their communities—and from a family of men who supported them fully.

Inspired by the values of my family, I was aware that the opportunities available to me and the roles exemplified by the women in my family were not the same as those available to the majority of women globally. This led me to focus my doctoral research in India on understanding the barriers that women face in pursuing a career, and ultimately, propelled me toward a career focused on rectifying the inequities experienced by women—that became both my passion and my profession.

Over the past three decades, as the leader of a gender and development research institution, a senior executive of a multilateral organization, and as an adviser to philanthropies, I have learned that economic security and the guarantee of health and personal safety are critical ingredients for women to thrive and prosper—and when they do, so do their families, communities and nations. It is for this reason that I have dedicated myself to advocating for evidence-based policies and programs to allow women and girls to fulfill their economic and leadership potential and conduct their lives with dignity, without fear of violence or discrimination.

Through that work, I witnessed the courage, resourcefulness and resilience of women in the face of seemingly insurmountable challenges, such as in the Zaatari camp for Syrian refugees in Jordan or the Rohingya camps in Bangladesh, or in Northern Nigeria. From the women entrepreneurs in Kenya and India who sustain small businesses despite limited access to financial services, to the brave women in Liberia who mobilized against great odds to demand peace for their families and communities, I have seen women use the limited resources they have to provide for their families and protect others.

The status of girls and women has improved since I began my career. However, the pace of change has been slow, and the gains are vulnerable to backsliding. COVID-19 has forced many women to leave their jobs, and countries across the globe report sharp increases in violence against women and girls. The pandemic, however, is not the only threat facing women and girls today. They are uniquely affected by the climate crisis, the weakening of democratic institutions, and the political instability and fragility that characterize more countries today than ever before.

Today, in real time, we are all witnessing the courage and resilience of Ukrainian women as they fight alongside men and seek safety for their children and families. Simultaneously, we watch in awe, the determination of Afghan women who despite the threat of imprisonment and torture, are protesting the increasingly stringent limits that are being placed on their rights by the Taliban. Those brave women need their voices amplified and championed.

Women's equality is a moral and economic imperative of U.S. foreign policy. It has transcended both Democratic and Republican administrations. Ever since the position of Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues was established in 2009 with bipartisan Congressional support, the issue has been a foreign policy priority.

If confirmed, I will continue this bipartisan tradition and work closely with inter-agency, civil society, government and private sector partners, and especially with Congress, to advance the mandate of the Office to integrate gender equality throughout U.S. foreign policy.

I confess that I can almost hear my parents say: Enough with the talk—go get the job done! Should I be confirmed, I reaffirm to you: I am ready to get the job done.

Senator CARDIN. Thank you, Dr. Gupta, for listening to your parents.

[Laughter.]

Senator CARDIN. This committee has a great tradition of working across party lines and working with the executive branch on foreign policy.

We pride ourselves in the unity that we can have between the Congress and the executive branch but maintaining the separation of branches. That depends upon the cooperation of our confirmed representatives.

We have four questions that we are going to ask you, each one of you to answer by a simple yes or no. That is extremely important for this committee to be able to carry out its work on behalf of the American people.

I am going to ask all four of you. You will respond to each question individually.

Do you agree to appear before this committee and make officials from your office available to the committee and designated staff when invited? That is assuming you all are confirmed. Do you agree to do that?

[All witnesses answer in the affirmative.]

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

[All witnesses answer in the affirmative.]

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

[All witnesses answer in the affirmative.]

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

[All witnesses answer in the affirmative.]

Senator CARDIN. Congratulations. You passed the first test.

I want to ask—we will have five-minute rounds and we will probably be able to get to a second round.

Let me start on the human rights front and I will start with Dr. Gupta.

Each one of you have major roles to play in regards to advancing American human rights. Women are under attack globally, as you

pointed out in your testimony, but they are particularly vulnerable in Ukraine.

As we know the men, because of the policy, many women have been separated from their—the men have been separated from their families. They are subject to being abused. They are subject to trafficking, et cetera.

In Afghanistan, we invested a great deal and part of the reason for our investment was to help and respect the rights of women in Afghanistan. Now that we are no longer physically present it is much more challenging.

Tell me how you are going to deal with those two concerns that we have in regards to the welfare of women in Ukraine and in Afghanistan.

Ms. GUPTA. Thank you, Senator.

I agree with you Russia's unprovoked attack on Ukraine has had severe impacts on the health, safety, and rights of women there, just as the women left behind in Afghanistan are suffering the roll-back of their rights under the rule of the Taliban.

The majority of women displaced in Ukraine, as we have all seen, are women, children, and the elderly, and I think, if confirmed, as part of the women, peace, and security agenda in Ukraine I would like to see three streams of work move forward.

One is to have methods for documentation, but documentation that is survivor centered and that is trauma informed to be able to document acts of sexual violence, in particular.

I was very disturbed recently to hear the report from the SRSRG Patten after her visit to Ukraine where she got credible reports of rape—gang rape—being used as a weapon of war, and I would like to see that being documented and perpetrators being brought to account.

Obviously, humanitarian assistance should still be targeted to women and children who are most in need or seeking refuge in other countries but also those who are trapped, seeking shelter within Ukraine.

And I would like to establish—would like to see if communication can be established with high-level women still in Ukraine so that we can know what the situation is and continue to monitor it regularly.

In Afghanistan, it is sad to see that the greatest gains that have been made—I visited there, Senator, many years ago and met many of the brave women rights leaders and I could see the gains that they had made. So to see those roll back now is particularly traumatic.

I have been involved in a neighborhood effort to help resettle Afghan families in northern Virginia, and the family that I am taking care of I get firsthand reports of the trauma they went through because of the takeover by the Taliban.

If confirmed, I will work with Special Envoy Amiri, who has been appointed by Secretary Blinken to be placed in the office of GWI, and I will work closely with her to pursue two lines of effort—one, to make clear to the Taliban through our international partners that normalization and any relaxation of the sanctions is contingent upon women's rights being upheld, and to find ways to continue to assist Afghan people through multilateral organizations so

that the money is safeguarded and does not fall into the wrong hands.

So that is what I hope I will be able to do if confirmed.

Thank you, Senator.

Senator CARDIN. Thank you.

Mr. Ratney, I heard your priorities, which are important for the United States. We, certainly, need the Saudis to be more sensitive on the oil prices. We want them to be more engaged in regards to Russia and Ukraine. We, certainly, would like to see progress made to normalization between the Saudis and the Israelis.

But this all needs to be wrapped within our values. The outstanding lack of accountability on the tragic death of Khashoggi is an issue that America cannot ignore.

Tell me how you establish the clear message to the Saudis, if you are confirmed, that the human rights abuses in that country are ones that we are going to continue to put a spotlight on and have consequences in our relationship.

Mr. RATNEY. Thank you, Senator.

And let me say at the outset that the murder of Jamal Khashoggi was just a heinous act. I cannot say that I knew him well, but I met him a few times and he was a decent man, and no decent person deserves what happened to him.

The administration has taken some steps in that regard, including declassifying and publishing the intelligence community's assessment of responsibility for his murder.

Numerous sanctions from State and Treasury have been issued, including against the members of the unit that was responsible for the murder, and we have used statutory authority to implement what we have called the Khashoggi ban, which is, essentially, to say that those who would reach out across borders to suppress dissent will face consequences, including an inability to travel to the United States.

Those are consequential measures and I think they would have a powerful dissuasive impact on those who would contemplate that sort of act in the future.

More broadly than that, the President has made clear that he has elevated human rights as a pillar of U.S. foreign policy globally, and Saudi Arabia is no different, and, clearly, if confirmed, that would be a major element of my discussions with the Saudi leadership and, more broadly, with Saudi society.

We have seen a bit of progress there in certain areas, including things like freedom of expression and the rights of women, judicial transparency. These are areas where we have emphasized in our conversations with Saudi leaders and would most assuredly continue to be prominent on our agenda—my agenda, if confirmed, certainly, the President's agenda during his upcoming trip.

I think it is important that we have these straightforward—these forthright conversations with the Saudi Government. I take your point, absolutely, that it is—continues to be a mixed picture.

Even the advances, which I think the Saudi Government has achieved, there are instances. There is a lot of work left to be done before we can call it systemic change.

Senator CARDIN. Thank you.

Senator Young?

Senator YOUNG. Thank you, Chairman.

Congratulations, again, to all of our nominees for your nominations.

Dr. Wittes, in 2020 you indicated that you were not in favor of the Abraham Accords. On social media you said you agreed with an article that called the deal a triumph for authoritarianism.

You suggested the deal was, quote, "oversold," unquote, and that Middle Eastern countries normalizing relations with Israel was a, quote, "betrayal of Palestinian interests," unquote.

I am curious to hear if your views have changed in the two years since.

Ms. WITTES. Senator, thank you for the opportunity to be very clear about my views.

I support the Accords. I support the profound transformation that they have wrought in the region, and I said publicly when they were signed that they are a boon to the Israeli Government and to Israelis, who have long felt isolated in their neighborhood.

That is the profound transformation we see not just at the government-to-government level but at the people-to-people level, and it is very meaningful.

I have written that they strengthen the pro-American coalition in the region, and before I was nominated I encouraged the Biden administration to follow up on the Accords to promote regional cooperation that would advance peace and stability.

So I think my record is clear.

Senator YOUNG. Not to me.

How do we reconcile all those statements, which were just crystal clear with the statement that the deal was a triumph for authoritarianism and that the deal was oversold?

If your views have changed, that would be helpful to me, quite easy to reconcile. If, instead, it is my job to reconcile the previous statements with the current views, I am having difficulty. So help me out.

Ms. WITTES. Senator, thank you.

I will say I was skeptical that other countries would join the UAE in the Accords when the UAE first made its announcement in August of 2020, and I was wrong about that.

We have seen Morocco, we have seen Sudan, we have seen Bahrain come in, and that, I think, creates tremendous opportunity that we need to seize.

Senator YOUNG. Thank you. I do appreciate that.

Doctor, last week it was reported that the now resigned president of the Brookings Institution was an unregistered foreign agent on behalf of one of Brookings' donors. He is not a nominee before the Senate for consideration. I want to be crystal clear about that.

But we, as policymakers who often refer to Brookings material, must ask the uncomfortable question about whether or not Brookings remained impartial in its scholarship, especially that which focused on the Middle East.

Do you believe that we can trust the scholarship and independent views presented by a think tank that receives foreign funding?

Ms. WITTES. Senator, thank you. Let me speak to Brookings and my work at Brookings.

Every grant agreement that supported my work and the work that I supervised included strong language guaranteeing the independence of that work. I have absolute confidence that that work was conducted with independence from donors and that it stands on its own merits.

I had no knowledge of any of these disturbing allegations regarding General Allen. I never discussed research on Qatar with General Allen. I never participated in fundraising from foreign governments with General Allen.

Senator YOUNG. Thank you. I think it is important that you got that on record. Thank you so much.

Doctor, are you willing to urge Brookings to voluntarily work with this committee so that we can have a full accounting of foreign donations to the institution, especially funding that supported the work at the Center for Middle East Policy?

Ms. WITTES. Senator, all nonprofits, I think, have to demonstrate their independence from donors. I think Brookings has strong policies on transparency, on conflict of interests, on research independence.

I am no longer employed there, as you know. I, certainly, hope that they will live up to their values and their policy.

Senator YOUNG. Would you be willing to urge them to voluntarily work with the committee in furtherance of living up to their values as you have characterized it?

Ms. WITTES. Senator, I would like them to be as transparent as possible.

Senator YOUNG. Okay.

Ms. WITTES. I think the work stands on its own.

Senator YOUNG. I would, too.

While director of the Center, did you, Doctor, advocate, including informally, to any federal employee on issues relating to the region, especially relating to the affairs of the Gulf Cooperation Council or member states?

Ms. WITTES. Did I advocate?

Senator YOUNG. Yes.

Ms. WITTES. No, Senator. My job was to put forward policy recommendations to the public and that is what I did.

Senator YOUNG. Doctor, thank you for your answers to my questions.

Chairman?

Senator CARDIN. Senator Schatz?

Senator SCHATZ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Ranking Member.

Thank you to all of you and your families for your willingness to serve, and, in many cases, continue to serve.

Mr. Ratney, OPEC countries are producing oil at levels well below their collective quota due in large part to the sanctions related to Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

The administration has made very reasonable requests of the Saudis to ramp up oil production and make up for the shortfall. And just to be clear, this is not some huge favor we are asking. Saudi Arabia has spare capacity that it could draw on to quickly make up for the under producers in the group.

If stable energy markets are a key goal of U.S.-Saudi relations and the Saudis are not holding up their end of the relationship, why make concessions on other key objectives like human rights?

Mr. RATNEY. Thank you, Senator.

At the outset, let me say I do not think we are making concessions on human rights. I think it will remain—has been and will remain a forthright element of our dialogue with the Saudi Government.

On the specific issue of energy, you mentioned—and I think we need to start by pointing the finger directly at the immediate cause of the global instability in energy markets and that is Russia's utterly unjustified invasion of Ukraine and all of the implications of that war that has taken place.

Dealing with—

Senator SCHATZ. Let me ask the question another way. Part of our relationship with Saudi Arabia has to do with oil production. Is that fair?

Mr. RATNEY. Yes.

Senator SCHATZ. And a reasonable expectation is that during a global crisis, when necessary to stabilize prices they would step up and do so, especially when they do not have to do much other than just make the choice.

Is that a reasonable expectation?

Mr. RATNEY. Sure. I was actually getting to that point because, in fact, this has been a major topic of discussion with the Saudi Government and we are gratified to see that OPEC+, this larger group in which Saudi plays a leadership role, made a decision to increase their quotas for July and August considerable—something like a 50 percent increase in their quotas—which should have some impact on global oil supplies and, ultimately, gas prices.

It is not a silver bullet. It is not the answer to all of that. The administration, the U.S., and some of our partners have also made the strategic decision to release stocks of our global oil reserves.

There is a lot more diplomacy to be done on this, and I think conversations—forthright conversations about the Saudis' contribution to stability of global energy markets has to be a part of our conversations with the Saudis and, if confirmed, that would, certainly, be a part of my dialogue.

Senator SCHATZ. Thank you.

Let us talk a little bit about arms sales. You know the administration has to notify Congress in advance of major arms sales. Given what we all know about actions in Yemen and human rights violations, what kinds of weapons are appropriate to sell to Saudi Arabia and what kinds are inappropriate?

Mr. RATNEY. There is a technical element to that answer, and I want to be careful because it is not something that I have been heavily involved in or involved in at all with respect to Saudi prior to my preparations for this confirmation hearing.

I will say, as part of the President's commitment to solving—ending the war in Yemen through principled diplomacy, he also made a decision to end support for offensive military operations in Yemen.

At the same time, he also made a commitment to ensure that Saudi Arabia had the ability to defend itself and Saudi Arabia was

also facing an onslaught, really, of rockets and drone attacks from the Iranian-supported Houthis directed at people and infrastructure and others in Saudi Arabia.

So it is a balance we need to strike. The decisions on what constitutes support for offensive military operations and the specific weapon systems associated with that, that has to get considered on a case by case basis.

My colleagues at the State Department look at a variety of factors, including how those weapon systems have been used in the past.

Senator SCHATZ. I would just offer that some of this is about end use monitoring, some of this is about transparency in the country, and some of this is a judgment for Congress to make because whether a weapon system or a weapon is defensive or offensive depends on the circumstances, right, and that—this is the hard part.

Mr. RATNEY. I agree. It is—it is a hard—it is a judgment that has to get made and it is one that I think we are committed to doing in full transparency and consultation with Congress.

Senator SCHATZ. Final question. According to media reports, China is helping Saudi Arabia manufacture its own ballistic missiles. The Saudi Government has government ministry linkages to Huawei and has explored the possibility of selling oil in yuan.

How, specifically, would you address PRC policies that undermine regional security with the United States vis-a-vis Saudi Arabia?

Mr. RATNEY. Thank you for the question.

As Secretary Blinken made clear in a speech he gave at George Washington University just a couple of weeks ago, the challenge—the U.S. challenge of dealing with China it is a global competition. It is not restricted to Asia or any one country and, certainly, Saudi Arabia is no exception.

I do not know—China has—and Saudi Arabia have a significant trade relationship. I think that China is probably the largest purchaser of Saudi oil. There is a bit of Chinese investment in Saudi Arabia.

I do not know that there are significant defense relationships. The report you cite is one that I have seen in the media. But I know nothing more than that, and I think—I would suggest a briefing in a different setting from some of my colleagues.

But let me just say that this challenge of dealing with China, the risks of dealing with China, particularly a China that pursues policies that are utterly antithetical to our own values and the values of even Saudi Arabia, including genocide in Xinjiang, for example, that is something that we have to make clear to our Saudi partners to all our partners globally.

Senator SCHATZ. Thank you.

Senator CARDIN. I understand Senator Portman is available through WebEx.

Senator PORTMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thanks to the nominees for stepping up to serve. Again, many of you have already been in public service. We appreciate your continued service, as I have talked to Mr. Ratney about.

I have listened with great interest to the back and forth, Dr. Wittes, with you and Senator Young. I am the co-author of what

is called the Israel Relations Normalization Act, which is now law. It was signed into law in March and it promotes the so-called Abraham Accords and their expansion.

And the one question I would have in addition to the ones that you have already answered regarding your previous comments about the Abraham Accords is whether you are committed to this and committed to pursuing a policy agenda which would be deepening the existing Abraham Accords agreements and expanding to other countries, including some countries whose Ambassador nominees are with us today, like Saudi Arabia.

Would you be committed to expanding it and would you be committed to deepening existing relationships?

Ms. WITTES. Senator Portman, thank you, and the answer is yes, absolutely.

Senator PORTMAN. I will not prolong this, and it does seem counter to your previous comments but I am glad that you have had a change of heart and I think it is incredibly positive in terms of peace in the Middle East, not just for Israel, as you noted, but for those countries that choose to connect in that way.

Mr. Davis, Qatar has become a significant producer of liquefied natural gas, as you know, including for export. Last month, they signed an energy cooperation deal with Germany, which I was glad to see. They need new sources of energy in Germany, obviously, and other parts of Europe to get away from their dependency on Russia.

Can you talk a little about that and what role you expect to play in expanding that U.S. cooperation with Qatar with regard to energy production and particularly with regard to exports that relate to the Ukraine-Russia war?

Mr. DAVIS. Senator, I appreciate the question.

In fact, you make a good point about Russia's aggression in Ukraine. Qatar has been very clear about their view that Russia's aggression in Ukraine was—is unjustified.

As you note, they have signed a deal with Germany. They have worked with the European Union to provide whatever capacity they have to the EU. They have also made clear that countries in Asia and around the world cannot, during this war, outbid European countries on current contracts.

The truth is that Qatar is leading the way on liquid natural gas and working to build capacity through a couple of deals that they have in the United States—the Golden Pass LNG terminal in Texas and at petrochemical plants in which they have invested \$8 billion, also in Texas.

But the Qataris have made clear that they want to be a resource for the Europeans during this time and, if confirmed, it will be a priority for me to work with the Qataris to ensure that we identify areas of cooperation and opportunities for helping alleviate the energy crisis in Europe.

[Technical issue.]

Senator CARDIN. Senator Portman, we are not hearing you.

Senator PORTMAN. Sorry about that. Can you hear me now?

Senator CARDIN. Yes, you are on.

Senator PORTMAN. We had a technical issue here with the mute button.

Mr. Davis, I was just saying I appreciate so much your response to that. I was recently with Sheikh Mohammed, who is the Foreign Minister and—of Qatar and he made it very clear to me that they are taking a proactive approach here both with regard to Russia's brutal attack on Ukraine and also with regard to this issue of helping Russia to wean itself from Russian sources of energy.

I think you can play a very important role there and, again, thank you for your previous service and your willingness to step forward. I think you will find that Qatar wants to deepen our relationship and wants to be an active player in this current problem.

Dr. Gupta, just quickly—my time is running out here—you have expressed strong support for access to abortion as a reproductive right. You have publicly opposed the Mexico City policy. You have urged the World Health Assembly to classify sexual reproductive health services as essential services.

My question for you is are you aware of all the statutory restrictions on the use of taxpayer money to perform abortions or to advocate for or against them. That would include the Leahy amendment, the Helms amendment, the Siljander amendment, the Biden amendment.

Do you, if confirmed, commit to uphold these restrictions in law?

Ms. GUPTA. I do, Senator. Thank you for the question.

I am very aware of those legal restrictions on the use of foreign assistance funds and, if confirmed, I will follow the letter of the law.

Senator PORTMAN. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator CARDIN. We now have Senator Van Hollen by WebEx.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and congratulations to all of you on your nominations. As Senator Cardin said at the outset, you all are immensely qualified and I look forward to supporting your nominations.

Mr. Ratney, I do want to press you a little more on some of the issues that Senator Cardin and Senator Schatz raised. You are—the last line of your testimony today reads, quote, “If confirmed, I will work hard to ensure that the U.S.-Saudi partnership serves U.S. interests and reflects U.S. values.”

I want to focus on the U.S. values for a part because I see you did not mention Khashoggi in your testimony. It is a fact, is it not, that U.S. intelligence determined that the Crown Prince did mastermind the Khashoggi murder?

Mr. RATNEY. Senator, thank you.

The President made a decision early in the administration to release the intelligence community assessment of responsibility for that and I have no reason to differ with that assessment.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. And I have also got an article here in my hand about a Saudi Arabia mass execution of 81 men. This was in March of this year. You indicated in response to a question that there is more transparency now in the Saudi judicial process. I do not see it. Could you elaborate a little bit on that?

Mr. RATNEY. Yeah. Actually, I would like to be clear on that because the point I wanted to make is that judicial transparency is a major element of our engagement with the Saudis.

I was not trying to convey, and I think I may have misspoke, that that is something where we were lauding the Saudis for progress.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Right. I do not see it now. I hope you will be successful at pushing them in that direction.

We all know that the President has an upcoming visit to Saudi Arabia. Can you talk a little bit more about how vocal the President should be in pressing the human rights aspect of our policy?

As you stated, and I agree, putting human rights back at the forefront of our foreign policy was an important move by this administration.

Can you talk a little bit more about how we should be dealing with that in the context of Saudi Arabia?

Mr. RATNEY. I am, obviously, not involved in the preparations for the President's visit. But I know he is a man that believes in person-to-person diplomacy. He also believes in having forthright conversations with our partners, even partners with whom we sometimes have significant differences.

He was the one that made the decision to put human rights at the center of U.S. foreign policy, to elevate it as one of the major pillars of our engagement, not just in Saudi Arabia but globally, and I have every expectation that that will figure in his discussions in Saudi Arabia, which, as you recall, is not just with the Saudis but there is also a much broader meeting with GCC leaders, plus the Iraqis, Jordanians, and Egyptians. I have every expectation that human rights in all its forms will be a significant part of his program.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Thank you for that hopeful word, and I hope that the President will also pursue those principles vigorously on his upcoming trip, and it was great to have a chance to meet you on one of my—my most recent trip to Israel and Jerusalem.

Thank you for your service there and your service elsewhere, and as I said, I look forward to supporting your nomination.

Dr. Wittes, congratulations on your nomination.

As you know, Putin's brutal war against Ukraine has created price shocks around the world in energy and food, and many countries in the Middle East and north Africa have been very reliant on Russian and Ukrainian wheat.

If you could talk a little bit about AID's programs generally, not just in the—in food assistance, but some of the—in some of the areas that have been hardest hit. Lebanon has been hard hit. Already had, of course, a desperate situation, and in—and the West Bank and Gaza have been highly dependent on some of those imports for their wheat.

Can you just talk broadly about USAID's efforts in those areas to advance U.S. interests?

Ms. WITTES. Senator, thank you.

Yes. As you noted, Russia's war on Ukraine and its blockade of the Black Sea ports has prevented Ukraine from getting that wheat to the global market and a lot of countries in our region are feeling the effects.

Egypt, for example, normally imports half of its grain. One of the activities that I understand USAID is engaged in there is helping

Egypt produce more and keep what it produces because some of this wheat, when it is grown, is not properly stored and it spoils.

USAID has a range of these kinds of food security activities around the region to promote higher yields, to manage water better, and to promote resilience to these kinds of shocks.

But in the face of this global food security crisis there is also a lot of emergency food aid USAID is providing around the region as well.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. I am going to ask you to follow up, I guess, in writing, since my time is going to expire shortly, in terms of some of the efforts USAID is undertaking, as I said, in Lebanon, in the West Bank, and in Gaza, as well as some of the other parts of the region, just with a little more granularity.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Senator CARDIN. Thank you, Senator Van Hollen.

Senator Shaheen?

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and good morning. Congratulations to each of you on your nominations and I look forward to working with you, once confirmed.

Dr. Gupta, I would like to begin with you because, as you know, four out of the last five years we have not had anyone as Ambassador to the Office of Global Women's Issues and so much of that opposition has been women's reproductive health, and I think it is important to point out that what the Office of Global Women's Issues does has a lot more to do than just reproductive health for women and that there are important reasons why we have an office that looks at half of the world's population and the important roles that women have to play in the world.

Can you talk a little bit about why the Office of Global Women's Issues is so important and why we need to be thinking about what women are doing in the rest of the world?

Ms. GUPTA. Thank you so much, Senator Shaheen.

It is absolutely essential for the State Department that is the representative of U.S. foreign policy to pay attention to women, being half the population of this world.

There are many inequities and indignities that women suffer around the world which hold them back from participating fully in the economy.

They are subject to threats to their safety and have a fear of violence even on a daily basis and that determines their mobility and they, in situations of conflict and emergencies and humanitarian crises, are particularly vulnerable, both in terms of their safety but also in terms of their being able to look after their families and feed their families.

If you look at the world today, the situation of women—if you look at the gender inequality indicators, the indicators show that the inequality has increased.

We have regressed on gender equality because of the threats that we have had at the moment which is the COVID-19 pandemic, which has kept women from the labor force, the climate crisis, the rise of authoritarianism, conflicts around the world.

So the priorities the Office of Global Women's Issues has currently are the right ones, given the reality of the world today, be-

cause it focuses on advancing women's economic security and opportunity.

It focuses on advancing the women, peace, and security agenda and preventing and responding to gender-based violence, and those seem to me to be the three most important priorities today and those have been identified in the national strategy that the U.S. has just put out on gender equality and equity, the first ever national strategy for both domestic and global issues, and I think that those are the right ones, from my point of view.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you. I certainly agree with that.

Can you also speak to what empowering women does for their families, for their communities, and for their countries?

Ms. GUPTA. Thank you.

Women play essential roles at the household and community level. They are the frontline caretakers and mothers of children. They are the providers and processors and producers of food, and they are income earners and they are leaders within their communities.

And yet, they face disadvantages in being able to access productive resources such as employment, education, income, land, et cetera. That puts them at a disadvantage to fully play their roles.

By disadvantaging them in that way, you are holding them back but you are also holding back their families, their households, their communities, and the economies of entire nations.

In fact, a McKinsey report recently identified that in 2015 that the cost to the global GDP is about \$28 trillion over a 10-year period if those inequality indicators were not improved, if the gap was not closed. So it has economic consequences as well as it is a rights issue.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you very much.

Dr. Wittes, I am very concerned about the situation in Lebanon. It is one of the countries in the Middle East that has significant challenges—the impact on young people and their interest in staying in the country and offering a future there.

Can you talk about what our focus is right now on Lebanon and what we can do to help address the challenges that the country is facing?

Ms. WITTES. Senator, thank you for the question.

The situation in Lebanon is quite dire—the humanitarian situation, the economic situation. There is an opportunity now because of the successful conduct of parliamentary elections last month.

I was able to serve as an international observer in the previous two rounds of Lebanese parliamentary elections and I was really encouraged to see that they were able to hold those elections. I think that the new government now has both the opportunity and the need to focus urgently on some long overdue reforms.

I understand that there is an agreement with the IMF that would include reforms in the banking sector that could really start to stabilize the economy.

On the humanitarian side, as you know and as Senator Van Hollen mentioned, there is a shortage of wheat globally and Lebanon does not have domestic storage because of this horrific explosion at the Beirut port. It can only store about one month or so of grain locally.

USAID has been providing emergency food packages to Lebanese and it is also working with civil society and working with municipalities.

To your question about keeping young people in the country, USAID also, as I understand it, has had a focus on trying to grow the private sector and trying to create a better environment for the private sector so that young people feel those opportunities and we do not see brain drain.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you very much. I am out of time.

But I would just close with an admonition that I hope each of you will work on what is continuing to get worse in Afghanistan with respect to the rights of women and the economy in that country.

It is something that I think each of you have the ability in your new roles to have some influence on, and I hope you will really look at that opportunity.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator CARDIN. Mr. Davis, Qatar, certainly, is a strategic partner of the United States—defense, other issues. They have serious human rights issues on their workers, those that have come to their country being protected with internationally recognized labor rights.

Tell me how you are going to prioritize that concern we have if you are confirmed as our representative in Qatar.

Mr. DAVIS. Senator, thank you for the question.

First, I want to note that I share your concern about Qatar's human rights record. They have made progress. They were the first country in the Middle East to have a minimum wage law.

They have instituted a tribunal to adjudicate cases of labor abuse. They have set up a fund to help compensate employees who have not received their wages, and specific to the World Cup, they have a regulation that bans working in the hottest part of the day.

My own work in southern Iraq, where I saw similar labor and human rights abuses, informs how I view this. Often, it is a case where it is not a lack of will but a lack of capacity.

Our Trafficking Persons report lays out avenues for the Qatari Government to improve their human rights record. The Department of Justice human trafficking prosecution unit has been working with the Qatari Government.

It is not enough to want to prosecute abuses of labor and human rights. You have to build that capacity.

If confirmed, I would think that we would be able to bring experts to Qatar to help build the capacity of the judicial system of lawyers, of prosecutors, of police. Domestic violence issues cannot stop with arrest. They have to be followed through to prosecution.

For the United States, there is not a calendar or a clock or a deadline on our advocacy for human rights. Qatar has made a number of strides in the lead-up to the World Cup.

If confirmed, it will be one of my highest priorities to work with the Qatari Government to solidify the gains that they have made, but also to move them forward in labor and human rights reform.

It will not be easy but it is something that is, as noted, a pillar of U.S. foreign policy, and I will not hesitate, if confirmed, to raise

at the highest levels of the Qatari Government our concerns about human rights and labor rights.

Senator CARDIN. Thank you very much.

Dr. Wittes, I just really want to reinforce the comments that were made by Senator Young and Senator Portman in regards to the Abraham Accords.

In our conversation before we started the hearing, I was at a dinner last night, a unique opportunity where the Ambassador from UAE hosted the Israeli Ambassador's visit to the placement in the United States. We had to postpone it a little bit because of COVID. And it was a stark moment to see Israel and an Arab state co-hosting an event here. So it was a wonderful occasion.

One of the articles that were circulated under your tweet during the initial consideration of the Abraham Accords was very critical that there was no concessions made by the Israelis in entering into the agreement with UAE.

I mention that because there was a major progress made in getting Israel off of the annexation issue, which could have been rather explosive, and that was done by the UAE without the expansion to the other countries of the Abraham Accords. So there was a significant reason to celebrate the UAE and Israel reaching an agreement on normalization.

I just point that out because I have heard your response, and I understand your commitment to further normalization in the region.

But I want you to know that we saw sensitivity at that time. We try to conduct as much foreign policy as we can not on partisan grounds. We really try to work together to strengthen our country on foreign policy issues.

With that—

Senator YOUNG. Senator Hagerty, please.

Senator CARDIN. Senator Hagerty?

Senator HAGERTY. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Ratney, I would like to, first, turn to you to talk with you about the country that you are intending to represent the United States to.

American families are suffering everywhere from high gas prices, and I understand that President Biden is on his way to Saudi Arabia next month, presumably to ask the Saudis to produce more oil and bail the United States out of this energy disaster that the Biden administration has created based on its war on the American fossil fuel industry.

This trip comes not long after President Biden, during his presidential campaign in a Democratic presidential debate, decided that he would turn Saudi Arabia into a, quote, "pariah" and he added that there is, quote, "very little social redeeming value in the present Government in Saudi Arabia." Those were his words during the presidential debate.

I actually believe that the Saudis can be a very critical partner to us in the Middle East and I would, first, like to know if you agree with President Biden's stated posture towards Saudi Arabia.

Mr. RATNEY. Thanks for the question, Senator.

I do not think I am in a position to comment on comments that the President made during the campaign or more than a year ago.

I can tell you what he has said since he has been President and I can tell you what he has been determined to do since he has been President and that is to carve out a relationship with the Saudi Government that both advances U.S. interests and also reflects U.S. values, and we have vast U.S. interests in Saudi Arabia including—

Senator HAGERTY. I agree with you.

Mr. RATNEY [continuing]. As you point out, a conversation about energy prices, gas prices that we are facing here and global turbulence in energy markets. There is a lot of other things, and in the war in Yemen cooperating on counterterrorism, pushing back on Iran's nefarious activities in the region that threaten us and our partners, and at the same time advancing our values.

I have every expectation that the President will use this trip which he is making to Saudi Arabia in addition to conversations with other Gulf leaders and other Middle Eastern leaders to have forthright discussions about a responsible role of Saudi Arabia.

Senator HAGERTY. Do you agree that our diplomatic relations are better off without an antagonistic relationship with a country as important as Saudi Arabia?

Mr. RATNEY. I do not think I would relish the possibility of being a U.S. Ambassador to Saudi Arabia if I thought an antagonistic relationship was a good direction to go in. I think my colleagues and our leadership in this administration agree with that, and in terms—

Senator HAGERTY. If you are confirmed, you are going to have a lot to clean up, I think, given the situation as it exists right now.

I would like to turn now to your time as Consul General in Jerusalem. Under your watch, the State Department provided \$465,000 in grants to a group called OneVoice, which then joined a group called Victory 15 and worked to defeat Benjamin Netanyahu and his Likud party in Israel's elections.

This struck many observers, including me, as highly inappropriate if not unethical, especially given that the Obama administration disagreed with Netanyahu and his many policies including the Iran nuclear deal.

I understand that the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs' Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations reviewed this case and reported out its findings, and according to that report, OneVoice's pivot to electoral politics was consistent with its strategic plan that was developed by OneVoice leadership.

OneVoice had emailed this strategic plan to the State Department officials during the grant period.

However, the State Department placed no limitations on the post-grant use of resources developed by OneVoice using the funds provided by the United States. Again, there were no limitations placed on how the resources of the funds would be used. The grant was just given by the State Department even though the State Department had their strategic plan in hand.

I think it is a failure of the State Department, again, under your watch, to take the necessary steps to guard against the risk that OneVoice would engage in political activities to unseat a particular foreign head of government.

I want to ask you, Mr. Ratney, given that OneVoice engaged in political activism in the 2013 Israel elections, before applying for a State Department grant how was it that you failed to foresee and guard against this risk? The ease of that would have—that recipient organizations can use to repurpose public diplomacy resources is something that is very concerning and I am very concerned about what happened here.

Mr. RATNEY. Thanks for the question, and I do recall the incident and I recall my work there.

I was responsible for oversight of a piece of that grant, which was to the Palestinian component of OneVoice, which are responsible for, essentially, building grassroots support for a two-state solution and the negotiating process that was underway at that point.

The Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations that Senator Portman chaired at the time looked into it, as you mentioned, and noted a few deficiencies in the way that that grant was handled, one of which is exactly what you point out, which is there was no restriction in the grant agreement for how they would use the data.

In this case, it was a database and some other things they had developed in the process of doing the work that sort of—

Senator HAGERTY. I think it is extremely concerning that that failure occurred. But I want to ask you one more question before my time is expended.

Do you dispute what was reported in the findings, that you deleted emails related to the review of these OneVoice grants?

Mr. RATNEY. The Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations identified two shortcomings. One had to do with the administration of the grant, which we talked about, which was that there was no prohibition on—

Senator HAGERTY. Political activities.

Mr. RATNEY [continuing]. The OneVoice organization using it later. That is something that I have made clear in my conversations with the staff on the Permanent Subcommittee. That would be unacceptable had we known about it.

The other problem was had to do with a systemic issue associated with records management at the State Department that has since been addressed. There was no routine method.

There was no routine way at that time to archive all of the routine emails that the State Department sent and received. That has since been remedied as well through changes in policy and changes in technology.

Senator HAGERTY. To be clear, did you delete emails that were relevant to this? Did you specifically pursue those emails and remove them from the record?

Mr. RATNEY. As I recall what happened at the time—and I want to be very precise about this because it is an important issue—at the time—this is somewhat of a technical issue but at the time the State Department—the email systems did not have the storage capacity to retain large numbers of emails in people’s inboxes.

We were routinely instructed by—and this was not unique to me—we were routinely instructed by our IT staff that if you do not

delete emails, especially those with large attachments, your inbox freezes and you stop getting emails.

That was a systemic problem that was addressed both by improvements in the technology and also a change to the policy about archiving of these messages.

Senator HAGERTY. You can understand my concern over that part of it but my even deeper concern is that funds were allowed to go to an organization that was going to take direct action against one of our political allies and get involved politically in that manner. I think it is a great oversight and it creates grave concern for me.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator CARDIN. Senator Cruz?

Senator CRUZ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I would note that I think the Democratic majority on this committee may have inadvertently convened a hearing on the profound anti-Israel bias of the Biden administration.

I very much agree with the questions Senator Hagerty just asked about Mr. Ratney's involvement in sending taxpayer funds to a group that employed Obama political operatives to run a campaign against the sitting Prime Minister of Israel, Benjamin Netanyahu, and undermine our friend and ally, Israel.

But as disturbing as that conduct was, Ms. Wittes' conduct is even more concerning.

Ms. Wittes, if you are confirmed you will be in charge of distributing vast amounts of funding across the Middle East. Since 2015, the Brookings Institution that employs you has taken at least \$12.5 million dollars from the Embassy of Qatar. That is the amount that can be traced publicly.

Just four days ago, the president of Brookings resigned in a scandal because he is facing an investigation for being an undisclosed lobbyist for Qatar, and he resigned because he said, "I know it is best for all concerned at the moment."

Now, the president of Brookings has resigned over this but you ran the Middle East Center at Brookings. To what extent did you participate in fundraising from Qatar?

Ms. WITTES. Senator, thank you.

I want to be very clear I had no knowledge of any of these disturbing allegations regarding General Allen. I did not discuss research on Qatar with General Allen. I did not do fundraising meetings for foreign governments with General Allen.

Senator CRUZ. Did you know that your work was being paid for by Qatar?

Ms. WITTES. Yes, sir.

Senator CRUZ. Okay. So you knew you were funded by a foreign Embassy?

Ms. WITTES. Yes, sir. We had funding from several foreign governments, including the Norwegians and the Emiratis.

Senator CRUZ. The Norwegians and the Emiratis do not work to undermine us and they do not work to undermine Israel. The Qataris do.

Did you participate in any way in the fundraising?

Ms. WITTES. I participated in one fundraising meeting in, I think, 2012.

Senator CRUZ. Okay. Just a second ago you said you did not participate in the fundraising—

Ms. WITTES. Not with General Allen, sir. General Allen became president after I stepped down—

Senator CRUZ. But you participated in 2012 in fundraising from the Qataris?

Ms. WITTES. I sat in a meeting in which Ambassador Indyk was asking for a renewal of our grant.

Senator CRUZ. Okay. You published a report with the Qatari Ministry of Foreign Affairs logo on the cover of it, correct?

Ms. WITTES. Senator, we had a grant agreement with the Qataris to conduct a joint conference, which we did in Doha every year.

Senator CRUZ. Okay. The president of Brookings just resigned over allegations that he was an unregistered lobbyist for Qatar. Did you register as a lobbyist for Qatar?

Ms. WITTES. No, sir. I never conducted advocacy for Qatar.

Senator CRUZ. Should the president of Brookings have resigned over this? Was he right to do so?

Ms. WITTES. Senator, I cannot speak to what General Allen did or did not do. I had no knowledge—

Senator CRUZ. Should the same standards apply to you?

Ms. WITTES. Senator, the rules at Brookings were very clear. We received regular trainings on FARA compliance. I had no problem understanding the rules.

Senator CRUZ. Should the American taxpayers be concerned that President Biden wants to put in charge of distributing millions of dollars of taxpayer money someone who has spent years being funded by a foreign nation who is not our friend?

Ms. WITTES. Senator, I think my research and the research that I supervised was conducted with complete independence from all of our donors and it stands on its own merit.

Senator CRUZ. But it was funded by the Qataris. It was funded by the Qataris and it just happened to so comply with their agenda that they put their damn logo on the cover, correct?

Ms. WITTES. Senator, they did not put their logo on any of the—

Senator CRUZ. You put their logo on the cover?

Ms. WITTES. No, sir.

Senator CRUZ. Who put the logo?

Ms. WITTES. Their logo is not on the research.

Senator CRUZ. Who put the logo on the cover—

Ms. WITTES. Senator—

Senator CRUZ [continuing]. Of the report you published?

Ms. WITTES. The logo—

Senator CRUZ. Did you put the logo or did they?

Ms. WITTES. Senator, we co-produced a conference.

Senator CRUZ. Okay. So you both put the logo.

All right. I want to shift to another topic.

The Biden administration claims to support the Abraham Accords. I got to say your record on the Abraham Accords is stunning.

It is one thing for your colleague, Mr. Ratney, to fund political campaigns against the sitting Prime Minister of Israel. But when the Abraham Accords came out, in September 2020 you tweeted

that Arab leaders should not deepen ties with Israel until they saw whether President Trump won reelection.

Why were you urging Arab countries not to deepen ties with Israel?

Ms. WITTES. Senator, I was skeptical when the Emiratis made their announcement, which was breathtaking, in August 2020. I was skeptical that other Arab states would join them and I—

Senator CRUZ. But you urged them not to.

Ms. WITTES. I was proven wrong.

Senator CRUZ. But you urged them not to. So they did not follow your advice. But you wanted them not to make peace with Israel.

Ms. WITTES. No, Senator, I did not urge. I was—

Senator CRUZ. All right. You tweeted that peace between Israel and the UAE was a “new Naksa” setback. You also said it was a triumph for authoritarianism and just a normalization of men, which I do not know what the hell that means.

Why did you actively lobby against historic peace accords in the Middle East and how could anyone have any confidence that you can be a senior government official?

Ms. WITTES. Senator, I support the Accords. I support the profound transformation.

Senator CRUZ. I guess that is the right political answer to say now but it is not what you said then.

Ms. WITTES. Senator, those are not my words. I tweeted out two articles critical of the Accords, one by an Israeli and one by an Egyptian, both of which—

Senator CRUZ. All right. A final question on the Egyptians.

You have tweeted that Egyptian President Sisi is running a reich that is a fascist regime. How exactly do you think you are going to be able to work with our Egyptian allies when you have called their president a Nazi?

Ms. WITTES. Senator, those are not my words.

Senator CRUZ. You did not say he is running a reich?

Ms. WITTES. No, Senator. I have no recollection of ever using those words about President Sisi.

Senator CRUZ. I am going to follow up in writing because the record is clear.

But it is really stunning the anti-Israel bias of senior nominees in this administration, and it is inconsistent both with American national security interest and with standing with our friend and ally, the State of Israel.

Senator CARDIN. Senator Young, anything further?

Senator YOUNG. Just picking up on one loose thread.

Ms. Wittes, you are director of the Center for Middle East Policy at Brookings, and did you disclose your organization received funding from Qatar? Did you disclose that matter?

Ms. WITTES. Yes, sir, including when I testified before Congress. As you know, the forms require it.

Senator YOUNG. Okay.

With respect to—Mr. Davis, with respect to the U.S. Embassy to Qatar and its interaction with the U.S. Embassy to Afghanistan, which will be operating from Doha, it is really important that this committee—we are so distracted by many challenges around the

world—does not lose sight of the trying situation in Afghanistan in the wake of the botched exit.

If confirmed, how would you coordinate actions between those two embassies?

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

I want to make sure that I make note and honor your service as a U.S. Marine. When the evacuation of Afghanistan began in August, I, like you, probably were inundated with former fellow Marines, former soldiers, and folks who had known interpreters, spotters, people, Afghans who had worked with us for years and years.

And so I take personally the responsibility, confirmation notwithstanding, to ensure that we are helping our allies, which is what they were.

I had a number of sleepless nights in August 24/7 trying to help people get out of the country.

Your question is an important one and one that, I think, requires a sitting Ambassador—a confirmed Ambassador—to coordinate the efforts and the message of the Afghanistan affairs unit that is now in Doha, the bilateral mission which I would head, if confirmed, and our care colleagues who are working with Afghans waiting to be relocated.

And so my role, if confirmed as the head of the bilateral mission, will be to coordinate message, to ensure community communication is happening all of the time between U.S. entities in Doha to include the work of Special Envoy Tom West.

We cannot have competing messages coming from any of those four entities. I think the idea of folks from any of them being able to go into the foreign ministry to make requests of the Qataris without having coordinated will only lead to slowing down the process and, as we have learned over the last nine or 10 months, any delay in assistance and help to those who fought alongside us and helped us in Afghanistan over two decades can be fatal.

And so it will be a major priority for me to make sure that we are speaking with one voice to the Qataris and to those in Afghanistan, whose assistance is absolutely vital.

Senator YOUNG. Thank you.

I understand that further clarity will come post confirmation on exactly how the interaction will occur and I will look forward to working with you in overseeing those responsibilities and I know others will as well.

Thank you, Chairman.

Senator CARDIN. Thank you, Senator Young.

Let me just follow up on points that were raised by my colleagues.

Mr. Ratney, if I understand correctly, your role with OneVoice dealt with the outreach to the Palestinian community.

Mr. RATNEY. That is right.

Senator CARDIN. And that you were in compliance with all of the policies of the State Department during that period of time as well as the technology that was available in regards to how emails were handled and stored to the extent they could be stored and deleted because of capacities.

Mr. RATNEY. That is correct. And if I might add, the subcommittee report made clear that the grant funds were used for their intended purpose.

Senator CARDIN. I think you have clarified that point, and I do not really think there is any misunderstanding here.

But let me just ask for the record, if confirmed, do you agree to adhere to all the State Department rules and regulations regarding record keeping and the retention of emails?

Mr. RATNEY. Absolutely.

Senator CARDIN. And, Dr. Wittes, in regards to your relationships at Brookings, it is my understanding that you complied with all the rules of Brookings that had in regards to foreign participation and funds and that you made all the disclosures that were required by law and you complied with all of the federal rules at the time.

Ms. WITTES. Absolutely, Senator.

Senator CARDIN. Thank you.

I have no further questions. Let me, if I might, announce that the record will remain open until close of business Friday, June 17th, for questions for the record.

I would urge our nominees to try to complete those answers as rapidly and as thoroughly as possible so that we can try to clear for committee action your nominations as quickly as possible.

Each of you have critical positions that we need confirmed—representatives and Ambassadors. So we would urge you to try to complete this work as quickly as possible.

If there is no further business, the committee will stand adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 11:52 a.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

Additional Material Submitted for the Record



June 15, 2022

Esteemed Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the American Jewish Committee (AJC), I write in advance of tomorrow's Foreign Relations Committee hearing to urge the confirmation of Dr. Tamara Cofman Wittes to the position of Assistant Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development, for which she was nominated in July of 2021. Filling this vacancy will ensure the United States can effectively pursue foreign policy objectives.

Our organization does not normally take positions on nominees requiring Senate confirmation. **When we do, it is because we know the nominee and can responsibly vouch for their capabilities.**

Tamara Cofman Wittes, who directed the Center for Middle East Policy at the Brookings Institution from 2012 to 2017, is currently a senior fellow in the Center, and previously served as a deputy assistant secretary for Near Eastern affairs at the Department of State. Dr. Cofman Wittes has focused her career on U.S. foreign policy, democratic change in the Arab world, and the Arab–Israeli conflict. AJC has known Dr. Cofman Wittes for years and has always found her to be responsible, thoughtful, and deeply committed to upholding American values.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out. Thank you for the consideration of our views.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Julie Rayman". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Julie Rayman

AJC Senior Director of Policy and Political Affairs

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO DR. TAMARA COFMAN WITTES BY SENATOR ROBERT MENENDEZ

Question. You were asked during your confirmation hearing about Brookings Institution materials that had the logo of the Qatari Government on them. You began to answer that the document in question related to a conference, but you were cutoff before answering. Could you please clarify what that document was, and whether it was a report? Was it authored by you and did it contain any of your research?

Answer. During my time as Center Director from 2012–2017, I oversaw the work of the Project on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World. The Project co-sponsored a conference, the U.S.-Islamic World Forum, with the Qatari Foreign Ministry's Permanent Committee for Organizing Conferences. Speakers at these Forums included a number of U.S. officials, leaders from Muslim-majority countries, civil society activists and scholars from a wide variety of perspectives.

This conference was held in Doha during my time as Center Director on the following dates: May 28–31, 2012; June 9–11, 2013; June 9–12, 2014; June 1–3, 2015.

The Conference also hosted working groups focused on issues such as interfaith dialogue, arts and culture, Muslim minorities in the West, and women's empowerment. These working groups were selected through a competitive process by the Project on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World, and the Qatari Government had no role in the process of selection. The working groups produced papers prior to the conference, and a report of their discussions after the conference. These were published by Brookings, subject to Brookings's usual review process for published reports, and not reviewed or edited by the Government of Qatar. I've attached an example of such a report.

Some of these conference-related publications produced by Brookings included the logo of the Qatari Permanent Committee for Organizing Conferences alongside the Brookings logo. Those publications were published with the same independence, and subject to the same review process as other Brookings Foreign Policy publications.

I did not author any working group reports or papers during my time as Center Director.

Question. Has any of your research been influenced by any donor to Brookings, including any foreign government?

Answer. No.

Question. Have you ever altered any of your research or work at the request of a donor or foreign government?

Answer. No.

Question. What safeguards were in place to ensure that your research at Brookings was not influenced by any donor or foreign government?

Answer. Brookings has transparent policies in place to protect the independence of its scholarship, which are publicly available on the Brookings Institution website.

Brookings included language in grant and gift agreements to protect scholar independence. In 2016, Brookings President Strobe Talbott wrote that Brookings uses the following language in gift agreements with donors:

Brookings scholars, in conformity with the Institution's mission of developing independent, nonpartisan analysis and recommendations that reflect objective and rigorous scholarship, will make the final determinations regarding the scholarly activities supported by [the gift/grant], including the research agenda, content, product, outcomes, use and distribution of resulting publications, and selection of personnel associated with the projects supported by [the gift/grant]. Brookings scholars and staff will at no time lobby or otherwise promote the interests of any donor.

In the course of their research, Brookings scholars engage with a broad range of people with specific expertise in the areas they are researching, including stakeholders, policy makers, other scholars and, in some cases, donors. Brookings's scholars always have the final say in what is published, in terms of their analysis, judgement, and recommendations.

Question. Can you clarify the authors and dates of publication of the articles and tweets regarding the Abraham Accords mentioned during your nomination hearing? Did you author, co-author or otherwise comment on any of these publications? If yes, how?

Answer. I never opposed the Abraham Accords. I also never urged Arab governments not to join the Accords.

I said to the *New York Times*, and to an audience at Brandeis, when the Accords were announced, that Israel and the UAE had good reasons for opening formal ties

and that shared interests and shared threats brought them together. I called in writing for the Biden administration to build on the Accords.

As I noted in the hearing, I did express skepticism very early on, in August 2020, that other governments would join the UAE; I was quickly proven wrong and believe that the inclusion of Bahrain, Sudan and Morocco made the significance of the Accords clear and presented an opportunity that I believe the U.S. Government must seize. If confirmed, I absolutely will work assiduously to build upon these transformative agreements, in line with the Administrator's and the Biden administration's efforts.

I believe, but cannot be sure, that Senators at the hearing referenced the attached tweets. I tweeted sharing these two articles, one by an Israeli and one by an Egyptian, because they presented aspects of the Accords I thought needed grappling with. I did not tweet them because I agreed with the articles, and my tweets very specifically did not endorse the articles or even suggest or imply that I agreed with them. I have shared many articles on Twitter, with which I may agree, disagree, or not have a view.

The Accords were a transformative event in the region with many dimensions and many implications; my role as a policy analyst was to understand how different audiences in the region and in Washington viewed what was happening and to integrate that knowledge into my own analysis.

Question. Did you have any role in fundraising efforts while at Brookings, and specifically for the Middle East program?

Answer. During my time at Brookings, primary fundraising responsibility for Brookings research rested with the President and the Vice Presidents of the five research programs. I participated in fundraising activities at the direction of the Vice Presidents for Foreign Policy Studies under whom I served, and of Brookings President Strobe Talbott, as well as their development staffs. During my time as director of the Middle East Center, I worked under the supervision of Vice Presidents Amb. Martin Indyk, Acting Vice President Ted Piccone, and Vice President Bruce Jones, as well as Amb. Talbott.

My participation in fundraising at Brookings had two elements: First, when requested by development staff or supervisors, I participated in substantive briefings on current policy topics, often in a panel with other scholars, for organizations and individuals who were donors and/or potential donors. Second, I engaged directly with several individual donors to the Center's work, including its founding donor, Haim Saban. These contacts were also organized by and/or coordinated with the Brookings development staff, the Vice President for Foreign Policy Studies, and the President.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO DR. TAMARA COFMAN WITTES BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

Stabilization, Early Recovery, Reconstruction

Question. If confirmed, how will you define and differentiate between "humanitarian response," "stabilization," "early recovery," and "reconstruction" activities in responding to conflicts in the MENA region, including Syria, Afghanistan, and Yemen?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with USAID colleagues to ensure the Agency continues to differentiate and coordinate between "humanitarian response," "stabilization," "early recovery," and "reconstruction" activities in the MENA region, including in Syria and Yemen. While Afghanistan falls under the authority of the Assistant Administrator for the Asia Bureau and not within the purview of the Assistant Administrator for the Middle East, if confirmed, I pledge to ensure that these definitions are consistent across the Agency.

I understand that humanitarian assistance is a needs-based response that saves lives, alleviates human suffering, and reduces the impact of disasters by helping people in need become more resilient. I further understand that USAID follows the relevant appropriations law and implements humanitarian programs primarily using International Disaster Assistance and Title II Food for Peace Act Assistance to meet humanitarian imperatives.

I understand that USAID utilizes early recovery, a humanitarian assistance tool, to reduce immediate and protracted humanitarian needs by strengthening the resilience of affected populations through small-scale programs at the individual, house-

hold, and local community level; improving individual, household, and community welfare; and therefore, reducing dependence on external assistance. Early recovery programs are based on assessed community needs and humanitarian imperatives, and conducted in a conflict-sensitive manner by independent and impartial humanitarian agencies, without direction or interference of government authorities.

Unlike humanitarian assistance, which is needs-based, stabilization is a political endeavor involving an integrated civilian-military process where local authorities and systems can peaceably manage conflict and there will be a strong focus on prevention to reduce risks for a resurgence in violence. Transitional and policy-driven in nature, stabilization may include efforts to establish civilian security, provide access to dispute resolution, deliver targeted basic services, and establish a foundation for the return of displaced people and longer-term development.

Reconstruction is different from both humanitarian and stabilization assistance by design, intent, and scale. I understand that USAID does not provide reconstruction assistance in Syria or Yemen, and that in Yemen, USAID is focused on providing humanitarian and development assistance to address the most immediate needs.

Question. If confirmed, will you commit to ensuring that common definitions of these terms are understood, adopted, and upheld by any/all international mechanisms receiving and programming United States foreign assistance funds, such as U.N. agencies and multi-donor trust funds? How?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to promoting prudent management of awards managed by USAID's Middle East Bureau and those awards made by the Bureau to and implemented by U.N. agencies and multilateral trust funds, and ensuring common definitions of these terms that are relevant to Middle East Bureau programming are understood and adopted in support of U.S. Government foreign policy. If confirmed, I pledge to coordinate with the Assistant to the Administrator for the Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance, who has authority over any humanitarian response, including early recovery programs.

Waste, Fraud, and Abuse

Question. A recent report by the Center for International Private Enterprise (CIPE) Anti-Corruption and Governance Center suggests that an estimated five to ten percent of annual humanitarian aid is lost to corruption, while an estimated seven percent of global spending on public health is lost to waste, fraud, and abuse. The United States is, by far, the single most generous donor of both humanitarian and global health assistance, including in the Middle East.

- If confirmed, will you commit to upholding a zero tolerance policy for waste, fraud, and abuse in the programs under your purview?

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, I commit to upholding a zero tolerance policy for waste, fraud and abuse in programs under my purview

Question. If confirmed, will you also uphold a zero tolerance policy for USAID staff and implementing partners who engage in the sexual exploitation and abuse of the vulnerable communities they are meant to serve?

Answer. Yes, if confirmed I will uphold a zero tolerance policy for USAID staff and implementing partners who engage in the sexual exploitation and abuse.

Question. What is your understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of third party monitoring and evaluation?

Answer. I understand that USAID defines Third-Party Monitoring (TPM) as "the systematic and intentional collection of performance monitoring and/or contextual data by a partner that is not USAID or an implementing partner directly involved in the work."

I also understand that third-party monitors are contracted by USAID to act as its eyes and ears when USAID staff are unable to visit all project/activity sites in non-permissive environments which are often characterized by instability, inaccessibility, and/or insecurity. Verification of activities and equipment delivery is the primary purpose for TPM. It is also a tool that mitigates the risk of USG resources going to sanctioned groups. The TPM service provider may also inspect implementation progress, collect feedback from beneficiaries, and gather contextual data to get a sense of the larger environment affecting activity implementation.

Strengths in using TPM include increased partnerships, capacity building of local monitors, and the ability to travel and monitor programs in locations where USAID staff access may be limited.

Question. The primary weakness in using TPM occurs when the risks of operating in non-permissive environments are shifted to local monitors. However, I understand that there are measures that USAID and TPM contractors take to reduce

such risks. For example, I understand that the TPM provider can develop a security plan that addresses the particular concerns for the context in which the contractor is operating.

- What is your understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of USAID's partner vetting procedures, particularly in areas under the control of foreign terrorist organizations?

Answer. I understand that USAID's partner vetting program significantly reduces the chances that USAID or its implementing partners are working with organizations or individuals that have connections to a foreign terrorist organizations. If confirmed, I commit to ensuring USAID's vetting processes are as robust and effective as possible.

I understand that USAID partners are required to review publicly available lists including, but not limited to, the System for Award Management and the Office of Foreign Assets Control sanctions list to ensure compliance with applicable laws and regulations. In addition to these measures, I understand that USAID currently utilizes partner vetting in five Middle East locations: West Bank and Gaza, Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, and Yemen and that partner vetting is part of USAID's strategy to mitigate the risk of diversion of taxpayer funds and resources to terrorists, supporters of terrorists, or affiliates of terrorists, while facilitating the Agency's ability to deliver programs in support of U.S. national security and foreign-policy priorities.

Question. In your opinion, do USAID personnel get out from behind U.S. embassy/mission walls enough to fully accomplish their missions?

Answer. It is my understanding that USAID regularly seeks ways to improve its ability to better accomplish its mission and that the mobility of USAID personnel within a host country is dependent on a number of factors, including staff safety and security. If confirmed, I commit to finding ways to ensure key aspects of our mission are achieved while balancing the safety of USAID personnel.

Question. How do you intend to improve the ability of USAID staff to better access local populations and conduct direct oversight of U.S. foreign assistance, including in conflict areas and fragile states?

Answer. I understand that USAID augments the direct oversight of assistance by staff with a variety of approaches to verify that assistance is reaching its intended beneficiaries, including by utilizing geo-tagged photos and videos of distributions and through feedback hotlines for beneficiaries. I also understand that USAID works closely with its implementing partners to develop activity-specific monitoring and evaluation plans, and coordinate with other donors and the Agency's Inspector General to identify risks and take steps to mitigate the potential for taxpayer dollars to be diverted.

In places where direct oversight is impracticable due to safety and security of USAID staff particularly in conflict areas and fragile states—I understand that USAID utilizes a number of tools, including vetting and remote, third-party monitoring to support oversight of activity implementation. I understand that through independent, field-based monitoring of activities and monthly progress reporting, third party monitors allow USAID to monitor programs in areas that are inaccessible to U.S. Government staff. The third-party mechanisms provide USAID with an additional level of assurance-similar to the role field visits play for USAID monitoring activities in more stable environments. If confirmed, I pledge to work with Agency leadership to ensure that the Agency continues to prioritize robust oversight of U.S. foreign assistance, including in conflict areas and fragile states.

Question. If confirmed, will you commit to aggressively pursuing access in complex operating environments by USAID direct hires, so they can regularly perform direct oversight of the programs under your area of responsibility?

Answer. Yes. If confirmed, I will commit to pursuing access in complex operating environments, while balancing the safety and security of USAID personnel, to ensure responsible oversight of USAID programs.

MANAGEMENT

Policy and Authority

Question. Having previously served as a policy analyst at a think tank and as Assistant Secretary of State for Near East Affairs, your experience appears to be focused on policy rather than on development.

- Do you acknowledge and, if confirmed, will you uphold the statutory division of authority between the Department of State and USAID, whereby USAID falls under the policy direction of the Secretary?

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, I will uphold the statutory structure and organizational principles by which USAID formulates and executes U.S. foreign economic and development assistance policies and programs, subject to the foreign policy guidance of the President, the Secretary of State, and the National Security Council.

Question. When it comes to democracy promotion in the Middle East, who is responsible for crafting the strategy—the Secretary or the Administrator?

Answer. If confirmed, I will uphold the statutory structure and organizational principles by which USAID formulates and executes U.S. foreign economic and development assistance policies and programs, subject to the foreign policy guidance of the President, the Secretary of State, and the National Security Council.

It is my understanding that the 2022-2026 Middle East and North Africa Joint Regional Strategy was developed by USAID and the Department of State as a part of an interagency process and under the foreign policy guidance of the President, the Secretary of State, and the National Security Council.

Mission, Morale, and Management

Question. How do you intend to ensure unity of mission and purpose between Washington, DC and USAID's overseas missions in the region?

- What is your understanding of morale within the USAID's Bureau for the Middle East and within each of the USAID missions in the region?
- How do you intend to improve morale in Washington, DC and overseas?

Answer. Having worked in the Near East Affairs Bureau during the instability that followed the Arab uprisings, I am particularly mindful of staff morale and unity of purpose, especially in a dynamic environment. If confirmed, I am committed to maintaining open dialogue with USAID personnel across the Bureau—including those in the field—to allow individuals to provide feedback, voice concerns, and share ideas. I'm committed to learning from the employees working in the Bureau for the Middle East and keeping my door open to hear their concerns.

Despite the challenging environment in which many USAID staff work, I have noted that USAID personnel I've met are consistently committed to their work and the mission that drives U.S. assistance to the peoples of the region. If confirmed, I commit to supporting USAID personnel as they carry out the Agency's critical development mission.

If confirmed, the safety and security of USAID personnel would be my highest priority. I expect that one of the major morale challenges I would face in addition to security is the workload carried by USAID employees. If confirmed, I am eager to work with Administrator Power to address staffing needs across the Middle East region and to ensure USAID has the staff needed to implement programming rigorously and responsibly.

Question. What is your expectation for returning USAID staff to the work place, following prolonged telework arrangements necessitated by COVID-19?

Answer. I understand that the Agency has moved to a hybrid work schedule that allows staff to use telework when it is suitable for their position and the work of the Agency. Telework can increase productivity, improve work-life balance, and reduce the stress of commuting in a congested region. I expect the Bureau and the Agency will likely need to make continued adjustments in the future as they continue to learn from this new model. If confirmed, I commit to ensuring the Bureau maintains the appropriate balance to support its important mission. With regard to Bureau staff working at USAID missions across the region, I understand that the telework policy at Missions is dictated by each country's respective Chief of Mission, and thus varies from post to post.

Question. If confirmed, will you commit to providing timely, thorough, and accurate responses to Congressional requests for information, including by restoring in-person briefings on the Hill, as necessary and appropriate?

Answer. Yes, I commit to maintaining open dialogue with Congress by providing timely, thorough, and accurate responses to Congressional requests for information, including through in-person briefings, as necessary and appropriate.

Question. How would you describe your management style?

Answer. My management style is collaborative. I believe team members work to their best ability when they feel themselves to be working alongside colleagues advancing a shared mission, with a clear vision and clear goals articulated by their leadership. This unleashes their expertise and problem-solving on behalf of our goals, and promotes mutual support within the workforce.

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

Answer. No.

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

Answer. Yes.

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

Answer. Yes, within the guidelines established by the Agency for such efforts.

BRANDING

Question. If confirmed, will you commit to taking a forward-leaning approach toward “branding” United States foreign assistance?

Answer. Yes. While recognizing there are limited exceptions to branding to maintain partner safety and security, I am committed to USAID branding, and if confirmed, will work to ensure that United States foreign assistance in the Middle East is appropriately branded in all possible instances. I believe appropriate branding sends a strong public diplomacy message, conveying that United States assistance is due to the generosity of the American people. If confirmed, I commit to complying with all USAID branding legal and policy requirements.

Question. Will you commit to continuously reviewing agreements to waive U.S. branding requirements, such that they are applied on a case-by-case and as-needed basis, rather than on a long-term, global basis?

Answer. Yes. I understand that USAID branding waivers must be limited in scope and regularly reviewed. If confirmed, I commit to rigorously reviewing all branding waivers I receive to ensure they are appropriately narrow both in scope and duration, so as to ensure beneficiaries of U.S. taxpayer assistance are informed of the source of that assistance.

FAMILY PLANNING AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

Question. The President’s FY2022 budget request for the Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs proposes a substantial increase for Family Planning and Reproductive Health (FP/RH), through both bilateral aid programs and contributions to the U.N. Population Fund.

- If confirmed, will you commit to ensuring full and complete USAID compliance with current law, which prohibits the use of U.S. foreign assistance to perform or promote abortion as a method of family planning, support involuntary sterilizations, or lobby for or against the legalization of abortion overseas?

Answer. Yes.

Question. Do you recognize the fungibility of U.S. foreign assistance? If confirmed, will you commit to ensuring that U.S. foreign assistance does not enable implementing partners to perform or promote abortion as a method of family planning, perform involuntary sterilizations, or lobby for or against the legalization of abortion?

Answer. Yes. If confirmed, I commit to continuing to comply with all applicable laws, including the Helms and Siljander amendments.

LOCALIZATION

Question. Successive administrations—both Democrat and Republican—have launched initiatives to “localize” U.S. foreign assistance, including by building the capacity of local partners to design programs and manage U.S. funds directly, rather than working as sub-awardees to large, U.S.-based development contractors and non-governmental organizations. Each of these initiatives has had mixed results.

- What is your view of “localization” in the Middle East region?
- How can the Bureau for the Middle East more effectively empower local partners through its program consultation, design, and implementation processes?
- Is it appropriate to set targets for “localization” and, if so, what would you consider to be reasonable and appropriate for the programs under your purview, particularly given access and vetting constraints in the region?

Answer. I support the vision of localization Administrator Power presented in her November 2021 speech at Georgetown University, A New Vision for Inclusive Development, in which she outlined USAID's commitment to build on past efforts in making its work more inclusive; and that the Agency will pursue this, in part, through localization. I understand that USAID will shift its programs and practices to expand and enhance its support for locally-led development, the process in which local actors—encompassing individuals, communities, networks, organizations, private entities, and governments—set their own agendas, develop solutions, and bring the capacity, leadership, and resources to make those solutions a reality. I agree with Administrator Power that around the world, when USAID's efforts are responsive to local priorities, and draw upon local capacities, diverse networks, and resources—results are more likely to be sustained by local organizations and institutions.

For the Agency and the Middle East Bureau, I understand localization to mean channeling a portion of development and humanitarian awards directly to local civil society, business, and other institutions that are supported by and accountable to local communities. It means changing the power dynamics that have historically characterized the relationships among local actors, international prime partners, and donors, with renewed focus on empowering local actors—and, within that goal, ensuring meaningful participation by marginalized populations, including women, people with disabilities, youth, indigenous populations, displaced persons, and ethnic and religious minorities.

I think it is appropriate to set targets to help motivate and track the Agency's localization efforts. I understand that the targets that the Administrator announced in November—25 percent of USAID's funding going to direct local awards and 50 percent of the Agency's activities incorporating good practices to put local actors in the lead—are global targets. If confirmed, I look forward to consulting with Congress and with the Bureau and Mission staff, to identify appropriate targets given the unique context of the region.

INVESTIGATION INTO FOREIGN INFLUENCE AND ILLEGAL FOREIGN
LOBBYING AT THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

Question. According to U.S. District Court records, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) is currently conducting an investigation into Gen. John Allen (retired)—former president of the Brookings Institution where you served as a Director of the Middle East Center and as a Senior Fellow from 2012-2022. The investigation concerns suspected illegal lobbying on behalf of the Government of Qatar in violation of the Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA). Qatar was a major donor to the Brookings Institution for much of this time.

- How long did you work with Gen. Allen at Brookings?

Answer. General Allen became president of Brookings in November 2017; I was at that time a Senior Fellow in the Center for Middle East Policy, and remained in that role until November 2021 when I went on a leave of absence.

Question. How would you describe both of your roles throughout your respective tenures at Brookings?

Answer. I was first hired at Brookings as a Fellow in November 2003; I was promoted to Senior Fellow in the summer of 2008 and remained in that role until November of 2009 when I entered government service.

I rejoined Brookings as Senior Fellow and Director of the Center for Middle East Policy in March 2012. I remained in that role until March 2017, when I left the directorship and remained as a Senior Fellow until November 2021. From November 2021 until June 3, 2022, I was on a leave of absence from Brookings. I resigned effective June 3, 2022.

I believe that General Allen first joined Brookings as a Distinguished Fellow in June 2013. He then was named by President Obama as the Special Presidential Envoy for the Global Coalition Against ISIL and remained in that role until November 2015. He became president of Brookings on November 6, 2017.

General Allen became president of Brookings in November 2017; I was at that time a Senior Fellow in the Center for Middle East Policy, and remained in that role until November 2021 when I went on a leave of absence.

Question. How would you describe the way your role interacted with his?

Answer. I saw General Allen mainly at Brookings events where he was providing welcoming remarks, and at occasional Institution-wide town halls. I cannot recall any specifics regarding one-on-one conversations with him in his role as Brookings President. There were two managerial layers between my role as Center Director and the President.

Question. Did you ever attend a meeting at Brookings with Gen. Allen where the question of foreign donations to Brookings was discussed? If so, please describe.

Answer. Not to the best of my recollection.

Question. Did you ever attend a meeting with Gen. Allen where foreign officials or representatives of a foreign government were present? If yes, please provide the date, names of attendees, and topics discussed.

Answer. The Brookings Institution holds many meetings and events with foreign officials, at which General Allen would often provide opening remarks or give a formal welcome in his role as president.

Question. Did you ever attend a meeting with Gen. Allen where Qatari officials or representatives of the Government of Qatar were present? If yes, please provide the date, names of attendees, and topics discussed.

Answer. On June 3, 2015, when General Allen was serving in government as the head of the anti-ISIS coalition, he spoke as a guest at the U.S.-Islamic World Forum, a conference which the Center I ran at Brookings co-hosted in Doha with the Qatari Foreign Ministry's Permanent Committee on Organizing Conferences.

Question. Did you ever discuss United States policy toward Qatar with U.S. Government officials? If yes, please provide the date, names of attendees, and topics discussed.

Answer. Over the course of my career both in government and non-government roles, I have had many engagements with U.S. Government officials on a wide array of topics. I cannot recall, nor do I have records of, all such instances.

Question. Have you spoken with law enforcement about this investigation? Please answer yes or no. If yes, please provide the date and agency.

Answer. No.

Question. During your confirmation hearing, Sen. Young asked you if you would be "willing to urge Brookings to voluntarily work with this committee so that we can have a full accounting of foreign donations to the institution, especially funding that supported the work of the Middle East Center." You answered that: you would like Brookings to be as transparent as possible." That is not a commitment.

- Do you commit to work with the Senate Foreign Relations Committee to conduct thorough oversight into allegations of foreign influence and illegal lobbying at the Brookings Institution and by Gen. John Allen? Do you commit to urge the Brookings Institution to voluntarily share with the Senate Foreign Relations Committee information relating to the committee's oversight on this issue?

Answer. I would urge the Brookings Institution to cooperate with any Senate oversight investigation.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO DR. TAMARA COFMAN WITTES BY SENATOR MARCO RUBIO

Question. You have an extensive history of tweets and publications supporting a deeply divisive and partisan view of American foreign policy, especially towards Israel. In January 2019, you tweeted on my bill from last Congress, S.1, the Strengthening America's Security in the Middle East Act of 2019, that would have overhauled American foreign policy towards the Middle East. Included in that bill was my bipartisan Combatting BDS Act, which clarifies that state and local governments have the right to not award contracts to companies that engage in the hateful, anti-Semitic boycott, divestment, and sanctions movement. You said at the time, "Democrats are not taking the bait on BDS."

- Do you believe state governments should be allowed to avoid doing business with companies participating in the anti-Semitic BDS movement?

Answer. I unequivocally oppose the BDS movement. President Biden and Secretary Blinken have made it clear that the administration firmly opposes the BDS campaign against Israel. The movement unfairly singles out Israel and too often veers into anti-Semitism.

Question. In November 2020, you wrote a blog saying that BDS is not always anti-Semitic. That would imply you support the BDS movement.

- Do you support the movement?

Answer. I unequivocally oppose the BDS movement. President Biden and Secretary Blinken have made it clear that the administration firmly opposes the BDS campaign against Israel. The movement unfairly singles out Israel and too often veers into anti-Semitism. While the administration respects the American people's First Amendment rights, I support the administration's vocal disapproval of the BDS campaign and any effort to delegitimize Israel on the world stage.

Question. Why did you call the inclusion of my bipartisan bill "bait?"

Answer. Senator, I unreservedly apologize for my comments. To clarify, I was not referring to the content of the bill, but to the tactical and procedural behavior then underway between the two parties in Congress involving pressing for competing votes on competing legislative proposals regarding support for Israel, rather than forging a bipartisan consensus on a matter where both parties agree. As I have noted, including in an article published in the Atlantic, the partisan polarization around Israel in the United States is, in my view, deleterious to the health of the US-Israel relationship.

Question. Senator Manchin and I have reintroduced the Combatting BDS Act this Congress and are seeking a path towards its passage. If confirmed, would you recommend that the President oppose or even veto this bipartisan bill?

Answer. If confirmed, my opinion on this bill would be outside of my responsibilities as Assistant Administrator for the Middle East at USAID.

Question. Brookings Institution President John Allan recently resigned following revelations that he secretly lobbied for the Qatari Government. Unfortunately, Qatar's deep influence at Brookings does not start or end with John Allan. While you led Brookings Middle East Center from around 2012 to 2017, the Middle East Center received a \$14.8 million grant from Qatar. While the Senate is extremely supportive of the U.S.-Qatar relationship—I joined many of my colleagues in cosponsoring a resolution recognizing Qatar's role in helping the American evacuation from Afghanistan—that does not mean we should give it free rein to influence American policymakers without any transparency.

- While you were at Brookings, did Qatar have any influence over hiring decisions and the publication of written work?

Answer. While I led the Brookings Middle East Center from 2012 to 2017, Qatar did not have any influence over hiring decisions and the publications of written work for which I was responsible.

Question. Are you able to disclose the details of an agreement Qatar announced with Brookings in 2017? If not, why not?

Answer. I do not have details of any agreement announced between Brookings and the Government of Qatar in 2017. At the time of a press release issued by the Government of Qatar in May 2017 titled "Qatar and Brookings Center Sign Agreement," I was no longer the Director of the Center for Middle East Policy. My understanding of the press release is that it refers to the final, three-year renewal of the longstanding grant to Brookings for its Project on US Relations with the Islamic World, which was part of the Center for Middle East Policy.

Question. Unfortunately, your tenure at Brookings indicates you have a history of avoiding hard criticism for regimes that donated significant sums of money to you. In 2018, you praised Saudi Arabia's rapid urbanization and reforms under Crown Prince Mohamad Bin Salman. This effusive praise was puzzling given Saudi Arabia's crackdown on women's rights and religious freedom advocates, who you typically write in support of. However, this all made sense when it was revealed in October 2018 that Brookings had a previously undisclosed donation from Saudi Arabia. Since cancelling that grant, you've been almost overly enthusiastic in your criticism of Saudi Arabia.

- We know that Qatar gave a significant amount of money to Brookings. Are you currently receiving money, or the promise of future payment from Qatar or any other foreign government, if confirmed?

Answer. No. I am not receiving payments from Qatar, and I have never received any payments from Qatar. I have no promise of future payment from Qatar or any other foreign government.

Question. Will you disclose the full history of foreign government grants to Brookings so that the American people can review and compare it with your extensive history of publications?

Answer. I do not have access to that information and refer you to the Brookings Institution to respond to any questions about their agreements. The relationships

with Qatar and other foreign government donors predated my arrival as Director of the Middle East Center and were managed by the Brookings President and the Vice President for Foreign Policy. I can say with absolute confidence that my research was conducted with complete independence and stands on its own merits.

Question. Will you commit that your decisions at USAID will not be influenced by Qatar or any other foreign government, if you are confirmed?

Answer. Yes, absolutely. I would like to add that I have never engaged in “effusive praise” of the Saudi Government, neither in 2018 nor in any other year. I have had one friend, Jamal Khashoggi, who was murdered by the Saudi Government, and another imprisoned for months without trial. Other friends have left the country seeking freedom. I was never involved in any Brookings work with Saudi Arabia.

Question. You have written extensive criticism of the Abraham Accords, retweeting articles that called the normalization agreements a “triumph for authoritarianism” and the “normalization of men.” Israel is our strongest ally in the Middle East and the region’s only full democracy. Encouraging normalization of its relations with other countries in the region also serves to encourage freer conditions in those countries. That’s why this committee overwhelmingly voted in favor of the bipartisan Israel Relations Normalization Act to further promote this process.

- Do you believe that other states in the region should normalize relations with Israel?

Answer. Yes. I fully support the Abraham Accords and if confirmed, I commit to supporting the Administrator’s and the Biden administration’s efforts to build upon these agreements to further strengthen cooperation between Israel and its neighbors and to encourage other Arab and Muslim countries to normalize relations with Israel.

As I noted in the hearing, I did express skepticism very early on, in August 2020, that other governments would join the UAE in opening ties to Israel; I was quickly proven wrong and, as I told the hearing, the inclusion of Bahrain, Sudan and Morocco made the significance of the Accords clear and presented an opportunity that I believe the U.S. Government must seize. As I said in my opening statement and again to Senator Portman, if confirmed, I absolutely will work assiduously with my colleagues in the Biden administration to build upon these transformative agreements.

I tweeted sharing two articles critical of the Accords, one by an Israeli and one by an Egyptian, because they presented aspects of the Accords I thought needed grappling with. I did not tweet them because I agreed with the articles, and my tweets very specifically did not endorse the articles or even suggest or imply that I agreed with them. I have shared many articles on Twitter, with which I may agree, disagree, or not have a view.

The Accords were a transformative event in the region with many dimensions and many implications; my role as a policy analyst was to understand how different audiences in the region and in Washington viewed what was happening and to integrate that knowledge into my own analysis.

Question. If confirmed, will you work against the promise of normalizing relations between Israel and other countries?

Answer. Absolutely not. As I said in my opening statement and again to Senator Portman, if confirmed, I absolutely will work assiduously with my colleagues in the Biden administration to build upon these transformative agreements. to further strengthen cooperation between Israel and its neighbors and to encourage other Arab and Muslim countries to normalize relations with Israel.

Question. Given your past advocacy against the Abraham Accords, how can this committee be confident in your ability to eagerly promote the normalization of relations with Israel?

Answer. As stated in the hearing, I did express skepticism very early on, in August 2020, that other governments would join the UAE; I was quickly proven wrong and, and believe that the inclusion of Bahrain, Sudan and Morocco made the significance of the Accords clear and presented an opportunity that I believe the U.S. Government must seize. If confirmed, I pledge to support the administrator’s and the Biden administration’s efforts to build upon these agreements.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO DR. TAMARA COFMAN WITTES BY SENATOR TED CRUZ

Question. The Assistant Administrator for Middle East at USAID has responsibility for overseeing a fund of nearly \$2 billion across the region, including for projects the following countries and territories: Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Syria, Tunisia, West Bank & Gaza, and Yemen. Some projects are regional in nature, and necessarily regional in nature, and implicate conditions in Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Qatar.

Qatar and Brookings have partnered to hold the U.S.-Islamic World Forum since 2004, and Qatar has supported Brookings with tens of millions of dollars. During that time, you strongly and publicly advocated positions that advanced the foreign policy of the Qatari Government. You've praised Qatar's human rights record despite their abuses, some of which have been discussed earlier today.

You began your tenure at Brookings in December 2003.

- Please outline any financial relationship the Brookings Institution has had with any of these countries or their close regional allies since 2004. For each grant, please list the exact amount and purpose of the grant.

Answer. I do not have that information, and refer you to the Brookings Institution. Financial relationships and grants with Qatar were established and managed by my superiors at Brookings.

Question. Were you ever present for meetings relating to fundraising for the Brookings Institution with officials from any of these countries since 2004? If so, please describe the date, purpose and participants of those meetings. If the meetings generated grants, please cite those with their exact amount and purpose.

Answer. During my time at Brookings, primary fundraising responsibility for Brookings research rested with the President and the Vice Presidents of the five research programs. I participated in fundraising activities at the direction of the Vice Presidents for Foreign Policy Studies under whom I served, and of Brookings President Strobe Talbott, as well as their development staffs. During my time as director of the Middle East Center, I worked under the supervision of Vice Presidents Amb. Martin Indyk, Acting Vice President Ted Piccone, and Vice President Bruce Jones, as well as Amb. Talbott.

My participation in fundraising at Brookings had two elements: First, when requested by development staff or supervisors, I participated in substantive briefings on current policy topics, often in a panel with other scholars, for organizations and individuals who were donors and/or potential donors. Second, I engaged directly with several individual donors to the Center's work, including its founding donor, Haim Saban. These contacts were also organized by and/or coordinated with the Brookings development staff, the Vice President for Foreign Policy Studies, and the President.

Question. Have you ever been registered as a foreign lobbyist for any of those countries or territories, or for their governments, embassies, and other entities controlled by their governments?

Answer. No.

Question. Please identify any advocacy or analysis you conducted at the federal level since 2004, outside of periods when you were serving as a U.S. Government official, regarding U.S. policy toward these nations. Please specifically list any Congressional hearing testimony, Congressional briefings, or other public support.

Answer. All of my congressional testimony as a non-government expert witness was provided to the committee as part of my nomination package. Here is a list:

Congressional Testimony

"Egypt: Trends in Politics, Economics, and Human Rights," testimony before the Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, September 9, 2020.

"Lebanon and Iraq: After the Elections," testimony before the Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, May 22, 2018.

"The Latest Developments in Saudi Arabia and Lebanon," testimony before the Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, November 29, 2017.

"War in Syria: Next Steps to Mitigate the Crisis," testimony before the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, May 17, 2016.

“Israel Imperiled: Threats to the Jewish State,” testimony before the Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade and the Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, April 19, 2016.

“Regional Impact of U.S. Policy Towards Iraq and Syria,” testimony before the Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, April 30, 2015.

“Demonstrations in Tahrir Square: Two Years Later, What has Changed?” testimony before the Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, February 26, 2013.

“Syria: U.S. Policy Options,” testimony before the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, April 19, 2012.

“Reflections on the Revolution in Egypt: Part I,” testimony before the Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, February 15, 2012.

“Women and the Arab Spring,” testimony before the Subcommittee on International Operations and Organizations, Human Rights, Democracy, and Global Women’s Issues and the Subcommittee on Near Eastern and South and Central Asian Affairs of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, November 2, 2011 (representing the Department of State).

“Shifting Sands: Political Transitions in the Middle East, Part 2,” testimony before the Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, May 5, 2011 (representing the Department of State).

I signed occasional advocacy letters as a member of the bipartisan Working Group on Egypt and similar efforts.

Question. Did you personally participate in any fundraising meetings with Qatari officials? If so, please describe the meetings and any grants that emerged from the meeting. Please list the exact amount and purpose of the grant.

Answer. As noted above, I recall supporting a fundraising meeting once with my Vice President for Foreign Policy in Doha in 2012 to request a renewal of the grant supporting the U.S.-Islamic World Project, on the margins of the U.S.-Islamic World Forum. I do not have specific details on that request, nor do I recall specifics on any other such meeting, and do not have access to records that would provide them.

Question. Did you personally participate in any fundraising meetings about raising money from Qatar? If so, please describe the meetings and any grants that emerged from the meeting. Please list the exact amount and purpose of the grant.

Answer. As noted above, I recall supporting a fundraising meeting once with my Vice President for Foreign Policy in Doha in 2012 to request a renewal of the grant supporting the U.S.-Islamic World Project, on the margins of the U.S.-Islamic World Forum. I do not have specific details on that request, nor do I recall specifics on any other such meeting, and do not have access to records that would provide them.

Question. Since 2012, have you ever lobbied Congress on specific legislative items pertaining to the Middle East, whether through meetings, letters, emails, phone calls, or other forms of communication?

- For each instance, please list the date, legislative item, and congressional office you lobbied.

Answer. Over the past ten years both as a member of the Obama administration and at the Brookings Institution, I engaged Congressional staff and members on a host of issues relevant to my expertise. That engagement included providing information and resources, consulting with staff and members on issues of concern to them, providing expert testimony, and participating in educational programs for members of Congress and/or programs held on Capitol Hill with Congressional staff and/or members, and sponsored by other organizations. As a State Department official responsible for overseeing the Congressionally-funded Middle East Partnership Initiative, and as Deputy Special Coordinator for Middle East Transitions, I engaged regularly with staff of the committees with jurisdiction over that assistance: HFAC, SFRC, and the Foreign Operations subcommittees in both houses of Congress.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to recusing yourself from projects that implicate any countries with which Brookings had a financial relationship since 2004?

Answer. I commit to follow the guidance of the Agency Ethics Official, and the commitments made in my ethics agreement, along with all relevant laws, policies and regulations.

Brookings Ties To Qatar—Disclosure

Question. During your testimony to SFRC, you indicated that you had previously disclosed to Congress the financial entanglements between Brookings and Qatar. You gestured toward so-called Truth in Testimony Disclosure Forms that would have been filled out pursuant to testimony in front of the House Foreign Affairs Committee. The forms you filled out do not appear to mention Qatar, though they do have references to foreign funding, e.g. Item 6.

- Are there any Truth In Testimony forms, or other forms pursuant to Congressional testimony, that do mention Qatar?

Answer. As a matter of institutional policy, these forms were completed with standard language which refers to Brookings's annual reports, in which Qatari support for the Institution is clearly noted.

Question. Where the answers in Item 6 what you were referencing when you testified to SFRC that you had disclosed to Congress the financial ties between Qatar and Brookings?

Answer. Yes.

Question. Who drafted the explanations in Item 6 of these forms?

Answer. As a matter of institutional policy, these forms were completed by Brookings Development staff for all Foreign Policy scholars whose testimony was requested.

Question. Did you consult with competent legal counsel over filling out these forms?

Answer. I did not.

Question. Did you consult with any Qatari officials before filling out these forms?

Answer. I did not.

Brookings Ties To Qatar—Dinner

Question. In 2013 you were director of the Brookings Center for Middle East Policy, amid Qatar's ongoing financial support for Brookings. In spring 2013 Brookings hosted an off-the-record dinner between Qatari officials, including Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim bin Jaber Al Than, and leading Washington DC policymakers and journalists. In the private sector, coordinating such an event would likely have required American persons to register under the Foreign Agent Registration Act (FARA).

Journalist Jeffrey Goldberg attended that dinner and criticized it publicly, describing Qatar as “the Hamas-loving, worker-exploiting, party-banning, dissent-stifling, Muslim Brotherhood-funding U.S. ally.” You publicly defended the dinner, telling a journalist that “Jeffrey can and should write whatever he wants to write. But we got a leading foreign official to respond, on the record, to the questions that everyone wanted to ask... Brookings is fortunate to have funders from a variety of sectors. It's clear to the organization and to its funders that we maintain our independence, and our relationship with [Qatar] is not different than our relationship with any other donor.”

- Did you register under FARA for activities related to the event? If not, why not?

Answer. I did not.

Question. Before making your decision whether to register under FARA for those activities, did you consult with a lawyer competent in FARA? If not, why not?

Answer. I do not have any specific recollection about this matter, and I do not have access to records that might provide that information.

Question. To your knowledge, did anyone at Brookings register under FARA for activities related to the event? If so, who?

Answer. I have no information on that.

Question. To your knowledge, did anyone at Brookings consult with a lawyer competent in FARA about whether they should register under FARA for such activities? If so, who?

Answer. I have no information on that.

Question. Did you consult or coordinate with any Qatari official before publicly issuing the response that you gave to journalists about the spring 2013 dinner?

Answer. No.

Question. Do you agree with Goldberg’s assessment that Qatar is “the Hamas-loving, worker-exploiting, party-banning, dissent-stifling, Muslim Brotherhood-funding U.S. ally”?

Answer. I have publicly criticized Qatar’s approach to terror financing, as well as its hosting of Hamas and Taliban officials.

Brookings Ties To Qatar—Joint Publications

Question. On at least two occasions, the Brookings Institution produced joint publications with Qatar’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs: a June 2016 article titled “Between Interference and Assistance: The Politics of International Support in Egypt, Tunisia, and Libya” and a January 2017 “Islamism after the Arab Spring: Between the Islamic State and the nation-state.” Both of these reports feature Brookings logos alongside the logo of the Qatari Ministry of Foreign Affairs. You were on the steering committee of these. Please describe the circumstances under which these reports were produced.

Answer. During my time as Center Director from 2012-2017, I oversaw the work of the Project on U.S.-Relations with the Islamic World. The Project co-sponsored a conference, the U.S.-Islamic World Forum, with the Qatari Foreign Ministry’s Permanent Committee for Organizing Conferences. Speakers at these Forums included a number of U.S. officials, leaders from Muslim-majority countries, civil society activists and scholars from a wide variety of perspectives.

This conference was held in Doha during my time as Center Director on the following dates: May 28–31, 2012; June 9–11, 2013, June 9–12, 2014, and June 1–3, 2015

The Conference also hosted working groups focused on issues such as interfaith dialogue, arts and culture, Muslim minorities in the West, and women’s empowerment. These working groups were selected through a competitive process by the Project on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World, and the Qatari Government had no role in the process of selection. The working groups produced papers prior to the conference, and a report of their discussions after the conference. These were published by Brookings, subject to Brookings’s usual review process for published reports, and not reviewed or edited by the Government of Qatar. I’ve attached an example of such a report.

Some of these conference-related publications produced by Brookings included the logo of the Qatari Permanent Committee for Organizing Conferences alongside the Brookings logo. Those publications were published with the same independence, and subject to the same review process as other Brookings Foreign Policy publications.

I did not author any working group reports or papers during my time as Center Director.

Question. Which if any Qatari officials contributed to the production of these reports?

Answer. None.

Question. Are you aware of any Qatari Government officials who cleared this report? If so, which?

Answer. No.

Question. What role was played by the Government of Qatar or Qatari Government officials in the production of the reports? To what degree did they affect the content of the final reports?

Answer. No Qatari official played any role in producing the reports.

Question. Did you register under FARA for activities related to this report? If not, why not?

Answer. No, I did not.

Question. Before making your decision whether to register under FARA for those activities, did you consult with a lawyer competent in FARA? If not, why not?

Answer. I do not have specific recollection about this matter, and I do not have access to records that might provide that information.

Question. To your knowledge, did anyone at Brookings register under FARA for activities related to this report? If so, who?

Answer. I have no information on that.

Question. To your knowledge, did anyone at Brookings consult with a lawyer competent in FARA about whether they should register under FARA for such activities? If so, who?

Answer. I have no information on that.

Post-Brookings

Question. You left the Brookings Institution in November 2021. Since then you have engaged in a variety of activities since departing from the Brookings Institution, including publishing a book on academic-adjacent professions. Most recently, you publicly disclosed that you are a senior advisor in the State Department's Office of the Sanctions Coordinator.

- Please describe the circumstances of your departure from Brookings in November 2021.

Answer. In late 2020 or early 2021, Brookings established a new policy by which scholars under consideration for senior government roles had to undergo a review by the General Counsel's office to determine whether their candidacy for said role interfered with their job duties. Because of a determination by Brookings that my nomination constrained my ability to undertake my Brookings duties, I was placed on an unpaid leave of absence beginning November 1, 2021.

Question. Please describe the circumstances under which you were approached, or you pursued, the position in the State Department's Office of the Sanctions Coordinator.

Answer. Based on my expertise and my experience with the policy process and the State Department, I was offered a role as a senior adviser in the Office of Sanctions Coordination. I underwent the required security background checks and began work on June 5, 2022.

Question. To your knowledge, what steps did the State Department take to ensure that the hiring was competitive, and that equal employment opportunity (EEO) laws and regulations were followed?

Answer. I have no information on that question. I would refer you to the State Department.

Question. When did you interview for the position in the State Department's Office of the Sanctions Coordinator?

Answer. My first interview was in February 2022.

Question. When you offered the position of an advisor in the State Department's Office of the Sanctions Coordinator?

Answer. I received a tentative offer letter on March 21, 2022 and a final offer letter on May 26, 2022 after the completion of a background investigation.

Question. When did your employment start in the position of an advisor in the State Department's Office of the Sanctions Coordinator?

Answer. June 5, 2022

Question. Who held this position prior to you?

Answer. The office was established in legislation passed in December 2020. Amb. O'Brien is the first incumbent in the Senate-confirmed role of Sanctions Coordinator. I was hired as part of staffing up this new office, and thus, to my knowledge, I had no predecessor.

Question. If you are confirmed, are you aware of any plans to replace you with another senior advisor? To your knowledge has the hiring process started?

Answer. I have no information on this question. I would refer you to the State Department.

Policy—BDS

Question. In January 2019, you criticized Leader McConnell in the context of legislation that included provisions countering the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement against Israel. Specifically, Leader McConnell was seeking to add additional provisions to the legislation, and you tweeted that "McConnell realizes Democrats are not taking the bait on BDS, so he's desperately adding random provisions to this bill." BDS has been broadly criticized as anti-Semitic, and the U.S. Senate has passed a resolution about highlighting the role that boycotts of Jewish businesses have historically played in endemic anti-Jewish bigotry. In contrast, you have tweeted that "BDS isn't always anti-Semitism."

- Under what specific circumstances do you believe that BDS is not anti-Semitism?
- What did you mean by describing anti-BDS provisions as "bait"?

- Do you support the BDS movement?

Answer. Senator, I unreservedly apologize for my comments. To clarify, I was not referring to the content of the bill, but to the tactical and procedural behavior then underway between the two parties in Congress involving pressing for competing votes on competing legislative proposals regarding support for Israel, rather than forging a bipartisan consensus on a matter where both parties agree. As I have noted, including in an article published in the Atlantic, the partisan polarization around Israel in the United States is, in my view, deleterious to the health of the U.S.-Israel relationship.

I unequivocally oppose the BDS movement. President Biden and Secretary Blinken have made it clear that the administration firmly opposes the BDS campaign against Israel. The movement unfairly singles out Israel and too often veers into anti-Semitism. While the administration respects the American people's First Amendment rights, I support the administration's vocal disapproval of the BDS campaign and any effort to delegitimize Israel on the world stage.

Policy—Abraham Accords

Question. An enormous part of your job, if confirmed, would be distributing aid aimed at bolstering our Middle East allies and alliances. For decades, one of the most significant frameworks in the region were the Camp David Accords between Israel and Egypt. More recently, the Abraham Accords have transformed the region. You have been deeply critical of actors in both of those frameworks.

In September 2020, you tweeted that Arab leaders shouldn't deepen ties with Israel until they saw whether President Trump won reelection. You wrote "If I were an Arab leader weighing ties with Israel, I would have 2 things in mind: 1) a promise from Kushner now isn't worth much. Why not wait until after Nov elections? 2) Bibi's backtracked on his commitments to UAE; his promises aren't worth much either. Let's wait and see." You also tweeted that peace between Israel and the UAE was a "New Naksa" (naq-sa)—a setback. You said that it was a "triumph for authoritarianism" and just "normalization of men."

- Why did you advise Arab leaders not to deepen ties with Israel until after the November election?
- Do you believe that your comments about the trustworthiness of Israeli officials, and specifically former PM Netanyahu, would hinder your ability to work with Israeli officials in the context of your role at USAID, if confirmed?
- What specific steps do you intend to take to engage Israeli colleagues in the context of your previous criticisms, both of Israel and of the Abraham Accords?

Answer. I'm committed to widening the circle of peace between Israel and its neighbors and deepening cooperation among the participants in the Abraham Accords. If confirmed, I will seek opportunities to further expand the Agency's existing cooperation with MASHAV, the Israeli international development agency, on major regional issues of concern—such as food security, water conservation, agriculture, and green energy—emphasizing trilateral cooperation between USAID, Israel, and with Abraham Accords countries. If confirmed, I will also work to encourage participation from Abraham Accord country researchers in the Middle East Regional Cooperation (MERC) program, which fosters Arab-Israeli scientific cooperation through multi-year research grants on topics of regional development relevance.

If confirmed, I will encourage the USAID Middle East Bureau to continue what I understand are regular engagements with Israeli counterparts at all levels and to increase USAID-Israeli cooperation both within the region, and on other shared development priorities. If confirmed, I will personally engage and seek to build close, constructive relationships with Israeli Government colleagues, with whom I understand USAID already maintains regular contact and coordination to ensure Israeli input and support for USAID activities in the West Bank and Gaza.

Policy—Qatar

Question. During your confirmation hearing Sen. Cardin said: "I am deeply concerned about the exploitation and abuse of migrant workers in Qatar, with workers exposed to forced labor, unpaid wages, and excessive working hours as the country prepare for the World Cup in November."

- Do you agree with Sen. Cardin's assessment that in Qatar there is "the exploitation and abuse of migrant workers in Qatar, with workers exposed to forced labor, unpaid wages, and excessive working hours as the country prepare for the World Cup in November?"

- Did you ever raise concerns within Brookings that the financial relationship between the Institution and Qatar risked exposing Brookings to reputational risk because of human rights violations inside Qatar?

Answer. Yes.

Question. In 2012, you tweeted positively about Qatar’s record for human rights: “Brookings has partnered with Qatar many years on this topic. And Doha’s become a global gathering place for dialogue!” Do you continue to hold that assessment?

Answer. No, I do not.

Policy—Egypt

Question. USAID has a significant bilateral program with Egypt. During your career you have been deeply critical of Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, and have specifically advocated cutting aid. In 2016 you wrote that it was imperative for the U.S. to “no longer be in the unseemly position of providing taxpayer largesse—however small in the grand scheme of things” to the Sisi Government. Your criticisms have been both pitched and have included predicting the collapse of the Government: in March 2020 you retweeted that “Egypt’s Reich will also fall, but list fascist regimes before it.”

- Why did you retweet the comparison of the Sisi Government to Nazi Germany?
- Do you believe that your comments about the Sisi Government in general will hinder your ability to work with Egyptian officials in the context of your role at USAID, if confirmed?
- What specific steps do you intend to take to engage Egyptian colleagues on issues of aid specifically, and more generally the U.S.-Egypt relationship, to mitigate potential complications from your public stances?

Answer. Throughout my career I have engaged fruitfully and in good faith with Egyptians, whether government officials, business figures, journalists, academics, private sector, or civil society activists, including co-organizing with Egyptian partners two nongovernmental U.S.-Egyptian strategic dialogues. These engagements have frequently included discussions on assistance. I expect to continue such fruitful engagements.

Policy—Muslim Brotherhood

Question. You’ve said that the terrorist Muslim Brotherhood, which has been supported by Qatar and opposed by the Egyptian Government, is actually “not a terrorist movement.” You have advocated withholding American aid on issues related to the Egyptian Government’s efforts to suppress the Brotherhood.

You have also been publicly supportive of the case of Salah Soltan, a Muslim-Brotherhood linked preacher imprisoned by the Egyptian Government on terrorism related charges. You’ve called his imprisonment “shortsighted and narrow policy.” Meanwhile Soltan has said: “I travel all over the world, and I met supporters of Al-Aqsa, of the prisoners, of Jerusalem, and of Palestine—people who thirst for the blood of the Jews, and who are eager for the promised war against the sons of Zion, until Palestine is liberated in its entirety.” He has also said “I want our brothers, and the whole world, to know what’s going on these days, during Passover. Read Dr. Naghuib Al-Kilani’s book, Blood for the Matzos of Zion. Every year, at this time, the Zionists kidnap several non-Muslims [sic]—Christians and others. . . . By the way, this happened in a Jewish neighborhood in Damascus. They killed the French doctor, Toma, who used to treat the Jews and others for free, in order to spread Christianity. Even though he was their friend and they benefited from him the most, they took him on one of these holidays and slaughtered him, along with the nurse. Then they kneaded the matzos with the blood of Dr. Toma and his nurse . . . the world must know these facts about the Zionist entity and its terrible corrupt creed. The world should know this.” Do you consider this statement genocidal? He has also said “Any Zionist—tourist or other—who enters Egypt must be killed. We will not kill tourists from any [other] country. We stress that this fatwa is directed only toward those Zionists, who destroyed our country, killed our people, and shed our blood on our land.” Do you consider this statement anti-Semitic?

- Do you consider the Muslim Brotherhood to be a terrorist group?

Answer. No U.S. administration has ever determined that the Muslim Brotherhood qualifies for designation as a foreign terrorist organization.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit not to withhold aid from Egypt, or advocate withholding aid in the context of USAID’s role in the interagency process, related to Egypt’s stance on the Muslim Brotherhood?

Answer. If confirmed, I will conduct my role as required by law and regulation and according to the policies of the administration.

Question. Do you consider any of these statements by Mr. Soltan to be anti-Semitic hate?

Answer. These are vile and hateful statements, and I condemn them completely.

Question. Do you consider any of these statements by Mr. Soltan to advocate genocide against Jews?

Answer. These are vile and hateful statements, and I condemn them completely.

Question. Do you consider Mr. Soltan to be a “hate preacher”?

Answer. These are vile and hateful statements, and I condemn them completely.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit not to withhold aid from Egypt, or advocate withholding aid in the context of USAID’s role in the interagency process, related to the release of Mr. Soltan?

Answer. Any future decisions on withholding of funds would be policy decisions made through an interagency process that includes the White House and State Department. While I cannot anticipate future discussions on this matter, if confirmed, I commit to consulting with Congress about any decisions related to the withholding of USAID assistance to Egypt.

Public Social Media Advocacy

Question. You have advanced your policy and political views over a variety of new media platforms, from social media to podcasts. You opened your Twitter account in November 2011, since then, you posted more 118,500 tweets (other than tweets that were deleted).

During your confirmation process, you have locked your Twitter account so that your public record can no longer be reviewed.

- Why did you lock your Twitter account? Do you intend to unlock it after your confirmation process?

Answer. As I was entering a role in the State Department on June 6, I followed Department guidelines and best practices for social media in setting my Twitter account to private. If I am confirmed, I will follow Agency guidelines on the use of social media.

Question. Can you please provide all of your tweets in a searchable form to the committee?

Answer. My Twitter feed is searchable.

Question. You have tweeted negatively about members of the U.S. Senate. Have you deleted any of those tweets? If so, can you please provide them to the committee?

Answer. I do not have a general practice of deleting tweets. My Twitter feed is searchable.

I sincerely regret any tweets or retweets that characterized others, including members of the Senate, in unkind terms. I apologize unreservedly. If confirmed, I assure you that I respect and intend to fully honor the fundamentally nonpartisan nature of USAID’s activities. I believe that my long public record and my relationships and activities across the political spectrum make clear that these statements on Twitter do not represent how I engage in policy or politics. I want to assure you directly that, if confirmed to this position, I will always be respectful with those who have different views from my own and will hold myself to the highest of standards in such conduct.

Disinformation

Question. Earlier this year Nina Jankowicz was named director of the DHS Disinformation Governance Board. You tweeted that you were “thrill to see [her] take on this urgent and essential work” and that it was a “big win for our democracy and national security.” The Biden administration subsequently albeit partially reversed progress on the board, and Jankowicz is now unconnected to the project.

Before and after this controversy, Biden administration officials, including USAID officials, publicly advocated to use the resources of the U.S. Government to combat disinformation. Identifying disinformation has become a subject of significant public controversy.

- In July 2020 you amplified a tweet that alleged that Republicans in Congress and the Trump administration were trying to undermine the U.S. Postal Service “to undercut vote by mail & suppress votes.” You echoed the concern and com-

mented on top of the tweet that “We are all going to need to send our ballots in early and/or have easy access drop off locations.”

- Do you believe that Republicans sought to interfere with the U.S. Postal Service to undermine the integrity of the 2020 election?

Answer. I do not have a view on this question.

Question. Do you believe that this claim—that Republicans interfered with the U.S. Postal service to undermine the integrity of the 2020 election—constitutes disinformation?

Answer. I do not have a view on this question.

Question. What do you view as the role of the U.S. Government in combatting alleged disinformation?

Answer. I understand that a large part of USAID’s mission is to elevate and integrate democracy, human rights, and governance within the Agency’s overall development portfolio. By promoting and demonstrating democratic values abroad, USAID works to advance a free, peaceful and prosperous world.

In part, I understand that USAID democracy, human rights, and governance programming works to strengthen the resilience of societies and the media environment in countries that are targets of disinformation campaigns from actors that work to undermine the efforts of the United States and its interest. Programming focused on media development, media and digital literacy, and cybersecurity is critical in ensuring that people and institutions in these countries in target countries have credible access to information and resources to protect themselves from all forms of instability.

Question. An enormous part of your job, if confirmed, would be distributing aid aimed at bolstering our Middle East allies and alliances. For decades, one of the most significant frameworks in the region were the Camp David Accords between Israel and Egypt. More recently, the Abraham Accords have transformed the region. You have been deeply critical of actors in both of those frameworks. In September 2020, you tweeted that Arab leaders shouldn’t deepen ties with Israel until they saw whether President Trump won reelection. You wrote “If I were an Arab leader weighing ties with Israel, I would have 2 things in mind: 1) a promise from Kushner now isn’t worth much. Why not wait until after Nov elections? 2) Bibi’s backtracked on his commitments to UAE; his promises aren’t worth much either. Let’s wait and see.” You also tweeted that peace between Israel and the UAE was a “New Naksa” (naq-sa)—a setback. You said that it was a “triumph for authoritarianism” and just “normalization of men.”

- What specific steps do you intend to take to engage Israeli colleagues in the context of your previous criticisms, both of Israel and of the Abraham Accords?

Answer. I’m committed to widening the circle of peace between Israel and its neighbors and deepening cooperation among the participants in the Abraham Accords. If confirmed, I will seek opportunities to further expand the Agency’s existing cooperation with MASHAV, the Israeli international development agency, on major regional issues of concern—such as food security, water conservation, agriculture, and green energy—emphasizing trilateral cooperation between USAID, Israel, and with Abraham Accords countries. If confirmed, I will also work to encourage participation from Abraham Accord country researchers in the Middle East Regional Cooperation (MERC) program, which fosters Arab-Israeli scientific cooperation through multi-year research grants on topics of regional development relevance.

If confirmed, I will encourage the USAID Middle East Bureau to continue what I understand are regular engagements with Israeli counterparts at all levels and to increase USAID-Israeli cooperation both within the region, and on other shared development priorities. If confirmed, I will personally engage and seek to build close, constructive relationships with Israeli Government colleagues, with whom I understand USAID already maintains regular contact and coordination to ensure Israeli input and support for USAID activities in the West Bank and Gaza.

Question. USAID has a significant bilateral program with Egypt. During your career you have been deeply critical of Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, and have specifically advocated cutting aid. In 2016 you wrote that it was imperative for the U.S. to “no longer be in the unseemly position of providing taxpayer largesse—however small in the grand scheme of things” to the Sisi Government. Your criticisms have been both pitched and have included predicting the collapse of the Government: in March 2020 you retweeted that “Egypt’s Reich will also fall, but list fascist regimes before it.”

- Do you believe that your comments about the Sisi Government in general will hinder your ability to work with Egyptian officials in the context of your role at USAID, if confirmed?
- What specific steps do you intend to take to engage Egyptian colleagues on issues of aid specifically, and more generally the U.S.-Egypt relationship, to mitigate potential complications from your public stances?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to working with the Government of Egypt on shared development priorities and to proactively seek opportunities for engagement with Egyptian officials, the private sector, and civil society.

Answer. If confirmed, I intend to travel to Cairo to engage with USAID's key partner ministries within the Government of Egypt, including the Ministry of International Cooperation, along with nongovernmental stakeholders. I understand that leaders from USAID and other U.S. agencies recently met with Egyptian Government officials across multiple ministries to discuss the country's efforts to counter corruption. If confirmed, I would build on those discussions to support the reform efforts the country is already undertaking, as well as exploring opportunities to increase those efforts. Egypt's selection as the host for COP27 also offers several opportunities for engagement with Egyptian officials as the country prepares to host this highly visible international summit.

Question. You've said that the terrorist Muslim Brotherhood, which has been supported by Qatar and opposed by the Egyptian Government, is actually "not a terrorist movement." You have advocated withholding American aid on issues related to the Egyptian Government's efforts to suppress the Brotherhood. You have also been publicly supportive of the case of Salah Soltan, a Muslim-Brotherhood linked preacher imprisoned by the Egyptian Government on terrorism related charges. You've called his imprisonment "shortsighted and narrow policy." Meanwhile Soltan has said: "I travel all over the world, and I met supporters of Al-Aqsa, of the prisoners, of Jerusalem, and of Palestine—people who thirst for the blood of the Jews, and who are eager for the promised war against the sons of Zion, until Palestine is liberated in its entirety." He has also said "I want our brothers, and the whole world, to know what's going on these days, during Passover. Read Dr. Naghuib Al-Kilani's book, Blood for the Matzos of Zion. Every year, at this time, the Zionists kidnap several non-Muslims [sic]—Christians and others... By the way, this happened in a Jewish neighborhood in Damascus. They killed the French doctor, Toma, who used to treat the Jews and others for free, in order to spread Christianity. Even though he was their friend and they benefited from him the most, they took him on one of these holidays and slaughtered him, along with the nurse. Then they kneaded the matzos with the blood of Dr. Toma and his nurse ... the world must know these facts about the Zionist entity and its terrible corrupt creed. The world should know this." Do you consider this statement genocidal? He has also said "Any Zionist—tourist or other—who enters Egypt must be killed. We will not kill tourists from any [other] country. We stress that this fatwa is directed only toward those Zionists, who destroyed our country, killed our people, and shed our blood on our land." Do you consider this statement anti-Semitic?

- If confirmed, do you commit not to withhold aid from Egypt, or advocate withholding aid in the context of USAID's role in the interagency process, related to Egypt's stance on the Muslim Brotherhood?

Answer. Any future decisions on withholding of funds would be policy decisions made through an interagency process that includes the White House and State Department. While I cannot anticipate future discussions on this matter, if confirmed, I commit to consulting with Congress about any decisions related to the withholding of USAID assistance to Egypt. To my knowledge, no USAID funds have been withheld to date related to Egypt's stance on the Muslim Brotherhood.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO DR. TAMARA COFMAN WITTES BY SENATOR BILL HAGERTY

Question. On June 22, 2015, in response to Senator Rubio's statement on then-Governor of South Carolina Nikki Haley's statement in support of removing the Confederate flag from the South Carolina statehouse grounds, you wrote on Twitter that "Rubio lauds Haley's leadership while revealing his own lack of same."

On February 4, 2016, you wrote on Twitter that the sight of Senator Sanders "shouting" is "so ... unattractive."

On *January 11, 2017*, in response to Rex Tillerson’s nomination hearing to be the U.S. Secretary of State, you wrote on your Twitter account (@tcwittes) that Senator James Risch was “making us all wonder why he bothered showing up to this hearing.”

On *July 29, 2019*, you wrote on Twitter that Republicans are “transparent and servile” while referencing Senator Mitt Romney.

On *March 7, 2020*, you wrote on Twitter that Senator Ted Cruz “reveals himself (again) to be an ugly-hearted, small-minded, hateful human.”

- Do you believe that you exercised sound temperament and good judgment when you posted these tweets on Twitter? I request you begin your answer with yes or no.

Answer. I sincerely regret any tweets or retweets that characterized others, including members of the Senate, in unkind terms. I apologize unreservedly. If confirmed, I assure you that I respect and intend to fully honor the fundamentally non-partisan nature of USAID’s activities. I believe that my long public record and my relationships and activities across the political spectrum make clear that these statements on Twitter do not represent how I engage in policy or politics. I want to assure you directly that, if confirmed to this position, I will always be respectful with those who have different views from my own and will hold myself to the highest of standards in such conduct.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO MICHAEL ALAN RATNEY BY SENATOR ROBERT MENENDEZ

Question. Please describe your role in approving or overseeing the OneVoice grant during your time as Consul General in Jerusalem, to include the timing and circumstances of OneVoice’s absorption of other companies as it relates to the U.S. grant it received.

Answer. In September 2013, the State Department provided grants to two affiliates of “One Voice” to build grass roots support for a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and for the U.S.-led negotiating process then underway. OneVoice, which still exists (<http://www.onevoicemovement.org/>), is a U.S.-based NGO that described itself at the time as “a global initiative that supports grassroots activists in Israel, Palestine, and internationally who are working to build the human infrastructure needed to create the necessary conditions for a just and negotiated resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.” OneVoice had approached the State Department in the summer of 2013 as Secretary Kerry’s Israeli-Palestinian peace efforts were gearing up with a proposal to support those efforts by building grassroots support among Israelis and Palestinians for the negotiating process. The initiative to support OneVoice’s two local affiliates, OneVoice Israel and OneVoice Palestine, came from the team in Washington working with Secretary Kerry on Israeli-Palestinian negotiations. Execution and oversight of the grant agreements fell to the U.S. Embassy to Israel and the U.S. Consulate General in Jerusalem.

A grant was provided to OneVoice Israel, and a separate, smaller grant was provided to OneVoice Palestine. Day-to-day oversight of the OneVoice Palestine grant fell to the Public Affairs Section of the U.S. Consulate General in Jerusalem, which I led at the time as Consul General. In that capacity, I had overall responsibility for the work of the Public Affairs Section and met at least once with the leadership of OneVoice Palestine to discuss their work. Oversight of the OneVoice Israel grant fell to the U.S. Embassy to Israel. Dan Shapiro, then U.S. Ambassador to Israel, and I had our teams work closely with OneVoice Israel and OneVoice Palestine, respectively, to ensure that their activities didn’t touch on sensitive final status issues like Jerusalem or borders and stuck instead to building more generic grassroots support for the negotiation effort.

The peace process effectively came to an end in March/April 2014. The grant agreements formally ended later in 2014, but by then, lacking any prospect of renewed negotiations, their work had lost relevance. We did not know it at the time, but OneVoice had decided at some point that their Israeli affiliate, OneVoice Israel, would absorb what had then been a small, though explicitly political, Israeli organization called V15 (for “Victory 15”). After the grant period ended, they would use the contact database developed by OneVoice Israel to support an initiative to build support for Israeli centrists who supported a two-state solution in the next Israeli elections. (The work of OneVoice Palestine, and the West Bank-focused grant that Consulate General Jerusalem oversaw, had no apparent relevance to this new effort.) In February 2016, the Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations (PSI) undertook an inquiry into the connection between the State Department grants and V15’s political activities. I met with the investigators.

The Senate PSI report concluded that “the Subcommittee found no evidence that OneVoice spent grant funds to influence the 2015 elections.” The PSI report went on to state that “After the elections were called following the collapse of the peace negotiations, and after the State Department grant period ended, OneVoice shifted its focus to influencing the electoral outcome by working to defeat incumbent Prime Minister Netanyahu. Planning for this effort began during the period when OneVoice was still a State Department grantee. OneVoice did not use State Department funds directly for political activities or seek State Department grants in anticipation of the Israeli elections, but it did use the campaign infrastructure and resources it had built in part with State Department funds, to support a campaign to defeat PM Netanyahu in the 2015 elections.”

The Subcommittee did point out that State Department grant procedures did not prohibit the use of the database OneVoice Israel developed with USG funds for the later, political, purpose after the grant period was over, a possible weakness in contracting procedures. Although I was not involved in the OneVoice Israel grant, it is safe to say that if we had any inkling that USG resources would be used in this way, the USG would have terminated the relationship with OneVoice, a point I made in my interview with PSI investigators.

Question. Please describe the content of the email related to OneVoice that you discussed with the Senate Permanent Select Committee.

Answer. In late September 2014, about one month before the OneVoice Palestine grant period formally ended, I received an email from Marc Ginsberg, then CEO of One Voice, in which he was lamenting the low state of the peace process and complaining about some inflammatory and inappropriate comments President Abbas had made. I had known Ginsberg since the mid-1990s when I was assigned to the U.S. Consulate General in Casablanca and Ginsberg was U.S. Ambassador to Morocco. I had seen him very occasionally in the intervening years, and I met him a few times when he became involved with One Voice. After our exchange on Abbas, he said he was working on a “major strategy directed at centrist Israelis,” and asked if I “would like to see a copy just for friendship’s sake?” I agreed he could send it—which he apparently did—but I never focused on it, and nor do I recall ever reading the document. When I was shown the strategy document by the PSI staff (which they apparently obtained from Ginsberg), it was completely unfamiliar. At the time, State Department IT staff urged employees to delete emails with large attachments lest we exceed inbox storage limits and stop receiving new messages. Ginsberg’s strategy document was apparently among those emails I dispensed with. This was about five months after the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations ended, and according to Ginsberg, concerned “centrist Israelis,” a constituency with which I had no role. This was not the sort of document I would spend time reading. Anomalous Health Incidents: I am very concerned about directed energy attacks on U.S. Government personnel (so-called Anomalous Health Incidents). Ensuring the safety and security of our personnel abroad falls largely on individual Chiefs of Mission and the response of officers at post. It is imperative that any individual who reports a suspected incident be responded to promptly, equitably, and compassionately.

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

Answer. Yes. Anomalous health incidents that have affected the health of U.S. Government personnel are very troubling and must be taken seriously. I agree completely with Secretary Blinken that nothing is more important than the health and safety of our employees. These incidents affect the wellbeing of U.S. personnel serving their country abroad and must be taken extremely seriously. If confirmed, the health, safety, and security of the U.S. Mission to Saudi Arabia staff, their family members, and all those supporting the Mission will be my highest priority. This includes contributing to the extensive, ongoing interagency investigation into the cause of these incidents and how we can best protect our people. I will ensure that any reported Anomalous Health Incidents at the U.S. Mission to Saudi Arabia are responded to quickly and thoroughly.

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

Answer. Yes. The Department has created a Health Incident Response Task Force charged with supporting employees who report symptoms of Anomalous Health Incidents. If confirmed, I commit to ensuring that all reported potential anomalous health incidents are given serious attention and reported swiftly through the appropriate channels. If confirmed, I will ensure that all employees and their family members at the U.S. Mission to Saudi Arabia are aware of Anomalous Health Inci-

dents and the means to report them, as well as the availability of resources and care. I will also ensure that staff who are affected by these incidents receive prompt access to the treatment, support, and medical care that they need.

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

Answer. Yes. If confirmed, I commit to meeting with medical staff and the Regional Security Office to discuss any reported anomalous health incidents so that I am most prepared to protect the safety of Mission Saudi Arabia and ensure that all protocols regarding anomalous health incidents are being followed appropriately, in consultation with the Department's Health Incident Response Task Force and the appropriate teams in the Bureau of Diplomatic Security and Bureau of Medical Services.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO MICHAEL ALAN RATNEY BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

Security Relationship

Question. According to the Carter Doctrine, as articulated in 1980, it is in the U.S.'s vital national interest to defend our Gulf partners against attacks that undermine their stability and sovereignty. Is it your understanding that the Carter Doctrine remains operative and is supported by the Biden administration?

Answer. It remains in the United States' vital national interest to help defend our Gulf partners—and to help our Gulf partners defend themselves—against external aggression. On February 4, 2021, in his first foreign policy speech, alongside announcing an end to U.S. support for Saudi-led coalition offensive operations in Yemen, President Biden reiterated the U.S. commitment to support Saudi Arabia's territorial defense.

The President and Secretary Biden have since reiterated this commitment multiple times, both publicly and in direct conversations with our Saudi partners. The administration continues to support arms transfers to Saudi Arabia for its legitimate defense needs, particularly to defend against incoming Houthi missile and drone attacks from Yemen, of which there were more than 400 in 2021. The United States also provides Saudi-funded technical assistance to certain Saudi security and law enforcement organizations.

If confirmed, I look forward to working with the departments and agencies of the Executive Branch and consulting transparently with Congress on arms sales to Saudi Arabia that are consistent with U.S. values and support Saudi Arabia's ability to defend itself.

Question. Saudi Arabia's territory, people, and infrastructure are under constant attack from Iranian-backed proxies, particularly in Yemen. Is the administration committed to selling Saudi Arabia the military capabilities it needs to provide for its legitimate defense needs against Iran, irrespective of any artificial distinction that some are now making between offensive and defensive weapon systems?

Answer. Yes. The President and Secretary have been clear that the United States will continue to support Saudi Arabia's legitimate defensive needs in order to meet existing and emerging threats, including cross-border attacks from Yemen and elsewhere against targets inside Saudi Arabia—including the 70,000 U.S. citizens in Saudi Arabia.

U.S. arms transfers that bolster and replenish Saudi Arabia's defenses, particularly air defenses, are consistent with the administration's pledge to lead with diplomacy to end the conflict in Yemen and to cease support for offensive operations in Yemen, while also ensuring Saudi Arabia has the means to defend itself from cross-border air attacks by the Iran-supported Houthis, of which there were more than 400 in 2021. The United States provides maintenance support to the Royal Saudi Air Force, so they are equipped to intercept the persistent drone and missile attacks on Saudi Arabia and to counter Iran.

If confirmed, I look forward to working with the departments and agencies of the Executive Branch and consulting transparently with Congress on arms sales to Saudi Arabia that are consistent with U.S. values and support Saudi Arabia's ability to defend itself.

Question. To what extent do you view the Houthis as a threat to Saudi Arabia? What steps, if any, is the Biden administration prepared to take to address this threat?

Answer. The Houthis launched more than 400 cross-border drone, missile, and explosive boat attacks against Saudi Arabia in 2021, and continued to launch attacks threatening or striking Saudi military, energy, and civilian infrastructure facilities through the first three months of 2022, before the parties to the Yemen conflict accepted the U.N.-brokered truce, now extended through August 2, 2022.

U.S. arms transfers that bolster and replenish Saudi Arabia's defenses, particularly air defenses, are consistent with the administration's pledge to lead with diplomacy to end the conflict in Yemen and to cease support for offensive operations in Yemen, while also ensuring Saudi Arabia has the means to defend itself from air attacks by the Iran-supported Houthis. The United States provides maintenance support to the Royal Saudi Air Force, so they are equipped to intercept the persistent drone and missiles attacks on Saudi Arabia and to counter Iran.

The President and Secretary have been clear that the United States will continue to support Saudi Arabia's legitimate defensive needs in order to meet existing and emerging threats, including cross-border attacks from Yemen and elsewhere against targets inside Saudi Arabia—including the 70,000 U.S. citizens in Saudi Arabia.

If confirmed, I look forward to working with the departments and agencies of the Executive Branch and consulting transparently with Congress on arms sales to Saudi Arabia that are consistent with U.S. values and support Saudi Arabia's ability to defend itself.

Question. Are there opportunities to encourage greater defense cooperation between Israel and Saudi Arabia?

Answer. Saudi Arabia and Israel have many common regional interests, particularly countering the threats from Iran and Iranian-supported groups. These common interests present significant opportunities for greater cooperation between Israel and Saudi Arabia. If confirmed, I will work to encourage this cooperation, in coordination with the Department of Defense.

There's great interest in Congress in encouraging increased defense and security cooperation between Israel and its Arab neighbors, especially in the area of integrated regional defense against the growing threat of Iranian missiles and drones. The Saudis will be key to maximizing those efforts and should have as great an interest in such cooperation as any country in the region in light of the hundreds of Houthi missile and drone attacks that they've endured in recent years.

Question. Can you give us your assessment of the prospects for Saudi participation, and can you assure us that, in cooperation with CENTCOM, you'll make encouraging Saudi cooperation in such a multilateral effort one of your top priorities?

Answer. The United States has robust defense and security cooperation, both bilaterally and multilaterally, with the member states of the Gulf Cooperation Council and is seeking to deepen and expand this cooperation. In March 2022, the Department of Defense co-hosted U.S.-GCC working groups on air and missile defense and maritime security, in which Saudi Arabia participated and at which the United States reiterated its commitment to regional cooperation to confront our adversaries in the region, including Iran and Iran-supported groups.

Two member states of the GCC, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates, have signed the Abraham Accords and are developing deeper cooperation with Israel in connection with those agreements. The other GCC members also have many common regional interests with Israel, particularly countering the threat from Iran and the aggressive behavior by Iran-supported groups. These common interests present significant opportunities for greater defense cooperation between Israel and its Arab neighbors, including Saudi Arabia. If confirmed, it will be a priority to encourage this important cooperation, in coordination with the Department of Defense.

Question. Are there opportunities to encourage greater defense cooperation between Israel and Saudi Arabia? If so, what are they?

Answer. Saudi Arabia and Israel have many common regional interests, particularly countering the threat from Iran and the aggressive behavior by Iran-supported groups. These common interests present significant opportunities for greater defense cooperation between Israel and Saudi Arabia. If confirmed, I will make it a priority to encourage this important cooperation, in coordination with the Department of Defense.

Question. Do you envision the current U.S. mediation of Egypt-Saudi-Israel talks on Red Sea islands as an initial step in a broader U.S. effort to help promote Saudi-

Israel normalization, and if so, what additional steps do you think feasible/necessary?

Answer. As Secretary Blinken has said, normalizing relations with Israel is a decision each country has to make on its own. The administration supports normalization by highlighting the tangible benefits of relations with Israel and leveraging the wide range of diplomatic tools at our disposal. The Abraham Accords have produced real benefits for people, including rapidly growing connections among businesses, students, and tourists and new opportunities for U.S. engagement and multilateral cooperation. The United States hopes that greater prosperity and new opportunities for cooperation will encourage other countries, including Saudi Arabia, to become part of the process.

Normalizing relations with Israel is in the best interest of the stability of the region and of Israel, whose security is of critical importance to the United States. Any substantive talks between Israel and its Arab neighbors are constructive towards those goals.

If confirmed, I look forward to working with Saudi Arabia to seek to expand the Abraham Accords.

Question. Short of full normalization, do you envision a U.S. role in helping facilitate initial Saudi-Israeli security cooperation against shared threats like Iranian missiles and drones?

Answer. Saudi Arabia and Israel have many common regional interests, particularly countering the threat from Iran and the aggressive behavior by Iran-supported groups. These common interests present significant opportunities for greater defense cooperation between Israel and Saudi Arabia, even short of full normalization. Given our important defense partnerships with both nations, the United States can indeed play a helpful role in encouraging and supporting such mutually beneficial cooperation. If confirmed, I will work to encourage security cooperation between Saudi Arabia and Israel, in coordination with the Department of Defense.

Vision 2030:

Question. What is your evaluation of the historical significance of the social and economic reforms now underway in Saudi Arabia?

Answer. Under the banner of “Vision 2030”—a plan for reform of the Saudi economy and society—Saudi Arabia has announced it aims to diversify its economy by mobilizing more than \$1 trillion in domestic and foreign direct investment in infrastructure, entertainment, tourism, industry, and other sectors. These changes present opportunities for both the United States and for the Saudi population. Many U.S. companies already have significant projects in development. For example, U.S. companies have recently concluded deals to construct factories in Saudi Arabia for electric vehicle manufacturing and green hydrogen production. Meanwhile, following social and economic reforms, women’s participation rate in the workforce doubled from about 17 percent in 2017 to more than 35 percent at the end of 2021.

These reforms and changes are unlike anything in Saudi Arabia’s history in their size and pace, but they are also incomplete. As the Department’s most recent Human Rights Report details, Saudis continue to face a broad range of human rights abuses. Labor reforms have enabled many private sector expatriate workers to change jobs and obtain exit and re-entry visas after one year without their employer’s permission. However, these advances do not apply to domestic workers. Despite their rising numbers in the workforce, most women still do not formally participate in the economy, and there remain legal inequalities in property and inheritance laws, as well as restrictions on marriage and maternal leave, despite recent positive reforms to the guardianship system. The implementation of legal reforms announced to date has been incomplete and uneven.

If confirmed, I will encourage Saudi Arabia to achieve the full potential of Vision 2030 and enact legal and policy reforms to respect and protect the human rights of all people.

Question. To what extent do you feel Vision 2030 and Saudi Arabia’s parallel reform plan serve long-term U.S. interests?

Answer. Saudi Arabia’s mobilization of more than \$1 trillion in domestic and foreign direct investment is an economic opportunity for U.S. companies, many of which already have projects in development. U.S. companies have recently concluded deals to construct factories in Saudi Arabia for electric vehicle manufacturing and green hydrogen production.

If reforms are fully implemented and expanded, that will create increased economic and social opportunities for a generation of Saudi citizens, most notably Saudi women. The changes underway have potential to encourage the transformation of

Saudi Arabia into a more open and dynamic society, further marginalize violent extremism and support regional stability, all of which would benefit the United States. Improvements in women's and labor rights, though incomplete, are inherently in the U.S. national interest; President Biden and Secretary Blinken have made clear that human rights are central to U.S. foreign policy. If confirmed, I will encourage Saudi leaders to continue such reforms and expand and accelerate them.

Question. What should we be doing that we're not doing to help ensure those reforms succeed?

Answer. As Saudi Arabia embarks on its Vision 2030 program to diversify its economy and transform its society, there are opportunities for cooperation with the United States to support the advancement of the program's various reforms. Importantly, we must continue to engage on human rights and related concerns, including full equality for women and further reforms to protect human rights and fundamental freedoms.

A significant component of Vision 2030 is deploying renewable energy and advancing climate initiatives. Saudi Arabia has pledged to achieve 50 percent electricity generation capacity from renewables, plant 50 billion trees in the Middle East, divert 94 percent of rubbish from landfills, and have 30 percent of vehicles in Riyadh be electric by 2030. Saudi Arabia also joined the Global Methane Pledge to reduce global emissions of methane by 30 percent by 2030. Possible bilateral cooperation areas include U.S. clean technology (such as carbon capture), and technical and financial assistance to third countries on methane reduction and renewables deployment.

If confirmed, I look forward to identifying any gaps in U.S. policy and engagement and advancing additional cooperation initiatives between the United States and Saudi Arabia in support of both U.S. national interests and Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 goals.

China

Question. What is the extent of Saudi Arabia's relationship with the Chinese firm Huawei in the area of 5G, and whether the Biden administration remains committed, as its predecessor was, to making it a top priority to stop Huawei from penetrating the telecom sectors of our most important international defense partners, including in the Gulf?

Answer. Saudi Arabia has one of the most highly developed telecommunications markets in the Middle East, with high mobile penetration and a saturated market. Huawei partners with Saudi mobile operators to provide 5G to dozens of cities, and Saudi Arabia is also a major importer of telecoms broadcasting equipment from the People's Republic of China (PRC).

The administration views 5G security as a high priority; countries and citizens need to be able to trust that 5G and other sensitive equipment and software will not introduce risks that threaten national security, privacy, or respect for human rights.

The United States raises its concerns with Saudi Arabia and other U.S. partners in the Gulf, including defense counterparts, over the PRC's role in 5G technology and sensitive infrastructure. The administration seeks to ensure that PRC influence and activities in the Middle East do not come at the expense of the region's prosperity, stability, and long-standing relationships with its global partners, including the United States.

If confirmed, I will reiterate these concerns to Saudi leaders and endeavor to dissuade them from considering untrustworthy and high-risk suppliers, regardless of national origin.

Question. There has been a lot of speculation in the press about Saudi cooperation with China to build ballistic missile facilities in the kingdom, as well as other reporting about the Saudis seeking help from Russia and China to help it build certain civilian nuclear capabilities. Without going into classified matters, how deep a concern is this kind of potential cooperation between the kingdom and our two main great power adversaries, and what will you do as ambassador to make sure it doesn't come to fruition?

Answer. The administration is very concerned with the potential for proliferation of missile technology in the Middle East and raises concerns with all partners and allies about a range of actions by Russia and the People's Republic of China that run counter to our values and interests.

The United States has long stressed its support for the responsible development of civil nuclear power in a manner consistent with the highest standards of safety, security, and nonproliferation. The administration has emphasized with all partners

the importance of adhering to these standards in developing nuclear power programs.

Commensurate with the high importance of this issue, if confirmed, I will raise these concerns with Saudi officials and encourage adherence to the strongest non-proliferation standards.

Question. The Saudis are rapidly building a huge economic relationship with China at the same time China is fast becoming the most important economic lifeline for the regime in Tehran ostensibly the kingdom's number one security threat. Isn't it time that the Saudis began using more of their own economic leverage with China to stop the Chinese from strengthening their number one enemy in Iran? If the Saudis want us to put more pressure on Iran, shouldn't they be doing more as well? Can you assure us that one of your priorities will be encouraging the Saudis to put greater pressure on China to back off its strategic relationship with Iran?

Answer. The United States acknowledges that U.S. allies and partners in the Middle East, including Saudi Arabia, have complex relationships with the People's Republic of China (PRC). The PRC is now the top destination for Saudi crude oil exports, importing nearly \$25 billion worth in 2020. As Secretary Blinken has said, the United States will not force our allies and partners into an "us-or-them" choice, preferring instead to navigate these challenges together. The administration seeks to ensure that Beijing's influence and activities in the Middle East do not come at the expense of the region's prosperity, stability, and long-standing relationships with its global partners, including the United States.

The United States and Saudi Arabia are of the same view that Iran's aggressive behavior poses the greatest threat to regional stability, which Saudi Arabia has acutely experienced, as it faced more than 400 missile and drone attacks launched against its territory in 2021 by the Iran-supported Houthis in Yemen. If confirmed, I will consult regularly with the Saudi Government on pursuing effective ways to deter Iran and its aggressive behavior in the region, including encouraging Saudi Arabia to press China to curb its troubling support to Iran.

Question. In light of Saudi concerns about Iran's nuclear program whether or not there is a nuclear deal, what else can, and should, the United States do to address Riyadh's concerns and rebuild trust in the bilateral U.S.-Saudi security partnership?

Answer. The United States has consulted regularly with Saudi Arabia and other Gulf Cooperation Council member states on the administration's pursuit of a mutual return to full implementation of the Joint Cooperative Plan of Action as the best means of ensuring that Iran will not acquire a nuclear weapon. The U.S.-GCC working group on Iran met in Riyadh in November 2021 and condemned Iran's malign behavior through its support for proxies and other violent groups and direct use of advanced ballistic missiles, cruise missiles, and unmanned aircraft systems. The Department of Defense co-hosted U.S.-Gulf Cooperation Council working groups on air and missile defense and maritime security in March 2022 and reiterated the U.S. commitment to regional cooperation to confront our adversaries in the region, including Iran and Iran-supported groups.

The United States also is committed to supporting Saudi Arabia's territorial defense. In accordance with the relevant laws, the administration supports arms transfers to Saudi Arabia to deter Iran and bolster Saudi defenses, particularly against incoming drone and missile attacks. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the departments and agencies of the Executive Branch and consulting transparently with Congress on arms sales to Saudi Arabia that are consistent with U.S. values and support Saudi Arabia's ability to defend itself.

President Biden's recently-announced trip to Saudi Arabia, including a multilateral meeting with GCC and other regional leaders, presents another opportunity to consult bilaterally and multilaterally on Iran and on security cooperation.

State Department Management and Public Diplomacy

Question. Many U.S. missions have been under enormous stress over the last few years, in large part due to COVID.

- What is your understanding of morale throughout Mission Riyadh?

Answer. U.S. diplomats and their families can encounter challenging conditions and environments overseas. For some, Saudi Arabia can be a difficult place to work and live. Prohibitions against alcohol and pork are strictly enforced, and there are more limited recreational options than can be found in the United States. In recognition of these conditions, all posts in Saudi Arabia receive 25 percent post differential, and most tours of duty are only two years. Many positions at U.S. Embassy Riyadh, U.S. Consulate General Jeddah, and U.S. Consulate General

Dhahran are listed as hard-to-fill, indicating historically few employees have been interested in those positions.

However, many social restrictions in Saudi Arabia have eased over the past several years, with the introduction of public concerts, movie theaters, and lifting the ban on women driving. Morale at all three posts has significantly improved with the removal of Covid-related restrictions that had closed nearly all international travel from Saudi Arabia in 2020.

If confirmed as the Chief of Mission, my top priority will be the health, safety, and wellbeing of U.S. citizens in Saudi Arabia, including employees of the U.S. Mission and their families. I look forward to hearing directly from them about any challenges they face and how we can work to overcome or mitigate them.

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

Answer. If confirmed as the Chief of Mission, my top priority will be the health, safety, and wellbeing of U.S. citizens in Saudi Arabia, including employees of the U.S. Mission and their families. I will seek to ensure the Mission is a diverse, effective, cohesive, and respectful workplace that supports high employee morale. Employee and family member morale is often a function of multiple factors in both the workplace and the local society. In the workplace, morale is often of a function of clear communication, mutually respectful behavior, and a strong sense of mission and purpose driving the work we do. If confirmed, I expect to bring those values to my work leading the Mission. Outside the workplace, Saudi Arabia has certain social and weather conditions that make it a challenging place to live for some people. In recognition of the difficult conditions, all posts in Saudi Arabia receive 25 percent post differential, and most tours of duty are only two years. Money, however, only goes so far, so it would be incumbent on me as Ambassador to ensure that the mission is welcoming to mission families and creates a sense of community for our employees and their family members.

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

Answer. The United States has important national security interests in Saudi Arabia, and it is critical that the entire Mission team understands those interests and their role in advancing them. If confirmed, I will ensure that all sections of the Embassy, and the Consulates General in Jeddah and Dhahran, receive clear, direct, and accurate communications and direction on both policy goals and internal procedures, in pursuit of achieving effective performance. I will ensure the Mission is a diverse, effective, cohesive, and respectful workplace that supports high employee morale. This will require my steady presence and interaction through the mission, including regular travel by me and our DCM to each of the Consulates and other mission elements.

With U.S. Embassy Sana'a operations still suspended and the Yemen Affairs Unit co-located with the U.S. Embassy in Riyadh, if confirmed, I will also coordinate closely on these issues with the U.S. Ambassador to Yemen.

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

Answer. I believe in delegating authority, but not delegating ultimate responsibility. I need to depend on our experts, and they need to know I have their backs. Employees perform their best and achieve the most effective results when their leaders provide clear, direct, and accurate communications, particularly on expectations; establish and maintain a respectful and collaborative work environment; and provide them with the necessary support to propose new ideas and be confident that good-faith mistakes, while analyzed for improvement, will not be ridiculed. It is important that all members of the U.S. Mission in Saudi Arabia know their Chief of Mission will listen to their ideas and concerns while supporting them fully in their pursuit of U.S. policy goals.

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

Answer. Absolutely not. Berating, yelling, or using aggressive language is never acceptable, under any circumstances, including when discussing performance or management issues. It is also a sign of weak, insecure leadership. Tolerating such behavior in subordinates is also unacceptable. If confirmed, I will ensure that the workplace at Mission Saudi Arabia is characterized by mutual respect among all our colleagues, starting with me, and encompassing every American, Local Staff member, Eligible Family Member, and contractor. The Department has deployed resources and tools in recent years to report instances of workplace bullying and toxic work environments. If confirmed, I will ensure that employees at the U.S. Mission

in Saudi Arabia are aware of these resources and tools to report such unacceptable behavior, both within the Mission and to the appropriate offices within the Department, and I will follow up personally to ensure any incidents are addressed and rectified.

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

Answer. Collaborative, honest, and mutually supportive. The Deputy Chief of Mission is a critical role in any mission, and it is essential that he or she receive the full support of the Chief of Mission. As the direct supervisor of most of an Embassy's section chiefs, the DCM serves as the conduit for information and decisions to reach the Ambassador, as well as communicating the Ambassador's priorities and decisions to the rest of the Mission and translating those into actions. I know firsthand from my experience while DCM at the U.S. Embassy in Doha, Qatar, that the DCM plays an indispensable role in fostering an effective Mission team.

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

Answer. If confirmed, I plan to entrust the DCM with supervision of most day-to-day operational functions of the Mission, while ensuring that I support her or him however is necessary to create and maintain a diverse, effective, cohesive, and mutually respectful Mission team. As the direct supervisor of most of an Embassy's section chiefs, the DCM serves as the conduit for information and decisions to reach the Ambassador, as well as communicating my priorities and decisions to the rest of the Mission and translating those into actions.

I would also expect the DCM to mentor and guide the skills development of the newest members of the Mission and Department. And while the DCM's role is largely internal to the Mission, I would also expect him or her to be prepared to act in my stead during periods as Chargé and lead policy-focused discussions with Saudi officials, the private sector, and civil society, and representing the Embassy at public events.

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

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

Answer. Yes. Constructive feedback that is clear, accurate, and direct is an integral part of encouraging high performance. If confirmed, I will commit to providing this feedback to employees at the U.S. Mission in Saudi Arabia, both through regular, mandatory performance review discussions and informal conversations. This is equally important for both addressing areas where employees can improve their performance and recognizing and rewarding those who are successfully advancing Mission goals.

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

Answer. Yes. Constructive feedback that is clear, accurate, and direct is an integral part of encouraging high performance. If confirmed, I will commit to providing this feedback to employees at the U.S. Mission in Saudi Arabia, both through regular, mandatory performance review discussions and informal conversations. This is equally important for both addressing areas where employees can improve their performance and recognizing and rewarding those who are successfully advancing Mission goals.

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

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

Answer. It is absolutely essential to the functions of U.S. embassies that our diplomats interact with host government officials, non-government organizations, fellow foreign diplomats, and the local population more broadly. The new tools that the Department has deployed over the course of the Covid-19 pandemic to accommodate working remotely have also ushered in new ways for us to engage with host country interlocutors. The U.S. Mission in Saudi Arabia moved more of its outreach online, which brought increased connections between Mission programs and people outside

of the major urban centers, as the virtual format mandated by the pandemic equalized people's ability to participate.

Despite the benefits of online and virtual programming, much of a Mission's work requires that we still be physically present and conduct in-person meetings to be truly effective. At the same time, the health, safety, and security of U.S. citizens overseas, including those working in our foreign missions, is the Department's paramount priority. It is thus imperative that we appropriately and effectively balance the need to be active locally outside the Embassy with commensurate security and safety measures to sufficiently protect our people.

If confirmed, I will be committed to achieving that balance to ensure that the employees of the U.S. Mission in Saudi Arabia and their family members remain safe while also achieving our Mission goals through effective external outreach with local and international actors and institutions in Saudi Arabia.

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

Answer. It is absolutely essential to the accomplishment of a U.S. Mission's goals that our diplomats interact with host government officials, non-government organizations, fellow foreign diplomats, and the local population more broadly.

If confirmed, I will commit to achieving our Mission goals through external outreach with local actors and institutions, while ensuring that employees of the U.S. Mission in Saudi Arabia and their family members remain safe.

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

Answer. The public diplomacy environment in Saudi Arabia is characterized by both challenges and opportunities. As noted in the Department's 2021 Country Report on Human Rights Practices for Saudi Arabia, there are serious restrictions on free expression and media, including unjustified arrests or prosecutions against journalists, and censorship. Security authorities actively monitor internet activity, with some human rights activists reporting government surveillance or blocking of internet and mobile phone access. Nongovernmental and civil society organizations, which can often be partners in public diplomacy programs, are severely restricted.

Saudi citizens are generally very active on social media, with more than 14 million Twitter users as of January 2022, out of a population of approximately 35 million. The U.S. Embassy Riyadh Twitter and Facebook pages each have more than 137,000 followers. Hundreds of thousands of Saudi citizens have received a U.S. education over the last decade, cultivating strong people-to-people connections between both countries. Saudi student enrollments at U.S. universities peaked at 61,000 in 2016, and reached 22,000 in 2021, despite the drop in international travel due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

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

Answer. The public diplomacy environment in Saudi Arabia is characterized by both challenges and opportunities. As noted in the Department's 2021 Country Report on Human Rights Practices for Saudi Arabia, there are serious restrictions on free expression and media, including unjustified arrests or prosecutions against journalists, and censorship. Security authorities actively monitor internet activity, with some human rights activists reporting government surveillance or blocking of internet and mobile phone access. Nongovernmental and civil society organizations, which can often be partners in public diplomacy programs, are severely restricted.

Security concerns also can limit the scope of some activities. The Department's travel advisory for Saudi Arabia currently recommends U.S. citizens reconsider travel to the country due to the threat of missile and drone attacks on civilian facilities, and that they exercise increased caution due to terrorism. U.S. Government personnel must adhere to travel restrictions as noted in the travel advisory, limiting the delivery of services, including consular assistance programs, within 50 miles of the Saudi-Yemen border and the cities of Abha, Jizan, Najran, and Khamis Mushayt, as well as the Eastern Province city of Qatif and its suburbs. Mission programming is also limited due to host country requirements in approving meeting requests, events, exchange programs, and other engagements, which can entail lengthy bureaucratic delays.

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

Answer. Our public diplomacy messages must be tailored sufficiently to the local population so that our intent and meaning are understandable and effective, while ensuring they remain faithful to U.S. values and foreign policy priorities. In order to be effective, an embassy's public diplomacy messages must remain in close align-

ment with messages emanating from Washington. If confirmed, I will ensure that I, along with the U.S. Mission in Saudi Arabia's public diplomacy team, coordinate all of our public messages with the respective teams at the Department to ensure they are advancing our overall U.S. foreign policy goals and objectives while crafting messages that will resonate with the local Saudi audience.

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

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

Answer. Yes. Anomalous health incidents that have affected U.S. Government personnel and their family members are very troubling and must be taken seriously. I agree completely with Secretary Blinken that nothing is more important than the health and safety of our employees. Serving one's country overseas should not come at the cost of one's health. If confirmed, I will ensure that any reported Anomalous Health Incidents at the U.S. Mission in Saudi Arabia are responded to quickly and thoroughly. If confirmed, the health, safety, and security of Embassy staff, their family members, and all those supporting the Mission will be my highest priority.

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

Answer. Yes. The Department has created a Health Incident Response Task Force charged with supporting employees who report symptoms of Anomalous Health Incidents. If confirmed, I will ensure that all employees and their family members at the U.S. Mission in Saudi Arabia are aware of Anomalous Health Incidents and the means to report them, as well as the availability of resources and care. If confirmed, I am committed to regularly share new information on this issue consistent with ensuring the integrity of ongoing investigations.

Question. In the State Department's 2021 Trafficking in Persons report, Saudi Arabia was upgraded to Tier 2 for its increased efforts to report on investigations, prosecutions, and convictions.

- If confirmed, how will you engage with the Saudi Government to capitalize on this positive progress?

Answer. There have been notable advancements in Saudi Arabia over the last few years in gender equality, trafficking-in-persons, and empowering those with disabilities. In 2021, Saudi Arabia reported more trafficking investigations, prosecutions and convictions and expanded its provision of services to TIP victims. As a sign of this progress, Saudi Arabia was upgraded from Tier 2 Watch List to Tier 2 in the Department's annual Trafficking in Persons Report in 2021.

This is important progress, although more remains to be done. If confirmed, I will engage with the appropriate Saudi authorities, including the Human Rights Commission, to solidify this progress and work with them on additional improvements, such as expanding protections to domestic workers, which was a priority recommendation in the 2021 TIP Report. Such priority recommendations highlight key efforts necessary for a country to better meet the minimum standards in the U.S. Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) and is part of the assessment to determine a Tier ranking.

Question. In the State Department's 2021 International Religious Freedom Report, Saudi Arabia was noted as having quite severe violations of religious freedom and little societal respect for religious minorities.

- What is your assessment of this particular issue and if confirmed, how will you work with the Ambassador-at-Large to bolster religious freedom in-country?

Answer. The Department's 2021 International Religious Freedom Report noted severe issues with religious freedom in Saudi Arabia. There have also been advancements, such as the redeployment and reduced authorities of the religious police, the removal of inflammatory content about non-Muslims in Saudi school textbooks, growing acceptance of non-Islamic celebrations, and the Muslim World League, a Saudi Government-funded religious affairs entity, hosting an interfaith dialogue in May 2022 that attracted more than 100 religious leaders, including a dozen rabbis. However, there is clearly more work to be done on this in Saudi Arabia, for which the United States should strongly advocate.

Senior U.S. officials routinely raise and discuss reports of abuses of religious freedom, arbitrary arrests and detentions, enforcement of discriminatory laws against

religious minorities, and promotion of respect and tolerance for minority Muslim and non-Muslim religious practices and beliefs.

If confirmed, I will help address religiously motivated abuses, harassment, and discrimination in Saudi Arabia. I will work with the Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom to recommend, develop, and implement policies and programs to address these concerns.

Question. Do you commit to raising this issue directly with the host government and with the Human Rights Commission in country?

Answer. Yes. The State Department aims to promote core U.S. values of tolerance, respect for diversity, and religious freedom. This is an important aspect of our ongoing engagement with the Saudi Government. Senior U.S. officials routinely raise and discuss reports of abuses of religious freedom, arbitrary arrests and detentions, enforcement of discriminatory laws against religious minorities, and promotion of respect and tolerance for minority Muslim and non-Muslim religious practices and beliefs.

If confirmed, I will help address religiously motivated abuses, harassment, and discrimination in Saudi Arabia, and I will raise concerns over religious freedom directly with Saudi officials, including those from the Saudi Human Rights Commission.

Question. Saudi Arabia has been designated as a “country of particular concern (CPC)” under the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 since 2004. The Secretary recently reaffirmed this designation but waived sanctions for national security interests.

- What steps can you take, if confirmed, to graduate Saudi Arabia from the CPC list and bolster societal and governmental respect for religious freedom on the ground?

Answer. The Department’s 2021 International Religious Freedom Report noted severe issues with religious freedom in Saudi Arabia. There have also been advancements, such as the redeployment and reduced authorities of the religious police, removal of some inflammatory content about non-Muslims in Saudi school textbooks, and the Muslim World League, a Saudi Government-funded religious affairs entity, hosting an interfaith dialogue in May 2022 that attracted more than 100 religious leaders, including a dozen rabbis. However, there is clearly more work to be done on this in Saudi Arabia, for which the United States should strongly advocate.

If confirmed, I will raise concerns over religious freedom directly with Saudi officials, including those from the Saudi Human Rights Commission, and work with them on recommendations for bolstering societal and governmental respect for religious freedom that, if successfully implemented, could see Saudi Arabia no longer designated as a country of particular concern under the International Religious Freedom Act.

Question. In the State Department’s 2021 Human Rights Report, Saudi Arabia’s list of human rights issues was quite long, but included allegations of torture, reports of political prisoners and detainees, harassment of dissidents abroad, restrictions on internationally recognized human rights, a lack of internet freedom, among other concerning issues.

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

Answer. President Biden and Secretary Blinken have been clear that human rights are a central tenet of our foreign policy, including in our bilateral relationship with Saudi Arabia. The Secretary and other U.S. officials have consistently raised specific human rights cases and broader human rights concerns in almost every senior meeting and call, whether in Riyadh or Washington, including urging the release of detained human rights activists and lifting of travel bans and other restrictions for activists previously released from detention.

If confirmed, I will prioritize addressing these concerns, and I will not shy away from raising these issues at the most senior levels.

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

Answer. As noted in the Department’s 2021 Country Report on Human Rights Practices for Saudi Arabia, nongovernmental and civil society organizations are severely restricted. Civil society organizations independent from the government essentially do not exist.

There are many aspects of Saudi Arabia’s human rights record that remain troubling, particularly severe restrictions on freedom of expression and political activ-

ism, censorship, and other issues. There has also been progress, albeit uneven and incomplete, on women's, labor, and disability rights and actions to combat trafficking in persons.

If confirmed, I will press for the full resolution of the cases of U.S. nationals and others detained for peaceful activism, including lifting of travel bans and other restrictions. I, and the broader team at the U.S. Mission in Saudi Arabia, will keep pushing at every opportunity to make progress on broader reforms to protect freedom of expression, improve judicial transparency, and expand the rights of women, and keep standing with human rights defenders.

Question. Do you commit to raising these issues personally with the host government?

Answer. Yes. President Biden and Secretary Blinken have been clear that human rights are a central tenet of our foreign policy, including in our bilateral relationship with Saudi Arabia. If confirmed, I will prioritize addressing these concerns, and I will not shy away from raising these issues at the most senior levels.

Question. U.S. citizen Dr. Walid Fitaihi remains under a travel ban in Saudi Arabia after serving a prison sentence.

- How will you work to advocate for the lifting of the travel ban for Dr. Fitaihi?

Answer. The safety and security of U.S. citizens overseas is the Department's paramount priority. After sustained and consistent engagement by the U.S. Government pressing Saudi authorities to resolve his case, Dr. Walid Fitaihi's sentence was reduced to time served in January 2021, with no return to prison. However, he remains subject to a travel ban.

The Secretary and other U.S. officials have consistently raised his case and those of other detained human rights activists, as well as broader human rights concerns, in almost every senior meeting and call, whether in Riyadh or Washington, including urging the release of detained activists and lifting of travel bans and other restrictions for those, like Dr. Fitaihi, previously released from detention.

Along with Department leaders, if confirmed, I will raise concerns over the detention of U.S. citizens, including those released but subject to travel bans, and those detained for peacefully advocating for freedom of expression and religion. As the Department has repeatedly made clear to Saudi officials, promoting and advocating for human rights should be commended, not criminalized.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO MICHAEL ALAN RATNEY BY SENATOR MARCO RUBIO

Question. When running for President, Joe Biden famously said he would turn Saudi Arabia into a "pariah state" and, since coming into office, actively enacted this policy. The results are plain to see: Saudi Arabia detains American citizens, does not cooperate with American-led international energy strategies, and may even be open to cooperating with our chief geopolitical adversary, the Chinese Communist Party. If confirmed, you have a long road ahead of you to restore the U.S.-Saudi Arabian partnership.

- Do you believe that the President's decision to visit Saudi Arabia next month, for the first time since becoming President, is an admission that his "pariah state" strategy has not worked?

Answer. At its outset, the administration decided that it was important to reorient—but not rupture—relations with Saudi Arabia, including elevating human rights as a priority in the bilateral relationship. The United States shares a host of interests with Saudi Arabia, from containing Iran, to counterterrorism, to helping Saudi Arabia protect its territory, to achieving the recent extension of the truce in Yemen, which has saved countless lives.

The administration's agenda with Saudi Arabia is focused on delivering results for the American people. The United States consults regularly on energy issues with Saudi Arabia which demonstrated leadership earlier in June when it achieved consensus for accelerating quota increases, the largest of which is for increased Saudi production.

The United States raises concerns with all partners and allies, including Saudi Arabia, about the range of People's Republic of China (PRC) actions that run counter to our values and interests and undermine the international rules-based order. Saudi Arabia states that the United States is its most important bilateral partner, including in the defense realm, and Saudi Arabia is not a major consumer of PRC defense systems.

The Secretary and other U.S. officials have consistently raised human rights concerns in almost every senior meeting and call, whether in Riyadh or Washington. There has been some progress on cases of detained U.S. citizens, and the Department's efforts likely influenced decisions within the past year to conditionally release several U.S. citizens from detention. But this has been incomplete; those activists who have been released remain under a combination of travel bans, communications restrictions, and asset freezes.

If confirmed, I will advocate at every opportunity for the lifting of travel bans and other restrictions on U.S. citizens and other peaceful activists; as well as pressing for broader human rights reforms that protect freedom of expression, improve judicial transparency, and expand the rights of women, while standing with human rights defenders.

Question. If confirmed, what will you do to secure the release of American citizens wrongfully detained in Saudi Arabia?

Answer. The Department's top priority is the safety and welfare of U.S. citizens, including those who are detained—wrongfully or not—or unable to depart a foreign country. The Secretary and other Department leaders have consistently raised U.S. national detention cases with their Saudi counterparts and urged them to lift the travel bans and fully resolve these cases.

Along with Department leaders, if confirmed, I would raise concerns over the detention of U.S. nationals including any detained for peacefully exercising their rights to freedom of expression and religion or belief. Moreover, I will encourage Saudi Arabia to enact legal and policy reforms that respect the human rights of all people. As the Department has repeatedly made clear to Saudi officials, promoting and advocating for human rights should be commended, not criminalized.

Question. If confirmed, will you recommend the United States continue to provide robust support for Saudi efforts to protect themselves from attacks on Saudi civilians by the Houthi terrorist group in Yemen?

Answer. If confirmed, I will recommend the United States continue to provide support for Saudi efforts to defend its territory and civilians from Houthi cross-border attacks. The President and Secretary have been clear that the United States will continue to support Saudi Arabia's legitimate defensive needs in order to meet existing and emerging threats, including cross-border attacks from Yemen and elsewhere against targets inside Saudi Arabia—including the 70,000 U.S. citizens in Saudi Arabia.

U.S. arms transfers that bolster and replenish Saudi Arabia's defenses, particularly air defenses, are consistent with the administration's pledge to lead with diplomacy to end the conflict in Yemen and to end support for Saudi-led coalition offensive operations in Yemen, while also ensuring Saudi Arabia has the means to defend itself from air attacks by the Iranian supported Houthis. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the departments and agencies of the Executive Branch and consulting transparently with Congress on arms sales to Saudi Arabia that are consistent with U.S. values and support Saudi Arabia's ability to defend itself.

Both Israel and Saudi Arabia are critical security partners of the United States. It is in our interest to promote the normalization of relations between the two countries. To date, Saudi Arabia has not joined the Abraham Accords.

Question. Under what circumstances might the kingdom's rulers embrace a more overtly cooperative relationship with Israel?

Answer. Saudi Arabia and Israel have many common regional interests, including countering the threats from Iran and Iranian-supported armed groups, as well benefiting from opportunities presented by greater regional economic integration. These common interests present significant opportunities for greater cooperation between Israel and Saudi Arabia.

As President Biden has said, this administration welcomes and supports the Abraham Accords and normalization agreements between Israel and Arab and Muslim-majority countries. If confirmed, I will work to expand cooperation and opportunities among countries in the region, including strong support for expanding and deepening the Abraham Accords.

Question. What factors do you believe shape Saudi decision-making on this issue?

Answer. There are undoubtedly numerous factors, including regional threat perceptions, economic opportunities, as well the Palestinian issue. For example, Saudi Arabia continues to support the Arab Peace Initiative, which it introduced at the 2002 Arab summit and that calls for normalization of relations between Israel and Arab countries, including Saudi Arabia, in exchange for Israeli recognition of an independent Palestinian state, among other conditions.

Saudi Arabia has stated it fully supports the Biden-Harris administration's approach to advance equal measures of freedom, prosperity, and dignity for Israelis and Palestinians in the immediate term, and keeping the door open for achievement of a negotiated two-state solution in the longer term, as this remains the best way to ensure Israel's future as a democratic and Jewish state while enabling the Palestinian people to live with dignity and security in a viable state of their own.

As President Biden has said, this administration welcomes and supports the Abraham Accords and normalization agreements between Israel and Arab and Muslim-majority countries. If confirmed, I will work to expand cooperation among countries in the region, including support for the Abraham Accords.

Question. If confirmed, what will you do to promote normalization between Riyadh and Jerusalem?

Answer. As Secretary Blinken has said, normalizing relations with Israel is a decision each country has to make on its own. The administration supports normalization by highlighting the tangible benefits of relations with Israel and leveraging the wide range of diplomatic tools at our disposal. The Abraham Accords have produced real benefits, including rapidly growing connections between businesses, students, and tourists. The United States hopes that this prosperity will encourage other countries, including Saudi Arabia, to advance the process.

Normalizing relations with Israel is in the best interest of the stability of the region and for Israel, whose security is of critical importance to the United States. If confirmed, I look forward to working with Saudi Arabia to seek to expand the Abraham Accords.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO MICHAEL ALAN RATNEY BY SENATOR BILL HAGERTY

On the Retention of Official State Department Emails Related to OneVoice

During your Senate Foreign Relations Committee nominations hearing on June 16, 2022, we examined your oversight of the OneVoice grant applications and retention of official State Department emails related to the matter. In response to my question on whether you dispute what was reported in the findings that you deleted emails related to the review of these One Voice grants, you said there was “a systemic issue associated with records management at the State Department that has since been addressed. There was no routine method. There was no routine way at that time to archive all of the routine emails that the State Department sent and received. That has since been remedied as well through changes in policy and changes in technology.”

The Staff Report from the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, however, found that:

The State Department was unable to produce all documents responsive to the Subcommittee's requests due to its failure to retain complete email records of Michael Ratney, who served as U.S. Consul General in Jerusalem during the award and oversight of the OneVoice grants. The Subcommittee discovered this retention problem because one important email exchange between OneVoice and Mr. Ratney—described in Part III.C—was produced to the Subcommittee only by OneVoice. After conducting additional searches, the Department informed the Subcommittee that it was unable to locate any responsive emails from Mr. Ratney's inbox or sent mail. Mr. Ratney later elaborated, “[A]t times I deleted emails with attachments I didn't need in order to maintain my inbox under the storage limit.” There was an option to archive emails to stay below storage limits, but Mr. Ratney stated that he “did not know [he] was required to archive routine emails” (emphasis added).

Question. Mr. Ratney, the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations found although you stated you did not know there was a requirement to archive emails, there was, in fact, an option to archive emails. Would you like to amend your answer provided during your nominations hearing that there was no option to archive emails at the State Department?

Answer. It would be more accurate to say that “I was unaware of any routine way at that time to archive all of the routine emails that the State Department sent and received.” It is not clear what the “option to archive emails” mentioned in the Subcommittee report refers to. I do clearly recall, as do others working at the Department at the time, that we were routinely urged to delete emails with large attach-

ments in order to stay under inbox limits. The following Department press guidance that was prepared following release of the Subcommittee report in 2016 noted the systemic nature of the challenge we faced:

On the record attributable to State Department Spokesperson Mark Toner: The Department cooperated with the Senate’s investigation, which found no wrongdoing. As is made clear in the report itself, Mr. Ratney was working under State Department IT limitations with regard to the size of his inbox, and his deletion was content-neutral housekeeping, not an attempt to purge emails on any specific topic. The Department recognizes that we need to provide better tools to our employees to assist with records management. Secretary Kerry appointed Janice Jacobs as Transparency Coordinator to help us address these challenges. Beyond that, we are focused on implementing a system that meets NARA requirements for the management of records in an electronic format. We are in the process of purchasing new technology for records management to meet the OMB/NARA directed deadline for U.S. Government agencies to manage email records electronically by the end of 2016.”

If confirmed, I will ensure that the U.S. Mission in Saudi Arabia and all its staff—including me personally—follow all applicable laws and regulations with regards to Federal records management.

On Saudi Coalition Airstrikes

Question. What is the percent increase or decrease in year-over-year civilian casualties from Saudi coalition airstrikes in Yemen? Please provide a specific time-frame and percentage change. The aggregate numbers would be helpful if available.

Answer. The U.N. Civilian Impact Monitoring Project (CIMP) noted in its 2021 annual report that “for the third year running, the number of civilian casualties on account of airstrikes decreased, down to 185, with a two-month hiatus in airstrike casualties seen in July and August 2021.” The 2020 CIMP annual report noted that “since the Stockholm Agreement at the end of 2018, the number of civilian casualties on account of airstrikes has seen a significant reduction.” CIMP reported 2,504 civilian casualties from airstrikes in 2018, 796 in 2019, and 216 in 2020. Per the U.N. data, civilian casualties from airstrikes dropped by 68 percent from 2018 to 2019, another 73 percent from 2019 to 2021, and a further 14 percent from 2020 to 2021. Overall, from 2018 to 2021, civilian casualties from airstrikes fell by about 93 percent. There was an increase in civilian casualties during the early months of 2022, driven largely by a mass civilian casualty incident in January; however, there have not been any reports of civilian casualties due to air strikes since the truce took effect in April. Airstrikes were responsible for only 7 percent of all civilian casualties in 2021, according to CIMP.

Question. Please provide a detailed explanation for any change. If there was a significant reduction in civilian casualties from Saudi coalition airstrikes, what explains the change? Was it improved procedures, changes on the battlefield, and/or other considerations?

Answer. There are likely several factors that have influenced the reduction in civilian casualty incidents from airstrikes over the past several years. These include changes in the nature of the conflict and also may involve improvements in aircrew proficiency, improved rules of engagement specifically regarding airstrikes, and U.S.-provided training related to civilian casualty mitigation.

Without visibility on all Saudi strike planning processes and with U.S. Embassy Sana’a operations suspended, it is challenging to establish a definitive causal link between U.S. training and engagement with the RSAF and the dramatic reductions in civilian casualty incidents since 2018. However, the United States is the only country offering sustained, intensive training over multiple years on civilian casualty mitigation to the RSAF. The Department is in constant contact with Saudi Arabia about the need to avoid and mitigate civilian casualties and has urged Saudi transparency and accountability regarding civilian casualty incidents both privately and publicly. We do not just encourage improvements in operational procedures, but also urge thorough and transparent investigations be conducted after any incidents. Based on these factors, it is very likely that U.S. efforts have played an important role in positively influencing Saudi actions.

Question. What are the Saudi Government’s views of industrial-scale drug trafficking of captagon by the Assad regime in Syria and Hizballah into the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia?

Answer. The Saudi Government is deeply concerned about the increasing volumes of Captagon flowing into the Kingdom, mainly originating in Lebanon and Syria.

Captagon now constitutes the Kingdom's largest drug problem, and in 2021, Saudi Arabia stated that it had seized approximately 190 million Captagon pills. Saudi Arabia recognizes that drug revenues may reach terrorist organizations and contribute to regional instability and insecurity, while Captagon trafficking also presents social consequences and a security challenge. In response to the threat, the Saudi Government has taken measures to halt the flow. After repeatedly interdicting Captagon pills smuggled in Lebanese produce, the Saudi Government banned produce imports from Lebanon in April 2021 and then all Lebanese imports in October 2021, contributing to a serious deterioration in Saudi-Lebanese relations, that only in recent months has moderately improved. Law enforcement authorities in the Kingdom are working with their U.S. counterparts on information sharing arrangements that could increase Captagon interdiction. If confirmed, I look forward to working with Saudi Arabia to combat the flow of Captagon into the Kingdom. The Department would be happy to provide you with more information in a classified setting if that would be helpful.

Question. Do you assess that scheme to allow for the delivery of gas through Syria into Lebanon—despite the provisions in the Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act—would benefit the Assad regime in Syria?

Answer. The administration is strongly committed to holding the Assad regime accountable for its actions and appreciates the tool to do so that Congress has provided in the form of the Caesar Act. The Administration is also deeply concerned about the prospect of state collapse in Lebanon, where the lack of fuel and power threatens the delivery of critical services like health care and water. We continue to work with the parties to the regional proposals to sell Egyptian gas and Jordanian electricity to Lebanon, as well as the World Bank, to ensure that these deals, which are fundamentally about providing Lebanon with more sustainable energy sources, would not involve any financial payments to Assad that would violate our sanctions laws. The Department of State and the Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) are working together to ensure that the proposals fully comport with U.S. sanctions, including the Caesar Act. The U.S. sanctions regime targeting the Assad Government remains fully in force, and as Secretary Blinken has made clear, we have not lifted or waived Syria-related sanctions in this case, and the U.S. remains committed to applying additional sanctions against the Syrian regime in the future, as appropriate. The Department would be happy to provide you with more information in a classified setting if that would be helpful.

Question. Do you believe that Saudi Government supports energy schemes that would render either gas or gas revenue to the Assad regime in Syria and Hizballah, both of which are involved in the industrial-scale drug trafficking of captagon into the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia?

Answer. If confirmed, I look forward to working with Saudi Arabia to both combat the flow of Captagon into the Kingdom and to preventing any arrangements designed to relieve the energy and economic crisis in Lebanon from providing any benefit to the Assad regime or Lebanese Hizballah that would be in violation of U.S. sanctions. The United States consults regularly on both regional and energy issues with Saudi Arabia. The United States is deeply concerned about the prospect of state collapse in Lebanon, where the lack of fuel and power threatens the delivery of critical services like health care and water to the Lebanese people. Regional proposals to sell Egyptian gas and Jordanian electricity to Lebanon would not involve any financial payments to Assad or Hizballah. The Department would be happy to provide you with more information in a classified setting if that would be helpful.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO TIMMY T. DAVIS BY SENATOR ROBERT MENENDEZ

Anomalous Health Incidents

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

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

Answer. Yes. Anomalous health incidents that have endangered the health of U.S. Government personnel are very troubling and must be taken seriously. I agree com-

pletely with Secretary Blinken that nothing is more important than the health and safety of our employees. If confirmed, I would ensure that any reported Anomalous Health Incidents at U.S. Mission Qatar are responded to quickly and thoroughly.

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

Answer. Yes. The Department has created a Health Incident Response Task Force charged with supporting employees who report Anomalous Health Incidents. If confirmed, I would ensure that all employees and their family members at U.S. Mission Qatar are aware of Anomalous Health Incidents and the means to report them, as well as the availability of resources and care. I commit to reporting any incidents quickly through the appropriate channels and to referring them promptly to the appropriate medical care.

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

Answer. Yes. If confirmed, I would commit to meeting with medical staff and the Regional Security Office to discuss any past reported incidents and ensure that all protocols are being followed, in consultation with the Department's Health Incident Response Task Force and the appropriate teams in the Bureau of Diplomatic Security and Bureau of Medical Services.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO TIMMY T. DAVIS BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Question. What, if anything, can/should the United States be doing to ensure Qatari LNG can help Europe transition away from its dependence on Russian natural gas?

Answer. The United States is encouraging Qatar's discussions with European partners about potential LNG supply. Additionally, QatarEnergy is considering several U.S. companies as potential partners to develop Qatar's North Field East LNG field. This LNG expansion project is expected to boost Qatar's LNG output by 64 percent by 2027 and supply many of the new LNG contracts Qatar is discussing with European partners.

Question. Should the United States demand changes in Qatari policy as a condition for helping strengthen regional cooperation with other U.S. Gulf partners?

Answer. The United States welcomed the historic breakthrough made with the Al Ula Declaration at the GCC summit by Qatar and Bahrain, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE. The decision to open their mutual borders, lift transportation restrictions, and restore diplomatic relations was a welcome step. My understanding is that the United States remains supportive of continued reconciliation, and it continues to identify areas of potential cooperation on which our partners can make incremental progress.

Many U.S. missions have been under enormous stress over the last few years, in large part due to COVID.

Question. What is your understanding of morale throughout Mission Doha?

Answer. Mission Doha played a significant role in the Non-Combatant Evacuation Operation from Afghanistan in August 2021, which was a challenging time for diplomats and local staff. Continued Afghanistan operations in Qatar have required further Embassy engagement and support, stretching resources in a post that has been without an Ambassador since 2017. The COVID-19 pandemic also caused stress to the mission. Throughout these challenges, Mission Doha has remained a tight knit community.

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

Answer. From day one, I would underscore the importance to Mission Qatar employees of their work in Qatar and the value of their service to our country. Secondly, having a confirmed Ambassador allows better leadership and oversight, as everyone else down the chain of command can return to their normal jobs. Finally, the Department has developed and deployed resources and tools in recent years, including mental health resources, that I would take full advantage of in supporting our team at Mission Qatar.

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

Answer. U.S. Embassy Doha, the Afghanistan Affairs Unit, and the team supporting Afghan relocation efforts in Doha already work closely together to advance U.S. interests in a unified way. If confirmed, I would continue to strengthen that exemplary teamwork. I would also develop a strategic vision for the bilateral relationship that will foster a unity of purpose within the Mission. Management is a key responsibility for chiefs of mission.

Question. How would you describe your management style?

Answer. I believe in inclusiveness, promoting good ideas, and teamwork. It is important that the team at Mission Qatar knows that their safety and security is my highest priority and that I share a clear vision for policy success with clear expectations. My management style is based on maximum responsibility for me as the leader, and maximum credit for the team.

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

Answer. No. Berating, yelling, or using aggressive language is never acceptable, under any circumstances, including when discussing performance or management issues. If confirmed, I would neither use such unacceptable methods or language in discussions with employees, nor would I tolerate those under my supervision using such methods or language. The Department has deployed resources and tools in recent years to report instances of workplace bullying and toxic work environments. If confirmed, I would ensure that employees at Mission Qatar are aware of these resources and tools to report such unacceptable behavior, both within the Mission and to the appropriate offices within the Department, and I would follow up to ensure any incidents are addressed and rectified.

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

Answer. The Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM) is a critical role in any mission, and it is essential that he or she receive the full support of the Chief of Mission. Embassy Doha has an excellent DCM in Natalie Baker, who has served in leadership roles on some of our top foreign policy priorities. If confirmed, I would support DCM Baker (and any other DCM) and fully empower her to foster an effective Mission team.

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

Answer. As the direct supervisor of most of an Embassy's section chiefs, the DCM serves as the conduit for information and decisions to reach the Ambassador, as well as communicating the Ambassador's priorities and decisions to the rest of the Mission and translating those into actions. If confirmed, I plan to entrust the DCM with supervision of most day-to-day operational functions of the Mission, while ensuring that I support her in appropriate ways to create and maintain a diverse, effective, cohesive, and respectful Mission team.

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

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

Answer. Yes. Constructive feedback that is clear, accurate, and direct is an integral part of encouraging high performance. If confirmed, I would commit to providing this feedback to employees at U.S. Mission Qatar, both through regular, mandatory performance review discussions and informal conversations. This is equally important for both addressing areas where employees can improve their performance and recognizing and rewarding those who are successfully advancing Mission goals.

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

Answer. Yes. If confirmed, I would commit to providing this feedback to employees at U.S. Mission Qatar, both through regular, mandatory performance review discussions and informal conversations.

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

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

Answer. U.S. diplomats must interact with host government officials, civil society, and the local population to protect American interests on the ground and represent American values to the local population. However, the health, safety, and security of U.S. citizens overseas, including those working in our foreign missions, is the Department's paramount priority. I have learned from my various postings, including in leadership positions, how to appropriately balance the need to be active outside the embassy with commensurate security and safety measures to sufficiently protect our people. If confirmed, I would commit to achieving that balance to ensure that the employees of Mission Qatar and their family members remain safe while also advancing our Mission goals through external outreach.

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

Answer. If confirmed, I would commit facilitating regular external outreach with local actors and institutions, while ensuring that employees of Mission Qatar and their family members remain safe.

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

Answer. Educational and cultural partnerships are important components of our bilateral relationship, and the Qatari Government is largely supportive of Embassy programming and partnerships. Targeting public diplomacy programming to the 10 percent of Qatar's population who are Qatari citizens can be challenging. The Government and people of Qatar have largely favorable views of the United States, but mixed views on U.S. foreign policy in the region.

Our public diplomacy efforts in Qatar are bolstered by Qatar's confidence in U.S. education, science, technology, and business, especially as the Government of Qatar seeks to pivot to a knowledge-based economy. Six American university campuses are currently housed at Education City in Qatar, with the support of Qatar Foundation: Georgetown University, Virginia Commonwealth University, Carnegie Mellon University, Texas A&M University, Weill Cornell Medical College, and Northwestern University.

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

Answer. The greatest challenge is accessibility to Qatar's small Qatari national population. Qataris on social media and in the press are very supportive of U.S. education and American culture but tend to be critical of U.S. Government policies in the region and values they perceive to be exclusively "Western."

While the Government of Qatar actively participates in a yearly Strategic Dialogue, implementation of various memoranda of understanding and other public diplomacy agreements is sometimes a challenge.

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

Answer. Our diplomats and local staff at U.S. Embassy Doha possess deep knowledge of the cultural context and audiences in Qatar. As such, they are primarily responsible for effectively tailoring public diplomacy messages in country, in close collaboration with public diplomacy and public affairs colleagues in Washington, D.C.

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

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

Answer. Yes. Anomalous health incidents that have endangered the health of U.S. Government personnel are very troubling and must be taken seriously. I agree completely with Secretary Blinken that nothing is more important than the health and safety of our employees. If confirmed, I will ensure that any reported Anomalous Health Incidents at U.S. Mission Qatar are responded to quickly and thoroughly.

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

Answer. Yes. The Department has created a Health Incident Response Task Force charged with supporting employees who report Anomalous Health Incidents. If confirmed, I would ensure that all employees and their family members at U.S. Mission Qatar are aware of Anomalous Health Incidents and the means to report them, as well as the availability of resources and care. I commit to reporting any incidents quickly through the appropriate channels and to referring them promptly to the appropriate medical care. I also commit to meeting with medical staff and the Regional Security Office to discuss any past reported incidents and ensure that all protocols are being followed, in consultation with the Department's Health Incident Response Task Force and the appropriate teams in the Bureau of Diplomatic Security and Bureau of Medical Services.

In the State Department's 2021 Trafficking in Persons Report, Qatar was identified as Tier 2 for its ongoing efforts to meet the minimum standards to eliminate trafficking but did not adequately do so in a few key areas, including in the number of trafficking investigations and training for law enforcement.

Question. How will you work with the Qataris to address these issues if you are confirmed as Ambassador?

Answer. I share your concern about these issues and, if confirmed, would commit to working with the Government of Qatar to address them. Specifically, I would continue U.S. Government exchange programs and trainings with Qatari officials to strengthen their capabilities in the areas of victim identification, support services, and investigation and prosecution under Qatar's anti-trafficking law. I would also encourage Qatar's close cooperation with the International Labour Organization as well as other international and domestic NGOs to make further progress.

I would also consult closely with the office of the Ambassador-at-Large to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons to improve Qatar's anti-trafficking efforts. In the State Department's 2021 International Religious Freedom report, societal respect for religious freedom in Qatar was generally lacking, especially among registered religious minorities.

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

Answer. The United States promotes universal respect for freedom of religion or belief for all as a core objective of U.S. foreign policy. Qatar's constitution guarantees freedom to practice religion, but places limits on that freedom. The public worship or display of religious symbols for people of non-Islamic faiths is restricted, for example. There are also concerning trends such as residency renewal refusals and criminal proceedings against people of unregistered faiths such as the local Baha'i community.

If confirmed, in addition to direct engagement with the Qatari Government, I would work with the Ambassador-at-Large to help monitor religiously motivated abuses, harassment, and discrimination and recommend, develop, and implement policies and programs to address these concerns.

In the State Department's 2021 Human Rights Report, Qatar was noted as having several significant human rights abuses, including limits on the freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association, excessive restrictions on NGOs, migrant workers' rights, and forced labor. It was noted the Government did take some steps to address these issues.

Question. If confirmed, what steps will you take to continue to address these concerns with the host government?

Answer. As the President and Secretary have said, human rights are a pillar of our foreign policy and of our relationships around the world. If confirmed, I would prioritize addressing these concerns, and I would not shy away from raising these issues at the most senior levels.

Specifically, if confirmed, I would work closely with Qatari partners to strengthen implementation of positive changes like labor reforms that allow migrant workers to change jobs and exit the country without employer permission. I would also regularly encourage Qatar to take additional steps to protect the fundamental freedoms of expression and association. I believe honest conversations about human rights will make our relationship stronger and more resilient.

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

Answer. Restrictive laws govern civil society organizations in Qatar. If confirmed, I would direct embassy employees to continue engaging regularly with civil society, and I would engage directly with the Government of Qatar to encourage greater freedom of association.

Question. What is your assessment of the forced labor issue, especially as Qatar prepares to host the 2022 World Cup? If confirmed, do you commit to personally raising human rights issues with the Qatari Government?

Answer. According to the State Department's annual Trafficking in Persons report, the Government of Qatar is making significant efforts to eliminate human trafficking, including forced labor, but currently does not fully meet minimum standards of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act. Qatar has passed laws to better protect World Cup stadium construction workers specifically, for example a decree in 2019 that prohibits work outdoors in the extreme heat, but serious problems still exist. If confirmed, I would commit to raising human rights issues with the Government of Qatar as a priority and working with Qatari partners to address these issues.

If confirmed, you will be Ambassador to an important major non-NATO ally that is currently the main interlocutor in the U.S-Taliban relationship, specifically as it relates to evacuations of U.S. nationals and vulnerable Afghans from Afghanistan.

Question. What is your assessment of continued evacuations from Afghanistan and evacuees transit through Camp Al-Saliyah (CAS) in Qatar?

Answer. The Coordinator for Afghan Relocation Efforts (CARE) and her team continue the U.S. Government's important work to fulfill the President's commitment to support the Afghan nationals who worked side-by-side with the United States in Afghanistan. The Government of Qatar has been an invaluable partner in those efforts.

Question. What is your assessment of Qatar's role in the long-term planning for evacuations?

Answer. I am not apprised of conversations with the Government of Qatar on this topic. I would refer you to Coordinator for Afghan Relocation Efforts (CARE) for further details, and if confirmed, I would look forward to engaging with Qatari partners to secure their continued support for our ongoing Afghan relocation efforts.

Question. If confirmed, how will you work with other regional Ambassadors to support evacuations?

Answer. The Coordinator for Afghan Relocation Efforts (CARE)'s mission requires collaboration and teamwork from U.S. embassies around the world. If confirmed, I would work closely with other regional Ambassadors at the Coordinator's advice to support these efforts.

Question. It is our understanding that the Qataris have agreed to an extension for the MOU outlining continued support for evacuations until 2023. Knowing that evacuations will likely continue beyond this time, what is the best path forward to ensure CAS remains open for processing?

Answer. If confirmed, I would work with the Coordinator for Afghan Relocation Efforts (CARE), other U.S. Government agencies, and the Government of Qatar to maximize support for our ongoing Afghan relocation efforts. I would refer you to CARE for any specific questions.

Question. If confirmed, how will you de-conflict between the Coordinator for Afghan Relocation Efforts (CARE) and Mission Doha regarding evacuations?

Answer. Mission Qatar and the Coordinator for Afghan Relocation Efforts (CARE) have a very close working relationship. CARE's operation in Doha is an integrated component of Mission Qatar. If confirmed, I would commit to maintaining and further strengthening this collaboration.

Question. Do you commit to briefing this committee on the continued conversations between the U.S., Qatar, and the Taliban regarding evacuations?

Answer. Yes, I commit to keeping this committee apprised of important developments.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO DR. GEETA RAO GUPTA BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Question. Many State Department Offices have been under enormous stress over the last few years, in large part due to COVID.

- What is your understanding of morale throughout the Office of Global Women's Issues?

Answer. Since January of last year, the office has been led by a longtime career public servant who has prioritized addressing recommendations from the Office of

the Inspector General's assessment conducted under the previous administration. My understanding of morale throughout the Office is that it has significantly improved as it regains staffing, including and in line with the recommendations of the Inspector General, and with the current leadership's efforts to retain flexibility as COVID protocols have changed. I also understand the office currently enjoys a high degree of access and coordination with the White House, and that political will and support has been incredibly important to improving the morale of the dedicated team at S/GWI.

Question. How do you intend to improve morale at Office of Global Women's Issues?

Answer. In my past professional experience, I have learned that all offices need at least three things to succeed, and that morale is concurrently served through: 1) sufficient personnel and financial resources; 2) political will and leadership; and 3) clear goals and metrics. If confirmed, I am committed to identifying and addressing the needs of the Office and empowering staff in their leadership of Department initiatives for half of the world's population, in coordination with Congress.

Question. How do you intend to create a unified mission and vision at Mission Office of Global Women's Issues?

Answer. I have read the Office of the Inspector General assessment of S/GWI under the previous administration, including its recommendation for a greater focus on strategic planning and alignment of resources with priorities. It is my understanding that the Office has created a new team for this purpose and to oversee implementation of the National Strategy on Gender Equity and Equality, an umbrella framework issued by the White House last year. If confirmed, I will utilize this Strategy to unify related gender equality policy mandates developed, implemented, and coordinated by S/GWI.

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

Answer. I endeavor to lead by example, with my goal to manage in ways that are inclusive, collaborative, transparent and decisive. In the past, I have benefitted from input from my team and other stakeholders, but ultimately believe it is my responsibility to take full ownership for the decisions I make. I provide regular feedback and do not shy away from making and implementing difficult personnel decisions because it is an important way to improve the team's overall morale and performance. To develop a shared sense of responsibility, I communicate roles and responsibilities clearly, collaborate with my team to set goals with metrics to monitor progress, and celebrate successes jointly.

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

Answer. No. I do not believe that it is ever acceptable or constructive to berate subordinates, whether in public or in private.

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

Answer. To my understanding, there is no official deputy position in the Office of Global Women's Issues currently. However, I know the Office has been superbly managed by the current Senior Official, a career civil servant with deep program and policy experience. If confirmed, I intend to ask her to stay on as principal deputy, and to entrust her with significant leadership responsibilities, including and especially as I come up to speed. If confirmed, I also intend to explore how I can best work with and learn from others in the Office who have long served at the Department.

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

Answer. It is my understanding that confirmed political leadership for State Department offices is critical, but the Office of Global Women's Issues has since January of last year been led superbly by a longtime career public servant who I intend to ask to stay. If confirmed, I intend to learn from and empower her continued leadership, that of the current senior advisor, and the leadership of others in the Office to build an environment of collaborative leadership and consistency for our staff, while advancing gender equality globally. This is especially important to maintaining programmatic continuity.

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 wholeheartedly believe that it is important to provide employees with timely, accurate, and constructive feedback on their performances in order to encourage improvement, as needed, empower high achievers, and raise the overall morale of the Office. As someone who has spent a career working with data, I relish the opportunity to provide my team with the information they need to grow and excel in their roles. I welcome that feedback from others as well. If confirmed, I will work to ensure EERs, as well as bi-annual performance reviews, are completed in a comprehensive manner for all S/GWI employees, to provide other, timely oral feedback, and to use awards cycles to recognize truly outstanding performance.

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

Answer. Yes. If confirmed, I would absolutely support and encourage clear, accurate, and direct feedback to employees in order to improve performance and reward high achievers. I intend to lead by example and provide this feedback and will encourage others in a leadership position in the Office to do the same.

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

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

Answer. The Department continues to engage our partners and contacts outside of embassy walls at all posts, to include our High Threat/High Risk posts. However, challenges remain for our diplomats and development officers to operate outside of capitals due to security concerns, which can prevent diplomatic engagement, as well as crisis mitigation and other stabilization efforts. I look forward to learning more about these efforts should I be confirmed.

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

Answer. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, international and non-governmental organizations as well as civil society, have developed innovative virtual platforms to ensure engagement with local populations. While I do not believe anything truly replaces face-to-face diplomacy, should I have the honor of being confirmed, I will support the Office's utilization of these virtual consultative mechanisms, especially as I believe they can be used to engage local civil society organizations that operate outside of capital regions to address the needs of grassroots populations.

Question. Is access to abortion an internationally-recognized human right?

Answer. My understanding is the United States is not a party to any international human rights instrument that states that access to abortion is a "human right." The United States has been a global leader and a strong bilateral donor of voluntary family planning assistance, empowering women and girls to plan their futures, including by preventing unintended pregnancies.

Follow-up Questions

Question. Is S/GWI involved in reproductive health policy decisions?

Answer. To my understanding, the Office of Global Women's Issues leads on the portfolio on female genital mutilation (FGM), which is a form of gender-based violence that also detrimentally affects women's sexual, reproductive and maternal health. However, it is my understanding that PRM leads on sexual and reproductive health and rights policy at the Department, and the extent of S/GWI's involvement relates exclusively to providing consultation and clearance as appropriate, given its leadership on gender equality within the Department.

Question. Should it be?

Answer. I am supportive of PRM's continued leadership on sexual and reproductive health and rights policy for the Department. I believe that it is appropriate for S/GWI to continue to lead on GBV, inclusive of FGM and child marriage. Should I be confirmed, I will continue S/GWI's focus on its three key priorities: 1) addressing and preventing GBV; 2) increasing wom-

en's economic participation; and 3) advancing the women, peace and security agenda.

Question. If confirmed, will you commit to ensuring full and complete compliance with current law, which prohibits the use of U.S. foreign assistance to perform or promote abortion as a method of family planning, support involuntary sterilizations, or lobby for or against the legalization of abortion overseas?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to upholding all provisions of law related to our foreign assistance including those relating to abortion and involuntary sterilization, and I will work with partners to ensure compliance.

Question. Does the Office of Global Women's Issues work on health issues?

Answer. Health outcomes are related to some of the Office's priorities, such as how gender-based violence impacts women's and girls' participation in public and private life due to its short- and long-term impact on physical and mental health. However, the Office does not have any global health-related funding or programs. If confirmed, I will focus on the policy and programmatic priorities of the Office for which I am nominated which include: women's economic security; gender-based violence; and advancing the women, peace, and security agenda.

Question. In particular, does the Office of Global Women's Issues work on reproductive health policies?

Answer. It is my understanding that the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration is the policy lead for the Department on sexual and reproductive health and rights, and that the Office for which I am nominated does not have targeted global health-related programming or funding. However, the Office of Global Women's Issues' work on gender-based violence includes a focus on female genital mutilation (FGM), which has a direct bearing on reproductive and maternal health. Should I be confirmed, I will focus on the priorities of the office I am nominated for, which include women's economic security, gender-based violence to include FGM, and advancing the women, peace and security agenda.

Follow-up Questions

Question. I understand that the United States continues to support the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Programme of Action, which was adopted by consensus. The ICPD established international consensus definitions of the term "reproductive health" and "reproductive rights," neither of which explicitly references abortion or a right to abortion.

- Is it your interpretation that the Siljander Amendment applies only to global health assistance, or also to the development and economic assistance that GWI manages and awards?

Answer. My understanding is that the Siljander Amendment stipulates that no funds appropriated under the Department of State, Foreign Operations and Related Programs Appropriations Act may be used to lobby for or against abortion. This includes the foreign assistance that S/GWI manages and awards.

Question. If confirmed, will you commit to ensuring that the policies GWI advances in response to gender-based violence are fully compliant with the Siljander and Helms amendments?

Answer. Yes. I reaffirm that, should I be confirmed, I will take legislative restrictions, including restrictions related to abortion, very seriously and will work with partners to ensure compliance.

Question. Secretary Blinken released the below press statement on Friday, June 24, regarding the Supreme Court's ruling in *Dobbs v. Jackson*:

As Secretary of State, I usually avoid commenting on Supreme Court rulings. But today's decision overturning Roe v. Wade has raised understandable questions and concerns across the world and within our workforce.

So let me be clear: under this administration, the State Department will remain fully committed to helping provide access to reproductive health services and advancing reproductive rights around the world. And this Department will do everything possible to ensure that all our employees have access to reproductive health services, wherever they live.

We will not waver from this commitment.

- Do you agree with Sec. Blinken's June 24 press statement in response to the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling in *Dobbs v. Jackson*?

Answer. Yes, but from my understanding, S/GWI does not engage in policy affecting workforce issues.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO DR. GEETA RAO GUPTA BY SENATOR MARCO RUBIO

Question. You have written extensively on the need to consider abortion and reproductive health programs a human right. You have opposed common-sense policies, like the Mexico City Policy, which ensures that organizations which promote abortion are not subsidized by taxpayer money while pushing the World Health Assembly to designate reproductive health services as “essential services.” While the Office of Global Women’s Issues at the State Department does not currently have a purview over women’s health issues, the American people deserve to know whether or not you will seek to abuse your position to advance divisive abortion policies.

- Do you believe that access to abortion should be a fundamental human right?

Answer. My understanding is that the United States is not a party to any international human rights instrument that states that access to abortion is a “human right.” Instead, the U.S. has long supported efforts to make pregnancy and childbirth safer by strengthening health systems to provide women and girls with integrated health services, including increased access to maternal health care and high quality, voluntary family planning.

Question. If confirmed, will you use your position to advance this belief in American foreign policy?

Answer. If confirmed, I will focus on the priorities of the Office for which I am nominated, which include: promoting women’s economic security; preventing and responding to gender-based violence; and advancing the women, peace, and security agenda.

Question. A number of countries continue to have laws that respect the sanctity of human life, including the right to life of the unborn. Many of these are critical American partners, like Guatemala, the Dominican Republic, the Philippines, Jamaica, and Suriname.

- Is it in the interest of the United States to advocate for these countries to repeal their pro-life laws?

Answer. It is my understanding that the 1981 Siljander amendment prohibits the use of State Department or USAID funds to lobby for or against abortion. If confirmed, I commit to upholding this, and all provisions of law related to the use of State Department funds.

Question. Are you worried that by doing so, we risk forcing these countries into the arms of China and Russia, who have no issues with these countries’ positions on abortion?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to upholding all provisions of law restricting the use of funding from the Department of State from lobbying for or against abortion. I will focus on the mandate and priorities of the Office, which include: advancing women’s and girls’ economic security; preventing and protection from gender-based violence; and increasing women’s meaningful participation in political and security decision-making.

Question. If confirmed, will you include advocating for access to abortion in these countries among one of your priorities?

Answer. Should I have the honor of being confirmed, I commit to upholding all provisions of law, including those restricting the use of Department of State funds as related to lobbying for or against abortion. As noted above, my intention is to focus on the mandate and priorities of the Office to support women’s and girls’ economic security, prevention and protection from gender-based violence, and their meaningful participation in political and security decision-making.
