

NOMINATIONS

WEDNESDAY, JULY 13, 2022

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

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:00 a.m., in Room SD-419, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Brian Schatz presiding.

Present: Senators Schatz [presiding], Cardin, Coons, Murphy, Kaine, Markey, Booker, Van Hollen, Romney, Young, and Hagerty.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. BRIAN SCHATZ, U.S. SENATOR FROM HAWAII

Senator SCHATZ. Good morning. The Senator Foreign Relations Committee will come to order. We are here today to consider several important nominations: Mr. Dean Thompson to be Ambassador to Nepal, Mr. Robert Godec to be the Ambassador to Thailand, Mr. Yohannes Abraham to be the Ambassador to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, Mr. Richard Buangan to be the Ambassador to Mongolia, and Marie C. Damour, to be the Ambassador to the Republics of Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, the Kingdom of Tonga, and Tuvalu.

Senator Van Hollen is here to introduce Mr. Thompson, so I will now turn it over to him to make his introduction.

STATEMENT OF HON. CHRIS VAN HOLLEN, U.S. SENATOR FROM MARYLAND

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Well thank you, Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member Romney. Let me start by congratulating all of the nominees here today and thank you for your service.

I have the special privilege, Mr. Chairman, of introducing President Biden's nominee to serve as our next United States Ambassador to Nepal, Mr. Dean R. Thompson. President Biden selected a nominee with impeccable credentials, sterling character, and a deep knowledge of U.S. diplomacy, and he has also wisely selected a Marylander who holds a master's degree from the University of Maryland and represents the very best of our state.

As a career member of the Foreign Service, Dean Thompson has served overseas in Malaysia, Romania, India, Paraguay, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka. Here at home he served in several leadership roles within the State Department, including poses as the Director of the State Department's Executive Secretariat staff, Deputy Director of the State Department Operations Center, and Director of the Operations Center Crisis Management staff. He cur-

rently serves as the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for South and Central Asian Affairs and stepped up to serve as Acting Assistant Secretary from 2020 to 2021.

I believe each of these experiences, which span over 25 years of service to our nation, have provided Mr. Thompson with a deep knowledge of U.S. foreign policy and how to connect effectively with local communities in Nepal, should this committee confirm his nomination.

Beyond this extraordinary resume, Dean Thompson is a man of exemplary character. He is regarded within the State Department as someone who not only possesses the strength to lead but also has the heart to fully invest in the well-being and success of those who work for him. He is composed and kind and equal measure, always committed to getting the job done with efficiency, respect, and decency.

He is supported in all these things by his family, and I want to salute his wife, Jane, and his mother, Linda, who are with us in the hearing room today. Thank you very much for being here. And I want to give a shout-out to his father, his children, and his new grandson, all of whom are watching online.

I grew up in a Foreign Service family. I lived in some of the countries where Dean Thompson has served, and I know the challenges and the opportunities of having a parent represent our nation overseas. I want to commend Dean Thompson, the Thompson family, and the Foreign Service Officers and families, families of Foreign Service Officers in this room, and all around the world. They are on the front lines of advancing America's priorities abroad, and those of us in the United States Congress must commit ourselves every day to honor their service and their sacrifice through our work here in the Capitol.

Also growing up in a Foreign Service family taught me how to spot a good diplomat. I know a good one when I see one, and Dean Thompson is truly a diplomat in every sense of the world. He will be ready to go on day one, and colleagues, I urge this committee to support his nomination. Thank you.

Senator SCHATZ. Thank you, Senator Van Hollen. Congratulations to all of you. You are all qualified for these positions, and we thank you for being willing to serve at this challenging time. We also especially thank your families, and when you have an opportunity to address the committee we would welcome your introduction of your family.

If confirmed, Mr. Thompson would serve during an important time in U.S.-Nepalese relations. Nepal is one of the few countries in the region to condemn Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Earlier this year, the Nepalese Parliament approved a \$500 million in infrastructure grant from the Millennium Challenge Corporation, a decision met with protests from citizens who were concerned about American influence in their country, and just last month the Nepalese government cancelled its participation in the U.S. State Partnership Program. These actions followed a concerted Chinese government disinformation campaign. It is vital that the U.S. Ambassador to Nepal be able to navigate this landscape and reassure the people of Nepal that America is their ally. Mr. Thompson's depth

of experience in this region makes him well-qualified to take on this important post.

Robert Godec is a career diplomat who most recently served as Acting Assistant Secretary for the Bureau of African Affairs at the Department of State. He served as U.S. Ambassador to Kenya from 2013 to 2019, and U.S. Ambassador to Tunisia from 2006 to 2009. During his long career he has also held positions as the Assistant Office Director for Thailand and Burma in the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs and Director for Southeast Asian Affairs at the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative.

Thailand is a major non-NATO ally with the largest economy in mainland Southeast Asia. Secretary Blinken was in Bangkok this past week and signed two cooperation agreements with his Thai counterpart to deepen ties between our two nations, saying, “We are taking the partnership between us fully into the 21st century.”

Thailand is also a member of the Indo-Pacific Economic Forum and a key partner in a free and open Indo-Pacific. Mr. Godec’s wide breadth of experience, which includes previous work on Thailand and regional trade issues make him an excellent nominee for this position at this critical time.

Yohannes Abraham currently serves as Deputy Assistant to the President, Chief of Staff, and Executive Secretary of the National Security Council. He has worked in the Executive branch in various capacities, including as a Senior Advisor to the National Economic Council and a Deputy Assistant to the President for Intergovernmental Affairs and Public Engagement during the Obama administration.

In his current position, Mr. Abraham has cultivated valuable experience helping plan and execute the 2021 and 2022 U.S.-ASEAN Summits, the President’s first trip to Asia, and the Vice President’s trip to Vietnam and Singapore. The United States must continue to engage with ASEAN on issues of international significance, including climate change and infrastructure development, and Mr. Abraham is well-suited to take on this task.

Richard Buangan is a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, Class of Minister-Counselor. He most recently served as Acting Assistant Secretary in the Bureau of Global Public Affairs at the State Department and prior to that he served as Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Bureau of East Asia and Pacific Affairs. Mr. Buangan also lived in my home state of Hawaii for part of his childhood, when his dad was in the Navy, and I understand that his dad is here today. Congratulations. I am sure you are very proud.

Mongolia is a vast nation surrounded by Russia and China and a young democracy. It is more important than ever that the United States continue its friendship with the Mongolian people and find opportunities to collaborate on issues, including energy independence and economic development, and Mr. Buangan is well-qualified to do so.

Marie Damour is a career member of the Senior Foreign Service who has served as Council General in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, since 2019. She previously served as Director in the Office of Maritime Southeast Asia in the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs as well as in the Office of Policy Coordination and Public Af-

fairs in the Bureau of Consular Affairs. She was also the Deputy Chief of Mission as well as the Chargé d'Affaires at the U.S. Embassy in Wellington, New Zealand.

Ms. Damour has been nominated to represent our nation in five Pacific Island countries: Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Tonga, and Tuvalu, that cover thousands of square miles of ocean. These nations are important partners, and the United States must genuinely engage with them on issues that are of concern to the region, from IUU fishing to sea level rise threatening their very existence.

I have spoken with ambassadors from many of the countries that Ms. Damour will be working with, if confirmed, and there are urgent needs in these communities that the United States has unfortunately neglected for too long. I am encouraged by the commitments Vice President Harris made at the Pacific Island Forum leaders' meeting yesterday, including plans to establish U.S. embassies in Kiribati and Tonga, appoint an envoy to the Pacific Island Forums, bring the Peace Corps back to the Pacific, and make progress towards re-establishing a USAID regional mission for the Pacific in Suva. I am sure you will be directly involved in many of these efforts, and if confirmed, I look forward to speaking with you more about how the United States can expand its engagement in the region.

There are few jobs as important as confirming nominees to be U.S. Ambassador. It is my honor to chair this hearing, especially given that all five of these nominees, if confirmed, will represent the United States in the Indo-Pacific, a region critical to our foreign policy and national security. These positions require vast skills and experience, and you all have it.

I now yield to the Ranking Member, Senator Romney.

**STATEMENT OF HON. MITT ROMNEY,
U.S. SENATOR FROM UTAH**

Senator ROMNEY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for your comments, and thank you to each of the nominees for your willingness to again take on the mantle of service for our nation in a region of the world which is critical for the citizens there but also critical for the interest of the United States, given the dynamic of authoritarian promotion by the Communist Chinese Party as well as a recognition that this is a critical time in history as it relates to major global issues.

I appreciate your willingness to serve our country and to represent our interests. Our friends and allies are important in Asia, one because we value friendship and we value the relations we have with these nations, but also because of our strategic objectives in the region, and that is only going to become more necessary as China continues down its path of malign behavior.

Mr. Chairman, rather than reading through my opening comments I would ask that they be included in the record so that we can hear from the nominees and move directly to questions.

Senator SCHATZ. Without objection. Thank you, Senator Romney. [The prepared statement of Senator Romney follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF SENATOR MITT ROMNEY

Thank you to our nominees for being here today and for your commitment to serve our country and represent our nation's interest abroad as ambassadors. Our friends and allies in Asia are not just important, but necessary for meeting U.S. strategic objectives around the world, and will only become more necessary if China continues down its path of malign behavior.

China's quest to become the world's leading power-economically, militarily, and geopolitically-is the central challenge of the 21st Century. We must link arms with our friends and allies to confront China, to push the Chinese Communist Party to abandon its predatory policies, and demand that China abide by international norms and rules. We must also the cause of freedom around the world-including holding the CCP accountable for the atrocities they commit against the Uyghur people and other ethnic minorities.

Southeast Asia is a vibrant region of growing strategic importance to the future of a free and open Indo-Pacific. ASEAN nations are feeling pressure from China given its close proximity and influence-especially as China continues to make investments in energy, critical minerals, and other areas. Expanding concrete economic engagement in the region is what our partners most want to see, and it's crucial for the U.S. economy as well. Mr. Abraham, I look forward to hearing from you how, if confirmed, you will work to find ways to leverage that existing strength and partnership in the region so that we can grow them further. A persistent advocate for tangible ways to expand this economic engagement is critical in this role.

Thailand is a significant treaty ally within ASEAN-and a critical partner in the areas of energy and infrastructure. Mr. Godec, I hope to hear from you how, if confirmed as Ambassador to Thailand, you will work to not only support our close military relationship with the Thais, but prioritize ensuring the country remains a willing partner on providing opportunities for cross-border humanitarian assistance into Burma.

I'm proud that the Utah Guard was able to deliver life-saving COVID supplies and equipment to Nepal last summer. I also applaud the decision by the Federal Parliament of Nepal to ratify its Millennium Challenge Corporation compact. Mr. Thompson, if confirmed, one of your crucial tasks as our next Ambassador will be overseeing its implementation, and we have to get this right.

Mr. Buangan, as you are aware, Mongolia, a growing democracy and great partner to the U.S., is unfortunately wedged between two increasingly aggressive authoritarian powers: Russia and China. We must ensure that the U.S. remains active in the country and consider ways to expand our economic, development, and defense relationship. I'd like to hear from you on how, if confirmed as Ambassador to Mongolia, you will work to increase U.S.-Mongolia trade, and its trade with other countries, to reduce economic dependence on China and Russia.

The United States is a longstanding partner of the Pacific Islands, and given China's encroachment, it is imperative that we solidify and amplify U.S. presence in the region. Notably, Fiji recently helped the U.S. seize the yacht of a Russian oligarch. The next U.S. Ambassador to Fiji needs to come to the table with concrete ideas for strengthening our ties in area such as health, education, investment, defense, and the environment. Ms. Damour, I would like to hear from you how, if confirmed, you would work to build collaboration with allies and partners, including Taiwan.

I look forward to hearing from you all on the issues I outlined, and should you be confirmed, I urge you all to use your roles to promote the values of freedom and democracy abroad and work to dissuade China from pursuing its predatory path.

Thank you, and I will now turn it back to Senator Schatz.

Senator SCHATZ. We will now proceed to testimony and we will start with Mr. Godec.

STATEMENT OF THE HON. ROBERT F. GODEC, OF VIRGINIA, A CAREER MEMBER OF THE SENIOR FOREIGN SERVICE, CLASS OF CAREER MINISTER, NOMINATED TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE KINGDOM OF THAILAND

Mr. GODEC. Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you as President Biden's nominee to be the next U.S. Ambassador to

the Kingdom of Thailand. I want to thank President Biden and Secretary Blinken for their confidence in me. If confirmed, I look forward to working with Congress to advance U.S. interests in Thailand and the Indo-Pacific region.

I would like to introduce to you my wife, Lori Magnusson, who is here today. Lori has been a source of inspiration, strength, and wisdom through our years together. Lori's constant love, support, and partnership have been extraordinary, and I owe much to her. Next to Lori is Brittany Jones, who is an exceptional caregiver and provides much support to Lori. I would also like to express my profound thanks to my mother, Nancy Dietrich, for all she has done for me. She is watching online this morning.

Thailand has a rich history, remarkable culture, extraordinary beauty, and exceptional people. It has been a partner for the United States since 1833. Together, we have woven a rich tapestry of ties that are government-to-government, business-to-business, university-to-university, NGO-to-NGO, and people-to-people. We have improved security in the region, faced global public health challenges, deepened mutual prosperity, and advanced the fight against human, wildlife, and drug trafficking. Building on our shared values and our just-signed United States-Thailand Communiqué on Strategic Alliance and Partnership, we have opportunities in the days ahead to strengthen further our partnership, to renew it, and take it to a new level.

The United States and Thailand have a longstanding commitment to mutual security. Our militaries fought side by side in Korea and Vietnam. Today, Thailand is a treaty and major non-NATO ally, and we have many military engagements and training exercises, including COBRA Gold, the largest in Asia. Our alliance helps to ensure security for Thailand, the United States, and the region. If confirmed, I will seek to deepen it.

Our economic partnership is another vital part of our tapestry of ties. Our total trade is over \$60 billion a year and growing. U.S. businesses are a major investor in Thailand, and Thai companies are increasingly active in the United States. If confirmed, I will work to expand further our commercial ties.

Strengthening democracy and promoting respect for human rights and the rule of law are fundamental to U.S. relations with Thailand. We have long supported multi-party democracy, freedom of expression, good governance, and respect for human rights across the world and in Thailand. We recognized that a democratically elected government took office in 2019 after the 2014 coup, but work remains to be done by Thailand. If confirmed, I will vigorously continue our efforts to advance democracy, human rights, the rule of law, and will support civil society, independent media, and human rights defenders who play a critical role in this effort.

The United States and Thailand also enjoy robust people-to-people ties. Our connections are enriched by the presence in the United States of almost 350,000 Thais and U.S. citizens of Thai heritage, and by the more than 100,000 U.S. citizens in Thailand. We are strengthened by the close ties our universities and colleges enjoy as well as the cultural exchange programs we support in Thailand. If confirmed, I will work to increase opportunities for Thais and Americans to learn together and from each other.

Thailand plays a vital role in the region. Today we work closely with Thailand in ASEAN, and in other regional mechanisms including the Mekong-U.S. Partnership. As a key ally, we welcome Thailand's decision to join the discussions on the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework, which will help build an economic partnership for the future. If confirmed, I will engage robustly with Thailand, the host of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Forum this year, to facilitate the transition into our own 2023 host year.

Across the years, we have cooperated with Thailand on regional challenges, including law enforcement, the response to natural disasters, and humanitarian relief. We welcome Thailand's commitment to address the threat of climate change; this will be a critical area for further collaboration. We appreciate Thailand's willingness to host refugees and, if confirmed, I would seek to ensure refugees and asylum seekers have all the support they need. And I would engage in Thailand to underscore our call to all countries to condemn the military coup in Burma and end the Burmese military's horrific violence, which has led to worsening human rights and humanitarian crises.

Finally, our Embassy in Bangkok and Consulate General in Chiang Mai have exceptional teams that are doing extraordinary work to advance our partnership. Ensuring they are safe and secure, and have the resources they need, will be a top priority for me, if confirmed.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and members of the committee, if confirmed, I would welcome the opportunity to serve as the next U.S. Ambassador to the Kingdom of Thailand and to lead our team of capable and committed public servants to advance the U.S.-Thai partnership.

I look forward to answering your questions. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Godec follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. ROBERT F. GODEC

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We also enjoy robust people-to-people ties. Our connections are enriched by the presence in the United States of almost 350,000 Thais and U.S. citizens of Thai heritage, and by the more than 100,000 U.S. citizens in Thailand. We are strengthened by the close ties our universities and colleges enjoy as well as the cultural exchange programs we support in Thailand. If confirmed, I will work to increase opportunities for Thais and Americans to learn together and from each other.

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Finally, our Embassy in Bangkok and Consulate General in Chiang Mai have exceptional teams that are doing extraordinary work to advance our partnership. Ensuring they are safe and secure, and have the resources they need, will be a top priority for me if confirmed.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and members of the committee, if confirmed, I would welcome the opportunity to serve as the next U.S. Ambassador to the Kingdom of Thailand and to lead our team of capable and committed public servants to advance the U.S.-Thai partnership.

I look forward to answering your questions. Thank you.

Senator SCHATZ. Thank you very much. Mr. Thompson, please proceed with your testimony.

STATEMENT OF DEAN R. THOMPSON, OF MARYLAND, A CAREER MEMBER OF THE SENIOR FOREIGN SERVICE, CLASS OF MINISTER-COUNSELOR, NOMINATED TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO NEPAL

Mr. THOMPSON. Thank you, Chairman Schatz, Ranking Member Romney, and honorable members of this committee. I appreciate very much you considering my nomination to serve as the next U.S. Ambassador to Nepal. I want to thank Senator Van Hollen for his far-too-generous remarks. My mother and my wife have joined me today. He introduced them. With my mother here, someone maybe believed part of his remarks even. We will see.

I want to start by thanking my family, my wife, Jane, and my three children Marshall, Kendall, and Grace. They served with me

for more than 26 years in the Foreign Service. They have endured frequent moves, emergency evacuations, and periods of separation. But they have also shared with me the privilege of serving the American people overseas, a privilege for which we are deeply grateful.

I would also like to thank my parents—my mother is here—for instilling in me a strong sense and interest in service and international relations. My father was the Director of International Programs at the National 4-H Council in Washington for 20 years, and prior to that Director for West Africa at the outset of Peace Corps.

From my time as Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary in the South and Central Asian Affairs Bureau, as a diplomat in Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and India, and a leader in the Department's crisis management apparatus, I do feel well-prepared to serve in this capacity, if confirmed.

It has been a privilege to serve the American people and, if confirmed, I welcome the opportunity to take on this important responsibility. If confirmed, I will embrace the opportunity to lead a topflight group of American and local staff and strive to create an environment that emphasizes the American values of diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility.

We are at an important juncture in our relationship with Nepal. Nepal has been referred to as a “yam between two stones,” those stones, of course, being India and China. While those countries do have important relationships with Nepal, we also share Nepal's interest in strengthening its sovereignty and partnership with the United States.

If confirmed, facilitating Nepal's economic growth and strengthening the trade ties between our countries will be key priorities. The United States' relationship with Nepal has seen recent gains that cement our 75-year partnership. Mr. Chairman, you mentioned Nepal's parliament ratified the \$500 million Millennium Challenge Corporation Compact in the face of a torrid PRC disinformation campaign. This project will build electricity transmission lines to connect to Nepal's clean energy, abundant hydro-power with South Asia's energy grid. It will also build high-quality roads in Nepal. These projects will increase the prosperity of both of our countries.

USAID just signed a \$659 million agreement with Nepal to contribute to Nepal's development over the next 5 years. This is a new chapter in the United States government's longstanding development relationship and reflects the evolution of our partnership. Post-earthquake reconstruction is winding down, the transition to federalism is well underway, and through successful programming the United States has helped lay the foundations to support Nepal's goal of graduating to middle-income country status.

If confirmed, I will also push for the rights of all Nepali citizens and residents. This includes the Dalits, marginalized communities, and refugee communities, including Tibetan refugees. I will encourage the government of Nepal to implement policies that promote meaningful inclusion, economic opportunity, and humanitarian support.

Nepal's progress on the commitments it made during President Biden's Summit for Democracy demonstrates how important Nepal's young democracy is to its people and the importance it places on its relationship to the United States. Nepal's support for Ukraine resolutions at the U.N. General Assembly and the U.N. Human Rights Council demonstrates its dedication to the international rules-based order and the premise of territorial integrity. Nepal is a committed bilateral partner and a committed partner on the world stage.

Finally, if confirmed, I will also work to help Nepal strengthen its democratic institutions. Nepal has come a long way since its civil war only 16 years ago. Like other democracies, Nepal's politics can be contentious and messy at times, but supporting Nepal's democracy is in our interest and will remain a priority of mine if confirmed as Ambassador.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to close by saying that we have an important opportunity to strengthen the U.S. relationship with Nepal. I look forward to working with Congress to build this relationship.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Thompson follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT FOR DEAN R. THOMPSON

Chairman Schatz, Ranking Member Romney, and distinguished members of this committee; thank you for considering my nomination to serve as the next U.S. Ambassador to Nepal. It is an honor to be nominated for this position.

I would like to start by thanking my family, my wife, Jane, and my three children Marshall, Kendall, and Grace. For more than 26 years in the Foreign Service they have served with me, enduring frequent moves, emergency evacuations, and periods of separation. They have also shared with me the privilege of serving our country, a privilege for which we are deeply grateful. I would also like to thank my parents, my mother is here with us today, for instilling in me a strong interest in service and international relations. My father was the Director of International Programs at the National 4-H Council in Washington for 20 years, and prior to that a member of Peace Corps staff, including director for West Africa at the outset of Peace Corps' mission.

From my time as Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary in the South and Central Asian Affairs Bureau, as a U.S. diplomat in Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and India, and a leader in the Department's crisis management apparatus, I feel well prepared to serve in this capacity if confirmed.

Serving the American people has been a privilege and, if confirmed, I welcome the opportunity to take on this important responsibility. If confirmed, I will embrace the opportunity to lead a topflight group of American and locally employed staff and I will strive to create an environment that emphasizes the American values of diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility.

We are at an important juncture in our relationship with Nepal. Nepal has been referred to as a "yam between two stones," those stones being China and India. While those countries do have important relationships with Nepal, we also share Nepal's interest in strengthening its sovereignty and its partnership with the United States.

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Mr. Chairman, I would like to close by saying that we have an important opportunity to strengthen the U.S. relationship with Nepal. I look forward to working with Congress to build this relationship. Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I look forward to your questions.

Senator SCHATZ. Thank you very much. Mr. Abraham, please proceed with your testimony.

STATEMENT OF YOHANNES ABRAHAM, OF VIRGINIA, NOMINATED TO BE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS, WITH THE RANK AND STATUS OF AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY

Mr. ABRAHAM. Mr. Chairman, Mr. Ranking Member, and distinguished members of the committee, I am honored to be here today. I am grateful to President Biden and Secretary Blinken for placing their confidence in me to serve as the U.S. Representative to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, and I want to thank the members of this committee for your consideration of my nomination.

I also want to thank the most important people in my life, my family. Our story is a familiar one, and it is one that is only possible in this greatest of nations. This country welcomed my parents with open arms when the country of their birth was being torn apart by the cruel ravages of a dictator. With no money and no connections, but with faith and determination, they worked all manner of jobs to put themselves through college and graduate school. They went on to become successful professionals and small-business owners, as well as active members of our community of Springfield, Virginia. They raised my sister and me to love this country that had given them so much. They are the two most incredible people I have ever known, and they are the reason I am sitting here today, and I want to thank you for giving me the opportunity to thank my parents.

The United States is a great nation. We are also a Pacific power, with deep roots and critical interests in the region. If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with Congress to realize our shared vision of a free and open Indo-Pacific, one where countries and in-

dividuals are able to make independent decisions free from coercion.

Southeast Asia's economically vibrant, youthful, and growing populations are at the heart of realizing that vision, which is why the administration has made clear our commitment to ASEAN and its centrality. Our relationship is about collaboration to meet shared challenges and opportunities, including health security, energy and climate issues, and the economic prosperity of our combined one billion people. If confirmed, I would look to build on the recent U.S.-ASEAN Special Summit, including by continuing a whole-of-government effort to build ASEAN's own capacity to act on its interests.

Our vision for the U.S.-ASEAN relationship is a positive one; it is defined by what we are for. At the same time, I am clear-eyed about the challenge that coercive activity by the People's Republic of China poses to that vision. It is in the national security interests of the United States for ASEAN to be strong, prosperous, united, and well-equipped to set the terms of its relationship with the PRC. Nowhere is that truer than when it comes to the PRC's increasing maritime assertiveness in the South China Sea. If confirmed, I will work with ASEAN to pursue our shared interests in maintaining peace and stability, respect of international law, and freedoms of navigation and overflight in the South China Sea.

A critical component of advancing our interests is standing up for our values. As President Biden has said, human rights are a vital interest of this administration's foreign policy. If confirmed, I will not hesitate to raise issues of human rights, democracy, and rule of law with interlocutors across the region. I have been moved by the tragic and disturbing crisis in Burma, including the horrific and widespread violence perpetrated by the Burmese regime against the people of Burma. If confirmed, I will support efforts to change the regime's calculus so that we can resolve the worsening humanitarian and political crisis and return Burma to a path toward inclusive, multiparty democracy.

Above all, if the U.S.-ASEAN relationship is to continue to deliver for our peoples in the 21st century, it must be durable. The return of a Senate-confirmed Ambassador to this seat in Jakarta, which has been filled on an acting basis for more than 5 years, would be a step in that direction, sending a powerful message to ASEAN and the world of American commitment to Southeast Asia and its premier institution.

If I am confirmed to this post, I would take as my responsibility to ensure the long-term success of this vital relationship. To do so, I would draw on the most important sources of stable, long-term U.S. engagement with the region: bipartisan cooperation and people-to-people ties. If confirmed, I would look to build on already strong Congressional support for U.S. engagement with ASEAN. I would also support our thriving people-to-people programs, including the Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative, that strengthen our already-strong bonds of friendship.

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Ranking Member, and members of the committee, thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you today and your consideration of my nomination.

I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Abraham follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF YOHANNES ABRAHAM

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Ranking Member, and distinguished members of the committee:

I am honored to be here today. I am grateful to President Biden and Secretary Blinken for placing their confidence in me to serve as the U.S. Representative to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, and I want to thank the members of this committee for your consideration of my nomination.

I also want to thank the most important people in my life: my family. Our story is a familiar one, and it is one that is only possible in this greatest of nations. This country welcomed my parents with open arms when the country of their birth was being torn apart by the cruel ravages of a dictator. With no money and no connections, but with faith and determination, they worked all manner of jobs to put themselves through college and graduate school. They went on to become successful professionals and small-business owners, as well as active members of our community of Springfield, Virginia. They raised my sister and me to love this country that had given them so much. They are the two most incredible people I have ever known, and they are the reason I am sitting here today.

The United States is a great nation. We are also a Pacific power, with deep roots and critical interests in the region. If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with Congress to realize our shared vision of a free and open Indo-Pacific, one where countries and individuals are able to make independent decisions free from coercion.

Southeast Asia's economically vibrant, youthful, and growing populations are at the heart of realizing that vision, which is why the administration has made clear our commitment to ASEAN and its centrality. Our relationship is about collaboration to meet shared challenges and opportunities, including health security, energy and climate issues, and the economic prosperity of our combined one billion people. If confirmed, I would look to build on the recent U.S.-ASEAN Special Summit, including by continuing a whole-of-government effort to build ASEAN's own capacity to act on its interests.

Our vision for the U.S.-ASEAN relationship is a positive one; it is defined by what we are for. At the same time, I am clear-eyed about the challenge that coercive activity by the People's Republic of China (PRC) poses to that vision. It is in the national security interests of the United States for ASEAN to be strong, prosperous, united, and well-equipped to set the terms of its relationship with the PRC. Nowhere is that truer than when it comes to the PRC's increasing maritime assertiveness in the South China Sea. If confirmed, I will work with ASEAN to pursue our shared interests in maintaining peace and stability, respect of international law, and freedoms of navigation and overflight in the South China Sea.

A critical component of advancing our interests is standing up for our values. As President Biden has said, human rights are a vital interest of this administration's foreign policy. If confirmed, I will not hesitate to raise issues of human rights, democracy, and rule of law with interlocutors across the region. I have been moved by the tragic and disturbing crisis in Burma, including the horrific and widespread violence perpetrated by the Burmese regime against the people of Burma. If confirmed, I will support efforts to change the regime's calculus so that we can resolve the worsening humanitarian and political crisis and return Burma to a path toward inclusive, multiparty democracy.

Above all, if the U.S.-ASEAN relationship is to continue to deliver for our peoples in the 21st century, it must be durable. The return of a Senate-confirmed Ambassador to this seat in Jakarta—which has been filled on an acting basis for more than five years—would be an important step in the right direction, sending a powerful message to ASEAN and the world of American commitment to Southeast Asia and its premier institution.

If I am confirmed to this post, I would take as my responsibility to ensure the long-term success of the vital U.S.-ASEAN relationship. To do so, I would draw on the most important sources of stable, long-term U.S. engagement with the region: bipartisan cooperation and people-to-people ties. If confirmed, I would look to build on already strong Congressional support for U.S. engagement with ASEAN. I would also support our thriving people-to-people programs, including the Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative, that strengthen our already-strong bonds of friendship.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and members of the committee, thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you today and your consideration of my nomination. I look forward to your questions.

Senator SCHATZ. Thank you very much, Mr. Abraham.

Mr. Buangan, please proceed with your testimony.

STATEMENT OF RICHARD LEE BUANGAN, OF CALIFORNIA, A CAREER MEMBER OF THE SENIOR FOREIGN SERVICE, CLASS OF MINISTER COUNSELOR, NOMINATED TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO MONGOLIA

Mr. BUANGAN. Thank you very much. Chairman Schatz, Ranking Member Romney, and distinguished members of the committee, I am deeply honored to be here today as the President's nominee to serve as the United States Ambassador to Mongolia. I am grateful for the confidence of President Biden and Secretary Blinken in entrusting me with this important responsibility. If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with this committee to advance U.S. priorities in Mongolia and further strengthening our bilateral partnership. I deeply appreciate the crucial role Congress plays in the foreign policy process.

I want to take a moment to acknowledge my parents, Art and Evelyn, who are joining me all the way from San Diego, California, my brother, Jay, his wife, Joyce, my nieces Arya, Emma, and Caras, as well as my friends, family, and colleagues who are watching from around the world. They have been a source of inspiration and strength for me throughout my 23-year journey as a Foreign Service Officer. If confirmed, I look forward to working alongside our Embassy Ulaanbaatar team, my American colleagues as well as our locally engaged Mongolian staff, who have been the linchpin of our deep and abiding relationship with the Mongolian people for decades.

This year marks the 35th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations with Mongolia and 30 years since its peaceful transition to democracy. During this time, the United States has worked closely with Mongolia to strengthen its commitment to human rights and the rule of law, to promote democratic values, and to expand defense cooperation.

Mongolia continually seeks increased U.S. engagement, trade, and investment. We are proud to call Mongolia a strategic partner.

The U.S.-Mongolia relationship is built on a foundation of shared values and common interests. If confirmed, I will focus on efforts to bolster Mongolia's democratic and economic institutions. Our goal is to support the Mongolian people in building a strong, resilient, democratic system and a prosperous, private sector-driven economy that can play a constructive role in the international community.

I would like to comment on a few specific issues.

First, Mongolia is at a critical juncture in its energy transition. With abundant reserves of coal and other minerals, Mongolia is dependent on extractive industries both to meet its own energy needs and to generate foreign exchange. At the same time, Mongolia has huge potential for clean energy, ranging from hydropower to solar and wind. If confirmed, I will strive to help Mongolia begin the transition to a clean energy future.

Second, given Mongolia's ongoing economic and geostrategic challenges, U.S. development support remains critical to helping this country move forward. For example, the U.S. government's largest

investment in Mongolia is the Millennium Challenge Corporation's \$350 million Water Compact, which will redevelop Ulaanbaatar's water and wastewater system and increase the city's supply of water by 80 percent when completed in 2026. Separately, the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation manages a \$38 million portfolio while USAID projects support small and medium-sized enterprises, empower women and youth, and improve energy governance.

Third, the United States and Mongolia view military-to-military cooperation as a cornerstone of our relationship. The United States is grateful for the service of Mongolian soldiers who have served alongside U.S. and NATO coalition partners in Afghanistan. Furthermore, the U.S. military provides extensive assistance and training to improve the Mongolian Armed Forces' information infrastructure, engineering capabilities, and readiness for peacekeeping operations. If confirmed, I will support efforts to continue expanding Mongolia's already impressive U.N. peacekeeping operations capability.

Finally, turning to public diplomacy, I believe it is critical to strengthen our people-to-people exchanges with Mongolians, particularly with youth, who are increasingly eager to seek opportunities to study abroad and develop closer ties with the United States and other free-market open societies.

Over the years our exchange programs have reaped dividends, fostering relations with Mongolians from all walks of life. Numerous senior military leaders, prominent persons in business and finance, and influential members of civil society and academia, as well as one-third of current parliamentarians, are alumni of U.S. exchange or training programs.

One important key to improving our people-to-people ties is supporting English language education in Mongolia. Approximately 100 Peace Corps volunteers each year taught English across the country until COVID-19 forced volunteers to return to the United States in 2020. As Ambassador, I would commit to seeing this vital program return to, and even exceed, prior levels as quickly as possible.

Chairman Schatz, Ranking Member Romney, committee members, it would be the honor of a lifetime to represent my country as a U.S. Ambassador and lead the outstanding staff of the U.S. mission to Mongolia. If confirmed, I look forward to working with Congress to continue deepening ties with our strategic partner Mongolia, while also paying tribute to the rich culture and history of the Mongolian people and helping their government meet the challenges of the 21st century.

Thank you for your time, and I look forward to answering your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Buangan follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF RICHARD LEE BUANGAN

Chairman Schatz, Ranking Member Romney, and distinguished members of the committee, I am deeply honored to be here today as the President's nominee to serve as the United States Ambassador to Mongolia. I am grateful for the confidence of President Biden and Secretary Blinken in entrusting me with this important responsibility. If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with this committee to advance U.S. priorities in Mongolia and further strengthen our bilateral partner-

ship. I deeply appreciate the crucial role Congress plays in the foreign policy process.

I want to take a moment to acknowledge my parents who are joining me today all the way from San Diego, California, as well as my family, friends, and colleagues who are watching from around the world. They have been a source of inspiration and strength for me throughout my 23-year journey as a Foreign Service Officer. If confirmed, I look forward to working alongside our Embassy Ulaanbaatar team, my American colleagues as well as our locally engaged Mongolian staff, who have been the linchpin of our deep and abiding relationship with the Mongolian people for decades.

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The U.S.-Mongolia relationship is built on a foundation of shared values and common interests. If confirmed, I will focus on efforts to bolster Mongolia's democratic and economic institutions. Our goal is to support the Mongolian people in building a strong, resilient democratic system and a prosperous, private sector-driven economy that can play a constructive role in the international community. I would like to comment on a few specific issues:

First, Mongolia is at a critical juncture in its energy transition. With abundant reserves of coal and other minerals, Mongolia is dependent on extractive industries both to meet its own energy needs and to generate foreign exchange. At the same time, Mongolia has huge potential for clean energy, ranging from hydropower to solar and wind. If confirmed, I will strive to help Mongolia begin the transition to a clean energy future.

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Finally, turning to public diplomacy, I believe it is critical to strengthen our people-to-people exchanges with Mongolians, particularly with youth, who are increasingly eager to seek opportunities to study abroad and develop closer ties with the United States and other free-market open societies.

Over the years we have received an excellent return on our investments in exchanges in general. Numerous senior military leaders, prominent persons in business and finance, and influential members of civil society and academia, as well as one-third of current parliamentarians, are alumni of U.S. exchange or training programs.

One important key to improving our people-to-people ties is supporting English language education in Mongolia. Approximately 100 Peace Corps volunteers each year taught English across the country until COVID-19 forced volunteers to return to the United States in 2020. As Ambassador, I would commit to seeing this vital program return to, and even exceed, prior levels as quickly as possible.

Chairman Schatz, Ranking Member Romney, committee members, it would be the honor of a lifetime to represent my country as a U.S. Ambassador and lead the outstanding staff of the U.S. Mission to Mongolia. If confirmed, I look forward to working with Congress to continue deepening ties with our strategic partner Mongolia, while also paying tribute to the rich culture and history of the Mongolian people and helping their government meet the challenges of the 21st century.

Thank you for your time and I look forward to answering your questions.

Senator SCHATZ. Thank you very much.

Ms. Damour, please proceed with your testimony.

STATEMENT OF MARIE C. DAMOUR, OF VIRGINIA, A CAREER MEMBER OF THE SENIOR FOREIGN SERVICE, CLASS OF MINISTER-COUNSELOR, NOMINATED TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE REPUBLIC OF FIJI, AND TO SERVE CONCURRENTLY AND WITHOUT ADDITIONAL COMPENSATION AS AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE REPUBLIC OF KIRIBATI, THE REPUBLIC OF NAURU, THE KINGDOM OF TONGA, AND TUVALU

Ms. DAMOUR. Chairman Schatz, Ranking Member Romney, and distinguished members of the committee, I am honored to be here today as the President's nominee to serve as the United States Ambassador to the Republics of Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, the Kingdom of Tonga, and Tuvalu. I am grateful for the confidence shown by President Biden and Secretary Blinken in entrusting me with this important responsibility and, if confirmed, I look forward to working with Congress to advance the interests of the United States by reinvigorating our ties with our Pacific neighbors.

I would like to take a few minutes to acknowledge my family, without whose support and guidance I would not be here. My father, Alfred Damour, established a model of public service for my three brothers and me throughout his career as an officer in the U.S. Army, including active duty during the war in Vietnam. My mother provided for me the best example of how a woman can and should pursue individual goals in a professional career while simultaneously caring for her family and community. Their values and the example they set guide me each and every day. While my brothers and their families could not be here today, I know they are here in spirit. I also want to thank the many Foreign Service, Civil Service, and local employee colleagues with whom I have had the honor to serve over the course of my 29-year career in the Department.

My experiences have taught me the power of our country's values-based diplomacy. If confirmed, I will draw on these lessons and my regional policy experience to advance the United States' strategic interests in the South Pacific, because the United States is a Pacific power. We share an important history with our Pacific Island neighbors. It was in the islands that Americans braved some of the hardest-fought battles of the Second World War, forging connections that are not easily forgotten. Our peoples are knit through a large Pacific Islander diaspora in the United States. If confirmed, I will work in collaboration with the five nations to which I would be accredited to ensure that our common future is one of prosperity, peace, and stability.

President Biden has made addressing the climate crisis one of his administration's top priorities for good reason: our Pacific neighbors are experiencing the most devastating impacts of climate change, particularly Kiribati and Tuvalu, two of the lowest-lying atoll nations for which this is an existential issue. As Secretary Blinken stated during his trip to Fiji this year, every defining issue of the 21st century runs through this region: the climate crisis,

global health, the future of technology, whether nations will be free to chart their own path or be subject to coercion by more powerful nations.

If confirmed, I will listen and work with our Pacific partners to advance solutions that will support Pacific communities and help them adapt to the impacts of climate change, address public health issues, support better communication, and preserve international rules and standards.

The Pacific Islands are global players. Both Fiji and Tonga have been important contributors to international Peacekeeping Operations. Fijian forces are currently participating in various United Nations missions, where they are responsible for providing security for mission personnel and facilities. Tonga was an early member of the Coalition to liberate Iraq. Kiribati, Nauru, and Tuvalu are committed to their responsibilities as U.N. members, and the United States cooperates closely with them on a wide range of issues in that forum. All five nations boldly supported Ukraine in the United Nations. If confirmed, I look forward to continuing to build this regional and global cooperation.

Success in tackling our common challenges will depend on fostering the internal strength of our Pacific Island partners that comes from strong democratic institutions, rule of law, and respect for human rights. The Pacific Islanders share our respect for democratic values but realizing those values can be challenging in practice. If confirmed, I will strive to build civil society, democracy, and good governance through all means available to us.

Embassy Suva is responsible for the United States' largest geographic consular district in the world, over two million square miles. It is challenged by almost yearly cyclones, floods, and tsunami warnings. If confirmed, I will make disaster preparedness and support for U.S. citizens a priority focus.

My career at the State Department has taught me that our people are our most precious resource. If confirmed, it will be my privilege to lead Embassy Suva's diverse and dedicated team of American and local staff and welcome the return of Peace Corps volunteers.

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Ranking Member, and distinguished members of the committee, thank you very much for your consideration and the opportunity to appear before you today. I look forward to your comments and questions.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Damour follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF MARIE C. DAMOUR

Chairman Schatz, Ranking Member Romney, and distinguished members of the committee, I am honored to be here today as the President's nominee to serve as the United States Ambassador to the Republics of Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, the Kingdom of Tonga, and Tuvalu. I am grateful for the confidence shown by President Biden and Secretary Blinken in entrusting me with this important responsibility and, if confirmed, I look forward to working with Congress to advance the interests of the United States by reinvigorating our ties with our Pacific neighbors.

I would like to take a few minutes to acknowledge my family, without whose support and guidance, I would not be here. My father, Alfred Damour, established a model of public service for my three brothers and I throughout his career as an officer in the U.S. Army, including active duty in the war in Vietnam. My mother provided for me the best example of how a woman can and should pursue individual goals in a professional career while simultaneously caring for her family and com-

munity. Their values and the example they set guide me each and every day. While my brothers and their families could not be here today, I know they are here in spirit. I also want to thank the many Foreign and Civil Service colleagues with whom I have had the honor to serve over the course of my 29-year career in the Department of State.

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My career at the State Department has taught me that our people are our most precious resource. If confirmed, it will be my privilege to lead Embassy Suva's diverse and dedicated team of American and local staff and welcome the return of Peace Corps Volunteers.

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Ranking Member, and distinguished members of the committee, thank you for your consideration and the opportunity to appear before you today. I look forward to your comments and questions.

Senator SCHATZ. Thank you very much. Before we get into members' questions I have a few questions that speak to the importance that this committee places on responsiveness by all officials in the Executive branch and that we expect and will be seeking from you. I would ask each of you to provide just a yes or a no answer, and we will start with Ms. Damour and go down the line.

If you are confirmed, do you agree to appear before this committee and make officials from your office available to the committee and designated staff when invited?

Ms. DAMOUR. Yes.

Mr. BUANGAN. Yes.

Mr. ABRAHAM. Yes.

Mr. GODEC. Yes.

Mr. THOMPSON. Yes.

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

Ms. DAMOUR. Yes.

Mr. BUANGAN. Yes.

Mr. ABRAHAM. Yes.

Mr. GODEC. Yes.

Mr. THOMPSON. Yes.

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

Ms. DAMOUR. Yes.

Mr. BUANGAN. Yes.

Mr. ABRAHAM. Yes.

Mr. GODEC. Yes.

Mr. THOMPSON. Yes.

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

Ms. DAMOUR. Yes.

Mr. BUANGAN. Yes.

Mr. ABRAHAM. Yes.

Mr. GODEC. Yes.

Mr. THOMPSON. Yes.

Senator SCHATZ. Thank you very much. I will now turn to Ranking Member Romney for his questions.

Senator ROMNEY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Some years ago I was at the home of a man who would become president of Afghanistan, and people there were explaining to me their view as to why the Taliban had been so successful up until that point, and they said they had such a powerful message. I said, "What is that message?" and they said, "Well, infidels are on Islamic land, and the infidels must be expelled." And I said, "What is our message?" And there was a long silence, and finally one of the individuals said, "Well, our message is that before the Americans came it used to take 4 hours to get to the nearest city out of Kabul and now it only takes an hour." And I thought to myself, that is not a message to die for, and fighting for freedom is a fight that typically involves potential loss of life.

I would like to ask each of you, in turn, what you have already testified, what are messages to the people of the nation or nations that you will represent us in, what are the messages as to why America, as opposed to the alternative, which I presume in each case would be China. There is a global competition between nations that are interested in freedom and democracy and those that want to become authoritarian regimes. Why America? Why associate with us as opposed to, if you will, joining the Chinese?

Please, Mr. Thompson.

Mr. THOMPSON. Thank you, Senator.

Senator ROMNEY. Yeah, your microphone. Sorry.

Mr. THOMPSON. Is it on? Okay. Sorry about that. Yes, I would look forward to delivering a message that tells the people of Nepal

that America is standing with them is about their sovereignty, about their territorial integrity, and about their ability to make decisions for themselves about their future and the prosperity of their nation. And so I think that will stand in very sharp contrast to a lot of the messaging they hear in the region.

Senator ROMNEY. Thank you. Very helpful.

Mr. GODEC. Senator, if confirmed, I would very much bring to Thailand a message about all the values that America stands for—freedom, democracy, human rights, and so many other things. I would also listen to what the Thai want and understand where Thailand is coming from, and work to make certain that our message about the United States is both clear and offers opportunities to Thailand that the Thai people themselves are looking for.

One of the things that I believe is a great advantage of the United States is the tapestry that we have, as I mentioned. This is not just government-to-government, business-to-business, NGO-to-NGO. It is so many other things. So I think that ensuring that we are working with all of the diverse things that America brings when it forms a relationship with another country, with another people and its citizens, the citizens of that country, that there are real opportunities here, opportunities that the country, I believe, will have an interest in.

So I would very strongly seek both to bring a message about, again, our values, listen to the Thai, understand where they are coming from, and then at the same time support and bring assistance to all of the other parts of what we, as Americans bring. And I think it stands, frankly, in contrast, to what is offered by the PRC, which is a much more centrally directed, much more directive situation, and I do not think it would be nearly as attractive to the Thai. Thank you, Senator.

Senator ROMNEY. Thank you. Mr. Abraham?

Mr. ABRAHAM. Senator, thank you for the question. If confirmed, I would bring to the nations of ASEAN a message that is really centered in our shared commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific, one where countries and individuals are free to pursue their interests without fear of, or impacts of, coercion. I would bring a message of solidarity with their aspirations for sovereignty and territorial integrity, and importantly in support of those aspirations I would bring a message of durable, longstanding, and sustaining U.S. commitment to our relationship with both ASEAN and the nations of ASEAN.

Senator ROMNEY. Thank you. Mr. Buangan?

Mr. BUANGAN. Thank you very much, Senator, for that. If I am confirmed, I would tell the Mongolian people very simply that as a fellow democracy we have to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with you. Democracies work. Your democratic system works. We have a vested interest in ensuring that your democracy is strong and resilient. We want to see you prosper and secure in your own right and make sovereign decisions without fear of coercion from your neighbors. We want to help you build strong economic, open-market systems that allow you to make independent, sovereign decisions about your investment, about your prosperity, about the lives you want to lead.

And I would simply tell them that we are your friend and partner. We are far away from each other and we Mongolia and the United States could not be farther apart, but we are a lot closer than you think in terms of our shared values and our commitment to democratic institutions. Thank you.

Senator ROMNEY. Thank you. Ms. Damour.

Ms. DAMOUR. Thank you, Senator. Our message to our Pacific Island neighbors is simple. As we were standing shoulder-to-shoulder 80 years ago, the United States remains committed to helping them sustain their sovereignty, maintain their territorial integrity, achieve sustainable economic development, and help them preserve their ability to make choices in the best interests of their people. We are their neighbor. We are their partner. That is our commitment. Thank you.

Senator ROMNEY. Thank you. Mr. Chairman.

Senator SCHATZ. Thank you, Ranking Member Romney. Senator Cardin.

Senator CARDIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. First let me thank all five of our nominees for their public service and their willingness to continue to serve during extremely challenging times, and we thank your families because we know it is a family sacrifice. So thank you for being willing to do this.

I want to focus on some of the human rights issues and the influence of China in the region. So first, Mr. Godec, let me talk a little bit about Thailand. Obviously, they play a key role in regard to the crisis in Burma, and you mentioned that during your testimony. I want to bring up an issue in trafficking in persons. The most recent report, they went backwards from being on Tier 2 to Tier 2 watchlist. The report spells out the challenges they have with forced labor as well as sex trafficking.

So tell me your commitment, if confirmed, as to how you will promote Thailand taking the necessary steps to end this form of modern-day slavery.

Mr. GODEC. Thank you for the question, Senator. You raised a very important issue. Thailand has had a significant problem with trafficking in persons. That was reflected in the change in its ranking, its downgrade, and its ranking.

This is a subject that we talk to the Thai about regularly, at the highest levels. It is a subject where the United States, through a number of agencies, has provided some support and assistance to try to get some improvement. We have seen some progress, but there is a lot more that remains to be done. And I would commit, if confirmed, to doing everything possible to make progress.

I would note that the Prime Minister recently did a public event, for example, where he gave recognition to a number of agencies and people who were doing some things in this area. And it is good to see high-level engagement but there is a lot that needs to be done in this area.

Senator CARDIN. We have a lot of issues with Thailand. We recognize that. We are trying to make advancements, particularly as it relates to humanitarian issues in Burma. Do we have your assurances that you will give objective observations as to the progress they are making on trafficking? We have seen, in the past, sometimes other politics enter into this. This is too fundamental of a

human rights commitment, that you will give us objective accounts as to the progress or lack of progress in that country?

Mr. GODEC. Absolutely, Senator, I will do that. I have done it in my previous positions and I would commit to doing it again.

Senator CARDIN. Thank you. Thank you very much.

Mr. Buangan, in regard to Mongolia, Mongolia is an interesting country. It is now a member of the OSCE so we deal with them in the Helsinki Commission. They believe they have two geographical neighbors in China and Russia but they consider their third neighbor to be the United States. So we have seen a significant strategic partnership with the United States that can clearly be improved.

I just really want to make the observation there is strong support here in the Senate to expand trade opportunities and other opportunities with Mongolia, because we see this as a real opportunity for America to have a strong strategic partner in the region.

Mr. BUANGAN. Thank you very much for that comment, Senator. I could not agree more. We are their third neighbor. In fact, we are their preferred third neighbor. They are also seeking to expand relationships with other open-market economies and democracies like Japan and South Korea.

But you are exactly right. We need to be able to do more to help them build strong, resilient democratic systems, open-market economies, given the challenge that they are neighbors with China and Russia and the overwhelming influence and coercion that those two countries are bearing right now on Mongolia.

Senator CARDIN. Ms. Damour, I just really want to tell you how excited we are about having a confirmed ambassador for the five countries that you refer to. I dare say that many Americans do not even know the names of some of these Pacific Island states. When we look at their influence in the United Nations and other entities it can play an important role for U.S. strategic diplomacy. The same thing is true with the Caribbean island states that are very small, and we generally do not pay much attention to.

China is paying attention to the five countries that you would be represent us at. So we do look forward to you giving us some concrete recommendations as to how we can strengthen our ties in these countries. It does not take very much. Paying a little bit of attention to them is what they really want. But we are going to need a game plan on how we can strengthen our ties with these countries and use that as a model in other areas where the United States has really been missing in action and China has been moving very aggressively.

Ms. DAMOUR. Senator, thank you very much for those comments, and I think you are right. I think a lot of Americans could not find Kiribati on a map. But everybody knows about the Battle of Tarawa. We understand our historic role in that region. And I was very pleased to see the announcement yesterday of the intent of the Biden-Harris administration, subject to notification and consultation with Congress, to open two new embassies, in Tonga and in Kiribati. If confirmed, I very much look forward to being part of the process to developing the first U.S. national strategy for the Pacific Islands.

You are absolutely right. We need to show up. We need to up our game. We need to be there in person. And I would certainly hope, if confirmed, I would be able to consult with you, the members of the committee and your staffs, on how we can ensure consistent, sustained, high-level visits to the region to demonstrate in person that we are there and we are part of their future. Thank you.

Senator CARDIN. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator SCHATZ. Thank you, Senator Cardin. Just following up on that line of questioning, Ms. Damour, the announcement yesterday was a really good start. I had a constructive conversation with several Pacific Island nation ambassadors about a month ago here in the Senate, and there were two issues that were flagged for me where they thought our presence could be very useful and it probably would not cost that much money or be an expenditure of an unusual amount of political capital. That is obviously IUU and telehealth. We have seen such an extraordinary expansion of telehealth in the United States over the last 8 or so years, particularly during the pandemic but even preceding that. They are very, very interested in what we can do in that space.

I do not need you to be an expert right now on telehealth but I would love your commitment to flesh out these two issues. IUU is pretty well articulated. We know what we need to do. We just need to be present there. I think there are opportunities in terms of utilizing technology, drones in particular, to be more present in the region, to stop pirate fishing.

But on the telehealth side, people's eyes lit up when we started to talk about the opportunities there. I would like you to comment on that.

Ms. DAMOUR. thank you very much, Senator. I agree, two of the issues that we need to be dealing with our global health issues in the region and maritime security, and if confirmed, I very much look forward to working with colleagues in the Indo-Pacific Command, with the U.S. Coast Guard. We already have shiprider agreements with all five of these nations that help them police and sustain their own resources. I would love to see if there is more we can do in that area.

And I certainly think during the COVID pandemic we have all seen an increase of telemedicine so that people, even in remote areas, could access health care. So thank you very much for raising that, sir. Our health cooperation is a very important part of our cooperation in these nations, and I would be very interested to continue that discussion, if confirmed. Thank you, sir.

Senator SCHATZ. Thank you very much. Just two comments. One on IUU. There is a tendency to think that the only way to be present is to be underway. I just really us to use technology to be present and not have to sort of multiply the number of Coast Guard vessels and Navy vessels, because at some point that becomes impractical from a financial standpoint.

The other thing is yes, everybody needs broadband and we should try to be of assistance there, but not all telehealth requires a high-speed internet connection, and we need to explore those opportunities, even as we try to help people get better broadband connection.

Mr. Abraham, what opportunities do you see for the United States to engage ASEAN on environmental issues, including combatting deforestation and managing water systems such as the Mekong?

Mr. ABRAHAM. Senator, thank you for the question. As you know, the nations of Southeast Asia are on the front lines of the impacts of climate change and issues surrounding sustainability. I mentioned the Young Southeast Asian Leaders Program in my opening testimony. One of the things that I know we hear from young leaders in the region is their deep-seated conviction that we need to act on issues of climate change together. If confirmed, that would certainly be an area of focus in my engagement with ASEAN. It has been a part of this administration's engagement of ASEAN, including through the special ASEAN Summits. And I would look to work closely with you and with partners in the region and with Congress on where further opportunities lie.

Senator SCHATZ. Thank you. And before moving on to Senator Van Hollen for his questions I just want to point out on the deforestation side, you know, we have the Lacey Act, and we all know that illegally deforested products are impermissible from an import standpoint in the United States. But the truth is that most of the illegal deforestation is commodity driven, and so we are going to need to deal with that question, which is to say a lot of clear-cutting happens for the purpose of growing commodities that we then import, and that is not covered by the Lacey Act. So we need to do something on the statutory side, but there is also a fair amount of room to maneuver at ASEAN and through USTR.

So thank you all for your testimony and your willingness to serve. Senator Van Hollen.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and good to see you all again. Congratulations again on your nominations.

Ambassador Godec, let me start with you. As has been mentioned, the United States and Thailand recently released a communiqué on our strategic alliance and partnership. That communiqué reads, in part, that it is grounded in, quote, "our collective commitment to build resilient, inclusive democracies and advance human rights," end quote.

At the same time, the U.N. Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights, Human Rights Watch, and Amnesty International have all criticized Thailand's laws that essentially prohibit criticism of the monarchy. And, in fact, in February 2021, a U.N. Office of Human Rights panel of experts said, quote, "We have repeatedly emphasized that these laws have no place in a democratic country. Their increasingly harsh application has had the effect of chilling freedom of expression and further restricting civic space and enjoyment of fundamental freedoms in Thailand," end quote.

As you know, there are many people in prison right now in Thailand for simply criticizing the king and monarchy. Can you just talk about how you will address those issues, if confirmed as Ambassador to Thailand?

Mr. GODEC. Thank you, Senator, for the important question. The United States certainly respects the institution of the Thai monarchy. We understand the esteem with which the Thai people hold the royal family. That said, freedom of expression is critical, and

I would emphasize, both publicly and privately, the importance of allowing people to freely express their ideas without threat of arrest. I would certainly, as I have done in my previous postings, both Kenya and Tunisia, make every effort again to protect the freedom of expression.

I would also emphasize the importance that anyone who has been arrested be treated appropriately, with full respect for their fundamental rights and that they receive due process. And I would make certain to put an emphasis on that as well.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Thank you, and look, I support our partnership with Thailand, but when I see statements stating that we have sort of this collective commitment to human rights I think it is important that we make clear our differences on those issues with Thailand.

Mr. GODEC. Absolutely, Senator.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Thank you.

Mr. Buangan, with respect to Mongolia, we know that Mongolia relies on about 90 percent of their oil imports from Russia. Any thoughts on what we can do to address that issue and reduce that reliance?

Mr. BUANGAN. Thank you for that question, Senator. Mongolia does find itself in a very complex geopolitical environment given their dependency on not just Russia but also the PRC, and in addition to relying on Russian oil imports and other energy imports they are completely also dependent on coal. So I think there are two opportunities here. I see one an environmental challenge, with their commitment to climate change, to help them facilitate and expedite their transition to clean and renewable energy that can be done in Mongolia. But also I think it is incumbent on the U.S. to ensure that they have strong economic systems that would allow them to find ways to further investment outside of China and the PRC.

We have to accept the reality that they have close ties with Russia. I think that is something that many Mongolians want. But at the same time we should be able to allow them to do it in a way that respects their ability to do it, that does not threaten their sovereignty, and does not coerce them or force them to make decisions that they do not want to make.

So I think with respect to energy there is a lot of opportunity there where we can help them transition to that.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. I appreciate that. As you indicate, they are sort of in a very tough spot geographically, with both Russia and the PRC. And just with respect to climate change—and I do not have time to get into it, but Mr. Thompson, as you know, Nepal is especially vulnerable to the impact of climate change, given the Himalayan glaciers, and I look forward to continuing the conversation with you on that.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator SCHATZ. Senator Booker.

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

First of all I just want to take a step back and say thank you to all of you for being here. I am one of these folks that walks around this place and every once in a while has to stop and just take stock of the reality that we are sitting here in the Capitol of

the greatest country on earth, all of us stepping forward to serve, make sacrifices to do so. But the work we all do is incredibly important and it can make a difference for millions and millions of people. So I celebrate you all. I thank you all for, many of you, very long careers of service and putting yourself forth again to step into often difficult situations and try, amidst the chaos of humanity, to find good, to do good, and to make for a better future. So thank you all for that.

Mr. Thompson, I really want to focus on you because I just recently came back from Nepal, as I think you know, and it was an extraordinary, eye-opening trip. It was sort of one of the last countries we tagged onto a longer code, but when I got there I found myself thanking God that I was able to visit the country because I learned so much. And this small nation, set between two titans, India and China, has had this difficult balancing act for a very, very long time.

And maybe I want to start with China and their extraordinary influence in the nation. You have a country that in the last year or so accounts for about 78 percent of all the investment in Nepal, but at the same time, as we talk with government officials, they really want to deepen their relationship with us. You know the economic agreement that we just got signed literally with China trying to put disinformation and trying to undermine our ability to deepen these economic ties. The new prime minister there seems to be really committed to an independent relationship with America but not seem like we are just trying to exploit that relationship to counter China. They want to be understood as someone that has to stand on their own.

And I am wondering if you can give me just a brief view of how you take your mission and how to strengthen our relationship as China continues to try to expand its influence and, frankly, undermine the autonomy of the country.

Mr. THOMPSON. Thank you, Senator. It was a great privilege to brief you and the other members of the code that traveled. We really appreciate the fact that you were able to tag Nepal on and have such a good experience. I know the Embassy there reported back very favorably about all the discussions that you had.

You are absolutely right. This is a critical issue for Nepal as they balance their interests. I had mentioned in my opening statement, you talked about two titans. They often are referred to as a yam between two boulders. And as Prime Minister Deuba seeks to develop the economy, to find a path forward for Nepal that represents the real interests of the Nepal people, this can be a challenging neighborhood in which to do it.

You are absolutely right. The Millennium Challenge Corporation Compact provides a huge game-changing opportunity for them to have greater connectivity with the electricity grid in South Asia, to build better transportation networks, to allow them to expand their trade opportunities as a nation. We are also looking at other opportunities, Senator, such as through the Development Finance Corporation and our USAID mission to help develop market-oriented opportunities with entrepreneurs, with greater business and investment climate.

And so if confirmed, I would look forward to really engaging very deeply on these fronts, because we are at a critical juncture for this type of opportunity.

Senator BOOKER. Well, I hope you see me and I imagine a lot of other members of that code as allies in this. I am not overstating this. I think we all fell in love with Nepal and its people, and it was an extraordinary experience. And on that note let me make the last point to you. I had never seen the Himalayas before, and as we flew by them I saw people on the plane with me looking out at this incredible mountain range with tears in their eyes, getting very emotional at the majesty of the mountains. But we also were coming off of understanding that Nepal is one of the top five countries on the planet right now that are suffering the effects of climate change. And I was stunned at how devastating the growing warmth is doing to that country and really threatening—I mean, 20 percent of the water that humanity gets is coming from the Himalayas, and right now climate change is causing havoc and threatens extraordinary destruction, not to mention deprivation.

So this, I see, as an urgency. I knew it intellectually but to experience it on the ground, to talk to people who are trying to think of creative ways to deal with this. So I am hoping you see that as part of your mission as well and to help us, as policymakers and lawmakers, try to find ways to help especially these very vulnerable nations who are feeling, from island nations to many in the mountains who are going to feel the devastating effects of this, which will not only cause economic damage but it will cause political instability as well.

Mr. THOMPSON. We look forward to working with the committee, with our colleagues at the Department on this front. You are absolutely right. It is critically important. Nepal made some very ambitious pledges at the Cop26. We will continue through our assistance programs to seek ways to help them adapt and mitigate climate change. It is a high priority for us, absolutely, if confirmed.

Senator BOOKER. And again, thank you for your kindness to me before that incredible trip.

Mr. THOMPSON. Thank you.

Senator SCHATZ. Senator Hagerty.

Senator HAGERTY. Thank you, Senator Schatz and Senator Romney, for holding this hearing, and to all of the nominees here today I want to congratulate you. Should you be confirmed you are going to have the unique opportunity and responsibility to represent the most exceptional nation in the world, and you are going to a region that is very critical right now, critical to our nation's security but critical to the world's security.

And ASEAN, I think, is going to continue to play a very, very critical role to advance the vision that my good friend, former Prime Minister Abe articulated in terms of a free and open Indo-Pacific. And it was a great honor for me to work with him to deepen our alliance in that region and to expand that vision. It is a vision that I think has tremendous amount of opportunity for us and it is one that I think we should explore every opportunity to deepen.

Mr. Abraham, I would like to turn to you and talk about your view with respect to the Quad's relationship to ASEAN, and to get

your perspective in terms of how we can provide key resources. I think there is a tremendous opportunity here, whether it be infrastructure resources through the Blue Dot Network, facilitating vaccines or new technologies. But I would like to get your perspective on how we can deepen our relationship in the Quad framework in ASEAN.

Mr. ABRAHAM. Senator, thank you for the question and thank you for your leadership in the region. If confirmed, one of the things that I would be most enthusiastic about doing is trying to find ways, consistent with our views around ASEAN centrality, to create greater connectivity within the region, within the various institutional pieces of the regional framework, one of them being the Quad.

I think we have seen some progress to that end and there are some interesting areas of both common interest and potential collaboration. The one I would point to, which certainly speaks to a broader priority I would bring, if confirmed, surrounds our commitment to freedom of navigation and overflight into the maritime security of the region. During the Biden-Harris administration, the quad has announced and taken steps towards providing, as a public good, some data transparency tools around maritime domain awareness. That is a public good that would absolutely be impactful to our work with ASEAN and with ASEAN member nations, and I think it is illustrative of areas of common interest that I would hope to build upon.

You touched on health security. I also think there are great opportunities for collaboration there, as was noted at the tail end of the U.S.-ASEAN Special Summit recently.

Senator HAGERTY. Again, I encourage you to take every opportunity you can to find ways to not only deepen our relationships with ASEAN but to bring that into the framework in a constructive manner with the Quad.

Mr. ABRAHAM. Yes, sir.

Senator HAGERTY. Mr. Buangan, I would like to turn to you to talk about Mongolia. Mongolia has been regarded as an oasis of democracy within the authoritarian desert of Eurasia. Mongolia also has a rich history dating back to the times of Genghis Khan. We are also aware of the fact that the Chinese Communist Party makes very human efforts to dilute the cultures of ethnic groups such as the Uighurs in Xinjiang.

The Chinese Communist Party is attempting to do the same thing with Mongolian heritage and culture, as you know, I am certain. In 2020, the Chinese Communist Party demanded the removal of the words "Genghis Khan," the word "empire," and "Mongol" from a museum exhibition in France. The Chinese Communist Party wants to airbrush its history to minimize the important role of ethnic minorities such as the Mongols. And, in addition, the Chinese Communist Party is intensifying its pressure on ethnic Mongolians that are living in China, to suppress their local language, to suppress their culture.

Mr. Buangan, in your view what are the objectives of the Chinese Communist Party in seeking to dilute the Mongolian heritage and culture and what are your plans to help Mongolia diversify away from China and those pressures that it is feeling?

Mr. BUANGAN. Thank you so much for that question, Senator, and I appreciate your concern to that. I think the vast majority of Mongolians will agree and be pleased to hear your concern for that and particularly as it relates to the PRC's attempts to dilute the culture and religious traditions of ethnic minorities in China. It is something that we have seen. Mongolia, both its people and its Government, have been following the developments, in Inner Mongolia in particular. They are concerned about it. They are tracking it. But because of China's enormous economic leverage that they have with Mongolia it is very difficult for them to speak out.

But in that vein, what I would say is that we, at the U.S. Embassy—and this is something that I would certainly prioritize if I am confirmed—is that we have a lot of programs with Mongolians where we celebrate their culture, where we help them preserve a lot of their rich, diverse culture. I would point to a couple of examples that we do. Our Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation, for example, just awarded a grant to the National Library of Mongolia to help them preserve Tibetan ancient manuscripts and woodblock prints.

We also speak out very vocally, as you know, when we see the Chinese attempt to distort the history of the Uighurs and Tibetans, including ethnic Mongolians in Inner Mongolia. And I think the Mongolians see that, and I think they appreciate that. So I would hope to continue that conversation with my Mongolian counterparts, if confirmed, to help them, one, celebrate their rich history but, two, figure out ways where we can figure out how we can speak openly and candidly about what is going on in the PRC.

Senator HAGERTY. Excellent. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator SCHATZ. Senator Coons.

Senator COONS. Thank you, Chairman Schatz. Thank you to all of our nominees today for your long service to our nation and your dedication to foreign service. And thank you to your families for supporting you in this service and being such great partners with you.

I have a broad number of questions and very little time, so I am going to focus, if I might, on a few areas of principal concern, just for me. Ambassador Godec, it is wonderful to see you again. Across a number of trips and engagements in Kenya and Ethiopia and elsewhere I am so impressed with your skills and your engagement and your capability. Thailand is a new region for you, a new engagement, and one where your deep experience, I think, will be critical and relevant.

One of our core challenges, both in ASEAN and in Thailand and around the world in lots of different countries and contexts is balancing our interest in free expression, democracy, robust human rights in civil society, and security. How do you think we will balance our critical security relationship with Thailand with continuing to press for improvements in civil society and opening space for human rights advocates?

Mr. GODEC. Thank you, Senator Coons, and it is terrific to see you again as well.

Senator, we do have obviously a number of interests with Thailand. We have a relationship that goes back almost two centuries,

and across that time we have done a lot together, as I said in my opening statement. I do think we can do these things simultaneously. We can continue the security partnership which is so critical and at the same time be plain, privately, certainly, but public also when appropriate about things like the importance of continued progress on democracy, protection of human rights, fundamental freedoms.

We can do these things, and I would certainly be deeply committed to doing that, in a wide range of ways. It starts by showing up. It was great to see the Secretary in Thailand just on Sunday. It was great to see the recent U.S.-ASEAN Special Summit the President hosted. It was great to see the other visitors, Secretary of Defense, out there just recently. But then it goes to, again, looking at really all of the different areas of the partnership, continuing the dialogue, and continuing to really emphasize where we can move forward together and where we have differences, making plain what those differences are and explaining why what we have to offer, I think, in terms of values is a good way to go.

Senator COONS. Well, and I think sending a seasoned senior ambassador like yourself to help balance that tricky and challenging balance is exactly the right choice.

Mr. Abraham, Yohannes, if I could, great to see you here. I am excited about your nomination to ASEAN. The Indo-Pacific Economic Framework, how do you plan to engage ASEAN on this opening towards trade integration that is not overturned in TPP but is an opportunity? How would you make progress on the IPEF?

Mr. ABRAHAM. Senator, thank you, and it is great to see you as well. I think first and foremost, as you do, the administration believes that deepening our economic ties with the region, Indo-Pacific writ large and certainly within ASEAN, is critical to not only our economic prosperity but also our national security.

If confirmed, I would look to work in close partnership with my colleagues in capitals around region to build on what we found to be a very encouraging initial set of countries who signed up to be a part of the launch of IPEF, seven members of ASEAN being amongst them.

And so right now we are in a scoping stage of the exercise. As we continue to progress to build out IPEF I would look to be a partner with my colleagues in capitals around the region as well as in Washington, D.C.

Senator COONS. Ms. Damour, I was pleased to see the initiative about new embassies in Kiribati and Tonga, the return of the Peace Corps to the region, establishment of a new USAID office in the region. If I might, with the forbearance of the Chairman, I would just like to ask each of the three remaining nominees if you might. I have particularly been interested in and supportive of the Development Finance Corporation and the Millennium Challenge Corporation. I am the Chair of the appropriating subcommittee that funds both of these.

Could you just briefly explain how they will play a key role in the Pacific Islands, in our relationships in Mongolia, and in our relationships in Nepal, and how we might strengthen and deepen our partnerships in regions and countries where they have an alter-

native and we are trying to show up, as it were, and provide a meaningful partnership?

Ms. DAMOUR. Thank you for that, Senator, and thank you for your interest in the region. We do have one country amongst the five to which I have been nominated that has started a conversation with the MCC, as well as two countries that have signed an agreement with the Development Finance Corporation. And these are going to be critical because it will allow us to establish assistance to them that can help them with their sustainable economic development needs, which are vast, particularly in the area of infrastructure.

One of the things, if confirmed, that I would look forward to doing is exploring how we can leverage those capabilities in order to demonstrate why the United States should be the preferred partner in assisting with their economic development.

Senator COONS. Thank you. Mr. Buangan, in Mongolia?

Mr. BUANGAN. Thank you, Senator, for that question. There are a couple of areas where I see the DFC and MCC helping with Mongolia, particularly through their infrastructure development. As I stated in my opening remarks, our largest investment right now is in the \$350 million Millennium Challenge Corporation's grand to help Ulaanbaatar increase its water capacity. I think there is also a lot of opportunity that both of those programs are doing with respect to trade and investment, particularly improving Mongolia's investment climate, as we are seeing with DFC.

And I think given the realities that Mongolia has, particularly with rooting out corruption, with strengthening its rule of law, I think those programs are also doing a lot to help strengthen capacity-building in those areas, where I think it would help, particularly as we are focusing on Mongolia's economic infrastructure and their economic development and their energy diversification, which I mentioned earlier, I think the whole-of-government approach here, DFC, MCC, including our public diplomacy and USAID programs will help strengthen those areas. Thank you.

Senator COONS. Mr. Chairman, your call. Do we have a moment for Nepal or should we move on?

Senator SCHATZ. Sure.

Senator COONS. Mr. Thompson.

Mr. THOMPSON. Thank you, Senator. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We have talked a bit about the MCC already. It is a game-changer, I believe, for Nepal. Five hundred million dollars will lead to thousands of jobs, tremendous infrastructure, connectivity for Nepal and India and the rest of the region. Tremendous transportation infrastructure upgrades for Nepal which can have great benefit on the trade front.

DFC, a bit smaller still. It is more of a nascent stage there but a fantastic tool, we believe, to help provide the financing that is going to be necessary in so many areas, such as renewable energy, health care sector, and the growing technology sector there as well. So we look forward to seeing how we can better use that, and if confirmed, I would certainly be interested in doing that.

Senator COONS. Thank you all very much. Thank you for your forbearance, Mr. Chairman.

Senator SCHATZ. Senator Markey.

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

Mr. Abraham, in your testimony you spoke about the importance of human rights and standing up to universal values. My colleagues and I, we sent a letter to President Biden before the U.S.-ASEAN summit in May, urging the President to place democracy, good governance, and human rights as key items on the summit's agenda. I was disappointed that despite the importance the President said he will place on human rights and democracy in U.S. foreign policy these issues were marginalized during the summit.

So if confirmed, what would you do to elevate the importance of human rights and concerns about democratic backsliding amongst ASEAN member countries?

Mr. ABRAHAM. Senator, thank you for the question, and I share your concerns around human rights and democratic backsliding in the region. If confirmed, first and foremost I will not hesitate to speak with interlocutors around the region about our human rights and/or governance concerns, in public and private fora. I would also work with the mission staff to ensure that U.S.-ASEAN missions tracking and monitoring capabilities as it relates to human rights concerns remain robust, and I would hope to work in close partnership with my colleagues, my bilateral colleagues in missions around the region on individual countries' concerns.

Senator MARKEY. I am deeply concerned about the lack of progress in implementing the five-point consensus developed by ASEAN member countries, particularly with regard to engagement with all parties in Burma, including the National Unity Government. If confirmed, how would you engage with ASEAN to make progress in addressing the deteriorating human rights situation in Burma?

Mr. ABRAHAM. Senator, first and foremost, if confirmed, addressing really the horrifying and deteriorating situation in Burma would be a top priority of mine, and I would robustly push for the implementation of the five-points agenda and I would also look to work with colleagues around the government on what other tools we can bring to bear to change the regime's calculus and begin to move the country back towards a multiparty democracy. That would certainly be, and a way that has built on the administration's use of the tools that Congress has granted them so far.

Senator MARKEY. Okay. I want to stay with Burma and go to you, Ambassador Godec. Revenue from dirty fossil fuels continues to line the Burmese military's coffers. According to Human Rights Watch, Thailand's state-owned energy company, PTT, purchased about 80 percent of Burma's exported gas, repeatedly called for the United States to take a page out of the EU's playbook, and sanctioned the Myanmar oil and gas enterprise.

Ambassador Godec, do you agree that we need to work with Thailand to reduce its reliance on natural gas from Burma and to reduce the Thai government's continued financial support of the Burmese military?

Mr. GODEC. Thank you for the question, Senator. I just want to emphasize as I did in my opening statement that the Burmese regime continues to carry out horrifying atrocities and it is critically important that this stop. We have supported ASEAN and the five-

point consensus but there is not enough progress, clearly. In fact, there is no progress at all, and it needs to happen.

We have worked with Thailand. Burma and the Burmese regime's horrifying actions have been a top issue in discussions with Thailand. Certainly the Secretary and many other officials have raised this. We are seeking ways with the Thai to increase the pressure on the Burmese regime. All options are on the table. That includes further action in the oil and gas sector. And, Senator, I would commit to working very hard on this matter, if confirmed. We appreciate some of the things that Thailand has done on the humanitarian side but clearly more pressure needs to be brought to bear and new ways—

Senator MARKEY. It is all about oil and gas, everywhere on the planet. It is about the dough—

Mr. GODEC. It is a critical issue, Senator. I agree.

Senator MARKEY.—with these authoritarian regimes, that they are able to extract from oil and gas, and then they do their evil deeds with that dough. So every time we see it we know what the answer should be, and if we take strong action then we will probably extract the results that we are looking for.

And with that I will just ask my final question, over to Ms. Damour, and Fiji and the impact climate change is having upon Fiji and what actions we should be taking to assure them that we are on their side and will be there to help them.

Ms. DAMOUR. Thank you very much for the question, Senator, and thank you for focus on that region. The question of climate change, mitigating climate change is an existential issue for these nations. They are the most vulnerable around the world given their low-lying areas. The Biden-Harris administration has made it a top priority for addressing the region, mitigating the effects of climate change, assisting them with a clean energy transition. All of those, if confirmed, would be focus for me in terms of helping them.

Senator MARKEY. Well, nothing more important because they are right in the crosshairs and we have to demonstrate that we understand their vulnerability and that we are going to take action. But we are going to show it to them specifically as well in terms of the help which we give them.

So we thank you and we thank all of you. Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Senator SCHATZ. Senator Kaine.

Senator KAINE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and congratulations to the nominees. I note that three of you are Virginians and Virginia is proud of each of you.

Mr. Godec, in particular, I want to commend you in your current role, the work that you have done with Afghan refugee resettlement at the State Department. I do not think we give it enough attention here that in 90 days the United States helped 126,000 people come out of Afghanistan, about 50,000 to other nations, 76,000 to the United States. Virtually all of them came into Virginia at Dulles Airport. They were then assigned to one of eight military bases for processing, three of which were in Virginia. As of February, all of those bases were closed and the 76,000 in the United States were now in communities, supported by families,

supported by churches and other nonprofit groups all over the United States.

I do not think that story has been told enough. I have suggested before that I think it would be a good idea for this committee to talk about the—you know, get an update on the status of these 76,000 as well as the 50,000 who we helped evacuate to third countries. We do know there are others in Afghanistan who continue to want to come to the United States, and I think that would also be an appropriate topic to delve into, what more we can do about that.

But just that number, 126,000 in 90 days, by order of comparison in the aftermath of the Vietnam War it took months and years to bring 120,000 Vietnamese to the United States. In the aftermath of World War II we brought about 65,000 displaced people from Europe, primarily Jewish Europeans, to the United States. That took 5 years to bring 75,000 European Jews to the United States in the aftermath of World War II. The fact that you and your colleagues and this administration was able to help 76,000 Afghans begin a new chapter of life here, and another 50,000 in other countries where they would be safer than Afghanistan is worthy of some attention, and I hope we might do that.

Mr. Abraham, I want to ask you a question. It is good to see you again. I want to ask you a question about ASEAN. Four of the 10 ASEAN nations have border disputes with China. So as somebody who does not consider myself an expert in the region I look at that as, that is interesting. So what does that fact say about prospects for deeper and deeper U.S. engagement with the ASEAN nations?

Mr. ABRAHAM. Senator, thank you for the question. I think my reflection on that fact is that it is a national security interest of ours to build the capacity of ASEAN as an institution to allow the nations of ASEAN to speak collectively, in a unified way, and importantly have the tools at their disposal to act on their self-interests. There are any number of those interests. You touch on territorial integrity and the issues of sovereignty. We are certainly committed to, and if confirmed, I would be committed to ensuring that ASEAN has the institutional capacity and that we are encouraging of their ability to collectively, and collectivize some of their concerns in a way that would put them in the driver's seat in dealing with bigger countries in the region like the PRC.

Senator KAINE. The border disputes are largely in the South China Sea, and the U.S. is sort of committing a self-inflicted wound by not eventually ratifying the U.N. Convention on the law of the sea. If the U.S. ratified that treaty, as every Secretary of Defense and every Secretary of State for the last decade has suggested we do, then we would have standing to help in pressing claims about border disputes in that area. We now do not have standing because of our refusal, which is amazing to me, our refusal to ratify that treaty. It is my hope that colleagues would eventually wake up to the need to do that.

Let me ask you this. Senator Markey asked you about Burma and what you might do, obviously, to deal with the very, very difficult situation there. Secretary Blinken recently had some tough words for ASEAN, feeling like ASEAN had not really done enough. They have done some. Individual leaders have done some things.

They have blocked Burmese leadership from attending ASEAN meetings on occasion.

But as you look at what ASEAN could do to be more effective in Burma, talk about that a little bit.

Mr. ABRAHAM. Senator, thank you for the question. I would view our engagement with ASEAN as part of a larger whole of trying to effect change on the situation in Burma. I think our work with ASEAN would be an important part of that. I think building on the floor that was set, to your point about the precedent that was set about nonpolitical representation of Burma at key ASEAN meetings is an important floor that we need to build on and build from.

I would view myself as part of a broader team, a multilateral component of a broader team that is really aimed at changing the regime's calculus. Some of that work will be done in bilateral context, and if I was confirmed, I would happily and enthusiastically work bilaterally or in small groupings in Jakarta with representatives from other ASEAN nations on which in which we can continue to change the regime's calculus and continue to build an echo chamber around the costs that we have exacted on the regime.

Senator KAINE. Thank you. I yield back, Mr. Chair.

Senator SCHATZ. Thank you, Senator Kaine. If there are no more questions for the witnesses the record will remain open until close of business Thursday, July 14, for questions for the record. We urge our nominees to complete those answers as rapidly and as thoroughly as possible so that we can clear for committee action your nominations. Each of you will have critical positions that we need confirmed, so we would urge you to try to complete this work as quickly as possible.

If there is no further business the committee stands adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 11:34 a.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

Additional Material Submitted for the Record

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO HON. ROBERT F. GODEC BY SENATOR ROBERT MENEZES

Question. How should the US balance our concerns about Thailand's democratic backsliding with our security commitments and cooperation to the country? Given the Government crackdown on protesters, do you think all military exercises, including the large-scale Cobra Gold exercises, should continue as usual?

Answer. The United States and Thailand are longstanding allies. We have extensive cooperation on security, which has been important for both our countries and the region. Promoting respect for human rights and democracy are also indispensable elements of our foreign policy that advance our strategic interests. Our security assistance programs include human rights training and associated institutional capacity building and, I believe, the more we engage with Thailand on security issues, the more we are promoting respect for human rights in the military and police.

If confirmed, I would engage with the Thai Government, civil society, and other parts of Thai society on how we can best achieve our human rights and democracy objectives and our security assistance objectives to promote the broader interests of the United States. I believe we can successfully pursue all our goals.

Question. How, if confirmed, do you plan on raising the issues of the arrested pro-democracy protest leaders with the Thai Government? What leverage does the United States have to encourage greater respect for human rights in Thailand?

Answer. If confirmed, I will prioritize with the Thai Government the importance of further progress on democracy and respect for human rights, including the rights to freedom of expression and freedom of peaceful assembly.

In the recently signed United States-Thailand Communique on Strategic Alliance and Partnership, the Thai Government affirmed strong democratic institutions, independent civil society, and free and fair elections are central to our shared vision. As I have done in my other assignments, I would engage both privately and, when appropriate, publicly on these issues. I would also encourage senior U.S. Government leaders, congressional visitors, and others to do so, as well. I believe our continued engagement with Thailand across the broad range of our shared interests will help influence and encourage further progress in Thailand.

Question. If you are confirmed, what role will Thailand's relations with Burma play in your engagement with their leadership?

Answer. The escalating crisis in Burma is horrifying, and the United States has continued to urge others to take strong actions in response to the military coup and the regime's abhorrent crackdown on the people of Burma. If confirmed, I would continue to prioritize engagement with the Thai Government on Burma. I would further press Thailand to hold the military regime accountable to the full and swift implementation of the ASEAN Five-Point consensus.

If confirmed, I would also prioritize increasing humanitarian assistance to the people of Burma. I want to work with Thailand to expand existing assistance efforts to better address the ongoing crisis in Burma and the delivery of unhindered humanitarian aid, including through cross-border mechanisms.

Question. What are the key challenges Thailand faces in addressing trafficking in persons, including in the fishing industry and sex trafficking of women and children? How, if at all, has the COVID-19 pandemic affected the Government's anti-trafficking efforts?

Answer. The downgrade in 2021 of Thailand's Trafficking in Persons Report ranking reflected the challenges Thailand has faced in adequately addressing this serious problem. The Thai Government has prioritized making improvements in its anti-trafficking efforts and, if confirmed, I will work to find avenues of cooperation to support these efforts.

Thailand's key challenges have been in investigating and prosecuting offenders, particularly for labor trafficking. Although Thailand has made efforts to improve labor inspections, the Government still faces challenges identifying traffickers—particularly in the fishing industry. During the pandemic, the Government and NGOs saw an increase in online sexual exploitation, especially of children.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO HON. ROBERT F. GODEC BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Question. In the State Department's 2021 Trafficking in Persons Report, Thailand was downgraded to the Tier 2 Watch List for not fully meeting the minimum standards to eliminate trafficking including by initiating fewer investigations, and prosecuting and convicting fewer traffickers. How will you work with the Thai Government to address these issues if you are confirmed as Ambassador?

Answer. Thailand's downgraded ranking in the 2021 Trafficking in Persons Report reflected the challenges the country has encountered in adequately addressing this serious problem. The Thai Government has reported it continues to prioritize making improvements in its anti-trafficking efforts and, if confirmed, I will work to find avenues of cooperation to support these efforts.

Working with our interagency team at Embassy Bangkok, I will seek specific ways to support anti-trafficking goals. For example, both publicly and privately, I will promote the improvement of the capacity of local law enforcement to investigate and prosecute offenders—especially labor traffickers. The Thai Government has publicly stated its desire to improve its anti-trafficking efforts and, if confirmed, I plan to leverage this political will and work closely with the Thai Government to achieve our shared goals of protecting victims and bringing traffickers to justice.

Question. The Office of to Monitor and Combat trafficking in persons plays a key role in assisting Ambassadors in promoting anti-trafficking work. Please describe how you can work with the office to improve Thailand's anti-trafficking work in country.

Answer. I deeply value the work done by the Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons and plan to coordinate closely with them to improve anti-trafficking efforts in Thailand. Specifically, if confirmed, I would welcome the opportunity to host officials from the TIP Office in Bangkok, in order to facilitate candid engagements with the Thai Government and civil society on ways to combat trafficking. Throughout my career, I have found that such visits foster relationships across governments and people and help build common understanding of the causes and potential solutions for issues such as trafficking in persons.

Question. What concrete steps can you, if confirmed, take with your mission to help Thailand improve its anti-trafficking efforts?

Answer. Some of Thailand's key challenges have centered around its efforts to provide adequate services to victims and to address labor trafficking. Although Thailand has made efforts to improve labor inspections, the Government still faces challenges identifying labor trafficking victims and their traffickers—including in the fishing industry. If confirmed, I will lead the mission's efforts to work with the Thai Government, civil society, and other partners to focus on areas where Thailand must improve.

I also hope to build on existing programming such as USAID's Counter Trafficking in Persons Program in Thailand to address the demands and incentives for using forced labor, among other goals. Mission Thailand includes dozens of U.S. agencies and offices and I plan to leverage that talent and expertise to bring a whole-of-mission approach to combat trafficking in Thailand.

Question. In the State Department's 2021 International Religious Freedom report, tensions between religious groups remains in Thailand, particularly in the Deep South, which has resulted in at least 86 deaths of both Muslims and Buddhists. 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. As Secretary Blinken has stated, the United States maintains its unwavering support to promote respect for and protect freedom of religion or belief for all. I understand that Mission Thailand regularly engages with the Thai Government, civil society, and Thais of all religious backgrounds to promote respect for the freedom of religion or belief. Mission Thailand has made outreach to the Deep South a priority, supporting projects on digital literacy, diversity and inclusion, youth engagement, and community building. If confirmed, I commit to continuing these important engagements, and I would work with the Ambassador-at-Large to explore new ways to further support religious freedom in Thailand.

Question. In the State Department's 2021 Human Rights Report, Thailand was noted as having several significant human rights abuses, including credible reports of torture, cruel and inhuman treatment by government officials and arbitrary arrests. Additionally, there are reports of serious restrictions on freedom of expression, association, and movement. If confirmed, what steps will you take to continue to address these instances with the host government?

Answer. Promoting human rights and fundamental freedoms and advancing democratic values are among my highest priorities, including as part of advancing our vision for a free and open Indo-Pacific. If confirmed, I will ensure these priorities continue to be elevated in meetings and engagements with the Thai Government at all levels and remain a central focus of the bilateral relationship. I will encourage the Thai Government to respect freedoms of expression, association, and movement and encourage Thailand to review and revise or repeal laws used to unduly restrict any of these freedoms. Thailand's continued progress to uphold democratic institutions, and human rights, including freedom of expression, is essential to our partnership as was reflected in the recently signed United States-Thailand Communique on Strategic Alliance and Partnership.

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

Answer. Throughout my career, I have prioritized engagement with and support for civil society. The United States places great importance on civil society and NGOs and, if confirmed, I will continue our strong advocacy both publicly and privately in support of the critical role played by civil society in Thailand's democratic development and promotion of human rights. If confirmed, I would work to advance American values and respect for human rights in my engagements at all levels of the Thai Government and with all parts of Thai society and would ask all members of Mission Thailand to take the same approach.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to personally raising human rights issues with the Thai Government?

Answer. Yes. If confirmed, I will not hesitate to raise human rights issues with all levels of the Thai Government. As allies and partners, the United States and Thailand have a productive platform with which to engage candidly. I firmly believe that the promotion of human rights is in the interest of all people in the United States and Thailand, and I will work tirelessly in support of that goal. If confirmed, in addition to raising human rights issues with the Thai Government, I look forward to meeting regularly with human rights advocates, civil society, and other non-governmental organizations in Thailand to affirm U.S. support for human rights.

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 Bangkok?

Answer. Mission Thailand is one of the largest in the world and high morale is essential to its success. Like many other missions around the world, the COVID-19 pandemic created challenges for the staff and for families. I understand the current mission leadership has worked hard and effectively to address these concerns and the recent lifting of some restrictions by the Thai Government and improvement in the overall public health situation has helped. If confirmed, I would work with the DCM and others in the mission to bolster morale further and ensure all staff and families have sense of safety and security.

Question. How do you intend to improve morale at Mission Bangkok?

Answer. If confirmed, I would place a high priority on mission morale and actively seek opportunities to improve it. As I indicated in my statement at my hearing, I would prioritize the safety and security of mission staff and families and work to ensure the team has the resources needed to succeed in advancing our goals. I would draw from my experiences at Embassy Nairobi and Embassy Tunis to improve morale and foster a strong community life, always seeking to innovate. I would work with the DCM and use an inclusive style, consulting and speaking frequently with staff to solicit ideas and share views on how to build morale. I would support staff development with an interagency mentorship program and seek staff input through regular anonymous morale surveys (to include on the performance of the Ambassador and DCM).

Question. How do you intend to create a unified mission and vision at Mission Bangkok?

Answer. As I have done in my previous service as Ambassador, if confirmed, I would start by listening to our country team and other personnel in Thailand to ensure I fully understand our current objectives and programs. I would consult with them to establish a clear vision and set of goals and objectives. I would work to communicate those goals throughout the Mission and more widely in the U.S. Government. I would also create a strong interagency working group system to monitor and facilitate implementation.

Question. Management is a key responsibility for chiefs of mission. How would you describe your management style?

Answer. I believe in an inclusive, open, and collaborative leadership and management style. I seek the views of the widest possible range of staff and to build a team. I work with the entire team to create a vision, set goals, and implement them. I communicate clearly and candidly and ask that everyone else do so as well. I seek to decentralize decision-making and empower employees to own and direct their work and activities consistent with U.S. law and administration policy.

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

Answer. No. It is never acceptable or constructive to berate subordinates either in public or private.

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

Answer. If confirmed, I would ask my deputy chief of mission to serve as the Embassy's chief operating officer. I would regularly seek the DCM's views on the full range of leadership, management, and policy issues the mission faces and keep the DCM informed of my actions, activities, and decisions.

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

Answer. As a former ambassador, I understand that the ambassador-deputy chief of mission relationship is critical to a well-functioning mission. In my previous assignments, I have empowered my DCM to serve as the Embassy's chief operating officer and would do so as well in Thailand, if confirmed. I would regularly seek the DCM's counsel to ensure effective Embassy operations to enable the team to meet our strategic objectives and implement our policies and programs. I would also ensure the DCM is fully informed of and consulted on all mission policies and activities and is prepared to become Charge d'Affaires when necessary.

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

Answer. Yes, it is important to provide employees with accurate, constructive feedback on their performances to encourage improvement and reward those who succeed in their work. If confirmed, I commit to doing both.

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

Answer. Yes, I would support and encourage clear, accurate, and direct feedback to employees in order to improve performance and reward high achievers. If confirmed, I commit to doing so.

Question. It is imperative that U.S. diplomats get outside of posts abroad to meet with local actors, including host government officials, non-government organizations, and fellow foreign diplomats stationed in Thailand. In your opinion, do U.S. diplomats get outside of our Embassy walls enough to accomplish fully their missions?

Answer. In recent years, security concerns and now the COVID-19 pandemic have limited the engagement of U.S. diplomats in Thailand and other countries. As Secretary Blinken has emphasized, however, "diplomacy is a contact sport." I believe it is essential that we actively reach out to speak and engage with the Thai people in all walks of life. We must get out of the Embassy and into the communities if we are to be effective diplomats.

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

Answer. If confirmed, I would work with the Embassy Bangkok and Consulate General Chiang Mai Public Affairs Sections and with the full country team to find ways to engage with people across Thailand. We would do so through many channels (e.g., events, digital and traditional media, and other available mechanisms) to advance U.S. goals. I would work to ensure that all members of the Mission Thailand team are involved in this outreach and make it a priority.

Question. Public diplomacy is an important aspect of U.S. foreign policy efforts. What is the public diplomacy environment like in Thailand?

Answer. With its rich culture and traditions and 200 years of friendship with the United States, I understand Thailand is a vibrant environment for public diplomacy. Additionally, the United States and Thailand enjoy robust people-to-people connections creating the foundation for expansive public diplomacy and outreach. For many years, the United States has supported cultural exchange with Thailand through highly successful programs like the Fulbright program, Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative (YSEALI), and the United States' International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP). If confirmed, I hope to build on these programs to create lasting connections between the next generations of our countries.

Question. What public diplomacy challenges do U.S. diplomats face there?

Answer. Disinformation, competition in the information and programming space, and personnel constraints present public diplomacy challenges in Thailand. If confirmed, I commit to working to increase public diplomacy resources to expand our messaging and programmatic efforts. I will use my platform as Ambassador to accurately inform target Thai audiences about our policy priorities and range of bilateral cooperation to build support for our shared goals. I also believe in supporting local efforts to counter disinformation, including by building journalistic capacity, increasing fact-checking and providing training to combat mis- and disinformation.

Although the COVID-19 pandemic limited in-person public diplomacy programming in Thailand during the past two years, if confirmed, I hope to return to and even exceed pre-pandemic levels of in-person public diplomacy engagement across

Thailand and to continue using new virtual tools to expand our reach and strengthen people-to-people ties.

Question. How do you balance the importance of Main State versus the in-country mission when it comes to tailoring public diplomacy messages for foreign audiences?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with the talented team of diplomats and local staff at Mission Thailand to understand and support the mission's unique role in formulating public diplomacy programs and responses, especially those tailored to local audiences. I would draw on local expertise and insights, gleaned from organizations like the new Thailand-U.S. Alumni Association and the Embassy Youth Council, to ensure our public diplomacy messages are appropriately calibrated for the local audience and that they explain and advance our key foreign policy priorities. I would do this while consistently promoting the American values that underscore our public diplomacy around the world. I would also coordinate with and keep Main State informed of our messages and draw on their capabilities as appropriate.

Question. "Anomalous health incidents," commonly referred to as "Havana Syndrome," have been debilitating and sidelining U.S. diplomats around the world for years. They have caused serious, negative consequences for U.S. diplomacy, yet many believe that the Department is not doing enough to care for, protect, and communicate to its personnel. The past occurrences and ongoing threat of anomalous health incidents among Embassy personnel and their families poses a serious challenge to morale. When personnel at post fear for their safety or doubt that their case will be taken seriously if they were affected, the performance of Embassy operations can suffer. If confirmed, do you commit to taking this threat seriously?

Answer. Yes. I am deeply troubled by potential anomalous health incidents that have affected Embassy personnel and their family members. I agree we must take these reported incidents seriously and, if confirmed, I would absolutely do so in my role as leader of Mission Thailand. If confirmed, the health, safety, and security of Embassy staff, their family members, and all those supporting Mission Thailand will be my highest priority.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to talking as openly as you can to Mission Bangkok personnel?

Answer. If confirmed, I am committed to sharing information on this issue consistent with ensuring the integrity of ongoing investigations. If confirmed, I will do everything in my power to protect the health and safety of our mission team members and their families.

Question. Have you received a briefing on the anomalous health incidents that have occurred to U.S. Government personnel around the world, including at U.S. embassies and other diplomatic posts? If you have not, and if you are confirmed, do you commit to receiving a briefing on the incidents before you depart for your post?

Answer. If confirmed, it will be my highest priority to protect the health and safety of our mission staff and their families. I will commit to receive any available briefings, unclassified and classified, and will seek further information in meetings with the Coordinator of the State Department's Health Incident Response Task Force as well as relevant bureaus including Diplomatic Security and Intelligence and Research.

Question. In the event of an anomalous health incident among your Embassy personnel or eligible family members, do you commit to maintain detailed records of the incident, and share the information with the State Department and other embassies to contribute to the investigation of how these attacks are affecting U.S. missions and personnel around the world?

Answer. Yes. If confirmed, I commit to supporting investigations into circumstances surrounding the anomalous health incidents and to maintaining records and sharing information.

I commit to working with the State Department to ensure the safety and security of Mission Thailand staff and their families and all U.S. citizens.

Question. Whether or not anomalous health incidents occur at your Embassy, how will you work to restore and preserve morale that may be lost due to the knowledge these attacks have been occurring at posts around the world?

Answer. If confirmed, in the event of any health emergency, I would prioritize the health and safety of our diplomats and their family members and ensure that those impacted receive the proper treatment. To help preserve and restore morale, I would

communicate clearly, transparently, and honestly with my staff about this issue and more generally in my work every day.

I also commit to an open-door policy and would welcome my staff speaking with me about any issue, including those potentially affecting the health of mission members. I also commit to speaking with my staff regularly about the mission's goals to ensure they understand the role of their individual work in achieving our overall objectives on behalf of the U.S. Government and the American people.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO HON. ROBERT F. GODEC BY SENATOR MARCO RUBIO

Question. Thailand is the oldest of the United States' five treaty allies in the Indo-Pacific, with our cooperation going back to World War II and the Korean War. Despite our robust security relationship, Thailand has become closer to the CCP. The PRC is increasingly becoming Thailand's largest trading partner, and Thailand declined to join regional trade agreements sponsored by our allies, like the Trans-Pacific Partnership, that exclude the PRC. The current Thai Government, led by the same leader that overthrew a democratically elected government in 2014, also finds the CCP a more convenient partner that will not criticize its human rights abuses against protesters. This seems to indicate that Thailand will only become closer to the CCP.

- In your view, what are the prospects for reversing this apparent pro-CCP trend in Thailand's foreign policy?

Answer. The U.S.-Thailand alliance is critical for both the United States and Thailand. It is central to the security and prosperity of the region, and it is widely welcomed in Thailand. If confirmed, I would engage with the Thai Government and all parts of Thai society to build understanding of the PRC's actions to ensure that China plays by the same rules as everyone else. If confirmed, I look forward to supporting and growing this relationship. For example, for more than two hundred years, the United States and Thailand have enjoyed a close trade relationship, and Thailand has joined the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF). The United States is also Thailand's largest export market. If confirmed, I look forward to working with Thailand to ensure the IPEF deepens our economic relations in the region and coordinates approaches to global economic challenges. I believe Thailand's engagement in the IPEF process is indicative of the deep economic ties between our nations, and its importance as a friend and ally. The depth and importance of our ties in many areas including economic, will, I believe, create opportunities for progress on the challenge posed by the PRC.

Question. Is a pro-CCP Thailand a threat to U.S. interests? Please explain.

Answer. If confirmed, I will encourage Thailand to continue to proactively raise concerns over PRC actions that undermine the rules-based international order. I will also encourage regular communication and coordination with Thailand to address common security, economic, and environmental concerns, such as the PRC's increasingly provocative activities in the South China Sea and at Ream Naval Base in Cambodia and transboundary water management along the Mekong River. The United States and Thailand maintain strong economic relations. The United States is Thailand's largest export market and has more than double the investment in Thailand as that of the PRC.

Question. Does the Chinese Communist Party pose a threat to the United States? Please explain.

Answer. As Secretary Blinken said in May, we believe the PRC is the one country that increasingly has the economic, technological, military, and diplomatic means to advance a different vision of international order. Beijing's actions suggest PRC officials intend to do so. We are prepared to work together with Beijing where our interests intersect, where it is essential for global peace and prosperity and to keep lines of communication open. There is no reason why our great nations cannot coexist peacefully. As Secretary Blinken said, we will compete with confidence; we will cooperate wherever we can; we will contest where we must.

Question. If confirmed, how will you accomplish this?

Answer. If confirmed, I will continue to strengthen ties between the United States and Thailand by building on the existing links that bridge our countries across society. We have close security, economic, people-to-people, business-to-business, and many other cultural ties that have developed during the past two centuries. The re-

cently signed United States-Thailand Communique on Strategic Alliance and Partnership reaffirms the breadth and depth of U.S.-Thai bilateral relations and, if confirmed, I plan to work to continue to strengthen those ties.

Question. Do wedges exist between the CCP and the current Thai Government?

Answer. Thailand maintains robust relationships with both the United States and PRC. Thailand shares our concerns about the PRC's behavior in the region, yet, like the United States, also has economic ties to Beijing and areas where Thailand and PRC cooperate. Thailand has raised concerns when PRC activities affect the well-being of Thai citizens. For example, Thailand pushed back when PRC activities on upper parts of the Mekong River—such as damming and blasting the river—threatened the livelihoods of Thai communities downstream. If confirmed, I will support Thailand when faced by provocative PRC behavior that undermines Thai and U.S. interests alike.

Question. Are there pro-American factions in the Thai Government? If so, how can we best empower them?

Answer. The United States and Thailand enjoy almost two hundred years of close ties. Over that time, we have built a rich web of relationships running through all aspects of society. In addition to our security alliance, Thailand relies on the United States economically as its top export destination. Furthermore, our connections are enriched by the presence in the United States of almost 350,000 Thais and U.S. citizens of Thai heritage, and by the more than 100,000 U.S. citizens in Thailand. U.S. cultural exchange programs further foster good relationships between our countries and many Thai leaders have participated in those programs. If confirmed, I will continue these people-to-people exchanges and fund more programs to create these lasting connections between our two countries.

Question. If confirmed, what will you do to support Thailand in maintaining its positive relations with the U.S.?

Answer. If confirmed, I will build on the existing strong ties between the United States and Thailand and identify new areas to grow our relationship. I will foster new areas of cooperation like space, climate, and cyber security. At its foundation, the United States-Thailand relationship is built on strong people-to-people ties, and I will seek ways to further expand these ties to reach younger generations of Thai and American people.

Question. The Trump and Biden Administrations have worked towards forming new, pro-U.S. groupings in the Indo-Pacific, including the Quad and the Australia-United Kingdom-United States (AUKUS) agreement. These groupings exclude Thailand and other treaty allies, like the Philippines and Korea.

- Is there an avenue for Thailand and other treaty allies to engage with the Quad or AUKUS?

Answer. Thailand has deep and strong relationships with each of the countries in the Quad and AUKUS. These relationships span a wide range, including economic and security dimensions. I believe Thailand would be open to considering engagements with the Quad and AUKUS in areas of mutual interest. As one example, the Quad countries' Chiefs of Mission in Bangkok jointly handed over to the Thai Ministry of Health Indian produced COVID-19 vaccines as part of the Quad's Vaccine Partnership. If confirmed, I will engage regularly with the Chiefs of Mission of these allies and partners and find ways to advance our mutual interests to the benefit of Thailand, other allies, and the Indo-Pacific as a whole.

Question. What is your view of Thailand's attitude to these new groupings? Do they see it as an opportunity to enhance relations with the U.S.?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to engaging with the countries of the Quad and AUKUS and with Thailand to effectively convey the goals of these groupings. I believe the United States would benefit from promoting the new groupings with key allies and partners in the Indo-Pacific region like Thailand.

Thailand has deep and strong relationships with each of the countries in the Quad and AUKUS. These relationships span a wide range, including economic and security dimensions. I believe Thailand would be open to considering engagements with the Quad and AUKUS in areas of mutual interest. If confirmed, I will seek opportunities to build such engagements.

Question. If confirmed, what activities would you recommend to encourage Thai engagement with the Quad or AUKUS?

Answer. Throughout my career, I have engaged with Chiefs of Mission of like-minded countries to promote U.S. interests abroad. If confirmed, I will use my posi-

tion as U.S. Ambassador to convene diplomatic gatherings to explain our Indo-Pacific strategy and how groupings like the Quad or AUKUS—as well as ASEAN—share U.S. goals for prosperity, stability, and security in the region.

Question. Thailand has struggled to maintain its historical respect for universal human rights in recent years. From often violent suppressions of opposition protests to widespread allegations of forced labor in its fishing industry, the Thai Government is increasingly adopting positions that have led Congress to impose sanctions on other countries. Left unaddressed, these issues can lead the Thai population to question the legitimacy of Thai democracy—which would be a boon to the CCP, which is eager to promote its authoritarian system.

- What levers does the United States have to encourage the Thai Government to be more responsive to allegations of human rights abuses?

Answer. Strengthening democracy and promoting respect for human rights and the rule of law is fundamental to U.S. relations with Thailand. Our alliance and partnership with Thailand is foundational to the U.S. role in the Indo Pacific, and the relationship is built on shared values and principles founded upon mutual democratic aspirations. The recently signed United States-Thailand Communique on Strategic Alliance and Partnership reaffirms a mutual respect for strong democratic institutions, independent civil society, and free and fair elections as central to our shared vision. If confirmed, I will prioritize these themes in my engagement with the Thai Government and wider Thai society.

Question. In your opinion, do you see evidence that the CCP encourages or enhances these abuses?

Answer. The United States welcomes contributions by the People's Republic of China to regional development, so long as it adheres to high standards, including in areas such as transparency, the rule of law, absence of corruption, environmental protection, human rights and labor rights, sustainable financing, and respect for the autonomy of development aid recipients.

Question. If confirmed, what will you do to encourage Thailand to maintain its historic commitment to human rights and democracy?

Answer. The United States and Thailand expressed our shared respect for human rights and democracy through the United States-Thailand Communique on Strategic Alliance and Partnership. If confirmed, I will work with Thailand to uphold its commitment to human rights and democracy, the foundation of our alliance and partnership. Furthermore, I will reiterate how critical human rights and democracy are to ensuring security and prosperity for all people. To do so, I will engage with the Thai Government and with the wider Thai society, including civil society groups, independent media, and human rights activists.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO HON. ROBERT F. GODEC BY SENATOR JOHN BARRASSO

Question. Humanitarian assistance has been deteriorating in Burma since the February 2021 coup d'état. The delivery of humanitarian assistance, COVID-19 vaccines, and other aid has continued to be limited. What percentage of the population in Burma and Thailand have been vaccinated for COVID-19?

Answer. The crisis in Burma continues to worsen. While Thailand has provided humanitarian assistance to people fleeing Burma since the 2021 military coup, far more work needs to be done to meet the growing needs of the people of Burma. If confirmed, I will work closely with Thailand and other countries in the region to advocate for humanitarian access and expand humanitarian assistance and access to meet the needs of all people displaced in and from Burma, including via cross-border mechanisms.

As of July 12, more than 80 percent of Thais had received one vaccine dose and more than 76 percent of Thais had received two doses.

Question. What is the status of the effort to establish a Thai-Burma cross border program on getting coronavirus vaccines into Burma?

Answer. We continue to work with Thailand and other neighboring countries to seek additional ways to deliver critical assistance to the people of Burma, including through facilitating cross-border vaccines and other humanitarian assistance. Secretary Blinken, Deputy Secretary Sherman, U.S.-U.N. Ambassador Thomas-Green-

field, and Counselor Chollet have pressed the importance of providing assistance to the people of Burma during visits to Thailand and other parts of the region.

Thailand has also joined the COVID-19 Global Action Plan, under which countries are working together to accelerate access to vaccines in all settings, including humanitarian. In March, Thailand donated 500,000 doses of Astra-Zeneca vaccine to Burma, along with 3 million doses to other countries in the region.

Sadly, the greatest obstacle to providing life-saving vaccines to the people of Burma is the Burmese military regime. If confirmed, I will work with Thailand and other ASEAN countries to press the regime to allow for greater access to vaccines and humanitarian assistance.

Question. What are the political and diplomatic challenges in getting coronavirus vaccinations into Burma?

Answer. Since the February 2021 coup d'état, the Burmese military regime has continued to impede the delivery of humanitarian assistance, including medical aid, to the people of Burma. The United States has continued to urge ASEAN as a collective, ASEAN member states, and other partners to press the regime to allow unhindered humanitarian access and the delivery of aid, including COVID-19 vaccinations, to all those in need, including in remote areas of the country. If confirmed, I will continue to work closely with the Thai Government to in support of the equitable delivery of COVID-19 vaccine doses and other assistance to the people of Burma.

Question. If confirmed, what actions will you take to aid in getting vaccines and other humanitarian assistance into Burma?

Answer. If confirmed, I will commit to working with the Thai Government, like-minded countries, regional partners, civil society organizations, NGOs, and international organizations to provide COVID-19 vaccines and other humanitarian assistance to the people of Burma. I will encourage Thailand to increase pressure on the regime to swiftly and fully implement ASEAN's Five-Point Consensus, cease the violence, release all those unjustly detained, allow unhindered humanitarian access to those affected in Burma, and restore Burma's path to inclusive democracy.

Recognizing Thailand's long tradition of supporting Burmese refugees, if confirmed, I will seek ways to expand assistance to people from Burma in need, including those suffering as a result of the military coup and subsequent regime violence and repression. I will regularly meet with like-minded partners and ASEAN member states to advocate they speak with one voice and coordinate resources to help end the violence in Burma and return the country to the path toward democracy.

Question. During a briefing on April 26, 2021, you said, "We are very much committed to working together with Africans to overcome the COVID-19 pandemic, to promote trade and investment, to strengthen security, to tackle the climate crisis, to advance democracy, human rights, the rule of law, and to work again together on a whole range of issues that matter to both Africans and Americans."

Again, in your testimony you said, "We welcome Thailand's commitment to address the threat of climate change; this will be a critical area for further collaboration."

- As Ambassador, do you plan to focus on and promote climate change? If so, what would be your priorities?

Answer. Climate change is a major concern for both the United States and Thailand. If confirmed, it would be a top priority for me. I would continue our engagement with the Royal Thai Government on clean energy and climate, including through the Agriculture Innovation Mission for Climate, the Sustainable Partnerships for Growth, the Global Methane Pledge, the Glasgow Leaders' Declaration on Forests and Land Use, USAID's Corporate Clean Energy Alliance, and the Greening Government Initiative. We will also work with Thailand to enhance their resilience to the impacts of climate change through the President's Emergency Plan for Adaptation and Resilience.

The United States is supporting Thailand's climate ambitions through a range of engagements, including USAID's SERVIR-Mekong program, USTDA's Global Partnership for Climate Smart Infrastructure Initiative, and a number of State Department programs including the Mekong Water Data Initiative, the Water Smart Engagements program, and the Japan-U.S. Mekong Power Partnership. Thailand was also the first country in the world to sign the U.S.-led Clean Energy Demand Initiative.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO HON. ROBERT F. GODEC BY SENATOR TODD YOUNG

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to making Thailand's response to the coup in Burma a priority of your diplomacy?

Answer. Yes. If confirmed, I would engage Thailand to underscore the importance that all countries, including Thailand, strongly condemn the military coup and violence in Burma and press the Burmese military to end its horrific violence, which has led to worsening political, human rights, and humanitarian crises. I would work closely with Thailand and other countries in the region to advocate for unhindered humanitarian access and expand humanitarian assistance to meet the needs of all people displaced in and from Burma, including via cross-border mechanisms.

Question. What steps can the United States take in our diplomacy with Thailand that would incentivize them to take a more active role in mediating a return to democracy in Burma?

Answer. If confirmed, I would work closely with Thailand, and other allies and regional partners, to strengthen diplomatic engagement, intensify the broad international response to the Burma military coup and escalating military crackdown on the people, and urge the military to cease the violence, release all those unjustly detained, allow unhindered humanitarian access, and restore Burma's path to inclusive democracy. The coup and subsequent violence perpetrated by the Burmese military regime has increased instability along Thailand's borders, as it has across the region.

I would encourage Thailand, as the leading economy and our only treaty ally in mainland Southeast Asia, to step up pressure on the regime to promote a peaceful resolution to the crisis and to hold the regime fully accountable its commitments under the ASEAN Five-Point Consensus.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO HON. ROBERT F. GODEC BY SENATOR BILL HAGERTY

Question. Do you agree that a top priority of the U.S. Department of State is to ensure the health, safety, and security of U.S. diplomats living and working abroad?

Answer. Yes, I agree that it is a top priority of the Department of State to protect the health, safety, and security of all U.S. diplomats, mission staff, and their families living and working abroad. I made this a top priority as Ambassador to Kenya and to Tunisia, as well as in the leadership positions I have held in the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs and the Bureau of African Affairs. Doing so was of particular and personal importance to me having been assigned to Embassy Nairobi when it was bombed in 1998. If confirmed, I commit to upholding this responsibility in support of all members of Mission Thailand. I also commit to keeping an open line of communication with our staff to hear about any and all concerns they may have in these areas, and to work with the Deputy Chief of Mission and all relevant offices to ensure all staff and families have a sense of safety and security.

Question. Do you agree that this is a top priority, especially when a U.S. diplomat abroad is under direct threat?

Answer. Yes. The safety, health, and security of our diplomats, mission staff, and families abroad under direct threat is a top priority and, if confirmed, I would work to ensure that it is so for Mission Thailand just as I have in all my previous assignments. If confirmed, I commit to working with all relevant security agencies and officials from the United States and Thailand to ensure protection for all mission personnel, staff, and families from any threat. In doing so, I would draw on my experience in leadership positions in which I have responded to a wide range of threats, including terrorist attacks, and kept our diplomats, staff, and families safe.

On the Departure of the Outgoing U.S. Ambassador to South Africa in January 2021–February 2021

Question. The following questions revolve around your time as Deputy Assistant Secretary of State (2020–2021) and later Acting Assistant Secretary of State/Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State (2021) in the Bureau of African Affairs.

- In September 2020, Politico reported that “[t]he Iranian government is weighing an assassination attempt against the American Ambassador to South Africa, U.S. intelligence reports say, according to a U.S. government official familiar with the issue and another official who has seen the intelligence,” adding: “U.S.

officials have been aware of a general threat against the Ambassador, Lana Marks, since the spring, the officials said. But the intelligence about the threat to the Ambassador has become more specific in recent weeks. The Iranian Embassy in Pretoria is involved in the plot, the U.S. Government official said.”

- Between September 2020 and February 2021, did you at any point become aware that then-U.S. Ambassador to South Africa Lana J. Marks faced a specific assassination threat from the Iranian Government—the world’s biggest state sponsor of terrorism? If so, when?

Answer. I became a Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Bureau of African Affairs in August 2020 but had no responsibility for Mission South Africa or its staff or operations. I became the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Bureau of African Affairs on January 13, 2021, and on January 20, 2021, acting Assistant Secretary. Around that time, I was apprised of the threat to Ambassador Marks and that the Bureau of Diplomatic Security and Regional Security Officer in Pretoria were fully informed and engaged in ensuring Ambassador Marks’ safety and security.

Question. On January 11, 2021, then-U.S. Ambassador to South Africa Lana J. Marks posted on the website of the U.S. Embassy to South Africa a statement on her ongoing recovery from a recent COVID-19 infection. She wrote:

I started to experience shortness of breath and extreme weakness, and as my symptoms worsened, upon the advice of our medical team at the U.S. Embassy, I was admitted to the hospital to seek supplemental oxygen and therapeutic treatment. Shortly after admission on December 28, I was moved to the ICU where I remained for ten days before spending three more days in the COVID-19 unit. Late last week, I was discharged and continue to receive care at home.

She added:

This is a tremendously serious and unpredictable illness, and it has been the most physically debilitating thing that I have ever experienced in my entire life.

- Between December 2020 and January 2021, did you at any point become aware that then-U.S. Ambassador to South Africa Lana J. Marks was recovering from a COVID-19 infection in Pretoria, South Africa? If so, when?

Answer. I became aware that Ambassador Marks was recovering from a COVID-19 infection just before I became Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Bureau of African Affairs. I was deeply concerned about her condition, and I was following her health closely through the Deputy Assistant Secretary responsible for Southern Africa and other officials. I was assured by the Office of Medical Services that Ambassador Marks was receiving the care she needed and that they would continue to engage beyond January 20. I was aware of (and agreed with) other exceptional steps taken by the Department to protect Ambassador Marks’ health, including providing a special exception to allow her to remain in the Chief of Mission residence while she recovered fully. On January 11, 2021, I was grateful to see that Ambassador Marks had posted a statement on Embassy Pretoria media platforms stating, “My condition is improving and the doctors are confident that I will eventually make a full recovery.”

Question. When outgoing U.S. Ambassador to South Africa Lana J. Marks—who was not only recovering from what she had publicly described as a “tremendously serious and unpredictable illness” and a “physically debilitating” case of COVID-19 infection, but also the subject of an assassination threat from the Iranian regime—beseeched you in a phone call on January 19, 2021, to assist her in remaining a U.S. Government employee until she returned to the United States, did you—in written communication—nevertheless decline to contact the transition team or take any action on her behalf? If so, when?

Answer. In January 2021, I was closely following Ambassador Marks’ health condition, security, and employment status. I was in direct communication with the Office of the Director General of the Foreign Service and with the Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs and the Deputy Assistant Secretary responsible for Southern Africa. On January 18, 2021, Ambassador Marks also called me directly regarding her employment status in the State Department. The Bureau of African Affairs has no authority or responsibility for the employment of non-career Presidential appointees in the Department of State. These decisions are the responsibility of the White House and its office in the State Department that handles Presidential personnel, and the Director General of the Foreign Service and the Bureau of Global Talent Management, who work with incoming transition teams on personnel issues.

I was also aware that the Director General and the Global Talent Management Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary were in direct communication with Ambassador Marks regarding her employment status. I also understood that the transition team was fully apprised of the concerns raised by Ambassador Marks. In light of this, I advised Ambassador Marks on January 18 that the channel for resolving her employment concerns was the Director General's office. I note that, on January 19, Ambassador Marks sent an email to the Global Talent Management Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary stating, "I just wanted to also take the opportunity to thank you and DG Perez—and everyone CCed on this email—for your very hard work on a fairly atypical situation, during atypical circumstances." I was copied on this email.

Question. Do you agree that you had the option of contacting the transition team and the Director General of the Foreign Service and advocating for Ambassador Marks to be retained as a U.S. Government employee—for example, through administrative measures such as having her temporarily appointed as a non-career Senior Executive Service (SES) appointee or a limited-term Foreign Service Officer (FSO)—until her safe and secure return to the United States?

Answer. As noted above, I was engaging with the Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs and the Director General's office about Ambassador Marks' employment status, and I understood that all possible avenues were considered. I was aware of the communication between the Director General's office and Ambassador Marks, and for employment options for a political appointee, I believed it was best for her to communicate directly with them as they were working with the transition team on personnel issues. I am not aware of any avenue that might have been available to allow her to remain a U.S. Government employee beyond January 20, 2021.

Question. What is your understanding of when and precisely how outgoing U.S. Ambassador to South Africa Lana J. Marks departed South Africa and returned to the United States?

Answer. I understand that Ambassador Marks departed South Africa on or about Sunday, February 21, 2021. Embassy Pretoria confirmed in a message to me on February 23 that she was in the United States. I was advised that she departed without informing Embassy Pretoria. I do not have information on how Ambassador Marks returned to the United States.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO DEAN R. THOMPSON BY SENATOR ROBERT MENENDEZ

Question. As we aim to strengthen our relationship by supporting the best interests of the Nepalese people and combatting Chinese influence, I am curious to hear what you believe our priorities ought to be in Nepal.

- If confirmed, what will your priorities be in Kathmandu? What would you say are the biggest challenges facing Nepal today? What do you see as the solutions to those challenges, and what can the United States do to help?

Answer. If confirmed, facilitating Nepal's economic growth would be a key priority. In February 2022 Nepal's Parliament ratified the \$500 million U.S. Millennium Challenge Corporation Compact electricity-and-roads project in the face of a torrid PRC disinformation campaign. This project will build electricity transmission lines to connect Nepal's clean, abundant hydropower with South Asia's energy grid. This project will increase the prosperity of both of our countries and Nepal's resilience in the face of Chinese pressure.

If confirmed, I would advocate for the human rights of all Nepali citizens and residents. This policy priority includes marginalized communities and refugee communities, such as Tibetan refugees. I would also work to help Nepal strengthen its democratic institutions, as Nepal moved to a federal system in 2015. Stronger democratic institutions will also help Nepal complete its transitional justice plans, that is, those efforts that brought together various parts of Nepali society after the end of the 1996-2006 civil war.

Finally, people and preparedness will be critical—taking care of our country team and their families, building our great people-to-people relationships in Nepal, and preparing for any eventuality, be it natural or other types of disasters. Taking care of our people and our relationships makes it possible to fully pursue and protect U.S. interests.

Question. Earlier this year, we saw an alarming increase in Chinese disinformation aimed at undermining the Nepalese parliament's ratification of the MCC Nepal Compact. The Compact is a \$500 million grant—not loan—that will help Nepal improve its domestic infrastructure, increase electricity reliability, and facilitate cross-border energy trade.

- What are your priorities as Ambassador for deepening U.S.-Nepalese bilateral cooperation in the aftermath of the ratification of the MCC? How do you intend to counter Chinese disinformation in Nepal going forward when it comes to projects that are in the best interests of the Nepalese people?

Answer. If confirmed, I would champion the MCC electricity-roads project through every step of the implementation phase and highlight the economic benefits that Nepal will receive from the building of electricity lines and roads to export its energy to other parts of South Asia. I would also work with my Embassy team to use our foreign policy tools to show China's propaganda efforts and help Nepalis be resilient to Chinese mis- and disinformation. Our economic developmental support for Nepal, which is carried out in a transparent, collaborative partnership, helps Nepal strengthen its own foundation of national sovereignty and independent decision-making.

Question. U.S. interests in Nepal include supporting democratic institutions, promoting regional stability and security, alleviating poverty, promoting human rights, achieving sustainable economic growth, protecting the interests of Tibetan refugees, and helping build resilience to deal with climate change and natural disasters.

- How do you, if confirmed, plan on balancing these competing interests?

Answer. As you note, the United States has a broad range of interests in Nepal. The essence of an ambassador's job is to advance those U.S. interests. The MCC electricity-and-roads project will create thousands of jobs for Nepalis and millions of dollars in revenue for the country. USAID's recently signed \$659 million assistance agreement will support democratic institutions and alleviate poverty while helping build resilience to climate change and natural disasters. If confirmed, I also would work across the interagency to promote the rights of all citizens and residents of Nepal, including of refugee communities.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO DEAN R. THOMPSON BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Question. In the State Department's 2021 Trafficking in Persons Report, Nepal remained on 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 failing to criminalize all forms of labor and sex trafficking and providing protection for trafficking victims. Additionally, government complicity in trafficking remains a serious concern.

- How will you work with the Nepalese Government to address these issues if you are confirmed as Ambassador?

Answer. Nepal has made some progress on combatting trafficking in persons in recent years but still has issues to address. If confirmed, I will engage the Government of Nepal at the highest levels and press to criminalize all forms of trafficking and to put an end to the Government's complicity in trafficking. I will employ the resources of the Department of State's Trafficking in Persons Office to train Nepali officials to prosecute and convict human traffickers.

Question. The office of to monitor and combat trafficking in persons plays a key role in assisting Ambassadors in promoting anti-trafficking work. Please describe how you can work with the office to improve Nepal's anti-trafficking work in country.

Answer. The office to monitor and combat trafficking in persons (J/TIP) at the Department of State is already doing great work in Nepal. I have worked closely with J/TIP in the past and look forward to regular consultation and continued assistance from them, if confirmed. Just this past quarter, one of their implementers in Nepal, ECPAT Luxembourg, held coordination meetings to create awareness and build pressure to develop child protection mechanisms and to help stakeholders better understand the status of child rights. They also trained over 80 media outlets in Nepal to cover children and trafficking in persons issues. If confirmed, I will work closely with the J/TIP Office to further this work to help end human trafficking in Nepal.

Question. What concrete steps can you, if confirmed, take with your mission to help Nepal improve its anti-trafficking efforts?

Answer. If confirmed I will work closely with our Department of Justice colleagues in Nepal, who run the International Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Program (ICITAP) and the Overseas Prosecutorial Development and Assistance Training (OPDAT). These programs, funded by the Department of State's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, train local law enforcement and prosecutors to recognize, arrest, and prosecute transnational crime, such as human trafficking. If confirmed, I will continue with these programs to put the criminals guilty of human trafficking behind bars.

- Working with our J/TIP Office colleagues and implementers, I will also focus on helping Nepal to assist the victims. If confirmed, I will engage directly to encourage and underscore the importance of providing victim assistance. If confirmed, as Chief of Mission, I will ensure our Embassy is forward leaning in its engagement with Nepal to meet the standards of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act.

Question. In the State Department's 2021 International Religious Freedom report, highlighted concerns regarding treatment of Christians and Tibetan communities in Nepal. In particular, concerns regarding discrimination and prohibiting conversion.

- 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. While Nepal is tolerant in many ways, there have been concerns in recent years regarding religious freedom. We have seen media reporting on the Government of Nepal prohibiting Tibetan refugees from celebrating cultural and religious holidays. If confirmed, I will work with the International Religious Freedom Office to stand up for religious rights for people of all faiths. I will engage with Nepali Government officials and raise concerns regarding religious intolerance. It is a universal human right for all citizens to practice one's faith.

Question. In the State Department's 2021 Human Rights Report, Nepal was noted as having several significant human rights abuses, including credible reports of torture, cruel and inhumane treatment by government officials and arbitrary arrests. Additionally, there are reports of serious restrictions on freedom of expression, association, and movement.

- If confirmed, what steps will you take to continue to address these instances with the host government?

Answer. If confirmed, I will stand for human rights in Nepal. I will work with our Human Rights Officer and with the Department of State's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL) to engage civil society, raise concerns with the Government, and advance human rights for all citizens and residents of Nepal. DRL has great programs to bring awareness to human rights, and I will work closely with our DRL Bureau to use those programs to put a stop to torture and inhumane treatment. I will work with our Department of Justice officials in charge of ICITAP to promote humane policing. In cases of gross human rights violations, I will call out such violations. In doing all these things, we can help Nepal put a stop to human rights abuses.

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

Answer. Our Embassy in Nepal regularly engages with civil society and, if confirmed, I would ensure that such engagement continues. Civil society organizations (CSO) in Nepal work with the Embassy to improve human rights for Nepali citizens and residents. USAID has an annual budget of \$16 million to work with NGOs and CSOs on a variety of issues, the advancement of human rights chief among them. If confirmed, I will work with USAID colleagues to continue to coordinate with CSOs that stand up for the human rights of all Nepalis.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to personally raising human rights issues with the Nepalese Government?

Answer. Yes. If confirmed, I commit to personally raising human rights issues with the Government of Nepal.

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 Kathmandu?

Answer. Under its current outstanding leadership, the morale at Mission Kathmandu is high. If confirmed, I will work to keep it so.

Question. If confirmed, how do you intend to improve morale at Mission Kathmandu?

Answer. If confirmed, taking care of the staff and families at the Mission will be my highest priority. I will endeavor to create a caring, respectful environment where all feel safe and secure - both personally and professionally. We have numerous important U.S. interests to look after in Nepal, and we need our team and their families well cared for in order to achieve this mission.

Question. How do you intend to create a unified mission and vision at Mission Kathmandu?

Answer. If confirmed, I will create a unified mission and vision through diligent strategic planning, broad engagement across the mission, and inclusive leadership. I will use my experience and judgement and that of my team to focus our initiatives to produce results for the American people. I will be generous in recognizing the accomplishments of others while also being the first to take responsibility for any errors. I will create an environment of trust and respect where all can share their talents toward the goals of the mission.

Question. Management is a key responsibility for chiefs of mission. How would you describe your management style?

Answer. Working at an Embassy isn't just a regular job. It's part of broader family and lifestyle commitment. I care about our people and their families, and I care about their professional development. If confirmed, as Chief of Mission, I would engage our community as a whole and commit to finding ways to help everyone feel included, welcome, and part of our overall mission community. I would seek to recruit a diverse team of Americans and local staff. If confirmed, I would work closely with my DCM to ensure we have effective and proper mentoring and professional development opportunities across all grades and agencies, and I would seek feedback to evaluate our success or need for change. The American people entrust us with a mission and resources and, if confirmed, I would hold myself and our larger team accountable for our efforts.

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

Answer. No. Never. If confirmed, I would ensure everyone working at the Embassy is treated with dignity and respect. I do not believe it is acceptable or constructive to berate subordinates ever, either in public or privately.

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

Answer. If confirmed, I expect to have close, continuing communication with my DCM about roles and responsibilities. I expect she would function as the Chief Operating Officer of the mission and also be ready to step in should I become incapacitated or am away from post. I expect to employ a consultative, collaborative leadership approach, but one in which I accept ultimate responsibility for the outcomes of our actions and policy implementation.

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

Answer. If confirmed, I expect that my DCM will take on key leadership responsibilities including oversight of the Family Advocacy Committee, all post-level mentoring programs for entry-level and mid-level officers and local staff, and chair of the Emergency Action Committee. If confirmed, I would expect the DCM to remain closely engaged with our Management section to ensure proper oversight and management controls are in place and that I am fully aware of any challenges or deficiencies on that front. I would also expect that the DCM would share with me leadership on matters related to the implementation of a diverse and inclusive workforce that fosters respect, productivity and professional engagement across all sections and agencies.

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 do believe it is important to provide employees with accurate and constructive feedback on their performance to encourage improvement and to reward those who succeed. I meet with direct reports and reviewed employees to ensure

they get feedback on their performance. If confirmed, I would continue that practice in Kathmandu.

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

Answer. Yes. If confirmed, I will support and encourage clear, accurate, and direct feedback to employees to improve performance and reward high achievers.

Question. It is imperative that U.S. diplomats get outside of posts abroad to meet with local actors, including host government officials, non-government organizations, and fellow foreign diplomats stationed in Nepal.

- In your opinion, do U.S. diplomats get outside of our Embassy walls enough to accomplish fully their missions?

Answer. COVID-19 and other resource constraints have limited our engagement outside Embassy walls. As we come out of the COVID pandemic it will be particularly important to ensure U.S. diplomats re-engage across the whole of society. In my opinion, U.S. diplomats should get outside of the embassies as much as possible, in consultation with the Regional Security Office when appropriate, to fully accomplish their missions. If confirmed, I will always encourage my staff to get outside of our Embassy walls more, to better understand our host country and to deliver results for the American people.

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

Answer. If confirmed, I would work closely with the DCM, Regional Security Officer and individual sections to ensure they compile robust reporting and travel plans that are geared to the goals of the integrated country strategy and that provide us good contacts and insights from across the country. I will work with our management team and Washington to get the resources we need to engage and deliver our key messages to the people of Nepal.

Question. Public diplomacy is an important aspect of U.S. foreign policy efforts. What is the public diplomacy environment like in Nepal?

Answer. The public diplomacy environment in Nepal is difficult because of the mis- and disinformation that pervades social media and some elements of traditional media. If confirmed, I would work closely with our country team, likeminded embassies, the Nepali Government and civil society to broaden access to quality, accurate information and to speak truth to the people of Nepal about the United States, its interests and its intentions in its bilateral relationship with Nepal.

Question. What public diplomacy challenges do U.S. diplomats face there?

Answer. The Nepali media and social media landscape, like in so many countries, contends with mis- and disinformation. In the modern world, where so many have access to the internet, false stories are prevalent, as we saw in spades with the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) Compact. The public affairs team at the Mission did great work in contrasting the disinformation surrounding the Compact with clear explanations about what the Compact was and what it will do for Nepal and its people. If confirmed, I will work with the public affairs office in Kathmandu to continue that great work.

Question. How do you balance the importance of Main State versus the in-country mission when it comes to tailoring public diplomacy messages for foreign audiences?

Answer. I believe that the mission understands the nuances of the media and the audience in country the best while Main State has a holistic, global view. Thus, it is imperative that the mission guide the foreign policy in country while always coordinating closely with Main State to ensure consistency and accuracy with respect to our messaging. At the same time, in the information environment, speed is critical. If confirmed, I would work closely with our professionals at post and experts in DC to ensure we have sufficient agility to be proactive in our messaging, but to also respond quickly and accurately whenever required.

Question. “Anomalous health incidents,” commonly referred to as “Havana Syndrome,” have been debilitating and sidelining U.S. diplomats around the world for years. They have caused serious, negative consequences for U.S. diplomacy, yet many believe that the Department is not doing enough to care for, protect, and communicate to its personnel. The past occurrences and ongoing threat of anomalous health incidents among Embassy personnel and their families poses a serious challenge to morale. When personnel at post fear for their safety or doubt that their

case will be taken seriously if they were affected, the performance of Embassy operations can suffer.

- If confirmed, do you commit to taking this threat seriously?

Answer. Yes. If confirmed, I will take this threat seriously and make sure our team members have all the information available to protect themselves and their families.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to talking as openly as you can to Mission Kathmandu personnel?

Answer. Yes. If confirmed, I will regularly talk as openly as possible to Mission Kathmandu personnel.

Question. Have you received a briefing on the anomalous health incidents that have occurred to U.S. Government personnel around the world, including at U.S. embassies and other diplomatic posts? If you have not, and if you are confirmed, do you commit to receiving a briefing on the incidents before you depart for your post?

Answer. I will receive a briefing on anomalous health incident (AHI) on Monday, July 18. If confirmed, I will consult specifically with AHI coordinator's office, as appropriate, about Nepal.

Question. In the event of an anomalous health incident among your Embassy personnel or eligible family members, do you commit to maintain detailed records of the incident, and share the information with the State Department and other embassies to contribute to the investigation of how these attacks are affecting U.S. missions and personnel around the world?

Answer. If confirmed, I do commit to maintaining detailed records of the incident and to share information with the State Department and other embassies to contribute to the investigation of how those attacks are affecting U.S. missions and personnel around the world. I would ensure that our Regional Security Office and Health Unit follow all appropriate protocols and engage the appropriate experts in Washington to ensure full care of our personnel.

Question. Whether or not anomalous health incidents occur at your Embassy, how will you work to restore and preserve morale that may be lost due to the knowledge these attacks have been occurring at posts around the world?

Answer. We learned a lot from the COVID experience with respect to the fear and uncertainty that can come from threats to health. If confirmed, I will always let my staff and families know that their health and security come first. When it comes to their well-being, I will have an open-door policy and foster an environment where the staff and families can share their concerns in safety.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO DEAN R. THOMPSON BY SENATOR JEANNE SHAHEEN

Question. New Hampshire has a strong and active community of Nepali-Americans. In my years of government service, here in the Senate and in New Hampshire, I have seen the tremendous benefits of engaging closely with diaspora communities here at home.

- If confirmed, will you commit to close engagement with the Nepali-American community in New Hampshire and in other states?

Answer. I have also found the benefits in working closely with diaspora communities during my time with the State Department. The State Department is engaged with the Nepali-American community in New Hampshire, and I can confirm that, if nominated, I would commit to close engagement with the Nepali-American community in New Hampshire and other states.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO DEAN R. THOMPSON BY SENATOR MARCO RUBIO

Question. Under current Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba, Nepal has sought to rebalance its foreign policy away from the pro-Chinese Communist Party (CCP) pursued by his predecessor, KP Sharma Oli of the Nepali Communist Party. Prime Minister Deuba has stopped progress on Nepal's Belt and Road Initiative projects

and has worked with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi to repair Nepal-India relations.

- Is the CCP's engagement with Nepal a threat to U.S. interests? Please explain

Answer. The Chinese Communist Party's interests and activities in Nepal are a concern. For example, the PRC has recently used misinformation in an attempt to derail the U.S. Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) Compact in Nepal, a project that will bring thousands of jobs and millions of dollars in revenue to Nepal. If confirmed, I would build on our long-standing efforts to strengthen Nepal's sovereignty and its ability to maintain its independence both in internal and foreign policy decision-making. I would push back on misinformation and highlight the benefits of the U.S.-Nepali relationship to the Nepali people and our sincere and transparent interest in helping Nepal's development.

Question. Does the Chinese Communist Party pose a threat to the United States? Please explain.

Answer. As Secretary Blinken said, the PRC is the only country with both the intent to reshape the international order and the economic, diplomatic, military, and technological power to do it. Beijing presents a vision that would move us away from the universal values that have sustained so much of the world's progress over the past 75 years. Under President Xi, the PRC has become more aggressive abroad, and the United States must respond with strength, with the determination to defend territorial integrity, international law, and institutions that have brought prosperity to so many parts of the world.

Question. Is it in the U.S. interest to encourage positive ties between India and Nepal? If yes, how can we best encourage these ties?

Answer. India and Nepal share an important relationship. They are linked historically and culturally, and India is Nepal's largest trade partner and investor. The United States supports those strong ties, and the MCC Compact, which will promote the trade of clean Nepali hydropower energy throughout South Asia. Our MCC electricity-and-roads project is a great example of how the United States can build upon and grow those important ties. If confirmed, I would work to see the MCC Compact implemented to the benefit of both Nepal and India.

Question. What remaining divisions in the India-Nepal relationship could the CCP exploit to drive a wedge between the two countries?

Answer. India-Nepali ties run deep. In addition to their important economic ties, India-Nepali security ties are crucial. The Indo-Nepal 1950 Treaty of Peace and Friendship expressly notes neither country will "tolerate any threat to the security of the other by a foreign aggressor." In short, the CCP will have a difficult time overcoming the important historical, economic, and defense relationships that Nepal and India maintain. If confirmed, I would work to call out any PRC manipulation or aggression that may seek to do so.

Question. If confirmed, what will you do to encourage closer ties between Nepal and India?

Answer. If confirmed, I will continue to build on the important coordination established during the discussions on the MCC Compact project. One of the conditions for the project was the creation of a joint-venture company between Nepal and India, so that Nepal could sell its clean hydropower energy to India. This type of cooperation is foundational and, if confirmed, I would use it to promote similar cooperation between our three countries.

Question. Over the many decades, but especially recently under General Secretary Xi Jinping, the Himalayas have become a source of conflict between India and the CCP. This has sometimes led to violent clashes, such as in Doklam in neighboring Bhutan. The CCP, the aggressor, has deliberately forced Tibetans to move into Nepali, Bhutanese, and Indian Territory in the high Himalayas in an effort to move border markers further south.

- What is your appraisal of ongoing border tensions between the CCP and the Himalayan countries, including Nepal?

Answer. The PRC has indeed encroached on its neighbors in the Himalayas, including in Bhutan as you noted in 2017 on the Doklam Plateau. Regarding the border with Nepal, although there have been allegations reported in local media, we have found no evidence of PRC encroachment. Nevertheless, if confirmed, I would resolutely support Nepal's territorial integrity and sovereignty.

Question. What role can the U.S. play in supporting Nepal, Bhutan, and India in resisting CCP encroachment?

Answer. The United States must stand for territorial integrity throughout the world. Nepal is no exception. If confirmed, I would determinedly support its territorial integrity and sovereignty.

Question. Nepal lies directly on the border with CCP-occupied Tibet. Tibetan refugees in Nepal live under movement restrictions while there are reports of Nepali security officials engaging in sexual violence against refugees. These conditions are deplorable and support CCP propaganda.

- Are you aware of the changes to U.S. policy toward Tibetan refugees in Nepal that Congress passed in recent years, including my Tibetan Policy and Support Act?

Answer. I am aware of the Tibetan Policy and Support Act, and I thank Congress for its support of the Tibetan people. If confirmed, I would work to support the rights of Tibetan refugees in Nepal and would use all the tools at our disposal to do so.

Question. If confirmed, how do you plan to implement these policies toward Tibetan refugees?

Answer. If confirmed, consistent with the Tibetan Policy and Support Act, I would urge the Government of Nepal to provide legal documentation to long-staying Tibetan residents in Nepal. This documentation is necessary for Tibetan refugees to more fully participate in Nepali society and the Nepali economy, and I would engage the Government of Nepal to fully promote this policy. I would also make use of the generous assistance that Congress provided in the Act to promote and preserve Tibetan culture and language and to build the resilience of Tibetan communities in Nepal.

Question. If confirmed, will you raise the issue of Tibetan refugees with the Nepali Government?

Answer. If confirmed, I vow to raise the issues affecting Tibetan refugees with the Government of Nepal.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO DEAN R. THOMPSON BY SENATOR TODD YOUNG

Question. If confirmed, how would you work to counter Chinese misinformation about the MCC and U.S.-Nepalese relations more broadly?

Answer. If confirmed, I would clearly articulate that the U.S. Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) Compact is an electricity and roads project that will bring revenue to Nepal and help the Nepali people. More broadly, I would work to counter PRC disinformation and demonstrate to the Nepali people and government that the United States is a partner that operates transparently and values Nepal's sovereignty and independence.

Question. In your view, what does the MCC Compact mean for the people of Nepal? If confirmed, how would you demonstrate the value and purpose of the MCC Compact?

Answer. The MCC electricity-and-roads project will strengthen Nepal's economic and energy independence, providing thousands of jobs and millions of dollars in revenue annually to the people of Nepal. If confirmed, I would champion the MCC electricity-roads project through every step of the implementation phase and highlight the economic benefits that Nepal will receive from the building of electricity lines and roads to export its energy to other parts of South Asia.

Question. Are there ways we should respond if China were to undertake more aggressive attempts at economic coercion against Nepal?

Answer. We see China's attempts to coerce Nepal. If confirmed, I would work with my Embassy team to use our foreign policy tools to show China's propaganda efforts and help Nepalis be resilient to Chinese mis- and disinformation. Our economic developmental support for Nepal, which is carried out in a transparent, collaborative fashion, helps Nepal strengthen its own foundation of national sovereignty and independent decision-making. Our developmental support includes the \$500 million MCC electricity-roads project and \$659 million in USAID development assistance. We also engage the U.S. private sector—including the newly formed American

Chamber of Commerce in Nepal—to increase trade with Nepal and improve the business environment.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO YOHANNES ABRAHAM BY SENATOR ROBERT MENEDEZ

Question. What will be your top priorities in Jakarta, should you be confirmed? What role does ASEAN play in the Biden administration’s Indo-Pacific Strategy and in U.S. policy towards Asia broadly?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work to implement the administration’s Indo-Pacific strategy, with a focus on supporting our commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific, one where countries and individuals are able to make independent decisions free from coercion. With a commitment to a rules-based order and an economically vibrant, youthful, and growing population, ASEAN plays a critical role in the Biden administration’s Indo-Pacific Strategy. A strong and independent ASEAN will be a key partner in addressing shared challenges, seizing emerging opportunities, and advancing our shared interests. If confirmed, I will look to build on ongoing, whole-of-government efforts to support ASEAN centrality and the ASEAN-led regional architecture, while building ASEAN’s capacity to act on its interests and deliver meaningful solutions to the region’s most pressing challenges.

Strengthening ASEAN’s own capacity will increase our ability to work together on a range of critical shared opportunities and challenges, including the tragic and disturbing crisis in Burma, the PRC’s increasing assertiveness in the South China Sea, health security, energy and climate issues, and the economic prosperity of our combined one billion people.

If confirmed, I will also prioritize ensuring the durability of our partnership with ASEAN, specifically by building on already-strong bipartisan Congressional support for U.S. engagement with ASEAN and supporting people-to-people programs, including the Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative.

Finally, and importantly, leading the U.S. Mission to ASEAN starts with taking care of its people. If confirmed, supporting my team and ensuring their safety and security would be my top management priority.

Indo-Pacific and Asia Strategy through ASEAN Centrality

Question. The Biden administration has repeatedly emphasized the importance of developing strong relationships in the Indo-Pacific and Asia, particularly through ASEAN, as key to American international strategy and a rules-based order. How do you view “ASEAN centrality” in regional diplomacy? How should the United States support ASEAN centrality and how do you plan to do that, should you be confirmed?

Answer. Given our shared commitment to the rules-based international order, I believe that a strong and independent ASEAN is essential to the regional architecture of the Indo-Pacific, and that our partnership with ASEAN is essential to maintaining a free and open Indo-Pacific. It is in the national security interests of the United States for ASEAN to be strong, prosperous, united, and well-equipped to withstand coercive activity.

If confirmed, I will work to build on ongoing, whole-of-government efforts to build ASEAN’s own capacity to act on a range of shared interests. If confirmed, I will also work to ensure the United States and our interests are robustly represented in ASEAN forums, and I will ensure that we continue to work bilaterally and multilaterally to strengthen critical partnerships in the region.

Indo-Pacific Economic Framework

Question. Seven members of ASEAN have joined President Biden’s Indo-Pacific Economic Framework as the U.S. works to counter the malign influence of China’s economic coercion in the region.

- How will you, if confirmed, support these negotiations? How does IPEF fit into our broader economic diplomacy in the region?

Answer. Economic engagement with the Indo-Pacific broadly, and ASEAN specifically, is critical to advancing our economic prosperity and national security interests, as well as those of our allies and partners. This year, President Biden launched the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF), aimed at enabling the U.S. and our allies and partners to deepen our economic engagement, drive inclusive prosperity in the United States and throughout the Indo-Pacific, and set the rules on critical 21st century economic challenges and opportunities. The framework is the Presi-

dent's signature economic initiative in the region, and complements ongoing economic engagement with ASEAN, APEC, the Quad, and bilateral efforts.

If confirmed, I would work closely with Congress, my bilateral colleagues across the region, and my colleagues in Washington to achieve high-ambition outcomes in the discussions under each pillar of IPEF. I would do so by seeking to understand the perspectives of my counterparts in Jakarta and working with my interagency colleagues on ways to achieve both American and partner objectives.

Coordination with Allies on Security Initiatives

Question. The QUAD, composed of Japan, Australia, India, and many of our other allies and partners, including South Korea and European nations, are heavily focused on security in the region as we counter Chinese aggression.

- What opportunities are there for U.S. coordination with allies and partners, such as these nations, on ASEAN development and security initiatives? How, if confirmed, do you plan on working with your U.S. diplomatic colleagues in the region to pursue these opportunities?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work closely with my diplomatic colleagues in the region to promote regional connectivity amongst our allies and partners, a tenet of the United States Indo-Pacific Strategy. I believe that significant opportunities exist to advance our interests, as well as those of our allies and partners, through greater regional connectivity and cooperation. The Quad - a partnership based on values - shares our commitment to democracy, peace, security, and prosperity in the region. The Quad seeks to support and build on our longstanding multilateral partnerships and recognizes ASEAN centrality as a main pillar of regional engagement. In the Joint Vision Statement that leaders adopted at the U.S.-ASEAN Special Summit in Washington, D.C., the U.S. and ASEAN welcomed the support extended by ASEAN Dialogue Partners through various initiatives, including the Quad Vaccine Partnership. The Quad has also announced a new initiative on maritime domain awareness that will benefit ASEAN nations. If confirmed, I will look to foster and facilitate cooperation between ASEAN and the Quad, and I will also work with others, including European partners, on other areas of possible collaboration. I will do so by working closely with my counterparts in Jakarta - both those from ASEAN nations and those from other partners and allies - to see if flexible groupings can help accomplish shared objectives.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO YOHANNES ABRAHAM BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Question. If confirmed, how will you advocate for the continued promotion and protection of internationally-recognized human rights in ASEAN member countries?

Answer. As I said in my opening statement, a critical component of advancing our interests is standing up for our values. President Biden has said that human rights are a vital interest of this administration's foreign policy. If confirmed, I will not hesitate to raise issues of human rights, democracy, and the rule of law with my counterparts, including as we work to address the worsening political and humanitarian crises in Burma. If confirmed, I will support ASEAN in continuing to restrict Burma's representation at senior-level ASEAN events, and I will work with colleagues and counterparts around the region on ways to increase pressure on the regime to change its calculus.

In addition, the United States has numerous ongoing training and development programs to advance respect for human rights in Southeast Asia. For example, the Mission's public diplomacy section designed an in-person workshop for women human rights defenders from all ASEAN member states, plus Timor-Leste, that will occur in Thailand in August 2022. If confirmed, I will continue supporting the efforts of regional human rights defenders, and I will ensure that the team at our Mission continues to diligently monitor the human rights situation across Southeast Asia. I appreciate Congressional attention to this issue and look forward to close consultations.

Question. Within the ASEAN Declaration on Human Rights, there is a priority area of cooperation that says, "Take initiative with a preventive approach in addressing humanitarian issues, including public health emergencies, with regional and international humanitarian consequences and impacts on human rights." If confirmed, please detail any possible steps you could take to advance this particular tenet of the declaration within ASEAN nations.

Answer. I believe that taking a preventative approach to humanitarian issues and public health emergencies is critical to our national security and that of the ASEAN member states. If confirmed, I would ensure that the United States continues to work closely with ASEAN member states and the Secretariat's disaster response authorities to plan for, prepare for, and respond to both natural and man-made disasters. If confirmed, I will also advocate for strong U.S. humanitarian support for the peoples of ASEAN in times of crisis, and I would work closely with USAID, the coordinator for international disaster assistance efforts. If confirmed, I will look to advance programs that build the capacity of our allies and partners to prepare for the next disaster, including by strengthening the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance and supporting disaster risk reduction programs implemented by our bilateral Missions in ASEAN member states.

COVID-19 has reminded us all that pandemics know no borders, and we must work together to prevent and respond to public health emergencies. If confirmed, I would prioritize building on U.S.-ASEAN Health Futures, including by supporting the CDC's efforts to enhance pan-respiratory disease surveillance in the region and USAID's support for the ASEAN Public Health Emergency Coordination System, which will improve regional cooperation and information-sharing on public health emergencies.

State Department Manangement 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 the U.S. mission to ASEAN?

Answer. It is my understanding that the U.S. Mission to ASEAN staff is a talented, dedicated group. I also understand that, like many workplaces around the world, pandemic-related restrictions have taken a toll on the team and their families. Strict lockdowns in Indonesia prevented in-person schooling for the children of the Mission's personnel, and other lockdown regulations altered or halted the regular rhythms of social and professional engagement.

I understand that Indonesia is beginning to lift those lockdowns and related restrictions and that travel has opened back up again. If confirmed, ensuring the health and well-being, both physical and emotional, of the Mission's personnel would be a top priority. If confirmed, I will look for creative ways to boost morale and will prioritize supporting the team and their families as they work to promote our interests.

Question. How do you intend to improve morale at the U.S. mission to ASEAN?

Answer. Morale is a critical driver of both the well-being of the USASEAN team and their ability to advance America's interests. As such, if confirmed, I would take as my duty the stewardship of the team's and their families' morale. Morale can never be too high, and I will continuously prioritize improving it.

If confirmed, I will listen to the team. I will work with the Deputy Chief of Mission to understand their perspectives, their aspirations, their ideas, and their frustrations. I would then work to build systems, structures, and norms that would help bolster and maintain the team's sense of community and devotion to our core mission. The ASEAN Mission is co-located with Embassy Jakarta, and if confirmed, I would seek to work with, and learn from, State and USAID leadership at Embassy Jakarta to help build morale.

Question. How do you intend to create a unified mission and vision at the U.S. mission to ASEAN?

Answer. I believe it is critical for a team to have a clear sense of what they are working for and what they are working toward, and, if confirmed, I will prioritize creating a unified mission and vision at the U.S. Mission to ASEAN. If confirmed, I will start by listening to those already at the U.S. Mission to ASEAN to understand their current priorities and perspectives, and I will make sure to clearly communicate the administration's strategic priorities and the Mission's role in furthering them.

Question. Management is a key responsibility for chiefs of mission. How would you describe your management style?

Answer. I believe teams operate best when leaders are willing to listen to, learn from, and empower those they are charged to guide. My management style is centered on communication, empowerment, and camaraderie. I believe my job as a manager is to set clear expectations and priorities; to remove obstacles to success; to procure and provide the tools and resources necessary for the team to succeed;

and to make sure the team is operating in an environment that breeds trust, respect, and partnership.

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

Answer. No. I do not believe it is ever acceptable to berate subordinates in any setting. If confirmed, I commit to providing a safe, respectful, and professional working environment for all Mission personnel.

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

Answer. The relationship between an ambassador and a deputy chief of mission is critical to the success of the team. If confirmed, I will prioritize ensuring this relationship is rooted in trust. If confirmed, I will empower my deputy chief of mission to serve as the team's chief operating officer, and I will regularly seek her counsel and look to make maximum use of her experience and expertise.

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

Answer. If confirmed, I will empower my deputy chief of mission to serve as the team's chief operating officer, relying on her knowledge of Department policies and procedures to ensure the smooth functioning of the U.S. Mission to ASEAN. I would also regularly seek her counsel on the full range of leadership, management, and policy issues the Mission faces.

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 believe it is critical to provide employees with accurate, constructive feedback on their performance in order to recognize their good work, encourage professional development, and reward those who most successfully advance the interests of the country. Meaningful, thoughtful feedback also conveys that a manager cares for their employees. EERs are particularly important for foreign service employees, as they directly impact their career trajectory and promotions. If confirmed, I will ensure that Mission leadership prioritizes accurate, constructive feedback, including through the EER process, and I will lead by example.

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. Feedback is critical. It directly fuels performance and morale. Managers owe their teams regular, thoughtful feedback. If confirmed, I would support and encourage clear, accurate, and direct feedback to employees in order to recognize their good work, encourage professional development, and reward those who most successfully advance the interests of the country.

Question. It is imperative that U.S. diplomats get outside of posts abroad to meet with local actors, including host government officials, non-government organizations, and fellow foreign diplomats stationed in ASEAN nations. In your opinion, do U.S. diplomats get outside of our Embassy walls enough to accomplish fully their missions?

Answer. Diplomacy requires engagement, and in my opinion, there can never be enough engagement with the communities in which we serve, within the bounds of prudent health and security measures. If confirmed, I will encourage the U.S. Mission to ASEAN team to conduct outreach, make contacts, and spend time outside of the Mission, within the bounds of my commitment to their health and safety. If confirmed, I would do so by leading by example, making it a priority to engage outside of the Mission.

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

Answer. If confirmed, I would work closely with the Regional Security Officer to maximize the ability of Mission employees to spend time outside the Mission, directly interacting with local populations, within the bounds of prudent health and security measures. If confirmed, I would work closely with Ambassadors and USAID Mission Directors in our bilateral Missions in ASEAN member states to build on,

and learn from, their experience reaching local populations, including traveling jointly, when possible. Better accessing local populations also means employing creative tactics. If confirmed, I would work with the public affairs team and others across the bilateral missions of each ASEAN member state to ensure we are reaching key audiences in a strategic way.

Question. Public diplomacy is an important aspect of U.S. foreign policy efforts. What is the public diplomacy environment like in ASEAN nations?

Answer. Public diplomacy is of critical importance to our strategic interests in ASEAN, and I understand the public diplomacy environment to be well suited for active U.S. engagement. While each nation is unique, the youth of Southeast Asia are overall eager to engage with America, as are the businesses of the region. If confirmed, I would work to expand and strengthen the relationship between our peoples, businesses, civil society, and governments. If confirmed, I will also be cognizant, with insight from the public affairs teams, of the challenges in certain environments. Important voices in some ASEAN member states are subject to human rights abuses; discrimination; and limitations on freedom of speech, the press, and assembly. The ease or difficulty of conducting public affairs programs ranges from country to country, and even from city to city. If confirmed, I will rely on public affairs professionals to provide me with the insights I need to be effective.

Question. What public diplomacy challenges do U.S. diplomats face there?

Answer. I understand the COVID-19 pandemic has been a challenge for public diplomacy programming across ASEAN member states, although many initiatives have continued by shifting online. As COVID-19 restrictions continue to ease, I will seek to expand our in-person public diplomacy efforts, within the bounds of my commitment to the health and safety of Mission staff.

In addition, as I understand it, U.S. spending on public diplomacy in ASEAN nations is dwarfed by that of the People's Republic of China (PRC). If confirmed, I will seek to ensure our public diplomacy resources are sufficient to successfully combat PRC disinformation, as well as Russian disinformation, while ensuring high quality programming that makes good use of those resources.

Some civil society contacts in Southeast Asia, including emerging voices and established leaders, are at risk of arrest, harassment, or imprisonment, particularly citizen journalists and human rights defenders. Each ASEAN member state has a different environment with varying degrees of challenges that affect outreach initiatives. If confirmed, I will rely on Mission staff for the insights I need to understand the variety of challenges within the region.

Question. How do you balance the importance of Main State versus the in-country mission when it comes to tailoring public diplomacy messages for foreign audiences?

Answer. If confirmed, I will seek to learn and draw from the local expertise of the U.S. Mission to ASEAN team. The team has a crucial role in formulating public diplomacy programs and messages. I understand that the Mission public affairs team has developed relations with counterpart teams located in all ten ASEAN member states, and that they are well networked in the Department. If confirmed, I will rely on their valuable insights, and I will seek their counsel to ensure we are calibrating our efforts appropriately for regional audiences. I will do so in a way that is appropriately coordinated with the Department, under the policy direction of the Secretary, such that we can best advance our strategic interests.

Question. "Anomalous health incidents," commonly referred to as "Havana Syndrome," have been debilitating and sidelining U.S. diplomats around the world for years. They have caused serious, negative consequences for U.S. diplomacy, yet many believe that the Department is not doing enough to care for, protect, and communicate to its personnel. The past occurrences and ongoing threat of anomalous health incidents among Embassy personnel and their families poses a serious challenge to morale. When personnel at post fear for their safety or doubt that their case will be taken seriously if they were affected, the performance of Embassy operations can suffer.

- If confirmed, do you commit to taking this threat seriously?

Answer. I am deeply troubled by anomalous health incidents reported by U.S. Government personnel, including Embassy personnel and their family members. I agree we must take these reported incidents seriously and ensure that our workforce receives the care and support they need and deserve. If confirmed, I would have no higher priority than the health, safety, and security of the U.S. Mission to ASEAN staff and their families.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to talking as openly as you can to the U.S. mission to ASEAN personnel?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to talking as openly as I can to mission personnel not only about anomalous health incidents, but other issues as well. If confirmed, I commit to regularly sharing new information on this issue, consistent with ensuring the integrity of ongoing investigations. If confirmed, I commit to doing everything in my power to protect the health and safety of our team members and their families.

Question. Have you received a briefing on the anomalous health incidents that have occurred to U.S. Government personnel around the world, including at U.S. embassies and other diplomatic posts? If you have not, and if you are confirmed, do you commit to receiving a briefing on the incidents before you depart for your post?

Answer. In my capacity as the Chief of Staff and Executive Secretary of the National Security Council (NSC) Staff, I have been and will continue to be briefed on anomalous health incidents. If confirmed, I commit to receiving additional relevant briefings, including to learn any best practices in the event Mission staff or their families report an incident.

Question. In the event of an anomalous health incident among your Embassy personnel or eligible family members, do you commit to maintain detailed records of the incident, and share the information with the State Department and other embassies to contribute to the investigation of how these attacks are affecting U.S. missions and personnel around the world?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to maintain detailed records of the incident, and share the information with the State Department and other embassies to contribute to the investigation of how these attacks are affecting U.S. missions and personnel around the world.

Question. Whether or not anomalous health incidents occur at your Embassy, how will you work to restore and preserve morale that may be lost due to the knowledge these attacks have been occurring at posts around the world?

Answer. If confirmed, my top priority would be ensuring the safety and security of U.S. Mission to ASEAN personnel. If confirmed, I will prioritize improving and maintaining the morale of the team, and I wholeheartedly commit to talking as openly as I can to mission personnel not only about anomalous health incidents, but other issues as well. I believe that transparency will have a positive impact on morale. If confirmed, I commit to doing everything in my power to protect the health and safety of our team members and their families. They will know that this is a priority of mine both from my words and my actions.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO YOHANNES ABRAHAM BY SENATOR MARCO RUBIO

Question. The CCP is fostering closer economic ties with ASEAN, and its military is seeking to negotiate access agreements with ASEAN countries. Last month, we saw an official ceremony giving the People's Liberation Army control of the Ream Naval facility in Cambodia. The PLA is continuing to increase its military-to-military relations with Thailand and Burma.

- Is CCP engagement with ASEAN a threat to the United States? Please explain.

Answer. The next 10 years will be the decisive decade in the competition between the United States and People's Republic of China (PRC). The United States has a positive, affirmative vision for ASEAN and the region, rooted in common interests, opportunities, and challenges. At the same time, I am clear-eyed that coercive and nontransparent activity by the PRC, such as its actions in the South China Sea, pose a challenge to that vision. If confirmed, I will continue to support our allies and partners in ASEAN in upholding regional stability and the rules-based international order. I will also encourage regular communication and coordination with ASEAN on addressing common security concerns, including the PRC's increasingly provocative activities in the South China Sea and the Mekong.

Question. Does the Chinese Communist Party pose a threat to the United States? Please explain.

Answer. The most serious long-term challenge to the rules-based international order, which is a source of stability and opportunity for the United States and for

countries around the world, is the People's Republic of China (PRC). The next ten years will be the decisive decade in the competition between the United States and the PRC. This challenge will define the coming decades and will shape the kind of world we leave behind. If confirmed, I will help advance the Biden-Harris administration's comprehensive, whole-of-government strategy to compete responsibly with the PRC while highlighting our shared, positive, affirmative vision with allies and partners.

Question. If confirmed, how will you encourage greater military cooperation between the U.S. and ASEAN?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with the Department of Defense to deepen U.S. security engagement with ASEAN, including through the annual ASEAN Defense Ministers Meeting Plus (ADMM+). If confirmed, I will also encourage regular communication and coordination with ASEAN states on upholding freedom of navigation and promoting adherence to international law in the South China Sea. If confirmed, I will also work with the U.S. Coast Guard to support robust implementation of their announced plan to expand maritime cooperation, training, and capacity-building in Southeast Asia, including by prioritizing the transfer of decommissioned cutters to coastal ASEAN nations to increase their maritime law enforcement capacity and promote a free and open Pacific.

If confirmed, I will also support ongoing U.S. cooperation with ASEAN, the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), and member states to enhance regional and country-level resiliency against terrorist attacks; share best practices in countering terrorism and violent extremism; develop national action plans; and build capacity to counter terrorist activities, networks, and travel.

Question. If confirmed, how will you use your participation at ASEAN fora to raise concerns about the consequences of the PLA establishing a military presence in the region?

Answer. If confirmed, I will use my platform to raise concerns regarding the impact that an expanded PRC military presence in the region would have on regional security. The PRC has shown a pattern of offering opaque, nontransparent deals. If confirmed, I would raise concerns about these sorts of arrangements, including specifically raising concerns about the Ream Naval Base. I would also raise concerns, publicly and privately, about the PRC's actions in the South China Sea and how they threaten ASEAN member states' livelihoods, food security, biodiversity, and energy security. If confirmed, I will also support whole-of-government U.S. efforts to bolster effective maritime governance and security capabilities in the South China Sea, including through improving the effectiveness of defense and maritime law enforcement agencies.

Question. For most of its history, ASEAN has followed what it calls the "ASEAN way," where decisions are made by consensus and individual members refrain from commenting on the internal affairs of other members. Last year, we saw nine of ASEAN's ten members break with this tradition by signing a statement condemning the military coup in Burma. Is ASEAN's Burma statement a sign of the group's greater willingness to hold members accountable to minimum basic standards of democracy and human rights?

Answer. ASEAN continues to call for the regime to swiftly implement the Five-Point Consensus, cease violence, release all unjustly detained prisoners, and allow unhindered humanitarian access. If confirmed, I intend to continue our close consultations with ASEAN, including efforts to press Burma to implement the ASEAN Five-Point Consensus. Their continued alignment on Burma is important, as are the precedents they have set in dealing with Burma since last year's coup; if confirmed, I would look to build on both. More broadly, if confirmed, I will pursue whole-of-government efforts to build ASEAN's own capacity to take meaningful action on other human rights and humanitarian issues.

Question. On what other issues do you believe ASEAN members are willing to work together to hold individual members accountable?

Answer. ASEAN member states share a mutual interest in maintaining peace and stability, unimpeded lawful commerce, and respect for international law including freedoms of navigation and overflight, and other lawful maritime activities, including in the South China Sea. If confirmed, I will encourage ASEAN members to hold each other accountable to these and other shared interests.

If confirmed, I will also encourage ASEAN and ASEAN members to lift their voices on key global issues. In the wake of Russia's unprovoked further invasion of Ukraine, many ASEAN members supported the immediate response from the UN General Assembly that condemned Russia's actions. At the U.S.-ASEAN Special

Summit, ASEAN leaders endorsed the principles of territorial integrity and sovereignty as they relate to Ukraine. If confirmed, I will seek to build on this foundation.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO YOHANNES ABRAHAM BY SENATOR TODD YOUNG

Question. Do you believe that ASEAN has maximized its power with regards to Burma, both in response to the genocide against the Rohingya and last year's coup?

Answer. ASEAN has taken a number of steps in the wake of last year's coup in Burma, including restricting Burma's participation in high-level meetings to a non-political representative and pressing for the regime to swiftly implement the Five-Point Consensus, cease violence, release all unjustly detained prisoners, and allow unhindered humanitarian access. That said, more can and should be done. If confirmed, I will work with colleagues and counterparts around the region on ways to increase pressure on the regime to implement the Five Point Consensus, change its calculus, and return Burma to a path to multiparty democracy.

While some ASEAN members have voiced concerns regarding the military's brutal attacks on Rohingya, it is also clear that more should be done to hold the military accountable and support Rohingya refugees in the region. If confirmed, I will encourage ASEAN members to undertake focused action to address the genocide against the Rohingya.

Question. What steps do you believe ASEAN can take, especially with Cambodia as the current chair, to exert pressure on the junta, and how will you seek to clarify U.S. policy on need to restore the duly elected government?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work closely with ASEAN to maintain their alignment around the need for swift implementation of the Five-Point Consensus, as well as the precedent they set in not seating a political representative from the regime in key leader-level meetings. If confirmed, I will encourage ASEAN members to exert further pressure on the military regime. If confirmed, I will also encourage ASEAN members to meet with the NUG and other representatives of the pro-democracy movement, and I will leverage my platform to promote accurate information about regime activities in the information space. If confirmed, I will use public and private forums to make clear that the United States condemns the military's actions and urges the military regime to reverse course; release all those unjustly detained, including democratic political leaders, labor leaders, journalists, civil society advocates, and foreign citizens; allow unhindered humanitarian access; and engage in meaningful dialogue that acknowledges the will of the people of Burma, and not the will of a handful of military leaders and those that benefit financially from them.

Question. As we face serious competition with China, our goal in the Indo-Pacific should be to bolster economic relationships, reduce the region's dependence on Chinese exports, and provide security-related commitments. How do you plan to provide the support needed to help ASEAN leaders maneuver in the face of a rising China?

Answer. We are in the decisive decade as it relates to the strategic competition with the PRC. The United States has a positive, affirmative vision for ASEAN and the region, rooted in common interests, opportunities, and challenges. At the same time, I am clear-eyed about the challenge that the PRC poses to our vision. If confirmed, I will work with ASEAN to ensure it is in the driver's seat in its relationship with the PRC.

If confirmed, I will continue orienting U.S.-ASEAN engagement around deepening our longstanding cooperation, pursuing new avenues of dialogue, investing in our countries, driving inclusive prosperity in this critical region, and upholding the rules-based international order. As an example, if confirmed, I will work with the U.S. Coast Guard to support robust implementation of their announced plan to expand maritime cooperation, training, and capacity-building in Southeast Asia, including by prioritizing the transfer of decommissioned cutters to coastal ASEAN nations to increase their maritime law enforcement capacity and promote a free and open Pacific.

Question. How do you expect to be involved in trade relations to bolster our economic commitments in the region?

Answer. Economic engagement with the Indo-Pacific broadly, and ASEAN specifically, is critical to advancing our economic prosperity and national security interests, as well as those of our allies and partners. This year, President Biden launched

the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF), aimed at enabling the U.S. and our allies and partners to deepen our economic engagement, drive inclusive prosperity in the United States and throughout the Indo-Pacific, and set the rules on critical 21st century economic challenges and opportunities. If confirmed, I would work closely with Congress, my bilateral colleagues across the region, and my colleagues in D.C. to achieve high-ambition outcomes in the discussions under each pillar of IPEF.

In addition to IPEF, the United States has advanced our trade relationship with the ASEAN economic ministers through the 2006 ASEAN-United States Trade and Investment Framework Arrangement, a United States Trade Representative-led forum. Through this forum, the U.S. government engages closely with ASEAN to advance cooperation in the areas of labor, environment, trade facilitation, intellectual property standards, the digital economy, competition, agriculture, biotechnology, transparency, and good regulatory practices, among other issues. If confirmed, I will support this forum and continue to strengthen our economic relationships with ASEAN by engaging with a broad array of stakeholders. I look forward to deepening economic engagement between the U.S. and ASEAN, if confirmed.

Question. Does the administration envision providing greater market access to ASEAN countries? If not, what are the meaningful benefits we hope to provide ASEAN countries to counter what China is proposing, via initiatives such as RCEP?

Answer. President Biden has been clear about his commitment to deepen our economic relationships with our partners in the Indo-Pacific region. For example, through IPEF, the administration will pursue trade facilitation and close collaboration on supply chain resilience, as well as the creation of a common set of rules, including in the digital economy. Working together to write the rules of the road in a way that is good for American workers, as well as for the people of the region, will create opportunities to deepen our economic engagement that is meaningful and beneficial for all involved. In addition to deepening our economic engagement, the administration is partnering with ASEAN and ASEAN nations on a range of other shared interests and challenges. These mutually beneficial efforts address meaningful issues and help strengthen our partnership.

If confirmed, I would work closely with Congress, colleagues around the administration, and my counterparts in the region to deepen our mutually beneficial partnership with ASEAN and ASEAN nations across a range of issues, including by supporting progress on IPEF negotiations and other economic initiatives.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO RICHARD LEE BUANGAN BY SENATOR ROBERT MENENDEZ

Question. If you are confirmed, what will be your priorities in Ulaanbaatar? What is the current status of the U.S. bilateral relationship with Mongolia?

Answer. Our bilateral relationship with Mongolia is strong and growing stronger. If confirmed, I will prioritize U.S. policies and initiatives that support Mongolia's democratic institutions, civil society, and open market economy, and which promote our shared values in areas such as respect for human rights and the rule of law. I will work to increase economic and trade ties between our two countries, support efforts to continue expanding Mongolia's already impressive U.N. peacekeeping operations capability, and I will strive to help Mongolia rebuild its aging infrastructure and begin the transition to a clean energy future.

Question. Corruption and human rights remain issues of significance in Mongolia. How do you plan to approach Mongolia's leadership on these key problems?

Answer. My understanding is that Mongolia generally respects human rights, but we do have concerns about criminal libel laws, governmental corruption, crimes involving violence or threats of violence targeting lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, or intersex persons, and forced child labor. If confirmed, I commit to lead the U.S. Embassy in Ulaanbaatar to consistently address these issues at all appropriate levels within Mongolia's government and civil society, and I personally will ensure frank and candid conversations with Mongolia's senior decision makers on taking steps to strengthen their commitment to addressing corruption and human rights issues.

Question. How do you plan to approach the issue of reliance on their economies and energy security, and what opportunities exist for the United States to strengthen our bilateral relationship?

Answer. I share your concern, and if confirmed, I will prioritize programs and assistance designed to help Mongolia diversify its economy and energy sources and achieve energy independence from Russia and the PRC. If confirmed, I will strive to help Mongolia strengthen its aging energy infrastructure and begin the transition to a clean energy future.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO RICHARD LEE BUANGAN BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Question. In the State Department's 2021 Trafficking in Persons Report, Mongolia remained on 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 failing to appropriately identify male victims and appropriately penalize child sex traffickers. How will you work with the Mongolian Government to address these issues if you are confirmed as Ambassador? The office of the Ambassador at Large to monitor and combat trafficking in persons plays a key role in assisting regional Ambassadors in promoting anti-trafficking work. Please describe, in detail and with concrete steps, how you can work with the Ambassador-at-Large to improve Mongolia's anti-trafficking work in country.

Answer. If confirmed, as Ambassador, I will be committed to working closely with the Ambassador at Large to improve Mongolia's anti-trafficking efforts. It is my understanding that, overall, the Mongolian Government has taken positive steps to combat trafficking. If confirmed, I will work with Mongolian officials to continue their efforts to increase investigations, prosecutions, and convictions—particularly of labor cases; create specialized trafficking prosecutor positions; and increase victim identification and protection. Furthermore, I will strive to ensure full implementation of the \$5.5 million Child Protection Compact.

Question. In 2019, the U.S. and Mongolian Government entered a Child Protection Compact Partnership to increase Mongolia's anti-trafficking work. Can you please provide your assessment of the progress made thus far in this compact?

Answer. It is my understanding that the Compact has helped Mongolia improve its anti-trafficking work, including through the recent establishment of Mongolia's first anti-trafficking Multidisciplinary Task Force, the creation of child-friendly spaces in police stations, and by providing significant training to law enforcement officials.

Question. In the State Department's 2021 International Religious Freedom report, governmental and societal respect for religious freedom in Mongolia was generally lacking, including increased registration difficulties for various faith groups, negative public sentiment about "foreigners" and other behaviors. 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 Governments of the United States and Mongolia share deeply rooted values, including respect for freedom of religion or belief. If confirmed, I will continue to encourage religious groups and government authorities to work together to ensure respect for religious freedom. I will ensure U.S. Embassy officials continue to discuss religious freedom concerns with the highest levels of the Mongolian Government and that we meet regularly with religious leaders.

Question. In the State Department's 2021 Human Rights Report, Mongolia was noted as having several significant human rights abuses, including serious government corruption and forced child labor. It was noted the Government did take some steps to address these issues. If confirmed, what steps will you take to continue to address these instances with the host government?

Answer. My understanding is that Mongolia generally respects human rights, but we do have concerns about criminal libel laws, governmental corruption, crimes involving violence or threats of violence targeting LGBTQI+ persons, and forced child labor. If confirmed, I commit to lead the U.S. Embassy in Ulaanbaatar to consistently address these issues at all appropriate levels within Mongolia's Government and civil society, and I personally will ensure frank and candid conversations with Mongolia's senior decision makers on taking steps to address corruption and human rights issues.

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

Answer. If confirmed, I will continue U.S. policies and initiatives that support Mongolia's democratic institutions, civil society, and open market economy, and which promote our shared values in areas such as respect for human rights and rule of law. In particular, I will work with civil society organizations to develop and foster a culture of volunteerism and philanthropy in order to encourage civic participation and strengthen the Mongolian people's faith in their democratic institutions.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to personally raising human rights issues with the Mongolian Government?

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, I will commit to personally raising human rights issues with the Mongolian Government.

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 Ulaanbaatar?

Answer. I understand that morale has been good despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and Ulaanbaatar's isolated location, traffic concerns, and high pollution. The Embassy hosts a growing number of agencies—including MCC, USAID, DoD, Treasury, and Peace Corps—and the country team maintains high levels of collaboration and teamwork.

If confirmed, I will lead Mission Mongolia by example and prioritize taking care of our people and their families.

Question. How do you intend to improve morale at Mission Ulaanbaatar?

Answer. Given the overall high morale at Mission Ulaanbaatar, specific issues remain that could be improved. For example, if confirmed, I will work with our Embassy management team and Overseas Building Operations (OBO) to support quick progress on construction of a new Embassy compound to replace the current outdated and cramped facility. Additionally, we will work with the Office of Overseas Schools to seek continuous improvement to the International School of Ulaanbaatar to ensure a widening of educational opportunities for U.S. Government dependents based in Mongolia.

If confirmed, I will prioritize taking care of our people and their families. I will personally take a strong interest in the welfare and wellbeing of our Mission colleagues and lead with purpose to inspire pride in our work. I will also ask the Embassy's senior leaders and section chiefs to prioritize work-life balance and professional development for both American and Locally Employed staff.

Question. How do you intend to create a unified mission and vision at Mission Ulaanbaatar?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to working closely with and empowering the country team to ensure we maintain high levels of collaboration and teamwork. It will be a priority for me to communicate frequently and broadly to the Embassy workforce, as well as host periodic town halls and community-wide events to synchronize our efforts. I will encourage all employees to familiarize themselves with key aspects of our vision documents, particularly the Integrated Country Strategy and Mission Resource Request.

Question. Management is a key responsibility for chiefs of mission. How would you describe your management style?

Answer. I believe in being an inclusive manager and encouraging everyone to perform to the best of their abilities. I integrate coaching and mentoring as part of my leadership ethos. Open communication and active listening are a central part of my management style. I encourage information sharing and collaboration, especially across the USG interagency represented at the Embassy. I also believe in fostering a diverse and inclusive working environment so everyone can feel valued as part of the community. As our work normalizes and adjusts post-pandemic, I believe in ensuring our teams have the right tools to work collaboratively, in person or virtually. If confirmed, I look forward to learning from the experiences and perspectives of the Mission Ulaanbaatar team.

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

Answer. I am strongly opposed to berating mission employees, either in public or private. If confirmed, I will treat all members of the Mission Ulaanbaatar community with respect and dignity. When State Department performance reviews are required, I will conduct these with the goal of recognizing strong performance and helping every member of the team realize their potential. Our people are our most

important asset, and if confirmed, I will do everything in my power to support and encourage our personnel to be the best they can be.

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

Answer. As an inclusive manager, if confirmed, I will strive to build a close, consultative relationship based on mutual respect that will empower my deputy chief of mission (DCM) to ensure the smooth functioning of Mission Ulaanbaatar. I will hold myself accountable for ensuring my DCM has the right information and resources to do their job effectively as a senior member of the Embassy team. I will also provide appropriate professional development and growth opportunities to prepare my DCM for higher positions of responsibility in future assignments.

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

Answer. If confirmed, I will rely on my DCM's knowledge of Department policies and procedures to ensure that Mission Ulaanbaatar is well-run and appropriately resourced to achieve our foreign policy priorities. I will also appropriately delegate and empower my DCM to make decisions to ensure efficient Embassy operations that prioritize results and taking care of our people.

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 believe that accurate, constructive feedback is important at all levels, and if confirmed, I will be forthright with my staff because honesty and transparency foster strong relationships and help to establish clear performance expectations. This means recognizing and rewarding those who are succeeding in their roles, as well as providing constructive feedback to help all employees develop the skills needed to achieve their potential. I will hold myself and my team to the highest standards and ensure we are accountable at all levels.

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

Answer. Yes. I believe that accurate, constructive feedback is important at all levels. If confirmed, I will provide clear, accurate, and direct feedback to my staff because honesty and transparency foster strong relationships and help to establish clear performance expectations. This means recognizing and rewarding those who are succeeding in their roles, as well as providing constructive feedback to help all employees develop the skills needed to achieve their potential. I will hold myself and my team to the highest standards and ensure we are accountable at all levels.

Question. It is imperative that U.S. diplomats get outside of posts abroad to meet with local actors, including host government officials, non-government organizations, and fellow foreign diplomats stationed in Mongolia. In your opinion, do U.S. diplomats get outside of our Embassy walls enough to accomplish fully their missions?

Answer. Given the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic around the world, it has been exceptionally tough for U.S. diplomats to get outside the Embassy walls and engage with local actors. However, over the course of my foreign service career, I have continually been impressed by the way U.S. diplomats strive to develop a deep knowledge and understanding of the countries in which we serve. The most successful diplomats engage directly with the community, learn the local cultures and languages, and get to know a wide range of people. Such relationships are critical to our work advancing U.S. priorities overseas and managing bilateral ties.

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

Answer. If confirmed, I will encourage members of Mission community to engage with host country nationals. Mongolia is a vast country with a rich history that has undergone significant democratic and economic development over the past 30 years. It is important that we get out and meet people in all parts of the country, listen to their stories, and understand the diverse challenges and opportunities they face, from the rapidly growing capital to the rural countryside.

Question. Public diplomacy is an important aspect of U.S. foreign policy efforts. What is the public diplomacy environment like in Mongolia?

Answer. It is my understanding that there is a vibrant and active public diplomacy environment in Mongolia. If confirmed, I will work to expand and strengthen our already very strong people-to-people ties, which are deep and form the basis of our strategic partnership.

Question. What public diplomacy challenges do U.S. diplomats face there?

Answer. It is my understanding that our public diplomacy efforts in Mongolia prioritize building media literacy and supporting efforts to counter disinformation, particularly from Russia and the PRC. The continuous stream of disinformation is a challenge to our public diplomacy efforts, but we use our programs and messages to continually demonstrate the United States' respect for Mongolian culture, identity, democracy, and independence.

Question. How do you balance the importance of Main State versus the in-country mission when it comes to tailoring public diplomacy messages for foreign audiences?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with the team at Mission Ulaanbaatar to understand and support the Mission's crucial role in formulating public diplomacy programs and responses. Our staff on the ground in Mongolia bring an incredible range of expertise and local insight to the Mission. If confirmed, I will ensure that our public diplomacy professionals in Washington and Ulaanbaatar continue to work closely together, and that we draw on that local expertise to ensure our global public diplomacy messages are relevant and effective for our Mongolian audiences.

Question. "Anomalous health incidents," commonly referred to as "Havana Syndrome," have been debilitating and sidelining U.S. diplomats around the world for years. They have caused serious, negative consequences for U.S. diplomacy, yet many believe that the Department is not doing enough to care for, protect, and communicate to its personnel. The past occurrences and ongoing threat of anomalous health incidents among Embassy personnel and their families poses a serious challenge to morale. When personnel at post fear for their safety or doubt that their case will be taken seriously if they were affected, the performance of Embassy operations can suffer.

- If confirmed, do you commit to taking this threat seriously?

Answer. I am deeply concerned by potential anomalous health incidents affecting government personnel and their family members. 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 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 Ulaanbaatar personnel?

Answer. If confirmed, I will commit to ensuring all reported incidents at Embassy Ulaanbaatar are treated seriously and quickly reported through the appropriate medical and investigatory channels, and to sharing information to the extent permitted by applicable law and investigatory procedures. **Question 23:**

Have you received a briefing on the anomalous health incidents that have occurred to U.S. Government personnel around the world, including at U.S. embassies and other diplomatic posts? If you have not, and if you are confirmed, do you commit to receiving a briefing on the incidents before you depart for your post?

Answer. I have received a briefing on the anomalous health incidents that have affected U.S. Government personnel and their family members around the world. If confirmed, I commit to seeking additional briefings at the appropriate classification levels before my departure to post and learning how I can best protect all Embassy personnel and their family members and respond to any future incidents.

Question. In the event of an anomalous health incident among your Embassy personnel or eligible family members, do you commit to maintain detailed records of the incident, and share the information with the State Department and other embassies to contribute to the investigation of how these attacks are affecting U.S. missions and personnel around the world?

Answer. Yes, I commit to sharing information to the extent permitted by the Rehabilitation Act and other applicable laws.

Question. Whether or not anomalous health incidents occur at your Embassy, how will you work to restore and preserve morale that may be lost due to the knowledge these attacks have been occurring at posts around the world?

Answer. In the event an anomalous health incident (AHI) is reported, I will do everything possible to ensure that anyone affected receives immediate and appro-

appropriate attention and care and that the incident is reported through appropriate channels. I would keep the Mission informed to the extent permitted by law. I understand there is an extensive, ongoing interagency investigation to identify the possible causes of AHIs, and I am committed to supporting this investigation.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO RICHARD LEE BUANGAN BY SENATOR MARCO RUBIO

Question. Since emerging from the shadow of communism more than 30 years ago, Mongolia's young democracy has followed a "Third Neighbor" policy, where it seeks close relations with the United States to counter the influence of its two immediate neighbors: China and Russia. If Mongolia is dominated by the CCP's influence, is that a threat to U.S. interests? Please explain.

Answer. If confirmed, my goal as Ambassador will be to strengthen Mongolia's independence, and to support the Mongolian people in building a strong, resilient democratic system and a prosperous, private sector-driven economy that can play a constructive role in the international community and withstand pressure or coercive actions from the People's Republic of China. I believe it is not in the interest of either the Mongolian people or the United States for an outside force or country to intimidate or threaten Mongolia.

Question. Does the Chinese Communist Party pose a threat to the United States? Please explain.

Answer. As Secretary Blinken said in May, the PRC is the only country with both the intent to reshape the international order and, increasingly, the economic, diplomatic, military, and technological power to do it.

We are prepared to work together with Beijing where our interests intersect, where it is essential for global peace and prosperity and to keep lines of communication open.

Question. Can Mongolia's third neighbor policy serve as a model for other countries susceptible to foreign influence from Russia and China?

Answer. It is my understanding that through its "Third Neighbor" policy, the people and Government of Mongolia seek to develop strong ties with the United States and the West while maintaining a balanced, cordial relationship with Russia and the PRC. This pragmatic foreign policy has served Mongolia for decades, and it may be a model for other countries susceptible to pressure from Russia and the PRC.

Question. If so, what should the U.S. do to be a good "third neighbor" to these countries?

Answer. Much like what we do in Mongolia, I believe the United States could pursue policies that support democracies in the Indo-Pacific by strengthening their democratic institutions, civil society, and free press as well as promote open market economies. We must also remain true to promoting fundamental values in areas such as respect for human rights, religious freedom, and rule of law.

Question. Despite this Third Neighbor Policy, Mongolia remains economically dependent on Russia and China for most of its imports and exports. I, along with other Senators on this committee, have cosponsored the Mongolia Third Neighbor Trade Act to chip away at this dominance. In your assessment, would the Mongolia Third Neighbor Trade Act reduce Mongolian dependence on the Russian and Chinese economies?

Answer. I welcome the role the Congress plays in helping to provide our Indo-Pacific allies and partners, including Mongolia, with resources and tools to diminish the dependency these countries have on Russia and the PRC. If confirmed, I would support efforts to help the Mongolian people build a prosperous economy, capable of withstanding pressure from its authoritarian neighbors.

Question. If confirmed, what will you do to support enhancing economic ties between our two countries?

Answer. If confirmed, I will prioritize enhancing economic ties between our two countries by seeking opportunities to promote foreign direct investment in Mongolia, stressing the importance of full implementation of the U.S.-Mongolia Agreement on Transparency in Matters Related to International Trade and Investment; supporting the activities and programs of Millennium Challenge Corporation, the U.S. Inter-

national Development Finance Corporation and USAID; and working closely with AmCham Mongolia.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO MARIE C. DAMOUR BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Question. In the State Department's 2021 Trafficking in Persons Report, Fiji was upgraded to Tier 2 for not fully meeting the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking but making significant efforts to do so. Areas where Fiji could improve include increasing services to sex trafficking victims and increasing convictions. How will you work with the Fijian Government to address these issues if you are confirmed as Ambassador?

Answer. As I understand, U.S. Embassy Suva did significant outreach to the Fijian Government to address issues raised in the Trafficking in Persons Report. If confirmed, I will continue with our outreach efforts to help Fiji improve its anti-trafficking efforts, including by helping the Government to find methods to improve the effectiveness of anti-trafficking trainings provided to law enforcement, immigration, labor, and other officials, as well as ensuring effective implementation of the recently created case management mechanism to improve the provision of victim services.

Question. The office of to monitor and combat trafficking in persons plays a key role in assisting Ambassadors in promoting anti-trafficking work. Please describe how you can work with the office to improve Fiji's anti-trafficking work in country.

Answer. The Department's Trafficking in Persons Report provides concrete recommendations for improving Fiji's anti-trafficking work. If confirmed, I will ensure U.S. Embassy Suva will work with Department colleagues to find more efficient and effective methods, including reviewing successful ones used in other countries, that may be imported and replicated in Fiji.

Question. What concrete steps can you, if confirmed, take with your mission to help Fiji improve its anti-trafficking efforts?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with U.S. Embassy Suva to actively engage with the Fijian Government, civil society, and the private sector to address the concrete recommendations made in the Department's Trafficking in Persons Report and to build a more effective anti-trafficking strategy.

Question. In the State Department's 2021 International Religious Freedom report, highlighted concerns regarding strict COVID-19 restrictions on religious worship in Fiji. 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 of State monitors reports of abuses and discrimination against all individuals based on religious identity, practice or believed, worldwide. The United States continues to support freedom of religion, including bundled rights such as freedom of expression, assembly, and association, including during the COVID-19 pandemic. If confirmed, I will continue to advocate for religious freedom and encourage government authorities to work closely with civil society, including members of religious groups, in order to ensure respect both for freedom of religion or belief as well as for public health guidelines.

Question. If confirmed, what steps will you take to continue to address these instances with the host government?

Answer. As a global policy, the U.S. Government advocates for respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. If confirmed, I commit to lead the U.S. Embassy Suva to consistently address these issues at all appropriate levels within Fiji's Government and civil society, and I personally will ensure frank and candid conversations with Fiji's senior decision makers on taking steps to strengthen their commitment to addressing freedom of expression, including for the media.

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

Answer. If confirmed, I would direct U.S. Embassy Suva employees to continue to work with civil society partners in Fiji to raise awareness, highlight abuses and violations, and promote respect for human rights in Fiji.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to personally raising human rights issues with the Fijian Government?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to raising human rights issues with the Fijian Government.

Question. In the State Department's 2021 International Religious Freedom report, there were highlighted concerns regarding the lack of religious tolerance and pluralism in Kiribati. 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 Kiribati constitution provides for freedom of conscience (including religion), expression, assembly, and association. If confirmed, I will regularly engage civil society, including members of religious communities, and, along with the Ambassador at Large, will advocate for religious freedom and respect for the rights of all with the Kiribati Government.

Question. In the State Department's 2021 Human Rights Report, Kiribati was noted as having several significant human rights abuses, including credible report of criminalization of consensual sexual activity between men, although the law was not enforced, and child labor. If confirmed, what steps will you take to continue to address these instances with the host government?

Answer. As a global policy, the U.S. Government advocates for respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. If confirmed, I commit to lead U.S. Embassy Suva to consistently address these issues at all appropriate levels with the Kiribati Government and civil society.

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

Answer. If confirmed, I would direct U.S. Embassy Suva employees to continue to work with civil society partners in the Kiribati to raise awareness, highlight abuses and violations, and promote respect for human rights in Kiribati.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to personally raising human rights issues with the Government of Kiribati?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to raising human rights issues with the Kiribati Government.

Question. In the State Department's 2021 International Religious Freedom report, Nauru had no reports of societal actions affecting religious freedom but only concerns about lack of registration of some religions due to COVID-19 restrictions. 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 of State monitors reports of abuses and discrimination against all individuals based on religious identity, practice or believed, worldwide. The United States continues to support freedom of religion, including bundled rights such as freedom of expression, assembly, and association, including during the COVID-19 pandemic. If confirmed, I will continue to advocate for religious freedom and encourage government authorities to work closely with civil society, including members of religious groups, in order to ensure respect both for freedom of religion or belief as well as for public health guidelines.

Question. In the State Department's 2021 Human Rights Report, Nauru was noted as having several significant human rights issues included credible reports of censorship and the existence of criminal libel laws. If confirmed, what steps will you take to continue to address these instances with the host government?

Answer. As a global policy, the U.S. Government advocates for respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. If confirmed, I commit to lead U.S. Embassy Suva to consistently address these issues at all appropriate levels within Nauru's Government and civil society, and I will ensure frank and candid conversations with Nauru's senior decision makers on taking steps to strengthen their commitment to addressing freedom of expression, including for the media.

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

Answer. If confirmed, I would direct U.S. Embassy Suva employees to continue to work with civil society partners in the Nauru to raise awareness, highlight abuses and violations, and promote respect for human rights in Nauru.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to personally raising human rights issues with the Government of Nauru?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to raising human rights issues with the Nauru Government.

Question. In the State Department's 2021 Trafficking in Persons Report, Tonga was downgraded to Tier 2 for not fully meeting the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking but is making significant efforts to do so. Areas where Tonga could improve include developing victim identification procedures and take steps to appropriately identify victims. Particularly it is concerning that Tonga has not prosecuted or convicted any traffickers since 2011. How will you work with the Tongan Government to address these issues if you are confirmed as Ambassador?

Answer. If confirmed and once borders are open with Tonga, I plan to deploy U.S. personnel to engage in outreach efforts to help the Tongan Government understand the importance of this issue and work with them to improve gaps in their anti-trafficking efforts as identified in the Department's Trafficking in Persons Report. I understand U.S. Embassy Suva deployed a very effective outreach program to the Fijian Government in 2020 on this issue to explain the importance of this matter. I plan to replicate this successful outreach program with Tongan Government officials.

Question. The office of to monitor and combat trafficking in persons plays a key role in assisting Ambassadors in promoting anti-trafficking work. Please describe how you can work with the office to improve Tonga's anti-trafficking work in country.

Answer. The Department's Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report provides concrete recommendations for improving Tonga's anti-trafficking work. U.S. Embassy Suva will work with Department colleagues, especially from the TIP Office, to find more efficient and effective policies, including by reviewing successful methods used in other countries that may be imported and replicated in Tonga.

Question. What concrete steps can you, if confirmed, take with your mission to help Tonga improve its anti-trafficking efforts?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with U.S. Embassy Suva to actively engage with the Tongan Government, civil society, and the private sector to address the concrete recommendations made in the Department's Trafficking in Persons Report and to build a more effective anti-trafficking strategy.

Question. In the State Department's 2021 International Religious Freedom report, Tonga has a mix of religious groups but the Forum of Church Leaders only includes Christian leaders. 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 of State monitors reports of abuses and discrimination against all individuals based on religious identity, practice or believed, worldwide. The United States continues to support freedom of religion, including bundled rights such as freedom of expression, assembly, and association, including during the COVID-19 pandemic. If confirmed, I will continue to advocate for religious freedom and encourage government authorities to work closely with civil society, including members of religious groups, in order to ensure respect both for freedom of religion or belief as well as for public health guidelines.

Question. In the State Department's 2021 Human Rights Report, Tonga was noted as having several significant human rights issues included credible reports of serious government corruption and the existence of law criminalizing consensual same-sex sexual conduct between adults. If confirmed, what steps will you take to continue to address these instances with the host government?

Answer. As a global policy, the U.S. Government advocates for respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. If confirmed, I commit to lead U.S. Embassy Suva to consistently address these issues at all appropriate levels within Tonga's Government and civil society.

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

Answer. If confirmed, I would direct U.S. Embassy Suva employees to continue to work with civil society partners in the Tonga to raise awareness, highlight abuses and violations, and promote respect for human rights in Tonga.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to personally raising human rights issues with the Government of Tonga?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to raising human rights issues with the Government of Tonga.

Question. In the State Department's 2021 International Religious Freedom report, there were reports of restrictions on non-state religion and lack of religious plu-

ralism and tolerance in Tuvalu. 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 of State monitors reports of abuses and discrimination against all individuals based on religious identity, practice or believed, worldwide. The United States continues to support freedom of religion, including bundled rights such as freedom of expression, assembly, and association, including during the COVID-19 pandemic. If confirmed, I will continue to advocate for religious freedom and encourage government authorities to work closely with civil society, including members of religious groups, in order to ensure respect both for freedom of religion or belief as well as for public health guidelines.

Question. In the State Department's 2021 Human Rights Report, Tuvalu was noted as having several significant human rights issues including credible reports of existence of laws criminalizing consensual same-sex sexual activities between men, although the laws were not enforced. If confirmed, what steps will you take to continue to address these instances with the host government?

Answer. As a global policy, the U.S. Government advocates for respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. If confirmed, I commit to lead the U.S. Embassy Suva to consistently address these issues at all appropriate levels within Tuvalu's Government and civil society.

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

Answer. If confirmed, I would direct U.S. Embassy Suva employees to continue to work with civil society partners in the Tuvalu to raise awareness, highlight abuses and violations, and promote respect for human rights in Tuvalu.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to personally raising human rights issues with the Government of Tuvalu?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to raising human rights issues with the Government of Tuvalu.

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 Suva?

Answer. My understanding is morale in Fiji has been good under the leadership of Charge Greubel after U.S. Embassy Suva weathered a difficult 2020. I don't know any specifics, but like many of our missions overseas, employees in the Fiji faced the full gamut of COVID-19 mitigation protocols, quarantine requirements, and travel disruptions due to COVID-19 restrictions. If confirmed, I would prioritize the health, safety, security, and morale of all employees in the Mission.

Question. How do you intend to improve morale at Mission Suva?

Answer. If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with the senior leadership team to understand and address any issues affecting morale. I prioritize the care of my team, both American and local staff, to ensure they have the tools to succeed in the workplace. The challenges of COVID-19 over the last two years have underscored the very real need to care for our people. It is a privilege to lead such a dedicated group of individuals, and I am committed to creating an inclusive workplace environment that puts the safety and well-being of our teams first.

Question. How do you intend to create a unified mission and vision at Mission Suva?

Answer. If confirmed, I will start by listening to the experienced staff and personnel to learn from their experiences and perspectives. I will work with my senior staff to develop a shared vision of Mission priorities. I will clearly communicate the foreign policy priorities of this administration and facilitate regular conversations with both American and local staff to ensure clear communication and coordination.

Question. Management is a key responsibility for chiefs of mission. How would you describe your management style?

Answer. I am an inclusive manager. I find that teams work best when you take care of them. This means you actively listen to them to understand their needs and find ways to support them so they can be successful at their jobs.

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

Answer. It is never acceptable to berate subordinates, either publicly or privately. If confirmed, I will commit to treat all members of the Mission Suva community

with respect and dignity. I believe in helping my team understand their areas of development and their areas of strength. Our people are our most important asset, and if confirmed, I will do everything in my power to support and encourage our personnel to be the best they can be.

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

Answer. I have an inclusive leadership style, and I expect to have a collaborative relationship with my deputy chief of mission built on mutual respect. I will look to empower my deputy chief of mission to ensure Mission Suva functions smoothly.

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

Answer. If confirmed, I will rely on my deputy chief of mission to navigate the Department's policies and procedures to ensure we are properly resourced to achieve our foreign policy objectives.

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

Answer. It is imperative to provide employees with accurate, constructive feedback on their performance in order to encourage improvement and reward those who most succeeded in their roles. If confirmed, I will commit to fostering an open and inclusive environment where employees will receive both the support and candid feedback they deserve to help them achieve their peak performance capabilities.

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. To ensure all employees can achieve their highest level of performance, they must receive clear, accurate, direct, and regular feedback. If confirmed, I will strive to build strong relationships with them, which entails clear and transparent communication about expectations. High achievers should be recognized and rewarded. All employees should expect and demand the opportunity to develop the skills necessary to achieve their potential.

Question. It is imperative that U.S. diplomats get outside of posts abroad to meet with local actors, including host government officials, non-government organizations, and fellow foreign diplomats stationed in the Pacific Islands. In your opinion, do U.S. diplomats get outside of our Embassy walls enough to accomplish fully their missions?

Answer. U.S. Embassy Suva faces some unique challenges because it covers five countries from our physical location in Suva. The pandemic closed international borders and adversely impacted our ability to visit to each of the countries our mission covers. If confirmed, I will prioritize getting our people regularly back out in the field to all five of the countries covered by U.S. Embassy Suva.

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

Answer. Pacific islanders highly value in-person interactions. For that reason, it is imperative to get our staff out in the field as often as possible to interact with the local populations. If confirmed, I will work with mission members to get out into the field, including all five of our countries, to ensure we are reaching all of the local populations to the best of our ability.

Question. What is the public diplomacy environment like in the Pacific Islands?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work to expand and strengthen the people-to-people ties between the United States and the Pacific Island countries. While our Pacific neighbors gravitate toward us based on common values and shared history, we cannot take those factors for granted. Younger age groups on Pacific Islands may not have the same memory of World War II as older generations do. The People's Republic of China (PRC) is actively engaging in-person in many of the countries where we are not physically present, including Kiribati and Tonga. We need to continue to strengthen our ties to the region, including the promotion of a broad range of interests based upon our shared values of democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. Diaspora ties are also highly important between the United States and Pacific Island countries.

Question. What public diplomacy challenges do U.S. diplomats face there?

Answer. Pacific societies place high value on face-to-face contacts, which has been nearly impossible for many Pacific Island countries during the pandemic. When diplomats show up in person, it not only shows U.S. commitment to engaging more with Pacific Island countries, it also builds up the personal contacts and networks that are vital for advancing American interests with Pacific partners.

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. As I understand it, U.S. Embassy Suva has a crucial role in formulating public diplomacy programs and responses. The Public Affairs Section (PAS) has a staff of Americans and Pacific Islanders who provide expertise and local insight. There are many areas where PAS works directly with different offices and bureaus at Main State. For example, the PAS Press Section handles all relations between the Embassy and the local media. It also coordinates with other missions in the region and Main State on high-level visits or issues which attract international attention (such as the recent seizure of the Russian superyacht Amadea). PAS works closely with Main State on such initiatives as Fulbright, Sports Diplomacy, and the Young Pacific Leaders Program.

Question. “Anomalous health incidents,” commonly referred to as “Havana Syndrome,” have been debilitating and sidelining U.S. diplomats around the world for years. They have caused serious, negative consequences for U.S. diplomacy, yet many believe that the Department is not doing enough to care for, protect, and communicate to its personnel. The past occurrences and ongoing threat of anomalous health incidents among Embassy personnel and their families poses a serious challenge to morale. When personnel at post fear for their safety or doubt that their case will be taken seriously if they were affected, the performance of Embassy operations can suffer. If confirmed, do you commit to taking this threat seriously?

Answer. I am deeply concerned by potential anomalous health incidents impacting U.S. Government personnel and their family members. 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 Embassy Suva 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 Suva personnel?

Answer. The health and safety of my staff is my top priority. If confirmed, I will commit to ensuring all reported incidents at U.S. Embassy Suva are treated seriously and quickly reported through the appropriate medical and investigatory channels. I will ensure that any affected individuals receive prompt access to treatment and medical care. Moreover, I will ensure that they receive our support and empathy. If confirmed, I will also commit to work closely with medical staff and the Regional Security Office at Embassy Suva to discuss any past reported incidents (if any), openly communicate with Mission personnel, and ensure that all protocols are being closely followed.

Question. Have you received a briefing on the anomalous health incidents that have occurred to U.S. Government personnel around the world, including at U.S. embassies and other diplomatic posts? If you have not, and if you are confirmed, do you commit to receiving a briefing on the incidents before you depart for your post?

Answer. Yes. We had an anomalous health incident in Vietnam and later had a Town Hall meeting with the Department. If confirmed, I commit to receiving a briefing on the incidents before departing for my post. Nothing is more important than the health and safety of our Mission personnel and, if confirmed, I will do my utmost to understand the conditions under which my Mission operates and to facilitate clear communication with Mission members.

Question. In the event of an anomalous health incident among your Embassy personnel or eligible family members, do you commit to maintain detailed records of the incident, and share the information with the State Department and other embassies to contribute to the investigation of how these attacks are affecting U.S. missions and personnel around the world?

Answer. Yes, in the event of an anomalous health incident among my Embassy personnel or eligible family members, I would commit to maintain detailed records of the incident and to the extent permitted by law share information with other offices and bureaus within the State Department to contribute to the investigation of

how these attacks are affecting U.S. missions and personnel around the world. Nothing is more important than the health and safety of our Mission personnel and their families.

Question. Whether or not anomalous health incidents occur at your Embassy, how will you work to restore and preserve morale that may be lost due to the knowledge these attacks have been occurring at posts around the world?

Answer. It is incumbent upon leadership to establish and maintain trust with the Embassy community. We build trust by maintaining the lines of communication, by listening to the concerns of our community members, and addressing those concerns as openly and clearly as possible.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO MARIE C. DAMOUR BY SENATOR MARCO RUBIO

Question. This year, we saw the CCP sign a security pact with the Solomon Islands, which gives it access to deploy its military in a position that threatens U.S. and allied military facilities. In May, the PRC tried to negotiate a sweeping trade and security agreement with ten further nations. Fortunately, this broke down, but the CCP will undoubtedly try again. The reasons for this are clear—in a future confrontation with CCP, the U.S. will need facilities in the region to resupply and re-fit our troops, and Beijing’s security pact would prevent this. Is CCP engagement in the Pacific Islands a threat to U.S. interests? Please explain.

Answer. Our vision of a free and open Indo-Pacific excludes no nation. We welcome contributions to regional development, so long as countries adhere to high standards, including in areas such as transparency, rule of law, sustainable financing, social and economic safeguards, and respect for the autonomy of development aid recipients. However, as the PRC’s involvement in the region has grown, we have seen a range of increasingly problematic behaviors, including its assertion of unlawful maritime claims and the ongoing militarization of disputed features in the South China Sea, predatory economic activities including illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing, and investments that undermine good governance and promote corruption.

Question. Does the Chinese Communist Party pose a threat to the United States? Please explain.

Answer. We have profound differences with the Chinese Communist Party and the PRC Government. The PRC is the only country with both the intent to reshape the international order and, increasingly, the economic, diplomatic, military, and technological power to do it. The United States must defend and reform the rules-based international order—the system of laws, agreements, principles, and institutions that the world came together to build after two world wars to manage relations between states, to prevent conflict, to uphold the rights of all people. We want not just to sustain the international order that made so much of that progress possible but also to modernize it to make sure that it represents the interests, the values, the hopes of all nations, big and small, from every region; and furthermore, that it can meet the challenges that we face now and will face in the future.

Question. What were the reasons for the breakdown in talks between the CCP and the ten Pacific islands?

Answer. PRC Foreign Minister Wang Yi did not do things the “Pacific way” and subsequently failed to secure regional buy-in for his agenda. For example, he did not consult with the 10 Pacific Island nations and build consensus for the PRC’s China-Pacific Island Countries Common Development Vision and a related five-year action plan. This is a lesson we are keeping in mind as we move forward in our engagement with Pacific Island nations. To ensure we build the best foundation for a common partnership, we have consulted and will continue to consult with our Pacific neighbors.

Question. How has the U.S. fallen behind the CCP in engaging the Pacific Island states?

Answer. For too long, the United States has relied on the goodwill and common bonds built among our countries through the World War II experience, but that common memory has waned, and the younger generation is disconnected from our shared past and too many of the younger generation have never interacted with an American. To change this narrative we must show up, listen, provide a positive al-

ternative to the PRC and be visible in our programs and engagements with Pacific Island countries.

Question. If confirmed, what will you do to ensure that the CCP does not gain a strategic foothold in the Pacific islands?

Answer. If confirmed, I will do my part to significantly deepen our engagement in the Pacific Islands and embark on a new chapter in our partnership—a chapter with increased American presence where we will commit to work with the Pacific Islands in the short and long term to address the most pressing issues that they face. Following on Vice President Harris’ speech to the Pacific Islands Forum, the United States will begin discussions with Kiribati and Tonga on our interest in establishing embassies in those countries. If confirmed, I will work with inter-agency partners to return Peace Corps to the Pacific Islands and work with USAID to expand its engagement in the region.

Question. Can you give us an update on the status of the Compact States negotiations?

Answer. The Biden-Harris administration has prioritized Compact negotiations with the Freely Associated States (FAS) as a U.S. foreign policy objective. Recognizing the urgency of completing these negotiations, the administration announced the appointment of Ambassador (retired) Joseph Yun as the Special Presidential Envoy for Compact Negotiations on March 22, 2022. Special Presidential Envoy for Compact Negotiations Joseph Yun has held in-person or virtual meetings with the presidents of all three FAS and has met separately with the lead negotiators from each nation. Negotiations with the Federated States of Micronesia continue to move forward and have recently recommenced with the Republic of Marshall Islands. Formal negotiations with Palau are scheduled to resume in early August. The Special Presidential Envoy for Compact Negotiations is leading the negotiations with the continuing support of the team composed of representatives of relevant agencies. We look forward to reaching understandings with the three FAS later this year on a shared vision for our strong and lasting relationship that benefits the entire Pacific region.
