

NOMINATIONS

WEDNESDAY, JULY 26, 2023

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

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 2:36 p.m., in Room SD-419, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Tammy Duckworth presiding.

Present: Senators Duckworth [presiding], Menendez, Shaheen, Kaine, Van Hollen, and Hagerty.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. TAMMY DUCKWORTH, U.S. SENATOR FROM ILLINOIS

Senator DUCKWORTH. Good afternoon, everyone. The nominations hearing of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee will come to order.

I want to offer my congratulations to each of you on your nominations and express my appreciation for your willingness to serve.

In the interest of time and getting to hearing from each of you and beginning questions quickly I am going to forego an opening statement today.

Senator Hagerty, would you like to make an opening statement before introductions or should we proceed?

Senator HAGERTY. I would make an opening statement, if I might.

Senator DUCKWORTH. You are recognized.

STATEMENT OF HON. BILL HAGERTY, U.S. SENATOR FROM TENNESSEE

Senator HAGERTY. Likewise, I would like to congratulate the nominees. Thank you for being here today. It is an exceptional honor to be in the position that you are in, and for those of you that are going to be confirmed I think you have a unique opportunity ahead of you to serve the most exceptional nation in the world. So I know you will take that to heart.

I would like to start with the nominee to be Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs. It is going to be a critical role here that you have got in terms of helping the administration navigate the Ukraine crisis.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine spurred the largest conflict in Europe since World War II and it continues to pose an enormous strategic challenge for the United States. Yet, many Americans are weary of our administration's less than clear strategy in Ukraine.

They are concerned about the growing cost of U.S. involvement and they want to see all European nations—not just Britain, not just those that are more proximate to Ukraine—share the burdens of the alliance.

The Biden administration needs to provide the American people a clear, realistic plan for victory in Ukraine—we have asked for it from this committee before—a plan that offers not only lasting solutions to the long-term security problems that we have in the region but also one that protects Americans' interest.

I would like to turn to the nominee to be Ambassador to Croatia. The United States has played a key role in fostering Croatia's growth as a democratic, secure, and market-oriented society. We recognize Croatia is a dependable partner within the Euro-Atlantic institutions and we greatly appreciate its constructive and stabilizing influence in the region.

As a NATO ally since 2009, Croatia has partnered with the United States in operations in Afghanistan, Kosovo, Libya, and elsewhere. Croatia has also played a critical role in energy security through its LNG import terminal, which has helped to minimize Europe's dependence on Russian oil, the dependence that has fueled Russia's war machine.

Next, I would like to turn to the nominee to be the Ambassador to Haiti. Haiti is facing a seemingly intractable political and security crisis. The humanitarian catastrophe there has fueled massive migration from the country.

The Biden administration will have to continue working closely with the international community to support Haitian efforts to restore security, the rule of law, and economic and social stability.

And then last but certainly not least, I would like to focus on the nominee to be U.S. Ambassador to Guatemala. From its recognition of Taiwan, its solidarity with Ukraine, its opposition to the Maduro regime in Venezuela, and its close ties to Israel to its cooperation on trade, migration, and security, Guatemala has long been a critical U.S. ally in Latin America and more specifically in the critical Northern Triangle region.

I traveled to Guatemala on my first official trip as a United States Senator and I had the pleasure of meeting Guatemalan President Giammattei. He is a great friend of the United States. President Giammattei noted how waves of illegal migration pose demographic, economic, and social problems within his country. His own nation's sovereignty is under siege.

He told me that thanks to the flood of humanity responding to the open border migration here in the United States he has lost control of his own southern border. His nation's loss of stability is furthering a brain drain. It is disrupting families and local communities and it is depriving his nation of foreign investment, modern infrastructure, and economic growth.

All of this feeds a vicious cycle that engenders yet more mass migration and creates favorable conditions for transnational drug cartels.

It allows them to exploit and traffic vulnerable migrants and smuggle deadly fentanyl and other drugs into our country. While concerns about corruption and election integrity are understandable, if you are confirmed I hope you recognize that Guatemala's

critical importance for U.S. interests and work to maintain the United States' longstanding partnership with which whichever candidate wins Guatemala's August presidential runoff election will be important.

Again, to all of our nominees thank you for serving our nation and for answering the questions of the committee today. I look forward to hearing your testimony. Thank you.

Senator DUCKWORTH. Thank you, Senator Hagerty.

Now, I know several of my colleagues wanted to share introductions of some of our panel and, as usual, we have—we all have tricky schedules, given everything that is happening in the Senate today.

Chairman Menendez, I can turn it over to you first.

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

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Madam Chair, to you and Senator Hagerty for conducting the hearing. One of our roles as members of the committee is the responsibility to conduct nomination hearings so I very much appreciate both of your taking time from your incredible schedules to do this.

I want to congratulate all of the nominees and their families and thank you for your willingness to serve our country. I mention the families as well because this is a family affair. The reality is that when you are called to serve abroad, your family has sacrifices as well. So, I want to acknowledge them.

I want to take a moment to say that it is my distinct pleasure to introduce Nathalie Rayes, the nominee to be the U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Croatia. Today, with dictators and autocrats working to undermine peace and freedom around the world, our nation needs to fill our diplomatic posts with leaders who are committed to protecting democracy and human rights.

I believe that Nathalie Rayes' dedication to the defense of these basic universal principles is what the United States needs from our next Ambassador in Zagreb. Nathalie was born in a small town in Venezuela and came to the United States when she was just nine years old.

She did not speak a word of English but her mother, like my own mother, made tremendous sacrifices so that her daughter could get an education and thrive here in America, and with her support Nathalie not only went on to UCLA where she got her bachelor's and master's degree, she built an impressive and distinguished career as a leader, as a consensus builder, and an advocate.

As the president and CEO of Latino Victory, President Biden's appointee to the board of the United States Institute of Peace, she has been an influential voice fighting to make the world a better place.

She is no stranger to public service. She has served as deputy chief of staff of the mayor of Los Angeles where she managed the office of intergovernmental relations, international trade and protocol.

She established L.A.'s first office of immigrant affairs. She formed sister cities with San Salvador, Beirut, and Ischia in Italy,

and she served as President Obama's appointee on the board of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars.

Her experience, her record of leadership, and her strong people-to-people skills makes her the right candidate for this post.

If confirmed, we can rest assured that Nathalie will stand up for her values and be a tireless advocate for democracy and human rights. So it is my pleasure to support the nomination of my good friend, Nathalie Rayes, as U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Croatia. I do not always come to the committee to introduce people but in this case it is compelling to do so.

Before I close I would like to note, Madam Chair, that I have received multiple letters in support of Ms. Rayes' nomination including from former Congressman Lincoln Diaz-Balart, the chairman of the Congressional Hispanic Leadership Institute, the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, the Aspen Institute, Latinos in Society Program, among others. I asked unanimous consent these letters be included in the record.

Senator DUCKWORTH. Without objection.

[The information referred to above is located in the *Additional Material Submitted for the Record* section of this transcript.]

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Senator DUCKWORTH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator Padilla, I will turn it over to you next.

**STATEMENT OF HON. ALEX PADILLA,
U.S. SENATOR FROM CALIFORNIA**

Senator PADILLA. Thank you Madam Chair, Chairman Menendez, and Ranking Member Risch.

Today, I am also proud to introduce my friend, Nathalie Rayes, as President Biden's nominee to serve as U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Croatia.

As you heard from Chairman Menendez—I will try not to be too repetitive—but I do think it is important to underscore and emphasize she is the proud daughter of Venezuelan and Lebanese parents as an immigrant herself.

Ms. Rayes' career has been defined by an unwavering commitment to public service, a drive to diversify the highest levels of leadership in our nation, and a fundamental understanding of the hope and stability America's leadership brings to the world stage.

But before it all Ms. Rayes started off as a student in Los Angeles where she earned her bachelor's degree in sociology and a master's degree in public policy with concentrations in international relations and education at UCLA.

Nathalie and I first crossed paths when I served on the Los Angeles City Council and she served as deputy chief of staff for then Los Angeles Mayor James Hahn. There she managed the office of intergovernmental relations, international trade and protocol, and established, as you just heard, Los Angeles' first ever Office of Immigrant Affairs.

Ms. Rayes went on to serve as vice president of public affairs for Grupo Salinas in the United States and as executive director of Fundacion Azteca America. She currently serves as the president

and CEO of the Latino Victory Fund where she works to increase Latino representation at every level of government.

Last year the Senate confirmed Ms. Rayes to serve as President Biden's appointee to the board of the United States Institute of Peace. At a time with increased conflict around the world we can assure you somebody who represents, embodies, and advances peace through diplomacy.

In an effort to increase Latina representation in the field of international relations Ms. Rayes founded and now chairs the Hope Binational Advisory Group and created the binational fellowship to train 20 Latinas here in the United States and Mexico.

She has not only brought more opportunities to diverse communities but she has also simultaneously strengthened our foreign policy workforce by bringing new ideas and new perspectives to challenge conventional thought and America today is stronger for her service.

Colleagues, since President Biden first took office so much of the Senate's work to advise and consent to the President's nominees have seen the fundamental shift as we are finally confirming nominees who better reflect the diversity of the country they serve and represent.

But that diversity of backgrounds and of thought should not end with judicial nominees or cabinet officials. It must extend to those representing our nation on the world stage because how we present ourselves to the world and who we entrust with our nation's image and diplomatic duties abroad matters.

I have seen Ms. Rayes' leadership up close from her time with the city of Los Angeles to her work nationally for a more inclusive democracy. She has the intellect, the expertise, and the commitment to do the job, not to mention the fundamental understanding of America's potential that will serve us well as U.S. Ambassador to Croatia.

I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting her swift confirmation and I thank you.

Senator DUCKWORTH. Thank you, Senator Padilla.

I would also like to briefly introduce the other nominees on the panel today.

Ambassador Dennis Hankins has been nominated to serve as Ambassador to the Republic of Haiti. Ambassador Hankins is a career member of the Senior Foreign Service and currently serves as the foreign policy adviser to the National Guard Bureau at the Pentagon.

He has previously served as Ambassador to Guinea and to Mali and he has had a lengthy career in public service at the State Department and has included postings in Brazil, Sudan, Saudi Arabia, Thailand, and Haiti, to name just a few.

Welcome, Ambassador Hankins, and we look forward to your testimony once all of the other introductions are complete.

Next, let me introduce James O'Brien. Mr. O'Brien has been nominated to be Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs. He is currently serving as the head of Office of Sanctions Coordination at the State Department and he has previously served as the Special Presidential Envoy for Hostage Af-

fairs and as Special Presidential Envoy for the Balkans, among many other roles across both public and private sectors.

Mr. O'Brien, welcome, and we look forward to your testimony very shortly.

Finally, I am pleased to introduce Tobin John Bradley, who has been nominated to serve as Ambassador to the Republic of Guatemala. Mr. Bradley is a career member of the Senior Foreign Service and currently serves as deputy assistant secretary of state in the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs.

His time in public service has also taken him to posts in Mexico, England, Jordan, and Iraq, in roles supporting our embassies and consulates as well as with the NSC and our mission to NATO. Welcome, Mr. Bradley.

I will now turn it over to each of you to share your testimonies, beginning with Ambassador Hankins.

STATEMENT OF HON. DENNIS B. HANKINS, OF MINNESOTA, 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 HAITI

Mr. HANKINS. Thank you very much.

Madam Chairman, ranking member, and distinguished members of the committee, I am deeply honored to appear before you today and grateful to President Biden and Secretary Blinken for the confidence they have placed in me as their nominee for Ambassador to the Republic of Haiti.

I want to thank my wife, Mira, and my son, Navy Lieutenant Commander Danu Hankins, for their encouragement, sacrifice, and support throughout the years.

As diplomacy is inherently about relationships, my wife of more than 40 years has always been my better three-quarters and the reason for whatever success I have had as a diplomat.

I am particularly honored that today's chairwoman and ranking member have separate titles of former public service near and dear to my heart, that of lieutenant colonel in the Army National Guard and of Ambassador to Japan.

It has been an honor to serve in challenging assignments around the world for these last 39 years. Many of these assignments have been in countries in crisis including Haiti. These posts have offered me the opportunity to make real impact on lives.

If confirmed, I look forward to working with you and other members of Congress to advance U.S. American interests in Haiti. If confirmed, I would draw upon my existing and new relationships with key U.S., international, and Haitian interlocutors to deepen the bilateral ties, protect my American and Haitian colleagues who work tirelessly at the U.S. mission in Haiti, to continue our work combating insecurity and lawlessness, restoring stability, fostering inclusive democratic governance, bolstering economic growth, and meeting basic humanitarian needs.

Of course, an Ambassador has no higher responsibility than the safety and security of American citizens abroad and that will always be my top priority.

Haiti faces multiple and competing crises, all of which are exacerbated by gang-led activities in and around Port-au-Prince and other parts of the country. Gang activity has seriously severely impacted the economy and security of the entire country.

Gangs also hamper the Haitian Government's limited ability to provide public services and the ability of international partners to distribute humanitarian assistance.

If confirmed, I am committed to supporting the Haitian National Police, the HNP, and its efforts to combat gang influence, maintain basic security, and institute community-based prevention efforts.

I want to ensure that HNP members receive extensive and practical human rights training to minimize the risk of abuses. In addition to meeting immediate security needs I will work to address the underlying drivers of violence and instability in Haiti through the U.S. strategy to prevent conflict and promote stability.

This 10-year plan will improve coordination between U.S., Haitian, and external partners to build inclusive and sustainable foundations for long-term security, stability, and democratic governance.

In October 2022 Haitian Prime Minister Ariel Henry requested an international force after gangs blocked access to Haiti's port and main fuel terminal, paralyzing the country, including the cholera response.

The United States and our international partners support this request. What other—whatever forms such a force takes it can give Haitians the space they need to address the many challenges they face. But it is incumbent on them to do so.

Organized criminal group activity continues to exacerbate humanitarian needs and displacement throughout Haiti. Approximately 4.9 million people, nearly half the country's population, will likely require emergency food assistance over the summer. If confirmed, I will work to address with national and international partners the urgent needs of the most vulnerable Haitians.

While we fund humanitarian and security efforts to save lives our collective attention must focus on emerging Haitian solutions to Haiti's political crisis.

Since January there have been no elected officials in Haiti with a current mandate. We have seen important steps to enlarge political consensus since then but there is much to be done to help return the country to democratic order.

Neighboring countries through CARICOM are also deeply engaged in promoting a return to uncontested political legitimacy. If confirmed, I will urge all political parties, indeed, all players in Haitian society to come forward, compromise, and create the conditions for a transparent and inclusive electoral process where all parties can compete for Haitian votes.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I would be honored to respond to any questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Hankins follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. DENNIS B. HANKINS

Madam Chairwoman, ranking member, and distinguished members of the committee, I am deeply honored to appear before you today, and grateful to President Biden and Secretary Blinken for the confidence they have placed in me as their nominee for Ambassador to the Republic of Haiti. I want to thank my wife Mira, and my son, Navy Lieutenant Commander Danu Hankins, for their encouragement, sacrifice, and support throughout the years. As diplomacy is inherently about relationships, my wife of more than 40 years has always been my better three-quarters and the reason for whatever success I have had as a diplomat.

I am particularly honored that today's Chairwoman and ranking member hold separate titles of former public service near and dear to my heart—that of Lieutenant Colonel in the Army National Guard and of Ambassador to Japan. It has been an honor to serve in challenging assignments around the world for the last thirty-nine years. Many of these assignments have been in countries in crisis—including Haiti. These posts have offered me the opportunity to make a real impact on lives. If confirmed, I look forward to working with you and other Members of Congress to advance American interests in Haiti.

If confirmed, I would draw upon my existing and new relationships with key U.S., international, and Haitian interlocutors to deepen bilateral ties, protect my American and Haitian colleagues who work tirelessly at the U.S. mission in Haiti, and continue our work combatting insecurity and lawlessness; restoring stability; fostering inclusive, democratic governance; bolstering economic growth; and meeting basic humanitarian needs. Of course, an Ambassador has no higher responsibility than the safety and security of American citizens abroad and that will always be my top priority.

Haiti faces multiple and competing crises, all of which are exacerbated by gang-led activities in and around Port-au-Prince. Gangs control approximately 30 percent of the capital and are increasingly able to operate in neighborhoods previously regarded as safe. Gang activity has severely impacted the economy and security of the entire country. Gangs also hamper the Haitian Government's limited ability to deliver public services and the ability of international partner to distribute humanitarian assistance.

If confirmed, I am committed to supporting the Haitian National Police (the HNP) in its efforts to combat gang influence, maintain basic security, and institute community-based prevention efforts. I want to ensure that HNP members receive extensive and practical human rights training to minimize the risk of abuses.

In addition to meeting immediate security needs, I will work to address the underlying drivers of violence and instability in Haiti through the U.S. Strategy to Prevent Conflict and Promote Stability. This 10-year plan will improve coordination between U.S., Haitian and external partners to build inclusive and sustainable foundations for long-term security, stability, and democratic governance.

In October 2022, Haitian Prime Minister Ariel Henry requested an international force after gangs blocked access to Haiti's port and main fuel terminal, paralyzing the country. The United States and our international partners support this request. Whatever form such a force takes, it can give Haitians the space they need to address the many challenges they face—but it is incumbent on them to do so.

Organized criminal group activity continues to exacerbate humanitarian needs and displacement throughout Haiti. Approximately 4.9 million people—nearly half of the country's population—will likely require emergency food assistance over the summer. If confirmed, I will work to address with national and international partners the urgent needs of the most vulnerable Haitians.

While we fund humanitarian and security efforts to save lives, our collective attention must focus on emerging Haitian solutions to Haiti's political crisis. Since January, there have been no elected officials in Haiti with a current mandate. We have seen Prime Minister Henry make several significant steps towards creating a path forward for inclusive elections, by installing the High Transition Council, reconstituting the Supreme Court, and holding political roundtables with opposing political parties. Neighboring countries though CARICOM are also deeply engaged in promoting a return to uncontested political legitimacy. If confirmed, I will urge all political parties (indeed, all players in Haitian society) to come forward, compromise, and create a transparent and inclusive electoral process where all parties can compete for Haitian votes.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I would be honored to respond to any questions.

Senator DUCKWORTH. Thank you. Wow. You landed that on a dime to the second.

No pressure, Mr. O'Brien. Your testimony, please.

STATEMENT OF HON. JAMES C. O'BRIEN, OF NEBRASKA, NOMINATED TO BE AN ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE (EUROPEAN AND EURASIAN AFFAIRS)

Mr. O'BRIEN. Thank you, Madam Chairman, Senator Hagerty, Senator Menendez, other members of the committee. I am honored to have been nominated for this position and that you are considering me for it.

I have submitted written testimony with some extensive remarks on the region. Fundamentally, the job is to promote American security, prosperity, and values by working with, sometimes on, our strongest partners across Europe and Eurasia.

That is the global platform that makes Americans more prosperous and secure. I could do this work only with the support of my family, my wife, Mary, my children, Jamie and Sean, my father-in-law, John O'Donnell, and my sisters Meghan and Nan, and my father, James O'Brien.

I was talking to him this morning and he reminded me of a story that captures the themes in my testimony. A few years ago as my mom was succumbing to the disease that killed her she said she wanted to go see the place where her father died in World War II. He was a private in the U.S. Army in the Hurtgen Forest.

Now, this was the single event in my mom's life. She went from being as, in her words, daddy's girl living a middle class life in the Bay Area and then had to move cross country, kind of live hand to mouth in what she called a house of widows with her grandmother, mother, little sisters, and some aunts.

For the first time she wanted to go here because she knew she was nearing the end. So we drove around Belgium where her father had written extensively, and Western Germany, through as much of the Hurtgen Forest as she could manage and finally to the town that was the object of the campaign where he died.

And as we walked around she looked and she said, this place is beautiful—I had only ever seen it in the black and white photos that showed the battle damage of 1944 and 1945 and I knew it would not be that way but I could not understand how well off and beautiful it is.

And then she got very quiet and then she got mad and she asked us to drive her out of the town. And as we drove her out of town she kept saying, those people have normal lives. I did not get the life that was the normal I thought I was going to get and I just wish they knew.

And then we visited one of the U.S. military cemeteries nearby where many of the soldiers killed with my grandfather had been handled to be brought home. She broke down in tears.

She said, you know, I am so proud of what he gave because this area we drive across borders nobody stops us. It is well off. It is prosperous. People are peaceful. There is no chance of war and so I am so proud of that. I wish I could ask him if he was proud.

Now, why do I talk about this? It is not because it is a unique story but it has been on my mind a lot. Tens of millions of people can tell a similar story and those of you who served as you have,

Madam Chair, can tell much more personalized stories about the trauma of war.

But I think it captures two themes that are very important as we look to go forward. One of them is we are talking about human pain that will live on for decades. What Russia has unleashed in Ukraine is going to stay with us for generations and the same is true of people who have been surviving conflict left over from the Western Balkans in the 1990s where I was proud to serve the country, through those southern Caucasus where several of you, Chairman Menendez, have been very vocal advocates for the victims of those conflicts.

We have to remember that this is not just geopolitics. It is about humans and how they recover.

The second thing we can learn is that we know how to succeed. Senator Hagerty, you asked what is the plan—what is the way forward. I look forward to working with you on that.

But we do have models where we can integrate economies like Ukraine's into more wealthy economies and lift up the people of that region. The same is possible for the people of the southern Caucasus around the Black Sea and through the Western Balkans if we handle the next year or two properly.

We know how to go from the black and white photos of the war damage of 1945 to the beautiful little town that I took my mother to eight years ago.

Now, what do we need in order to do that? I think there are two things I would love to work with this committee on as we go forward. One is a very strong platform in the EUR Bureau. It is 12,000 people, produces almost two-thirds of the action items the secretary operates on. They need the resources and support to be great at their job because they are creative and they are wonderful.

The second thing is cooperation with the committee and I look forward to that on both sides of the aisle. Our opponents say America cannot be relied on. We will have an election and we are going to reverse course.

If we all stand together to say America stands for what works then I know we will succeed, and I look forward to working with you on that and I look forward to answering questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. O'Brien follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. JAMES C. O'BRIEN

Chair Duckworth, Ranking Member Hagerty, members of the committee, I am honored to have been nominated to be Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs. Thank you for the opportunity to appear today.

I am here because of the support of my family—my wife Mary, our children Sean and Jamie, Mary's father John O'Donnell, and my father Jim and sisters Meghan and Nan. I grew up in Nebraska, and my family still live in Omaha. My mother, Jane, who died early in 2021, instilled a love of community and public service that has shaped my life.

The job of our diplomats is to promote American security, prosperity, and values. Today that mission addresses war in Europe and the rise of China.

First, Russia's further invasion of Ukraine touches every aspect of Europe and Eurasia. Ukraine, which continues to fight courageously and successfully, draws on a coalition led by the United States comprising dozens of countries, including most in this region. Together, we provide Ukraine with the security assistance to defend itself and the humanitarian and economic support to respond and rebuild in the face of continuing Russian attacks. We are also working together to restrict the Kremlin's access to resources necessary to wage its unjustified war and diminish Russia's

future destabilizing capabilities. The coalition's strength is critical, and we must work to keep it powerful, aligned, and up to date. The number of elections across the coalition in the next 16 months means that this will require active diplomacy.

For many countries in the region the next period will be pivotal. Ukraine knows from this month's Vilnius Summit and announcements by the European Union that its future lies in the transatlantic security and economic space. Moldova, too, has never had a clearer path to its EU future. These European nations need to show their own people, and ours, that their societies will be more prosperous and free—and their democratic and economic institutions stronger—as the region emerges from this hot war. Our assistance and experience—especially that of our private sector—will be essential.

The six states of the western Balkans should be given renewed clear requirements, and incentives, to reform as they make their way toward the European Union. Georgia and countries across the Caucasus to the Caspian will have opportunities to build new relationships to Europe and global trade routes. U.S. engagement will define the choices before each country.

In short, the next year can set the template for a deeper, stronger rules-based community of freedom across this region, touching the Arctic, the Atlantic, the Adriatic, the Black Sea, and the steppes of central Asia. This is the fabric that our citizens depend on every day to keep them safe and create more economic opportunity.

One aspect of this work deserves special focus. The U.S. leads a global alliance network—rooted in Europe and NATO—that no other country can match. We must ensure that this framework is fit for purpose going forward. Next year's 75th anniversary NATO summit here in Washington will let us reinforce key elements: an iron-clad Article 5; our enduring commitment to each other to spend at least 2 percent of GDP on defense investment; a NATO with deeper links to the Indo-Pacific; and growing Alliance of 31—and, with Sweden, 32 members—with an unwavering open-door policy.

We must also work to strengthen the commitment of all countries across the region to democracy and the rule of law.

Third, I will focus on our country's prosperity. Our society is starting to see huge technological leaps in artificial intelligence, energy production, and medicine. Over the next decades, these advances can make us, especially our middle class, richer and more secure or lead to new battles over emerging technology. We should work with our closest partners to share approaches and agree on the risks posed by alternative systems. Wherever possible we should agree on the approaches to critical minerals, supply chains, the uses of new technologies, and the protection of our critical infrastructure including from cyberattacks. Working with the EU is key—including through the U.S.-EU Trade and Technology Council (TTC) and U.S.-EU China Dialogue. A new European Commission will take office in 2024; the agenda it sets for its five-year term will be important for the next two U.S. administrations.

Madam Chair and ranking member, it would be a privilege to join the 12,000 hard-working, dedicated men and women of our State Department EUR community. This team has done extraordinary work to sustain an America that is more secure and more prosperous because Europe is whole and free. I look forward to working together with them to develop plans of action to realize the objectives laid out here over the next 6, 12, 18 months.

I also look forward to working with the Members of this Committee.

Over the next 18 months, our adversaries will be questioning whether the promises America makes are ones we will keep. Our work will be much more effective when others hear our shared commitment to an America that is stronger with a Europe whole and free.

Thank you and I welcome your questions.

Senator DUCKWORTH. Thank you. Very moving and insightful. Thank you, Mr. O'Brien.

Ms. Rayes

STATEMENT OF NATHALIE RAYES, OF MASSACHUSETTS, NOMINATED TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA

Ms. RAYES. Madam Chair Duckworth, Ranking Member Hagerty, and distinguished members of this committee, I am honored for the

privilege of speaking with you today as the President's nominee to be the next United States Ambassador to the Republic of Croatia.

Thank you, Chairman Menendez and Senator Padilla, for your kind words of introduction. I am grateful to President Biden and Secretary Blinken for their confidence in my ability to serve in this role and represent the interests of the American people.

If confirmed, serving as Ambassador will be my greatest honor and I pledge to work with this committee and Congress to advance U.S. interests and priorities in Croatia.

I am here today thanks to the love and support of my family and friends. My husband, Tarek Samad, devotes his time to family and finding cures for brain diseases. We are blessed with two boys here with me today, Julian and Alexander. Both are kind and respectful—and they asked me not to cry—and I am proud to be their mother.

I also have my mother and my wise older sister here with me today and my father watching from above. I am also thankful to my friends and family and my friends here and those who are watching from home.

I have dedicated my career to international relations, cultural exchanges, and civic engagement in the public, private, and nonprofit spheres. I have come full circle from a young fellow at the United States Embassy in Cairo where I first was exposed to the world of diplomacy to have proudly served for over six years on the board of the Woodrow Wilson Center and now as of 2022 on the Senate-confirmed board of the U.S. Institute of Peace.

I embody the American dream. Following the footsteps of my immigrant parents, from them I learned discipline, dedication, hard work, and the endless possibilities of our United States of America.

I began my career in Los Angeles, the world's twentieth largest economy and where one of the biggest Croatian diasporas has flourished in San Pedro since the late 1800s.

I created the Law Center's Office of Immigrant Affairs, manage intergovernmental relations, trade, protocol, and champions civic partnerships by establishing international alliances in sister cities with San Salvador, with Ischia, with Beirut and Yerevan.

I also created powerful coalitions in the private sector that improves civil society and strengthened bridges between the United States and Mexico. I am very proud of spearheading several initiatives to promote open and nonpartisan dialogue between the United States and Mexico.

My nonprofit sector experience has cemented my belief that transparency, accountability, and representation safeguard a safe democracy, which we are so fortunate to have in our great nation.

Most importantly, I have learned the power to convene and that success is reached by building trustworthy partnerships. If confirmed, I will use these skills to advance United States interests and values in Croatia.

Croatia and the United States have strong security, economic, and cultural ties. Croatia embraces transatlantic cooperation and shares our commitment to safeguarding democracy, the rule of law, and human rights.

As a close NATO ally Croatia is a strong advocate of many joint issues and, if confirmed, I will work to deepen our defense and se-

curity cooperation and continue to build a bilateral relationship based on our common values.

If confirmed, my number-one priority will be the safety and security of Americans in Croatia.

Second, I will work with Croatia to strengthen transatlantic security in countering Russia's war in Ukraine and malign influence in the region.

Third, as Croatia is poised to be an energy exporter I will work with Croatia to expand its role in advancing energy security and diversification.

Fourth, I will leverage our strong partnership to advance EU accession for all Western Balkan countries, which includes promoting respect for democracy and increasing U.S. trade and investment.

Fifth, I will deepen the connection between our two nations by increasing cultural exchanges, youth-focused initiatives, and cooperation between academic institutions to engage scholars, students, and teachers.

In July 2013 Croatia became the latest member of the European Union and at the beginning of this year Croatia adopted the euro and became a member of the border-free Schengen Area.

If confirmed, my goal is to inform the American private that Croatia is open for U.S. business. I will work with Croatia to help advance joint U.S.-EU priorities and encourage Croatia to help its neighbors pursue their own EU accession aspirations.

I believe that accession reforms are as much an economic incentive as a democracy-building project driving prosperity and trade.

If confirmed, I will proudly serve the United States of America with empathy, with humility, and with integrity. Thank you very much for the opportunity to appear before you today. I am happy to answer any of your questions.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Rayes follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF NATHALIE RAYES

Madam Chair Duckworth, Ranking Member Hagerty, and distinguished members of the committee, I am grateful for the privilege of speaking with you today as the President's nominee to be the next United States Ambassador to the Republic of Croatia. Thank you, Chairman Menendez and Senator Padilla, for your kind words of support.

I am thankful to President Biden and Secretary Blinken for their confidence in my ability to serve in this role and represent the interests of the American people. If confirmed, serving as Ambassador would be a great honor, and I pledge to work with this committee and Congress to advance U.S. interests and priorities in Croatia.

I am here today due to the love and support of my family. My husband, Tarek Samad, devotes his time to family and to finding cures for brain diseases. We are blessed with two boys here with me today, Julian and Alexander. Both are kind and respectful, and I am proud to be their mother. I also have my mother and my wise older sister here today and my father watching from above. I am also thankful to my friends who are here and those that are watching from home.

I have dedicated my career to international relations, cultural exchange, and civic engagement, in public, private and nonprofit spheres. I have come full circle from a young fellow at the United States Embassy in Cairo, where I was first exposed to the world of diplomacy to have proudly served for over six years on the board of the Woodrow Wilson Center and, as of 2022, on the Senate-confirmed board of the United States Institute of Peace.

I embody the American dream, having followed in the footsteps of my immigrant parents. From them, I learned discipline, dedication, hard work, and the endless possibilities of our United States of America.

I began my career in Los Angeles, the world's 20th largest economy, where one of the biggest Croatian diasporas has flourished in San Pedro since the late 1800s. I created Los Angeles's first Office of Immigrant Affairs, managed intergovernmental relations, trade, and protocol and championed civic partnerships by establishing international alliances and Sister Cities with San Salvador, Ischia, Beirut, and Yerevan.

I also created powerful coalitions in the private sector that improved civil society and strengthened the bridges between the United States and Mexico. I am very proud of spearheading several initiatives to promote open and nonpartisan dialogue between the United States and Mexico.

My nonprofit sector experience has cemented my belief that transparency, accountability, and representation safeguard a stable democracy, which we are fortunate to have in our great nation. Most importantly, I have learned the power to convene, and that success is reached by building trustworthy partnerships. If confirmed, I will use these skills to advance United States interests and values in Croatia.

Croatia and the United States have strong security, economic, and cultural ties. Croatia embraces transatlantic cooperation and shares our commitment to safeguarding democracy, the rule of law, and human rights.

As a close NATO Ally, Croatia is a strong advocate on many joint issues, and if confirmed, I will work to deepen our defense and security cooperation and continue to build a bilateral relationship based on our common values.

If confirmed, my number one priority will be the safety and security of Americans in Croatia. Second, I will work with Croatia to strengthen transatlantic security, counter Russia's war against Ukraine, and combat malign activities and corrosive investment in the region. Third, as Croatia is poised to be an energy exporter, I will work with Croatia to expand its role in advancing energy security and diversification. Fourth, I will leverage our strong partnership to advance EU accession for all Western Balkan countries, which includes promoting respect for democracy and human rights and increasing U.S. trade and investment. Fifth, I will deepen the connection between our two nations by increasing cultural exchanges, youth-focused initiatives, and cooperation between academic institutions to engage scholars, students, and teachers.

In July 2013, Croatia became the latest member of the European Union, and at the beginning of this year, Croatia adopted the euro and became a member of the border-free Schengen Area. If confirmed, my goal is to inform the American private sector that Croatia is open for U.S. business. I will work with Croatia to help advance joint U.S.-EU priorities and encourage Croatia to help its neighbors pursue their own EU accession aspirations. I believe that accession reforms are as much an economic incentive as a democracy-building project, driving prosperity and trade.

If confirmed, I will proudly serve the United States with empathy, humility, and integrity.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to appear before you today. I am happy to answer your questions.

Senator DUCKWORTH. Thank you, Ms. Rayes.
Mr. Bradley?

STATEMENT OF TOBIN JOHN BRADLEY, 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 TO THE REPUBLIC OF GUATEMALA

Mr. BRADLEY. Chairwoman Duckworth, Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Hagerty, distinguished members of the committee, I am honored to appear before you today as President Biden's nominee to serve as the U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Guatemala.

I would like to thank President Biden and Secretary Blinken for the confidence they have shown in me and the privilege and responsibility to be considered for this position.

If confirmed, I look forward to working with you and the Congress more broadly to advance U.S. interests in Guatemala.

In over 25 years as a career Foreign Service officer I have had the honor to represent the United States and Latin America, the Near East, Europe, as well as multiple postings here in Washington including service at the National Security Council under two presidents.

Whether supporting the first democratic elections in post-war Iraq, strengthening the NATO alliance, protecting American citizens in Matamoros, or building partner capabilities in dozens of countries to combat drugs and transnational crime I have dedicated my career to advancing U.S. security and democratic values.

I have also sought to cultivate innovation and apply creative problem solving to the challenges that face us and our partners.

I would like to acknowledge my family today. They are here. They have inspired and anchored me on this journey. Following his father's sacrifice in World War II, my father served with distinction as a city manager for 45 years.

My mother was a teacher, a church volunteer, and a medical service provider helping thousands. My partner, a proud immigrant who has stood with me for 25 years through war zones and late night shifts, dedicated years as a D.C. public school teacher.

My sister, who represents all my siblings, is a part of a proud Navy family that has deployed around the world in service to our nation. They have taught me anything is possible with education, determination, and hard work.

Finally, I know my uncle, Charlie Ward, who has served this Senate for 25 years as chief of staff to Speaker Carl Albert and Senator Boren, would be so proud to see me appear before you today.

In addition to its rich culture, significant World Heritage Sites, and abundant biodiversity, Guatemala's role in the region and beyond is vital. Guatemala has the largest economy in Central America. It is a critical transit node for people as well as licit and illicit goods. It has a strong and vibrant civil society.

Guatemala's diplomatic ties with Taiwan, support for Israel, and condemnation of Russia's illegal war in Ukraine provide a foundation to advanced broader strategic interests.

Our geography and strong family bonds between our two countries make our paths inextricably shared. We have much to gain from cooperation that supports our security and regional prosperity. Thanks to strong U.S. congressional support U.S. foreign assistance is advancing that vision. If confirmed, I will be a conscientious steward of U.S. taxpayer money.

I will endeavor with this committee, the current and incoming Guatemalan Government, civil society, and the private sector to address root causes of irregular migration, violence, corruption, poverty, and malnutrition.

I will also promote inclusive economic opportunity and a level playing field for U.S. businesses so that Americans and Guatemalans can prosper together.

The United States and our international partners are closely monitoring Guatemala's runoff presidential election on August 20th. A leader chosen freely and fairly in accordance with Guatemala's constitution would have the mandate of the Guatemalan people and, in turn, be an effective partner to the United States.

While there are many challenges, Guatemala's close cooperation on key issues provides opportunities. Guatemala is implementing the Los Angeles Declaration on Migration and Protection and cooperating to strengthen reintegration services for returned unaccompanied children and families.

Guatemala works with U.S. law enforcement to stem violence, combat transnational crime, and convict human traffickers under new laws.

If confirmed, I will work to help Guatemala strengthen its own border against illicit trafficking and continue to advance safe, lawful, and humane migration management.

I will also support Guatemalan authorities and civil society to strengthen Guatemala's democratic and legal institutions needed to sustain the peace that ended 36 years of conflict.

The embassy in Guatemala is one of the largest in the hemisphere with a talented and committed team of U.S. and local staff. If confirmed, I would be honored to lead them.

My utmost priority will be to protect the safety and security of the embassy team and of U.S. citizens who live in and visit Guatemala. I will be thrilled to return to this vibrant region and to work to harness our collective strengths to advance U.S. interests.

To members of this committee, if confirmed I look forward to partnering with each of you to further strengthen the U.S.-Guatemala relationship.

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

[The prepared statement of Mr. Bradley follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF TOBIN JOHN BRADLEY

Chairwoman Duckworth, Ranking Member Hagerty, distinguished members of the committee, I am honored to appear before you today as President Biden's nominee to serve as U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Guatemala.

I would like to thank President Biden and Secretary Blinken for the confidence they have shown in me and the privilege and responsibility to be considered for this position. If confirmed, I look forward to working with you and the Congress more broadly to advance U.S. interests in Guatemala.

In over 25 years as a career Foreign Service Officer, I have had the honor to represent the United States in Latin America, the Near East, and Europe, as well as multiple postings here in Washington, including service at the National Security Council under two presidents. Whether supporting the first democratic elections in post-war Iraq, strengthening the NATO alliance, protecting American citizens in Matamoros, or building partner capabilities in dozens of countries to combat drugs and transnational crime, I have dedicated my career to advancing U.S. security and democratic values. I have also sought to cultivate innovation and apply creative problem solving to the challenges that face us and our partners.

I would like to acknowledge my family here with me today. They have inspired and anchored me on this journey. Following his father's sacrifice in World War II, my father served with distinction as a city manager for 45 years; my mother was a teacher, church volunteer, and medical service provider helping thousands; my partner, a proud immigrant who has stood with me for 25 years through warzones and overnight shifts, dedicated years as a D.C. public schoolteacher. My sister, who represents all my siblings, is a part of a proud Navy family that has deployed around the world in service to our nation. They have taught me anything is possible with education, determination, and hard work. Finally, I know my Uncle Charlie Ward, who served the Senate for 25 years as Chief of Staff to Speaker Carl Albert and Senator Boren, would be so proud to see me appear before you today.

In addition to its rich culture, significant world heritage sites, and abundant biodiversity, Guatemala's role in the region and beyond is vital. Guatemala has the largest economy in Central America. It is a critical transit node for people, as well as licit and illicit goods. It has a strong and vibrant civil society. Guatemala's diplo-

matic ties with Taiwan, support for Israel, and condemnation of Russia's illegal war in Ukraine provide a foundation to advance broader strategic interests. Our geography and strong family bonds between our two countries make our paths inextricably shared.

We have much to gain from cooperation that supports our security and regional prosperity. Thanks to strong U.S. congressional support, U.S. foreign assistance is advancing that vision. If confirmed, I will be a conscientious steward of U.S. taxpayer money. I will endeavor with this committee, the current and incoming Guatemalan Government, civil society, and the private sector to address root causes of irregular migration—violence, corruption, poverty, and malnutrition. I will also promote inclusive economic opportunity and a level playing field for U.S. businesses so that Americans and Guatemalans can prosper together.

The United States and our international partners are closely monitoring Guatemala's runoff presidential election on August 20. A leader chosen freely and fairly, in accordance with Guatemala's constitution, would have the mandate of the Guatemalan people, and in turn, be an effective partner for the United States. While there are many challenges, Guatemala's close cooperation on key issues provides opportunities. Guatemala is implementing the Los Angeles Declaration on Migration and Protection and cooperating to strengthen reintegration services for returned unaccompanied children and families. Guatemala works with U.S. law enforcement to stem violence, combat transnational crime, and convict human traffickers under new laws. If confirmed, I will work to help Guatemala strengthen its own border against illicit trafficking and continue to advance safe, lawful, and humane migration management. I will also support Guatemalan authorities and civil society to strengthen Guatemala's democratic and legal institutions needed to sustain the peace that ended 36 years of conflict.

The U.S. Embassy in Guatemala is one of the largest in the hemisphere, with a talented and committed team of U.S. and local staff. If confirmed, I would be honored to lead them. My utmost priority will be to protect the safety and security of the Embassy team and of U.S. citizens who live in and visit Guatemala. I would be thrilled to return to this vibrant region and work to harness our collective strengths to champion U.S. interests.

Chairwoman Duckworth, Ranking Member Hagerty, and distinguished members of the committee, if confirmed, I look forward to partnering with you to further strengthen the U.S.-Guatemalan relationship. Thank you for the opportunity, and I look forward to your questions.

Senator DUCKWORTH. Thank you, Mr. Bradley, and thank all of you for your testimony. We will start a period of questions now.

First, I have a few questions that speak to the importance that this committee places on responsiveness by all officials in the executive branch. I would ask each of you to provide just a verbal yes or no to this series of questions.

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

[All witnesses answer in the affirmative.]

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

[All witnesses answer in the affirmative.]

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

[All witnesses answer in the affirmative.]

Senator DUCKWORTH. Thank you. And, finally, do you commit to promptly responding to requests for briefings and information requested by the committee and its designated staff?

[All witnesses answer in the affirmative.]

Senator DUCKWORTH. Thank you. Now, on to other questions. Chairman Menendez will be returning but I will begin with the first line of questions.

Mr. O'Brien, you come to this position during the biggest security crisis that Europe has faced in a generation and at a transformative moment in U.S.-Europe relations.

While European unity has shown tremendous resilience in the face of Russian aggression, it remains to be seen how it will weather what increasingly appears to be a years-long fight for Ukrainian sovereignty.

Mr. O'Brien, in the wake of both the aborted mutiny of the Wagner Group and an ongoing Ukrainian counter offensive how do you assess, on the one hand, the ability of Russia to sustain the war effort and maintain the gains it made last year and, on the other, the ability of our NATO allies to maintain the level of support they have been able to provide thus far?

Mr. O'BRIEN. Thank you, Madam Chair.

First, I look forward to working on these issues with all the members who are interested. I think the willingness of our coalition to stay together depends in large part on their sense of the solidarity and sustainability of American leadership in the effort and that needs to come from both sides of the aisle.

I feel at this moment I would much rather be in our coalition supporting Ukraine than on the Russian side, largely, alone. On Russia, I will not speculate about what is happening within. Secretary Blinken has spoken about the difficulty of understanding the internal dynamics but, clearly, there has been some fracturing.

But from the posture of my current job managing the sanctions side we do see Russia facing some constraints. It is building its indigenous capacity to create certain weapons but it is less and less able to source key components from many economies abroad.

That puts a limit on its ability to wage a modern war. Instead, you see them waging static warfare, attacking civilian targets including economic targets over the last week or so, not able to work with modern communications, rapid movement, precision munitions, et cetera.

We also see real constraints on the Russian economy. They are—it is a deep economy. It was one of the largest 10 in the world at the start of this war. So they will be able to sustain themselves for quite a while. We do not see a collapse.

But they are going to be forced to make difficult choices. They began the war with probably \$850 billion U.S. in sort of ready cash. Now it is probably about \$250 billion. We think there will be some choices facing it over the next several years. In the longer term, we think its economy will shrink considerably.

We expect by the end of the decade Russia will be 20 percent smaller than it would have been if it had not waged this war. That makes it a less attractive partner less able to sustain this conflict at the rate that they think that they can.

On the other side, our coalition has been remarkably stable and I think what we are seeing right now is that Russia is committing outrages in order to try to hasten some progress in this war and instead it is isolating itself.

Its attack on the global food system by taking more than 30 million tons of Ukrainian grain out of the global food supply that strips the Global South of about 24 million tons.

That is food for tens of millions of people, and Russia cannot replace that. So now it is facing a lot more isolation. So I would rather be where we are. The work that we do to keep people unified is important.

And I will just close with one last note. Senator Hagerty talked about the importance of burden sharing and I completely agree. We are now in a position where U.S. contributions are largely matched by what is coming from the rest of the coalition. That includes specialized contributions.

We are thirteenth in terms of GDP on the amount of security assistance we are providing. So I think we are in a place now where everyone knows they have to put their shoulder to the wheel in support of this effort because we are all going to benefit when Ukraine wins.

Senator DUCKWORTH. Thank you.

Senator Hagerty?

Senator HAGERTY. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Ms. Rayes, I would like to start with you. First, thank you for being here. You have long been a critic of the brutal Chavez-Maduro regimes in Venezuela. I agree with you.

The Maduro regime today has provided a beachhead for malign activity in the Western Hemisphere for China, for Iran, for Russia. They have extended a lifeline to Cuba and, frankly, they support illicit drug smuggling and money laundering throughout the region. Those concerns are very significant.

I understand that you hold dual citizenship as a Venezuelan citizen and as an American citizen, and if you are confirmed I want to ask you on the record for myself and for the committee will you agree to renounce your Venezuelan citizenship?

Ms. RAYES. Well, thank you very much, Senator Hagerty, for that question. Yes, I do also renounce—denounce, I should say—I would denounce my Venezuelan citizenship, yes.

Senator HAGERTY. Thank you. I appreciate that.

One of my concerns has been with this administration's foreign policy and its tendency to moralize on issues that may have great political interest but are not directly at our national security and economic interest.

And you have served on the board of Planned Parenthood Action Fund. Planned Parenthood Action Fund advocates for some very divisive policies, for example, expanding the Supreme Court, taking away the Helms Amendment—dispensing with the Helms amendment—even advocating for so-called gender affirming care.

As you mentioned in your opening testimony, if you are confirmed to be U.S. Ambassador it will be your highest honor, but it will also be your great responsibility and I would like to know, first, do you agree with the positions of Planned Parenthood Action Fund?

Ms. RAYES. If confirmed, my sole focus will be representing the American people and the American interests in Croatia.

Senator HAGERTY. Well, you did a good job of articulating your plans there. I want to encourage you strongly to stick to those plans, please, and please commit to us that you will not use this as a platform in any way to advocate for these other policies.

Ms. RAYES. Senator, you have my full assurance that I am there to represent the American people and the American interest.

Senator HAGERTY. Great. Thank you very much.

I would like to turn my next question, if I might, to you, Mr. Bradley.

I appreciate your recognition of Guatemala's strategic importance to the United States. You did a good job of that in your opening statement. As you know, no partner is perfect. Guatemala, though, has long faced difficult challenges of combating public corruption like many nations in the Western region—the Western Hemisphere, I am sorry.

I am concerned, however, that the Biden administration has created the perception that it is picking sides in Guatemala's presidential election, and so my question of you is if you will commit to this committee that you will respect the outcome of Guatemala's August presidential election regardless of who wins.

Mr. BRADLEY. Yes, Senator. Thank you for the question. You have my commitment that I will respect the outcome of the Guatemalan election. That is, we will work with anyone in Guatemala. As I have discussed, our future is shared and there are so many issues that we need to work on together. The Guatemalan people are at a democratic milestone and that they have an opportunity to freely elect a leader. This—

Senator HAGERTY [continuing]. Yeah. My point is that we need to respect that and not be perceived as being in any way meddling with it, and so I hope that you will certainly follow up on that perception.

Mr. BRADLEY. I will work with—

Senator HAGERTY [continuing]. I appreciate that.

When I met with President Giammattei, as I mentioned earlier, he correctly, I think, identified Guatemala as a choke point for illegal migration from Central America.

He talked to me about the national security crisis that presents for his nation as well as for the United States, and during the previous administration Guatemala was a key partner for the United States in countering the crisis. They signed an asylum cooperation agreement that helped stem the flow of illegal immigrants.

But since January of 2021 that flow has exploded, and it has created numerous problems not only here in America but also in Guatemala, and during our meeting President Giammattei advised me that technical assistance—training, equipment—that that type of activity would be far more effective, in his mind, to help counter illegal migration flows, illegal drug flows. He felt that that would be far more effective than increasing funding for nongovernmental organizations. Do you agree with President Giammattei's perspective?

Mr. BRADLEY. Thank you, Senator. I believe that we should use every tool that the embassy has to reduce the pressure on our Southwest border and to support humane and orderly migration and direct—

Senator HAGERTY [continuing]. Would you give some perspective on what you would do—I am sorry.

Mr. BRADLEY [continuing]. And direct support to the Government.

Senator HAGERTY. I am just interested your perspective on what we could do to help support strengthening the rule of law in Guatemala to help them enhance border security and deepen our economic ties.

Mr. BRADLEY. Senator Hagerty, border security has been a focus of my career over 10 years. Through my management of the INL program in Mexico City we incubated new technologies and innovative approaches for the betterment of both of our countries and one of those innovations is actually currently being piloted at the border in Matamoros in Brownsville and I helped to pioneer that with my team.

So we worked with the CBP, Sandia National Laboratories to actually show that you can increase dramatically border security while decreasing wait times for licit travel.

And so I understand the interconnected interdisciplinary nature of the border challenge and I believe I can bring those lessons learned and the things we are actually piloting now to Guatemala to help them protect their own border. They want to protect their own border too, as President Giammattei has said, and that means that Guatemalan border security is our security.

Senator HAGERTY. I agree. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Senator DUCKWORTH. Senator Shaheen?

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you, Madam Chair, and congratulations to each of our nominees. Thank you for your willingness to continue to serve the country.

Because I chair the European Affairs Subcommittee I am going to focus my questions on you, Ambassador O'Brien and Ms. Rayes.

And, Ambassador O'Brien, I understand that you were in Tbilisi recently to look at the sanctions implementation. Can you give us an update on what is happening currently in Georgia with respect to the Russia sanctions?

Mr. O'BRIEN. Yes, and I look forward to working with you on this issue and other issues in Georgia and around the region. I really appreciate your leadership and it will be very important as we go forward.

I was in Tbilisi along with my EU and U.K. counterparts so we presented a united front. I think there is some very encouraging news in that the Georgian customs authorities are taking real steps to restrict the most battlefield relevant items from being transshipped to Russia.

What we want to do is make sure that they have complete control over movements across the Georgian border whether it is by airfields or by the road border, and so that is continuing work and there is a lot of assistance being provided to that.

But they have been good partners at being transparent about what they see and the question now is can we get better data going forward and can we have a clear eye on what is happening with the air flights that have resumed recently between Georgia and Russia.

Senator SHAHEEN. So the resumption of those flights—are we concerned that that is going to have—provide an ability to evade sanctions?

Mr. O'BRIEN. I would not say concerned but it is clearly a possibility and so we want to make sure we know what is going on those planes on their way back to Russia.

Senator SHAHEEN. And ahead of the elections next year what can be done to engage the Georgian Government further to strengthen their institutions?

Mr. O'BRIEN. Yeah, it is a great—it is a great question.

So, as you know, the U.S. designated a set of judges who were notorious within Georgia for control of the judicial system. This is one of the first requirements for Georgia to make progress toward its European perspective.

So we are working closely with the European Union and have made clear to the Georgian Government that improvements on the appointment, disciplining, and monitoring of judges is a key area for making progress.

More broadly, I met this week with a group of civil society activists from Georgia. It is one of the most vibrant groups in the world. I am sure you all saw the same set of people. They make—they embody the commitment of the Georgian people. More than 90 percent of the Georgian people say they want to be part of Europe. There is no polarization on that.

And what has to happen is the group of economic interests behind the Government need to be made aware that the reforms necessary to join Europe are in fact where the country is moving.

So we are working with our European colleagues to make clear that the conditions they have set are also reflected in our assistance and in our conditions and that we need to see progress on these over the next month. The fall will be critical because of the report that will come from the European Council.

Senator SHAHEEN. That is a mixed report but has some encouraging news in there.

I want to go—move to the Balkans now because as you pointed out you did a lot of work in Bosnia-Herzegovina in particular and I wonder if, given Milorad Dodik's increased level of rhetoric against a united country, are we concerned that that will endanger the renewal of EUFOR at the United Nations and what more can we do to address what Dodik is doing?

Mr. O'BRIEN. I think—and this is something we should discuss in another setting as well—but Milorad Dodik controls the Government in a part of Bosnia. He wants to control the resources and all of the patronage that flow from those resources in that area.

So we have the ability to reduce his control over the money. That is partly what is causing him to challenge the state processes. I think with our European colleagues, with the High Representative for Dayton implementation, we are making clear to him that what he is doing is unacceptable, that there will be clear consequences for it, and that he needs to start stepping back from these postures.

The military force that is there is critical for security. I think we have made clear throughout that it is there under EUFOR or as NATO. It is there in some capacity no matter what and its presence is essential.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you. Madam Chair, can I ask one more question of Ms. Rayes?

Croatia is one of the—or is one of three constituent peoples in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia plays an important role, I think, in sustaining peace in the country.

Can you discuss how you would work with the Croatian Government to encourage a continued positive force in terms of what happens in Bosnia-Herzegovina?

Ms. RAYES. Well, I appreciate that question, Senator.

The U.S. remains committed, as you know, to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Bosnia-Herzegovina and, obviously, to the Dayton Accord framework of one country, two entities, and three constituencies and if confirmed I will work with the Croatian Government to engage Bosnian and Croats and their counterparts to support their governance reforms.

So I would be that conduit between the Croatian Government and the Croats in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Senator DUCKWORTH. Thank you.

Senator Kaine?

Senator KAINE. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Mr. Bradley, I am the chair of the Americas Subcommittee here, and while Guatemala has been a really important partner for us for a long time I have also been very disappointed in recent years with the efforts to chase anti-corruption prosecutors out of the country.

Judges who have focused on corruption have been targeted. Journalists have been targeted. A number of them now live in Virginia. They would rather be back in Guatemala. I was even visiting with some last night.

And so I think the work of the embassy and the work of the Ambassador, should you be confirmed and I am confident you will be, upholding democracy and anti-corruption standards is going to be a really important thing.

I am sure most of you know that we are in the last weeks of a runoff election for president. The two candidates who prevailed in the first round there was an effort by the existing government to block one of the two successful candidates from moving forward in the election.

It is really important—we do not have a favorite in this but it is really important that Guatemala not disable a democracy from working. My understanding is the United States is going to host both of the two finalist candidates here to show that we want to continue to work with whoever the Guatemalan people pick as its next president.

But I just really hope, whether it is press freedom or anti-corruption efforts, our support for NGOs. Guatemala passes an NGO registration law, which we see happening in other nations like Nicaragua, which force NGOs to register or be dissolved. That registration is often a precursor to a shrinking of civilian space.

I hope I have your commitment—from your background I suspect I do—that should you be confirmed you will work very, very hard to encourage progress in these important human rights areas.

Mr. BRADLEY. Absolutely, Senator. You have my commitment, and thank you for your voice and the role of this committee and

the bipartisan, bicameral statement on the election issue that—with Chairman McCaul.

I have worked on democracy and human rights for a long time. I helped set up some of the first elections in Iraq and I know firsthand how important it is that the citizenry believe in the election process, that they have faith in the results, and that they have the right to choose their preferred candidate under the law.

And so, Senator, you absolutely have my commitment to do that, and in terms of the anti-corruption side of the house, if confirmed, I support the use of all the tools that Congress has provided us to hold corrupt actors accountable, whether that is the Section 353 of the Engel list or Section 7031(c) for visa restrictions or financial sanctions as appropriate. I will use all of those.

Senator Kaine. Excellent. Excellent. Thank you.

Ambassador Hankins, thank you for your willingness to serve. Service to Haiti is going to be one of the toughest challenges in the world right now, and you have served in Haiti before so you go in with a love for the country and a love for the Haitian people and an understanding for some of the challenges as we—we are going to have a hearing in our committee tomorrow on Haiti where Secretary Nichols and others will be here on behalf of the administration and others who care a lot about Haiti.

The consensus seems to be as I travel in the region that security is the first priority but it is very difficult to assemble a security initiative unless a nation has stepped forward to lead it and there is a whole lot of reasons why the nations that might be asked to lead it—legitimate reasons—why they have been reluctant.

The United States—we have a history with Haiti that might not make us the most credible leader. France has a history that might not make it the most credible leader. Dominican Republic should play a role. They could not be the most credible leader.

We all need to be involved but as of yet we have not found the right lead nation to help us provide security assistance and that is a big, big issue that would be not just the Ambassador's work but I know that is something you would focus on.

Let me ask you this. From your experience in living in Haiti and then you are following it to now, how much of a concern in the Haitian security situation has been the extent of arms trafficking of guns from the United States that are purchased illegally often through straw purchases and then sold in Haiti to kind of back up these gangs and escalate violence?

Mr. HANKINS. Thank you very much, Senator.

And you are correct, the flow of weapons going into Haiti allows a situation where often then the criminal gangs are better armed, outnumber then the Haitian National Police.

The most recent session of the Security Council asked the Secretary General to outline three options: more support to Haitian National Police, a multinational force outside of the U.N. structure, or a new U.N. peacekeeping mission, and we have been working with a number of countries to see if somebody would lead or participate.

Those negotiations—those discussions are ongoing to support the Secretary General's effort. Clearly, what we see in the situation is

right now the security situation blocks progress whether it is on humanitarian or political.

To your question, most recently this institution passed the bipartisan Safer Communities Act, which then gave more teeth to the trafficking in weapons and many of these weapons do come.

We have seen Department of Justice has now created a new special prosecutor looking at weapons trafficking towards the Caribbean. So you have, in fact, given us one of the tools that can help us work with that.

We look at trafficking in both directions, whether it be trafficking of human beings to the United States. But, clearly, there is a problem with trafficking of weapons from the United States to Haiti.

Senator KAINE. I have exceeded my time. But if I could just say, Madam Chair, I asked the question about arms because sometimes when we see a situation, particularly in our hemisphere, where there is violence or chaos we kind of wonder, well, what why do we need to get involved in this—why does the United States need to be a problem solver in Haiti or why are folks from Central America coming to our shores as if we are not connected to the misery in those countries.

And there is a pretty significant connection, whether it is U.S. arms trafficking into Haiti that increase violence or whether it is the demand for illegal drugs in the United States that send cash and guns south that turn neighborhoods in Honduras and Guatemala or Salvador into dangerous places that people then want to flee.

We often find that our miseries are very connected and that makes the work of this committee and the work of Congress in diplomacy and stronger international relations so very important.

It is not just about others. It is about others and the lives they lead, which are often very connected to some of the challenges we ourselves have.

Thank you, and I yield back.

Senator DUCKWORTH. Senator Van Hollen?

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Thank you, Madam Chair. Congratulations to all of you on your nominations.

Ambassador O'Brien, a couple questions about Turkey. I think all of us here in the Senate were pleased to see President Erdogan finally drop his opposition to Sweden's entry into NATO, although we are still monitoring the situation closely regarding the ratification.

But beyond the fact that President Erdogan was blocking Turkey's entry—excuse me, Sweden's entry into NATO a number of us had other concerns. Did you see a report last Friday about Turkish F-16s violating Greek airspace?

Mr. O'BRIEN. No.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. There was—there were some reports just—and we are trying to verify them but last Thursday or Friday—about an incursion, which was a little surprising since there has been a period of relative quiet and calm. So we would like to get back to—

Mr. O'BRIEN. I will look into this and come back to you with what I find.

Senator VAN HOLLEN [continuing]. Right. Because, I mean, you would agree, would you not, that as a NATO ally Turkey should not be using its F-16s to violate the airspace of Greece or any other NATO ally, right?

Mr. O'BRIEN. Yes, and, I mean, as you pointed out, I think we are at a moment when—the two leaders met just last month. They have set up a regular cycle of their meetings.

The foreign ministers—I know their advisors are often in contact. So I think we are in a place where the two governments can manage the relationship well. But let me look into this incident and come back to you.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. No, I am—I have been also heartened by some of the change there, a lot less so with respect to Turkey's conduct vis-a-vis our Syrian Kurdish allies, which has been another concern many of us have voiced for a long time. You would agree, would you not, that the Syrian Kurds were really the tip of our spear in the fight against ISIS?

Mr. O'BRIEN. And I know a number of my colleagues have—not on this panel but elsewhere were intimately involved in that, so yes.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Yes, indeed, and ISIS, as a large-scale institution it has clearly been somewhat quashed but it is not altogether gone. There was—I am just reading "U.S. airstrike targets ISIS leader in eastern Syria." This was July 9th so just a little while ago.

And yet, Turkey continues to target Syrian Kurdish leaders who are with us in the fight against ISIS. You would agree, would you not, that it is against U.S. national security interests for Turkey to be targeting our Syrian Kurdish allies?

Mr. O'BRIEN. Yes, and I think this is a topic that will be a regular focus of discussion and I look forward to working with you as well to make sure that you see where we are going on the issues.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Good. Well, I appreciate that because obviously Turkey has requested a fresh round of upgraded F-16s and we are, again, watching the ratification of Sweden's admission into NATO by Turkey.

But these other issues are really important and it seems to me there are only two ways to get at them. One is to get assurances—U.S. Government getting assurances from Turkey that it will not use these F-16s in violation of the airspace of Greece or any NATO—other NATO ally, and that they will not use them to attack our Syrian Kurdish partners. Would you agree those are reasonable requests to make of Turkey?

Mr. O'BRIEN. I think—I think, Senator, the clarity of views coming from the Congress has been very helpful as we navigate these issues with our Turkish allies. So I think if we can continue in communication on this we can make sure that the points are raised.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. I appreciate that because I think you will continue to see that reinforcement from the Congress and there are two ways to do it. I would like to see both ways.

One is some assurances from Turkey in some form. The other, of course, is the Biden administration giving members of Congress

assurances that if Turkey were to violate those conditions that there would be consequences.

Mr. O'BRIEN. So let us find a way to keep working on it together. Thank you.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Thank you.

Ambassador Hankins, let me just follow up briefly on Senator Kaine's question. I want to thank Senator Kaine for his longtime and deep interest both in Haiti and Central and Latin America more broadly.

I know one of you mentioned a couple of countries we have been approaching regarding providing a role as some kind of guarantor of support in Haiti. One of them, I know, was Canada. Are those conversations still ongoing or what is—what is your sense of where we are there?

Mr. HANKINS. Thank you, Senator. I know we have approached some of the larger countries that would have the normal military capability and previous history with Haiti that could be logical players.

So far none of them have come forward wanting to be the lead. Does not mean they might not support some future operation but not wanting to be the lead for their own domestic reasons.

We do look far afield. There are a number of countries that have very strong histories in international peacekeeping, whether they be in Asia or Africa. We are looking at some of those options and also looking at what kind of support the United States would have to provide if you find a country willing to lead that may not necessarily have the wherewithal to do that.

It is not yet determined on which option one might go with. We noted in the most recent Security Council resolution it was unanimous. So both Russia and China were willing to at least discuss the possibility of a peacekeeping operation, which previously was not understood.

But I think it is clear without some kind of international force it is very difficult to look at how Haitians can regain control of their country in the short term.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. I appreciate that. Look, it is a desperate situation which has dragged on for a long, long time and we look forward to working with you, if confirmed, on these issues and I do support the nominations of this entire impressive roster.

So I look forward to working with you. Thank you.

Senator DUCKWORTH. Chairman Menendez?

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Ambassador Hankins, let me ask you a few questions because I think we have really not engaged in Haiti the way we need to.

I had the Secretary General of the United Nations in a meeting with me and I said to him unless we have a multinational force to ultimately provide for security we cannot do all the rest.

We cannot have a political development unless there is security. We cannot make economic development which Haiti desperately needs unless we have security. We—and we cannot have security for so long as the gangs are the ones controlling it as well as the fact that the elite that uses the gangs to perpetuate their interests.

So I would just like to get your sense—I may have missed it because I had a markup in the Finance Committee. But is that some-

thing that—am I off base here? Is that something we are in comity with? What can you speak to me on that?

Mr. HANKINS. Haiti is—by its nature it is a complicated country where lots of crises affects everyone else. We have a very dedicated team and we have a great deal of, whether it be from the Senate, the House, or from the administration, a lot of engagement. But it is hard to find good lasting solutions.

I agree with you, Senator, that without some kind of force, whether that be a multinational force or a U.N. peacekeeping mission, it is very difficult for basic human security to be guaranteed for the Haitians to have the space they need to proceed on political resolution or to ensure the security of Haitians as well as the many American citizens who live in Haiti.

I would be engaged with all partners, whether it be then major countries like Canada and France, which have long-lasting history, but as well with the bordering countries whether it be Dominican Republic, Jamaica, the countries that also see the impact of the instability in terms of irregular migration for their countries.

The CHAIRMAN. Yeah, and that is a challenge. I was with the president of the Dominican Republic and he said to me, we are trying to be good neighbors. But when 50 or 60 percent of the hospital beds in the maternity ward are delivering babies of Haitian mothers and Dominican mothers cannot get in to go ahead and deliver their babies that is a problem and that is one of the many dimensional elements of the Haiti problem.

Next thing is we will see people on boats to the shores of the United States. We talk about migration. So this is a cauldron ready to explode and I am—I am hopeful that your presence there will help us find a pathway forward.

On a specific thing, I introduced bipartisan legislation, Haiti Criminal Collusion and Transparency Act, which has the support of over a dozen Haitian civil society diaspora groups to expose the links between the elites and the Haitian gangs and sponsors that—and sponsors and target them for economic sanctions and visa restrictions. Is that something I can get your commitment to work with us on if you are confirmed?

Mr. HANKINS. Absolutely, sir. Again, it is another tool it gives us in our diplomacy of dealing with then corrupt links between political and gangs.

I do not have my experience on the ground to understand whether the causality is politicians who control criminal gangs or criminal gangs that control politicians. But, obviously, we see that there are linkages between the two.

So it is important to break those linkages so that violence is not used as a way of avoiding a political and social process.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Mr. O'Brien, I want to echo what Senator Van Hollen said about our—the administration's consideration of F-16s to Turkey. It is not surprising Sweden still has not received a vote from Turkey even though Erdogan said yes, okay, Sweden should be in.

He could have called the parliament. He could have had the vote. He has not had it, and we cannot have belligerence in the eastern Mediterranean. We have another NATO ally, Greece, for which we not only have Souda Bay long-standing, but we have

Alexandropoulos, which has become the Souda Bay of the north and a major energy center and a NATO center for transshipment.

Now, how does it work for us to have one NATO ally be belligerent to another and somehow sell them F-16s? So I hope that this will be one of the things that if this is still pending upon your confirmation that you will be focused on and I hope that we can be an advocate for greater stability in the eastern Mediterranean because it is incredibly important.

I hope that we will work on the 3+1 process in a way that will strengthen the relationships between Israel, Cyprus, Greece, and the United States.

Mr. O'BRIEN. Absolutely, and, Mr. Chairman, I think the clear messages coming from this committee are incredibly helpful as we try to navigate through the relations.

The CHAIRMAN. And I have one specific thing and then I will submit the rest of my questions in writing so that the committee can move on.

On June the 20th the Albanian Government rated Camp Ashraf 3 where they have been hosting Iranian refugees for many years. I salute the Albanians for doing that.

However, there was a recent raid and there are differing accounts. It seems that one person died during or after the raid and that both residents of the camp and police officers were injured. Can you commit to advocating for the fundamental rights and freedoms of the residents of Camp Ashraf?

Mr. O'BRIEN. Absolutely.

The CHAIRMAN. It is important because if you seek refuge you ultimately have to be in a position to know that that refuge is secure, and we moved these residents into Camp Ashraf from their previous location and I support the—I appreciate the Albanians having made that possible. We need a continuing guarantee of security.

Mr. O'BRIEN. I join you in the appreciation of Albania, which has been a very important place of refuge for a number of people seeking asylum. I will look into this incident. I am very sorry for the family of the person who died. I will report to you what I find out—

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Mr. O'BRIEN [continuing]. And we will work together, going forward.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, and I will submit the rest of my questions for the record.

Mr. O'BRIEN. Thank you.

Senator DUCKWORTH. Thank you.

I am going to begin a second round of questions. I just have another additional question and I know Senator Hagerty has indicated he wants to do a little follow-up as well.

With that, Mr. O'Brien, the NATO pivot towards a more cautious approach to the PRC in recent years has been a welcome change. At the same time, we have seen a reluctance by some partners to set up a more formal presence in the Indo-Pacific.

How do you assess Europe's current postures towards Asia and the PRC in particular and what role should our Indo-Pacific strategy play into our outreach to our European allies?

Mr. O'BRIEN. Thank you for the question and, obviously, it is an essay question in itself. I think our—a lot of our work over the last year or two, some of which I have seen in the sanctions discussion, has led to a convergence of views between our European allies and ourself about the importance of having a united approach to China.

I think at the recent Vilnius Summit there were several of our most important Asian allies there and were as honored guests.

Although some of the formal mechanisms may not have been established I think what we are on now is a track for great communication and security channels as well the work that is being done across the Indo-Pacific to beef up the U.S. presence and our allied presence, I think, sends a very strong message that we are working to create a global rule-abiding community.

The goal of that community is security and prosperity for our citizens as well as the citizens of our partners. So it is an ongoing very important topic and we will keep working it in every channel that we have.

Senator DUCKWORTH. Thank you.

Senator Hagerty?

Senator HAGERTY. If I might, Madam Chair, can stay on this topic. I appreciate your raising it.

But I would like to come to the other side of it, too, and I share your concerns about having deeper involvement in the Indo-Pacific and anything that we can do to be helpful and supportive there, Mr. O'Brien, we want to do that.

I would also be very interested in your perspective on how we work toward a unified approach with our allies in the EU to push back against the intellectual property theft, the forced technology transfer, and basically the predatory behavior of China as they look at the EU.

The EU is wide open and vulnerable, and I feel like there is much more that we could be doing together. I would be interested in your thoughts on how we move forward there.

Mr. O'BRIEN. Yeah. Thank you for that and thank you for the intellectual leadership on the issues.

I know Under Secretary Fernandez testified this morning—I believe, Chairman Menendez, you were there—about the measures we are taking to enhance our economic resilience along with our partners on issues like critical minerals, broader supply chains, also to address Chinese coercion.

So where China attempted to intimidate Lithuania we were able to step in and provide alternative financing, find markets for Lithuanian goods, and otherwise work to demonstrate that coherence within our alliance lets each one of us stand up for what we know to be right.

We have active discussions with our European colleagues and one point on which I really look forward to working with the committee is through the mechanisms that have been established like the Trade and Technology Council, the EU-U.S. Dialogue.

Those sound like boring bureaucratic measures but they are where we are going to start establishing the rules of the road for technologies like artificial intelligence, like many of the technologies emerging from the energy transition—biomedical innovation.

These are the things that will help make our people richer over the next generation. We need to do those in a way that is aligned with our European allies, not allow China to set the rules of the road, not allow China to steal the technology. By laying this groundwork together now we will be much better suited for addressing the challenges in the—

Senator HAGERTY. I would just interject that our national security interests need to be first and foremost in your mind as you think about this—

Mr. O'BRIEN [continuing]. Absolutely.

Senator HAGERTY [continuing]. Sort of cooperative approach. And I want to key off of something that you said about China's coercion, turning back to you, Mr. Bradley.

As you know, Guatemala remains an ally of Taiwan. They are under a great deal of pressure from the CCP as a result of that.

I have met on multiple occasions with the U.S.-Guatemala Business Council. They would love to work with us on nearshoring opportunities, ways to make our supply chains more secure and I think that from the perspective of an American businessman, which is what I have done my entire life before coming here, it should be a great opportunity for us as well to de-risk our supply chains and bring them closer to home.

I am fighting hard to get every job I can back to Tennessee. Please understand that. But to the extent they do not come back to Tennessee, partnering with countries like Guatemala with businesses there should be a great opportunity.

I would look forward to introducing you to some of the people that I have met. McKinsey has done a great study there talking about where these opportunities exist but I see a huge opportunity there and I would be interested in your thoughts.

Mr. BRADLEY. Thank you, Senator, for your question and offering to connect me to some of your colleagues.

Taiwan has been a reliable partner to Guatemala and—since 1933 and Guatemalan people have had sustainable benefits because of it.

So I will certainly want to raise with an incoming administration, whether that is with Sandra Torres of the UNE Party or Bernardo Arevalo of the Semilla Party, that it is very important that they maintain this close relationship with Taiwan and there is representation of the Taiwanese in Guatemala, and I look forward to working with the colleagues there as well on these ideas.

It will not only potentially provide opportunities to U.S. businesses but also help us provide job opportunities and attack some of the root causes of irregular migration that puts the pressure on our border.

Senator HAGERTY. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Senator DUCKWORTH. Well, thank you again to all the nominees for your willingness to serve and your answers today.

The record for this hearing will remain open until close of business on Thursday, July 27th, 2023. Please ensure that questions for the record are submitted by no later than close of business Thursday.

With that, the hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 3:55 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

Additional Material Submitted for the Record
Correspondence Received in Support of the Nomination of
Nathalie Rayes to be Ambassador to the Republic of Croatia



Nora Vargas
CHAIRWOMAN
San Diego County Board of Supervisors

July 12, 2023

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Majority Leader, U.S. Senate
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader, U.S. Senate
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Robert Menendez
Chairman, Foreign Relations Committee
423 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable James E. Risch
Ranking Member, Foreign Relations
Committee
423 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

RE: Ms. Nathalie Rayes – Nominee for United States Ambassador to the Republic of Croatia

Dear Senate Leaders,

As Chair of the San Diego County Board of Supervisors, and long-time friend and colleague, it is with great honor that I express my strong support for Ms. Nathalie Rayes' nomination as the next U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Croatia. I have had the pleasure of knowing Ms. Rayes for over 30 years and she has been unwavering in her dedication and commitment to championing civic and philanthropic engagement, cultural exchange, and the preservation of democracy and American values.

Ms. Rayes is a proven leader with an impeccable record of service who has worked diligently to build and strengthen relationships among vastly different organizations, consistently advancing delivering practical and sensible solutions through bipartisan exchanges. Throughout her career, she has built an impressive record of accomplishments and vast experience in international affairs, policy, and public service that will enable her to make valuable contributions as U.S. Ambassador to Croatia.

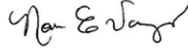
I have had the pleasure of collaborating with Ms. Rayes on various local, national, and international initiatives and can attest that her ability to convene and lead with empathy, humility, and integrity has been crucial in her success. From working together in Los Angeles to establish the first-ever Office of Immigrant Affairs, collaborating on initiatives through the

Aspen Institute, or exchanging ideas as board members of the Hispanas Organized for Political Equality (HOPE) Binational Advisory Group, Ms. Rayes has been a constant inspiration with an unwavering work ethic.

Her combined experience in both the public and private sector has equipped her with the insight and skills to navigate competing needs to benefit diverse communities. Ms. Rayes is the embodiment of the American Dream, and she uses her own immigrant experience to advance the needs of the Latino Community. Her impressive qualifications demonstrate that Ms. Rayes will continue to promote a more prosperous, resilient, and globally competitive U.S. through bilateral relations built on common values and shared priorities.

I respectfully appeal to you to confirm Ms. Rayes after careful review of her impressive qualifications. I am eager to see a U.S. Ambassador in Europe who reflects the diversity of the American people in our leadership, nationally and abroad, and ensuring that the most qualified individuals, such as Ms. Rayes, are afforded equal opportunity to serve all Americans.

Sincerely,



Nora Vargas
Chairwoman, District 1
County of San Diego

**OFFICERS**

Honorable Lincoln Diaz-Balart
Chairman
Rep. Henry Cuellar (TX)
Vice Chairman
Rep. Mario Diaz-Balart (FL)
Vice Chairman
John Hoel, Altria Client Services
Treasurer
Emilio X. Gonzalez, Verizon
Secretary
Heather Kennedy, The Home Depot

CONGRESSIONAL BOARD MEMBERS

Sen. Robert "Bob" Menendez (NJ)
Sen. Rick Scott (FL)
Rep. Carlos Gimenez (FL)
Rep. Tony Gonzales (TX)
Rep. Jennifer Gonzalez-Colon (PR)
Rep. Robert "Rob" Menendez (NJ)
Rep. Darren Soto (FL)
Rep. David Valadao (CA)

CORPORATE BOARD MEMBERS

Honorable Bill Flores
Honorable Ileana Ros-Lehtinen
Akin
Silvia R. Aldana
Pacific Gas & Electric Company
LaKeitha Anderson
Brownstein Hyatt Farber Schreck
Marie Luisa Boyce, UPS
Yisel Cabrera, Ford Motor Company
Sara Decker, Walmart
Omar Franco, Becker
Javier Gamba, Business Roundtable
Downey Magallanes, BP America
Leo Muñoz, Comcast
Claudia Puig, TelevisaUnivision
Isaac Reyes, Target
Iliia Rodriguez, Accenture
Alexandra Valderrama, Chevron
Omar Vargas, General Motors
Jennifer Zinicola, Coca-Cola Company

PRO-BONO OUTSIDE COUNSEL

Frank Cruz-Alvarez
Arnold & Porter Kaye Scholer LLP

July 14, 2023

The Honorable Robert Menendez
Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee of the United States Senate
528 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Menendez,

As Founder and Chairman of the Congressional Hispanic Leadership Institute (CHLI), I write to offer my strong support for the nomination of Nathalie Rayes as United States Ambassador to the Republic of Croatia. As an experienced professional with a deep understanding of international relations, Ms. Rayes will represent the interests and policies of the United States in Croatia with excellence.

Ms. Rayes' professional background and experiences uniquely position her to manage the complexities of the diplomatic landscape in Croatia. She has honed her skills as a respected figure with over 20 years of leadership experience in international relations, cultural exchanges, coalition-building, public relations, and philanthropy.

My personal, professional experience with Ms. Rayes began in 2013 when she joined the Board of Directors of the Congressional Hispanic Leadership Institute. She supported our CHLI Global Leaders Program and hosted interns in Mexico, admirably served as Chairwoman of the Annual CHLI Leadership Awards Gala, and initiated a cross-country voter education campaign, the *CHLI Red White Y Tu*, to educate college students on the importance of voting.

I enthusiastically support Ms. Rayes' nomination to serve as our country's Ambassador to the Republic of Croatia.

Thank you for your time and consideration, Mr. Chairman. Please do not hesitate to contact me if I may be able to provide further information in support of Ms. Rayes' nomination.

Cordially,

Lincoln Diaz-Balart
CHLI Chairman

cc: Ranking Member, Senator James E. Risch, Foreign Relations Committee
Senator Charles Schumer, Majority Leader of the United States Senate
Senator Mitch McConnell, Minority Leader of the United States Senate



July 3, 2023

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Robert Menendez Chairman,
U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee

The Honorable James E. Risch
Ranking Member, U.S. Senate Foreign Relations
Committee

Subject: Support for Nathalie Rayes as U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Croatia

Dear Senate Leaders:

The leadership and national alumnae of Hispanas Organized for Political Equality (HOPE) respectfully ask you to confirm Nathalie Rayes as Ambassador to the Republic of Croatia. HOPE is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that has empowered our communities through advocacy, leadership training, and increasing knowledge on the contributions Latinas have made to advance the status of women for the past 33 years. To date, HOPE's innovative programming has served over 60,000 Latinas. We are proud that our members comprised of both republican and democrat Latina leaders have served in the past nine presidential administrations. Our commitment to prepare Latinas to advance and build a strong democracy is demonstrated by the over 1,000 positions on state and national commissions our members have served.

Ms. Rayes is a proven leader who is deeply committed to democracy and devoted to improving the lives of Americans. She is a proud Latina immigrant of Venezuelan and Lebanese parents, and her many accomplishments and career trajectory are a testament to the realization of the American dream.

As co-founder and chair of our organization's Binational Fellowship, Ms. Rayes has led the capacity building of dozens of Latina executives and elected leaders from the United States to make urgent and long-lasting improvements in the lives of all Americans.

Ms. Rayes has dedicated her career to increasing international understanding and improving diplomatic relations. As Deputy Chief of Staff to Los Angeles Mayor, James K. Hahn, she served as chief liaison for International Affairs creating Sister City partnerships around the world, establishing the first Office of Immigrant Affairs, and overseeing the Office of Protocol and International Trade. She also served as a Fellow at the State Department's Embassy in Cairo in the Economic and Political Section in 1998.

In the last decade, Ms. Rayes has served on the Board of Directors for several national organizations, including the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars chairing the Audit Committee, and the Hispanic Federation where she chaired the Board of Directors. She currently serves on the United States

Hispanas Organized for Political Equality
634 S. Spring Street, Suite 920, Los Angeles, CA 90014
213.622.0606 | www.latinas.org

Institute of Peace. She has extensive experience in international affairs, policy, and public service make her a uniquely qualified candidate to serve as Ambassador to the Republic of Croatia.

In 2015, HOPE honored Ms. Rayes with the "Ray of HOPE Award" in recognition of her contributions to advancing the status of Latinas in the United States. She has worked hard to ensure all women in the United States are empowered to participate in our democracy, regardless of political party, which is one of the highest callings an immigrant can adopt to ensure our nation's democracy is strong.

We respectfully urge you to confirm Ms. Rayes as the next United States Ambassador to the Republic of Croatia.

Thank you for your consideration and public service.

Sincerely,



Chief Executive Officer



July 3, 2023

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Robert Menendez
Chairman
U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee

The Honorable James E. Risch
Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee

RE: Ms. Nathalie Rayes – Nominee for United States Ambassador to the Republic of Croatia

Dear Senate Leaders,

It is with great enthusiasm that I address you to express our support for Ms. Nathalie Rayes' nomination as the next U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Croatia. I have had the pleasure of knowing Ms. Rayes for close to a decade and she has consistently presented herself as a servant leader dedicated to championing civic and philanthropic engagement, cultural exchange, and the preservation of the American values that we hold so dearly.

Ms. Rayes is a proven leader with a stellar record of service, as she has uplifted organizations and individuals on both sides of the aisle to move forward our union. Throughout her career she has unequivocally confronted difficult situations and brought different perspectives to the table in her quest to reach agreements and advance bipartisan exchanges through practical and sensible solutions.

Based on our work together on various local, national, and international initiatives, I can attest that she is equipped with a sense of empathy, humility, and integrity in how she approaches our nation's interests in any of these stages alike. Ms. Rayes is the portrait of a stellar woman who is a natural born convener committed to building trustworthy partnerships that move forward common-sense results for all parties involved.

As her CV will support, she has spearheaded multiple boards and initiatives to promote open, plural, and nonpartisan national and international dialogue. Her north star is her commitment to safeguard democracy, the rule of law, and human rights. She has repeatedly proven her steadfast devotion to promote a more prosperous, resilient, and globally competitive U.S. through bilateral relations built on common values and shared priorities.

I am certain that she will deliver her enthusiasm for international relations, unwavering work ethic, and extensive qualifications to serve the best interests of the United States in Croatia. I respectfully appeal to you to confirm Ms. Rayes after careful review of her impressive qualifications. We are eager to see a U.S. Ambassador in Europe who reflects the diversity of the American people in our leadership, nationally and abroad, and ensuring that the most qualified individuals, such as Ms. Rayes, are afforded equal opportunity to serve all Americans.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Eneida Román".

Eneida Román
President & CEO
Amplify Latinx

AMPLIFY LATINX
18 Grove Street Suite 4
Wellesley, MA 02482
info@amplifylatinx.com



COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES SUPERVISOR - FOURTH DISTRICT

JANICE HAHN

July 5, 2023

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Robert Menendez
Chairman, U.S. Senate Foreign Relations
Committee

The Honorable James E. Risch
Ranking Member, U.S. Senate Foreign
Relations Committee

Subject: Support for Nathalie Rayes as U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Croatia

Honorable Senate Leaders:

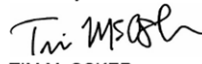
It gives us great pleasure to write this letter in support of Nathalie Rayes and her appointment as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to the Republic of Croatia. We strongly believe she will be a tremendous asset.

We have known Nathalie Rayes for over 20 years and know her to be a brilliant, diligent, and thoughtful public servant, dedicating her career to building bridges within the many communities that she has had the privilege of serving. Early in her career, she served as Deputy Chief of Staff to Mayor James K. Hahn and was instrumental in creating the City's first-ever Office of Immigrant Affairs and managing the Mayor's Office of Intergovernmental Relations, International Trade, and Protocol. Aside from her admirable career accomplishments, both in government and international relations, Nathalie has demonstrated a genuine commitment to public service.

We both represent the San Pedro community of Los Angeles which is home to one of the largest populations of Croatian Americans. We believe Ms. Rayes has the experience and commitment necessary to serve as both our nation's representative in Croatia and ensure our embassy serves the interests of the many Croatian Americans who depend on it. We respectfully urge you to confirm the appointment of Nathalie Rayes as the United States Ambassador to the Republic of Croatia.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions.

Sincerely,


TIM McOSKER
Councilmember, 15th District
Los Angeles City Council


JANICE HAHN
Chair
Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors



ALPFA NATIONAL OFFICE
1717 West 6th Street, #410 Tel.: 855-692-5732
Austin, TX 78703 www.alpfa.org

To: Chairman Robert Menendez, Foreign Relations Committee
From: Damian Rivera, President and CEO, Association of Latino Professionals For America (ALPFA)
Re: Nathalie Rayes, Nominee for Ambassador to Croatia

Dear Senator Menendez,

I am writing to offer the highest level of support to the nomination of Nathalie Rayes to become the U.S. Ambassador to Croatia.

ALPFA is the country's largest Latino professional association, with a mission to empower and develop Latino men and women as leaders of character. When I first started in the role of CEO in 2018, I went on a "tour" across the country to connect with our over 100K professional and college student members to listen to the needs of the community as well as meet other leaders in the community. A name that continued to come up in my travels as a leader, collaborator and advocate for the community is Nathalie Rayes.

In 2019 I finally had the pleasure of meeting her for the first time and immediately I understood why she was admired within the community. Nathalie has a unique leadership style and ability to bring people together from varying social circles and make everyone feel valued and inspired to action. I have seen her energize a room to action in her role as the President and CEO of Latino Victory.

On a more personal note, even with her extremely busy schedule, she has always made time to provide me with mentoring advise over the years. As the CEO of a nonpartisan nonprofit organization, I work with the American public representing every state and demographic across the country and I have been able to trust in Nathalie to give me advise and coaching based on a nonpartisan view with an ethical lens and a focus on doing what is right.

Additional evidence of Nathalie's significant positive influence and impact across the country is in 2021 she was nominated by my members and selected as one of ALPFA's 50 Most Powerful Latinas in America.

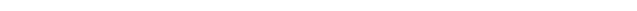
Nathalie's dedication to America throughout her career, in addition to her public affairs experience, perseverance, leadership abilities and love of the United States will allow her to represent American interests at the highest level.

With her remarkable qualifications, Nathalie Rayes is unquestionably well-suited to become the U.S. Ambassador to Croatia

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Damian Rivera'.

Damian Rivera
President and CEO, ALPFA



HONORABLE
RUDY SVORINICH, JR.,
President Pro Tempore of the Los Angeles City Council (ret.)
Councilman, 15th District, City of Los Angeles (ret.)
PO Box 6418, San Pedro, CA 90734-6418
Tel: (310) 517-9920 – Email: rudy@svorinich.com

July 17, 2023

VIA EMAIL

Honorable Members of the Committee on Foreign Relations
Senate of the United States
Dirksen Senate Office Building, Room 423
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Honorable Members:

It is with great pleasure that I would offer my support of the nomination of Nathalie Reyes as United States Ambassador to the Republic of Croatia.

Nathalie Reyes is a true naturalized American success story. From humble beginnings in Venezuela, arriving in our country in 1984 at the age of 9, struggling with family hardship, her hard work, dedication and perseverance graduating high school, receiving her Bachelor of Science Degree from the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) and serving in many prestigious capacities in public service makes her well qualified to represent our country abroad.

Nathalie proudly and admirably served as the Deputy Chief of Staff to former Los Angeles City Mayor James Hahn and her leadership, love of our city and its people were extremely commendable. As the San Pedro community of the City of Los Angeles is home to one of the largest concentrations of persons of Croatian ancestry (approximately 30,000) in the United States, she is uniquely aware of the Croatian people, our culture, and the important relationship that bonds the peoples of our two countries.

As an American of Croatian descent, the former President Pro Tempore of the Los Angeles City Council, Harbor District Councilman (which includes San Pedro), President of the ninety-seven year old Dalmatian-American Club of San Pedro – one of the oldest, largest and most prominent domestic Croatian social benefit non-profit organizations, as Republican Party nominee for the California State Legislature's former 54th Assembly District and as a Republican candidate for the United States House of Representatives' former 36th District, I wholeheartedly support Nathalie's appointment in the hope that bipartisan support is the order of the day regarding her nomination's approval.

Nathalie Reyes truly deserves support from both sides of the aisle, and it would be my sincerely hope and desire that your committee unanimously forwards her nomination to the full Senate and that the Senate, in turn, supports her confirmation without dissent. She will do our country proud as our next Ambassador to the Republic of Croatia.

In the spirit of bipartisan cooperation, which is one of the finest American attributes, I remain,

Very Truly Yours,



HONORABLE RUDY SVORINICH, JR.
President Pro Tempore of the Los Angeles City Council (ret.)
Councilman, 15th (Greater Harbor Area) District, City of Los Angeles (ret.)
President, Dalmatian-American Club of San Pedro

NHLA National Hispanic Leadership Agenda

July 6, 2023

The Honorable Robert Menendez
 Chairman
 Committee on Foreign Relations
 United States Senate
 Dirksen Senate Office Building
 Room 423
 100 Constitution Ave NE
 Washington, DC 20510-6225

The Honorable James Risch
 Ranking Member
 Committee on Foreign Relations
 United States Senate
 Dirksen Senate Office Building
 Room 423
 100 Constitution Ave NE
 Washington, DC 20510-6225

Re: Support for Ms. Nathalie Rayes, nominee for Ambassador to Croatia

Dear Senators Menendez and Risch:

On behalf of the National Hispanic Leadership Agenda (NHLA) we write to urge the Committee on Foreign Relations, and the Senate as a whole, to vote to confirm Ms. Nathalie Rayes to serve as United States Ambassador to the Republic of Croatia.

NHLA is the premier coalition of more than 40 leading national Hispanic civil rights and public policy organizations. Collectively, NHLA leads the advocacy behind the pressing civil rights and policy issues affecting the 62 million U.S. Latinos, including improving the representation of Hispanics in political appointments. NHLA strives to increase Latino visibility and leverages our country's diversity to build a stronger Latino influence in our national affairs.

Nathalie Rayes is a good fit for Croatia. One of the largest Croatian diasporas in the United States has flourished since the late 1800's in the San Pedro neighborhood of Los Angeles, a city where Nathalie served as Deputy Chief of Staff to then-Mayor James K. Hahn, managing intergovernmental relations, international trade, and protocol, thus becoming very familiar with the Croatian community. Los Angeles is also the heart of our film industry and, as more American productions film in Croatia's unique historic locales, Nathalie's intrinsic familiarity with Hollywood's needs will help her champion those American businesses to improve their commercial opportunities in Croatia.

As a native of Venezuela who lived there till the age of nine, Nathalie understands the importance of real democracy and the need to help Croats repel authoritarian influences. Because she's a Latina immigrant, Nathalie's appointment will also help highlight America's true diversity and opportunity in a country where views about the United States were historically skewed by propaganda and still tend to be colored by narrow media portrayals, even in good faith. Nathalie's story is the intrinsically American story that Croats and the neighboring Balkans need to see as their region and Europe are, once again, embroiled in turmoil related to migration and xenophobia.

MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

- Alianza Americas
- American G.I. Forum
- ASPIRA Association
- AVANCE Inc.
- Casa de Esperanza- National Latino Network
- Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute
- Farmworker Justice
- Green Latinos
- Hispanic Association of Colleges & Universities
- Hispanic Federation
- Hispanic National Bar Association
- Hispanics in Philanthropy
- Inter-University Program for Latino Research
- Labor Council for Latin American Advancement
- Latino Justice PRLDEF
- League of United Latin American Citizens
- MANA, A National Latina Organization
- Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund
- Mi Familia Vota
- NALEO Education Fund
- National Association of Hispanic Federal Executives
- National Association of Latino Arts and Culture
- National Association of Latino Independent Producers
- National Conference of Puerto Rican Women, Inc.
- National Day Laborer Organizing Network
- National Hispanic Caucus of State Legislators
- National Hispanic Council on Aging
- National Hispanic Foundation for the Arts
- National Hispanic Media Coalition
- National Hispanic Medical Association
- National Latina Institute for Reproductive Justice
- National Latinx Psychological Association
- Presente.org
- SER Jobs for Progress National
- Southwest Voter Registration Education Project
- U.S. - Mexico Foundation UnidosUS
- United States Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
- United States Hispanic Leadership Institute
- United States-Mexico Chamber of Commerce
- Voto Latino

NHLA Support Ms. Nathalie Rayes, nominee for Ambassador to Croatia

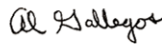
Nathalie has a long-standing interest in foreign relations, including a master's in public policy in the field. She currently serves on the Board of the United States Institute of Peace and served on the Board of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars from 2014-2020. In 2016, trying to address the lack of Latinas in international relations, she created and currently chairs a unique US-Mexico bipartisan effort, the Hispanas Organized for Political Equality (HOPE) Binational Fellowship to annually prepare 20 Latina professionals and executives from both countries to lead in addressing their country's most critical issues with a global perspective. In 1998, she was a fellow in the Economic Political Section at the U.S. Embassy in Egypt.

The NHLA member organizations, with one voice, urge you to vote in favor of confirming Ms. Nathalie Rayes to serve as United States Ambassador to the Republic of Croatia.

Sincerely,



Kenneth Romero-Cruz
Executive Director, NHCSL
Co-Chair, NHLA Government Accountability
Committee
NHLA Chair



Al Gallegos
President, NAHFE
Co-Chair, NHLA Government Accountability
Committee

c/ Hon. Charles Schumer
Hon. Mitch McConnell



June 29, 2023

The Honorable Bob Menendez
Chair
United States Senate Foreign Relations
Committee
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jim Risch
Ranking Member
United States Senate Foreign Relations
Committee
Washington, DC 20510

Re: Hearing and Confirmation of Nathalie Rayes as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Croatia

Dear Chairman Menendez and Ranking Member Risch:

As national Latino organizations who have worked together to increase Hispanic representation in the federal government, we write to offer our strong support for Nathalie Rayes to Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Croatia.

Nathalie Rayes has had a distinguished career in public service as a leader, consensus builder, and advocate. She has devoted her career to advancing and empowering the Latino community through advocacy and education. Rayes has served as the President and CEO of Latino Victory since 2020. Before joining Latino Victory, Rayes was Vice President of Public Affairs for Grupo Salinas in the United States and Executive Director of Fundación Azteca America.

In 2022, Rayes was confirmed by the U.S. Senate to serve as President Joe Biden's appointee to the board of the United States Institute of Peace. Currently, she also serves as secretary of the board of directors of Hispanic Federation, vice chair of the board of Planned Parenthood Action Fund, chair of the Hispanas Organized for Political Equality (HOPE) Binational Advisory Group, and advisory board member of the Aspen Institute Latinos and Society Program. Rayes was appointed during the Obama-Biden Administration to serve on the Board of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars from 2014 to 2020. She was a fellow in the Economic Political Section at the U.S. Embassy in Cairo and was selected as an Asia 21 Fellow of the Asia Society.

Proyecto 20% urges the confirmation of Nathalie Rayes as soon as possible and appreciates the committee's commitment to make her hearing a priority. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Janet Murguia, President and CEO, UnidosUS
Arturo Vargas, Chief Executive Officer, NALEO Education Fund
Hector Sanchez Barba, Executive Director and CEO, Mi Familia Vota
Thomas Saenz, President and General Counsel, MALDEF
Frankie Miranda, President and CEO, Hispanic Federation
Sindy Benavides, Executive Director, Latino Victory Fund

P20% Coalition Partners



Proyecto 20% is a coalition of national Latino organizations that have been advocating that at least 20 percent of the approximately 4,000 political appointments and other jobs to be filled by President Biden are held by Latinos and Latinas.

July 18, 2023

To: The Honorable Robert Menendez
Chairman, Foreign Relations Committee, United States Senate

From: Jack Baric
Councilmember, Council of the Republic of Croatia for Croats abroad. Board Member, Croatian American Club of San Pedro. Member, Association of Croatian American Professionals.
Co-founder, Croatian Cultural Week in Los Angeles.

Re: Nomination of Nathalie Rayes as United States Ambassador to Croatia

Dear Senator Menendez,

The Croatian-American community has been steadfast in its dedication toward building bridges between the United States and Croatia. With this in mind, I am pleased to offer my endorsement of support for Nathalie Rayes to be the United States Ambassador to the Republic of Croatia.

As an American citizen, who herself is an immigrant from Venezuela, Nathalie has personal knowledge of the unique perspectives that immigrant communities can provide in building mutually beneficial partnerships between the United States and other nations around the world. Nathalie not only brings a keen understanding of the value immigrants can bring in developing strong global relations, she has firsthand practice in making those connections.

In her role as executive director of Fundacion Azteca America, Nathalie created a program to help resolve the lack of Latinas in international relations positions. The binational, bipartisan program selects twenty Latina executives a year in Mexico and the United States to provide leadership training that addresses their nations' most critical issues with a global perspective. In this role she also worked with Aspen Institute Mexico to promote plural and bipartisan dialogue between the United States and Mexico.

As the Deputy Chief of Staff to Los Angeles Mayor James Hahn, Nathalie created sister city programs with various cities around the world. In addition, as Mayor Hahn resided in the LA suburb of San Pedro, which has nearly 30,000 residents of Croatian heritage, Nathalie had numerous encounters with the Croatian-American community in Los Angeles, which gave her the opportunity to learn about the strong United States to Croatia connections they had made, especially during the period when Croatia broke the shackles of communism to become an independent democratic nation.

In closing, I hope you will agree that Nathalie Rayes has the qualifications and experiences for the position of United States Ambassador to Croatia.

Warmest regards,
Jack Baric



Chairman Robert Menendez
Foreign Relations Committee
United States Senate
423 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Re: Nathalie Rayes, Nominee for Ambassador to Croatia

Dear Senator Menendez,

I am writing to offer support for the nomination of Nathalie Rayes to become the U.S. Ambassador to Croatia.

Throughout her distinguished career, Nathalie has demonstrated a profound commitment to public service and international relations. She has spent over two decades building and strengthening relationships among vastly different organizations with a consistent thread of building consensus and being a facilitator of goodwill. Her work as the President and CEO of the Latino Victory Project, as well as her involvement in various community-based organizations, highlights her ability to foster inclusive and collaborative environments. Nathalie's strong leadership qualities, strategic vision, and diplomatic acumen will undoubtedly enable her to forge and maintain fruitful relationships with key stakeholders in Croatia.

In 2015, Nathalie was a driving force in establishing a program at the Aspen Institute to support and advance the Latino community. With Nathalie's vision, support, and diligence, the Latinos and Society program was born. The Aspen Institute Executive Vice President Elliot Gerson and key Trustee members worked alongside Nathalie to launch this transformative program. Nathalie will bring the same passion, intelligence, and judgment to her new and important role.

Nathalie's extensive corporate career and binational role as Vice President of Public Affairs at Grupo Salinas in the United States and Executive Director of Fundación Azteca America in Mexico gives her added insight to establishing public-private partnerships to benefit diverse communities. Earlier in her career, she served as Deputy Chief of Staff for Los Angeles Mayor James K. Hahn, where she created and directed the city's first-ever Office of Immigrant Affairs and managed the Mayor's Office of Intergovernmental Relations, International Trade, and Protocol.

Nathalie is a values-based leader and an embodiment of the American Dream. Her own immigrant narrative has made her a steadfast advocate of empowering diverse communities through education and civic engagement. She has dedicated herself to public service and was confirmed by the U.S. Senate to serve as President Joe Biden's appointee on the United States Institute of Peace board. She also served six years as President Barack Obama's appointee to the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. Currently, Nathalie also serves on the Aspen Latinos and Society Board of Advisors, the

Hispanic Federation and Planned Parenthood Action Fund board, and chairs the Binational Advisory Group for the Hispanics Organized for Political Equality (HOPE).

With her impressive qualifications, Nathalie Rayes is fully capable of assuming the role of U.S. Ambassador to Croatia. Her resilience, adaptability, and determination will enable her to overcome any challenges the role may face and put her on track to significantly contribute to strengthening the bilateral relationship. Nathalie's keen understanding of global affairs and her ability to engage with diverse perspectives will enable her to foster dialogue and collaboration between our nations. In conclusion, I wholeheartedly support Nathalie's selection as the United States Ambassador to Croatia. Your exceptional qualifications, dedication to public service, and deep-rooted commitment to fostering strong international relationships make her an outstanding candidate for this position. I have every confidence that Nathalie will represent the United States with distinction and make a meaningful impact in advancing shared goals.

If I can be of further assistance during this process, please do not hesitate to reach out to me.

Respectfully,

Domenika Lynch
Vice President and Executive Director
Aspen Institute Latinos and Society Program



NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS
55 Exchange Place, 5th FL
New York, NY 10005
Phone: 212.233.8955
Hotline: 1.866.HFAYUDA

July 6, 2023

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Robert Menendez
Chairman, Foreign Relations Committee
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable James E. Risch
Ranking Member, Foreign Relations Committee
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Subject: Support for Nathalie Rayes as U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Croatia

Dear Senate Leaders,

With great respect, I write to express my wholehearted support for the confirmation of Ms. Nathalie Rayes as the next United States Ambassador to the Republic of Croatia. I have known Ms. Rayes for over 8 years and can attest to her integrity, leadership, and devotion to our nation and upholding the values, ethics, and principles we most cherish.

As the president and CEO of the largest Latino nonprofit umbrella organization in the US, and in my personal capacity, I've had the opportunity to work with Ms. Rayes on multiple efforts. From leading nonprofit boards to spearheading relief efforts in Mexico and the Caribbean, to her steadfast commitment to uplifting vulnerable communities all across our nation, her dedication to American principles is not only admirable but inspiring.

Nathalie has had a distinguished career in public service as a leader, consensus builder, and advocate with great love for our country. Ms. Rayes will not only serve our great country exceptionally, she will also be an example of the diverse fabric of our nation and an inspiration to all Americans, especially Hispanic-Americans. I am confident that she will represent the United States of America with the highest levels of integrity, intelligence, and honor.

I respectfully urge the Senate to confirm Ms. Rayes to this important role after careful review of her impressive background and track record of accomplishments. Thank you for your consideration. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Frankie Miranda
President and CEO

12125 Windsor Hall Way
Herndon, Virginia 20170

Phone: 571-276-3109
www.varcom.com

Email: dvargas@varcom.com



June 30, 2023

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Robert Menendez
Chairman, U.S. Senate Foreign Relations
Committee

The Honorable James E. Risch
Ranking Member, U.S. Senate Foreign Relations
Committee

Subject: Support for Nathalie Rayes as U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Croatia

Dear Senate Leaders:

With great respect, I write to express my wholehearted support for the confirmation of Ms. Nathalie Rayes as the next United States Ambassador to the Republic of Croatia. I have known Ms. Rayes for approximately 15 years and can attest to her integrity, leadership, and devotion to the highest principles of ethics and American values.

She has demonstrated genuine leadership in driving bipartisan solutions. We first met when she was an executive at Grupo Salinas when she invited me to speak at a forum that brought together Republicans and Democrats in Denver to discuss important policy issues. I saw her continued leadership when she served on the board of directors of the Congressional Hispanic Leadership Institute (CHLI) and later as the President/CEO of Latino Victory Fund.

Her commitment to advancing unity and common-sense approaches to promoting America's best interests both nationally and internationally is self-evident. I am confident that she will represent the United States of America with the highest levels of integrity, intelligence, and honor.

I respectfully urge the Senate to confirm Ms. Rayes' to this important role after careful review of her impressive background and track record of accomplishments. Thank you for your consideration. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Raul Danny Vargas".

Raul Danny Vargas
President, VARCom Solutions
Founder/CEO/Chairman, American Latino Veterans Association (ALVA)
Chairman Emeritus, Friends of the National Museum of the American Latino
Former National Chairman, Republican National Hispanic Assembly
Chairman, Virginia Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights



One Battery Park Plaza, Fifth Floor
New York, NY 10004
pfnc.org

July 5, 2023

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Robert Menendez
Chairman, U.S. Senate Foreign
Relations Committee

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable James E. Risch
Ranking Member, U.S. Senate Foreign
Relations Committee

Subject: Support for Nathalie Rayes as U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Croatia

Dear Senate Leaders,

I write in support of the nomination of Nathalie Rayes to serve as U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Croatia. As an executive of Grupo Salinas, Nathalie represented that major global business in the Partnership for New York City. She demonstrated significant knowledge of international business issues and a commitment to building global trade relationships. I introduced Natalie to the nonprofit Hispanic Federation, where she stepped up to become the Chairman of the Board of this important civic organization. In that role she was effective in fostering bipartisan, public policy discussions related to immigration and combatting poverty.

In the two decades that I have known Nathalie, I have found her to be a consummate diplomat, a savvy advocate, and a thoughtful leader. Her career and her personal commitments have consistently focused on building consensus among people of all backgrounds and points of view. She is an excellent listener and has all the qualities that would make her an effective representative of the United States in Croatia. I hope the Senate will move quickly to confirm her nomination for this important position, for which she is eminently qualified.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kathryn Wylde".

Kathryn Wylde
President & CEO

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

Victor Atlas
 Carlos A. Becerra
 Emile C'De Baca
 Yuri Cunza
 Jaime di Paulo
 Reuben Franco
 Sil Gonzales
 Patty Juárez
 Juan Carlos Liscano
 Rachel Kutz
 Roberto Martinez
 Rosa Navejar
 Mayra Pineda
 Jacquelyn Puente
 Nelson Reyneri
 Christine Rice
 Alice Rodriguez
 Jennifer Rodriguez
 Raul Salinas
 Yammel Sánchez-Ocaña
 Cesar Vargas
 Ramiro A. Cavazos
President & CEO

July 6, 2023

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
 Majority Leader
 U.S. Senate
 Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
 Minority Leader
 U.S. Senate
 Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Robert Menendez
 Chairman, U.S. Senate Foreign Relations
 Committee

The Honorable James E. Risch
 Ranking Member, U.S. Senate Foreign
 Relations Committee

Subject: Support for Nathalie Rayes as U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Croatia

Dear Senate Leaders:

On behalf of the United States Hispanic Chamber of Commerce (USHCC) and our nation's Hispanic business community, we write to express our support for Ms. Nathalie Rayes to serve as the U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Croatia. We applaud the nomination of Ms. Rayes by the Biden-Harris Administration, potentially giving the fast-growing Latino community more representation at the highest levels of government. Her expertise and experience merits strong consideration and her talents are beyond reproach.

Nathalie Rayes's distinguished career is highlighted by her service both locally and nationally. Ms. Rayes is the President and CEO of Latino Victory. She serves as the Chair of the Hispanas Organized for Political Equality (HOPE) Binational Advisory Group, vice-chair of the Hispanic Federation, and as board member of the Aspen Institute Latinos and Society Program. She has also served on the boards of the Congressional Hispanic Leadership Institute (CHLI) and the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute (CHCI). Ms. Rayes was appointed by President Barack Obama to serve on the board of the Woodrow Wilson Center and appointed by President Biden to serve as a board member of the United States Institute of Peace. She began her career as a field deputy and later Senior Policy Advisor to Los Angeles Council Member Mike Feuer. She also served as chief of staff to Los Angeles Mayor James Hahn. She was Vice President of Public Affairs for Grupo Salinas in the United States, Executive Director of Fundación Azteca America, and she was a State Department fellow in the U.S. Embassy in Cairo in the economic political section.

The USHCC actively promotes the economic growth, development, and interests of more than five million Hispanic-owned businesses that aggregate contribute over \$800 billion to the American economy every year. We also serve as a platform for our nationwide network of over 260 local Hispanic Chambers of Commerce. Overall, America's 63.5 million Latinos contribute more than \$2.85 trillion to the gross domestic product of the United States annually.

Latinos have invaluable insights to share, and it is time to give Latino voices a seat at every big table where decisions are made. USHCC stands with policy makers and leaders who support bipartisan initiatives and policies that contribute to our overall quality of life. Selecting the best public servants to serve our federal government at home and abroad is a value that we believe in at the United States Hispanic Chamber of Commerce.



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Victor Anias
 Carlos A. Becerra
 Ernie C'De Baca
 Yuri Cunza
 Jaime di Paulo
 Reuben Franco
 Sil Gonzales
 Patty Juárez
 Juan Carlos Liscano
 Rachel Kutz
 Roberto Martinez
 Rosa Navejar
 Mayra Pineda
 Jacquelyn Puente
 Nelson Reyneri
 Christine Rice
 Alice Rodriguez
 Jennifer Rodriguez
 Raul Salinas
 Yammel Sánchez-Ocaña
 Cesar Vargas
 Ramiro A. Cavazos
 President & CEO

The USHCC firmly believes that having a strong Hispanic presence at every level of government will allow us to fully reflect our diversity in Hispanic communities, including, gender, race, sexual orientation, religion, disability, and ethnicity. Hispanic Americans account for approximately 20% of our total population and continues to grow. We seek more equity in the representation of Latinos serving in Presidential Cabinets, our Court System, ambassadorships, or other key political appointments.

We look forward to your support in achieving the appointment and confirmation of Ms. Nathalie Rayes' nomination. If you have any questions about her or the USHCC's efforts related to other key appointments, please do not hesitate to reach out to us at any time; we welcome the opportunity to have dialogue on this important process in American history.

Respectfully,

Ramiro A. Cavazos
 President & CEO
 United States Hispanic Chamber of Commerce



July 7, 2023

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Robert Menendez
Chairman, Foreign Relations Committee
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable James E. Risch
Ranking Member, Foreign Relations Committee
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Re: Support for Nathalie Rayes as U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Croatia

Dear Senate Leaders,

It is with great joy and pride that I respectfully address you on the occasion of supporting the nomination of Mrs. Nathalie Rayes as the next Ambassador of the United States to the Republic of Croatia. I have known Mrs. Rayes for many years now, and have had the opportunity to work with her on various projects. I can attest first-hand to her ability, her talent, her leadership, her integrity, and above all, her absolute commitment to America. She is always guided by the highest ethical principles and by the love and respect for the values that built our great nation.

I have seen her lead solutions in a bipartisan way many times. She has also played the role of the liaison necessary to reach agreements on both sides of the aisle, from the leadership shown on the occasion of leading boards of non-profit organizations to having under her direction the necessary help in regions such as Mexico and the Caribbean. Mrs. Rayes has also been a fundamental support of the Venezuelan community in its quest to achieve the return of democracy to Venezuela. The Venezuelan American Caucus, the organization that I am honored to lead, would not exist without Nathalie, she has been a tireless advocate and a great leader for our community. This is a historic nomination as Nathalie is the first Venezuelan American to be nominated for ambassadorship, and her confirmation will undoubtedly lead the way for our community and join our growing Hispanic representation in our government.

As evidenced by decades of her work in various organizations and boards, Mrs. Rayes has always been known for being and for promoting plurality, understanding, and dialogue without partisanship.

Nathalie is qualified and prepared to fill this position. Without a doubt, she will represent the best interests of the United States in Croatia. For all these reasons and after reviewing all of her qualifications, I respectfully ask you to confirm Ms. Rayes. She will represent the best of our great, diverse and loved America, while serving our country with the respect, values and leadership we need.

Sincerely,

Adelys Ferro
Executive Director
Venezuelan American Caucus



Adelys Ferro
Executive Director
Venezuelan American Caucus

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO HON. DENNIS B. HANKINS BY SENATOR ROBERT MENENDEZ

Diaspora Community

As you know, we have a vibrant Haitian diaspora community in our country closely attuned to developments affecting their loved ones in Haiti, including in my home state of New Jersey. Over the past two years, members of this community have tirelessly sounded the alarm about the political, security, and humanitarian crises facing the Haitian people. I hear from them on a regular basis, and know that they seek greater engagement with the Biden administration on the development of policy towards Haiti:

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to regularly consult and engage with members of the Haitian American diaspora as an essential stakeholder in regards to the stability and future well-being of Haiti?

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, I commit to regularly consult and engage with the Haitian-American diaspora regarding the stability and future well-being of Haiti. I confirm my oral commitment to your staff to, if confirmed, visit Haitian diaspora representatives in New Jersey within four months of my arrival in Haiti.

Multinational Force

For almost a year, the Biden administration has been in discussions with partner countries to rally support for a multinational force to address the security crisis engulfing one of our closest neighbors. I strongly believe that the gravity of the security challenges facing the Haitian people, and the extent to which such challenges have hindered the distribution of humanitarian assistance, urgently warrants an international response to help stabilize the country. The international community has failed to come to Haiti's aid in the past. We cannot afford to fail again.

Question. If such a force comes to fruition, how will you work to ensure it has broad credibility and support among the Haitian people and leads to sustainable peace and security in the country?

Answer. I am very encouraged that Kenya is “positively considering” leading a multinational force to support the Haitian National Police (HNP), responding directly to Haitian requests. The vast majority of Haitians support multinational assistance to the HNP. This sentiment is conveyed in Haitian television, radio, and media stories; social media commentaries; and individual conversations. Few public opinion polls exist in Haiti, but in polls taken in January 2023, approximately 70 percent of the Haitian population said that they did not believe the Haitian police had the capacity to tackle Haiti’s severe gang problem on their own. An equal number supported international assistance to the HNP. Haitian public support for international security assistance has grown since that time as the security situation has continued to decline. While there have been a few public statements against multinational support to the police, these tend to come from a small number of vocal, well-connected individuals whose positions on a potential MNF are motivated more by their political positions than by the extreme security needs of everyday Haitians.

To maximize the ability of an MNF to pave the way towards sustainable peace and security and in order to maintain credibility and popular support, we are drawing from lessons from prior international efforts in Haiti to avoid repeating mistakes. In addition, we will also use the upcoming United Nations Secretary General’s report outlining the full range of support options the United Nations can provide to enhance the security situation to help guide development of the MNF.

Like the Administration, I believe an MNF could assist the HNP in securing critical infrastructure sites and better enable it to curtail lawlessness and stop rampant gang violence. Continuing to support the growth of the HNP also will play a critical role in ensuring a positive outcome in Haiti.

Democracy Speech

Given the current challenges of democratic backsliding and rising authoritarianism occurring around the world, it is imperative that U.S. representatives shine a public light on these issues:

Question. To that end, can I get your commitment that you will deliver a public speech open to the press at a venue in Haiti within your first six months on the importance of democracy and human rights in the Caribbean and that you will specifically raise democracy and human rights in your interactions with the Haitian Government?

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, I commit to spread awareness on the importance of democracy and human rights in both my public comments and private interactions with the Haitian Government. I will call on all players in Haitian society to come together to build a sustainable, long-lasting democratic government. I will urge stakeholders from all sectors of society, including the Haitian Government, to foster a broad and inclusive leadership infrastructure that will serve as a foundation for the rule of law and the protection of human rights.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO HON. DENNIS B. HANKINS BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Question. Is Haiti a failed state? Please explain.

Answer. Haiti is not a failed state, although the Government's ability to provide security and governance for all its citizens is highly strained. Haiti faces multiple and competing crises, all of which are exacerbated by gang violence in and around the capital city of Port-au-Prince. Gangs control a significant part of metropolitan Port-au-Prince and are increasingly able to operate in neighborhoods previously regarded as safe. Port-au-Prince's gang activity has severely impacted the entire country, exacerbating challenges in transporting goods throughout the country, shortages of key fuel, and dwindling access to medical care. Gang activity also hampers the Haitian Government's limited ability to deliver public services and limits our ability—and the ability of our international partners—to distribute humanitarian assistance. It is my understanding that INL and USAID work closely with the Haitian National Police and civil society organizations, respectively, to build institutional police capacity and provide humanitarian relief. Nonetheless, the Government still provides services within its limited capacity throughout much of the country and has, for instance, made progress in financial management as recently acknowledged by the International Monetary Fund.

Question. In your opinion, are the security, humanitarian, and governability conditions in Haiti today better than they were in January 2021? Please explain.

Answer. Haiti has suffered immensely since January 2021; the positive effects of U.S. and international disaster and humanitarian support are offset by the increasing influence of armed gangs. Already in a political impasse and suffering from poverty and gang violence, the July 7, 2021, assassination of President Moïse and August 14, 2021, earthquake worsened already difficult conditions in Haiti. Since those events, the United States increased its critical efforts across Haiti to improve the humanitarian, security, political, and economic situation and to help prevent further deterioration. Thanks to USAID support, under-five mortality rates have decreased by 20 percent in the last ten years. USAID's food assistance reaches hundreds of thousands of people per month and has helped to bring nearly 20,000 people out of famine-like conditions. USAID funding supports over 160 health clinics located throughout Haiti; one in every two fully vaccinated children in Haiti were vaccinated with USAID support. In addition, the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs' critical support is helping the Haitian National Police address gang violence to reduce insecurity, which is needed to help Haiti move toward democratic elections. It is my understanding that Prime Minister Henry has made several significant steps towards creating a path forward for inclusive elections, including installing the High Transition Council, reconstituting the supreme court, and holding political roundtables with opposing political parties.

RESUBMITTED QUESTION AND RESPONSE

Question. In your opinion, are the security, humanitarian, and governability conditions in Haiti today better than they were in January 2021?

Answer. No, while we can point to a few positive developments, any objective analysis of the situation in Haiti would have to see conditions as worse than they were in January 2021.

Haiti has suffered immensely since January 2021; the positive effects of U.S. and international disaster and humanitarian support are offset by the increasing influence of armed gangs. Already in a political impasse and suffering from poverty and gang violence, the July 7, 2021, assassination of President Moïse and August 14, 2021, earthquake worsened already difficult conditions in Haiti. Since those events, the United States increased its critical efforts across Haiti to improve the humanitarian, security, polit-

ical, and economic situation and to help prevent further deterioration. Thanks to USAID support, under-five mortality rates have decreased by 20 percent in the last ten years. USAID's food assistance reaches hundreds of thousands of people per month and has helped to bring nearly 20,000 people out of famine-like conditions. USAID funding supports over 160 health clinics located throughout Haiti; one in every two fully vaccinated children in Haiti were vaccinated with USAID support. In addition, the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs' critical support is helping the Haitian National Police address gang violence to reduce insecurity, which is needed to help Haiti move toward democratic elections. It is my understanding that Prime Minister Henry has made several significant steps towards creating a path forward for inclusive elections, including installing the High Transition Council, reconstituting the supreme court, and holding political roundtables with opposing political parties.

Question. How confident are you that current U.S. policies will improve security, humanitarian, and governability conditions in Haiti in the next 120 days?

Answer. I believe U.S. leadership and collaboration with Haitian stakeholders and the international community has set in motion a number of positive initiatives that are bearing fruit in Haiti and will continue to do so. Haiti's security situation remains dire and is a top priority for the Department of State. Following my hearing, I learned Kenya is "positively considering" leading a multinational force to support the Haitian National Police (HNP), which responds to requests directly from the Haitian Government. Upcoming deliberations within the United Nations Security Council and coordination among potential contributors for a security force for Haiti will determine how quickly security support can be fielded and begin to have a positive impact. In addition, on a bilateral basis, the Department has allocated \$122 million to strengthen HNP capacity since July 2021.

The United States remains closely engaged in ongoing dialogue between the Haitian Government, opposition political parties, and civil society that show some signs of progress in reaching a consensus leading to new interim governance mechanisms and new elections.

The United States' financial sanctions and visa restrictions—rolled out at an unprecedented pace—have placed significant pressure on political and economic elites who finance gang leaders and foment the ongoing crises in Haiti. Since October 2022, the United States has designated more than 50 individuals involved in street gangs, other Haitian criminal organizations, drug trafficking, significant corruption, or gross violations of human rights. In fall 2022, the United States also secured unanimous approval for the first ever U.N. sanctions regime in the Western Hemisphere and persuaded partners like Canada and—following my hearing—the EU to create their own Haiti sanctions program.

The United States also supports the Haitian people as they forge a path forward for their country's democratic governance and development, including through the Global Fragility Act. The act allows us to build long term solutions with Haitians while we address today's acute, multidimensional crises. We encourage Haiti's political, economic, religious, and civil society actors to work together to resolve Haiti's political and security challenges.

Question. Please provide your assessment of the current security situation in Haiti.

Answer. Haiti faces multiple and competing crises, all of which are exacerbated by gang violence in and around the capital city of Port-au-Prince. Gangs control significant portions of greater Port-au-Prince and are increasingly able to operate in neighborhoods previously regarded as safe. With most national highways passing through the city, Port-au-Prince's gang activity has severely impacted the entire country, exacerbating challenges in transporting goods throughout the country, shortages of key fuel, and dwindling access to medical care. Gang activity also hampers the Haitian Government's ability to deliver public services and limits our ability—and the ability of our international partners—to distribute humanitarian assistance.

Previously, gangs were largely dependent on relationships with corrupt political and economic elites and often received payment from them, for example, in exchange for mobilizing paid protesters against political opponents. Today, gangs are much more independent, deriving much of their income from kidnappings for ransom and sometimes even challenging political figures for political power.

Question. Please explain your views on whether a multinational specialized force in Haiti should include a peacekeeping process.

Answer. My understanding is that the tasks of the multinational force will initially be limited to static security for critical infrastructure points. However, given the multiplicity of security challenges in Haiti, it is critical to keep our options open for future security support. In this context, the re-authorization of the United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti includes a tasking to the United Nations Secretary-General to submit a written report to the Security Council, in consultation with Haiti, outlining the full range of support options the United Nations can provide to enhance the security situation, including a possible peacekeeping operation.

Question. Should a multinational force be deployed, what type of training, equipment, and logistical support would the United States provide for that force?

Answer. I am encouraged that, following my hearing, Kenya announced its intention to “positively consider” leading a multinational force. The United States welcomes this announcement and eagerly awaits the results of Kenya’s August assessment visit. I understand the United States stands ready to provide support to an MNF where it would be most effective, potentially including funding, training, logistics, and equipment. If confirmed, I will also work closely with Haiti as well as Department of State and interagency colleagues to engage the international community to fund and equip such a force.

Question. Should this multinational force be approved by a U.N. Security Council Resolution?

Answer. As I understand it, we would plan to pursue a U.N. Security Council Resolution authorizing the multinational force.

Question. Should this multinational force use assessed contributions from the U.N. Peacekeeping Budget?

Answer. Discussions in New York are trending towards a non-U.N. multinational force. Such a non-U.N. force would not be funded through U.N. assessed contributions. It is my understanding that countries not contributing personnel or equipment to this effort could contribute funds voluntarily.

Question. How should the United States and the international community respond to vigilante violence?

Answer. Vigilante violence is a serious concern for the Department of State. Vigilantism occurs when local citizens do not believe that their police forces have the capacity to protect them or hold alleged criminals accountable. The vigilante movement expresses the depth of Haitian public resistance to the criminal gangs that have made daily life unbearable. Therefore, the United States and the international community should continue to their bilateral support to the Haitian National Police (HNP) including efforts to enhance community policing. Since July 2021, the Department of State has allocated \$122 million to strengthen HNP capacity through recruitment and training, technical assistance, and equipment. This funding also supports community policing programs to build the community’s trust in the HNP so reports of criminal activity can be handled in a lawful manner.

Additionally, a multinational force—which Kenya has since my hearing said it was “positively considering” leading—would also help support the HNP, thereby increasing the confidence of Haitians in official security services and reducing vigilantism.

Question. As you may know, a number of Haiti-specific trade preference programs are set to expire in 2025. The political situation in Haiti is causing U.S. companies difficulty in meeting the requirement to obtain a visa for their products to receive duty-free treatment in the United States. Please explain your views on whether Congress should re-evaluate the need for the visa as it considers the expiring Haiti-specific trade preference programs.

Answer. I defer to Customs and Border Protection on questions regarding the visa requirements for products made in Haiti and eligible for Haiti-specific trade preference programs. Like the Administration, I strongly support the extension of the HOPE, HOPE II, and HELP trade preferences program for Haiti. At this critical time, it is important that producers and investors in Haiti, those they do business with, and the workers upon whom they rely, have certainty about the uninterrupted continuation of the Haiti-specific trade preference programs. In 2022, the garment sector—created largely thanks to the HOPE and HELP Acts—accounted for approximately 90 percent of Haiti’s exports, employed more than 34,000 Haitians, and financially supported more than 200,000 Haitians. But in the past year, some garment manufacturers have closed their factories and laid off workers—decisions made in part because of uncertainty about whether Haiti will continue to enjoy

those preferences. We must continue to support economic growth, job creation, and investment where possible to maintain those investment gains and job growth.

Question. According to the World Food Programme, Haiti currently faces the second worst food emergency crisis in the world, second only to South Sudan. WFP was unable to feed 100,000 people this month due to insufficient funding and the deteriorating security situation across the country. In your opinion, are current U.S. efforts to improve the capacity of the Haitian National Police likely to improve security conditions in the next 90 to 120 days?

Answer. I believe U.S. leadership and collaboration with Haitian stakeholders and the international community has set in motion a number of positive initiatives that are bearing fruit in Haiti and will continue to do so. Haiti's security situation remains dire and is a top priority for the Department of State. I am very encouraged that Kenya is "positively considering" leading a multinational force to support the Haitian National Police (HNP), which would respond directly to requests from the Haitian Government. We believe that such a force would help to free critical infrastructure and intersections from gang control, thereby facilitating the flow of food, water, humanitarian supplies, other goods, and people throughout the country.

The United States will continue current efforts to support the Haitian National Police including through the more than \$122 million allocated to strengthen police capacity since July 2021. This funding will strengthen the Haitian National Police's counter-gang capacity through recruitment and training, technical assistance, and equipment. The Department of State is also working with DHS to establish a Transnational Criminal Investigative Unit within the police to partner better with Haiti to investigate and prosecute transnational crimes with a U.S. nexus.

Finally, the United States is the largest humanitarian aid donor to Haiti. USAID's food assistance reaches hundreds of thousands of people per month and has helped to bring nearly 20,000 people out of famine-like conditions. One of USAID's major partners is the U.N. World Food Programme. The United States will continue our work to reduce food insecurity in Haiti and will continue to call on the international community to increase their contributions to this effort.

Question. What is your assessment of the implementation of the National Consensus for an Inclusive Transition and Transparent Elections in Haiti?

Answer. The National Consensus for an Inclusive Transition and Transparent Elections, also known as the December 21st accord, is a positive step towards resolving Haiti's political impasse. This accord has broader support than previous efforts. Since the signing of the December 21st accord, Prime Minister Henry has taken several significant steps towards creating a path forward for inclusive elections, including by installing the High Transition Council, reconstituting the supreme court, and holding political roundtables with opposing political parties. More must be done and urgently. A broader and more inclusive leadership structure will provide greater confidence to all Haitians.

Question. What actions are needed to reestablish and maintain security and stability in Haiti to allow the conduct of free and fair presidential and legislative elections in 2024?

Answer. The first and most urgent action needed is to improve security, especially in Port-au-Prince. I am very encouraged that Kenya is "positively considering" leading a multinational force to support the Haitian National Police (HNP), which responds directly to Haitian requests. Creating a multinational force, in combination with the United States' substantial on-going capacity building support to the HNP, will improve security. Improved security is a pre-condition for elections and necessary for election officials to make logistical arrangements, candidates to campaign, and citizens to vote.

Haitian stakeholders have also made important progress on the political processes necessary for elections. The National Consensus for an Inclusive Transition and Transparent Elections in Haiti, also known as the December 21st accord, is a positive step towards resolving Haiti's political impasse and has broader support than other efforts. The installation of the High Transition Council, reconstitution of the supreme court, and political roundtables with opposing political parties have been key milestones in the path towards elections. Now Haitian stakeholders must reach a compromise on remaining steps towards elections, which will include naming members of the Provisional Electoral Council, logistics around identifying polling places, updating voter lists, and issuing voter registration cards.

Question. Please provide an assessment of the most promising areas in which the United States can cooperate with Taiwan to improve conditions in Haiti.

Answer. The United States has a robust unofficial relationship with Taiwan. As a leading democracy and technological powerhouse, Taiwan is a key U.S. partner and a reliable partner to countries in the Americas, including in Haiti. I understand Taiwan maintains several initiatives in Haiti, including infrastructure construction, scholarship programs, as well as a key role in Haiti's garment manufacturing sector. I would seek opportunities to align Taiwanese efforts with our own in Haiti.

Question. Please explain how you intend to engage with the Haitian people and government about the concerns regarding PRC practices.

Answer. If confirmed, I will work closely with the Haitian people and government, as well as Department of State and interagency colleagues and Congress, to address the PRC's efforts to expand its influence in Haiti and the region. If confirmed, I will prioritize advancing U.S. national security interests in Haiti and countering efforts by our strategic and regional competitors to undermine those interests. The Administration has been clear that the PRC is the most consequential geopolitical challenge facing the United States, and that the United States is committed to working to strengthen our partnerships in the region.

Question. How will your experiences with the Wagner Group in Mali inform your work in Haiti?

Answer. Over the past several years, we have seen Russia—including through the Kremlin-backed Wagner Group and other Yevgeniy Prigozhin-linked entities—exploit insecurity as a catalyst to expand its destabilizing presence and profiteering on the African continent.

Wagner serves as one of Moscow's most prominent tools to gain influence. It is a transnational criminal organization that exploits African mineral wealth and weakens governance institutions by undermining accountability and rule of law as well as co-opting ministries for its own illicit ends.

If confirmed, I will use my experience countering these threats in Mali to be alert for any potential Wagner activity in Haiti and, more broadly, to support U.S. objectives in Haiti.

Question. How will your experiences with Russian activities in Africa inform your work in Haiti?

Answer. Disinformation is one of the Kremlin's most important and far-reaching tools to destabilize and influence other countries, including in Africa. The Kremlin creates and spreads disinformation in attempts to sway public opinion, create political instability, undermine democratic values, discredit the West, meddle in elections, and influence people to support the Kremlin's objectives in Africa. This includes attempts to spread lies, use social media platforms via fake and compromised accounts, while also soliciting content from local journalists, to meddle in African elections, and influence African politics with false and biased narratives.

While Russia is not very active in Haiti, if confirmed, I will apply my experience countering Russian disinformation in Mali, whenever possible, to advance U.S. policy objectives in Haiti.

Question. Please provide your assessment of current U.S.-Haiti cooperation to curb illegal migration and steps that you would take to support these efforts if confirmed.

Answer. The United States works closely with the Government of Haiti to curb irregular migration. If confirmed, I would support these efforts by continuing engagement with the Haitian Government and other countries in the region to address the root causes of migration.

On January 5, 2023, the Department of Homeland Security announced the extension of the Venezuela parole process and its expansion to nationals of Nicaragua, Haiti, and Cuba. Through this safe and lawful migration pathway, up to a total of 30,000 individuals per month from these four countries, can come to the United States for a period of two years and apply for work authorization. Individuals must demonstrate that they who have an eligible supporter in the United States and pass vetting and background checks before they are admitted to the United States.

This process has significantly reduced irregular entries at our border, showing that when there is a lawful and orderly migration pathway, people will be less inclined to put their lives in the hands of smugglers. The Department of State proactively informs potential migrants throughout the region of relevant U.S. policy. Mission Port-au-Prince engages with the Haitian Government and media to highlight opportunities for safe, orderly, and humane migration, while cautioning against the dangers and consequences of irregular migration.

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

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with the Haitian Government to continue to make progress on the prioritized recommendations in the areas of prosecution, protection, and prevention. We remain very concerned by the overall trafficking situation in Haiti, hence its ranking as a Tier 2 watch list country. Nonetheless, we are encouraged by efforts the Haitian Government has made over the past year, including creating a written plan to address recommendations in the most recent TIP report. If confirmed, I will work with my Embassy team and DC-based interagency colleagues to facilitate Haitian Government implementation of this plan. For example, we have already invited Haitian officials to participate in a U.S.-funded September 2023 regional training for police on investigative techniques and prosecutors on elements of a successful prosecution.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to reporting the reality of the trafficking situation on the ground in Haiti in the annual trafficking in persons report?

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, I commit to continuing the Embassy's accurate and thorough reporting regarding human trafficking in Haiti via the annual trafficking in persons report.

Question. What is your assessment of this particular issue and if confirmed, how will you work with the Ambassador at large for international religious freedom to bolster religious freedom in-country?

Answer. Haiti's 1987 constitution provides for the free exercise of all religions within Haiti, the certification of clergy credentials all denominations, and authorizes religious operations in the country. As described in the latest State Department report on international religious freedom, leaders representing the Catholic, Protestant, Muslim, Vodou, and Jewish communities reported that the Government did not restrict their religious freedom. However, government's inability to maintain security and order hampered their communities' abilities to practice their religions freely.

If confirmed, I will work with the Ambassador at large for international religious freedom to protect and support the right of all individuals within Haiti to exercise their freedom of religion or belief; change their faith as they choose; express their religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship, and observation; or practice no faith at all. I recognize the critical role that religious organizations play in peacebuilding, conflict prevention, and mitigation in Haiti and look forward to productive dialogues with diverse religious groups.

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

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, I commit to engaging personally with civil society on any concerns regarding religious freedom in Haiti.

In the past several months, religious organizations in Haiti have started playing ever-more important roles in negotiating a way out of political gridlock, building peace in gang-controlled communities, and spreading lifesaving public health messaging across Haiti. Haitian civil society actors and religious leaders remain some of our most effective partners globally across a variety of diplomatic and foreign policy objectives, and if confirmed, I commit to working alongside them at the crossroads of religious freedom, security, and other key issues.

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

Answer. As described previous answers and in the latest State Department report on international religious freedom, leaders representing the Catholic, Protestant, Muslim, Vodou, and Jewish communities reported that the Government did not restrict their religious freedom. However, government's inability to maintain security and order hampered their communities' abilities to practice their religions freely.

Given this feedback directly from religious leaders, I believe support for an MNF and continued support for the Haitian National Police will be a critical component creating more space for religious groups throughout Haiti to practice their religions freely. If confirmed, my team and I would work closely with civil society, Haitian political leaders, diaspora communities, U.S. leaders, and multilateral institutions to address laws and policies that impact Haitians' religious freedom. I believe engaging religious organizations across all faith backgrounds, including often stigmatized groups like Vodou, is of particular importance to ensure religious freedom for all Haitians.

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 continue to support and facilitate these important relationships. Through our regular outreach to civil society groups, including specifically those specializing in human rights, and also through the U.S. Strategy to Prevent Conflict and Promote Stability and the 10-year plan for Haiti, I will work to build inclusive and sustainable foundations for long-term security, stability, and democratic governance, including ensuring the protection and promotion of human rights. We will utilize our strong existing relationships with civil society organizations, local governments, and community leaders to implement the plan.

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

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, I will engage personally with Haitian civil society on human rights issues.

Question. If confirmed, please describe how you can work with USUN and IO colleagues to find, recruit, and retain qualified Americans in the U.N. system.

Answer. If confirmed, I will prioritize working with all stakeholders to promote the employment of U.S. citizens in the U.N. system to help advance American priorities such as innovation, ethical standards, transparency, and accountability at international organizations, while bringing important skills and specializations. I would also support our continued collaboration with stakeholders to develop and execute strategies for high-priority electoral campaigns for U.S. officials in multilateral agencies and coordinate with partners on likeminded, qualified, and independent candidates.

Question. If confirmed, please describe how you can work with USUN and IO colleagues to promote American or likeminded initiatives within the U.N. system, including on technical matters at specialized bodies.

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with USUN and IO colleagues to advance the United States' affirmative agenda for the U.N. and strengthen partnerships with traditional and non-traditional partners, including in specialized and technical agencies. U.S. engagement at the U.N. system is critical to asserting U.S. leadership, including by working with our partners and allies to promote initiatives that advance shared priorities on technical matters.

Question. How will you engage with the Haitian Government to ensure that perpetrators of sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) from U.N. personnel are held accountable?

Answer. If confirmed, I will ensure our Embassy regularly engages with the Haitian Government on SEA accountability as well as demand strong action on SEA prevention and accountability throughout all U.N. fora.

The United States endorses measures by the U.N. Secretary-General to prevent and combat SEA consistent with U.N. Security Council Resolution 2272. If confirmed, I will continue to advocate for the Secretary-General's zero tolerance policy and accountability by urging the Special Coordinator for Improving Response to SEA to share more information through the "Conduct in U.N. Field Missions" database and to expand prevention and accountability efforts.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO HON. DENNIS B. HANKINS BY SENATOR MARCO RUBIO

Question. In May 2022, Secretary Blinken said that the People's Republic of China is the "only country with both the intent to reshape the international order and, increasingly, the economic, diplomatic, military, and technological power to do it." The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) clearly holds the reins of power in the People's Republic of China and has used this power to commit genocide in Xinjiang, flood our communities with fentanyl, and emit, by far the largest quantity of greenhouse gases in the world today. This week was yet another reminder of the pervasive power the CCP wields over Chinese society, as all evidence of former Foreign Minister Qin Gang's career and presence are being wiped from the Chinese ministry's webpage. With their absolute control of Chinese society and industry, the CCP could stop all of these destructive actions tomorrow if they so choose. Is the Chinese Communist Party a threat to the United States?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Question. Despite substantial international support for Haiti, its institutions remain crippled, poverty is widespread, large economic disparities exist, and both human-made and natural disasters compound the country’s miserable situation. Haiti lacks any elected officials while organized gangs and associated violence and kidnapping have skyrocketed. As the security and humanitarian situation continue to worsen, we are seeing increased illegal immigration to Florida via dangerous sea voyages. What is your characterization of the existing relationship between the U.S. and Haiti?

Answer. The United States works closely with many Haitian interlocutors—government officials; political and economic stakeholders; and religious and civil society leaders. The United States is committed to helping the Haitian people build a better future, and this support makes a real difference in the lives of Haitians every day. When Haiti is more prosperous, secure, and firmly rooted in democracy, both Haitians and Americans benefit. The United States is the single largest donor of humanitarian assistance to Haiti and provides long-term development and support to strengthen Haitian institutions. With a large Haitian diaspora in communities throughout the United States, millions of individual bonds unite our populations.

The United States works closely with the Government of Haiti to curb irregular migration. On January 5, 2023, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) announced the extension of the Venezuela parole process and its expansion to nationals of Nicaragua, Haiti, and Cuba. Through this safe and lawful migration pathway, up to a total of 30,000 individuals per month from these four countries can come to the United States for a period of two years and apply for work authorization. Individuals must demonstrate that they have an eligible supporter in the United States and pass vetting and background checks before they are admitted to the

United States. This process has significantly reduced irregular entries at our border, showing that when there is a lawful and orderly migration pathway, people will be less inclined to put their lives in the hands of smugglers.

Question. If confirmed, what will your policy priorities be?

Answer. Given the dire security situation in Haiti, strengthening the Haitian National Police (HNP) would be a top priority, so that the state has a monopoly on the use of force. Supporting the Haitian people in developing an inclusive, broad-based consensus on a way forward for democratic governance and development is also of paramount importance. If confirmed, I would work with a broad group of Haitian leaders, partners in the United States, and international stakeholders to ensure Haiti has a path toward greater security, stability, and free and fair elections. Finally, if confirmed, I would work with Haitian and international partners to help meet the humanitarian needs of the most vulnerable Haitians.

All of these efforts would be in addition to my primary responsibility, if confirmed, which is the safety of mission personnel as well as the welfare of American citizen residents of Haiti.

Question. Why have past international aid and U.S. support been unable to improve the situation of Haitian citizens or governance capabilities?

Answer. Past international aid and U.S. support have achieved successes and sometimes encountered difficulties. U.S. assistance—and trade preference legislation—helped to create a new garment industry in Haiti. The garment sector accounts for approximately 90 percent of Haiti’s exports, employs more than 34,000 Haitians, and financially supports more than 200,000 Haitians. After the 2010 earthquake in Port-au-Prince, emergency medical assistance saved countless Haitian lives. In 2022, expert advice from on-the-ground INL police experts—plus air transportation provided by the U.S. and Canadian militaries—brought expertise and equipment together to support the HNP in ending a two-month-long gang seizure of Haiti’s principal fuel terminal and port.

At the same time, the United States and the international community have learned important lessons from past assistance efforts, and we apply these to our current planning. For example, while the MINUSTAH U.N. peacekeeping operation restored stability in Haiti, public support for the mission waned after Nepali peacekeepers inadvertently introduced cholera into the country and allegations of sexual assault committed by Sri Lankan peacekeepers emerged. As a result, current discussions about future international engagement in Haiti include training for foreign personnel to prevent sexual assault or other human rights abuses, plans for wastewater treatment and sanitation, and accountability mechanisms. Similarly, we have also learned that reconstruction assistance following the post-2010 earthquake relied too heavily on U.S. and other foreign-based organizations, and Haitian stakeholders did not have enough input into decisions. Thus, in our planning for a multinational force and other international engagement in Haiti we prioritize Haitian leadership and input and look to include local organizations as much as possible.

Question. Have U.S. immigration parole programs for Haitians impacted emigration from Haiti?

Answer. On January 5, 2023, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) announced the extension of the Venezuela parole process and its expansion to nationals of Nicaragua, Haiti, and Cuba. Through this safe and lawful migration pathway, up to a total of 30,000 individuals total per month from these four countries can come to the United States for a period of two years and apply for work authorization. Individuals must demonstrate that they have an eligible supporter in the United States and pass vetting and background checks before they are admitted to the United States.

This process has significantly reduced irregular entries at our border, showing that when there is a lawful and orderly migration pathway, people will be less inclined to put their lives in the hands of smugglers. The Department of State proactively informs potential migrants throughout the region of relevant U.S. policy. Mission Port-au-Prince engages with the Haitian Government and media to highlight opportunities for safe, orderly, and humane migration, while cautioning against the dangers and consequences of irregular migration.

Question. For more than twelve years in the early 2000s, the U.N. provided a peacekeeping force whose mission was to restore order, improve the capabilities of the Haitian National Police and helped with earthquake recovery. Not only was their mission a failure, the peacekeeping force introduced cholera to the country and committed human rights and sexual abuses which has sullied the view by some Hai-

tians regarding foreign peacekeeping forces. If confirmed, what immediate security assistance is needed to provide stability?

Answer. Continued support to the HNP, in combination with a multinational force, is essential to provide stability in Haiti. If confirmed, I will remain fully committed to supporting the HNP in its efforts to combat gang influence, maintain basic security, support repatriation operations, and institute longer-term community violence prevention efforts. I look forward to supporting my colleagues in our Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL), who have allocated \$122 million since July 2021 to equip, train, and support programs that develop the HNP counter-gang intervention unit, specialized border unit, counternarcotics unit, and overall institutional capacity.

The security and humanitarian situation in Haiti deteriorates daily. The conditions on the ground will not improve without significant security support from international partners. Gang violence has led to large-scale internal displacement in gang-controlled areas and hampers Haiti's ability to address continuing food insecurity. An MNF would prioritize security at key sites in Port-au-Prince, thus enabling the HNP to focus on combatting serious gang violence, which includes kidnapping, hijacking, extortion, murders, and sexual assault.

Question. Given past international interventions in Haiti, what lessons should inform another multinational force deployment?

Answer. We will draw lessons from the past, including MINUSTAH, as well as from a forthcoming report by the U.N. Secretary General that will outline the full range of support options the U.N. can provide to enhance the security situation in Haiti. Like the Administration, I believe an MNF with a narrow security scope and a small footprint would assist the HNP to secure critical infrastructure sites and enable the HNP to focus on curtailing gangs' use of kidnapping, hijacking, extortion, murder, and sexual violence.

Question. How would the type of training and equipment provided vary from failed past efforts by multinational forces?

Answer. It is my understanding that the proposed MNF will be narrow in scope, coordinated with the HNP, and focus on static security operations at key infrastructure sites. A small footprint is a different approach from previous engagements by the international community. Training and equipment will be tailored to this new, narrower scope.

Question. What makes you believe the outcomes will be different?

Answer. As discussed in other responses, the MNF will occur in combination with continued INL assistance to the HNP and will benefit from lessons learned from prior international engagement in Haiti. Lessons learned include the importance of Haitian input and consultation; working through local organizations as much as possible; human rights training and accountability mechanisms for foreign personnel; and the need to address sanitation and wastewater treatment.

A small footprint with greater Haitian buy-in is a different approach than previous engagements by the international community. It is my understanding that the proposed MNF will provide static security at key infrastructure sites, better enabling and empowering the HNP to focus on anti-gang operations.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO HON. JAMES C. O'BRIEN BY SENATOR ROBERT MENENDEZ

Degrading Russia's War Machine

You have been at the helm of implementing sanctions to target Russia's war machine.

Question. Have we been effective?

Answer. Sanctions and export controls are one component of our strategy to deny Russia benefit from its aggression. Sanctions impede Russia's military campaign and deny resources used to fuel that campaign. Sanctions and export controls reduce Russia's access to the electronics and other components it needs to run its war machine. There is much more to do in reducing Russian access to these materials, and we work every day with our coalition partners to deny Russia items useful for its military. Combined with military support, sanctions and export controls provide Ukraine with a qualitative edge on the battlefield.

In 2023, Russia's export earnings are approximately half what they were in 2022. Due to sanctions and trade measures, more than half the savings it had on hand

at the start of the war are immobilized, spent, or in currency or gold not widely able to finance the trade it needs for military and civilian purposes. Sanctions and import bans have cost Russia its most lucrative trading partners, especially in energy markets.

As a result, Russia will face financial constraints over the next several years and will need to make choices between civilian and military needs. Over the long term, Russia's economy will be less resilient and smaller than it would have been, perhaps as much as 20 percent smaller by 2030, making it less able to threaten its neighbors or to influence global markets.

Question. What more do we need to do to most effectively cut off Putin's access to resources that are fueling his brutal assault on Ukraine?

Answer. We are continually seeking opportunities to tighten our sanctions and export controls in order to restrict further Russia's ability to wage war. With our G7 partners we are reducing Russia's access to G7 components that might be useful on the battlefield. This involves intensifying our work with countries that have been transit points for goods entering Russia. We are also reducing Russia's trading opportunities and access to lucrative markets.

Black Sea Grain Initiative

Russia's refusal to extend the Black Sea Grain Initiative and recent attacks on Ukraine's grain infrastructure have made it very clear that Putin aims to cause a renewed global food crisis in order to extract concessions from the international community.

Question. How do you propose we address this latest atrocity and get Russia to re-enter the grain deal?

Answer. The United States condemns Russia's attacks on critical Ukrainian infrastructure, its unilateral withdrawal from the Black Sea Grain Initiative (BSGI), and its plans to blockade Ukraine's Black Sea ports, which are responsible for exporting 95% of Ukraine's grain. Countries throughout the world without regard to geography have condemned Russia's unilateral withdrawal and demanded that Russia stop using food as a weapon and return to the BSGI. With our allies and partners, we are developing alternative export routes for Ukrainian grain, supplying global markets and reducing Russia's leverage. The United States will continue to work with the United Nations, Turkey, and affected countries so that Russia stops attacking global food supplies.

Question. Will you commit to supporting the people of Ukraine as they continue to fight against Putin's invasion, and will you commit to working with Congress and international partners to continue planning for Ukraine's reconstruction?

Answer. Yes. As the President and Secretary have stated, the United States will continue to support Ukraine for as long as it takes. If confirmed, I look forward to working with Congress and international partners as we continue planning for Ukraine's reconstruction.

Question. Will you commit to working with the committee to find ways to continue supporting Cyprus' further integration into security agreements in the Eastern Mediterranean?

Answer. Yes, the United States is committed to working with our partner the Republic of Cyprus toward an Eastern Mediterranean region that is free, peaceful, prosperous, and stable. Since signing the Statement of Intent on Bilateral Security Cooperation in 2018, our bilateral security cooperation has expanded significantly. In April 2022 we jointly established the Cyprus Center for Land, Open-seas, and Post Security (CYCLOPS), a state-of-the-art training facility that serves as a regional hub for building border and maritime security training and targeting capabilities. In September 2022 the United States, for the first time, lifted the defense trade restrictions under the ITAR for the Republic of Cyprus, and most recently in July 2023 the New Jersey National Guard hosted the Republic of Cyprus National Guard for an orientation program to begin to operationalize their new State Partnership relationship.

Question. I'm also, as you probably know, an enthusiast of the 3+1 Format—how can we better leverage that format to advance our interests and those of Cyprus, Greece, and Israel?

Answer. Our cooperation in multilateral fora, including the 3+1 format, plays an important role in promoting regional cooperation on a broad range of issues. In order to build momentum and support U.S. policy in the Eastern Mediterranean, the Department has sent a set of proposals for 3+1 engagement to the three part-

ners, and they are currently reviewing. The Department of State continues to see the 3+1 as a valuable format and welcomes the opportunity to work with the three partners to engage in future discussions, workshops, exchanges, and meetings on energy, economic issues, and other topics of mutual consensus and concern. If confirmed, I will work to deepen our efforts in these fields and seek opportunities to expand it into others.

Question. I've been disappointed in the U.S.'s disproportionate pressure on Kosovo as we continue to support efforts to find a long-term peace between Kosovo and Serbia. Kosovo is a democratic ally, while earlier this year we all read detailed reporting on Vucic [VOO-chich]'s connection to hooligans and autocratic tendencies. How do we change the calculus in the minds of the leaders of these countries so that they behave in ways that promote long-term stability?

Answer. Together with European partners, we will continue to urge the leaders of both Serbia and Kosovo to implement the normalization agreement in order to unlock its benefits, including regional stability and security and durable economic growth. Kosovo is an independent, sovereign state, and we will continue to support Kosovo's full international integration. We want Serbia to be a constructive regional and trans-Atlantic partner. It is incumbent upon the leaders of the two countries to take actions that demonstrate their stated desire to pursue a European future for their people. As we engage leaders, we will also continue to encourage democratic reforms and improvements to the rule of law, both of which will help limit foreign harmful influence and will contribute to these countries' advancement on their European paths.

Question. What role will you play in countering Dodik's destabilizing actions?

Answer. Mr. Dodik's secessionist rhetoric and attacks on human rights and fundamental freedoms lead down a dangerous, authoritarian path toward isolation. Mr. Dodik says that he supports the Dayton Constitution but misinterprets it for his partisan purposes, something I know and can speak credibly to as a result of my role at Dayton. More broadly, we are pursuing a strategy to deter and constrain Dodik's destabilizing actions through the proper interpretation of Dayton, U.S. sanctions designations, support for the High Representative and his use of the Bonn Powers, strengthening the international military presence in Bosnia and Herzegovina (now EUFOR Althea), enhancing U.S. mil-to-mil engagements, and working with our international partners.

Question. How would you engage to get Bosnia to move toward greater stability?

Answer. The United States is committed to the sovereignty, territorial integrity, and multiethnic character of BiH and supports BiH's integration into Euro-Atlantic institutions. We are working in BiH to strengthen the country's democracy, enhance the rule of law and the fight against corruption, support civil society, advance reforms necessary for private sector-led economic growth, and strengthen the country's multiethnic armed forces. As I said in my testimony, some of BiH's political leaders have found ways to support their political networks through the misuse of public resources; this impedes democratic competition and prevents public institutions from working well. These patronage systems will be a major point of focus, as they were in my time as US special envoy. When appropriate, we will act to hold accountable individuals who undermine the Dayton Peace Agreement or threaten BiH's democracy.

Question. Will you commit to seriously reviewing the Department's habit of renewing the waiver of Section 907 of the FREEDOM Support Act and providing security assistance to Azerbaijan even as Aliyev continues to threaten Armenia?

Answer. Administrations of both parties have renewed the section 907 waiver of the FREEDOM Support Act annually since 2002 to enable U.S. security assistance to Azerbaijan that promotes U.S. national security interests, including counterterrorism, combating the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, securing critical energy infrastructure, addressing the 475-mile border with Iran, and combating narcotics trafficking and human trafficking. If confirmed, I commit to closely reviewing the Department's process for determining whether to recommend a waiver of section 907 to ensure it meets the interests and goals of the United States in Azerbaijan and in the region - and that it would have no negative effect on efforts to find a durable and dignified settlement in the conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia.

Question. Will you commit to prioritizing the safety and security of all Armenians and ethnic Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh as negotiations continue?

Answer. Yes. As Armenia and Azerbaijan work to conclude a peace agreement, I know the State Department prioritizes the rights and security for the residents of

Nagorno-Karabakh at every level of engagement with the Azerbaijan Government—including with President Aliyev. If confirmed, I will reinforce our focus on this critical aspect of a just and durable peace.

Question. Though there has been a bit of movement forward in the recent past, I am very concerned that China will be able to successfully play on divisions in Europe to continue on its path of undermining international norms and institutions. The stark differences between the treatment of Emmanuel Macron and Ursula Van der Leyen during their visits to Beijing point to this strategy. What would you do, concretely, to ensure China cannot divide and conquer our European partners as we seek to limit China's malign behavior?

Answer. As I said in my hearing, U.S. and European views on China are converging. This reflects continual efforts across the Administration and Congress to engage our European partners on China.

If confirmed, I will emphasize that the United States and Europe share common values; a realization that the standards and materials central to future economic growth are being decided soon; and a willingness to work together in new structures, such as the U.S.-EU Trade and Technology Council (TTC); in existing institutions that set global standards; and through the many channels of communication where we take up issues related to China.

For instance, in the U.S.-EU Dialogue on China, we are working with our European partners to strengthen our economic resilience, diversify our supply chains, and de-risk our economies, including by pressing China and working with our Allies and partners to ensure a level-playing field for U.S. trade and investment. We also discuss the risks of global stability posed by China's trade that supports Russia's war against Ukraine. We are also working with European allies to reduce risks of excessive dependence on China in key sectors such as critical minerals. Similarly, working through the TTC, we are developing secure and resilient supply chains in semiconductors, countering the PRC's use of non-market policies and economic coercion, and expanding U.S.-EU cooperation on cyber, digital, and emerging technology issues.

Question. Do you think sanctions would be impactful to support Georgia's process of de-oligarchization, a priority identified by the European Union?

Answer. Sanctions remain one of the key foreign policy tools we have at our disposal, among others. If confirmed, I will continue to work with Department and interagency colleagues, as well as foreign partners, including the European Union, to utilize all tools at our disposal to promote accountability and support democratic renewal and rule of law efforts globally. The United States continues to promote accountability for those who abuse public power for personal gain.

Question. Will you commit to assessing whether economic actors in Georgia are using their influence to re-orient Georgia's foreign policy, and whether these actors have committed sanctionable conduct?

Answer. If confirmed, I will continue to evaluate Georgia's cooperation on implementing Western sanctions and export controls. This includes reviewing the conduct of specific economic actors as well. This is a priority issue for our Embassy, the Department, and for me in my current role as Special Coordinator for Sanctions. I have worked closely with both the EU and G7 partners on ensuring cooperation with our sanctions in countries like Georgia, and I visited Georgia in June with my UK and EU counterparts to reinforce this message to the Government.

Question. Will you commit to raising the importance of regional stability—specifically not threatening other NATO allied countries and other neighbors like Greece? Will you raise serious concerns about democratic values, human rights, and our own embassy staff?

Answer. Yes. The current positive atmosphere between Greece and Turkey is deeply beneficial to NATO and broader U.S. interests in the region. If I am confirmed, I will continue the bureau's efforts to encourage further productive engagement and dialogue between our NATO Allies in Greece and Turkey.

Yes. Though Turkey is a longstanding NATO Ally with which we cooperate on shared interests, we have concerns regarding democratic backsliding and human rights in the country. If confirmed, I will make all appropriate efforts to address these important issues with Turkey and in the region.

Question. Given the current challenges of democratic backsliding and rising authoritarianism occurring around the world, it is imperative that U.S. representatives shine a public light on these issues.

To that end, can I get your commitment that you will deliver a public speech open to the press within your first six months on the importance of democracy and human rights in Europe and that you will specifically raise democracy and human rights in your interactions with European partners?

Answer. With some exceptions, the Europe and Eurasia region has experienced democratic backsliding for well over a decade. Particularly in the wake of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the protection and promotion of human rights and democratic institutions in the region is critical. If confirmed, I will ensure that upholding human rights and democratic governance is an important part of our bilateral interactions and policy agenda, consistent with the President's commitment to putting these issues at the center of U.S. foreign policy. If confirmed, I also commit to publicly raising human rights and democratic backsliding at appropriate times and venues.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO HON. JAMES C. O'BRIEN BY SENATOR MARCO RUBIO

Question. In May 2022, Secretary Blinken said that the People's Republic of China is the "only country with both the intent to reshape the international order and, increasingly, the economic, diplomatic, military, and technological power to do it." The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) clearly holds the reins of power in the People's Republic of China and has used this power to commit genocide in Xinjiang, flood our communities with fentanyl, and emit, by far the largest quantity of greenhouse gases in the world today. This week was yet another reminder of the pervasive power the CCP wields over Chinese society, as all evidence of former Foreign Minister Qin Gang's career and presence are being wiped from the Chinese ministry's webpage. With their absolute control of Chinese society and industry, the CCP could stop all of these destructive actions tomorrow if they so choose. Is the Chinese Communist Party a threat to the United States?

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

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

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

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

Answer. As the United States competes vigorously with the PRC, we seek to manage this competition responsibly so that competition does not veer into conflict. The United States will work with the PRC to address transnational challenges, such as climate change, counternarcotics, and public health, when it is in our interest to do so—as Secretary Blinken has said, not as a favor to anyone else, and never in exchange for walking away from our principles. If confirmed, I will work with Departments and Agencies across the U.S. Government as well as with Congress to advance U.S. objectives and counter harmful behavior by the PRC and other actors in Europe.

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

Answer. If confirmed, my priority will be to advance U.S. interests in the European and Eurasian regions and countering efforts by our strategic and regional com-

petitors to undermine those interests. The Administration has been clear that the PRC is the most consequential geopolitical challenge facing the United States, and that the United States is committed to working to strengthen our partnerships in the region. If confirmed, I will work closely with Department and interagency colleagues across the U.S. Government, as well as Congress to counter the PRC's efforts to expand its influence in Europe and the Eurasian region.

The U.S. has supported and enjoyed a close transatlantic relationship with Europe since the end of World War II. The relationship, anchored by NATO and EU cooperation, has helped European allies as much as it has advanced U.S. foreign and security policies. However, it is clear that since the end of the Cold War, many of our European allies have not stepped up to the plate in terms of adequately shoring up their own defense.

Question. Successive administrations have voiced criticism that European burden sharing of NATO has been insufficient, even after Moscow invaded Ukraine. What is your characterization of the existing transatlantic relationship?

Answer. The Biden administration has prioritized placing our alliances, especially NATO, at the center of U.S. foreign policy. NATO, and the existing transatlantic relationship, is stronger and more united than it has been in decades. NATO is as critical to ensuring the security of our citizens today as at any time since its founding nearly 75 years ago, including as Russia continues its unprovoked and unjustified war against Ukraine.

Question. Only seven allies met NATO's 2 percent GDP target in 2022. If confirmed, how will you convince the other NATO partners to meet the 2 percent GDP defense spending?

Answer. At the Vilnius Summit July 11–12, Allies built on the Wales Defense Investment Pledge by making 2 percent of GDP a floor for defense spending and by affirming that in many cases, expenditure beyond 2 percent of GDP will be needed. Eighteen Allies will exceed, or have a credible plan to meet, 2 percent by next year. The Administration is committed to ensuring Allies equitably share the responsibility of NATO's collective security by investing in the capabilities, readiness, and force-generation needed to maintain a credible deterrence and defense posture and fulfill NATO missions and operations. We will continue consulting with Allies and with Congress to ensure NATO has sufficient, capable, and ready forces required to realize these commitments.

Question. Should U.S. assistance through Foreign Military Financing or prioritization in the U.S. foreign military sales process be conditioned upon a country meeting its 2 percent threshold? If not, why?

Answer. NATO Allies agreed at the Vilnius Summit this July that in the current contested global environment the 2 percent target should be a floor, not a goal. Eighteen Allies will exceed, or have a credible plan to meet, 2 percent by next year, already up from the seven mentioned in the question. If confirmed, I will work to see that every Ally meets or exceeds the 2 percent level or has a plan to do so.

Foreign Military Financing (FMF) is only one part of our relationship with our Allies, and it serves our security interests now even while countries work on the agreed timeline and independently of the broader goals. Our ability to meet those goals should not be limited by a condition tied to NATO's Defense Investment Pledge. FMF serves security goals critical for U.S. interests that complement but are independent of the threshold. FMF strengthens self-defense capabilities, enhances standardization and interoperability, and allows burden-sharing, all of which deter Russian aggression. By increasing demand for U.S. systems, FMF also contributes to a strong U.S. defense industrial base, reducing costs for Department of Defense acquisitions and securing more jobs for American workers. Allied purchases through Foreign Military Sales also contribute to Allied defense spending in support of Defense Investment Pledge commitments.

Question. There is bipartisan agreement in this country on the need to address the threat of the Chinese Communist Party, though we may debate on how we do so and to what extent. Europe, on the contrary, is still far behind on coming to a consensus on China. Some countries, like Lithuania, have not been shy about the threat posed by an authoritarian communist regime to the free and open system enjoyed by democratic governments and free. Others, like Hungary and Serbia, champion the CCP's talking points. What is your assessment of the scope of China's economic and other ties to European countries?

Answer. The United States and our European partners share concerns about the threat posed by a range of non-market policies and practices of third countries. We have seen Beijing move to weaponize economic dependencies with European coun-

tries and to deter countries from taking actions in their own best interests. The United States has an interest in ensuring countries make their own sovereign decisions free from coercion and work with our Allies and partners to offer concrete economic alternatives for these countries. Since 2021, we have engaged with the European Union through U.S.-EU Trade and Technology Council (TTC) to partner on trade, technology, and innovation, while advancing our shared values and promoting shared approaches to strengthen our collective economic security. We have also engaged European countries bilaterally and through the U.S.-EU China Dialogue on the need to strengthen economic resilience, including through work on de-risking, establishing a level-playing field for trade and investment, and efforts to reduce risks from excessive dependencies in sectors such as critical minerals needed for secure energy transition.

Question. How can the U.S. assist European partners in building the political will to decouple their supply chains and critical industries from the CCP?

Answer. We are supporting our European partners through strategic dialogue and our commitment to sharing our assessments on the risks posed by the PRC's use of economic coercion, nonmarket policies and practices, and dominance of certain critical supply chains vital to our economic security. European Union leaders, along with an increasing number of EU member states, have publicly pledged to reduce their critical dependencies and vulnerabilities, including in supply chains, and to de-risk and diversify where necessary and appropriate. At the recent U.S.-EU Trade and Technology Council ministerial meeting in Sweden, we reiterated our commitment to secure our high technology and critical minerals supply chains, address non-market policies and practices designed to reinforce dependencies, and increase our mutual collective preparedness, resilience, and deterrence to economic coercion.

Question. Should an LGBT agenda come before national security or American prosperity when engaging with European partners?

Answer. Euro-Atlantic treaty alliances and partnerships are the bedrock of our national security. President Biden directed all agencies engaged abroad to ensure U.S. diplomacy promotes and protects human rights of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, plus (LGBTQI+) persons. It is a U.S. foreign policy priority and EUR, like other bureaus, advances this policy. Helping to ensure everyone has a voice in their democratic society and governance—promotes global peace, security, and prosperity.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO HON. JAMES C. O'BRIEN BY SENATOR CHRISTOPHER A. COONS

Question. Earlier this month, five former U.S. Ambassadors to Georgia urged that former president Saakashvili be released from prison to receive critical medical care. Do you believe such action would be appropriate?

Answer. We have carefully reviewed the assessments of the Public Defender's Office from December of last year and more recent statements, which indicated that former President Saakashvili was not receiving the treatment he needs. If confirmed, I will continue to monitor the treatment of former president Mikheil Saakashvili very closely. I will stress it is the responsibility of the Georgian Government to ensure Mr. Saakashvili's medical and psychological health is protected and his human rights are respected. We will continue to press for the authorities to take appropriate steps to ensure he receives the care that he needs for his health, dignity, and wellbeing, based on the recommendations of the Public Defender's medical experts.

Question. As head of the State Department Office of Sanctions, you oversaw the implementation of sanctions against four Georgian judges. Do you believe that those sanctions have proven effective, and would additional sanctions incentivize further reforms?

Answer. Sanctions remain one of the key foreign policy tools we have at our disposal, among others. Georgia's adherence to international sanctions and export controls against Russia is a priority issue for our Embassy, the Department, and for me in my role as Special Coordinator for Sanctions. I have worked closely with both the EU and G7 partners on enforcement of our sanctions in countries like Georgia, and I visited Georgia in June with my UK and EU counterparts to reinforce this message to the Government.

While these judges were designated under Section 7031(c) of the FY 2023 Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, and not a financial sanctions authority, these visa restrictions demonstrate the importance of accountability tools. If confirmed, I will continue to work with Department and interagency colleagues, as well as foreign partners, to utilize all tools at our disposal to promote accountability for corruption across the region. The United States continues to stand with all Georgians in support of democracy and the rule of law and will continue to promote accountability for those who abuse public power for personal gain. We stand with all judges who have the integrity and courage to act impartially and independently.

Question. In recent months, there has been an increase in violent attacks against members of the Georgian media and other critical voices of the Government. What can the State Department do to protect democratic institutions in Georgia and support freedom of the press and an independent media?

Answer. I share your concerns about political violence against journalists and other critical voices in Georgia, and I agree this is a critical issue moving forward to safeguard Georgia's Euro-Atlantic future.

On June 23, 2022, the EU identified 12 priority areas for reform for Georgia to implement before receiving candidate status. One of these was to improve the environment for media freedom, notably by "ensuring that criminal procedures brought against media owners fulfill the highest legal standards." Achieving candidate status is a top priority for the Georgian Government and the people of Georgia. If confirmed, I will continue to urge the Government to help strengthen its democratic institutions and media environment in line with its own aspirations and goals.

The people of Georgia have shown time and time again their commitment to the principles of democracy and the rule of law, and their conviction that Georgia's future is with the West and Europe. The United States will continue to stand with them in pursuit of this vision.

Question. How do you assess the increasing anti-western rhetoric by leaders of the Georgian Government, as well as moves to criminalize civil society organization through legislation such as the "Foreign Agents" bill that sparked mass protests in the spring?

Answer. Georgia's proposed Kremlin-inspired "Foreign Agents" law was designed to stigmatize and silence independent voices and citizens of Georgia who are dedicated to building a better future for their own communities; if passed, it would have jeopardized Georgia's Euro-Atlantic future. With the protests against the draft law in March, led by students and other young people, the people of Georgia once again spoke clearly that the only choice for Georgia is a secure and prosperous European future. We welcomed Georgian Dream's decision to withdraw both draft laws on "foreign influence," which are incompatible with Georgian and European values and the protection of fundamental freedoms.

Now is a time when we should all be working to strengthen the resilience of our democracies, embrace rule of law, and combat corruption, especially as Russia wages its unprovoked war against Ukraine and occupies 20 percent of Georgia's territory. If confirmed, I would focus on helping Georgia strengthen the independence of its institutions as a bulwark against malign Russian influence.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO NATHALIE RAYES BY SENATOR ROBERT MENENDEZ

Priorities

Croatia occupies a critical space in the Western Balkans as both a NATO and EU member.

Question. How do you assess current U.S.-Croatia relations? As Ambassador, what would be your priorities for the relationship?

Answer. Croatia is a close NATO Ally and like-minded partner, and our bilateral relationship has yielded many recent successes. Croatia entered the Visa Waiver Program in 2021; we concluded negotiations on a double taxation avoidance treaty in 2022; Croatia entered the Global Entry program in 2023; and our bilateral Extradition Treaty and Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty recently entered into force. If confirmed, I pledge to deepen and expand our close partnership with Croatia.

If confirmed, my number one priority will be the safety and security of Americans in Croatia. Second, I will work with Croatia to strengthen Transatlantic security in countering Russia's war against Ukraine and malign influence in the region. Third,

as Croatia is poised to be an energy exporter, I will work with Croatia to expand its role in advancing energy security and diversification. Fourth, I will leverage our strong partnership to support EU accession for all Western Balkan countries, promoting respect for democracy, advancing transparency and anti-corruption measures, and increasing U.S. trade and investment. Fifth, I will deepen the connection between our two nations by increasing cultural exchanges, youth-focused initiatives, and cooperation between academic institutions to engage scholars, students, and teachers.

Chinese Influence

As you know, China is increasingly seeking to integrate itself within European markets.

Question. How can we effectively ensure that Croatia remains economically oriented toward the United States despite China's deceptively cheap infrastructure projects?

Answer. The Government of Croatia understands the importance of ensuring national assets and critical industries are not vulnerable to malign actors. If confirmed, I will engage U.S. investors and partners to make concrete deals with long-term value to Croatia and the region. The United States also supports Croatia's ongoing efforts to adopt rigorous investment screening and public procurement reform, which protects against malign actors that pursue policies counter to U.S. and Croatian interests including unfair economic practices, human rights abuses, disregard for international law, aggressive and coercive behavior, and political intimidation.

Ukraine

Russia's war on Ukraine has posed challenges for countries across Europe.

Question. How do you assess Croatia's response to Russia's ongoing war on Ukraine?

Answer. Croatia has been an ardent, steadfast supporter of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Croatia has provided €190 million in humanitarian and security assistance. Croatia is the second largest donor of military helicopters to Ukraine. Croatia hosts more than 23,000 Ukrainian refugees. Croatia is providing expert guidance on demining, veteran trauma treatment, cultural preservation in war torn areas, and two prosecutors are helping to guide Ukraine's war crimes prosecutions. Croatia co-hosted the First Parliamentary Summit of the International Crimea Platform.

Trade and Investment

Croatia's Government hopes to attract greater foreign direct investment.

Question. As Ambassador, how would you support Croatia as it addresses these challenges such as higher energy prices that have stemmed from the war?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with Croatia to expand its role in advancing energy security and diversification in the region. In 2021, Croatia launched the Krk LNG terminal, replacing Russian gas on Croatia's domestic market with U.S. LNG. Croatia is doubling Krk's capacity to 6.1 billion cubic meters, allowing future exports to the region. Croatia can be a clean net energy exporter. It also has significant geothermal energy resources and is pursuing hydrogen and carbon capture and storage.

Question. As Ambassador, how would you promote U.S. investment and business in the country?

Answer. U.S.-Croatia bilateral trade continues to grow. Bilateral goods trade in 2022 totaled more than \$2.5 billion; U.S. exports to Croatia amounted to \$1.77 billion; and U.S. imports from Croatia totaled \$861 million. If confirmed, I will work with other EU partners to upgrade Croatia's energy infrastructure and accelerate clean energy production, providing more opportunities for U.S. energy companies, particularly as Croatia becomes a regional energy hub and net energy exporter to its neighbors. In July 2013, Croatia became the latest member of the European Union and at the beginning of this year, Croatia adopted the euro and became a member of the border-free Schengen area. Croatia entered the Visa Waiver Program in 2021, entered the Global Entry Program in 2023 and we concluded negotiations on a Double Taxation Avoidance Treaty in 2022. All good news for American business and investment. If confirmed, my goal is to inform the American private sector that Croatia is open for U.S. business and expand our close partnership.

Democracy Speech

Given the current challenges of democratic backsliding and rising authoritarianism occurring around the world, it is imperative that U.S. representatives shine a public light on these issues.

Question. To that end, can I get your commitment that you will deliver a public speech open to the press at a venue in Croatia within your first six months on the importance of democracy and human rights in the Balkans and that you will specifically raise democracy and human rights in your interactions with the Croatian Government?

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, I will deliver a public speech open to the press on the importance of democracy and human rights in the Balkans within my first six months. I will leverage our strong partnership to advance shared priorities including strengthening democratic institutions and promoting respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. I will work publicly and privately with Croatia to ensure continued commitment to its Summit for Democracy goal to advance human rights by eliminating sexual violence and harassment and promoting full and equitable access, safety, and equal participation of all persons, including members of marginalized and underrepresented populations in Croatia. If confirmed, I would regularly and consistently engage media to communicate the importance of a strong democracy and respect for human rights.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO NATHALIA RAYES BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Croatia and Ukraine

Question. Do you believe that Croatia has done all it can to help Ukraine and participate in the international coalition to support Ukraine against Russia's invasion? If no, what else do you believe that Croatia could do to support Ukraine?

Answer. Croatia has been an ardent, steadfast supporter of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Croatia has provided €190 million in humanitarian and security assistance. For example, Croatia is the second largest donor of military helicopters to Ukraine. Croatia hosts more than 23,000 Ukrainian refugees. Croatia is providing expert guidance on demining, veteran trauma treatment, cultural preservation in war torn areas, and two Croatian prosecutors are helping to guide Ukraine's war crimes prosecutions. Further, Croatia co-hosted the First Parliamentary Summit of the International Crimea Platform.

REVISED RESPONSE

Answer. No. However, Croatia has done a lot to support Ukraine. We are continuously working with our European partners and NATO Allies to contribute more to Ukraine and there is always more to be done. Croatia is already making significant contributions to Ukraine given its relative size and GDP, but the Croatian Government could still do more to provide timely lethal support that meets the requirements of an evolving operational environment in Ukraine. We will continue to push our Croatian partners to increase their security and humanitarian contributions to Ukraine. One specific area where Croatia could do more is in de-mining, and Croatia plans to co-host the International Donors' Conference on Humanitarian Demining in Ukraine this October.

Croatia has provided €256 million in humanitarian and security assistance to Ukraine thus far. Croatia is the second largest donor of military helicopters to Ukraine. Croatia also hosts more than 23,000 Ukrainian refugees and provides free medical support to 19 wounded Ukrainian soldiers. Croatia is providing expert guidance on demining, veteran trauma treatment, and cultural preservation in war torn areas. Notably, Croatia, as the only other country to have gone through the EU accession process while prosecuting war crimes, is providing pertinent training to Ukraine's Ministry of Justice on the investigation and prosecution of war crimes. In June, Croatia hosted a workshop on war crimes prosecutions for 30 prosecutors, the Prosecutor General, and the Minister of Justice from Ukraine. The trainings will continue this fall, and Croatia also contributes two prosecutors to the Atrocities and Crimes Advisory Group in Ukraine. Further, Croatia co-hosted the First Parliamentary Summit of the International Crimea Platform last October.

Croatia and NATO

Question. Croatia has never attained its stated goal of spending 2 percent of its GDP on defense. All NATO members have pledged to reach that number, but Croatia in 2023 will spend only 1.79 percent. If confirmed, do you commit to continuing to urge the Government of Croatia to fulfill its pledge?

Answer. If confirmed, I will press the Government of Croatia to reach its Vilnius Defense Investment Pledge commitments. Croatia currently spends 1.82 percent of GDP on defense. Planned acquisitions and defense budget increases next year should put Croatia over the 2 percent mark. The Administration is committed to ensuring Allies equitably share the responsibility of NATO's collective security by investing in the capabilities, readiness, and force-generation needed to maintain a credible deterrence and defense posture and fulfill NATO missions and operations.

Energy

Question. What more do you believe that Croatia needs to do to diversify its energy mix? Do you believe that the United States can help Croatia diversify its energy mix? If so, what mechanisms would you use to do that?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with Croatia to help it completely phase out coal and diversify its clean energy sources. The United States supports public-private clean energy investments working closely with international financial institutions to catalyze the Western Balkans' energy transition. The Department supports the EU's Green Agenda for the Western Balkans, welcomes the EU's deployment of its Global Gateway, further financing through RepowerEU, and efforts that accelerate U.S. private sector financing for clean energy developments in Croatia.

Balkans

Question. Croatia is one of the most stable nations in the Balkans, and the only country that was involved in the Balkan Wars of the 1990s that has succeeded in joining the European Union. What lessons do you think other Balkan nations could draw from Croatia's experience? How will you help Croatia use its role in the EU to encourage progress toward broader transatlantic integration in the region?

Answer. Stability and economic progress in the region directly benefit Croatia. As the most recent country to join the European Union and Western Balkan neighbor, Croatia plays an important role supporting the region, especially its aspirations to join the EU. Croatia can support EU enlargement goals through political support for the aspirants within the EU and providing technical and policy expertise to Western Balkan aspirants.

Question. Next door in Bosnia & Herzegovina the situation remains volatile. Ethnic Croats make up around 15 percent of the total population of Bosnia, and the Government of Croatia is often accused of meddling in Bosnian politics by influencing that group. Do you believe that Croatia's influence in Bosnia is productive? Why or why not? If confirmed as Ambassador, how would you confront instances where Croatia's actions in Bosnia harmed the goals of US policy in Bosnia & Herzegovina?

Answer. Croatia has an enduring interest in Bosnia and Herzegovina's security, stability and Euro-Atlantic integration. The best counter to secessionist efforts is a functional Federation. BiH Croats play a key role in the Federation's governance, and Croatia can support these efforts. If confirmed, I would engage Croatia's Government to urge constructive cooperation among BiH officials to advance reforms that benefit all BiH citizens, including the construction of the Southern Gas Interconnection that would reduce dependence on Russian energy.

China

Question. Every summer, the Government of Croatia allows China to send Chinese police officers to major tourist hubs to help police Chinese tourists. What is your opinion of such programs? Do you think their expansion in Croatia would be a good or bad idea?

Answer. The United States will continue to voice concerns regarding the PRC's reach outside its borders to harass, intimidate, and threaten into silence individuals who are critical of the PRC Government. The Department remains concerned about the PRC's use of transnational repression, including through overseas police service stations. There is a robust bilateral partnership between the United States and Croatia's police forces on a broad range of long-term law enforcement cooperation. If confirmed, I will continue close work with our partners and Allies to address and counter the PRC's transnational repression efforts.

Question. China and Chinese-owned entities have been buying up ports and related infrastructure throughout the Mediterranean. It has been reported that the United States pressured Croatia to not allow a Chinese consortium to win the tender to build a new container terminal at the Port of Rijeka. Instead, the contract was cancelled and a new group, with European participants, will undertake the project instead. If confirmed, do you commit to encouraging the Croatian Government to reject Chinese proposals and instead work with companies and contractors that meet EU and NATO standards for security?

Answer. The Government of Croatia understands the importance of ensuring national assets and critical industries are not vulnerable to malign actors. If confirmed, I will engage U.S. investors and partners to make concrete deals with long-term value that meet EU and international standards for Croatia and the region. The United States also supports Croatia's ongoing efforts to adopt rigorous investment screening and public procurement reform, which protects against malign actors working counter to shared U.S. and Croatian interests.

Question. Despite the European Union having called upon its members to implement a Foreign Investment Screening regimen, Croatia has not yet done so. If confirmed, will you pledge to encourage and assist the Government of Croatia in creating a strong system for screening out foreign investments that may pose a threat to the security of Croatia, as well as to the European Union and NATO?

Answer. Croatia understands the importance of establishing a national security screening mechanism for high-risk investments - not only to protect its own national security, but also the security of NATO and EU partners. The United States and Croatia are cooperating closely with the EU and OECD on best practices, standards, and model legislation to bring this priority to reality in the near future. If confirmed, I will encourage Croatia to adopt legislation and implement a mechanism to evaluate foreign direct investments on the basis of national security concerns.

Trafficking in Persons

In the State Department's 2023 Trafficking in Persons Report, Croatia was listed as Tier 2 for convicting more traffickers but gaps still remain in its anti-trafficking work.

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

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with Croatia to strengthen training for judges and prosecutors on trafficking, victim rights, and victim-centered approaches. I will encourage the Government of Croatia to make significant efforts to convict more traffickers and identify more victims.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to reporting the reality of the trafficking situation on the ground in Croatia through the annual Trafficking in Persons report?

Answer. I do.

Religious Freedom

In the State Department's 2022 International Religious Freedom report, Croatia generally lacks respect for religious freedom.

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

Answer. The State Department and U.S. Embassy Zagreb has strongly promoted religious freedom in Croatia, and Croatia has made strong progress. If confirmed, I will continue these efforts by urging the Government's further progress on resolving Holocaust and post Holocaust-era legacy issues, such as the restitution of private, heirless, and communal property and fostering Holocaust remembrance. I will raise with representatives of the Croatian Government and civil society the status and treatment of religious or belief minorities, antisemitism, and Holocaust revisionism. I will encourage Croatia's continued involvement in the International Religious Freedom or Belief Alliance. I will dedicate Embassy resources to attending, supporting, and organizing events on Holocaust remembrance, tolerance, diversity, and interreligious dialogue, including through Public Affairs' small grants programs.

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

Answer. If confirmed, I will raise with representatives of the Croatian Government and civil society the status and treatment of religious or belief minorities,

antisemitism, and Holocaust revisionism. I will encourage Croatia's continued involvement in the International Religious Freedom or Belief Alliance.

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

Answer. If confirmed, I will dedicate Embassy resources to attending, supporting, and organizing events on Holocaust remembrance, tolerance, diversity, and interreligious dialogue, including through Public Affairs' small grants programs.

Human Rights

In the State Department's 2022 Human Rights Report, Croatia was noted as having government censorship and intimidation of reporters, among other 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 leverage our strong partnership to advance shared priorities - including promoting respect for democracy and human rights, including related to media freedom. I will work publicly and privately with Croatia to ensure continued commitment to its Summit for Democracy goal to advance human rights by eliminating sexual violence and harassment and to promote full and equitable access, safety, and equal participation of all persons, including members of marginalized and underrepresented populations in Croatia.

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

Answer. If confirmed, I will personally and regularly engage civil society organizations to strengthen democracy and human rights.

Question. Croatia has been criticized for its regular efforts to push back and expel migrants, refugees and asylum seekers at its borders. How will you work with Croatia to address the increasing migration flows coming into Europe?

Answer. The European Commission, UNHCR, and others in the international community (including the United States) pushed Croatia to establish an Independent Monitoring Mechanism (IMM) for border police. The Ministry of Interior established the mechanism in June 2021, and evaluations of the mechanism have included recommendations to strengthen the border police and improve accountability using GPS tracking of police patrols to inform after-action investigations; consolidating case files; collecting biometrics from all border crossers, whether applying for asylum or not; and improving information sharing between police stations. If confirmed, I will continue the work with the Croatian Government to strengthen the IMM and to partner with the United States and EU to share best practices to ensure lawful treatment of migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers.

International Organizations

Question. If confirmed, please describe how you can work with USUN and IO colleagues to find, recruit, and retain qualified Americans in the U.N. system.

Answer. Ensuring that the United States and our like-minded allies and partners do not cede influence in the U.N. system to those who do not share our values and who are not committed to the foundational principles of the U.N. is of vital importance to U.S. foreign policy and national security interests. If confirmed, I will work directly with the International Organizations Bureau, the Government of Croatia, and other stakeholders to augment the number of Americans while also encouraging citizens of likeminded nations to work throughout the U.N. system.

Question. If confirmed, please describe how you can work with USUN and IO colleagues to promote American or likeminded initiatives within the U.N. system, including on technical matters at specialized bodies.

Answer. Croatia is closely aligned with the United States across the spectrum of foreign policy, national security, and economic issues, and if confirmed, I will take full advantage of this close alignment to advance U.S. and shared interests. I will ensure that my team and I maintain regular contact with host government counterparts to ensure maximum coordination on upcoming U.N. votes and other actions in the U.N. and other multilateral bodies, including actions to support Ukraine and further isolate Russia in the international system.

Question. How will you engage with the Croatian Government to ensure that perpetrators of sexual exploitation and abuse from U.N. missions and U.N. peacekeeping missions are held accountable?

Answer. The United States remains a strong supporter of holding U.N. peacekeepers accountable for SEA to include advocacy to end impunity for the commission of SEA-related crimes both by troops and U.N. personnel working in overseas missions. In 2022, we strongly supported the U.N. General Assembly's annual resolution on "Criminal Accountability of United Nations Officials and Experts on Mission," which urges all member states to consider establishing jurisdiction over crimes committed by their nationals while serving abroad with the U.N. We further urged the Special Coordinator for Improving Response to SEA to share more information through the "Conduct in U.N. Field Missions" database and to expand prevention and accountability efforts. If confirmed, I will ensure Embassy Zagreb continues to engage the Croatian Government on SEA accountability as well as demand strong action on SEA prevention and accountability throughout all peacekeeping mandate renewals, annual mission monitoring and evaluation visits, and peacekeeping-related U.N. Security Council products.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO NATHALIE RAYES BY SENATOR MARCO RUBIO

In May 2022, Secretary Blinken said that the People's Republic of China is the "only country with both the intent to reshape the international order and, increasingly, the economic, diplomatic, military, and technological power to do it." The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) clearly holds the reins of power in the People's Republic of China and has used this power to commit genocide in Xinjiang, flood our communities with fentanyl, and emit, by far the largest quantity of greenhouse gases in the world today. This week was yet another reminder of the pervasive power the CCP wields over Chinese society, as all evidence of former Foreign Minister Qin Gang's career and presence are being wiped from the Chinese ministry's webpage. With their absolute control of Chinese society and industry, the CCP could stop all of these destructive actions tomorrow if they so choose.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

U.S.-Croatia relations have been described as positive since Croatia gained independence in 1991. Croatia sought, and quickly gained, accession to NATO and the EU after independence and consistently maintained defense spending close to or over NATO's 2 percent spending target. They are also a party to the U.S. Visa Waiver and Global Entry programs which expedite international travel between our countries.

Question. What is your characterization of the existing relationship between the U.S. and Croatia?

Answer. Croatia is a close NATO Ally and like-minded partner. The bilateral relationship is built on common values and shared priorities. These strong ties have produced a range of recent successes: Croatia entered the Visa Waiver Program in 2021, we signed an income tax treaty in 2022, and Croatia entered the Global Entry program in 2023—all good news for American business and investment. Further, the Senate recently gave its advice and consent to an Extradition Treaty and a Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty to bring our law enforcement partnership into the 21st century. If confirmed, I pledge to deepen and expand our close partnership with Croatia.

Question. If confirmed, how would you support Croatia as it addresses energy and security issues?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with Croatia to expand its role in advancing energy security and diversification in the region. In 2021 Croatia launched the Krk LNG terminal, replacing Russian gas with largely U.S. LNG. Croatia is doubling Krk's capacity to 6.1 billion cubic meters, allowing future exports. Croatia, with its significant geothermal energy resources, can also be a clean energy net exporter. Croatia is a member of NATO and the Adriatic Five (A5) Charter, a forum to prepare regional partners for NATO membership. If confirmed, I will encourage Croatia to continue its contributions to international peace and security.

Question. If confirmed, which specific programs and offices of the State Department would you utilize to combat corruption and rule-of-law concerns that remain in Croatia?

Answer. If confirmed, I would work with the State Department's Bureaus of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs and Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor to help Croatia combat corruption and strengthen the rule of law. Croatia remains committed to its Summit for Democracy goal to advance human rights. I will work with Croatia on its National Plan for the Elimination of Sexual Violence, which includes law enforcement training. I will also work with Croatia to promote full and equitable access, safety, and equal participation for national minorities, and I will support Croatia's Anti-Corruption Action Plan to increase government and legislative transparency and improve public procurement oversight.

The CIA World Factbook notes that over 86 percent of Croatian citizens identify as Roman Catholic. I note that you have limited overseas experience leading diplomatic engagements, are the President and CEO of a progressive Democrat party advocacy group, and a Board Member of Planned Parenthood.

Question. If confirmed, can you assure this committee that you will actively oppose all efforts to advance a pro-abortion policy in Croatia?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to upholding all provisions of law, including those restricting the use of Department of State funds to lobby for or against abortion. My intention is to focus on the mandate and priorities of the Embassy to support women's and girls' economic security, prevention and protection from gender-based violence, and their meaningful participation in political and security decision-making in Croatia.

Question. Will you promote a change to Croatia's constitution to allow marriage between same-sex couples?

Answer. If confirmed, I will follow State Department policy and U.S. law. The United States will continue to promote respect for the human rights of all persons, including LGBTQI+ persons, globally.

Question. Should the United States promote an interpretation of transgenderism—that is only supported by a small minority of Americans—in Croatia at the risk of alienating socially conservative Croatians?

Answer. If confirmed, I will follow State Department policy and U.S. law. The Department’s actions bolster inclusive democracy, advance human rights, and promote global peace, security, and prosperity by helping ensure everyone has a voice in their democratic society and governance. The United States will continue to promote respect for the human rights of all persons, including LGBTQI+ persons, globally.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO NATHALIE RAYES BY SENATOR TED CRUZ

On Sept. 20, 2022, I spoke on the Senate floor about my opposition to the President’s nomination of Leopoldo Martínez Nucete to be United States executive director of the Inter-American Development Bank. I said that Mr. Martínez Nucete was “socialist congressman in Venezuela” during the Venezuelan regime of Hugo Chávez and that he had expressed hostility to the role played in international development by faith-based organizations. I specifically cited answers by Mr. Martínez Nucete to questions I had asked, in which he said that “the key to development” was “not faith” and that the role of faith-based organizations should be limited because “there should be no entanglement between government and religion.” You subsequently told reporters that “Senator Ted Cruz’s mischaracterization of Leopoldo Martínez is nothing but an outright lie.” In your testimony to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, you “pledge[d] to work with this committee and Congress to advance U.S. interests.” I am concerned that your comments are in tension with this commitment.

Question. Which characterizations in my speech do you believe to have been mischaracterizations?

Answer. I regret the tone of my statement. It was a poor choice of words and I have relayed the sentiment to your staff. The advice and consent power of the U.S. Senate underpins American representative democracy, and if confirmed I commit to working closely and transparently with you and all members of Congress to ensure U.S. policy toward Croatia reflects Administration priorities and the will of Congress.

I have known Leopoldo Martínez for eleven years and can say with confidence that he, along with many other migrants like myself, share a deep and abiding love and respect for the democratic principles enshrined in the Constitution of the United States. Unfortunately, the rights and freedoms to which all Americans are entitled are not afforded to the people of Venezuela, who under Nicolas Maduro face political oppression, the closure of the democratic space, and one of the hemisphere’s worst humanitarian crises. Venezuela’s democratic opposition, among them Acción Democrática, stand in defiance of Maduro and are working in unity toward the restoration of free and fair elections that will allow the people of Venezuela to determine their own futures.

Question. Do you acknowledge that Mr. Martínez Nucete was a member of Acción Democrática (AD), a political party that is an affiliate of Socialist International?

Answer. Yes, I acknowledge that Mr. Martínez Nucete was a member of Acción Democrática, a center-left political party that has been a member of the Socialist International since the 1980s. It should also be noted that AD opposed communist Cuba, Hugo Chávez, and Nicolas Maduro, and currently holds membership in the Venezuelan opposition’s Unitary Platform seeking a democratic solution.

In your testimony to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on July 26, you committed to renounce your Venezuelan citizenship should you be confirmed. The process for doing so is outlined in the Venezuelan constitution. I would like to ask you to clarify the process you envision implementing should be you confirmed.

Question. What type of consular services will you use, in what country, and in what timeline?

Answer. The United States does not recognize the regime of Nicolas Maduro, but instead recognizes the 2015 National Assembly as the Government of Venezuela. I have, therefore, provided my petition of renunciation of citizenship to the recognized Presidential Commissioner for Foreign Relations of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela resident in Washington, DC.

Question. Do you anticipate providing the committee with the Certificate of Renunciation of Venezuelan Nationality, issued by Venezuelan authorities pursuant to the Venezuelan constitution?

Answer. I will provide the committee with any documentation readily available to me associated with my petition for renunciation of my Venezuelan citizenship.
